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Modernist Aesthetics: Sexual Ethics, Gender Relations,
and Respective Moments of Epiphany

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Abstract

Reconsidering the significance of the enigmatic literary category of epiphany to modernist fiction, this thesis investigates and identifies its interdependence with the topics of sexual ethics and gender relations within the corpus of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922), and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Therefore, this research aims to analyse the 'blurred' concept of epiphany as an epicentre of modernist aesthetics and to establish the moments of sublime insights as a constitutive element in achieving 'truths' about the particularly acute issues within contemporary society. I argue that, in these novels, all the instances of epiphanies represent a medium for expressing the protagonists' transcendental/metaphysical experiences that provide a new sense of awareness of human sexuality and re-evaluate the established relationships between sexes. For this purpose, I investigate and contrast the ecstatic moments experienced by the female and male protagonists and examine to what extent James Joyce and Virginia Woolf incorporate epiphanic moments in their narrative. Additionally, I explore if it is a particularly plausible model in breaking the traditional gender roles. By doing so, I detect that the primary purpose of an epiphany is to unmask, go beyond the basic patterns and discover a new and systematic understanding of already established phenomena. I will use a qualitative research methodology for the thematic and content analysis and engage with it through gender and narrative theory. Ultimately, this paper endeavours to prove that the aspects of gender and sexuality represented by the cognitive phenomena of epiphany show the ambitious project of Modernism as a critique of what has been marginalised by the mainstream.

Introduction

The most significant 20th-century revolutionary movements are commonly grouped together under the term of ‘modernity’. Modernism started around the late 1900s and continued until the later 1940s. Its broad scope marks interdisciplinary fields, especially literature, which challenged the long-established literary norms by breaking these literary traditions, establishing new forms of self-expression, and implementing new techniques of writings. Modernist paradigms are constituted with moving away from linearity, opposing conventional genres and, more explicitly, resistance to the past was in flux. Virginia Woolf persuasively argues that “on or about December 1910 human character changed” (Woolf 1966: 1, 320), giving an immense contribution to the modernist epoch. Indeed, the modernist discourse fostered the emergence of the autonomous and complex nature of the human character. Preoccupied with the human character and mind, writers were prone to adopt new forms of narrative fiction, narrative technique, such as interior monologue or free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, etc., and embrace experimentations.

One of the striking features of modernist literature is adopting the theological domain of epiphany in literary works. Regardless of its denotative meaning, James Joyce, ‘the father of high Modernism’, projected the impetus for illuminating and explicitly establishing the literary theory of epiphany as an evanescent form of perception. As Joyce reflected in *Stephen Hero*:

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. 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. 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. (1944: 216)

This term goes beyond the mundane experience and represents the insight, the sudden realisation of truth and a moment of awareness that was hidden before. In fact, Joyce was not the first person who invented and introduced such an experience, but what he did was to reactivate and redescribe something familiar. Apparently, the concept of the aesthetic experience of epiphanies in the literature originates earlier from romantic writers, particularly with William Wordsworth’s critical accounts of coining the term

‘spots of time’ in his *Prelude* (1805) to capture the significant aspects of our minds. To a large extent, literary epiphanies have been a concomitant to the creativity of Ezra Pound, Elizabeth Bowen, Katherine Mansfield, Seamus Heaney, John Fowles, to name a few. Still, according to Irene Hendry, James Joyce was the one who developed the “tissue of epiphanies” (Tigges 1999: 11) to a very high level of artistic perfection. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf also patterned their artistic devotion to this phenomenon and accentuated the idea of emancipating literature from moral and didactic burdens. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf create intimacy in the literature where the characters undergo deep cognitive and emotional transformations.

This also affected the long-established normative rules of the domain of sexuality that were inherently suppressive. The twentieth century witnessed a great shift in the technological, political, and socio-cultural sphere. Particularly pathbreaking was a progressive tendency to sexual changes and deconstruction of what used to be characterised with redundant austerity, sexual continence, and the huge gender gap. Reconsidering the significance of the enigmatic literary category of epiphany to modernist fiction, the topics of sexual ethics, gender relations, and respective moments of epiphany provide the basis for the comparative studies of James Joyce’s two most acclaimed literary works *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), as well as Virginia Woolf’s renowned novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). This thesis will explore the ‘blurred’ concept of epiphany as an epicentre of modernist aesthetics and how it establishes the moments of sublime insights as a constitutive element in achieving ‘truths’ about the particularly acute issues within contemporary society. I argue that, in these novels, all the instances of epiphanies represent a medium for expressing the protagonists’ transcendental/metaphysical experience that provides a new sense of awareness of human sexuality and re-evaluates the established relationships between sexes. It seeks insights into how authors modify epiphanic experience in their highly complex mode of writing, what makes them produce the inexhaustible resource of the epiphanies, what the value of epiphanies in terms of human sexuality and sexual morals is, whether epiphanies enable characters to express their sense of self and how they shape powerful life-changing trajectories, etc.

To explore the above issues, I will investigate and contrast the ecstatic moments experienced by the female and male protagonists and explore to what extent James Joyce and Virginia Woolf incorporate epiphanic moments in their narrative and explore if it is a particularly plausible model in breaking the traditional gender roles. By doing so, I detect that the primary domain of epiphany is to unmask, discover the spirit of the humans, go beyond the basic patterns, and detect a new and systematic understanding of already established phenomena through the language. The theory of literary epiphanies and its consideration with the specific focus on sexual ethics in literature is still in its infancy. It is important to explore and elaborate on the epiphanic moments and their impact on the characters' psyche.

This thesis consists of nine sections. The first two sections of this thesis introduce the concept of the epiphany and its theoretical framework in terms of a literary device, as well as its theological connotation. These is mainly achieved through a brief history of epiphany from classical Greek theology and biblical manifestations to contemporary evocations in literary studies. Before looking at the role of sexual and moral context, the archetypal meaning of epiphany will briefly be discussed and analysed. Then, I am going to deal with the depiction of sexual ethics, gender relations, and respective moments of epiphanies in James Joyce's and later in Virginia Woolf's creativity in chronological order. After exploring the above issues, I will take a closer look at the novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* from Joyce's oeuvre. As for Virginia Woolf, I will examine the novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. After exploring the abovementioned issues and novels that bring to light modernist epiphanies, I will end my paper with a conclusion, in which I provide an outlook on the role of epiphanies in these four novels and recapitulate what has been discussed throughout the whole study.

Chapter 1: Towards Modernist Perceptions of Epiphany, Gender, and Sexuality

1.1. The Significance of Epiphany

Epiphany is a loaded term, and its etymological meaning goes back to ancient Greek literature. It is not possible to designate a universal definition of epiphany, but epiphanic evolutions can be found at the very heart of ancient

Greek mythology and religious texts and are most likely linked to holistic associations. Noteworthy, epiphany, considered as an integral part of the Greek pantheon, mainly operated as a generic term of embodying divine power par excellence. Epiphany derives from the Greek word ἐπιφάνεια, ἐπ (upon, besides) and φάνεια (to show) and thus “showing forth” (Ziolkowski 2013:1067) depicts gods’ divine manifestation of the supernatural. An interesting aspect of this definition is that the appearance of supreme gods and goddesses among mortals mainly outlines the pattern of divine power in illuminating and establishing the moral codes of the day.

Opinions are divided when it comes to tracing back the origin of the epiphany. In *The Poetics of the Epiphany* (1987), Ashton Nicols distinguishes the concept of epiphany from theophany, marking theophanies as “[recording] appearances of god” (1987: 6), while secular epiphanies as a generic term delineate “the mind caught in the act of valuing particularly vivid images” (Fraser 2007: X). Furthermore, Nichols speculates that the origin of epiphany traces back to Dionysius cultic texts (Nichols 1987: 6). Beja, on the other hand, legitimately calls into question the epistemic validity of epiphany as a classical concept and assumes that the tradition of epiphany starts from Paul’s dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (1971:24). Fritz Graf highlights the importance of divine apparitions as an omnipresent entity in myths: “gods were irrelevant if they could not manifest themselves to humans” (2004: 113). Ultimately, epiphanies are materialised and repleted in the works of ancient Greek sophists such as Plato, Aristotle, etc., whose thoughts changed and manufactured certain ideas about the world. The appearance of divine agents gradually evolves and intersects in the Homeric epic poems - *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These poems incorporate a series of epiphanic moments that define the outcomes of the Trojan war. As Aristotle points out, the *Deus ex machina* was a common narrative device in resolving seemingly complex plots of the tragedies, such as divine interventions of the anthropomorphic¹ Greek gods and demigods in mortals’ lives (MacDuff 2020: 26). Classic Greek narratives usually describe such processes of

¹ In religion and mythology, anthropomorphism denotes the manifestation of deities as human characters with the attributions of human traits.

manifesting divine authority in terms of epiphanies, which play the role of the versatile catalyst later in the theological context.

