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Religion in Modernism

Epiphany and Heresy in Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*.

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Abstract

In the early part of the last century, there were signs of new attitudes toward institutional religion in the Western world. These attitudes placed value on the subjective, individual experience over orthodoxy in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This historical shift concerning the truth gives rise to a question: How does the individual access their spiritual knowingness without the former religious institutions as validations? In this thesis, I examine two protagonists and their journeys toward spiritual sovereignty, setting them free from institutional religion, and giving them a sense of inner spiritual knowingness. When read together, Henry Roth's *Call It Sleep* (1934) and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and the "Telemachia" triad in *Ulysses* (1922) give a diverse account of how this journey toward spiritual sovereignty may unfold. I apply the concepts of epiphany and heresy to illustrate the complexity of this deeply personal journey. In encountering modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse, the reader gets intimate access to the protagonists' religious sentiments through their epiphanies. Moreover, as the epiphanies are interpreted and internalized, the protagonists dare to liberate themselves from institutional religion and cultural heritage. In contrast to the early years of the Judeo-Christian religion, the protagonists are not punished as heretics. Instead, heresy is internalized and they must free themselves from thoughts of guilt or punishments.

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Abbreviations

BG – Murfin, Ross. *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (2009)

CW – Joyce, James, *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (1959)

CCGM - Woodward, Roger. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology* (2007)

CCU – Flynn, Catherine. *The Cambridge Centenary Ulysses* (2022)

ECMMR – Radford, A. *The Edinburgh Companion to Modernism, Myth and Religion (2023)*

GSR – Braun, W. and McCutcheon. *Guide to the Study of Religion (2000)*

JE – Scholes et al. *Collected Epiphanies of James Joyce: A Critical Edition (2024)*

JR – Werblowsky and Wigoder. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion (1997)*

Longman – Fox, C. and Rosalind C. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2014)*

NATC – Leitch, Vincent B. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism (2018)*

Norton – Greenblatt, Steven. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature (2012)*

OC – Joyce, James *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (2000)

Oxford – Hornby, A.S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2015)*

OHGR – Eidinow E. and Kindt J. *Oxford Handbook of Greek Religion (2015)*

PD – Cuddon, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory (2013)*

Portrait – Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (2016)*

Sleep – Roth, Henry. *Call It Sleep* (1934)

Varieties – James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1982)

Epigraph

[W]hat I ask of the free thinker is that he should confront religion in the same mental state as the believer. (…) [H]e who does not bring to the study of religion a sort of religious sentiment cannot speak about it! He is like a blind man trying to talk about colour.

Now I shall address the free believer. (…) We must bring to [the study an] openness of mind: for a time we must practice a sort of Cartesian doubt. Without going so far as to disbelieve the formula we believe in, we must forget it provisionally, reserving the right to return to it later.

There cannot be a rational interpretation of religion which is fundamentally irreligious: an irreligious interpretation of religion would be an interpretation which denied the phenomenon it was trying to explain.

Emile Durkheim, "Contribution to Discussion, 'Religious Sentiment at the Present Time' (1919)" qtd. in Pickering, *Durkheim on Religion*, 1975, 184-185

Introduction

This master's thesis will focus on epiphany and heresy in *Call It Sleep* by Henry Roth, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the three opening episodes of *Ulysses,* named "Telemachia," by James Joyce. The main objective of the thesis is to examine how these novels act as representations of the historical shift concerning the perception of religious truths in the years from 1916 to 1934. This shift entails a turning away from institutional religion and orthodoxy to the individual finding their own truth. In these three modernist novels there are signs of attempts to ascertain spiritual sovereignty, a personal path, free from institutional religion and cultural heritage. Through their epiphanies, the protagonists experience an inner spiritual knowingness. They then find that their new views of life, based on their epiphanic experience, clash with religious scripture and dogma and are therefore heretical. This thesis will also look at the use of stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse and ask how these modernist experimental techniques express personal religious experiences.

Why religion in modernism? Is it that in an age we usually associate with increased secularization, there is always a holdover? Or is it that, when we look closer, religion and spirituality were always present in modernist literature? Since the turn of the twenty-first century, many literary studies have opted for the latter. Published in 2007, Gregory Erickson's *Absence of God in Modernist Literature* addresses the "surprising comeback" (2) of religion, culturally, socially, and within academic theory and philosophy. Erickson refers to Sartre's experience of a "God-shaped hole" and argues that this experience created an existential crisis that changed our sense of "history, identity, and writing" (3), each of which has changed how we create and perceive art, as well as our understanding of narrative, plot, and time (ibid.). Secondly, Pericles Lewis, in the seminal *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010), re-examines the "secularization thesis" (26). Lewis contends that secularization is a "misleading word for what happened to art's relation to the sacred in the twentieth century" (24). In his discussion, which I will come back to in chapter one, Lewis looks at how religion becomes more subjective in modernism.

The shift regarding how religion is viewed is part of a grander shift in modernist studies. This change is often referred to as "the new modernist studies". In the article "Expanding Modernism" (2008), Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz declares the inception of "new

methodological directions" within "*bad modernism*" (737), with the inception in 1999 at the yearly *Modernist Studies Association*. Key notes in their analysis are 'expansion': *temporal*; as the study of modernist literature has expanded beyond the "core period" of 1890 to 1945, *spatial*; as scholars study works produced in Asia and Australia, along with "economic and intellectual transactions" among various nations, and finally, *vertical*, where former sharp boundaries between high art and popular culture are reinvestigated (738). In *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Culture* (2015), Suzanne Hobson focuses on the lack of agreement on the term 'religion', a subject I will discuss in chapter one. Notwithstanding the increased popularity of religion in modernism, there still is a tension present. *The Edinburgh Companion to Modernism, Myth and Religion* (2023) addresses this tension. The editors, Suzanne Hobson and Andrew Radford, ask the question: "How and why does a literature supposedly expressive of secular modernity cleave so thoroughly to beliefs, values, attitudes and sensibilities seemingly more appropriate to an age of faith?" (ibid.). Their own answer is that the question itself arises from a "rethinking of the secular and secularization," mirroring similar sentiments in other disciplines, such as in political and social sciences (ibid.). As Hobson and Radford note, in the twentieth century there were studies on religion in modernism regarding authors like T. S. Eliot and H. D., but most "left unchallenged" the fact that "a secular age should produce literature in which religion and spirituality feature prominently" (1). They frame this as a "paradox" (ibid.). In this thesis, I will address this paradox as one of the trademarks of modernist literature. On one hand, orthodox, institutionalized religion is scrutinized and de-canonized. On the other hand, its structure is still present, used as a scaffold in which new concepts are introduced and experimented with. An example of this is apparent in the three novels in this thesis: *Sleep* is structured according to the Pentateuch, or *The Five Books of Moses*, James Joyce's *Portrait* follows, I will argue, the religious arch of sin, guilt, and redemption. As for *Ulysses*, the structure is not Christian or Jewish, but by using the overall arch and structure of *The Odyssey*, the novel operates within the traditional western canon.

In spite of the traditional structure of the novels, I will suggest that their style, with the modernist experimental techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse, contribute to shaking the "religious scaffold" they operate within, so much so that the very scaffold begins to rattle and shake. My aim in this thesis is to point to one of these "rattlings": the dismantling of the belief that there is a higher entity, whether one calls that entity "God" or not, that has a natural authority, one that is delegated through the

clerical priesthoods and sacred, orthodox doctrines. To unpack this, I will examine, through the main theme in this thesis, 'epiphany,' a concept whose history and origin I will outline in chapter one. I will argue that in the three modernist novels in this thesis, we can detect the first tentative efforts to explore religious experience outside of religious dogmas and institutions. As such, what we find is, as one would with any experiment, bold pronouncements along with preliminary and sketchy attempts at expressing something new, and everything in between these extremes.

Why look at the topic of religion through epiphany? For now, I will point to Morris Beja who already in 1971 noted, in the seminal *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, that "despite the general disillusion with religion," there has been, since the commence of modernism, "a continuing need (…) for meaningful, unifying 'spiritual' emotions of or experiences that would provide men with answers to some of their burning questions" (21). As for studies on 'epiphany' in modernist literature, which I will outline in chapter one, the real break started a decade ago, with studies by Sharon Kim (2012), Valery Taddei (2020), Sangam MacDuff (2020), and Graham Jensen (2023). This recent interest in 'epiphany' follows a similar pattern in other fields, as in Verity Platt's work on epiphanies in Greek and Roman art, literature and religion (2016). In addition to Platt, the work of Georgia Petridou, *Divine Epiphany in Greek Literature and Culture* (2016), are the main sources in the section on epiphanies in Greek religion. Petridou affirms the popularity of epiphany as a scholarly theme over the last two decades, with "a number of doctoral theses and conferences on the topic (…) from 2000 onwards" (10). The term 'epiphany' comes from ancient Greek religion, signifying "manifestation," "coming into being". It was used to indicate the appearance by or of a god or goddess to a human. In Judaism, the term 'epiphany' is not used in the Hebrew Bible (MacDuff 240). However, Genesis itself is a description of an 'epiphany;' the manifestation that leads to the creation of the physical earth: "And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light" (Kingjamesbibleonline Genesis, 1.3). In Christianity, 'epiphany' was adopted as "The Feast of Epiphany," on January sixth, when, according to the Catholic Church, Jesus was supposed to be born.

In this thesis, my aim is to use the epiphanic experiences of the protagonist of *Sleep*, David Schearl, and those of Stephen Dedalus, protagonist of *Portrait* and "Telemachia," to ask: How do these characters experience their epiphanies? What is the nature of them? Do the characters attribute their epiphanies to a religious source? If so, do they conceive of the source as an outside force or as emerging from within? Rather than focusing on a broad examination,

this thesis will, like an Ariadne thread, follow a few distinct epiphanies through the three novels. Epiphanies, which often include religious imagination of a deeply personal nature, have the potential to create a personalized religion. Therefore, I will argue that in these three modernist novels there are signs of attempts to describe spiritual sovereignty, a personal path, free from institutional religion and cultural heritage. In this discussion, I will also look at the concept of 'heresy'. In doing so, I will dive into the history of 'heresy' within Judaism and Christianity, especially within the Catholic Church where lists of heretics have been standard since the Council of Nicaea in 340 AD when the process of the canonization of orthodox Christian Bible began. In chapter one, I will outline the historical understanding of the term 'religion' from the Ancient Greek religion to Christianity in the modernist period. In the analysis of the novels, I will examine how, in the early twentieth century, heresy was no longer a strong outside force. Rather, it is internalized, as I will show in *Portrait* and "Telemachia". One key question regarding 'religion' is the "God question," posed by Nietzsche. Included in this chapter is also an overview of William James's and Emile Durkheim's definitions of 'religion', the first subjective, the latter functional. Following this, I will go through the historical understanding of the term 'epiphany,' which has changed from denoting a manifestation of gods to increasingly an inner, subjective experience. I will go through the term 'epiphany' in ancient Greek religion, Christianity, Romanticism, and Joyce's collection of epiphanies, respectively. Lastly, in chapter one I will outline the term 'heresy' within Judaism and Christianity.

Why include *Sleep* alongside *Portrait* and "Telemachia"? First, Roth's novel, transpiring in New York City, a metropole with people of various cultures and religions, differs from Dublin, a city far north in Europe. Thus, the thesis will show both the difference and the similarities in the experience of religion in a city at the turn of the last century. It will also, I hope, help to put Stephen Dedalus' journey in a new light, as to my knowledge, David Schearl has not been studied together with Stephen in view of the concepts of epiphany and heresy. I will dive into the novels in search of how these works can illuminate and expand our understanding of the religious experience in the modernist novel. I will look at the historical horizon of New York and Dublin at the turn of the last century, and ask: What is the authority of religious institutions in this particular time and space? How do the protagonists experience their assigned religions? David Schearl is born into a Jewish family from Eastern Europe, while Stephen Dedalus is born into a Catholic family in Ireland. Furthermore, I will pose the questions: How do the protagonists, based on their epiphanies, assume control of their own

religious experience? Do their epiphanic experiences make them question the religious authority they are born into?

In the analysis of David and Stephen, I will compare and contrast their journeys toward spiritual sovereignty. In *Sleep*, David is six to eight years old during the narration. As for *Portrait*, the narration follows Stephen from childhood to adolescence when he attends the university. In the "Telemachia" chapter, the focus will be largely on heretics in the early Christian period. The attempts at spiritual sovereignty play out differently in the three novels. In *Sleep*, David uses his intuition and naïve sensitivity to discover his inner spiritual knowingness. In *Portrait*, Stephen searches in his mind for the answers, where language is the operating factor. The language in the novel changes according to Stephen's age; Stephen as a child asks fundamental questions about God and the universe, while Stephen in his adolescence asks increasingly sophisticated questions. When it comes to "Telemachia," there is a shift in the presentation of the epiphanies. They are not as explicit as in *Sleep* and *Portrait*. Instead, they are now disguised, sprinkled throughout the text. In examining the origin of some of the epiphanies, I will look at the 2024 publication *Collected Epiphanies of James Joyce*, in which his early epiphanies are presented. The main source of Stephen's epiphanies in *Portrait* and "Telemachia" will be *MacDuff's Panepiphanal World: James Joyce's Epiphanies* (2020).

In my analysis of religion in the three novels, I will approach each of them according to the attitude of the characters toward religion. For little David, religion is predominantly a cultural heritage. For Stephen, religion is a deeply personal experience. Therefore, the analysis of *Sleep* will focus on David's experience of being an immigrant from a traditional rural Jewish community and how that culture is part of his parents' world but not his. I will ask: As a Jewish immigrant child arriving at the metropolitan city of New York at the cusp of the last century, is David losing his identity or finding it? Do his epiphanies aid him in finding his inner spiritual sovereignty? The analysis of *Portrait* will examine Stephen's mind and his personal thoughts on God, guilt, sin, and redemption. Here, the focus will be mostly internal, where language itself will be examined. I will ask: What characterizes Stephen's attempts at freeing himself from institutional religion? What role do his epiphanies have in his search for an inner spiritual knowingness? In the analysis of "Telemachia," I will ask: Has Stephen acquired the inner knowingness and spiritual sovereignty he sought in *Portrait*? Is he free from the religious authority of the Catholic Church?

In their differing forms, David and Stephen both engage with complex representations of the attempts of acquiring spiritual sovereignty that border on the problematic due to their upbringing within institutional religion and cultural heritage. As the thesis progresses, I will explore how epiphany is a key part in establishing their feelings of inner religious knowingness. This movement toward spiritual independence mirrors that of the historical shift in the modernist period, characterized by the individual challenging authority and finding their own inner truth. Heresy, which has a long history within the Catholic Church, will be applied to both David and Stephen. As mentioned, the conversation concerning religion in modernism is a fairly new one, and especially the studies on epiphany and heresy. My addition to this conversation is how the experiences of the epiphanies can open doors to individualized religious experiences that are seen as valid in and of themselves, without the need for any outer, clerical sanction.

The novel *Sleep* is a bildungsroman and semi-biographical. The same is true for *Portrait*. As they are both semi-biographical, it is of interest to look into the lives of their authors. Therefore, I will provide short biographies of the writers. James Joyce (1882-1941) was born in Dublin. His family was middle class but poor "because his alcoholic father mismanaged their finances" (Naughtie 185). He was educated at Jesuit schools and "served as an altar boy" (Lewis 2010, 178). He had his first sexual encounter at fourteen with a prostitute, followed by a confession and a religious transformation (ibid.). At sixteen, he was offered the vocation for priesthood which he declined. Instead, he saw his future in art. Lewis claims that "he always regarded art as a kind of alternative priesthood" (Lewis 2010, 178). At the publishing of *Portrait*, Joyce had lived in self-chosen exile for several years, leaving Ireland with his fiancée, Nora Barnacle, in 1902, at only twenty years old. He spent the rest of his life in Switzerland, Italy, and France. Henry Roth (1906-1995) was born in Tysmenitz, now part of Western Ukraine, to a Jewish family. He arrived in America as a baby in 1906. Roth's first language was Yiddish, the language spoken in his home. When he enrolled in the cheder, he learned biblical and liturgical texts in Hebrew (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 78). Roth studied literature at the City University of New York. According to Wirth-Nesher, Roth had a strained relationship with language. He was emotionally attached to Yiddish, while "his literary ambitions" were focused on the English language. Roth's "voracious" reading of modernist literature "coincided with his writing *Sleep*, where he stitches the languages constituted of the Hebrew alphabet into his 'Englitch'" (ibid.). As a Jewish immigrant writer,

Roth found himself "situated between languages" (Wirth-Nesher 10). Although he achieved mastery of the English language, he was "estranged from it emotionally" (ibid.). After the publishing of *Sleep* in 1934, Roth struggled with his writings, and did not publishing another novel for sixty years.

In chapter one, I will outline the development of the term 'religion' within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Included in this is the shift from religion as a broad, communal understanding in Augustus Hippo's time, to a narrowing of the term to only pertain to one's belief in a monotheistic God in the sixteenth century, to again being broadened to include both a functional definition, advocated by Emile Durkheim, and a more personal understanding of religion, suggested by William James. By the end of the nineteenth century, Friedreich Nietzsche declared "God is dead!", which marked a shift in the collective mind toward a new understanding of religion. In the modernist era, there was both a secularization and a trend to create an alternative to organized religion. In chapter two, I examine David Schearl's odyssey in *Sleep* toward spiritual sovereignty where he liberates himself from institutional religion and cultural heritage. A Jewish immigrant child from Eastern Europe, David arrives in New York City in 1907. The novel follows him for two years, from six to eight years old. At seven he enrolls in the cheder, reads the Hebrew bible without understanding the words, and learns about the Prophet Isaiah. In an epiphany, Isaiah sees God, and David, seeing a light after having an epiphany, claims that he has seen God's light as well. Isaiah was killed, deemed a heretic because he claimed to have seen God. David's imagination is also heretical according to the Jewish rules. In chapter three, I follow Stephen Dedalus's journey from being a Jesuit student to renouncing institutional religion and declaring that he will become an artist. Named *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the novel is not only a bildungsroman but also a künstlerroman. In this thesis I will read it as the latter. Stephen goes through phases of guilt, sin, confession, and redemption before he decides to leave the Jesuit order. His epiphanies, most of which are rooted in language, act as place holders on this journey. By the end of *Portrait*, Stephen boldly announces that he will leave institutional religion and his homeland and live as an artist in exile. In chapter four, where I will examine the first three episodes of *Ulysses*, the "Telemachia" (*CCU* 25), Stephen is back in Ireland due to his mother's death. He has been home for a year and seems desolate. In the analysis of the three episodes, "Telemachus," "Nestor," and "Proteus," the focus is on Stephen's interior monologues and stream-of-consciousness passages, where the history of the early Christian heretics appears. In *Portrait*, Stephen makes bold choices based on his

epiphanies. The heretical component on Stephen's journey is realized in "Telemachia." "Telemachia" follows the morning of Stephen Dedalus, the counterpart to Telemachus, Odysseus's son. As I only focus on the "Telemachia" part of *Ulysses* and treat it as an extension of *Portrait*, the *Ulysses* chapter in this thesis will be somewhat shorter than the chapters on *Sleep* and *Portrait*. While the concepts of 'epiphany' and 'heresy' can be applied to several fields, such as religious studies, in this thesis I apply these concepts as a methodology to modernist history and literature. I want to examine what it enables us to see when applying these concepts to the analysis of these three novels.

1 Religion in Modernism

1.1 Tracing Religion in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

> Imagine there's no heaven
> It's easy if you try
> No hell below us
> Above us only sky
> Imagine all the people
> Living for today
>
> Imagine there's no countries
> It isn't hard to do
> Nothing to kill or die for
> *And no religion too*
> Imagine all the people
> Living life in peace (Lennon, 1971; emphasis added)

Imagine, written by John Lennon, was released in 1971. The song and its eponymous album became a widespread success, "ultimately the most critically successful" of Lennon's career (History.com Editors). Clearly, the lyrics struck a chord with the public. The idea expressed here, that religion divides people into two opposing groups, "us" versus "them," captures a view many developed in in the post WWII era. This perspective refers to *religion* as a social genus, "social formations that includes several members" (Kevin Schilbrack 2022). However, this is but one possible way to categorize *religion*. Moreover, it is a fairly novel perspective. Before we proceed, we will take a quick historical look at the term *religion*, where it originated and how it developed.

One of our first discoveries is that the term 'religion' is characterized by its ambiguousness. Historically, it is also a new word. In the article "Religions, Are There Any?", Schilbrack points out that the term 'religion' does not exist in any of the ancient cultures, nor is it mentioned in any sacred scripture, not even in the Hebrew Bible or the Greek New Testament (1114). Thus, he concludes: "The word 'religion' in its modern use is thus not a concept shared universally but rather a product of a particular, modern, European, and Christian

history" (ibid.). In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Schilbrack outlines the basic historic trajectory of the term 'religion', including its etymological origin:

> The concept *religion* did not originally refer to a social genus or cultural type. It was adapted from the Latin term *religio*, a term roughly equivalent to "scrupulousness". *Religio* also approximates "conscientiousness," "devotedness," or "felt obligation," since *religio* was an effect of taboos, promises, curses, or transgressions, even when these were unrelated to the gods. (Schilbrack 2022)

Consequently, the term was used both in a moral and in a personal sense. In Western antiquity, it was common to acknowledge a diversity in how one expressed one's devotedness. Hence, the use of the term *nobis religio*, "our way of worship," which shows the contemporary understanding of the variety of religious beliefs. Moreover, the term 'religion' was not confined to solely expressing one's relationship to a deity. In *City of God* (AD 426), Augustus Hippo recognizes that the word 'religion' is used in various circumstances. In his discussion, he acknowledges that the word is used regarding relationships, "to express human ties," and it is also used to express "dutifulness to parents". Therefore, Hippo concludes,

> (…) it would inevitably produce ambiguity to use this word in discussing the worship of God, unable as we are to say that religion is nothing else but the worship of God, without contradicting the common usage which applies this word to the observance of social relationships. (376)

As we see, the term 'religion' was a rather loose term people used to express dutifulness in relationships, whether human or divine. Then, in the late 16th century, there was a significant shift in the use of the concept; people began to use 'religion' to indicate a social genus, and the divide was drawn between groups of Christians and non-Christians. Hence, the new question became: "Who is religious and who is not?" British philosopher Edward Herbert (1583-1648) took on the task to discern the two groups. He identified five terms found in every 'religion', thus outlining the criteria for a belief system to be labeled a 'religion':

1. There is a supreme deity,
2. this deity should be worshipped,
3. the most important part of religious practice is the cultivation of virtue,
4. one should seek repentance for wrong-doing,
5. one is rewarded or punished in this life and the next. (Schilbrack 2022)

As we see, Herbert includes only a monotheistic belief within the term 'religion'. One may argue that the division between 'religion' and 'superstition' began at this moment in time. Here, we find the development of 'religion' as a social divider, likely strengthened by the colonization by the European Christians where those who had other belief systems than Christianity were labeled *primitive*, and their belief systems were not regarded as 'religions', but rather as *superstitions*. Thus, with Herbert's contribution, the discussion of the definition of 'religion' seemed to be concluded.

By the turn of the last century, new definitions of 'religion' emerge, with philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) and social scientist Emilie Durkheim (1858-1917) as proponents of two new branches. Their views address subjective versus communal definitions of 'religion.' William James captured a new contemporary understanding of 'religion' that included more general terms of "forces" or "powers," by calling 'religion' an "unseen order":

> Were one asked to characterize the life of *religion* in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an *unseen order*, and our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto. This belief and this adjustment are *the religious attitude* in the soul. (*Varieties* 53; emphasis added)

By this new view, James goes back to the understanding of 'religion' in Hippo's time, as a "devotedness," albeit one no longer seen as a "felt obligation," but rather as a gentle nudge, pointing us to "our supreme good". There is no mention of "a supreme deity" such as Herbert listed as one of the above five characteristics of a 'religion', which opens up the term to include beliefs like Buddhism and Hinduism. Also, devotedness is not toward other people, "the human ties," as Augusto Hippo declared. Rather, it is directed toward oneself. Moreover, the term "religious attitude" indicates that the origin is inherent within each of us. Hence, James' definition of 'religion' marks the shift from acts of devotion according to the sacraments of the Church to a strong focus, one may argue an exclusive one, on a personal religious experience. This new understanding of 'religion' as a personal, subjective experience rather than adherence to institutional authority mirrors the before-mentioned trajectory related to 'epiphany' of the last two millennia. Thus, the understanding of 'religion' undergoes a change from an external power to an internal one, thereby reflecting a historical shift, from adherence to institutional authority to the individual in authority of their own truth.

This shift toward subjective experience can also be seen in literature in the late nineteenth century, by writers such as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James. The first of these was, according to Lewis, "the foreign-language novelist who most influenced the development of English modernism" (2007, 158). The focus on subjective experience will be an important aspect in the analysis of the modernist novels in this thesis, where both David Schearl and Stephen Dedalus attempt to find and express their own religious sovereignty.

Emile Durkheim's definition of 'religion' emerges from his studies on social science. In the 1912 publication *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* Durkheim suggests a functional definition. He argues that 'religion' is communal before it is personal. In his view, the basis for a 'religion' lies in the shared beliefs of the individuals within a group. Thus, Durkheim proposes: "*A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which come into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them*" (1912, translated 1995 by K. E. Fields, 44; emphasis in original). Durkheim's definition addresses beliefs and practices, and they both point to the real, that is, observable phenomena. Even "sacred things," Durkheim emphasizes in his work, do not have their prime bases in the other-worldly but in the shared views of the practitioners. Thus, in Durkheim's definition, 'religion' is primarily a social, communal entity. As we have seen, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Herbert's insistence on a "supreme deity" that should be worshipped was no longer the standard definition of 'religion'. To sum up; the difference between James's and Durkheim's views is both the origin of religion and the role it has in a society. James stresses the subjective aspect, while Durkheim focuses on the communal aspect. James's view and definition of 'religion' is grounded in theology, while Durkheim's is based in anthropology. Whereas James emphasizes the personal experience and the "religious attitude in the soul," Durkheim advocates that religion has first and foremost a collective function, which he argues is as essential as the above definition: "In showing that the idea of religion is inseparable from the idea of a Church, it conveys the notion that religion must be *an eminently collective thing*" (ibid.; emphasis added). Where James saw a historic trajectory toward subjectivism within religion, Durkheim held onto the communal aspect. In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim addresses and debates James's argument of the religious personal experience as solely an individual experience:

> Therefore, like a recent apologist of faith (followed by a note to *The Varieties*; parenthesis added), I accept that religious beliefs rest on a definite experience, whose demonstrative value is, in a sense, not inferior to that of scientific experiments, though it is different. I too think 'that a tree is known by its fruits', and that its fertility is the best proof of what its roots are worth. But merely because there exists a 'religious experience,' if you will, that is grounded in some manner (is there, by the way, any experience that is not?), it by no means follows that the reality which grounds it should conform objectively with the idea the believers have of it. (420)

Durkheim, believing that "the living force that feeds [religion] is to be found in society" (427), ventured to study a tribe in Australia as he stated that an "archaic religion" would be the best to "help us comprehend the religious nature of man" (1). In this new field of anthropology, Durkheim practiced what was later to be called *cultural relativism*. Franz Boas, called "the first professional anthropologist in the United States" (William Balée 2022), and known for training famous figures such as Zora Neale Hurston, stated in a lecture in 1888: "The data of ethnology prove that not only our knowledge, but also our emotions are the result of the form of our social life and of the history of the people to whom we belong" (636). Schilbrack states that with a functional definition of 'religion,' "even atheistic forms of capitalism, nationalism, and Marxism function as 'religions'" (2022). Books like *Media and Religion: Foundation of an Emerging Field* (2012) advocate for removing religion as a "fringe area" (2), and to view it, as R. Sylvan suggests in *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture*, "as the underlying substratum for all cultural activity and serves as the foundation for culture in general" (qtd. in Daniel Stout 3). Thus, Sylvan seems to view 'religion' as inseparable from any culture. However, by opening up the term to include "all cultural activity," we are in danger of watering down the concept to the point of rendering it beyond an academic field of study. In the volume *Guide to the Study of Religion* (2015), Willi Braun, associate professor of religion, addresses this predicament: "In my tabulary of student definitions, "religious" seems to have no domain limits" (4). He calls the lack of a clear and agreed-upon definition of 'religion' "the problem of excess and spectrality" (ibid.). Hence, he indicates that the word *religion* is a "floating signifier" which is capable of "attaching itself to a dizzying range of objects" (5). With a nod to Jacques Derrida's notion of "hauntology," Braun expresses an exasperation regarding the fact that "divergent, conflictual, even contradictory incantations" of religion are "vigorously alive side-by-side in hundreds of university religion departments" and sums up the status quo with

characterizing the field of religious studies as "a bewildering jungle" (5). Knowing the lack of current consensus of the definition of 'religion', I will in this thesis focus mainly on the subjective experience of 'religion', originated internally in the individual as opposed to an external force.

A new question arises in the late nineteenth century: Is there, a 'supreme deity'—as Herbert claimed was the primary criteria for the definition of 'religion'—or is the idea of a 'supreme deity' a creation of human imagination? This discussion would be labeled "the God question." Gaining momentum in the previous century, the question was famously asked by Friedrich Nietzsche in 1882. In *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882), also translated as *The Gay Science*, he includes "The Parable of the Madman." The narrator searches for, and declares the death of, God:

> *The Madman*. – Have you ever heard of the madman who on a bright morning lighted a lantern and ran to the market-place calling out unceasingly: "I seek God! I seek God!" (…) "Where is God gone?" he called out. "I mean to tell you! *We have killed him*, - you and I! We are his murderers! But how have we done it? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the whole horizon? What did we do when we loosened this earth from all suns? Whither does it now move? Whither do we move? Away from all suns? Do we not dash on unceasingly? Backwards, sidewards, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an above and below? Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Does not night come on continually, darker and darker? Shall we not have to light lanterns in the morning? Do we not hear the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we not smell the divine putrefaction? – for even Gods putrefy! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! (*The Joyful Wisdom* (1910), transl. Thomas Common. 167-68)

Nietzsche's text, written in the post-Victorian era, marks a significant contribution to the new sentiments regarding the question of the existence of God. The madman asks: "Wither do we move? Away from all suns? (…) Do we not stray, as through infinite nothingness?" With metaphors such as "grave-diggers" and "putrefaction," the text signals an ending of life itself. Nietzsche's text expresses the theme of nihilism. The term nihilism, invented by Turgenev, in his novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862), "denies all traditional values" and promotes the idea of destroying "all prevailing systems" (*PG* 472). In the Western world, Nietzsche's declaration of the "death of God" became for many the nail in the coffin for the belief in an outer, monotheistic, and authoritarian God.

As we have seen, in the last two centuries the concept of God has lost its former authority. Along with that loss of dominance, 'religion' has undergone a similar change, no longer in need of being validated by the Church as an institution. This is perhaps why William James saw the opportunity to include, or rather replace, the old understanding of 'religion' with a new aspect, namely a deeply emotional and personal experience, whether it happens within, or outside of, institutionalized religion. This shift, James argues, is of such a significant nature that it forces the religious institution itself to adjust:

> A strange moral transformation has within the past century swept over our Western world. We no longer think that we are called on to face physical pain with equanimity. (…) The result of this historic alteration is that even in the Mother Church herself, where ascetic discipline has such a fixed traditional prestige as a factor of merit, it has largely come into desuetude, if not discredit. (…) A believer who flagellates or "macerates" himself today arouses more wonder and fear than emulation. (*The Varieties* 297-298)

This development from religious "devotion" through pain to religious sentiment where the yardstick is illumination, insight, clarity and life affirmation, we find both in James Joyce's *Portrait* (1916) and in Henry Roth's *Sleep* (1934). In the first, the protagonist Stephen Dedalus is a believer who submits himself to strict Jesuit rules. Likewise, in the latter, seven-year-old David Schearl attends the *cheder;* the primitive Hebrew school where the rabbi ruthlessly uses authoritarian methods in his teaching. In both novels the development of the protagonist goes from religious oppression to emancipation. The main tool of David and Stephen in gaining an inner spiritual knowingness is their epiphanies.

1.2 Religion in Modernist Literature

Notwithstanding Nietzsche's sense of disillusionment, J. Hillis Miller, one of the deconstructionists of the Yale group, did not see this period as purely an ending. Instead, Miller saw this period also as a beginning: "if the disappearance of God is presupposed by much Victorian poetry, the death of God is the starting point for many twentieth century writers" (2). Miller claims that for the modernist writer, there would be no return to the traditional conception of God: "If there is to be a God in the new world it must be a presence within things and not beyond them" (10). Miller points to a new place to look for God; in the tangible, earthly world. He calls this "presence;" "It is the presence of things present, what

Stevens calls 'the swarthy water/That flow round the earth and through the skies,/Twisting among the universal spaces' ("A Primitive Like an Orb" *Collected Poems* 440, qtd. in Miller 10). Also, Miller refers several times to William Carlos Williams's "wheelbarrow" as a prime example of this presence, an "objective existence" in the sense that it does not "mean anything" as referring to any traditional symbolism. This is perhaps why Miller claims that of the modernist poets, W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Wallace Stevens, and William Carlos Williams, who all undertook this "journey beyond nihilism toward a poetry of reality," the latter is the one who reaches the "full development in poetry" (1). With Miller's narrative, one could detect modernism's beginning regarding its perceived godlessness as either creating an "art out of the resulting nihilism" or as "creating a replacement for religion" (Erickson 2007 2). The modernist poet Wallace Stevens opted for the positive option, the latter one. For him, God was the "supreme poetic idea" and he deemed that "in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations" (*Opus Posthumous* 186).

In the twenty-first century, Pericles Lewis has contributed with two major works in this field, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007) and *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010). In the first, he argues that "the word modernism designates a central phenomenon in cultural history" (xvii 2007). Furthermore, he points to a key trait of modernism: "a crisis in the ability of art and literature to present reality" (xviii). In the latter work, Lewis argues that modernist literature denotes a loss, again exemplified by Stevens: "It is a habit of mind with me to be thinking of some substitute for religion. (…) My trouble, and the trouble of a great many people, is the loss of belief in the sort of God in Whom we were all brought up to believe" (*Collected Poetry and Prose*, qtd in Lewis 2010, 1). Lewis postulates that "the modernist sought a secular sacred, a form of transcendent or ultimate meaning to be discovered in this world, without the reference to the supernatural" (21).

Pericles Lewis is one of the critics in the field of religion in modernism within the last two decades. Another is Erik Tonning, who in *Modernism and Christianity* (2014) argues that the literary critics of modernism have neglected to look into the impact Christianity has had, and continues to have, in modernist literature. Therefore, Tonning proposes, "the whole field of Modernism studies should thus be rethought in accordance with the insight that the role of Christianity is intrinsic to any coherent account of Modernism" (1). In the work, he studies Joyce, Eliot, and W. H. Auden, and he claims that "for some Modernists at least, the church and not modernity per se remained the principal adversary" (6). A third voice, Gregory

Erickson, takes a diverging stance. In *Christian Heresy, James Joyce and the Modernist Literary Imagination* (2023), he suggests a new approach to religion in modernism in which one focuses on "locating the others and adversaries *within* Christian traditions" (x). Furthermore, Erickson argues that by examining these interactions we can see how they have influenced literary thinking. Thus, he suggests:

> New theories of literary interpretation, then, rather than trying to operate outside of any sense of a God-idea, need to acknowledge the inescapability of religious thought and the enduring complexity of the idea of God, not only within texts but within our mode of analysis. (2007, 10)

Consequently, Erickson focuses on "how these interactions have shaped literary thinking" (2023 x). With the latter view we can view modernist literature with new eyes. While recognizing some of its declared blasphemous texts, modernism can be read in a new manner, not as denying, resisting, or trying to reinvent or replace a lost religion, but instead as an active critic and contributor to the discussion of what the texts in our Judeo-Christian heritage consist of. Moreover, we may see how modernist texts illuminate the question on how to read religious texts. This may be done by interpreting the modernist texts by using its hallmark of experimental texts. Another critic, Graham Jensen, focuses on epiphanies in "its numerous guises, considering its critical relevance and artistic force" (*ECMMR* 9).

In modernism literature there is a rise in the focus of the individual's experience of the unexplainable and the sublime, one that is not necessarily connected to the institution of the church and the traditional understanding of religion. It can be experienced as an inner knowingness, often in the form of an epiphany. Modernist literature, with its use of experimental new narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness and interior monologue, points to a new relationship with the spirit where the human is no longer subordinate of an orthodox doctrine but as an explorer of their own mind. Yet, when looking closer, the modern spiritual experience has its roots in ancient Hellenic and Judeo-Christian traditions, and thus maintains words and concepts from this heritage. In chapter two, three, and four, I will discuss the influence these religious and cultural traditions have on a personal level for David Schearl and for Stephen Dedalus.

1.3 Epiphany Introduction

The word ‘epiphany’ in its current, colloquial use originates with James Joyce’s definition in *Stephen Hero,* published posthumous in 1944: “By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself” (216). The history of the term ‘epiphany’ demonstrates how language is always in flux, always being created; it is, in Joyce’s words, a “continuous affirmation of the spirit” (Joyce, *The Critical Writings*, 1973, qtd. in MacDuff 24). Notwithstanding the language’s continuous change, Joyce’s definition of ‘epiphany’ is still the contemporary use of the word:

> 3a (1): a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something (2): an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking (3): an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure b: a revealing scene or moment. (Merriam-Webster, 10.10.24)

A quick internet search proves that Stephen’s definition matches the general, contemporary use of the term in 3a. Thus, it is unchanged after eight decades. When it comes to 3b, which is equal to “the genre Joyce called ‘Epiphany’” (Ellmann, *Letters of James Joyce*, 1957-66, qtd. in MacDuff 24), it has become mainly a literary term.

Epiphany in modernism is generally understood to be a conduit for describing reality in a new way. Thus, as MacDuff notes, the “ability to color ordinary event with visionary significance is the essence of the modern epiphany, allowing revelation to be found in, or ascribed to, the most commonplace experiences” (42). However, the term has undergone a long trajectory of changes in how it has been defined, applied, and understood. Firstly, the term has been identified as “an outgrowth of lyric poetry,” tracing back to William Wordsworth, and other Romantics such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, Charles Baudelaire, and Arthur Rimbaud (Kim, 2). Secondly, it has been linked to rituals in the Catholic Church, such as the Eucharist with its transformation of bread and wine into to Jesus’s body and blood, and the liturgy of the Epiphany Season. Thirdly, ‘epiphany’ in ancient Greek religion and myths is described in connection with the power of the gods. As we saw with the term ‘religion’, the term ‘epiphany' is an equally diffuse term to define. As Sharon Kim states, under the headline “The Problem With Epiphany” (3), with so many theories and assuming origins “[t]he problem of detecting ‘epiphany’ thus became the problem om defining it” (5). In order to confine the discussion on ‘epiphany’ within reasonable boundaries, I will look at four major branches of the term. First, I will look at

‘epiphany’ in the Greek religion with its traces to the Asia-Minor culture, and briefly discuss the use of epiphany in Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Second, I will look at the Eucharist in the Christian tradition and examine how James Joyce was inspired by the transformation of the bread and wine in the communion to the body and blood of Jesus. Third, I will look at the Romantic branch, with the main focus on William Wordsworth and his influence on William James’s religious studies. Fourth, I will look at the 2024 volume, *Collected Epiphanies of James Joyce*. When applying ‘epiphany’ in the analysis of the novels, each chapter will focus on one aspect of epiphany. In the second chapter, discussing Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep*, I will apply the Romantic branch. In the third and fourth chapter, I will mainly use epiphanies from *Collected Epiphanies,* epiphanies that Joyce reused in most of his works.

1.3.1 Epiphany in Ancient Greek religion

In ancient Greek religion, the substantive noun *epiphaneia*’s first appearance is found in a description at Delphi in 279 BCE (*OHGR* 500). It denotes a communication from the gods to the humans. Verity Platt informs:

> Derived from the verb *epiphainein*, ‘to show’ or ‘make manifest’, *epiphaneia* emphasizes active presence, a ‘coming into appearance’ ‘upon’, ‘near’, or ‘by’ a beholder that, crucially, occurs at the god’s initiative, as opposed to terms such as ‘vision’ (*opsis*), and *enarges* (‘clear’ or ‘visible’) that focus on the subjective experience of mortal witnesses. (Koch Piettre 1996: 396-8; Platt 2011: 149-51, qtd in Platt 500)

‘Epiphany’ in Greek culture had two major functions. One, it was used in a military, strategic manner, where it revealed “the forms (*eidea*) or authority (*dynamis*) of the gods, and where epiphanies were used to promote political alliances through claims of “divine authority” (Platt 496, 499). Georgia Petridou calls this the “cult context” (2); these epiphanies were used to validate social and religious authority. Two, it was used in a personal way, where an individual, often signaling someone with a special status, experienced the gods communicating directly with the human, “face to face” (Platt 493), rather than through signs that acquired interpretations by religious authorities. Petridou reports on the dual nature of ‘epiphanies’, they may be sensorial, including sight, hearing, smelling, or intellectual, where the perceiver is aware without physically seeing or hearing anything. (2) Consequently, being

multi-sensory phenomena and characterized by an often unsettling and fluid nature, 'epiphanies' often generated cognitive dissonance (Platt 495). In the Minoan religion, as in Ancient Greek religion, a bird is added to figures to denote their divinity and 'epiphany' (18), such as Athena often appearing as a bird. In *The Odyssey* Athena appears as a young girl (Book IX), a shepherd (XIII), a tall maiden (XIII), a sparrow (XXII), and Mentor (XXIV) (Kim 8). Because of the many varied disguises, it created some confusion as to whether the perceived apparition was indeed a god, as Odysseus remarks to Athena: "(…) Goddess, even the smartest man may find it hard to recognize you. You disguise yourself in so many ways" (Homer 13.312-315). Platt notes that 'epiphanies' in the Homeric epic are characterized by "disguise, metamorphosis, and verbal ambiguity" (495). Thus, they are subject to interpretation. This ambiguity is present in the modernist 'epiphanies' as well, and therefore open to various interpretations.

1.3.2 Epiphany in the Eucharist

The Christian ritual of the Eucharist seems to be of great importance to Joyce. In *Stephen Hero*, the eponymous protagonist actively seeks inspiration through this religious theme: "Phrases came to him asking to have themselves explained. He said to himself: "I must wait for the Eucharist to come to me" (36). The Eucharist seems to be both the source of inspiration and the source of interpretation. Moreover, in order to tap into this source, there is a need for stillness and contemplation: "He spent days and nights hammering noisily as he built a house of silence for himself wherein he might await his Eucharist" (ibid.). In what way did Joyce himself view the Eucharist as important? It seems to be directly connected to his work as a writer. In *My Brother's Keeper*, Stanislaus Joyce reports a talk with his brother, where James Joyce compares the Eucharist's transformation of spirit into matter to the creative process of an artist:

> - Don't you think, said he reflectively, choosing his words without haste, there is a certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass and what I am trying to do? I mean that I am trying in my poems to give people some kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life of its own . . . for their mental, moral, and spiritual uplift, he concluded glibly. (103-4)

Florence Walzl seeks to find Joyce's interest in the Eucharist and how he uses the concept in his own writing and creative process. First, she traces the term within the Christian tradition, and finds that in the early Christian period, "epiphaneia" denoted a "manifestation of a hidden divinity either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power" (436), which is clearly adopted from the Greek tradition. In addition, some of the main rituals in the Christian Eucharist, The Liturgy of the Epiphany Season, are borrowed from ancient Greek religion. One of these is the "epiclesis," *invocation*, where the gods were called. In the Ancient Mass liturgies it was a ritual which "besought God the Father through the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Jesus" (437). This ritual, Walzl informs, is an act of transubstantiation (ibid.). Walzl suggests that by adopting the term 'epiphany', Joyce believed that the "artist's creative act was analogous to the Eucharist change effected by the priest" (437). She points to how Stephen in *Portrait* regards the writer as "a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (*Portrait* 240). Walzl continues, "It also refers specifically to the feast of the Epiphany, 6 January" (ibid.). Walzl clarifies the two terms 'epiclesis' and 'epiphanies': "The epiclesis is the creative process; the epiphanies, the resulting manifestations" (437). Thus, in the Eucharist, the priest first effects the transubstantiation, then offers the divine communion to "the laity" (ibid.). In Walzl's analogy, Joyce is the priest who transforms an experience of godlike insights into art, which then people may take part in, "second-hand," so to speak. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen uses Aquinas' theory of "integrity, wholeness, symmetry and radiance" as the requirements for beauty (217). Following this, he claims that recognizing an object as "one integral thing" is the doorway to experience its essence, which leads to epiphany: "Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany" (217, 218). Walzl comments on how Joyce seems to have been inspired by "the popular association of the Feast of the Epiphany" in which "the star which symbolized the spiritual illumination that led the Magi to the Christ child" (436).

MacDuff has come to a different conclusion than Walzl. Having studied Stephen's aesthetics of epiphany and the manuscript of epiphanies, MacDuff purports that "for Joyce, an epiphany is not a revelation of God, nature, or the mind but of the human spirit embodied in language" (MacDuff 133). Though I concede that for Joyce, epiphanies were manifestations of the human spirit, I still insist that Walzl is right in assuming that the mystery of the Eucharist was important to Joyce. He saw, I would argue, the mystery of the Eucharist as a symbol of the

work of an artist, not of transmuting bread and wine into Jesus's body and blood, but to reveal the mystery of our daily experience.