If epiphanies do not have a revelatory connotation in the classical myths and cults, biblical, and therefore religious, epiphanies celebrate the revelation of God and divine moments and, as Beja says, “involve a new sense of awareness” (1971: 25) that “open up the possibility of doubt and self-questioning” (MacDuff 2020: 32). At this point, the concept of epiphany becomes sophisticated as its set of paradigmatic associations requires profound research. In both the Old and New Testament, epiphanies “record transcendental experiences in which God is manifested directly” (MacDuff 2020: 28) and, in this way, constitute the grand narratives of the Bible.

Religious epiphanies prepare and pave the ground for gradually emerging new philosophical epiphanies in the Romantic era and later modernist epiphanies. One of the earliest references to the concept of epiphany as a part of literary aestheticism dates back to the philosophical inquiries of Edmund Burke’s (1729- 1797) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), where he elaborates on the concept of the sublime as a bodily, ‘sensitive’ experience. Whereas Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) critical projects such as *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764) and *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) criticise Burke’s understanding of the sublime and reinterpret it as a transcendental, particularly subjective phenomenon of logos. Considering what has been said so far, it leaves no doubt that in William Wordsworth’s epiphanies, “the god-like infinitude of both nature and the mind are manifested through a Kantian revelation, in which the pure idea of unity is awoken by the sublime, affording a transcendental glimpse of the infinite” (MacDuff 2020: 39). Subsequently, it is Kant who “opens up the possibility of Romanticism” (Elridge 1996: 151). William Wordsworth takes up the interest in the same aesthetic experience and introduces his ‘sublime’, revelatory moments in *The Prelude* (1805): “There are in our existence spots of time / That with distinct pre-eminence retain / A renovating virtue...” (1. 208–210). This would inspire modernists to establish a seemingly revelatory device in their creativity. Clearly, Wordsworth’s ‘spots of times’ are far from Joyce’s secular, linguistic epiphanies, but still, it is an analogy of them. In the

words of Robert Langbaum, he receives credit for making “poetry democratic” (1983: 335) and for integrating epiphanies in fiction as “the Romantic substitute for religion” (Tigges 1999: 59). Romanticism is much interested in reflecting “the moment all the profundity, all the infinity of duration of which man feels capable” (Beja 1971: 35) and is preoccupied with the moments of insights: “Coleridge’s ‘phantasy’, Shelley’s ‘moment’, Browning’s ‘infinite moment’ (or ‘good minute’), Yeats’s ‘great moment’ ...” (Tigges 1999: 24). This preoccupation is intensified at the beginning of the modernist era and takes particular significance among modernist writers.

1.2. Epiphany in Modernist Literature

“Those rare moments”
(D’hoker 2004: 60)

What the twentieth century has brought in the discourse of modernity is the cultivation and shaping of the new aesthetic in the literature. Modernism is not only “a detour or dead-end away from the main highway of tradition” (Beebe 1974: 1066), but it also triumphantly adopts new ways of revealing human character’s complexity and psychological perception rather than dwelling on the aspects of ethical demands and morality. Modernist literature aims to create a dynamic literary canon that opens up new perspectives to innovate, re-establish the standard views and give new life to what remained invisible throughout the centuries. The imperative “make it new” (Billings 2019: 127) attributed to Ezra Pound has become a modernist project. It is pertinent to say that what made Modernism so fertile was the exploration of the psyche – “the dark places of psychology” (Gang 2013: 116) – unfolding human character.

Freud’s celebrated works in psychoanalysis and his contribution to discovering the new concept of the unconscious mind has had a quintessentially liberating effect on Modernism. Along with the centrality of the ‘inward turn’, writers start to put a substantial emphasis on its creative adaptation. Morris Beja also remarks that

The increasing interest in psychology and psychological processes, in the “spontaneous” actions of the mind, which has

so pervaded modern life and letters, has been especially important. As writers lost confidence in their perception and grasp of things outside man's consciousness—feeling that they hardly knew themselves, much less anything outside themselves—they inevitably turned inward to that consciousness for their subject matter. (Beja 1971: 47)

As a philosophical and artistic movement, Modernism brought radical transformations, such as creating the new literary technique, 'stream of consciousness'. The idea of the new narrative technique was to revolt against the traditional conventions of storytelling, which implies the disruption of the linear narration, time, and space, where characters' thoughts and feelings are more important than actions. Through the interior monologue, readers can be active participants in what is going through the character's mind. The modernist aesthetic is aimed essentially to give readers more privacy and intimacy, insight into the characters' mental perceptions and leave the interpretations up to the readers. It was essential for 'high' modernists, such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, to break the traditional conventions and introspect human character and its nature more profoundly. Even though both authors are distinctively individual, they still have common traits, such as sharing stylistic identities that are so characteristic of their artistic works.

One of the most prominent instances of Modernism was rediscovering the concept of epiphany as a distinctively psychological term. It is also what makes Virginia Woolf's and James Joyce's creativity exceptional. Clearly, incorporating epiphanic moments in the literature does not start from Modernism as an original literary device, but it has reached its prosperity in the modernist epoch. The complex process of self-discovery would also characterise other modernist writers, such as Joseph Conrad, Marcel Proust, William Faulkner, and Katherine Mansfield, to name a few, who put substantial emphasis to describe the human psyche *per se*. But it was James Joyce who coined this type of illumination as a literary device. Joyce, before he presents his theory of aesthetic phenomenon in *Stephen Hero*, articulates through the mouth of Stephen that it is trivial, ordinary occasions that make him collect epiphanies (Tigges 1999: 39). Modernists go far from their predecessors and triviality, and the realism of how the ordinary produces moments of epiphanies becomes the focal point for them. The same can be said of Woolf: "Moments of vision ... little daily miracles, illuminations"

(Beja 1971: 112) become a defining characteristic for her artistic creativity when she writes in *Modern Fiction*:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; ... the moment of importance came not here but there; ... Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life *is a luminous halo*. (Woolf 1966: 106)

Trivial epiphanies awaken a pure idea of capturing ‘sublime’ moments, bringing the narrative to its climax, leading to sudden self-awareness, arriving at an individual/universal truth, and to a revelation of what has not been realised before. With respect to it, Woolf’s aesthetic vision of Hardy² signifier of ‘moments of vision’ to a signified must be, to quote Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*, “the process of discovering ... not the discovery itself” (Beja 1971: 114). To summarise, Virginia Woolf challenges the epistemological function of vision as a function of art.

“Seeing things” (Tigges 1999: 396) of beauty turns out to be central to Stephen’s aesthetic experience. He applies Thomas Aquinas prerequisites of beauty³, which are metaphysical *integritas* (‘wholeness’), *consonantia* (‘harmony’), and *claritas* (‘radiance’) (*Portrait* 178) from the *Summa Theologiae*, to his theory and describes them as “the qualities of universal beauty” (*Portrait* 178). According to Stephen, the first feature of beauty is to apprehend a thing’s ‘wholeness’, seeing the object as one whole, which is followed by the phase of epistemological *consonantia*, “the analysis of apprehension” (*Portrait* 178), where the “complex, multiple, divisible, separable” (*Portrait* 178) dimensions of the object have to harmoniously correspond to its parts, to its metaphysical ideal. And the last phase is identified as a realisation of epiphany – “claritas is quidditas ... we recognise that is *that* thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness ... The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany” (Zaniello 1967:286). Joyce was indeed the

² Woolf first encountered Thomas Hardy’s poem “Moments of Vision” in Joseph Conrad’s passage in the *Lord Jim* (1900), where she discovers the powers of “moments of great intensity” (Hewitt 2018: 65).

³ According to William T. Noon, Aquinas maximas of beauty are not meant to be separated or have any fixed sequence, it is Joyce who separates the phases of perception (Beja 1971: 80).

first who altered another unique element of epiphany, such as the correlation of subject-object dependence, so that if earlier “the role of the subject tended to dominate, in epiphany the mysteries of the objective world gain prominence” (D’hoker 2004: 54).

However, Robert Scholes has rejected the overenthusiastic use of epiphanies as a literary structural device in Joyce’s creativity. In his introduction to *Joyce and the Epiphany: The Key to the Labyrinth*, Scholes speculates treating “epiphany-hunting ... a harmless pastime” (1964: 66) that withdraws the aesthetic apprehension of *Portrait*; and he argues that critics “have even been able to consider it what it never was in Stephen’s theory, and certainly not in Joyce’s mind, a principle of structure in fiction” (1964: 72). Opposed to this, Florence L. Walzl annotates on the artistic contemplation of Joyce’s aesthetic theory, particularly on the use of epiphany that and notes that it organically “tends to illuminate, rather than obscure, his definitions and to clarify his own later practices in fiction” (MacDuff 2020: 48). Nevertheless, the extent to which modernist writers start narrating turning points of the characters and reflecting on their sudden ecstatic flashes has enabled them to take a new course of formal experimentations. Thus, incorporating epiphanic moments into the narrative has become a deeply rooted aspect of their fiction.

The differential imagery of Modernism provided a general quest to discover truths of characters, something substantive, ‘beyond’, which integrated into literary texts as an impetus for gaining insights into their lives. In this sense, Joyce believed that it is a peculiar vitality of characters to use “their powers of observation and insight to transmute ordinary, everyday events into a celebration of humanity” (McDonald 2008: 91). Even though there is an analogy of modernist epiphanies to romantic settings, there is a substantial difference between the typology of Romantic and canonical Modernist writers’ epiphanies. If the Romantic epiphanies account to revealing “a universal unity of being, to be shared by all kindred spirits” (D’hoker 2004: 53), the Modernist epiphanies have “a greater psychological significance ... [and] are limited to a particular individual” (D’hoker 2004: 53).

In his 1971 work, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, Morris Beja notes that “the role of epiphany in the modern novel has been both immensely important and unique to our time” (1971: 18). Beja epitomises the idea of the significance of aesthetic epiphanies, which goes even beyond Joyce’s formulation of epiphany, and extends it in the following way:

It is a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind – the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it. (1971: 18)

Consequently, modernist epiphany in the literary work provides pillars for building secular moments of epiphany, which “reveals at once the world and the mind’s ability to make sense of the world” (Tigges 1999: 35).

1.3. Gender, Sex, and Sexuality in Modernist Literature

To be entirely free, and at the same time entirely dominated by law, is the eternal paradox of human life that we realise at every moment.

(Wilde 1997: 30)

Modernist epiphanies engage with the culturally constructed concepts of gender, sex, and sexuality. The themes of sex/sexuality and gender-specific issues in the modernist discourse are notorious subject matter. The deconstruction of the historically marginalised, repressed sexual desires and asymmetrical gender issues gain a central meaning. Michel Foucault, a French postmodernist, who historicised sexuality, persuasively argues that “[e]ach society has its regime of truth, it’s ‘general politics of truth’” (1984: 73), deducing that it is a ‘power-knowledge’ that gives constructs to societies throughout different levels of evolution on how to form their own context. If this is the case, Domna Stanton, in her essay *Discourses on Sexuality* (1992), puts forward that “the historicization (and the denaturalisation) of sexuality can be viewed as part and parcel of the deconstruction of an essential subjectivity that has marked modernity” (Dean 1994: 272). Foucault went further with distancing himself from the Marxist-Freudian⁴ function of power

⁴ Sigmund Freud postulates that sexuality is a mainstay in the construction of the human psyche, ‘self’, while Marxist theory rests on the supremacy of economic factors.

and sexuality and with the rejection of ‘the repressive-hypothesis’⁵. Accordingly, the act of ‘liberating’ from the repression is also seen as a manifestation of power, “an honor of a political cause: sex too is placed on the agenda for the future” (Renaud 2013: 80). However, this is not the case for everyone; initially postulated by Sigmund Freud, sexual repression is one of the main fundamental problems of humanity. For the proponents of sexual suppression, sex has been chiefly associated with a taboo, immoral category over the past three centuries of Western World – “something incompatible with a general and intensive work imperative” (Renaud 2013: 79) – that was not allowed to be discussed openly. Freud’s scientific discovery of the unconscious becomes an impetus for the writers to transit their psychic manifestations to the readers as a potential mechanism for articulating existential problems. All normative rules are socially determined in a particular historical period, and they are created and governed by the community to be followed and practised. Even though the socio-political function of those norms changes over time, deviation from the expected rules is usually assigned as something aberrated that shakes off the powerful social spectrums. Drawing upon it, much critical attention in Modernism goes beyond the domain of – ‘sexual subaltern’⁶ – liberating sexuality by underpinning the themes of human sexuality, identity formations, and the repression of sexual desires in literature. The emergence of the new sexual ethic marked a significant departure from the Victorian era. In her work, *Love among the Daughters* (1975), Elspeth Huxley writes that one of the reasons for Victorian prudery “was not religion or morality that kept most of us relatively chaste, but lack of facilities” (Glicksberg: 1973: XIII). Victorian society witnessed remarkable technological developments, abolishment of slavery, and socio-economic and political changes by making many reforms. On the other hand, those changes imposed upon Victorian society demanded

⁵ In *the History of Sexuality* (1976), Michael Foucault criticises the validity of emerging socially repressed sexuality as a by-product of the bourgeois and capitalist society. Foucault breaks with the classical theories of repression/control on sexuality and insists that the domain of power cannot be truly comprehended to repressive theory, and he suggests that it was this period that cherished and proliferated sexuality. He claims that power does not always have a negative outcome but often has a creative, productive effect. Moreover, Foucauldian thesis encouraged us to see sexuality as a premise and an object of discourse.

⁶ In Postcolonial theory, the term subaltern denotes the marginalised underdogs of the society who do not have a right to speak up in the colonial power and male-dominated society.

implementing a new course for the existing social equilibrium. Value choices gained utter importance, which counterproductively ended with cultivating moral disdains. The vivid image of Victorian England personified in ‘Mrs Grundy’⁷ trapped into the English society. The exploitation of the inferior classes for producing manual labour, creating double standards, gender inequality, a cult of domesticity, and puritanism came hand in hand and modified social perception. As a result, Victorian complacency was also imposed on sexuality. To quote Charles I. Glicksberg,

What the Victorians refused to face was the appalling but incontrovertible fact of immorality. It was as if they wished to deny the existence of evil – and sex outside the bounds of marriage was stigmatised as evil incarnate – by preventing its appearance in fiction. The realities of the world of sex – adultery, rape, venereal disease, illegitimate births, homosexuality, and prostitution – were kept discreetly hidden from the reading public. (1973: 15)

Making social conventions motivated the Victorian era to distillate what was morally acceptable or obscene and illicit. Many reasons lie precisely within the Victorian act of sexual repressions; fear of rampant sexual diseases which could cause physical or mental disorders, the religious connotation of sex as a strict boundary phenomenon within the marriage, disenfranchised ‘fallen women’, and prostitution that sprang from the rigid economic starvation. All of these paved the way to the formation of the Victorian mindset. Ultimately, the Victorian epoch made “pornography and especially pornographic writing ... an industry” (Glicksberg 1973: 5). Sexual deviances were not mentioned out loud and led to “a macabre assortment of impotent men, frigid women, secret addicts, and masturbators drained to death” (Stage 1975: 480). This explicit representation of Victorian ethics directly conflicts with what modernists strive for. In this realm, Oscar Wilde’s *l’art pour l’art* (art for art’s sake) and his way of the world become a driving force to reflect on the figuratively dead society. His aesthetic art project aims to criticise larger social constructs he comes to be part of. Oscar Wilde mocks the bigotry and the corruption of the authorities that desexualised human beings by demonising sexuality. Wilde’s sexual orientation and scandals as an

⁷ Mrs Grundy is a figurative name of an extremely conventional person originated from Thomas Morton’s 1798 play *Speed the Plough* and who then appeared in Samuel Butler’s 1872 novel, *Erewhon*.

archetypal bisexual marked a notorious tendency in society. In Victorian times and primarily throughout history, sex/sexuality has always been one of the control mechanisms to oppress society. One might say that the main driving force for the emergence of modern sexual ethics is the unfolding of that social unrest: “homosexuality, sadism, nymphomania and satyriasis were rampant at all levels of society, from the highest to the lowest” (Glicksberg 1973: IX).

Modernist writers depict the change of the order, removing the conventional constraints of the “canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law” (Foucault 1978: 37). As noted, modernist attitudes towards sexuality, sex, and gender relations changed due to the vast contributions to the modern world. On the one hand, Freud went beyond an established pattern and wrote a ground-breaking work in psychoanalysis regarding secret desires, unconscious drives, sexual interests, liberal forces, the functioning of the psyche with breaking boundaries and manifesting them into other realms. On the other hand, twentieth-century collective trauma due to the cataclysmic events, two world wars following the Cold War, economic and social disparities, feminist revolutions, and vicious and destabilising beliefs became very palpable for modernists to elaborate and account for existential problems. From this point, the themes of gender and sexuality sneaked into the viable modernist enterprise. At the height of the modernist era, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Marcel Proust cause a revolution that focuses on the individual and not on the collective ‘will’. Sexuality in the modernist era functions as a political act and an aesthetic phenomenon.