1.3.3 Epiphany in Romanticism

'Epiphany' has many definitions and many faces. Moreover, it has, as mentioned, many roots. One of these we find in James's *The Varieties.* At a time of spiritual crisis, *Varieties* offered a study of religious sentiment based in a psychological perspective. James proposed a division of the "religious field," where on one side lies the "institutional," on the other "personal religion" (*Varieties* 29). According to James, the institutional branch consisted of "[w]orship and sacrifice, (…) theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization," making it into an "art of winning the favor of the gods" (ibid.). While it does not dismiss God, personalized religion is not dependent upon outer definitions of any deity. Furthermore, there are no intermediaries in the transaction: "The relation goes direct from heart to heart, from soul to soul, between man and his maker" (ibid.). The study, held as a series of lectures in 1901-02 at the University of Edinburgh, stimulated scholarly and popular debates. Graham Jensen sees James's contribution as important, both to modernist literature and as a new way to view religion:

> *Varieties* (…) came to serve as a touchstone for prominent writers across multiple generations, religious orientations and literary movements; its notion of 'personal' as opposed to 'institutional' religion in particular seems to have anticipated, and even helped spur, the widespread privatization of religion that sociologists have routinely associated with the mid twentieth century. (250)

In the 1902 study, James discusses conversion, repentance, mysticism, saintliness, and "the sick soul" (125), and he offers accounts of actual, personal experiences. Taddei argues that James's work might have inspired modernists in portraying their "ecstatic moments" and spurred the "popularity of epiphanies" in modernist literature (40). Sharon Kim, in her discussion on literary epiphany, seeks to investigate "discursive superstructures" by analyzing the "rhetoric of spirituality" (26). Jensen argues that the personal accounts in *Varieties* provide "compelling, ready-made templates" for such discursive structures. Ashton Nichols argues that modernist epiphanies, defined as "elevations of ordinary events into moments of extraordinary significance," derive from Wordsworth (xii, qtd. in Jensen 251). Jensen agrees, suggesting that Romantic literature was one of the main influences for James, in particular the

Wordsworthian sensibility and description of exalted experience in nature. James, an avid reader of Wordsworth (Leary 24), compares Wordsworth's words to that of a spiritual experience whereby the intellect ceases:

> To religious persons of every shade of doctrine moments come when the world, as it is, seems so divinely orderly, and the acceptance of it by the heart so rapturously complete, that intellectual questions vanish; nay the intellect itself is hushed to sleep, - as Wordsworth says, "thought is not; in enjoyment it expires." Ontological emotion so fills the soul that ontological speculation can no longer overlap it and put her girdle of interrogation-marks round existence. (1905, 74)

In *Varieties*, James also argues that the individualized religious experience has "its root and centre" in mysticism (379). He calls these experiences "mystical states of consciousness" (ibid.). Recognizing that the word "mystic" has numerous vague and ambiguous connotations, James proposes four marks of mystical experience; "ineffability," "noetic quality," "transiency," and "passivity" (380-81). "Ineffability" implies that the state "cannot be imparted or transferred" to an outsider, just as someone deaf cannot hear a symphony (380). "Noetic quality" points to the fact that mystical states are "revelations" and therefore "full of significance and importance" by the knowledge they convey (ibid.). The third mark, "transiency," is, as the word indicates, recognized by its impermanence (ibid.). Lastly, "passivity" describes the sensation where something happens to the person and their "own will [is] in abeyance" (ibid.). Moreover, James points to how crucial literature is in evoking a mystical state: "Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young" (383). These sentiments of expressing elevated feelings, often in nature or alluding to Greek or Latin literary works, are found in many Romantic writers. There is a shift in modernism, from the high-brow to the low-brow, from the exalted to the plebeian, what Jensen calls a "fixation on trivial occupations" (261).

Jensen, in his article "William James, Mysticism and the Modernist Epiphany," explores the research into the term the last decade, and mentions Taddei, who has looked at the connection between the language of mystical experience and conversion narratives that is found in *Varieties*, and how they are "in many ways indistinguishable" from the epiphanies found in literary modernism (250-251). Thus, Jensen argues, 'epiphany,' originating in a religious framework, has made its return in modernist literature to a "religious and literary rhetoric": "(…) the modernist epiphany serves as a compelling – and crucial – piece of evidence of how

religious and literary rhetoric remained inextricably linked in a period frequently associated with processes of secularization" (252). Taddei argues that epiphanies establish an atmosphere of ambiguity where multiple and even contradictory interpretations are possible. She backs her argument by outlining three features that are characteristic of modernist epiphanies:

> First, they participate in a phenomenological attempt to rediscover lived experience as a source of partial but reliable knowledge. Second, they are a result of the 'inward turn' and of the curiosity for the psyche's deeper regions that are manifested through the logic of emotions. Third, they re-actualize mystical experiences as conduits to an authoritative insight that relies on unconscious structures to achieve a comprehensive view of life. (i)

Clearly, 'epiphany,' described and defined differently by various critics, is and will always be an elusive term. However, no matter how illusory the term, it invites a new approach to reading. As Taddei suggests, "(…) in reframing ambiguity and indeterminacy as spaces of creation and choice, epiphanies thus bring out a lesser known, life-affirming but not naïve vein of modernist inspiration" (ibid.).

1.3.4 James Joyce's Epiphanies

What is the relationship between epiphany and language? I will look at the question with the segment in *Stephen Hero* that leads to Stephen's definition of epiphany. While walking one evening through Dublin, pondering on the deceptive nature of women, a "trivial incident" (216) calls Stephen's attention: "A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis. A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area" (ibid.). Stephen goes nearer and listens to "the following fragment of colloquy":

> The Young Lady – (drawling indiscreetly) . . . O, yes . . . I was . . . at the . . . cha . . . pel . . .
> The Young Gentleman – (inaudibly) . . . I . . . (again inaudibly) . . . I . . .
> The Young Lady – (softly) . . . O . . . but you're . . . ve . . . ry . . . wick . . . ed . . . (ibid.)

This “trivial incident” becomes for Stephen an ‘epiphany.’ As such, he sees it as a moment of revelation: they encapsulate in a glimpse that which was on his mind. The scene in front of him becomes like a tableau, a still photo, encapsulating all the thoughts that has raced through his mind. Seeing the importance of such an incident, Stephen perceives that it is a writer’s duty to notice and put these epiphanies into words: “He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (ibid.). Hence, in Stephen’s understanding, ‘epiphany’ is a “sudden spiritual manifestation” (ibid.).

At the onset of the now famous definition of ‘epiphany’ in *Stephen Hero*, Stephen ponders the idea of “collecting many such moments in a book of epiphanies” (216). In fact, Joyce had already written a manuscript by 1904, called “epiphanies,” which was unpublished in his lifetime. These epiphanies were published in Buffalo in 1956, in Cornell in 1965 (MacDuff 2), and finally, in 2024, with the title *Collected Epiphanies of James Joyce: a Critical Edition.* Fourteen of these original epiphanies are reused in *Stephen Hero*, and twelve in *Portrait* (102). Commenting on the recycling of the epiphanies, McDuff argues that the “ever-varying reception of the same epiphanic structure” (103) is a characteristic of Joyce: “Borrowing Derrida’s term, the recycling of the former in the latter can be regarded as Joyce’s “signature”” (Derrida 1992, 33-75, qtd. in ibid.). The dates of the epiphanies are unclear, but in all likelihood they were written between 1900 and 1903 (*JE* 6). They are short, resembling “fragments of colloquy” (ibid.). The epiphanies consist of “frequent ellipses, exclamations, false starts, and unfinished sentences” (ibid.), indicating that they have been transcribed in the moment of a revelation. *JE* emphases the revelatory, yet hidden aspect of Joyce’s epiphanies, stating that there is a “sense of something concealed that is hinted at but never openly stated,” giving them a “mysterious significance” (7). There is an ongoing discussion regarding the tension between the “epiphany as a literary *device* of revelation and as a literary *genre* of prose sketches” (33). In this thesis, I focus on epiphany as a literary device of revelation in my reading of *Sleep*. When reading *Portrait* and “Telemachia,” the focus is on Stephen’s epiphanies as both literary devices of revelation and as literary genres of sketches.

1.4 Heresy in Judaism and Christianity

As with 'religion', the term 'heresy' has changed significantly during the last two millenniums. Thus, in *Longman*, we find the following two definitions: "a belief that disagrees with the official principles of a particular religion: *"He was executed for heresy*" and "a statement that disagrees with what a group of people believe to be right: *To come to work without a shirt and tie was considered heresy*" (2014).

The historical concept of heresy is closely linked to orthodox religion. In Judaism, heresy is defined as "a departure from orthodox belief" (*JR* 317). According to *JR*, there are "various appellations" to name heretics: one of them is *minim*, or 'sectarians,' which refer to those who depart the "norms of Judaism" (ibid.). This term applies to "a multitude of sinners," which includes "Gnostics" and "Judeo-Christians" (ibid.). In Judaism, heretics are normally not punished in their lifetimes. However, they "forfeit their share in the world to come," meaning that their punishment is "in the hands of God" (ibid.). In *Sleep*, the Prophet Isaiah will prove to be a heretic by claiming to see God in his imagination.

In the first three centuries following Jesus's death, numerous texts were written about him and his teachings. There were divergent views on who Jesus was, what his words indicated, and especially his relationship to God. In order to create a coda for the Christian Church, the first Council of Nicaea was held in AD 325, with over eight hundred bishops, and the first Christian coda was agreed upon and written down. This was the first of the codices of the scripture, a process that led to the canonical Bible. Those who had divergent views were declared heretics. One of these free thinkers was a Christian priest named Arius (AD 250-336), whom we will come back to in the reading of the "Telemachia"-section of *Ulysses*. According to Christopher Laws, Arius was a "popular Alexandrian presbyter who denied the consubstantiality of God the Father and Christ the Son, arguing that while God was eternal, there was a point in time which Christ did not exist" (14). Arius gained a substantial group of followers, and his interpretation of the early Christian texts was named Arianism. By being a leader of a religious group, Arius was declared a heresiarch. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the heresiarchs, called "arch-heretics," are placed in hell:

> "The arch-heretics are here, accompanied
> By every sect their followers; and much more,
> Than thou believest, tombs are freighted: like
> With like is buried; and the monuments

Are different in degrees of heat." This said,
He to the right hand turning, on we pass'd
Betwixt the afflicted and the ramparts high. (*Hell,* Canto IX)

As we will see in the "Telemachia" chapter, Arius was not only punished after his death, he was also exiled from the orthodox church. The manner of his death varies, but the accounts all emphasize his sin in declaring a belief that clashed with the dogma of the early Catholic Church.

2 *Call It Sleep* by Henry Roth

2.1 Introduction

Call It Sleep (1934) tells the story of the protagonist, a Galician Jewish immigrant, David Schearl, during a span of two years. *Sleep* is a bildungsroman, "a novel that recounts the development (psychological and sometimes spiritual) of an individual from childhood to adolescence to maturity, to the point at which the protagonist recognizes his or her place and role in the world" (*BG* 39).The story opens with a prologue, where eighteen-month-old David arrives at Ellis Island with his mother, Genya. His father, Albert, has arrived two years prior and awaits his wife and son. The novel opens in 1907, the peak year of immigration from Europe:

> During the year 1907 five thousand was fixed as the maximum number of immigrants that could be examined at Ellis Island in one day; yet during the spring of that year more than fifteen thousand immigrants arrived at the port of New York in a single day. (Howe, 45)

By contemporary critics, *Sleep* was praised as a "great contribution to American Literature" (Wirth-Nesher 1996, 2). With the focus on the protagonist David Schearl, Alfred Hayes claimed that the novel "is as brilliant as Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, but with a wider scope, a richer emotion, a deeper realism" (ibid.). Leslie Fiedler agreed; "No one has reproduced so sensitively the terror of family life in the imagination of a child caught between two cultures" (3). *Sleep* might have had the fate of most novels, fading into oblivion with the passage of time. But in 1961 the novel was republished and sold a million copies. *Sleep* came back with a triumph; it became the first paperback edition to be reviewed on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review* (3).

As mentioned, David's odyssey starts on the first page of the prologue when he arrives at Ellis Island with his mother, and it ends on the last page of the novel, where David experiences the "strangest triumph," coupled with the "strangest acquiescence" (*Sleep* 441). The main story shows David from six to eight years of age. David's odyssey moves from entrapment to freedom, made possible by his growing inner courage. Furthermore, it is marked by an ever-increasing sphere: from the inception within his family; to exploring

buildings and streets of New York; to encounters with non-Jewish people; to attending the cheder; and to experience an inner spiritual knowingness through his epiphanies.

Sleep is structured after the Pentateuch*,* or the *Five Books of Moses,* which tells the story of the Jewish emancipation from slavery. There was by the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century a mythic connection made concerning Jewish immigration to the United States. After 1880, when as a result of the prejudicial laws and pogroms, the New World "echoed Jewish beliefs about a promised land" (Campbell, Kean 69). Titled *The Promised Land* (1912), Mary Antin's book reflects this notion. She saw Jewish immigration as a potential of liberation for the Jews, a "new birth," where the Jewish cultural heritage would fuse with the New World and mold into a new hereafter: "Mine is the whole majestic past, and mine is the shining future" (Antin 364; qtd. Campbell 69). In *Sleep*, Antin's utterance is challenged. Opening with the words "I pray thee ask no questions this is that Golden Land," the novel raises questions about the conflicts of immigrant life, in Nancy Rosenbloom words, "the demands of assimilation and the search for spiritual nourishment in the modern world" (379). In this thesis, I will read *Sleep* as the story of a boy who liberates himself from the religious heritage of his parents and finds his own, new home. I will frame this story as "a spiritual odyssey," defined as "a series of experiences that teach you something about yourself or life" *(Longman).*

I will look at David's epiphanies through the lens of the Romantic tradition. I will compare and contrast them with the epiphanies and lyrics of Wordsworth. The definition of 'epiphany' I will use in this is the one provided by James as "mystical states of consciousness" (*Varieties*, 379) in the Romantic tradition. Wordsworth's epiphanies are focused on the sublime and the revelatory. However, as mentioned in chapter one, in modernism a new element is added which was not present in Romantism; ambiguity, experimental texts, open to various, often contradictory, interpretations and reading. Furthermore, the analysis will examine how David's mother and father are part of the religious and cultural heritage. At the cheder, David learns about the prophet Isaiah who has an epiphany where he sees God. This sets up an impetus within him to find the light that Isaiah saw. David sees this light, which makes him a heretic by the standard of Jewish religion. By declaring his epiphanies, David becomes a heretic in the eyes of the rabbi. According to *JR*, 'heresy' in Judaism is "a departure from orthodox belief" (318). The heretic will not be punished in this life. Their punishment will come after their death; it will be "in the hands of God" (ibid.). In this thesis I define a 'heretic' as someone who stands up against religious authority. My claim is that

David's epiphanies give him access to his inner spiritual knowingness which enables him to set himself free from institutional religion and his cultural heritage. Moreover, through his epiphanies, David gains a sense of spiritual sovereignty which enables him to oppose religious, orthodox claims of heresy. The benefit of analyzing *Sleep* through the lenses of epiphany and heresy is twofold. First, it reveals the subjective nature of religion portrayed in the novel. Second, it demonstrates the historical shift in modernism, where the individual is challenging the orthodox truths.

2.2 The Cellar

On his journey toward inner knowledge, David encounters his own fears. "A timid but inquisitive child" (Rosenbloom 385), David finds himself in situations that prove challenging. After a quarrel with the neighborhood boys, Davis runs away and hides in a cellar, only to be confronted with his worst fear, darkness: "It was horrible, the dark. The rats lived here, the hordes of nightmare, the wobbly faces, the crawling and misshapen things" (*Sleep* 92). The first part of the book, named "The Cellar" deals with darkness in many aspects of David's life, and shows, in Alfred Kazin's words, "the underground side of life – physical, aggressive, sexual" (*Sleep* xvii). Annie, a crippled neighborhood girl, lures him to "play bad" with her, and mysteriously tells him where babies come from: "de knish" (53).

> *Knish?*
>
> "Between the legs. Who puts id in is de poppa. De poppa's god de petzel. Yaw de poppa." She giggled stealthily and took his hand. He could feel her guiding it under her dress, then through a pocket-like flap. Her skin under his palm. Revolted, he drew back. "You must!" she insisted, tugging his hand. "Yuh ast me!"
>
> "No!" (ibid.)

David reacts with terror. The sexual experience is dramatic for six-year-old David: "she didn't know as he knew how the whole world could break into a thousand little pieces, all buzzing, all whining, and no one hearing them and no one seeing them except himself" (55). Kazin argues that David, after this experience, is now "a fallen creature, out of Eden, who must confront the terrible but fascinating city by himself" (xvii-xviii). While I contend that David is marked by the experience, I fail to see the religious connection. Instead, I see the incident

as a scary one for a child for whom the sexual curiosity has yet to be awakened. Thus, as an unknown and unexplored aspect of life, the sexual encounter creates fear in David. As an overly sensitive child, David repeatedly sees the world as frightening. He appears as feeble and needy on the first pages, retreating meagerly to his mother's bosom.

Even in his home, there is an intruder that induces qualms in David: Luter, a fellow "countryman" (29) of his father. Luter seems to affect both his mother and his father in ways that David doesn't understand, and therefore he despises him. Regarding Luter and his mother, David suspects something sinister is going on, which he likens to his own experience of "playing bad" with Annie. While out on the street, David sees Luter walking toward his house. With Annie's experience fresh in mind, David, in horror, imagines why Luter visits his mother: "He was going to make her play now. Like Annie. In the closet!" (89) Luter himself picks up on David's apprehension toward him, commenting that "I have never seen a child cling so to his mother" (41). David is torn between two emotions at home; love toward his mother and his "two fears, the dark and his father" (240). His journey toward the light requires him moving away from his father's dominance and abuse. Thus, David's odyssey starts at home where his father is the first authoritative, threatening force. Murray Baumgarten, who acknowledges that David's journey is a "Jewish odyssey" where he "wanders through the city in search of his own identity" (34), also contends that David seeks to redeem his parents: "he has taken upon himself (…) to comprehend and transform the imprisoning history of his psyche and his parents and, by a heroic act, attempt to heal their familial wounds (7). While I do not deny that David's actions may have the effect of bringing his parents together and thus "heal(ing) their familial wounds," I assert that six-year-old David's prime concern at the outset of his odyssey is of a self-preserving nature. He tries to elude his father's volatile behavior. When David learns that his father "near brained" a man "wid a hammer" (25), he is in shock over the harshness of his father, and he is "terrified at having to confront the reality" (27). Being weary of his father, David seeks to comprehend his manners and behaviors. He notices that Joe Luter has a curious effect on him:

> Why did Luter only need to say, "I don't like the earth. It's for peasants," to make his father laugh, to make his father answer, "*I think* I do. *I think* when you come out of a house and step on the bare earth among the fields you're the same man you were when you were inside the house. But when you step out on pavements, you're someone else. You can feel your face change. Hasn't that happened to you?" And all that Luther needed to say was, "Yes. You're right, Albert," and his father would take a deep breath

> of satisfaction. It was strange. Why had no one else ever succeeded in doing that? Why not his mother? Why not himself? No one except Luter. (31-2)

David's father finds in Luter a compatriot with whom he can share nostalgic bucolic memories of rural Europe. By reminiscing on those memories, David's father feels at home and at ease, and his identity, shaped and intertwined with traditional Jewish culture, is not threatened. However, in New York City, Albert's identity suffers. As a first-generation immigrant, Albert sees the metropolitan city as a hostile, frigid environment that does not approve of him. As a second-generation immigrant, David sees the city as a new world that seems both scary and enticing. As Ruth Wisse observes, "Immigration is humiliating for adults because they are forced back into the position of children, and required to relearn what cost them so much the first time" (62). For the father, New York City strips away his cultural identity and forces him to create a new identity, one that will be a fragmentation of two cultures. For the son, when he manages to conquer his fears, New York City will prove to be a canvas where he can paint his own image. An image that reflects his own spiritual sovereignty, free from the traditional rural community.

2.3 David Makes His Own Path

Being a bildungsroman, *Sleep* portrays David's growth and maturation process by showing his increasing independence. At the outset of his journey toward spiritual sovereignty, David has a startling discovery of the world. Being alone in the kitchen in Brownsville, six-year-old David is thirsty and unable to reach the water faucet on his own. Saddened, he ascertains that "this world had been created without thought of him" (*Sleep* 17). This sets up an impetus within him to make the world his own place. He does this by asking questions, both of a metaphysical and of an ontological nature. As for the first, David wonders about the difference between being awake and dreaming: "If you couldn't hear the sound of your own feet and couldn't see anything either, how could you be sure you were there and not dreaming?" (20). As for the latter, David asks inquisitive questions about the structure of buildings in the big city: "Where did the water come from that lurked so secretly in the curve of the brass? Where did it go, gurgling in the drain?" (ibid.) Moreover, the streets of the city are filled with exciting artifacts, inviting an adventurous explorer. Thus, David collects "whatever striking odds and ends he finds in the street" (35). The objects he stumbles upon that interest him must have something striking about them, like "the way in which the link of

a chain was worn or the thread on a bolt" (ibid.). He keeps his treasures in a box in the pantry (ibid.). One of them is a "perforated metal cork" used by barbers. David discovers the many uses of it: "One could blow through it, peep through it, it could be strung on a thread" (36). David uses his senses to orient himself in the new world, slowly making it his own.

One winter morning proves to be a turning point in David's search to forge his own path. Passing the cellar door with his heart racing, with still some apprehension of the dark lurking beneath, David enters the street and discovers, to his surprise, an unperturbed world. The streets are filled with newly fallen snow: "The silent white street waited for him" (58). Then, as he turns the corner, he sees the opportunity to create his own path. Before him, there is a group of children crossing the street. In David's eyes, they are all acting according to group behavior as they tread a "beaten path in the snow" (59), whereas he sees another option, to walk onto "the untrodden white of the gutter" (ibid.). Seeing the opportunity to make this world his own, David watches the untouched snow in front of him and challenges himself: "Must cross" (59). Then, as he measures the height of the curb, another voice appears in his interior monologue: "Better not" (ibid.). A courageous voice challenges the fearful one, declaring what is at stake if he walks onto the untrodden snow: "It would be his own, all his own path" (ibid.). The brave voice wins and David jumps into the snow, "high as his knees" (ibid.). Although shaken after the incident, David marvels at "how miraculously clean" it is, "whiter than anything he knew, whiter than anything, whiter" (ibid.). This is the first personal victory on David's odyssey toward independence that leads to spiritual sovereignty. He has dared to cross where no one had crossed.