The modernist era represents an apocalyptic reaction to the past. In *The Opposite of Desire*, Tonya Krouse directly states that the nucleus and “the politics of modernism lies precisely in the perverse detours and ellipses of its form” (2009: 12). It becomes legitimate and appropriate to write on these issues and resist long-practiced conventional norms. David Lawrence, an ‘arc-heretic’, made themes of sex and sexuality privilege a public discourse. On the macro level, D. H. Lawrence “privileges sex as a gateway to ‘truth’, as a way of escaping power” (Krouse 1974: 25). Tonya Krouse

applies Foucault's *scientia sexualis*⁸ and *the ars erotica*⁹ to Lawrence's creativity, in which Lawrence's project operates mainly in terms of *the ars erotica*. For Lawrence, a sexual act was identified as something divine, ecstasy that is to say, "the burden of separate selfhood is lifted and each partner at the climax of orgasm is mystically reborn, fused with the creative energy of the universe" (Glicksberg 1973: 89). Lawrence dialectically pins love-making down as spiritual and emotional in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. For him, *Eros*, ('sexual fulfillment') gains a redemptive function to get free from the historical handicaps. Most notably, Lawrence believes that

not sex for the sake of sex, sex functioning on a purely psychological level, but sex as uniting the chthonic instincts and the consciousness of the modern man ... "the fulfilment of our desires, down to the deepest and most spiritual desire. The body is immediate, the spirit is beyond: first the leaves and then the flower: but the plant is an integral whole: therefore *every* desire, to the very deepest. (Glicksberg 1973: 91)

There is also a running motif within Modernist literature to elaborate on a highly gendered society. English female novelists were often disguised as male writers¹⁰ to fight against gender inequality. To this point, if women were not supposed to have a part in the 'Great Tradition of English Literature', Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Mary Butts, Dorothy Richardson, May Sinclair, and other feminist writers overtly criticised the institution of marriage, their marginalised, submissive position in the society. Virginia Woolf is hailed as a seminal feminist writer in the modernist canon; without her, women would have to struggle to express themselves, their thoughts, and worldviews in their writings. Furthermore, Woolf contributes herself to redefining the gender roles of women and shaping the identity of the 'new woman', who "had no tradition behind them" (Marshik and Peace 2019: 4). Another important contextual detail that pertains to Woolf's question of why there have not been any great female writers is her way of revealing the façade of humanity by inventing a hypothetical character called Judith, Shakespeare's sister in *A Room of One's Own*. With this example to make her

⁸ Science of sexuality is an economy of desires and sees an act of sex as a way of reproduction

⁹ Erotic art applies to the knowledge and experience of sexual pleasure

¹⁰ It was common practice for female writers (The Brönte sisters (The Bell brothers), Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot, etc.) to write under a male pseudonym or anonymously (e.g. Jane Austen as 'A Lady') to avoid censorship and prejudice from the male-dominated society.

point, she scrutinises the repressive society by highlighting what would have happened if a female born in Shakespeare's time wanted to write fiction and become as famous as her brother. But she could not do this because of the social restrictions imposed upon women, and she portrays the poignant reality of much of human history and suggests the solution that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Roe 2000: 152). James Joyce similarly has significant importance in importing a new understanding of sexuality and moral evolution into this modernist agenda. Most importantly, the clash between traditional and progressive literature gave birth to literary manifestations that have considerably changed the attitudes toward sex, sexuality, and gender.

Chapter 2: Sexual Ethics, Gender Relations, and Respective Moments of Epiphany in James Joyce's Creativity

I am trying ... to give people some kind of intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment by converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own ... for their mental, moral, and spiritual uplift (Ellman 1982: 163)

– James Joyce

James Joyce (1882 – 1941), "the epitome of a high modernist, an artist for and of the cultural elite" (Norris 1998: 1), is the most enigmatic, controversial, and celebrated writer in the intellectual and academic realm of literature. His artistic sensibility, freedom, and a gradual discovery of the literary characters and techniques are unanimously acknowledged. Indeed, James Joyce was a particularly distinguished writer who successfully disentangled himself from the traditional constraints of religion, ideologies, etc., that he was exposed to by his contemporary society. His enthusiasm and commitment to transmute and recreate his real world through the verbal tissue reflect precisely what he brings to that world – language talent. In this sense,

his preoccupations to achieve unlimited freedom of the individual and make “extravagant excursions into forbidden territory” (Ellmann 1993: 22) gives him a new impulse to depict all-around, ‘real’ human nature *par excellence* that would not be idealised or romanticised. In this regard, the private life of “a man of small virtue, inclined to extravagance and alcoholism” (Ellmann 1993: 25) played a pivotal role in forming his artistic values and spirit, which guided him throughout his artistic creativity. It is from this approach that James Joyce started creating intellectually stimulating works, particularly *Dubliners* (1914), a transformation of *Stephen Hero* into *The Portrait of the Artist* (1916), *Exiles* (1918), the most revolutionary and landmark work – *Ulysses* (1922) and the most challenging and knotty book – *Finnegans Wake* (1939).

James Joyce’s love-hate relationship with his homeland, Ireland, has a causal explanation. Joyce, similar to other canonical ‘high modernist’ expatriates, such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden, Ernest Hemingway, was alienated from his home country and voluntarily became an exile as he did not see any future for him in Dublin.¹¹ Therefore, he became an exile of “the uncreated conscience of my race” (Ehrlich 1984: 12) and of Ireland that was “sick, – psychologically, morally and socially – and that its malady was “hemiplegia¹²,” which is a partial unilateral paralysis” (Bowen and Carens 1984: 159). Joyce remarks in one of his letters about *Dubliners* to Constantine Curran: “I am writing a series of epicleti – ten – for a paper. I have written one. I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city” (Ellmann 1982: 163), which does suggest that ‘epicleti’, hypothetically, could be identified what later Joyce named as an epiphany. Florenc L. Walzl, on the other hand, elaborates: “though *epicleti* and *epiphanies* are related words, they are not synonymous. The *epicleti* are the creative processes; the *epiphanies*, the resulting manifestations” (1965: 437).

¹¹ Joyce from 1904 until his death 1941 lived in Italy, France and Switzerland and never went back to living in Ireland.

¹² Joyce wanted to make a career in medicine and had three attempts to study it, but finally, he gave it up. This is why he uses medical terms as metaphors in the context of illness and diseases to reflect on Irish society.

Accumulation of the biographical patterns, such as growing up in a catholic family with a heavily alcoholic and sometimes abusive father, John Stanislaus Joyce, and a patient, pious mother, Mary Jane Murrey, an antipode of his father, has become one of the driving forces for Joyce to reflect ordinary real-life issues in his novels. Even though he left Ireland, the main subject of his writing was revolved around the “ambitious and intense” (Ellmann 1982: 98) city; or, to put it in Joyce’s words, about ‘Irish paralysis’. The continual relocation of his family to poorer residences caused by his father’s bankruptcy and discontent negatively impacted sunny Jim’s¹³ childhood. Apparently, Joyce developed a troubled, iconoclastic relationship with the Roman Catholic Church, starting from the Clongowes Wood College (1888-1891)¹⁴, a Jesuit boarding school, later in the Belvedere College (1893-1898) and the University of Dublin (1898-1902) with the detachment and the loss of his faith (Ellmann 1982: 42)¹⁵. Ultimately, it seemed for Joyce that the church, with its dogmatic rules and narrow-minded priests, was depriving Irish people of their identities and freethinking, particularly towards sexuality. He manifests his rebellion in the letter to Nora Barnacle: “Now I make open war upon it [church] by what I write say and do” (Ehrlich 1984: 1).

The universality of James Joyce in his private and artistic war against dogmas was also to substitute religious epiphanies with secular epiphanies – constructing “his own authority by the light of his senses” (Fraser 2007: 86). From 1901 till 1904, Joyce started recording earlier epiphanies of his fiction as sketches, currently known as *prose poems*. Initially, there were about 71 epiphanies, from which only 40 manuscripts survived¹⁶ (22 holograph manuscripts are at the University of Buffalo Collection, while the rest 18 were copied by Stanislaus Joyce. Joyce even sent his ‘epiphanies’ to George Russell to have a look, on which Russell instructed: “to flatter him [them] for

¹³James Joyce’s nickname in his childhood.

¹⁴ The first incident when Joyce (Stephen Dedalus) was unfairly punished by ‘Father Dolan’, in real life Father James Daly (Ellmann 1982: 28) resulted in losing his faith gradually in Catholic priesthood, Jesuits.

¹⁵ Richard Ellmann is one of the most acclaimed and copious biographers in the twentieth century, who published James Joyce in 1959 and revised it in 1982. That is why I have mostly relied on his immensely objective and detailed biography of James Joyce to reflect on this thesis.