Moving from Brownsville to the Lower East Side is a new crossing for David on his journey in his search for inner spiritual knowingness, with new challenges. Baumgarten suggests that "city life offers a setting for the exploration of the historical ambiguities of Jewish experience" (1). In Brownsville, David lives in a mostly coherent Jewish community. By moving to Manhattan, he enters the cultural melting pot of New York City. The "ambiguities of Jewish experience" refers to the double experience of freedom from cultural tradition, which is both potentially threatening and liberating. As a Jew in New York City at the cusp of last century, David would be a minority, typically living in the poorer parts on the Lower East Side. The Christian demographic was the predominant one. Baumgarten suggests another aspect of moving to the city. He claims that "in the urban geography of New York" (5), the bridge in *Sleep* takes on "an eidetic function – as image, symbol, and historical referent" (ibid.). Baumgarten claims that in Brownsville, David is "his mother's son," thus he is

"limited by his mother's experience of the city in terms of her village past" and the identity she can offer him. By crossing the bridge to Manhattan, Baumgarten claims that "David moves from psychological processes through geographical space into the religious encounter that will determine the possibilities of his life" (6). Though I agree that moving to Manhattan signifies an important shift in David's life, I do not see the shift as one from a "psychological process" to a "religious encounter." Rather, I see David's journey as a continuous, self-determined voyage toward individual sovereignty from his cultural heritage, both of family and religion. Even his mother, although she is loving and nurturing, is part of a cultural authority.

After realizing that the world was not created to appease him, David sees his mother in the doorway, looking "as tall as a tower" (*Sleep* 17). Now, a year later, David feels more at ease. He has made his own path in the snow and he is ready to extend his world. The opportunity presents itself in the hallway of the new building the family moves into. In this house there is no cellar door. David's family now lives on the top floor, and David longs to explore what lies beyond the roof door: "There was a frosted skylight over the roofstair housing that diffused a cloudy yellow glow at morning and a soft grey haze at afternoon" (144). With connotations of a mystical, glowing world beyond, the door awakens David's curiosity and religious sentiment. He notices that the door emits a "luminous silence" that is "static and embalmed" (144). He ponders whether to check if the roof door is locked, but wavers. For one, it's high up. Second, the roof door seems to hold a "mysterious vacancy" (ibid.) that deters him. Finally, there is something about those stairs leading up to the roof door. They are different from commons stairs:

> Common stairs were beveled to an edge, hollowed to an aching through by the tread of many feet, blackened beyond washing by the ground-in dirt of streets. But these that led up to the roof still had a *pearliness* mingled with their grey. Each slab was still *square and clean*. No palms of sliding hands had buffed the wrinkled paint from off their banisters. No palms had oiled them tusk-smooth and green as an ax-helve. They were *inviolable* those stairs, *guarding the light and the silence*. (144; emphasis added)

The stairs to the roof have a "pearliness" about them; they are "square and clean." Although this indirect discourse is not narrated in David's vernacular, the narration reveals his sensitivity to his surroundings and how he applies meaning to what he sees. The word "pearliness" has connotations of aesthetic beauty, and also of wealth, both of which are not

part of David's everyday life as a poor immigrant on the Lower East Side. Thus, "pearliness" indicates affiliation with another realm. The stairs, being "square and clean," signal beauty and a quality of superiority; no one has walked on them. Like the "untrodden snow" David has dared to cross, the stairs are untouched by dirty feet. The word "inviolable" speaks to the stairs' inalienable qualities; they are absolute and sovereign. These stairs do not function as mundane stairs. On the contrary, they have a mission, that of "guarding the light." The word *guard* implies protection and defense. Thus, with connotations of beauty, wealth, and sovereignty, the stairs seem to protect a mystical realm. Unlike the cellar door in Brownsville which "bulged with darkness" (20), the roof door seems to promise light. Although enthralled by the stairs, David is still apprehensive. It will take some time until he is ready to take the leap into the mysterious world on the roof. Nonetheless, he has reached a crucial stage on his odyssey. He has found a possible entrance to the sacred. In Manhattan, the urban skyscape, where the old religious heritage slowly dwindles and fades away, David has found a possible access to his own spiritual world.

2.4 Religion and Language

On his journey toward spiritual sovereignty, David will learn a new language: Hebrew. David already knows of three languages: English, Yiddish, and Polish, yet none of them fully represent who he is. They are, in Mikhail M. Bakhtin's words, the language of "others." Bakhtin proposes in "The Discourse of the Novel" that "a passive understanding of linguistic meaning is no understanding at all, it is only the abstract aspect of meaning" (1016). Within a language, Bakhtin professes, there is a constant interplay of different languages distributed by factors like age, occupation, and social position. He terms this phenomenon 'heteroglossia' (1002). *Sleep* demonstrates how language serves as both a unifying and a divisive force. Furthermore, Bakhtin speaks of centripetal and centrifugal forces pulling in different directions: the first toward centralization or standardization; the latter in the direction of dispersed or decentralized perspectives. In *Sleep*, the language of English is the centripetal language, while Polish and Yiddish are centrifugal languages. When it comes to Hebrew, it can be viewed as both centripetal and centrifugal. In the secular sense, Hebrew is the language of traditional Jewish culture and is thus a centrifugal language in New York City. However, within the Jewish religious community, Hebrew is a centripetal language as it is the language of orthodoxy, the standardized, institutional religion. Thus, David lives in a

heteroglot world where he juggles between several languages. English is the language of the city. Yiddish is the spoken language he uses at home with his parents. Polish is a language he only knows on a rudimentary level as it is a language his mother uses for adult talk with his aunt, thus excluding him. Thus, the languages are identified with religion and tradition. Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic are languages of his Jewish culture, while English signifies the language of "the Christian 'other'" (Wirth-Nesher 2005, 80).

In addition, the text David learns in the cheder is *lashon-hakodesh,* literally meaning "holiness" or "holy language," of Hebrew and Aramaic. *Lashon-hakodesh* refers not to the Hebrew language in general, only to biblical Hebrew. Thus, *lashon-hakodesh* is a sacred and holy language, and for Jews "an immovable basis of study" (ibid.). For East-European Jews, Hebrew was the language of writing, while Yiddish was the oral language, used for common daily communication. David speaks Yiddish but is, until he begins at the cheder, ignorant of biblical Hebrew. According to Wirth-Nesher, "For David Shearl, as for other immigrant children, Hebrew and Aramaic sound foreign and unintelligible despite their central role in his home culture" (ibid.). In *Sleep*, the language signifies the different strata of society; "Yiddish serves [David] at home, English assaults him on the street, and Hebrew and Aramaic beckon to him as mysterious, sacred tongues that represent mystical power and that initiate him into Jewishness as textuality as opposed to the ethnic Jewishness that marks his street life" (ibid.). Moreover, David's pronunciation of Yiddish gets him into trouble. While living in Brownsville, he gets lost in the streets because of his unintelligible pronunciation of his street's name as "Boddeh Stritt" (*Sleep* 100). Although David is guided safely to the local police station and treated well, he is traumatized by the event. He feels disempowered by his failure to be understood by non-Jews. Living with this plethora of languages in which each language is compartmentalized to regions of his life, David's life is one of modernism, where traditions are scattered and where religion no longer is the common denominator. Language itself is fragmented, leading to a fragmented experience of life. Lisa Naomi Mulman has picked up on this. She suggests that "the Judaic tradition would in many ways exemplify the fragmented consciousness and reverence for the text that are the hallmarks of modernist writing" (6). Furthermore, she points to James Joyce, who expresses this notion in *Finnegans Wake*: "the position of the Jew was analogous to that of the 20th century writer, the fragmented voice (re)defining itself through the word" (6). In this fragmented world, David seeks to find a spiritual unity within himself.

David dives into institutional religion when he attends the cheder. He has a personal spiritual experience after learning about the prophet Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible, one that will both strengthen and challenge his inner spiritual knowingness and set him up against institutional religion. Now seven years old, David enrolls the cheder on the insistence of his father. His mother hesitates. Her connection to the Jewish tradition pertains as much to her childhood memories as to the religious doctrines. David's mother argues that David can start at a later age, like "children in America often do" (*Sleep* 210), but his father is adamant. While acknowledging that he is not much of a Jew himself, he wants David to become "at least something of a Jew" (210). Albert Schearl demands that his family blends with the city's way of life and its attire, but the Schearl family's religious heritage is not up for debate. On the contrary, Jewishness is what defines him, and by extension, his family. Thus, David's mother enrolls her son in the Jewish education program. Arriving at the cheder, David observes the rabbi, Reb Yidel Pankower, an old untidy man: "His trousers were baggy and stained (…). The knot of his tie, which was nearer one ear than the other, hung away from his soiled collar. (…) Beneath his skull cap, his black hair was closely cropped" (212). Recoiling at the sight and dreading their coming interactions, David tells himself that he must accept his "fate" (212). At the cheder, he learns to read the holy Hebrew language, *lashon-hakodesh:*

> For a while, David listened intently to the sound of the words. It was Hebrew, he knew, the same mysterious language his mother used before the candles, the same his father used when he read from a book during the holidays – and that time before drinking wine. Not Yiddish, Hebrew. God's tongue, the rabbi said. If you knew it, then you could talk to God. Who was he? He would learn about him now. (213)

With the recitation of the unintelligible words in *lashon-hakodesh*, the learning is more of a ritual than internalizing meanings and making the language his own. Thus, *lashon-hakodesh* becomes a secret, hidden element which emphasizes and heightens the message that institutional religion is veiled in mystery. Furthermore, to get access to this mysterious, religious realm, one needs to partake in a ritual controlled by the Jewish priesthood, through hundreds of years of tradition.

David's meeting with institutional religion is directly linked to his mother and father, each of them playing a different role, where language is the defining feature. Yiddish is the mother tongue, spoken at home. It is colored by how David defines himself to his mother. The language is simple and conveys an immediacy. Thus, in Yiddish, God is "bright". Hebrew is

the father tongue, as it is connected to the patriarchy. It is the language of the institutional religion with secret words that must be vigorously studied and decoded. When he is learning Hebrew, David associates the words with patriarchal penalty: "First you read, Adonoi elahenoo abababa, and then you say, And Moses said you musn't, and then you read some more abababa and then you say, musn't eat in the traife butcher store" (*Sleep* 226). David connects the unintelligible words he pronounces with his mouth, to the Jewish dietary laws, such as the prohibition of eating pork: "Big brown bags hang down from the hooks" (ibid.). By looking closer at the sounds David learns, Wirth-Nesher points to another connection to the father. She states that "David moves from the words that denote God ("Adonoi elahenoo" meaning "The Lord Our God"), to the word for 'father' (aba), to the gibberish of an infant using his lips to stop the flow of air from his mouth (bababa)" (85). Thus, with the commencement of phonological awareness, David learns that the language of Hebrew is connected to institutional religion, beginning with his father's authority, which includes a list of rules and prohibitions. In contrast to the association of Hebrew with male authority, Yiddish, the mother tongue, is connected to a simple form of holiness. Thus, by learning Hebrew, David makes a break with his mother and moves beyond the child-mother symbiotic dynamic and enters into the religious patriarchal world.

2.5 The Prophet Isaiah's and David's Epiphany and Heresy

David studies the holy *lashon-hakodesh* with intense care. When the rabbi finally reveals that he will translate the lines the class has memorized, David gets excited. Now, finally, he will learn how to talk to God: "Not Yiddish, Hebrew. God's tongue, the rabbi had said. If you knew it, then you could talk to God" (213). The rabbi reveals the text of Isaiah's epiphany when he saw God, face to face: "'God was sitting on his high throne, high in heaven and in his temple – Understand?' He pointed upward" (227). The story the rabbi reads is from the *Book of Isaiah*. Here, Isaiah recounts an epiphany he had where God appeared in front of him:

> In the year of the death of King Uzziah, I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne, and His lower extremity filled the Temple. Seraphim stood above for Him, six wings, six wings to each one; with two he would cover his face, and with two he would cover his feet, and with two he would fly. And one called to the other and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." And the doorposts quaked from the voice of him who called, and the House became filled with smoke.

> And I said, “Woe is me for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and amidst a people of unclean lips I dwell, for the King, the Lord of Hosts have my eyes seen.”
>
> And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal; with tongs he had taken it from upon the altar. And he caused it to touch my mouth, and he said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity shall be removed, and your sin shall be atoned for”. (Chabad.org Isaiah 6:1-6)

Isaiah lived in the eight century BCE. He was a Jewish prophet with a “sophisticated literary style” who was active during the reigns of four kings of Judah (*JR* 356). The *Book of Isaiah* is the first of the Latter Prophets (ibid.). The line in Isaiah’s epiphany, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” is one of the Qedushah prayers where angels sing praises to God, also used in the Sanctus in Christian liturgy (ibid.). David listens intently as the rabbi dramatizes the story of Isaiah: “When Isaiah saw the Almighty in His majesty and His terrible light – ‘Woe me!’ he cried. (…) ‘My lips are unclean’” (*Sleep* 227). Isaiah was unclean, the rabbi explains, “for the Jews at that time were sinful” (ibid.). Isaiah’s lips are cleaned by the angels: “And with that coal, down he flew to Isaiah and with that coal touched his lips – Here!” (227). The rabbi stabs his fingers in the air. “You are clean!” (ibid.). Wirth-Nesher claims that the rabbi’s focus on *lips* is purposeful: “Keeping his lips clean, David knows, requires constant vigilance about ingesting food and expelling sound” (2005, 83). Moreover, “a mere slip in pronunciation can be a profanation” (85). *Lips* are connected both to the dietary laws and to profanity. Thus, David learns how the rules of the institutional religion are intimately connected to his body. Just as Isaiah had “unclean lips,” so has he if he doesn’t follow the rules. Visualizing God sitting on a chair, David talks to himself and slips into profanity: “So he got chairs, so he can sit. Gee! Sit Shit! Sh! Please God, I didn’t mean it! Please God, somebody else said it! Please!” (*Sleep* 230). Notwithstanding the doubtful aspects of Isaiah’s story, like “why did [God] want to burn Isaiah’s mouth with coal?” (230), David wants to know God’s nature. His mother informs him that God is “brighter than the day is brighter than the night” (241). David muses: “Brighter than day. That much seemed definite, seemed to conform his own belief.” (ibid.). David notices “a curious pause in himself,” as if he is waiting for “some sign” that will “forever insure his wellbeing” (221). He gets obsessed with light. At school, he studies “the sharp grids of sunlight that brindled the red wall under the fire-escapes” (222). On the morning of the first Passover night, after he has burned his “chumitz,” he is mesmerized by a light near the banks. He has an epiphany, narrated in indirect discourse:

> Minutes passed while he stared. The brilliance was hypnotic. He could not take his eyes away. (…) His spirit yielded, melted into light. In the molten sheen memories and objects overlapped. (…) And he heard the rubbing of a wash-board and the splashing suds, smelled . . . the acrid soap . . . a voice speaking words that opened like the bands of a burnished silver accordion – Brighter than day . . . Brighter . . . Sin melted into light . . . (…) Ages seemed to pass, but in spite of himself he could not move. Twice he sighed and with such depth as though he had been weeping for hours. (…) What was it he had seen? He couldn't tell now. It was as though he had seen it in another world, a world that once left could not be recalled. All that he knew about it was that it had been complete and dazzling. (247-248)

What characterizes David's first epiphany is the double consciousness, expressed in the words "In the molten sheen memories and objects overlapped." This merging of mundane and spiritual realms happens because he lets his "spirit yield." Likewise, through the merging of the two realms, his ordinary hearing and the auditory of his imagination, a voice in the mundane world becomes a "burnished silver accordion." In this passage we find James's four marks of *mystical experiences*: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity (*Varieties* 380-81). The hypnotic quality and David's statement that he "couldn't tell" what he had seen describes the ineffability. The sense that he had "seen into another world" counts for the noetic quality. His spirit, "melded into light" describes the transiency. "Ages seemed to pass, but in spite of himself he could not move" speaks to the passivity of the epiphanic experience. The passage reads like a Romantic narrative, fused with Wordsworthian sensibility and the lavish description of the exalted experience in nature. What Wordsworth called "spots of time" can be discerned here. David's experience is a dazzling one, rendering him unable to recall his thoughts. As Wordsworth notes, "thought is not, in enjoyment it expires" (qtd. in James 1905, 74). The enjoyment ends abruptly. Coming out of the epiphanic hypnosis, David has a harsh awakening to the reality of street life in New York City. He is approached by three gentile boys on the banks who questions who he is: "Yer a Jew aintchiz?" (*Sleep* 250). To avoid punishment, David denies being Jewish. He has learned by now that on the street he has to guard his cultural identity. Children in the street operate in groups according to their cultural heritage. In Wisse's words, "the process of immigration has driven a permanent wedge between the children of the street and the carriers of the heritage" (68). Being alone and of a different religion, David knows he has to play his cards wisely. He goes along with their demands. The boys trap him and lure him to the tracks, to show him "magic" (*Sleep*

252). What David is now witnessing makes him forget the predicament he is in. He is about to see God. One of the boys raps a "sheet-zinc sword" toward the tracks, "down the wide grinning lips like a tongue in an iron mouth" (253). With this sentence there is a change in the third-person narration. Rather than read this as an unreliable narrator, I interpret it as an instance of free indirect discourse, by the "narratorial framing of the thought" (*PD* 290). The words "lips," a flashback to Isaiah's epiphany, narrates David's perception of the scene. Here, and in the following passage, the objective reality of the scene is entangled with David's subjective impression:

> Power!
>
> Like a raw ripping through all the stable fibres of the earth, power, gigantic, fetterless, thudded into day! And light, unleashed, *terrific light* bellowed out of iron lips. The street quaked and roared, and like a tortured thing, the sheet zinc sword, leapt writhing, fell back, consumed with radiance. (*Sleep* 253; emphasis added)

The objective reality is that of a boy playing with a sword on the railway tracks to make sparks fly. David, still in an altered state of consciousness after the epiphany, perceives the scene as a conflation of Isaiah's epiphany and his own. Just as the rabbi recounted how Isaiah saw "the terrible light" of God, David now believes he has seen God's light, a "terrific light" which contains such an immense force that it is capable of "ripping through all the stable fibres of the earth" (ibid.). The word *terrific* contains both a positive and a negative connotation, like "splendid" or "horrific." David feels both: "His spirit sickeningly rolled and dipped" (254). With a striking, powerful movement, David races to the cheder, slips in through an open window and fervently runs to the *Book of Isaiah*, "the blue one!" (255). He reads the passage in *lashon-hakodesh,* "beshnas mos hamelech Uziyahu vawere es adonoi," and his senses "dissolve into the sound" (ibid.). David, believing that the book contains the power of God, seeks to align his epiphanic experience with the secret words on the page: "The lines, unknown, dimly surmised, thundered in his heart with limitless meaning, rolled out and flooded the last shores of his being" (255). The rabbi arrives and is immediately suspicious of David's conduct. With pure exaltation, David explains why he reads the blue book: "Because I went and I saw a coal like – like Isaiah" (257). The rabbi rejects him, "'Fool!' he gasped at length. 'Go beat your head on a wall! God's light is not between car-tracks!'" (257).

By claiming to be on the same level as a distinguished prophet such as Isaiah, David sets himself up against institutional religion and is therefore, by default, a heretic. By seeing "God's light" he displays, according to the orthodoxy, a heretical imagination. However, when we look closer, David is not the only one with a heretic imagination. The Prophet Isaiah was deemed a heretic as well. Before unpacking David's and Isaiah's stories, I will point to Moses, who is the most respected human in the Hebrew Bible, and who had several epiphanies. As MacDuff notes, "Although there is no exact equivalent of the word 'epiphany' in Hebrew, there are literally hundreds of examples of God appearing (…), often in a dream or in the guise of an angel" (27). In Moses's first epiphany, God appeared in an unusual manner. Informing Moses that he comes in order to rescue the Jews and bring them to "a goodly and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), he emerges in a burning bush:

> And Moses was herding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, priest of Midian, and he drove the flock into the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb. And the LORD's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of the bush, and he saw, and look, the bush was burning with fire and the bush was not consumed. (…) God called him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses! Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." (Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*. Exodus, 3:1-5)

Robert Alter comments on this "first manifestation of God's presence to Moses" as an "anomaly" (301). Alter suggests that fire, "which is something one cannot touch without being hurt or destroyed," is used by God as a shield; it is "the protective perimeter" (301). Thus, when God reveals the Ten Commandments to Moses, "all of Mount Sinai will be smoking like a firebrand, with celestial fireworks of lightning and thunder" (ibid.). In *Sleep*, the rabbi accepts Moses's epiphany of God as a burning bush but he disregards David's epiphany. As a clerk of the institutional religion, the rabbi declares David a heretic based on the scripture. However, the rabbi fails to acknowledge that prophet Isaiah himself was declared a heretic. The precedence for this rule comes from Moses. After his epiphany of the burning bush, Moses begs God: "Show me, pray, Your glory" (Alter, *The Five Books of Moses.* Exodus 33:18), whereas God replies that Moses will never be able to see God face to face, for "no human can see Me and live" (33:20-1). Thus, anyone who claims to see God sets themselves up against the orthodoxy of the institutional religion and is deemed a heretic according to the Talmud. On these grounds, the prophet Isaiah was later declared a heretic, a fact of which the rabbi is ignorant. The historical sources on Isaiah are somewhat murky. It

takes some digging to come to a full picture. One thing is clear: Isaiah was put to death by King Manasseh. According to JR, the reason was that the king "purged Judah of opponents" (357). Avrohom Bergstein claims that Isaiah's fate was caused by his disregard for the orthodoxy of institutional religion. The King "alleged that Isaiah's prophecies were in stark contradiction to the teachings of Moses and amounted to heresy. Under this pretext, he had Isaiah put to death" (Chabad.org). One fact is clear according to the orthodox texts: Isaiah did not see God in his epiphany. According to Joseph Albo (1380-1444), Isaiah later admitted that he had not seen God, declaring that because he dwelled "in the midst of people of unclean lips." his "moral qualities were not as they should be" (*Sefer-Haikarim* 3:17). Again, the *lips* are the focus of profanity. Furthermore, Isaiah's excuse for being a heretic is to blame his imagination: "Woe is me! for I am affected by imagination" (ibid.). Thus, as he is being punished for his bold statement concerning his epiphany, Isaiah's heretical imagination becomes his downfall.

In a twist of irony, David's rabbi sets up Isaiah, who was once deemed a heretic himself, as religious authority against David. Clearly, the rabbi does not know this fact, as it seems to have been buried. Also, as mentioned, Isaiah's texts are still used in Jewish and Christian liturgies. The story of Isaiah's and David's epiphanies illustrates how the authority of religious institutions controls and quells the individual's attempts at spiritual sovereignty. As far as David is concerned, he does not genuflect to the rabbi; his self-experienced epiphany is as valid as any. He is affirmative in his own spiritual knowingness; he saw God, just as Isaiah saw God. David realizes, in this moment, that he knows more than the rabbi: "The rabbi didn't know as he knew what the light was, what it meant, what it had done to him" (Sleep 257). He also knows that he will not reveal anything more to him. Leaving the cheder, David is in a victorious mood, with "surges of laughter plunging within him" (258). Coming home, entering the hallway, he notices a difference: "Gee! Used to be darker. (…) Ain't even scared. (…) Hee! Funny I was. I'm big now. (…) …can't ever be scared. Never. Never. Never…" (261). David has had an epiphanic experience that has brought him an inner peace that surpasses what the rabbi has taught him. His inner spiritual knowingness will not be acknowledged by the institutional religion, though. When the individual assumes control of their religious experience, it will be deemed heretical if it clashes with religious authority. Moreover, heresy, it proves, involves not only questioning religious authority, but also interpreting religious scripture in an unorthodox manner.

2.6 David's Culminating Epiphany

David conquers his fears and ascends the mysterious stairs that lead to the roof. He is about to have a new epiphany which will strengthen his spiritual sovereignty. Just as when he entered the snow-filled street when he crossed the "untrodden white" (59) and felt that "the silent white street waited for him" (58), David now feels that the "clean, untrodden flight of stairs" invites him, although with a warning: "beckoned even as they forbade" (295). The "inviolable" stairs that he earlier saw as protecters, "guarding the light" (20), now have an added quality to them, one of enticement: "temptingly the light swarmed down through the glass of the roof-housing, silent, untenanted light" (295). With the word "tempting," alluding to enchantment and attractiveness on one side, seduction and bewitchment on the other, the stairs now have a dual quality. They are no longer exclusively protectors of the "light," they are equally hiding something of uncertain value. The stairs, "beckoning even as they forbade" (295), remind David of his insecurity and his fragility. Again, as he did before he crossed the untrodden path in the snow, David wavers. Competing voices appear in his interior monologue. First, the courageous voices dominate: "Here was a better haven than either, a more durable purity. Why had he never thought of it before? He had only to conquer his cowardice, and that solitude and that radiance were his" (295). As when he dared to cross the untrodden path, he evokes in his mind and superimposes an image of "the snow he had once vaulted" (ibid.). By doing this, David reminds himself of the prize that awaits him: "He had only to conquer his cowardice, and that solitude and that radiance were his" (ibid.). Then, as the door gives way and "flows up suddenly," fearful voices warns him. His heart-wrenching dilemma is narrated in a fragmented passage of free indirect discourse:

> He tugged [the door] with crooked finger. It flew up suddenly—Panic stricken, he watched the heavy door swing away from his hand, squeak leisurely and on reluctant hinges into the sky. (—Down! Run down!) He threw a frightened glance over his shoulder. (—No! Coward! Stay right here! G'wan! G'wan out! It's light! What're you scared of?) He lifted a tentative unsteady foot over the high threshold. (—Ow!) (ibid.)

David steps onto the roof, having dared to trust his inner spiritual intuition and knowingness. He sits down on the roof top of a multi-story building. It's late afternoon in New York City. Eight-year-old David has conquered his fear, ignoring the voices of fear in his mind. As he gazes about him, he recognizes that the "durable purity" (295) he has sought is to be found

here. He acknowledges that he is here as a result of his own brave choices: “He had only to conquer his cowardice, and that solitude and that radiance were his” (295). He has crossed the path “no one has crossed” (59), he has entered through the sacred stairs “guarding the light” (144). And now he is here, alone, in his own sacred space. As he watches the horizon, David experiences his first grand epiphany:

> The immense *heavens* of July, *the burnished, the shining fathom upon fathom*. Too pure the zenith was, too pure for the flawed and flinching eye; the eye sowed it with linty darkness, sowed it with spores and ripples of shadow drifting. (- Even up here dark follows, but only a little bit) And to the west, the *blinding whorl of the sun*, the disk and the *trumpet, triple-trumpet blaring light*. (296; emphasis added)

David’s epiphanic experience is here narrated through religious symbolism. The highlighted words and phrases all point to established biblical symbols. The narration points to a religious experience by the use of unequivocal religious concepts and words. The “heavens,” “burnished,” and “shining fathom upon fathom” all contain allusions to the biblical presentations of the beyond. Likewise, the phrase, “blinding whorl of the sun, the disk and the trumpet, triple-trumpet blaring light,” points to religious symbolism; the “blinding whorl” alludes to the understanding of God as beyond what the human eye can watch, while the trumpet is used numerous times in the Bible, where they symbolize communication, divine authority, and power.

Paul Ricoeur speaks of religious phenomenology as a “a reduced, neutralized mode” (30). He frames this as the *fullness* of language, whereas “the second meaning somehow dwells in the first meaning” (31). Thus, in the above passage, the “blinding whorl of the sun” is the second meaning, directly alluding to the first meaning, the presence of God. This strongly laden religious symbolism locks the hermeneutic process into a predestined interpretation. Ricoeur points to Mircea Eliade who argued that “the force of cosmic symbolism resides in the nonarbitrary bond between the visible heavens and the order they manifest” (ibid.). Thus, the “heavens” *is* the heavens, the “shining fathom upon fathom” *is* a description of the world beyond, and the “triple-trumpet blaring light” *is* the sound and the sight of the unfathomable heaven. Ricoeur calls this “analogical power,” where there is no ambiguity to the interpretation. Consequently, in religious phenomenology, the symbols “*give* what they say” (ibid.). In the second part of the epiphany, the symbolism changes. The words display a new quality, no longer singularly of a biblical nature. Rather, the focus is on the transcendence of

the world around. Thus, the discourse reads like a Romantic mimesis fused with subjective imagination.

> He blinked, dropped his eyes and looked about him. Quiet. Odor of ashes, the cold subterranean breath of chimneys. (—Even up here cellar follows, but only a little bit) And about were roof-tops, tarred and red and sunlit and red, roof-tops to the scarred horizon. Flocks of pigeons wheeled. Where they flew in lower air, *they hung like a poised and never-raveling smoke*: nearer at hand and higher, they glittered like rippling water in the sun. Quiet. Sunlight on brow and far off plating the sides of spires and water-towers and chimney pots and the golden cliffs of the street. *To the east the bridges, fragile in powdery light.* (*Sleep* 296; emphasis added)

In this sequence, there are three levels of consciousness in the interior monologue. David is now able to hold all three at the same time: the epiphanic level, the daily consciousness of observation, and the voice of fear that still lingers in the parenthesis. Thus, David has here internalized the light, and it is no longer solely outside of him. In the first part of this epiphany, David is immersed in the light coming from a heaven outside of himself. In the second part, the light is omnipresent, no longer solely in the "pure zenith." Instead, the focus is on the roof-tops, "tarred and red and sunlit and red," creating a "scarred horizon." Moreover, his surroundings are no longer threatening. The bridges, metaphorically "fragile in powdery light," are now in David's perception imbued with an ethereal light. Written a century earlier, Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802," reads (in part):

> A sight so touching in its majesty:
> This City now doth, like a garment, wear
> The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
> Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
> Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
> All bright and glittering in the smokeless air. (poetryfoundation.org)

This Petrarchan sonnet describes London and the river Thames viewed from Westminster Bridge. As with David's epiphany, the beauty of the scene is omnipresent. There is no contrast between earthly beauty and that of the heavens. However, there is a shift in perception between the two texts which illustrates the shift from Romantism to modernism.

Wordsworth's poem has an external origin, while David's epiphany has an internal one. Wordsworth writes a poetic text which is inspired by the weather and the scenery the morning of September 3, 1802. We know this because his sister, Dorothy, documented the incident in *The Grasmere Journals,* correcting the date to July 31:

> The city, St. Paul's with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was something like the purity of nature's own grand spectacles. (*Norton* 413).

Thus, Wordsworth, like a landscape painter imitates a scenery on their canvas, imitates the scene of Westminster Bridge as it was that exact morning. This process has clear mimetic qualities to it. Contrastingly, the narrator in *Sleep* does not describe the actual scenery of New York City. The narrative is not a document of the actual weather. Rather, the description of the scenery originates from within David. The words reflect his subjective perception in the moment.

Graham Jensen asks whether there is a difference between the modernist epiphany and the kind of literary epiphanies that feature in Wordsworth (252). When we acknowledge that both are rooted in mysticism and that both describe "mystical states of consciousness" (*Varieties* 379), they have similar features. However, the modernist epiphany is more internalized than the epiphanies in Wordsworth. In addition, there is in modernism, as Jensen suggests, a "fixation on trivial occupations" (260) as we can detect in David's experience: "Where they flew in lower air, they hung like a poised and never-raveling smoke" (*Sleep* 296). David's epiphanies have increasingly become a part of his ordinary consciousness. In contrast to his former epiphany, where he asked himself, "What was it he had seen? He couldn't tell now" (248), this time David has an awareness of the world. Even in the epiphanic moment, David is now able to perceive the mundane and everyday life beneath the "pure zenith" and the quietness on the rooftop. He is no longer in a "hypnotic" (247) state. He is able to merge his epiphanic experience with his ordinary consciousness. Though he is able to hold the essence of his epiphany in his mind, he realizes the ineffability on a new level; he cannot communicate his experience to anyone. Thus, he does not reveal the experience to his rabbi or his mother. Still, he suspects that his mother may detect something. Descending from the roof top, he stamps toward his door to make his coming seem "more natural" (296). He notices

that his mother looks "strange" as he greets her, and he fears that "his ruse has failed" (ibid.). Relieved, he is assured that she did not notice anything. David treasures his serene experience on the roof from the night before, and he discovers that with the enchantment he has found within himself something that is uniquely his, and this brings him delight: "When David thought of the roof the next morning, he thought of it with so peculiarly selfish a joy that it kept him from thinking any further" (299). In addition, he decides that the spot itself is of a sacred nature. It is a place that is now dedicated to certain thoughts: "The roof, that precinct in the sky, that silent balcony on the pinnacle of turmoil, demanded that what thoughts one had be had there" (299). With the phrase "precinct in the sky," there is a connotation to holy places, walled off from the mundane world. Acknowledging his newfound religious site, David "culls" and sorts his thoughts, deciding which to bring up there, where he will "allow them to blossom once he ha[s] climbed up the stairs" (ibid.). David has achieved spiritual sovereignty.

2.7 Contextualizing David's Journey

At the beginning of his odyssey, David was filled with fear. Metaphorically called "The Cellar," the first chapter of *Sleep* presented David with his fears of the unknown and unexplored. Gradually, through his inquisitiveness, bravery, and cunning, he is able to overcome his fears. This speaks to the theme of bildungsroman, where the protagonist undergoes a development from immaturity to maturity. However, I will argue that the theme of the bildungsroman in *Sleep* points to more than a maturation process. It is equally a process of moving beyond the limitations of one's cultural heritage. The writer Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), himself arriving at the US as a child immigrant, expresses this beautifully as the process of "life's longing for itself" where he addresses parents:

> Your children are not your children.
> They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
> They come through you but not from you,
> And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. (21)

Likewise, on his spiritual odyssey, David has undergone a maturation process. He has felt an inner urge to "make his own path" and to find "the light." Through his epiphanies, David is granted access to his inner light. Thus, he no longer needs an intermediary like a rabbi. By

asserting his own subjective truth he no longer needs institutional religion. When David opposes the rabbi he becomes a heretic, but that label no longer has any meaning for him. David is now on a path of individuation, characterized in his own words as the "strangest triumph, strangest acquiescence" (441). David's experience is a solely interior adventure, unbeknownst to his parents, his rabbi, and the other people in his life. Starting with a difficulty to detect his own inner light, David manages eventually to hold his own subjective religious experience while maintaining his awareness of the mundane world. The larger significance of David's story has to do with our understanding of the tension between the individual and the society. *Sleep* addresses this tension. When David sits on the rooftop, he assumes authority over his own religious experience. By doing this, he frees himself from institutional religion and his cultural heritage. Wisse claims that "The more David 'frees himself' from the civilization that formed him, the more he becomes depleted and exhausted" (71). My view, however, contrary to what Wisse argues, is that the process of freeing oneself is often marked by feelings of depletion and exhaustion. This is common with growth itself, expressed in the words of the Swedish poet Karin Boye (1900-1941): "Ja visst gör det ont när knopper brister," translated "Of course it hurts when bud bursts" (lyricstranslate.com). It is a process that may be difficult, frightening, and confusing, but the reward is exquisite: You become an individual.

3 *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce

3.1 Introduction

James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* tells the story of Stephen Dedalus who grows up and decides to leave his religion, his family, and his country. The novel was published in 1916, the year of the Easter Rising in Dublin, a fact Seamus Deane calls a "sweet irony" (viii). The political rebellion sought to break from "the psychological dependency" (ibid.) of the British and the Roman Catholic imperium. Stephen's journey through the novel mirrors the political situation of Ireland, as he sought to free himself from institutional religion and cultural heritage. By the end of the novel, Stephen declares himself free from institutional religion and the cultural heritage of Ireland, in favor of arts: "I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning" (*Portrait* 268-9). This liberation process is in large part described through his epiphanies.

A semi-autobiography, *Portrait* has literary predecessors in the nineteenth century. Robert Scholes suggests that Stephen's aesthetics derives from William Butler Yeats and his focus on the importance that "an artist must have a philosophy" (241). Concerning the autobiographical concept, Scholes points to Gustave Flaubert's emphasis on avoiding the personal, and on Oscar Wilde's stance that "autobiography is irresistible" (Ibid.). The result, Scholes argues, is that *Portrait* can be read as "an impersonal autobiographical novel" (ibid.). *Portrait* is considered the first major modernist novel in the Western canon and one of the most influential novels regarding the modernist techniques like stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse. As such, the novel opened the door for other modernists, among them Virginia Woolf. Some of the most distinct features of modernism is an emphasis on the subjective perception and the personal expression.

Among literary critics, there has been, and still is, an ongoing discussion on Joyce's attitude to the Catholic Church and religion in general. There are many stances on Joyce's relation to institutional religion. There is one argument that most critics will agree with, summed up succinctly by Pericles Lewis: "Of all the figures that this book considers (*Religious Experience in the Modernist Novel*; my added comment), Joyce was perhaps the most hostile toward organized religion but also the one most shaped by his religious training" (178). My argument, which I aim to show in my analysis, is that not only was Joyce shaped by his

religious training, but he also drew actively on religious tenets in the story arch of Stephen's journey of liberation from institutional religion.

In this thesis I will ask: What is the role of Stephen's epiphanies in claiming his emancipation from institutional religion and his vocation as an artist? How do the epiphanies change his attitude toward institutional religion? I will argue that one of the main characteristics of Stephen's journey toward spiritual sovereignty is his struggle with guilt and shame. On this journey, his climatic epiphanies are crucial in his liberation from the need for Christian absolution.

3.2 Bildungsroman and Künstlerroman

Portrait, like *Sleep,* is a bildungsroman, a story of growing maturity and individualization. Stephen, like David, represents and personifies the historical shift in the early twentieth century, where the individual is challenging the religious authorities to find their own truths. Thus, both David and Stephen seek to acquire spiritual sovereignty and freedom from institutional religion and cultural heritage. However, *Portrait* has an added element. It is also a künstlerroman, which can be seen as a subcategory of the bildungsroman. In this analysis, the main focus will be on *Portrait* as a künstlerroman. Defined as "a novel which has an artist as the central character and which shows the development of an artist from childhood to maturity and later," the künstlerroman was particularly popular in Germany in the late eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century (*PG* 387). *PG* makes the case that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was among the first to develop the künstlerroman, with the 1795 novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Thus, the künstlerroman "starts with the romantic revival, a period when the artist was held in high esteem, and the man of genius became an exalted figure" (ibid.). *Portrait* starts and ends with an allusion to art and the Daedalus myth. Ovid's "*Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes*," translated as "and he turned his mind to unknown arts," is the epigraph of the novel. It is Daedalus' words from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. We will come back to the *Metamorphosis* when discussing Stephen's climactic epiphany in which he alludes to Daedalus, "the fabulous artificer" (*Portrait* 183). *Portrait* ends with a prayer: "Old father, old artificer, stand with me now and ever in good stead" (276), again alluding to Daedalus, this time from the perspective of his son Icarus. The precursor to the Daedalus epiphany is an epiphany Joyce wrote in February 1905, called "The Spell of Arms and Voices," which I will come back to when analyzing the Daedalus

epiphany. Joyce, then twenty-three years old, wrote to his brother Stanislaus that the epiphany was written "to mark the precise point between boyhood (*pueritia*) and adolescence (*adulescentia*) - 17 years" (Joyce 1966, 79). This coincides with the Roman life span where adolescence ends at thirty (*juventus*) (*JE* 157). At seventeen, Joyce moved away from the Jesuit curriculum and "immersed himself in contemporary European literature" (ibid.). A year later, as a student at the University College of Dublin, he delivered his first paper, "Drama and Life," to the Literary and Historical Society, and published his first article, a review of Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken* (*CW* 38), and he began to compose his epiphanies. (*JE* 157). Thus, Joyce saw his own maturity process as deeply connected to his artistic expression. In *Portrait*, Stephen goes through the same development, thus mirroring Joyce's own artistic trajectory.

3.3 Stephen and Language

One of the main themes in the novel and in Stephen's thoughts, is language. In *Sleep*, David, in his search for inner knowingness and spiritual sovereignty, seeks emotional solace. Stephen, from childhood on, seeks intellectual answers through language. Moreover, as we saw in *Sleep*, David's epiphanies were of a Romantic Wordsworthian nature, whereas for Stephen, the main nature of his epiphanies is again through language. MacDuff comments on this revelatory difference between Wordsworth and Joyce: "Wordsworth's revelation are imaginative experiences, whereas Joyce's are linguistic" (38). Already as a child Stephen is cerebral and muses over the world through words and enters "the confusing world of language" (Erickson 2023, 14). Thus, he ponders words such as "suck" and "kiss" (*Portrait* 7), and in the process he "explores the gap between signifier and signified" (Erickson 2023, 14). When he looks at a geography book, he realizes that the "different places" have "different names" (*Portrait* 12). Stephen then places himself in the world, followed by his school, county, country, continent, the world, and finally the universe. He then plays with the concept of "negative theology" (Erickson 2007, 3), where he contemplates a "nothing" that exists "after the universe" (*Portrait* 13). Stephen decides that "only God" is able to think such a "big thought" (13). Again, using language as a tool to understand the metaphysical, little Stephen muses over the *word* "God" in this interior monologue:

> God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. *Dieu* was the French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said *Dieu* then God

> knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (13)

Again, Stephen begins and ends with names: "his name was Stephen" and "God's real name was God." By including his own name while contemplating the name of God, Stephen seeks to establish his own identity and give meaning to the world. As Christine van Boheeman-Saaf writes, "the linguistic signifier 'God' anchors the hierarchy of difference and identity; it lends stability to Stephen's own identity and name" (48; qtd. in Erickson 2023, 15). Philosophers of religion Emmanuel Levinas and Hent de Vries contribute by pointing out that "the very pronunciation of God's name in French captures God's contradictory nature: it is a movement toward God – *à Dieu* – and at the same moment, *an adieu*, a farewell" (70, qtd. in Erickson 2023,14), thus leaving the entity is seeks to address. Erickson comments on the implication of God being both "absent" and "present": "this is the modernist God" (16). In the course of the novel, Stephen comes to discover that his linguistic inquisitiveness leads him eventually to abandon the Catholic Church, as I will come back to later. The name of God as "*adieu*" may be an apt description of the novel as a whole, where Stephen seeks to define words and the meaning of them, which eventually leads him to declare that he will renounce language, and "fly by" its net (*Portrait* 220). However, as I will uncover, Stephen never renounces language, and especially not religious language.

While contemplating his future after the decision to abandon the vocation to become a priest and instead enroll at the university, Stephen realizes that "the end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path" (178). This new path "beckons to him," and he senses that a "new adventure [is] about to be opened to him" (178-79). With the religious connotations of "to serve" and "beckoning," Stephen, while relinquishing the priesthood, still dwells in a religious terminology. In this state, Stephen seeks inside his mind for an inner spiritual knowingness. Again, language proves to be a door opener. He finds a phrase "from his treasure": "A day of dappled seaborne clouds" (180). This alliteration, combined with an iambic tetrameter, with a harmonic rhythm between short and long vowels, delivers Stephen what he desires from words: elevation and enchantment. As he speaks the words "softly to himself" (ibid.), he begins to ponder the nature and power of language. Thus, he begins to ask questions about the signifier and the signified, about the nature of *words*:

> Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the greyfringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose? (180-81)

In the above passage, Stephen expresses a deep connection to words, almost a religious, devotional relationship. Thus, he speaks the words "softly to himself." MacDuff points to how "Stephen stores precious words, prizing their shape and sound, and he draws them out by speaking them aloud" (133). Language itself becomes the conduit for Stephen's most intimate thoughts and will prove to be the door opener for his feeling of spiritual sovereignty.

3.4 Guilt

Stephen's journey toward spiritual sovereignty and liberation from institutional religion goes through phases that are religious in nature: guilt, sin, confession, redemption, and vocation. The latter of these is essential for Stephen even when he embraces art, which I will come back to. Stephen's journey from childhood to adolescence is conveyed through an increasingly sophisticated language as Stephen ages and matures. In MacDuff's words, "there is clear stylistic development within Joyce's *künstlerroman*, reflecting Stephen's maturing consciousness through growing linguistic complexity" (115). The novel opens with Stephen as a child: "Once upon the time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo" (3). In the same manner, the adults are presented: "His mother had a nicer smell than his father," and Dante, the governess of the Dedalus household, "gave him a cachou every time he brought her a piece of tissue paper" (4). Likewise, the first epiphany comes as a nursery rhyme. Here are, in succession, the original epiphany and the rewritten one, where there seems to be a connection of bird symbolism connected with guilt. The original says the eyes will be pulled out by "eagles":

He hid under the table. His mother said:
- O, Stephen will apologise.
Dante said:
- O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes. (Macduff 104)

- *Pull out his eyes,*
Apologize,
Apologize,
Pull out his eyes.

Apologize,
Pull out his eyes,
Pull out his eyes,
Apologize. (*Portrait* 4)

If we choose to go with the interpretation of the bird as a predator, the eagle may represent punishment for sins. As there is no clear context to the original epiphany, it leaves an empty space where sources can enter. MacDuff offers one source, taken from James Gifford, which points to Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs Attempted in the Easy Language of Children*, where Watts warns of the ramifications of being disobedient to one's parents:

What heavy Guilt upon him lies!
How cursed is his Name!
The Ravens shall pick out his Eyes,
And Eagles eat at the same. (33, qtd. in MacDuff 105)

If we choose this reference, the bird imagery is connected to the theme of guilt. Looking at the biblical allusion, a line in the Proverbs displays the same message. Again, the bird imagery is used as penalty: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (kingjamesbibleonline.org Proverbs 30:17). The theme of guilt follows Stephen through his journey toward individuation and emancipation toward spiritual sovereignty. Adding to that is the refusal to apologize. These two themes, guilt and refusal to apologize, characterize Stephen throughout *Portrait* and carry on in the "Telemachia" section of *Ulysses*. With the two added texts, the original nursery rhyme epiphany and Isaac Watts's lyrics, the stanzas in *Portrait* become one image among others, where each text colors and comments on the next.