¹⁶ Sangam MacDuff in the *Panepiphanal World: James Joyce’s Epiphanies* (2020) differentiates between dramatic and lyrical, dream epiphanies “the twin poles of Joyce’s art” (MacDuff: 18). Morris Beja calls them ‘direct’ and ‘delayed’ epiphanies (1971:15).

future use” (Ellmann 1982: 109). Even though Russell was not fascinated with those ‘epiphanies’, Joyce continued to write epiphanies progressively in his collection, “and so help me devil I will write only the things that approve themselves to me and I will write them the best way I can” (Ellmann 1982: 121). Later, James told his brother Stanislaus that in case of his death, his copies of “epiphanies should be sent to all the great libraries of the world, the Vatican not excepted”¹⁷ (Ellmann 1982: 109). Subsequently, these ‘epiphanies’ constitute foundational pillars for constructing his fiction.

The urgent need for Joyce to explore the ordinary world also becomes a primary catalyst in *Dubliners*. Another conspicuous element in terms of epiphanies is the – ‘Aha moment’¹⁸ – reaching the highest point, culmination of the stories through the singularity of epiphanies. “The Dead” is probably the most influential short story, novella, that has ever been written in the English canon. Inspired by his wife, Nora Barnacle, Joyce created a literary masterpiece that takes place on the Feast of the Epiphany (Theophany of God). The story is about a man, Gabriel Conroy, being revealed himself. Joyce chronologically unfolds his protagonist’s inner ‘self’, his self-estrangement. Apparently, the concluding paragraph of the story, Gretta’s revelation of her former lover Michale Fureay, becomes a turning point, ‘paralyses’ for him. Gabriel’s expectations were reversed; he failed to ‘know’ his wife, the most intimate person he was living with. He was emotionally distanced from her; he knew ‘nothing’ about her. At the end of the story, he experiences the spiritual and intellectual epiphany that everyone will end their life with the same fate – death – where the snow metaphorically has an in-between role between life and death. This is what pervades and moves Joyce’s art – a deep understanding of human beings. In this case, Gabriel’s epiphany is achieved in retrospect through the memorable phase, recalling the past

¹⁷During his walk on the Sandymount Strand, Stephen Dedalus parodies his artistic desire to make from his 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. ... When one reads these strange pages of one long gone feels that one is at one with one who once. ...” (*Ulysses* 1984: 34)

¹⁸ The Eureka effect refers to the sudden psychological insight into one’s mind. Synonym of epiphany.

events, where the snow has an imagery function of coming down all over Ireland.

His aesthetics in art reverberates around the politics: “my intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis” (Delany 1972: 256). Joyce’s resolutions, starting from the split of the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1890 following the revelation of the MP Stewart Parnell’s adulterous relationship and continuing with criticising the rhetoric of Irish politics, went beyond the aspect of “those big words ... [ideologies, church, etc.] which make us so unhappy” (Manganiello 1992: 241); in this respect, as Dominik Manganiello quotes Herbert Read in his 1980 year study *The Politics of the Unpolitical in Joyce’s Fiction*, “to be unpolitical does not mean to be without politics: every attitude that is egoistic is to that extent social, and a social attitude is a political attitude” (Manganiello 1992: 241). Consequently, Joyce’s normative position of egoism as a loner, “the individual passion ... the motive power of everything – art and philosophy included” (Manganiello 1992: 244), is to find his own purpose and create his own story as an artist. Furthermore, one of the key stresses of his audacious passion is another facet of Joyce’s tentative art/politics related to sexual morals throughout his writings. Strictly speaking, his revolutionary, eccentric ideas were harshly criticised and condemned as repugnant, pornographic “literature of the latrine ... stupid glorification of mere filth” (Brown 1988: 1), and it was not fitting to the moral paradigm of that contemporary society. Richard Brown, in his highly original study *James Joyce and Sexuality*, deliberately examines Joyce’s ‘obsession’ with sexuality: “Joyce’s fiction ... would have less stature, less of a sense of centrality to the intellectual life our century, less ‘modernity’ in our estimation, did not respond to this felt importance of sexuality and sexual change” (Brown 1988: 4). Indeed, this aspect makes him an artist, to make the unnoticed mentionable and breakthrough the conventional norms exposed to individuals. Yet, ultimately, his potential to record epiphanic moments as a formative concept in his literary inspirations becomes a central source to reflect on human life. Joyce encodes his subject matter of ontology of sex/gender through the mastered

technique of secular epiphanies. Richard Brown's point is well taken when he accentuates Joyce's account in forming new sexual ideology:

His works seem importantly connected to attitudes to marriage, to the scientific interest in sexuality, to non-reproductive priorities in sex and to women, that we characterise as modern. The need to write about such subjects was a strong determining force in his fiction. (1988: 10)

In the broad context, his goal is to shift the ground of the already established discourse of sexuality in which paradigmatic epiphanies function as a unique form of perceiving reality where characters can express themselves to release their emotional distress through the epiphanies. Joyce's use of language and his epiphanies do not necessarily have a clear outcome on the characters, which means that Joyce leaves space for subjective interpretation, that is to say, "readers are invited to fill the gap by speculating about what is missing" (MacDuff 2020: 61).

2.1. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* – Gender, Sexuality, Epiphany

*Aut viam inveniam auf faciam*¹⁹

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, a refined version of *Stephen Hero* and a prelude to *Ulysses*, is James Joyce's semi-autobiographical fictionalised novel published on 19 December 1916. As Father Newmann says, "literature is to man in some sort what autobiography is to the individual; it is his Life and Remains ... partly of man in rebellion" (T. Noon 1963: 559). Equally important, Stephen Dedalus postulates his contradictory theory of 'Hamlet' to John Eglinton (W.K. Magee) in the National Library that Shakespeare is at the same time father, son, and a ghost. Stephen metaphorically highlights that all literature is seemingly autobiographical and that all literature "unites art with life" (Peery 1952: 111). It was also James Joyce's intention to deal realistically with the human mind of Stephen Dedalus. The first name of the eponymous character, Stephen, alludes to the biblical martyr²⁰ and the second

¹⁹ Latin phrase for "I shall either find a way or make one"

²⁰ Stephen is the first Christian martyr accused and stoned to death for his blasphemous teachings by the Jewish religious authorities.

one to the Greek Dedalus.²¹ Similarly, in juxtaposition to his namesakes, Stephen Dedalus embodies someone who has to become a martyr for his artistic vocation and metaphorically build the wings to overthrow all the systems, even if someone “pull[s] out his eyes” (*Portrait* 6). At the core of this coming-of-age novel is the story of Stephen Dedalus’ artistic and psychological development from his sensitive childhood to his rebellious adolescence. Stephen is a highly reflective character who does not meet the social expectations because his worldview is utterly different to what he is supposed to have. He attempts to escape the ‘labyrinth’ of Ireland through his artistic perceptions and mighty struggle to resist the conventional norms of society. As a ubiquitous, and most importantly, healing phenomenon *per se*, art penetrates Stephen’s everyday life and makes him break the social chains placed on him. As an aspiring artist and an *alter ego* of James Joyce, at the end of the story, he realises what it takes for him to be a free-spirited individual without having an existential fear of destabilising himself. What makes Stephen a universal character is his sceptical mode, to question and doubt the validity of the larger units, systems, structures to reconsider and rethink what has been already established.

In doing so, Joyce incorporates epiphanies – mode of perception – throughout Stephen’s psychic formation to transcend a physical world and to see it in a new way from the perspective of the protagonist. The epiphanies play a profound role in shaping Stephen’s artistic commitment that mostly helps him to release unconscious conflicts and achieve integrity in his spiritual and intellectual life. Probably the most defining aspect of epiphanies as a reparative power of art in terms of Stephen’s character is its cognitive significance to grasp and modify reality that helps to shape Stephen’s artistic creation. Epiphanies are also paramount and requisite in understanding Stephen’s gender performance, his sexual development, arousal of his sexual

²¹ James Joyce often uses mythological elements and allusions in his fiction. Similarly, Daedalus alludes to the Greek mythical figure, a craftsman and architect who built the Minotaur’s labyrinth for King Minos at Knossos, Crete, written in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. He later was imprisoned with his son, Icarus, in the tower by King Minos. Daedalus helped Queen Pasiphae to produce the Minotaur, and also Ariadne, the daughter of Pasiphae and King Minos, to escape from the labyrinth with the help of the string with Athenian hero Theseus. As a symbol of artistic creation and wisdom, Daedalus invented wings made from feathers and wax to escape exile. Icarus ignores his father’s instructions, flies too close to the sun, and eventually dies tragically.

desires/lust as a queer²² protagonist, and how these epiphanies relate to the formation of his identity, where all-embracing “god and morality and religion come first” (*Portrait* 32). At this point, James Joyce deliberately uses epiphany to elucidate Stephen’s journey of his *Via Dolorosa*²³. In this sense, all instances of major or minor manifestation of epiphanies are deeply intertwined in Stephen’s ‘queer’ thinking. In other words, the epiphany that has to be momentarily captured and maybe later elaborated on functions as a resolution of a conflict.