MacDuff argues that this dynamic of intertextuality contributes to the multiple meanings of the epiphany: "the lines (…) can be seen as a palimpsest of quotations: the scriptural text, Watt's didactic song, Joyce's epiphany, and the published stanzas" (105). Moreover, he claims that the opening epiphany "adumbrates the central concerns of the novel," especially Stephen's refusal to apologize, and becomes "prophetic of Stephen's vocation as an artist" (104). Adding to that, I will point to the allegory from Ancient Greek religion, where Prometheus was bound to a rock by Zeus and an eagle was sent to eat out his liver (*CCGM* 178). The story is dramatized in *Prometheus Bound*, where Prometheus "dare[s] to champion humanity in the face of Zeus' intention to annihilate them" (ibid.). Thus, in acting out of line with Zeus, Prometheus becomes a heretic and is punished by the gods. Interpreted this way, it may be a foreshadowing of what is at stake for Stephen by claiming his own spiritual sovereignty in the face of the institutional religion of his upbringing.

With the opening epiphany of a nursery rhyme that contain an allusion to eagles plucking out the eyes of a sinner, the theme is set for religious authority. The didactic message given is that the institutional religion's penance for sin is to "pull out his eyes" (*Portrait* 4), which can be interpreted as a prohibition to use one's imagination. As we saw with the Prophet Isaiah in *Sleep,* his imagination, his inner eyes, became the culprit leading to declare him a heretic. The imagery displayed in the nursery rhyme demonstrates the volatile power the church has over Stephen's imagination. There is also a built-in paradox: by sinning, he will not be able to see freely. Instead, institutional religion offers him *its* imagery, which suggests animalistic brutality. Having been presented with this level of threat, the feeling of guilt follows Stephen into adolescence. When he begins his nightly escapades in the district of prostitutes the guilt theme is on his mind, as he knows that he is in "mortal sin" (105). In order to overcome "the enormities" (ibid.) of his actions, Stephen resorts to cynicism. Still, it is not his actions that are the real culprit. It is his heretical imagination: "By day and night he moved among distorted images of the outer world" (ibid.). Stephen's sense of guilt distorts his imagination. A seemingly random encounter is transformed into devilish imagery in his mind: "A figure that had seemed to him by day demure and innocent came toward him by night through the winding darkness of sleep, her face transfigured by a lecherous cunning, her eyes bright with brutish joy" (105). The word "transfigured" alludes to the transfiguration of Christ, where he takes some of his disciples to a mountain top and becomes radiant in front of the disciples: "And [he] was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (kingjamesbibleonline.org, Matthew 17:2). With this religiously laden

word, which suggests a divine dimension, the text may be read as irony. Likewise, there is an ironic distance in the epiphany when Stephen encounters a prostitute, where the language becomes poetic. He feels some "dark presence" that moves "subtle and murmurous as a flood" (*Portrait* 106). MacDuff views this as a "paradoxical function of irony and realism" and contends that it is a technique that "heightens Joyce's lyrical symbolism" (120). It also heightens Stephen's sense of dread, and again his eyes are a focal point: his eyes "grew dim" (*Portrait* 107). Like the eagles that cut out the eyes of the sinner, the streetlamp acts as a violent reminder of his sin: "The yellow gasflames arose before his troubled vision against the vapoury sky, burning as if before an altar" (ibid.). Stephen's feelings of guilt, although they are rampaging through his mind, do subside when he has a physical encounter with a prostitute. The trepidation of the church's punishment is gone for some moments as Stephen, watching the woman undress, notices her "proud conscious movement" (107). Her lack of shame and his feeling her body act as a catalyst for Stephen. The torment of his mind is temporarily absent, and he has "tears of joy and relief" (107). As they kiss, his mind once more resorts to the theme of guilt, but now coupled with imagery of tenderness, "darker than the swoon of sin" and "softer than sound or odour" (109). Again, Stephen expresses his experience through inner monologue. Language is the means of expressing his inner world.

3.5 Doomsday, Confession, and Vocation

On his journey toward liberation from institutional religion, Stephen realizes that he is a man of sin. After having frequented the prostitutes, Stephen attends a religious retreat dedicated to a "great saint, saint Francis Xavier! A great fisher of souls!" (116). Father Arnell implores the young men to put away "all worldly thoughts," and to give "all attention to the state of [their] souls" (118). After the talk, Stephen walks home with a building religious depression, as a "thick fog seemed to compass his mind" (119). In a lengthy stream-of-consciousness passage, Stephen dramatizes the end of time, when "the body had died and the soul stood terrified before the judgments" (120). God has "long been patient," but "that time was over" (120, 121). The last day has come:

> Doomsday was at hand. The stars of heaven were falling upon the earth like the figs cast by the figtree which the wind had shaken. The sun, the great luminary of the universe, had become a sackcloth of hair. The moon was bloodred. The firmament was as a scroll rolled away. (121)

MacDuff states that in the above passage "Father Arnall draws on the imagery of Apocalypse to convey the dread of final judgment" (9). However, the above passage is not the words of Father Arnall, it is Stephen's interior monologue. This is significant, as it shows how Stephen has internalized the graveness of the retreat he is part of, a retreat that Father Arnell hopes may "lead to sincere repentance" (119). On his way home, Stephen, in a lengthy stream-of-consciousness, plays out the end of time when it is "God's turn" (121). The words in the above passage are taken almost word for word from the Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament. According to Virginia Moseley, Joyce copied the Revelation "in its entirety" (viii). "Revelation to John" is the last biblical book of the New Testament. It is an apocalyptic book, with "extensive use of visions, symbols, and allegory, especially in connection with future events" (Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia). The word *revelation* is, according to MacDuff, the only word in italics in *Stephen Hero* (85), emphasizing "the revelatory quality of Stephen's aesthetics" (6). Furthermore, MacDuff emphasizes that Stephen's words not only have a revelatory quality to them; his aesthetics "are literary drawn from Revelation" (ibid.). Below is the passage Revelation 6:12-14 from where the Doomsday passage is taken:

> And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
> And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
> And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (kingjamesbibleonline.org)

MacDuff argues that the language of Revelation "prepares the ground for Joyce's künstlerroman" (9). I will add that the intensity of the religious imagery spurs Stephen to make his bold statements concerning art by the end of the novel. But before he declares his spiritual sovereignty, he goes into a religious depression. He realizes that God has showed him the "hell reserved for his sins: stinking, bestial, malignant, a hell of lecherous goatish fiends. For him! For him!" (*Portrait* 149). He prays and weeps "for the innocence he had lost" (150). Overwhelmed with remorse and guilt, Stephen goes into child mode. His mental mood is reflected in the language of his inner monologue: "It was easy to be good. God's yoke was sweet and light. It was better never to have sinned, for God loved little children and suffered them to come to him. It was a terrible and sad thing to sin. But God was merciful to poor sinners who were truly sorry" (154). Stephen goes to confession. Like with David

Schearl, his sins are connected to his lips. When he confesses his "sins of impurity," the sins "trickled from his lips, one by one, trickled in shameful drops from his soul festering and oozing like a sore, a squalid stream of vice" (156). Having confessed, Stephen feels that his soul "was made fair and holy once more, holy and happy" (157). The streets which used to be foggy now has a new quality: "The muddy streets were gay" (ibid.). Making up for his old sinful life, Stephen becomes a zealous Jesuit. When he kneels with his "fellow worshippers," he envisions himself as the early Christians under the Roman persecution, "imagin[ing] that he was kneeling at mass in the catacombs" (159). Stephen is now at a stage where he has submitted to the institutional religion and relinquished his own inner spiritual sovereignty.

Stephen's devotion does not escape the attention of the Jesuit leaders. He is called in for a talk, a talk that will incite a flame in Stephen's mind, one that will start with a devotion to institutional religion, then, with the same vigor, be expressed in his passion and devotion to art. The priest asks a simple question: "Have you ever felt that you had a vocation?" (170). The priest underlines the gravity of joining the Jesuit order: "To receive that call (…) is the greatest honor that the Almighty God can bestow upon a man. No king or emperor on this earth has the power of a priest of God" (171). Listening to the priest, Stephen does not respond to becoming a clerk who stands "aloof from the altar" (172). Rather, through the priest's words, he hears a "voice bidding him approach, offering him secret knowledge and secret power" (ibid.). He would know "obscure things," he would know sins confessed "under the darkened chapel by the lips of women and girls" (ibid.). Although flattered and excited at the priest's offer, Stephen recoils when he leaves the building and feels "the caress of mild evening air" (173). He smiles at the air, only to see in the priest's face a "mirthless reflection of the sunken day" (ibid.). Stephen leaves the building, troubled by his conscience, not knowing if he will join the Jesuit order, become an integral part of the institutional religion, or to leave.

3.6 Disillusionment, the Daedalus Epiphany, and the Bird-girl

After being asked if he wants to become a Jesuit priest, Stephen enters a new phase on this journey toward inner knowingness, one where his spiritual sovereignty converges with his declaration to become an artist. His contemplation of becoming a Jesuit priest starts with doubts, proceeding to feelings of disillusionment when he realizes that he is not suited for the task. Then, an epiphany leads him to a crossroad where he trades religion for art. Many critics

view the “bird-girl” epiphany as the one that contributes to Stephen’s transformation. Beja, for instance, argues that the “bird-girl” epiphany is “the most important epiphany as well as the structural climax of the novel, the moment when he becomes a conscious artist, when the rebel finds his cause” (100). Others, like MacDuff, does not acknowledge the bird-girl as an important epiphany since it is not based in any of Joyce’s written epiphanies. I agree with Beja that the bird-girl epiphany is important. Even though it has no origin in any of Joyce’s written epiphanies, it is a dramatic epiphany which had a quality of magic. However, I see MacDuff’s argument that the Daedalus epiphany is the climax of the novel as accurate (114). The Daedalus epiphany opens Stephen’s consciousness in such a way that he sees the bird-girl as an epiphany. Therefore, Stephen’s epiphany of the bird-girl is more like an encore of the climax of the Daedalus epiphany.

While Stephen is still contemplating becoming a Jesuit priest, language is again the allure. Through the words of the priest, he envisions a path to wisdom and power: “He listened in reverent silence now to the priest’s appeal and through the words he heard even more distinctly a voice bidding him approach, offering him secret knowledge and secret power” (*Portrait* 172). This enticing world of power and knowledge will become his through language. It will be his when he renames himself, “The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S.J.” (174). By invoking this new, clerical name, Stephen’s imagination gains wings: “His name in that new life leaped into characters before his eyes and to it there followed a mental sensation of an undefined face or colour of a face” (174). However, the exaltation does not last long. Stephen questions himself and oscillates. Walking past the Jesuit house in Gardiner Street, Stephen, in a stream-of-consciousness passage, begins to doubt. He sees the building of the Jesuit order and wonders “which window would be his” (175) if he enters the order. His former image of his life as a Jesuit crumbles at the sight of the concrete building. His imagination, connected to words and names, fails to match the physical reality in front of him. Stephen wavers regarding whether to join the order is right or not for him. He ponders his doubt, despite the “proud claims” of “the mystery and power of the priestly office” (175). He now realizes that the priest’s words have “fallen into an idle formal tale” (ibid.). Disillusioned with the religious words, Stephen deduces that he cannot be part of an institutional religious order. He does not see this realization as an opportunity to create his own life in freedom, and thus to claim his own spiritual sovereignty. Rather, he sees it as a fate that has been thrown at him: “He was destined to learn his own wisdom apart from others or to learn the wisdom of others himself wandering among the snares of the world” (ibid.). Although he denounces the

church, Stephen still operates with its vernacular and metaphors. He sees "the snares" of the world, its "sins," and the real possibility of him "falling"; "falling, falling but not yet fallen, still unfallen but about to fall" (ibid.). The word "fallen" plays a crucial and ambiguous double role in Stephen's stream-of-consciousness. On one level, the word may allude to "the fall of Adam and Eve" in Genesis. However, I will analyze the scene separately from that allusion. First, Stephen loses interest in "the mystery and power of the priestly office" because he perceives that the "exhortation" of the priest has "*fallen* into an idle formal tale" (ibid.; emphasis added). Thus, the priest has fallen short of Stephen's expectations of how the priest, as religious authority, ought to express himself. Second, by renouncing the institutional religion, Stephen declares that he himself is now "about to *fall*" (ibid.; emphasis added). The use of the word "fallen," "to drop down from a higher level to a lower level" (*Oxford*), indicates that Stephen operates within a spiritual hierarchy where language is the yard stick. Stephen denounces the priest, not because of how he conducts his priesthood but because the priest's words no longer move Stephen. Thus, no longer able to excite Stephen with his words, the priest is dismissed, along with the Jesuit order. Moreover, by leaving the order, Stephen is also "falling." Both the priest and Stephen have fallen from a "higher level to a lower level" (*Oxford*). However, when we look closer, it is the *words themselves* that have "fallen." The words, which before had promised "secret knowledge and secret power" (*Portrait* 172), now fail to produce this effect on Stephen. It is the language of menace of an authoritative church, warning of the dangers of heresy. Stephen is still not there yet, "still unfallen but about to fall" (ibid.). He is, in a religious metaphor, hanging between heaven and earth. In this state of "still unfallen but about to fall," a group of Jesuits passes him:

> Brother Hickey.
> Brother Quaid.
> Brother MacArdle.
> Brother Keogh.
> Their piety would be like their names, their faces, like their clothes (179-80)

Again, language is the parameter for judging the spiritual state of both himself and others. Stephen ascertains that the Jesuits live in a pitiful state of devotion based on their names. Then, his own name is called by boys playing on the beach:

> - Hello, Stephanos!

– Here comes the Dedalus!

(…)

Come along, Dedalus! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos! (182)

Stephen responds to the bantering of the boys as they play with his name by mocking them back. He puts up a verbal fight with them which is played out in an interior monologue: "How characterless they looked. (…) It was a pain to see them and a swordlike pain to see the signs of adolescence that made repellent their pitiable nakedness" (ibid.). The boys continue their name-calling, and this banter back and forth, between the boys' cries and Stephen's inner attacks, incites a force within Stephen. He experiences an epiphany. Again, language acts as a transmuter. The name 'Dedalus' now becomes the mythic figure 'Daedalus,' the "fabulous artificer": "Now, at the name of the fabulous artificer, he seemed to hear the noise of dim waves and to see a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing the air" (183).

The Daedalus myth is complex. The story takes place on Crete. King Minos' wife had born a "monster," the child of his unfaithful wife. The king asked Daedalus to build him a maze where he could trap the monster. Daedalus, "an architect famous for his skills, constructed the maze (…), leading the eye of the beholder astray by devious paths" (Scholer 266). Later, Daedalus was himself caught in the maze. Creating feathers of wax, he bent them as bird's wings. Daedalus also provided wings for his son Icarus. They both managed to escape King Minos' labyrinth. However, Icarus flew too close to the sun, the wax melted, and he was "swallowed up in the deep blue waters" (268). Here is part of the story of Daedalus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

A labyrinth built by Daedalus, an artist
Famous in building. (186)
"Though Minos blocks escape by land or water,"
Daedalus said, "surely the sky is open,"
He turned his thinking
Toward unknown arts, changing the law of nature.
(…)
He fastened [his feathers] with twine and wax, at middle,
At bottom, so, and bent them, gently curving,
So that they looked like wings of birds, most surely. (187)

"The story of Daedalus and Icarus" is in book eight of *Metamorphoses*. Written in Latin in hexameter verse about 8 BC, the work is a collection of mythological and legendary stories, many taken from Greek sources. By using the theme of metamorphoses, Ovid "rewrites history as an infinite process of coming into being, change, and death, an endless yielding of self and identity" (J.D. Reed 402). As mentioned in the introduction, line five and six in the above passage is the epigraph of *Portrait*, which signals the importance of this epiphany. Scholes states: "This is a crucial epiphany. In it we see Joyce beginning to clothe himself in the Daedalian myth" (40). The epiphany is titled "The Spell of Arms and Voices," written by Joyce in 1905, at the age of twenty-three:

> The spell of arms and voices — the white arms
> of roads, their promise of close embraces, and the
> black arms of tall ships that stand against
> the moon, their tale of distant nations. They
> are held out to say: We are alone, — come. And
> the voices say with them, We are your people.
> And the air is thick with their company as they
> call to me their kinsman, making ready to go,
> shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible
> youth. (*JE* 80)

Stephen's mind, steeped in both Greek mythology and Christian religious symbols, tries to interpret the epiphany by asking questions:

> What did it mean? Was it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophesies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea, a prophesy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being? (*Portrait* 183)

Reflecting on myths, prophesies, symbols, and the role of the artist, Stephen feels both excitement and trepidation by his epiphany. MacDuff comments on how doubt comes as a consequence of relinquishing an outer authority and focusing on one's own inner spiritual knowingness: "[the] transference of authority from the Logos that self-evidently manifests its

own truth to the witness of revelation who must interpret its significance leads to an increased focus on subjective experience and opens the door to doubt" (31-32).

In addition to the Greek myth of Daedalus, the name of Stephen Dedalus also is linked to a religious figure; St. Stephens in the New Testament. In Act 6, St. Stephen's story is told (Kingjamesbibleonline.org). He is selected by his fellow Christians to preach for the Hebrews and the Hellenists to come into a common understanding of the Christian faith (David Guzik). St. Stephen's talk stirs up the Hebrews and the Hellenists, the former accusing him of saying that Jesus was greater than Moses, which was deemed blasphemous. Consequently, St. Stephen was on trial "before the highest religious court he could face" (ibid.), and he was later stoned. St. Stephen has an epiphany likened that of Isaiah, telling a group of Jews of his vision: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (kingjamesbible.org Acts 7:56). The people kill him by stoning him. Scholes comments on St. Stephen's connection to the name of Stephen of *Portrait*: "St. Stephen is not only cast out of his city and martyred; before that he was a prophet and a preacher, seeking to revitalize the conscience of his race" (Scholes 264). Scholes points to the second last sentence in *Portrait*: "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" (*Portrait* 275-76). Stephen's epiphany seems to express both his rising passion for the arts but also his inner trepidations.

In this state of altered consciousness, Stephen sees a girl:

> 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. (…) She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. (…)
> "Heavenly God!" cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy. (185-86)

Seeing this girl, in an avian simile, Stephen's mind has undergone a metamorphoses. Just like David Schearl saw "God's light" when a boy put his sword to the trail rack, Stephen now sees a girl who is changed by "magic." The girl, "possibly a cockle picker" (MacDuff 119), touches Stephen's soul: "Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call" (*Portrait* 186). Stephen, in a state of ecstasy, breaks free of the religious bondage he has lived within, and he declares his new philosophy: "To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life

out of life" (ibid.). Through this dramatic epiphany which he experiences in the aftermath of the Daedalus epiphany, Stephen has achieved an inner spiritual knowingness.

3.7 Restoring His Soul, Becoming an Artist

Stephen's "Daedalus epiphany" acts as a door opener to his soul and reveals an inner spiritual world. Then, with the "bird-girl epiphany", the Daedalus epiphany seems to be solidified. Immediately following the two epiphanies, Stephen is in a state of altered consciousness, where he feels a connection to the universe: "He felt above him the vast indifferent dome and the calm processes of the heavenly bodies" (187). However, he also feels a sense of grounding: "The earth beneath him, the earth that had borne him, had taken him to her breast" (ibid.). Stephen now has an experience similar to David in *Sleep*. David, while in his culminating epiphany, still has an awareness of the world around him. In his epiphanic mode he observes the pigeons: "Where they flew in lower air, they hung like a poised and never-raveling smoke" (*Sleep* 296). Thus, like David is able to merge his epiphanic experience with his ordinary consciousness, Stephen is now able to hold an awareness of both "the heavenly bodies" and "the earth beneath him." This, I will argue, is what Stephen seeks to achieve; to feel the vastness of his own soul while at the same time staying grounded. Therefore, his reaction is to sigh with "joy" (*Portrait* 187). To stay true to his own soul, his inner spiritual knowingness, is of the outmost importance to Stephen, and I will argue, the reason why he leaves institutional religion. He later admits to Cranly that he fears that he may lose his soul to the Catholic Church. Cranly asks Stephen why he will not attend the holy communion. He wonders if it is "because you feel that the host may be the body and blood of the son of God and not a wafer of bread? And because you fear that it may be?" (264), referring to the "act of transubstantiation," where through the Holy Spirit the bread and the wine are transformed into the "body and blood of Jesus" (Walzl 437). Stephen replies "quietly" with a seemingly embarrassing confession: "Yes. (…) I feel that and I also fear it" (*Portrait* 264). Cranly follows up with a new question. He asks if Stephen fears that the "God of the Roman catholics" would "strike [him] dead" if he makes a "sacrilegious communion" (264-65). Stephen's answer speaks to, I will argue, the core of his religious sentiment: "I fear more than that the chemical action which would be set up in my soul by a false homage to a symbol behind which are massed twenty centuries for authority and veneration" (265). Stephen's main concern is to preserve his own spiritual autonomy. He believes that if he participates in

the sacraments of the Catholic Church without wholeheartedly believing its dogma, he will betray his own soul. Therefore, it may seem a paradox that Stephen, the artist, places himself in a religious hierarchy. He now sees himself as a priest, not of institutional religion, but of "eternal imagination." And as a priest, he has a vocation to fulfill. This vocation is not to transmute bread and wine into Jesus's body and blood with the Holy Ghost's assistance, it is to "[transmute] the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (240). Not only does Stephen clothe his theories in religious terminology, but he also elevates the artist to the status of God: "The mystery of esthetic like that of material creation is accomplished. The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (233). Although liberating himself from institutional religion, Stephen still operates within the belief structure of Christian thought.

As mentioned in the introduction, the heretic component of Stephen's journey is realized in "Telemachia." However, there is some mention of heresy in *Portrait*. While a young student at Belvedere, Stephen takes a bold stance concerning heretics. In a discussion with Heron, he refuses to admit that Byron was immoral:

> - In any case Byron was a heretic and immoral too.
> - I don't care what he was, cried Stephen hotly.
> - You don't care whether he was heretic or not? said Nash.
> (…)
> - Admit that Byron was no good.
> - No.
> - Admit.
> - No.
> - Admit.
> - No. No. (86)

Beja discusses this scene and argues that Stephen's refusal to apologize as a child is a foreshadowing of what he later rebels against, "home, fatherland, and church" (96). I find Beja's argument interesting. There seems to be a discrepancy between Stephen's outer expression and his inner feelings. Stephen may be able to be forceful in debates already from an early age, but his inner sense of guilt follows him, as I will come back to in the

"Telemachia" section of *Ulysses*, where Stephen internalizes the history of the early Christian heretics.

The guilt theme, from the first epiphany, is a recurring theme on Stephen's journey toward spiritual sovereignty. With the Daedalus epiphany, coupled with the bird-girl epiphany, Stephen is able to free himself of guilt, at least momentarily. Thus, when his mother wishes him to receive the communion within the Octave of Easter, which according to the Church law was to be received "at least once a year and that once during Eastertide" (*Portrait*, notes 325), Stephen declines:

> - [My mother] wishes me to make my easter duty.
> - And will you?
> - I will not, Stephen said.
> - Why not? Cranly asked.
> - I will not serve, answered Stephen. (259-60)

Cranly, upset that Stephen will reject his mother, tries to appeal to Stephen's emotions of empathy; "Do as she wishes you to do. What is it to you? You disbelieve in it. It is a form: nothing else. And you will set her mind at rest" (263). However, Stephen diverts the discussion into a new topic. He is adamant at following the inner spiritual knowingness he now has acquired after his epiphanies. Those inner spiritual experiences have helped to free his soul. Thus, his epiphanies provide a key role in his emancipation and liberation from institutional religion. In one of Stephen's last entries in his diary, we meet again the old epiphany named "Spell of Arms and Voices," the precursor to the Daedalus epiphany. Written by a young Joyce in 1905, it reinforces the autobiographical nature of the novel. As it is crucial to the theme of this thesis, I will repeat it here:

> The spell of arms and voices — the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces, and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone, — come. And the voices say with them, We are your people. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth. (275)

The entry, dated 16 April, opens with a double imperative: “Away! Away!” (275). Stephen has now embodied the myth of Daedalus, and he is ready to make his exile. However, there is a warning in the last entry: “27 *April*: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead” (276). Here Stephen brings in Daedalus’ son, Icarus, who flew too close to the sun and perished. The novel ends with the predicament experienced by many artists: how to soar in one’s imagination without losing one’s grounding.

3.8 Contextualizing *Portrait*

On his journey toward spiritual sovereignty, Stephen goes through the stages of guilt, sin, confession, redemption, before he finally relinquishes institutional religion. With the Daedalus and bird-girl epiphanies, he experiences an inner spiritual knowingness. This provides him with a boldness which makes him decide to become an artist and leave Ireland. The key factor in this process, I will argue, is to let go of guilt. To illustrate this point, I will look at two scenes: the scene with the Jesuit brothers, and the bird-girl scene. First, the Jesuit brothers. During a walk, reflecting on his realization that he is not suited for the Jesuit order, Stephen passes a group of his former ‘brothers’:

> A squad of christian brothers was on its way back from the Bull and had begun to pass, two by two, across the bridge. Their uncouth faces passed him two by two, stained yellow or red or livid by the sea, and as he strove to look at them with ease and indifference, a faint stain of *personal shame* and commiseration rose to his face. (179; emphasis added)

As a Jesuit, Stephen prayed and lived an ascetic life as a means to absolve his sins. Presently, when watching the former “brothers,” he strives to look at them with indifference, as if their presence is of no significance to him. But he is not indifferent. He feels shame, coupled with, perhaps, some pity and sympathy for the lives they live. Contrasting this scene with that of the bird-girl:

> She was alone and still, gazing out to sea; and when she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, *without shame* or wantonness. (186; emphasis added)

The single most striking element in the bird-girl scene is in how Stephen sees in the girl's eyes a total lack of shame. This is what gives him the impetus to denounce institutional religion and pursue the life of the artist. Being an artist, he no longer needs to follow strict rules to appease institutional religion. Instead, with spiritual sovereignty, he sets the rules himself. And the rules he now will adhere to is to allow himself to "live, to err, to fall to triumph, to recreate life out of life!" (186). As an artist, he will now give himself permission to live without shame, without dogmas from institutional religion. The celebration of his newfound freedom speaks to how guilt-ridden the old Stephen was. From being in turmoil over his sins, "how came it that God had not struck him dead?" (148), he now gives himself permission to fail: "I am not afraid to make a mistake, even a great mistake, a lifelong mistake and perhaps as long as eternity too" (269). The core of Stephen's spiritual journey, I will argue, is to free himself, not only of the dogmas of institutional religion, but also of the general notions of how to live life. Thus, by becoming an artist, a life which has its own challenges, Stephen relinquishes his need to let an authority tell him that he is a sinner. Instead, he gives himself permission to fail, to make mistakes, to err, without any repercussions. As an artist, Stephen now has ascertained spiritual sovereignty. His journey from guilt to emancipation ends in triumph, at least in *Portrait*. However, when we meet Stephen in "Telemachia," there is more to the story.

4 Ulysses by James Joyce

4.1 Introduction

Ulysses is set in Dublin over the course of a single day, 16 June 1904. The novel is, in Joyce's own words, "a modern Odyssey" based on Homer's *The Odyssey* (Frank Budgen 20). At the turn of the twenty-first century, Penguin Random House published the "100 best novels" of the twentieth century. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was ranked at the top, with his novel *Portrait* as number three (*The Modern Library*). *The Odyssey* consists of twenty-two episodes where the first four tell the story of Telemachus in search of his father. The following episodes narrate Odysseus's journey home from the war in Troy. The episodes in *Ulysses* follow the same structure; the first three episodes tell the story of Stephen, while the following episodes are focused mainly on Leopold Bloom, the protagonist and his wife, Molly. With no real plot and with each episode written in a particular style, *Ulysses* challenges the tradition of the genre of a novel. *Ulysses* also brakes with the decorum of language and topics in written texts, especially related to bodily functions. As Erickson notes, "bodies in *Ulysses* do things that bodies had rarely done in English novels before: they fart, piss, shit, pick their nose, and masturbate" (2023, 79). This, and the blasphemous content, caused problems for the publishing of the novel. It was not published in the US until 1934, followed by a British edition in 1936 (Naughtie 187). Contemporary critics often had strong reactions to the novel, such as fellow Irishman George Bernhard Shaw. He called it a "revolting record of a disgusting phase of civilization, but it is a truthful one (…) In Ireland they try to make a cat cleanly by rubbing its nose in its own filth. Mr Joyce has tried the same treatment on the human subject" (Ellmann 506, 507). Other contemporary writers praised *Ulysses*. T.S. Eliot declared; "It is a book to which we all are indebted and from which none of us can escape" (*Modernism Anthology* 371, qtd. in Lewis 2007, 153). Virginia Woolf praised the notion of narrating "the ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (*Modernism Anthology* 397, qtd. in Ibid.). Literary critic Edmund Wilson stated in 1931 that "when we are admitted to the mind of anyone of [the characters in the novel], we are in a world as complex and special, a world sometimes as fantastic or obscure, as that of a Symbolist poet – and a world rendered by similar devices of language" (156). I will come back to this notion.

4.2 "Telemachia"

The first four episodes in *The Odyssey*, named the "Telemachy," tell the story of Telemachus in search for his father. In *Ulysses*, the first three episodes are named "Telemachia" (*CCU* 25). In this trilogy, Stephen is the protagonist and the focal character. The parallels between Homer's archetypes and Joyce's modern-day characters open for multiple interpretations. According to *Norton*, the interpretations "can seem tight or loose, deflating or ennobling, ironic or heroic, epic of mock-epic" (*NATC* 2278), depending on the reader's viewpoint. The Stephen we meet in *Ulysses*, Lewis argues, is "a modern-day equivalent of Telemachus, the son of Odysseus" (2007, 154). In the first episode, "Telemachus," Stephen is exiled from his home, living in the Martello Tower with his sometime friend Buck Mulligan and Haines, an Englishman who studies Irish culture and resides as a guest in the tower. In the second episode, "Nestor," Stephen is teaching a history class. In the third episode, "Proteus," Stephen walks on Sandymount beach while having numerous thoughts, narrated in lengthy passages of stream-of-consciousness. In these three episodes, I will focus on two epiphanies from *Collected Epiphanies of James Joyce:* "She comes at night," which is reused in "Telemachus" and "Nestor," and "The Spell of Arms and Voices," which we find in "Proteus." In addition, I will dive into the history of heretics and heresiarchs which comes into full force in "Telemachus" and "Proteus". In *Sleep*, both the prophet Isaiah and David become heretics based on their imagination. However, in *Portrait*, Stephen manages to "fly by the nets" of heresies, apart from a little word quarreling with Cranly (*Portrait* 86). As mentioned in the introduction, the heretical component of Stephen's journey is realized in "Telemachia," where the heresiarch Arius is the main focus. The manner in which Stephen is portrayed in *Portrait* versus in *"*Telemachia*"* differs. In the first, Stephen's thoughts and experiences are revealed through stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue and free indirect discourse. In the latter, Stephen is portrayed according to the narrative technique that is used in the respective episodes. In "Telemachus" and "Nestor," he is revealed through a third-person narrator, interspersed with passages of stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue. In "Proteus," Stephen is almost exclusively portrayed in stream-of-consciousness. Thus, the narration focuses on his mind, which I will call the "inner layer". Many critics have interpreted Stephen solely on the "outer layer-narration," by the third-person narrator. However, in my analysis, I will contrast the two layers and examine what each of them convey. It is in the inner layer, I will argue, where the historical drama plays out, revealing the heretics and heresiarchs of the first centuries after Jesus's death.

4.3 James Joyce's Spiritual Views

In this analysis of the epiphanies in "Telemachia," the concept of *metempsychosis*—the belief of the rebirth of a soul into a new body—is central. To shed some light on this concept, I will look at Joyce's spiritual views. Acknowledging that he might have changed his view when he wrote *Ulysses*, I will argue that we can ascertain the nature of his religious thoughts and beliefs already in his early writings. In 1900, while he was a student at the University College Dublin, Joyce delivered the paper "Drama and Life" (*CW* 38). In the essay he lays out a theory of a spirit that hovers around humans:

> It might be said fantastically that as soon as men and women began life in the world there was above them and about them, a spirit, of which they were dimly conscious, which they would have had sojourn in their midst in deeper intimacy and for whose truth they became seekers in after times, longing to lay hands upon it. For this spirit is as the roaming air, little susceptible of change, and never left their vision, shall never leave it, till the firmament is as a scroll rolled away. (*CW* 41)

Joyce was an admirer and avid reader of Henrik Ibsen, learning Norwegian in order to read his dramas in their original language. Ibsen, considered one of the founders of realistic drama, turned to metaphysical themes in his later plays. In his very last play, *When We Dead Awaken*, the theme circles around physical and spiritual death. In an essay titled "Ibsen's New Drama," Joyce provides a lengthy analysis with the conclusion that in the "masterpiece" of "The Resurrection Day" (the working title; my comment), "there is involved an all-embracing philosophy, a deep sympathy with the cross-purposes and contradictions of life, as they may be reconcilable with a hopeful awakening – when the manifold travail of our poor humanity may have a glorious issue" (*OC* 48). Joyce includes the working title of the play, I will argue, because of the religious connotations, which reflect his belief in metempsychosis.

Two years later, Joyce once again mentions Ibsen's play. This time the concept of metempsychosis is clearly implied:

> The ancient gods, who are visions of divine names, die and come to life many times, and though there is dusk about their feet and darkness in their indifferent eyes, the miracle of light is renewed eternally in the *imaginative soul*. When the sterile and treacherous order is broken up, a voice or a host of voices is heard singing, a little

> faintly at first, of a serene spirit which enters woods and cities and the hearts of men, and of the life of earth – det dejlige vidunderlige jordliv det gaadefulde jordliv – beautiful, alluring, mysterious. (*OC* 60) (Translated in a note: "This beautiful, marvelous life on earth, this inscrutable life on earth" (Ibsen, *When We Dead Awaken*, Act III; emphasis added).

In *Portrait*, Stephen describes the artist as "a priest of eternal imagination" (240), which I choose to read as Joyce's view on the role of the artist. Moreover, this passage seems to confirm Joyce's belief in metempsychosis.

4.4 Inner and Outer Layer of the Discourse

In *Sleep*, *Portrait* and "Telemachia," I look at how the protagonists' seek to claim spiritual sovereignty and free themselves from institutional religion and cultural heritage. In the analysis of *Sleep*, the focus is on the bildungsroman, tracing David's epiphanies as he matures. In the analysis of Stephen's epiphanies in *Portrait*, the focus is on how they help him to find spiritual independence and declare himself an artist. When examining "Telemachia," the reading will be focused on what I will call the text's "objective and subjective narration." The first is the discourse of the outer reality, with the characters Buck Mulligan and Haynes in "Telemachus", and Garrett Deasy in "Nestor." The latter is the discourse and interior monologue of Stephen's mind. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin contends that in a novel there is a constant interplay of literary voices and styles. These conflicting voices can be attributed to either the narrator or to the different characters. In addition, they can be experienced as voices within a character. The different layers of a text, Bakhtin explains, are able to co-exist in a coherent way because they "do not exclude each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways" (*NATC* 1023). In MacDuff's words, "Joyce's recycling of his epiphanies is an example of heteroglossia, the principle that each utterance, even a single word, is dependent on context for meaning, and therefore unique (106). The epiphanies will reveal Stephen's subjective experience and thus become the subject of the novel. The aim of the analysis is to detect whether Stephen has acquired the inner knowingness and spiritual sovereignty he sought in *Portrait*. Is he now, as he boldly declared in *Portrait*, liberated from institutional religion in form of the Catholic Church? On the surface, "Telemachia" seems to be more impersonal than *Portrait*. However, I will argue that in many respects, the triad reveals itself as a personal account of Stephen

when we trace the origins of his epiphanies. Some of the referred texts are seemingly scant and reworked versions, down to one or two sentences. Notwithstanding the sparse language, the phrases and short sentences reflect a vast history, based in Joyce's own epiphanies. In the analysis, I will look at both the inner and the outer layers of the discourse. I will particularly explore the inner world of Stephen, a world which is, in Wilson's words, "complex," "special," "fantastic," and often obscure. Stephen's inner world is filled with thoughts on heretics. The focus will be on the historical sources that Stephen, a former Jesuit student, would be familiar with. The main heretic in this analysis is Arius. My claim is that Stephen finally seems to overcome his thoughts on heresy by realizing the fluid nature of history.

4.5 The Outer Layer of "Telemachus"

The Stephen we meet in the outer layer in "Telemachus" appears to be unable to speak for himself. He does not seem liberated from institutional religion and his cultural heritage. The episode points to the first part of the Telemachus book in *The Odyssey* where Telemachus is distraught regarding the situation of his home; he has not seen his father Odysseus since he was a child, and now his home is filled with suitors for his mother, Penelope. Stephen is likewise in a feeling of despair. He has now been back in Dublin for a year. He left Ireland for Paris but was called home when his mother was on her deathbed. Now, a year later, Stephen has not returned to Paris. On the last pages of *Portrait*, Stephen declares that he will exile himself from Ireland to "forge the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*Portrait* 276). He will leave the Catholic Church and his homeland to become "a priest of eternal imagination," and his means will be "silence, exile, and cunning" (240, 269). In his discussions with Mulligan and Haines, there is little outer evidence of his stance. Karen R. Lawrence interprets this as weakness and indecision. She states that Stephen "seems dispossessed not only by usurpers in the tower, but also from his own story. A reluctant character in his own drama, he is less a protagonist than a disgruntled observer of Buck Mulligan's performance" (*CCU* 29). During the morning in the Martello tower, Stephen does not go into any discussion with Buck Mulligan when the latter mocks the Catholic mass. Disquieted, he only responds with a cold look when Mulligan, dressed in an ungirdled dressinggown, bears a bowl of lather with a mirror and razor, makes a cross and mocks it: "Introibo ad altare Dei" (*Ulysses* 3). The declaration is the first line of the Latin Mass: "I will

go unto the altar of the Lord" (*CCU* 37). In Mulligan's parody, the shaving bowl is the chalice of wine, which, through the mystery of the Eucharist, will be changed into the blood of Jesus.

Thus, the opening page of "Telemachus" engages with degradation of one of the key tenets of the Catholic doctrine, *transubstantiation*, which was a key factor for the early church to designate heretics. Mulligan adds more travesty to the parody: "One moment. A little trouble about those white corpuscles" (*Ulysses* 3), then looking up, "in rapt attention," he awaits a reply from the Almighty. Hearing a whistle, he declares it an answer to his request and tells the Almighty, "Switch off the current, will you?" (ibid.). On the question of the whistle, Robert Bell suggests it is the result of careful planning by Mulligan; "he simply expects that at this time every morning he will hear the whistle of the mailboat" (369). Stephen spots the boat a little later, "clearing the harbour mouth of Kingstown" (*Ulysses* 5). For Mulligan, the act is blasphemy, but a needed one to shake up the authority of the Catholic Church. Mulligan views the mysteries of the Eucharist as nonsensical, whereas for Stephen the sacrament of the church addresses a profound enigma of life. Though no longer a practicing Catholic, Stephen believes that the sacraments of the Catholic Church, shrouded in secrecy, point to a greater mystery, that of creating art. As he announced in *Portrait*, referring to himself as "a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (240); art is the ultimate mystery to unveil. The be a priest of "eternal imagination," Stephen maintained in *Portrait*, is far superior to one "who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite" (ibid.). However, the Stephen who watches Mulligan in his mocking ritual does not express his views, but grumpily watches him. Mulligan, who seems to interpret Stephen's silence with a grunt toward the mockery of the Catholic communion, makes, with an overly dramatic gesture, a joke of Stephen's second name, Dedalus, and calls him the "jejune Jesuit" (*Ulysses* 4), thus indicating that he believes Stephen is still influenced by his former religious education. Stephen, in his distress, fluctuates between cold indifference and annoyance. Besides Mulligan, Stephen finds that Haines complicates life in the tower further by staying up half of the night, raving about a panther (ibid.). While he periodically engages with Mulligan and Haines, Stephen's air of loathing nonetheless holds the essence of how his character appears in the episode. Lawrence comments on Stephen's behavior toward Mulligan, claiming that he is "blocked not only by mockery on the outside but by self-loathing on the inside. He is stuck in bitterness of resentment and rejection, romanticizing his own alienation" (*CCU* 32). This is, I will argue, a superficial reading of Stephen in "Telemachus." I concur that his behavior is disgruntled, but when we look at the

deeper layers of the text, another Stephen emerges. He retracts into his imagination. Thus, the action happens inside his mind. It may seem like a defeat, but through his imagination he begins his inner fight with institutional religion.

4.6 The Epiphany, the Inner Layer of the Discourse

Stephen begins his journey toward liberation and spiritual sovereignty within his mind, which happens in the inner layer of the narration. The epiphany "She comes at night," was probably written in 1903, after Joyce's return from Paris (*JE* 136). Stanislaus Joyce suggests an oneiric origin to the epiphany: "Alone in Paris my brother had felt the black shadow of the priest that had fallen between him and his mother fade away into a vague, troubled memory. She had come to him in a dream confused in his sleeping brain with the image of the Virgin Mother" (229).

> She comes at night when the city is still;
> invisible, inaudible, all unsummoned. She
> comes from her ancient seat to visit the
> least of her children, mother most venerable,
> as though he had never been alien to her.
> She knows the inmost heart; therefore
> she is gentle, nothing exacting; saying,
> I am susceptible of change, an imaginative
> influence in the hearts of my children.
> Who has pity for you when you are sad
> among the strangers? Years and years I
> loved you when you lay in my womb. (*JE* 73)

In this epiphany there are phrases that support Joyce's beliefs in a spirit that is "above" and "about" humans as soon as they are born, as he wrote while in college in 1900. The line in the epiphany, "years and years I loved you" further suggests his claim that this spirit is "as the roaming air," and "shall never leave it" (*CW* 41). In "Telemachus," this epiphany is part of a passage of free indirect discourse where the objective reality intersects with Stephen's subjective impressions (Lewis 2007, 160). The outer layer is revealed through a third-person

narrator. The inner layer is revealed in an interior monologue or stream-of-consciousness. The words in italics are a rewording of the original epiphany:

> Stephen, an elbow rested on the jagged granite, leaned his palm against his brow and gazed at the fraying edge of his shiny black coatsleeve. Pain, that was not yet the pain of love, fretted his heart. *Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes.* Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (*Ulysses* 5-6; emphasis added)

Here the guilt theme re-emerges. It began in the child nursery in *Portrait*, it became the prime reason for Stephen to attend the Jesuit teachings, and it became a topic when his mother, on her deathbed, wanted him to declare his allegiance to Catholicism. The passage opens with a third-person narration, then melds into an interior monologue where Stephen recalls a dream in which his mother appeared. There is a continual shift between the two layers of narration. As Lewis notes, the green waters of Dublin Bay merge with his memory of his mother on her death bed, vomiting green bile, "thus lending a cruel irony to the references of Buck Mulligan (the 'wellfed voice') to the sea as mother" (2007, 160). Seeing his mother in the image of the Virgin Mother, Joyce seems to have an emotional connection to his mother that is directly linked to the Catholic Church. The passage in "Telemachus" fuses the epiphany with another dream, recorded under "Mother" in Joyce's Trieste notebook: "She came to me silently in a dream after her death: and her wasted body within its loose brown habit gave a faint odour of wax and rosewood and her breath a faint odour of wetted ashes" (MacDuff 145, 147). Stephen's attempts at spiritual sovereignty proves to be an entanglement where the Catholic Church and his mother seem to merge into a maze he finds it hard to get out of. This may be one of the reasons for his fondness for the Daedalus myth.

4.7 The Outer Layer of Heresy

Mulligan, in self-amusement, continues to mock the Mass. When preparing breakfast, he gives the food his blessing: “He hacked through the fry on the dish and slapped it out on three plates, saying: - In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti” (*Ulysses* 12), translated: “In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost” (*CCU* 46). After breakfast, Mulligan, Stephen, and Haines go out for a walk, and Mulligan chants in a “happy foolish” voice:

> - I’m the queerest young fellow that ever you heard.
> My mother’s a jew, my father’s a bird.
> With Josef the joiner I cannot agree,
> So here’s to disciples and Calvary. (*Ulysses* 18)

Mulligan’s mockery line, “I’m the queerest young fellow,” comes from “The Song of the cheerful (but slightly Sarcastic) Jesus” by Oliver St. John Gogarty, the person on which Buck Mulligan is based. It is a parody on the Christian tenet that the Virgin Mary was conceived through the Holy Spirit, often depicted as a dove. The poem was written in 1904 (Ellmann 206). The next verse mocks the story of Jesus turning water into wine:

> - If anyone thinks that I ain’t divine
> He’ll get no free drinks when I’m making the wine
> But have to drink water and wish it were plain
> That I make when the wine becomes water again. (*Ulysses* 19)

Erickson comments on this verse, claiming that is addresses the theme of transubstantiation, where Jesus “will turn the wine back to ‘water’ when he urinates” (2023, 79). Moreover, he states that for the early Christians questions about whether Jesus urinated or defecated were “frequent points of contention between the Gnostic and the proto-orthodox” (ibid.). The last verse makes fun of the resurrection:

> - Goodbye, now goodbye. Write down all I said
> And tell Tom, Dick and Harry I rose from the dead.
> What’s bred in the bone cannot fail me to fly
> And Oliver’s breezy… Goodbye, now, goodbye. (*Ulysses* 19)

Haines, holding back his laugh as he assumes Mulligan is “blasphemous,” asks Stephen whether he is a “believer” (ibid.). Before Stephen answers, Haines gives him the opportunity to declare his own spiritual sovereignty and freedom from institutional religion: “After all, I

should think you are able to free yourself. You are your own master, it seems to me" (20). Stephen does not confirm Haines's gentle suggestion. Instead, he declares, "I am the servant of two masters (…) The imperial British state (…) and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church" (ibid.). This seems to suggest that Stephen has not managed to "fly by those nets" as he claimed he would in *Portrait*. However, Stephen works on his liberation from institutional religion and his cultural heritage in his mind.