Before discussing Stephen’s sexually ambivalent imagery and gender consciousness, it is relevant to discuss Stephen’s first epiphany in his early identity formation. To quote Hugh Kenner, “every theme in the entire life-work of James Joyce is stated on the first two pages of the *Portrait*” (1984: 365). From the beginning of the novel, we encounter infant Stephen, who starts to navigate and conceptualise his microcosmos by activating his sensory perceptions. Hugh Kenner expands upon Stephen’s sensory awareness by pinpointing that in Joyce’s oeuvre, “the sense of smell corresponds to the discrimination of empirical reality, sight to the phantasms of oppression, hearing to the imaginative life; while touch and taste together are associated with sex” (1948: 363).

Stephen’s inclination towards his mother that she “had a nicer smell than his father” (*Portrait* 5), is a clear example of Stephen unconsciously starting to polarise socially gendered behaviours – a dichotomous distinction between male and female categories. Another, more often credited dimension of his emotional response to the repressive stimuli was hiding under the table when, for example, Stephen tells Dante (Catholic governess) that when he grows up, he wants to marry Eileen (a young catholic girl living in the neighbourhood). It is Joyce’s first step towards recording epiphanies in a *Portrait*. Stephen starts to face the unpleasant moments of reality, early discomfort, particularly when Mrs Dedalus and Dante are trying to get Stephen to apologise, otherwise “the eagles will come and pull out his eyes”

²² James Joyce uses the term ‘queer’ with its original meaning to call someone or something strange or peculiar. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, the word ‘queer’ gained its pejorative meaning for the plethora of sexual orientations in the early 20th century.

²³ A Latin phrase denoting a route of suffering.

(*Portrait 6*). The female figures, particularly antagonistic Dante Riordan – “the paternal threat of castration [pulling out eyes]” (Yoshida 1977: 40) – establish powerful matrimony and open up female discourse by that point. Dante’s terrifying words “pull out his eyes, / Apologise” (*Portrait 6*) cause Stephen’s first mental-cognitive realisation that he is doing something wrong/transgressive. It also highlights the instrumental power of the catholic church. Through his perception, Stephen starts dialectically to delineate, categorise, and self-understand what is morally right and wrong.

Later, Stephen is exposed with his naivety to the rigidity of his classmates in Clongowes Wood College. Still, he tries to overcome external pressures with his ability to visualise and think about things. By the same token, Stephen’s rebellious nature becomes the cornerstone of his creativity. As a matter of consequence, Stephen attempts to find his place in the hostile and restrictive environment where he lists himself at the head of the universe: “Stephen Dedalus ... The Universe” (*Portrait 12*). Moreover, Joyce ironically portrays Stephen’s traumatic confusion when malevolent Wells teases Stephen about kissing his mother before sleeping. After responding that he does and being laughed at, he changes his answer with “I do not” (*Portrait 11*), and they laugh again. Stephen does not understand their binary logic to the ontological question “what was the right answer to the question” (*Portrait 11*) as he is laughed at and humiliated either way. Correspondingly, this is the illustration that Stephen, similar to Oedipus²⁴ subconsciously, is emotionally linked to his mother when he speaks retrospectively “his mother put her lips on his cheek; her lips were soft and they wetted his cheek; and they made a tiny little noise: kiss. Why did people do that with their two faces?” (*Portrait 11*).

Stephen’s early life-defining experiences are a precursor of his ontological concerns. Stephen’s insecurities from the square-ditch incident to the mysterious ‘smuggling’ scandal’, “homosexual panic” (Sedgwick 1990: 185) as it is called by Sedgwick, to Father Dolan’s (Prefect of Clongowes) unfair pandying, endorse the idea that Stephen’s mistrust of authority is becoming real. Moreover, many critics have already conjugated on Stephen’s

²⁴ Oedipus is a tragic hero in Greek mythology, who ended up with killing his father and marrying his mother.

bipolar masculine and feminine identity that drives him to what Freud calls anxiety-neurosis.

As we follow the development of Stephen Dedalus through his inner thoughts and emotions, one can conclude that “ultimately, as the insistent climax of the overture shows, its [*Portrait's*] central theme is *Sin*: the development of Stephen Dedalus from a bundle of sensations to a matured, self-conscious, dedicated, fallen being” (Kenner 1948: 365). As Stephen matures, so do his unorthodox sexual desires. In the second chapter, Stephen starts to reveal the dynamics of his sexual epiphanies. The major epiphanies²⁵ pronounced by Morris Beja have a moving, climactic effect for Stephen to become an artist. His sexual epiphanies, deeply intertwined with his spiritual manifestations starting from the second chapter, also governs the climax and touch all aspects of a sexually maturing individual. Stephen’s transition from innocence to his sexual upheavals to avoid the physical reality starts when he fantasises about Edmond Dante’s lover, Mercedes²⁶, who becomes a catalyst in indulging and evoking his sexual desires. In his dreamlike epiphany, Stephen perceives an ideal image of experiencing his metamorphosis:

they would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made their tryst, perhaps at one of the gates or in some more secret place. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (*Portrait* 54)

Stephen’s ability to create a mental image of his romantic reveries and sexual fantasies induces his sense of isolation and ‘otherness’ from others. Ultimately, Stephen’s lust “to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul constantly beheld” (*Portrait* 54) takes his solace when he meets Emma at the party at Harrold’s Cross. Stephen has a somewhat contradictory perception of women. His mental image perceives women as either whores or as “TOVER OF IVORY ... House of Gold” (*Portrait* 29) with no harmony between them as he perceives Emma or Eileen as impure and unapproachable.

²⁵ Morris Beja (in Bowen and Carens 1984: 712-13) provides the list of the clear use of epiphanies.

²⁶ Fictional character in Alexander Duma’s novel *The Count of Monte Cristo*, who betrays Edmond Dantès.

Stephen's distortion of reality is caused because in those days, "the seclusion of the sexes both in school and in social life ... made it impossible for adolescents like Stephen to express themselves sexually and innocently" (Bowen and Carens 1984: 287). Stephen instantly realises that he can "hold her and kiss her" (*Portrait* 58) when Emma comes too close to him, but he is withheld by something, and most probably, it is his generalisation of divine traits on females he encounters. That can be linked to his Madonna-whore complex, which William York Tindall accentuated: "Stephen's trouble or one of them, is seeing woman as virgin or whore" (Tindall 1979: 92-93).

But later, he comes to the realisation that he has to recreate "life out of life" (*Portrait* 145) and he writes a poem "To E – C –" (*Portrait* 58), where Stephen breaks his silence and sublimates an act of desire, and, eventually, heals his soul: "when the moment of farewell had come the kiss, which has been withheld by one, was given by both" (*Portrait* 59). At this point, Stephen overcomes and replaces the demeaning system of values by compensating it with creating an approachable and alternative reality – poetry. Emma, like Mercedes, becomes a temptress for him. After detecting artistic temperament – heresy – in his essay and later arguing with Heron and the other two boys about Byron, Stephen's fall into his psycho-sexual sins is sped up. He is overwhelmed by the continuous economic instability of his family, and the fact that he will not go back to school contributes further to his troublesome relationship with his father. It is hard not to see Stephen's epiphanic flash when travelling with his father to Cork and seeing the word – 'Foetus' – carved deeply into a desk in the old medical college, where Mr Dedalus used to go in his formative years. Stephen experiences Catharsis when he realises that he is not alone with his down-to-earth sexual impulses. Through the moment of epiphany, "a vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk" (*Portrait* 75), as the radiant relationship with the object abruptly shocks the beholder:

It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words. He had soon given in to them and allowed them to sweep across and abase his intellect, wondering always where they

came from, from what den of monstrous images, and always weak and humble towards others, restless and sickened of himself when they had swept over him. (*Portrait* 75-76)

Stephen not only detaches himself from his father to become his model, but he acknowledges his fault for involving himself in degrading and sinful homoerotic “mad and filthy orgies” (*Portrait* 76), which clearly alludes to Stephen’s onanistic activities. Joyce apparently knew that “institutionalised and politicised religion inevitably leads to a prostitution of a self” (Bowen and Carens 1984: 303). His paralysis caused by his perverse thoughts makes him unstable as he has paranoid feelings of alienation and disconnection caused by his unbearable life. It is from this perspective that “nothing moved him or spoke to him from the real world unless he heard in it an echo of the infuriated cries within him” (*Portrait* 77). Stephen’s sexual phantoms become a concomitant of his adolescent life, and to clear his mind from those tormenting thoughts, he needs to find an object of his desire to nurture his physical fulfilment. So that “Stephen, the embryo artist and rebel” (Beja 1971: 106) looks for a Mercedes-like figure in the real world to alleviate his existential crisis:

He wandered up and down the dark slimy streets peering into the gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly for any sound. He moaned to himself like some baffled *prowling beast*. He wanted to sin with another of his kind, to force another being to sin with him and to exult with her in sin. (*Portrait* 83)

During Stephen’s nocturnal wanderings with animal ‘mating instincts’ in Dublin’s dirty streets, he ends up encountering a prostitute as his somewhat megalomaniacal ‘animal appetites’ for sex becomes inevitable. The most significant and focal epiphany in the second chapter occurs when he takes the first sexual intercourse to stop his sexual annihilation with the nameless harlot. Stephen physically enters the forbidden territory of sins and succumbs to his sexual urges because “his blood was in revolt” (*Portrait* 148). The prostitute explicitly becomes an antidote for his repressed sexual impulses. As Jeanne McKnight puts it, “Stephen must meet head-on what terrifies him as it proves to himself that he can quell his mind’s unrest” (1977: 426). Provided that he has to pursue his passion for becoming an artist, he must eradicate all the boundaries that hinder him from liberating himself:

Her round arms held him firmly to her and he, seeing her face lifted to him in serious calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping. Tears of joy and relief shone in his delighted eyes and his lips parted though they would not speak. (*Portrait* 84)

Certainly, Stephen does not take the role of an expected active male in sexual intercourse. He maintains a passively impotent position as “his lips would not bend to kiss her” (*Portrait* 85), which can be linked to his traumatic sexuality and the realisation of feeling guilty consuming him. Subsequently, to resolve the conflict in this climactic passage, Joyce attaches to this epiphany divine importance. Stephen’s perceptual experience is merely transformed into his spiritual rebirth and scrupulously depicts his self-actualisation:

It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of her softly parting lips. They pressed upon his brain as upon his lips as though they were the vehicle of a vague speech; and between them he felt an unknown and timid pressure, darker than the swoon of sin, softer than sound or odour. (*Portrait* 85)

Ultimately, Stephen Dedalus becomes vulnerable to his sinful nature and realises that his soul is in a vortex of conflicts; he has to repent. Only the fear of *Inferno* and death makes him submissive to the religious doctrine when he says in his religious epiphany that “what did it profit a man to gain the whole world if he lost his soul” (*Portrait* 106). He realises that religion cannot bring him happiness and artistic creation, and his self-mortification becomes a prerequisite of his “non-serviam”²⁷ (*Portrait* 99). In the next chapters, Stephen realises that his rigorous treatment of himself and self-discipline do not necessarily make him free from those ‘sins’. In the climactic passage of the novel, Stephen achieves maturation and understanding that it is an art that can save, explicitly and implicitly, his inner self. He “had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her graveclothes. Yes! Yes! Yes!” (*Portrait* 143). Later, the ‘bird-girl’ image makes a dramatic resolution, becoming a creative impulse for him. He rejects priesthood as he has “to move like the fallen Lucifer, or Satan, among the snares of the world” (Bowen and Carens 1984: 308). Her “mortal beauty” (*Portrait* 144) ends with an epiphanic exclamation of his soul “Heavenly God! Cried Stephen’s soul in an outburst of profane

²⁷ Latin, meaning “I will not serve”.

joy” (*Portrait* 144). Within this image, Stephen realises his artistic calling and determination to art for the rest of his life:

Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy. Her eyes had called him and his soul had leaped at the call. *To live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life!* A wild angel had appeared to him, the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life, to throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory. On and on and on and on! (*Portrait* 145)

And most importantly, this epiphany is also a synthesis of his mutually exclusive understanding of women, and it “resolves Stephen’s conflicting feelings about women, transcending, as part of an aesthetic vision, both virgin and whore” (Bowen and Carens 1984: 309). Additionally, a materialisation of this image happens a bit later, when Stephen composes Villanelle as a starting point for his artistic creativity. Consequently, transcended Stephen Icarus, who does not serve Ireland – “the old sow that eats her farrow” (*Portrait* 171) – is ready to leave his country and write in his self-imposed exile.

2.2. *Ulysses* – Gender, Sexuality, Epiphany

Ulysses is undoubtedly the most perplexing and written-about literary masterpiece. Good-humoured James Joyce was right when he replied to the French writer Jacques Benoît-Méchin after he requested to see the schema for translating “Penelope”: “I have put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality” (Ellmann 1982: 521). Publishing *Ulysses* became very problematic for Joyce, as publishers were detecting “obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy disgusting or indecent” (Birmingham 2014: 167) accounts, violating the Obscenity Law²⁸ and taboos that were not to be spoken about. With this precedent of transgression, Joyce prepared the ground to overturn an obsolete system and its legal trials²⁹ that

²⁸ Obscenity laws are meant to regulate those materials that contain possible elements of pornography not to violate communal decency (encyclopedia Britannica).

²⁹ In February 1921, Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap were fined \$100 for publishing the obscene chapter “Nausicaa”. To solve the litigation process, John Quinn, who himself did

suppressed and defined the intellectual sphere. However, benevolent Sylvia Beach, an American-born female publisher in Paris, did a heroic job of having the courage to publish ‘the most dangerous’ book and even to smuggle them outside of Paris when no one dared to go against the censorship.

No single book in Modernism leaves room for as many different interpretations as *Ulysses* does. Nevertheless, one indisputable thing is that Joyce tries to bind humanity together through mundane, ordinary events, especially when considering his preoccupation with exploring the human psyche in terms of sex and sexuality, forming one’s identity, and reflecting on gender performance. In other words, Joyce places sexuality in *Ulysses* on its pedestal. Moreover, one can assume that “Joyce’s fiction ... would have less stature, less of a sense of centrality to the intellectual life of our century, less ‘modernity’ in our estimation, did it not respond to this felt importance of sexuality and sexual change” (Marshik and Pease 2019: 55). In this regard, epiphanies became an effective medium to register the character’s revealing moments, establish their identity, mainly through the stream of consciousness, and, most importantly, create a fabric to serve Joyce’s artistic purpose.

As for the epiphanies, Richard Kearney, an Irish philosopher, considers Joyce’s secular epiphanies as the *tour de force* of his intellectuality, which has binary dimensions based on Thomas Aquinas’ aesthetics and John Duns Scotus’ metaphysics (Balinisteanu 2015: 60). If in *Portrait* Joyce manifests Thomistic epiphanies, that is, “‘whatness’ (‘*quidditas*’), manifested as a luminous radiance (*claritas*) ... enabling the world’s ascension to the divine” (Balinisteanu 2015: 60), in *Ulysses* he changes his understanding of epiphanies by adopting “‘thisness’ (haecceitas), according to which the universal is manifested in particular forms which cannot be repeated, thereby constituting the thisness of the universal as divine descended into the world” (Balinisteanu 2015: 60). In this sense, for Joyce, epiphanies showcase self-recreation materialised in everyday reality. To a large extent, by incorporating

not understand Joyce but supported him, invited three literary experts to examine the degree of obscenity in *Ulysses*. After reading a passage of “Nausicaa” out of context, it was unanimously deemed as a ‘dirty book’ by the panel of judges. Ultimately, after an effective suppression, the book was published in the USA in 1933. (Pagnattaro 2001: 217-237).

epiphanies in a larger narrative, Joyce creates a – “highly subjective, introspective, even autobiographical art” (Beja 1971: 47). Most of the epiphanies in *Ulysses* do not serve to bring the narrative to its climax, nor does it have a revelatory function on its own, but what makes Joyce aesthetically privileged is his ability to master the language and, in doing so, to manifest human spirit within the language. Through verbal imagination, Joyce can encode whatever he wants. That is to say, the language – a tool of universal communication – becomes itself an epiphany that is articulated and detected as a revelation. This can go in relation to what Stephen remarked when he parodically said that “in the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh” (*Portrait* 183); at this point, Stephen implicitly symbolises the artistic power of imagination that can transcend ordinary, mundane, into an extraordinary. Robert Langbaum detects 14 epiphanies that are reused in *Ulysses*, and he also elaborates on linguistic epiphanies that are “unique in making language the vehicle of its revelation” (MacDuff 2020: 18), where the form – content, semiotic model signifier – signified, operate to reveal those epiphanies (MacDuff 2020: 163).