4.8 The Inner Layer of Heresy

While Haines calmly ends the topic, Stephen does not. He plays out a historical, religious drama in his mind**.** One side of the drama is presented by the Catholic creed, "the proud potent titles clanged over Stephen's memory the triumph of their brazen bells: *et unam sanctam catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*" (20). The phrase is from the Nicene Creed and translates, "in one holy, catholic, and apostolic church" (*CCU* 54). The other side of the historical drama is the volatile Catholic Church, punishing and torturing leaders who were judged as heretics and heresiarchs: "behind their chant the vigilant angel of the church militant disarmed and menaced her heresiarchs" (ibid.). In a lengthy interior monologue, Stephen contemplates some of the most known heretics of the early centuries AD, while comparing them to Mulligan:

> A horde of heresies fleeing with mitres awry: Photius and the brood of mockers of whom Mulligan was one, and Arius, warring his life long upon the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father, and Valentine, spurning Christ's terrene body, and the subtle African heresiarch Sabellius who held that the Father was Himself His own Son. (*Ulysses* 20-1)

Phoitus, Arius, Valentine, and Sabellius are, according to Christopher Laws, "the most pertinent heretics in the first thousand years of the Church, leading ultimately to the East-West schism of 1054" (50). The historical and religious drama Stephen plays out in his mind has a winner: the orthodox church. In Bart. D. Ehrman's words, "virtually all forms of modern Christianity (…) go back to *one* from of Christianity that emerged as victorious from the conflicts of the second and third centuries" (4). Moreover, Ehrman points out that the word "orthodox," meaning "the right belief" was on one side of the conflict, while the "heretics" were people who "willfully [chose] not to believe the right things" (ibid.).

The heretic I will examine here is Arius. He had a substantial group of followers, and his belief was labeled "Arianism." Archbishop Rowan Williams states that "by the time that the great upheavals within the [Roman] empire were over, Arianism had been irrevocably cast as the Other in relation to Catholic (and civilized) religion" (1). Joyce seems to be particularly interested in Arius. As Laws observes, "Arius figures as the archetypal heresiarch throughout *Ulysses*" (49). Moreover, he claims that Arius's thoughts "can give sense to some of Ulysses' more obscure passages, its metaphysical relations, and its preoccupation with bodily functions" (49-50). Laws has made a deep dive into the study of Joyce's knowledge of Arius's death. Most critics, he states, draw superficial conclusions, such as Geert Lernout, who in *Help My Unbelief: James Joyce and Religion* argues that Joyce used the *Catholic Encyclopeida* (qtd. In Laws 53) where the sordid details of Arius's death are omitted. To this, Laws claims that the critics fail to realize that "Stephen, with his Jesuit education, and his continued reading of Aquinas, is steeped in much older religious thought" (53). The early church seems to have been zealous in describing the early heretics as degraded humans. Of the accounts Stephen may have read, several focus on the indignity of Arius's death. Some report that Arius was "called to nature," others that he "burst asunder in the midst" (Laws 61,59). Rufinus of Aquileia (340/345-410) wrote a particularly graphic account, where Arius was "called to nature," found a public facility, and "when he sat down, his intenstines and all his innards slipped down into the privy drain, and thus it was in such a place that he met a death worthy of his foul and blasphemous mind. (*The Church History of Rufinus,* 26-6, qtd. Laws 61). However, Laws argues that with *Socrates Scholasticus's Ecclestical History* there is an added quality, remarkable because of its seemingly historical reporting. Laws views this as an "especially intriguing textual link with *Ulysses*" (62):

> It was then Saturday, and Arius was expecting to assemble with the church on the day following: but divine retribution overtook his daring criminalities. For going out of the imperial palace, attended by a crowd of Eusebian partisans like guards, he paraded proudly through the midst of the city, attracting the notice of all the people. As he approached the place called Constantine's Forum, where the column of porphyry is erected, a terror arising from the remorse of conscience seized Arius, and with the terror a violent relaxation of the bowels: he therefore enquired whether there was a convenient place near, and being directed to the back of Constantine's Forum, he hastened thither. Soon after a faintness came over him, and together with the evacuations his bowels protruded, followed by a copious hemorrhage, and the descent of the smaller intestines:

> moreover portions of his spleen and liver were brought off in the effusion of blood, so that he almost immediately died. The scene of this catastrophe still is shown at Constantinople, as I have said, behind the shambles in the colonnade: and by persons going by pointing the finger at the place, there is a perpetual remembrance preserved of this extraordinary kind of death. (Socrates Scholasticus Chapter 38, 'The Death of Arius')

These texts, written by the "victors" (Ehrman 253), seem to be written as a warning for anyone who dared to imagine God and the story of Jesus in any other way than that suggested by the Nicaean Creed. With these heretics and heresiarchs in his mind, Stephen finally seems to take a stand in "Nestor." For now, Stephen ends his tenement at the Martello Tower. He hands Mulligan his keys and he pays for his stay (*Ulysses* 22). Then, as he leaves, he declares to himself: "I will not sleep here tonight. Home also I cannot go" (23). These two sentences, seemingly insignificant, speak to Stephen's decision to free himself from institutional religion and his cultural heritage, let go of guilt, and trust his inner spiritual knowingness.

4.9 The Nightmare of History

In the classroom of Deasy, history is again on the agenda. Contrary to his lame replies to Haines in the previous episode, Stephen now begins to utter his opinion, as he is beginning to form an individual spiritual sovereignty, free from institutional religion. When Deasy claims that the reason the Jews are "wanderers on the earth to this day" is that they "sinned against the light" (34), Stephen fends it off with "Who has not?" (ibid.). When Deasy asks him to elaborate, Stephen retorts with the famous line: "History," he tells Deasy, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (ibid.). Robert Spoo argues that this is the first time Stephen responds with "more than a mumbled irony or obliquity" (*CCU* 64). Furthermore, he finds the utterance a "strangely intimate confession" (ibid.). I concur. While in the classroom, Stephen, in an interior monologue, once again reflects on his mother at her death bed:

> Ugly and futile: lean neck and tangled hair and a stain of ink, a snail's bed. Yet someone had loved him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. Was that then real? The only true thing in life? (*Ulysses* 28)

This interior monologue mirrors the "She Comes at Night" epiphany Stephen has in "Telemachus." *JE* suggests that these lines are an "echo" of the original epiphany (138). As such, Stephen's mother seems to be deeply connected with his view of history. Spoo comments on this: "History is Stephen's personal incubus, a ghost compounded of guilt over rejecting his mother (the *mère* that comes in the night), and the intolerable givens of history: Irish subjection, nationalist politics, and the Church's doctrine of sin" (*CCU* 64).

As with "I will not sleep here tonight. Home also I cannot go" (*Ulysses* 23), the sentence "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" is a simple one, yet it is the definite answer to the questions on history from Haines and Deasy. Likewise, Stephen's view on God comes in not only a simple sentence, but also in a simple, mundane setting:

> From the playfield the boys raised a shout. A whirring whistle: goal. What if that nightmare gave you a back kick?
> - The ways of our Creator are not our ways, Mr Deasy said. All history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God.
> Stephen jerked his thumb toward the window, saying:
> - That is God.
> Horray! Ay! Whrrwhee!
> - What? Mr. Deasy asked.
> - A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders. (34)

Thus, in four simple sentences, Stephen has left Mulligan, rejected his home, relinquished history and the concept of God. As for the latter, MacDuff comments, "Stephen rejects Deasy's gods in favor of a shouted epiphany" (153). Thus, we are witnessing an epiphany being played out in 'real time,' to use a current phrase. As Deasy and Stephen are discussing God, the boys outside the window are shouting. For Stephen, their shouting is an epiphany, commenting on his and Deasy's discussion. Hence, he points to the window and declares that God is "a shout in the street."

4.10 The Fluidity of History

It's 10 am, and Stephen is walking on Sandymount beach. As the tide moves in on the vast stretch of sand, changing the landscape, Stephen opens his imagination in search of his inner spiritual knowingness. Although he has relinquished history, Stephen now plays out a

historical drama in his mind. In “Telemachus” and “Nestor,” the drama was the conflict between the Catholic Church and the heretics. In “Proteus,” the drama is history itself. Named after the mythical figure Proteus, the shape-shifting sea God, who could take shape of a “lion, serpent, panther, boar, running water, and leafy tree” (Graves 346), Stephen’s mind constantly shifts. Consequently, the episode fluctuates between various narration techniques. In contrast to “Nestor,” where history is presented as “monolithic, written, and unchanging” (Erickson 2023, 73), history is here presented as unconnected, disjointed, and fragmented. In addition, the theme of metamorphosis emerges, rendering history itself as fluid. Stephen, in an inner monologue, once again focuses on Arius, the heresiarch. As Laws observes, “Contemplating his own conception and birth, ‘made not begotten,’ Stephen wonders” (54):

> Is that when the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial? Where is poor Arius to try conclusions? Warring his life long upon the contramagnificandjewgangtiantiality. Illstarred heresiarch! In a Greek watercloset he breathed his last *euthanasia*. With beaded mitre and with crozier, stalled upon his throne, widower of a widowed see, with upstiffed *omophorion*, with clotted hinderparts. (*Ulysses* 38; emphasis in original)

Stephen’s mind again wanders. In a stream-of-consciousness, he reflects on history, on the Vikings that entered the shore of Sandymount, “torcs of tomahawks aglitter on their breasts,” and the times of famine, wondering if he is a “changeling” (43). In sixteenth and seventeenth-century-England, a “changeling,” also called a “goblin,” was a baby that was replaced by fairies due to its weak condition, hence a “misbegotten, deformed, or idiot child” (Jacqueline Simpson, ‘changelings’). Later, in a passage in free indirect discourse, the theme of *metempsychosis*—the belief in a soul’s recurring incarnation on earth—is related to animals: “A woman and a man. (…) Their dog ambled about a bank of dwindling sand, trotting, sniffing on all sides. Looking for something lost in a past life” (*Ulysses* 46). The theme of metempsychosis continues as Stephen wonders about what traces he will leave behind, while he is “walking beneath a reign of uncouth stars” (48): “I throw this ended shadow from me, manshape ineluctable, call it back. Endless, would it be mine, form of my form? Who watches me here? Who ever anywhere will read these written words? Signs on a white field" (ibid.). Stephen contemplates his own history of epiphanies:

> Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read

> them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. Pico della Mirandola. Ay, very like a whale. When one reads these strange pages of one long gone one feels that one is at one with one who once… (41)

Contemplating the writer who defeats death as his writings lives on in "great libraries of the world," Stephen repeats his stance on epiphanies he uttered in *Stephen Hero*: "He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments" (216). As with Stephen in *Portrait*, Stephen in "Telemachia" seeks to claim his spiritual sovereignty through language.

4.11 Contextualizing "Telemachia"

When Stephen leaves Sandymount beach, he spots a ship, "moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship" (50). The ending can be interpreted as a confirmation of Stephen's upcoming decision to move to Paris and thus fulfill his claim to become an artist, forging "the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*Portrait* 275-76). Does this indicate that Stephen has liberated himself from institutional religion and his cultural heritage as he declared he would do in *Portrait*? There seems not to be a definite yes or no to that question. In "Telemachus," when Stephen in a stream-of-consciousness passage reflects over the historical drama between the orthodox Roman Church and the heretics, he perceives "the slow growth and change of rite and dogma" as "like his own rare thoughts, a chemistry of stars" (*Ulysses* 20). Laws suggests that this passage demonstrates the convergence of the Catholic Church's dogma and history in Stephen's mind, which "far from asserting both as fundamentally dogmatic in a narrow sense, is instead to suggest that both are complex, contested sites, defined by their difficulties and oppositions" (50). Moreover, the path to liberation and spiritual sovereignty for Stephen seems to be intimately connected with words. He asks: "Who ever anywhere will read these written words? Signs on a white field" (*Ulysses* 48). In *Sleep*, David Schearl seeks out the "the untrodden white of the gutter" (59), where he can make his own path. They both seek to mark their world. Ultimately, that is how they claim their own spiritual sovereignty that may enable them to liberate themselves from institutional religion. By making their own paths, writing their own words, their inner essence is revealed. This revelation is as much a revelation to themselves as to others. When Stephen, and by extension, Joyce, asks "Who ever anywhere will read these written words?", it can be

interpreted as an invitation to the reader to look beyond our physical identity and recognize that each of us has, like Stephen, a universe within us, “a chemistry of stars” (*Ulysses* 35). And for Stephen, as for David, the epiphanies reveal echoes, images, and sounds from their inner universe.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have traced the attempts to ascertain spiritual sovereignty, a personal path, free from institutional religion and cultural heritage in *Call It Sleep* by Henry Roth, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the "Telemachia" triad of *Ulysses* by James Joyce. I began by looking into the history of religion in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and found that the definition of the term 'religion' has changed over the last two millennia. Beginning in the time of Augustus Hippo, who defined 'religion' as a way to show one's devotion, not only to God, but to humans, the term became narrower, and by the late sixteenth century, Edward Herbert defined 'religion' as solely pertaining to one's belief in a monolithic God. I then jumped three centuries ahead and found Durkheim's and James's definitions of 'religion,' the first one functional, the latter subjective. Both broadened the term. Durkheim did this by focusing on the communal role religion has in a society, thus including some of Hippo's views. James expanded the term by no longer restricting it to a belief in a specific God. Rather, he saw 'religion' as an "unseen order" which reflects our "supreme good" (*Varieties* 53). He put his focus on a personal spiritual experience where the main object is to focus on the "religious attitude of the soul," which is the "belief" and the "adjustment" to the "unseen order" (ibid.). I then brought up Nietzsche, who with his text of 1882, "The Madman," asserted the famous phrase, "God is dead!", which expressed the zeitgeist at the turn of the twentieth century, leading many to nihilistic views. Following this, I looked at how religion was presented in modernist literature, where J. Hillis Miller declares that the death of God is a "starting point" (2) for the modernist writer, with poets like Wallace Stevens' stance that "in the absence of a belief in God, the mind turns to its own creations" (*Opus Posthumous* 186). Moreover, I found that in the last century, most literary critics viewed modernist literature as secular. Then, at the cusp of this century, a shift happened, and an increasing number of critics began to challenge the "secularization thesis" (Lewis 2007, 26). I learned that with the *new modernist studies*, religious studies, along with studies in other fields, gained traction among modernist critics. Thus, new studies on religion in modernism were written, and in the last decade several works on epiphany in modernist literature have been published. In reading modernist novels with new eyes, focusing on the religious aspects, critics have found that there are signs of religious sentiments in many of the novels, though they are often not expressed directly, but are disguised. One may argue that 'epiphany' is such a disguise.

When I analyzed *Sleep*, *Portrait*, and "Telemachia," I read the novels through the concepts of epiphany and heresy, and I made several key discoveries regarding the protagonists' attempts to ascertain spiritual sovereignty. First, I found that with their epiphanic experiences, David and Stephen gain an inner religious knowingness, making them able to claim authority over their own beliefs and free themselves from institutional religion. Second, I saw that their journeys are characterized by both elevated enthusiasm and doubts. As MacDuff notices, when the focus of epiphany becomes increasingly subjective, it "opens the door to doubt" (32). Both David and Stephen experience this. David asks, after his first epiphanic experience: "What was it he had seen? He couldn't tell now" (*Sleep* 248). Stephen faces similar doubts in the midst of his Daedalus epiphany: "What did it mean?" (*Portrait* 183). Third, I learned that during their journeys toward an inner spiritual knowingness, they get to know themselves on a new, intimate level. Fourth, I saw that both David's and Stephen's journeys are solitary. As such, they have moments of anxiety and fear. Nevertheless, they arrive at a place where they have more confidence in their own inner spiritual knowingness than when they blindly abided by the rules of religious authority. Finally, I discovered the truth of Lewis's claim that in modernism, there is a "transfer of authority in religious belief from public to private hands" (2010, 30). Lewis goes on to say that this exchange is a "continuation of processes [that] begun in the Reformation" and "accelerated after the American and French Revolutions and the rise of Romanticism" (ibid.). This brings me back to the historical trajectory that I opened with, where I outlined the shifts in the definition of the term 'religion'. The term has shifted from solely expressing a belief in an outer, monolithic God to an increasingly *internalized experience* where the individual assumes authority over their own inner spiritual knowingness. Following this, the individual's expression of religious experience becomes *subjective*. This shift is at the heart of the modernist novels in this thesis, and, I will argue, in modernism in general. Again, in Lewis's words, "The modernist movement seems to have been the first in which this newly private character of religious experience earned wide recognition" (ibid.). Thus, I discovered a historic development of religion, *from being an institutional authority to being a subjective belief held by the individual.* In line with this, I saw the historic development of the concept of God, from being an outside force, to being an internal force.

I want to reiterate my reasons for the decision to read Roth and Joyce together, two authors who have not, to my knowledge, been compared and contrasted before with the methodology of epiphany and heresy. Therefore, this thesis can function as a revival of Roth, whose writing

has been less researched than the work of the canonical Joyce. By situating *Sleep* to the modernist canonical works *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, I aim to highlight both the similarities and the discrepancies in David's and Stephen's journeys toward spiritual sovereignty. I have aimed to highlight how David's imaginative experience brings to light the immediacy and all-consuming quality of his epiphanies. Contrastingly, Stephen's epiphanies, expressed and experiences mostly through language, have a quality likened to myths and world literature, such as Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Both novels illustrate the often complex and confusing journey of claiming one's own spiritual sovereignty. They show the challenge the individual faces when they go up against, in Stephen's words, "twenty centuries of authority and veneration" (*Portrait* 265). In some respects, it is easier for David, as he uses his inborn intuitive nature and trusts his inner knowingness. When the rabbi tells him that he has not seen God's light on the rail track, David dismisses the institutional authority of the rabbi because he puts his own inner knowingness in a position of authority: "The rabbi didn't know as he knew what the light was, what it meant, what it had done to him" (*Sleep* 257). Stephen, on the other hand, a Jesuit student, gets immersed in the scripture of the institutional religion. Thus, his journey becomes a journey of dismantling texts and theories on sin, guilt, and redemption. Furthermore, their journeys' outcomes differ. *Sleep*, being a bildungsroman, shows the story of six-to-eight-year-old David who achieves a maturity and a spiritual independence through his decisions to dare to make his own path, and shows his bravery in exploring his epiphanies. *Portrait*, which in this thesis I read as a künstlerroman, reveals how Stephen's epiphanies helps him to claim his spiritual sovereignty by declaring his desire to become an artist. Both novels represent the historical shift in the period of 1916-1934, with the individual challenging the idea of truth and finding their own truth within. One distinct discovery I made during my methodological reading through the concepts of epiphany and heresy was the efficacy of the modernist techniques in displaying the characters' religious experience. With the experimental techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and free indirect discourse, the reader gets intimate access to the protagonists' worlds.

I continued my exploration with a dive into the many ways an epiphany may be experienced. I began with the historical understanding of epiphany in ancient Greek religion, where epiphanies were understood to be direct messages from the gods. In Platt's words, epiphanies were seen as a "manifestation of divine presence," "whereby the gods reveal themselves 'face to face'" (493). I then learned that the Christian church adopted the term to symbolize the

transubstantiation, in which the bread and wine are transformed into Jesus's body and blood. Furthermore, I learned that the Catholic Church interprets this symbolism literally and calls the process the "Eucharist." The process of *transubstantiation* seems to have inspired Joyce to apply the term to the artist; he perceived that the inception of an artistic work had its origin in the spiritual realms and was being brought into physical reality by the creative encounter. Thus, in Stephen's words, he viewed the artist as "a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life" (*Portrait* 240). The understanding of epiphany as a force from the outside began to change with the Romantics, marked by Wordsworth's notable phrase "spots of time." With this, the origin of the epiphany continued to be internalized, where the human no longer needed an intermediary vessel. Arriving at modernism, I found that epiphany not only came to be understood as an inner experience, but as a deeply personal and subjective one. Thus, the development of the understanding and experience of epiphany follows the trajectory of religion, moving from being perceived as having an exterior origin to having an interior one. As is shown in the modernist novels in this thesis, as God is no longer an outside force, the process of revelation is internalized. Furthermore, I found that epiphanies can be experienced in various ways. With Wordsworth, epiphanies are imaginative. We saw this with David's epiphanies and with Stephen's epiphany of the bird-girl. However, in modernism the epiphanies became increasingly literal visions, as I discovered was the case in most of Stephen's epiphanies.

I then looked into the history of heresy, and I discovered the same trend as with religion and epiphany; heresy was a term the orthodox church used to punish, and often kill, those who had differing views. Ehrman has shown that "orthodoxy" literally means "the right belief" and "heresy" means "the wrong belief" (4). In the case of Prophet Isaiah, his sin was his heretical imagination, as he claimed to have seen God. With Arius, it was his interpretation of the early Christian texts. He was deemed a heretic by the Nicaean Creed because he dared to question the orthodox understanding of the Trinitarian problem. By his questioning he set himself up as authority against the orthodoxy of intuitional religion and was killed as a result. The practice of punishing heretics continued, but as the western societies became increasingly secular, the claims of heresy diminished. However, I saw that for Stephen, the old religious history of the heretics had been internalized, and only when he could overcome these thoughts in his mind would he be set free to choose his own beliefs.

I established that modernist literature is far from secular. I will here go one step further and declare that modernism is epiphanic. Its mode is epiphanic. Modernist novels aim to present experiences in a way that reveal underlying truths. In the novels I have analyzed there have been examples of David's and Stephen's epiphanic experiences that try to capture and convey the underlying truths. That is one of the trademarks of modernism. MacDuff gives attention to this, and he shows the diversity of the literary visions of some modernist writers: from "Joyce's faith in language to Woolf 's intersubjectivity, Conrad's dark abyss to Richardson's lucid silence, Beckett's negative theology to Eliot's conversion, and (…) Pound's *logopoeia* and Stein's echolalian exactitude" (232; emphasis in original). Erickson adds to this: "Although often rooted in the everyday, we might think here of Joyce's 'epiphanies' or Virginia Woolf's 'moments of being' as modernist examples of a kind of identifiable action that links the human and the beyond" (Erickson 2023, 44). In both these utterances, we see modernists writers' attempts at describing a subjective spiritual experience. Modernism itself is epiphanic in the sense that it seeks to embody the epiphanic experience.

As mentioned, there was a historical shift in the modernist era to the individual challenging the authority of institutional religion. In the modernist novels in this thesis, David and Stephen gain an inner spiritual knowingness that enables them to free themselves from institutional religion. By doing this, they point to a new path, to a spirituality that is personal and subjective. With this, God is internalized. Thus, with a religious, personal experience, the phrase 'religious authority' becomes an oxymoron.

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