Early in the micro-scene of “Nestor”, Mr Garret Deasy makes anti-Semitic remarks that “Jews are the sinners against the light” (*Ulysses* 28), that they killed Jesus, and that is why they became wanderers. Now they are controlling the whole of England following with Stephen’s interjection “who has not?” (*Ulysses* 28) sinned. This passage clearly foreshadows a hostile environment of Ireland that “never let [Jews] in” (*Ulysses* 30); Later in this context is also put – “a wandering Jew” (*Ulysses* 179) – Leopold Bloom. Furthermore, Mr Deasy, other than making factual errors, historicises women’s role and makes them prone to all evil in the world “a woman brought a sin into the world” (*Ulysses* 29). He also comments upon the affair of Parnell and Mrs O’Shea and compares Parnell’s lover to Helen of Troy, who became a ‘scapegoat’ for the Trojan war. Later in the episode of “Aeolus”, we discover that Mr Garret had marital problems. Mr Deasy’s prejudicial rhetoric makes Stephen say a monumental comment, an antithesis of Haine’s conception of “history is to blame” (*Ulysses* 17) for all the atrocities done by imperialist England to Ireland. Stephen rejects it; for him, history does not operate outside of the ‘will’ of people itself, so that “history ... is a nightmare

from which I am trying to awake” (*Ulysses* 28), highlighting the fact that it was literally the historical realm that established rigid systems, ideologies, societies, etc. First and foremost, Stephen has to experience that nightmare to create a platform – future – for his artistic enlightenment. Equally important, Stephen in the *Portrait* uncompromisingly tries to get free from all the biological constraints that hinder him from becoming an artist. While in *Ulysses*, paternity becomes “a legal fiction” (*Ulysses* 170), “a necessary evil” (*Ulysses* 170), “the only true thing in life” (*Ulysses* 170) – “Amor Matris” (*Ulysses* 23) becomes a crisis of identity for him. Therefore, Stephen is haunted by his maternal ghost throughout the novel. He is engulfed with an oppressive feeling that he figuratively killed his mother by not kneeling and praying for her soul. Thus, it is a reasonable assumption that Julia Kristeva, who supposedly “has allied herself ... with male theory” (Roughly 1991: 160), develops her psychoanalytic perspective of a semiotic theory based on the Freudian and Lacanian theories. Kristeva implies repressing and silencing the desire of the maternal aspect where the “language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother” (Roughly 1991: 161). So does Stephen Dedalus for his unnegotiated Oedipus complex, loving his mother and hating his father, “only by silencing and objectifying the mother can Stephen satisfy his infantile craving for oneness and his adult need for autonomy [differentiation]” (Hill 1993: 329). He confronts his threatening mother, “no mother, Let me be and let me live” (*Ulysses* 9), which may embody certain extremes, but it is undisputed that Stephen needs for his self-preservation to get free from his vengeful mother’s presence to develop as an artist. Ultimately, Stephen might have realised in “Circe” after appearing the ghost of “the ghoul! Hyena!” (*Ulysses* 474), “chewer of corpses” (*Ulysses* 9), “beastly dead” (*Ulysses* 7) mother, that the system, “the father’s and the son’s selfish disregard” (Hill 1993: 340), has victimised her. Stephen finally breaks “the maternal hell” (Oded 1985: 43) by saying to the ghostly mother and becomes free: “No! No! No! Break my spirit all of you if you can! I’ll bring you all to heel” (*Ulysses* 475).

To get back to Mr Deasy, for him, humankind moves to only one thing, “one great goal, the manifestation, of God” (*Ulysses* 28), while for Stephen,

“—That is God. / Hurray! Ay! Whrrwhee! ... A shout in the street” (*Ulysses* 28). This is certainly the most unexpected and crowning epiphanic realisation for Stephen, positioned at the centre of Joycean epiphanies. The idea of “a shout in the street” (*Ulysses* 28) provides another link to Joyce’s secular epiphanies because he “does not seek [simple] transcendence of the mundane; rather, Joyce sees the reality disclosed in epiphanic revelation as a hidden thread” (Balinisteanu: 60). With this passage, Joyce not only mocks individuals who uphold those platitude ideas, but it also represents the basis for the labile epiphanies where ‘God’, the aesthetic self, can be manifested everywhere, anytime, in anything. This argument would lead to Richard Kearney’s concept of *ana-theos* in his book *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, where “God became human so that humans could become divine” (Kearney 2017: 31). From this assumption, Joyce establishes his project of epiphanies to open up the new space for the moments of what Kearney calls ‘sacred secularity’ that has to do with the ordinary, trivial divinity.

In this spirit, after becoming familiar with an expanded and modified concept of epiphany, it seems necessary to identify how prevalent those cognitive epiphanies used in *Ulysses* are in terms of sex and gender categories. Epiphany, placed in the larger narrative as ‘the story within the story’ (*Mise en abyme*) (Ricardou and Kestner 1981: 323-338), can be detected in several episodes of *Ulysses*. And yet, while Stephen Dedalus, Buck Mulligan, and Haines are about to have breakfast at 8 a.m. at Martello Tower, in the parallel episode of “Calypso”, we encounter the second down-to-earth protagonist, a Hungarian Jew, who cooks breakfast at 8 a.m. at 7 Eccles Street, for his wife, Molly. It also foreshadows Bloom through the lens of feminine characteristics, who nourishes his family. On Molly’s question of what does ‘metempsychosis’ mean, Bloom, elaborates that it means reincarnation, “transmigration of the souls” (*Ulysses* 52). This word is metaphorically related to Joyce’s project to re-imagine and re-create mythological characters such as, for example Telemachus, Odyssey, and Penelope in the modern setting as Stephen Dedalus, Leopold and Molly Bloom. In this way, *Ulysses* corresponds in Stuart Gilbert’s³⁰ scheme to

³⁰ James Joyce handed the famous 1921 schema for *Ulysses* to Stuart Gilbert, who published it eventually in his book *James Joyce’s “Ulysses”: A Study* in 1930.

Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, an eponymous homesick hero who spent ten years in the Trojan war (*Iliad*) and another ten years to return to his home Ithaca. The episode of "Calypso" also parallels Book five of *The Odyssey*, where Odysseus has been captive by the goddess Calypso for seven years. Thus, we understand that Leopold Bloom is a captive of his wife, with whom he has not had sex since his son, Rudy, passed away. Bloom's innermost thoughts provide an ample opportunity to engage with how he comprehends the world around him. Leopold Bloom legitimately feels desperate because of the death of Rudy, his only son. But he also involves himself in the sadomasochistic life as a cuckold, as Gertrude cuckolds Hamlet's father. Bloom knows that his wife, Molly, sleeps with Blazes Boylan but cannot prevent her from doing this. He is metaphorically castrated, and the only thing he could do to overcome and distract himself from Molly's infidelity is fantasising about sexual actions happening to him or engaging in sexual fantasies with his pen pal, Martha Clifford. The theme of sexuality becomes omnipresent in the mind of Bloom. Starting from getting a glance at a young girl's bottom in the grocery "to catch up and walk behind her if she went slowly, behind her moving hams. Pleasant to see first thing in the morning" (*Ulysses* 9); later with buying soft pornographic book *Sweets of Sin* for Molly; watching women in the street as the object of his sexual fantasies, etc. Later, as Mulligan claims Bloom is "Greeker than the Greeks" (*Ulysses* 165) after noticing Bloom's meticulous examination of the buttock of the Greek Goddess Venus.

Leopold Bloom's gender identity is very controversial. The chapter-by-chapter progression reflectively portrays him as a person who suffers from his overt masculine libido. In the passage of "Lestrigonians", Bloom thinks, in retrospect, about his marital failure and recalls the first meeting with Molly on Howth Head when Molly first said 'YES':

Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth.
 Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and
 chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweet and sour
 with spittle. Joy: I ate it : joy. Young life, her lips that gave me
 pouting. Soft, warm, sticky gumjelly lips ... Hot I tongued her.
 She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair.
 Kissed, she kissed me. Me. And me now. (*Ulysses* 144)

This is a pivotal moment when Bloom appears to realise the drastic changes that happened to him and Molly. In this revealing passage, Bloom pities himself and admits his physical discomfort and sexual humiliation with epiphanic enlightenment, “Me. And me now” (*Ulysses* 144) contributes to his awareness by comparing his current condition and how he and Molly engaged for the first time in sexual intercourse.

Following this, Bloom’s perceptual experience in terms of sexuality and desire in the “Nausicaa” episode is one of the central themes in the book. Being on the Sandymount beach, Leopold Bloom observes a young woman, Gerty MacDowell, which potentially “took place in Bloom’s imagination” (McGee 1987: 306). After Bloom’s self-deprecation and the loss of intimacy with his wife, he accepts Gerty’s ‘sexual invitation’ to fill his emptiness. For the first time in the book, masturbation takes a social setting. It seems rather complicated to sympathise with Bloom’s blatant sexuality. Still, as the novel navigates us, we understand that Bloom is a man of suffering and insularity who is ostracised and undergoes lots of pain that cannot be expressed. Joyce breaks the social conventions by involving Bloom in an onanistic performance that is morally castigated as a sodomy sin and where “the human being is dragged down to the level of animal” (Glücksberg 1973: 86). Moreover, Gerty’s non-verbal assistance as a stimulus for Bloom’s sexual arousal becomes revolutionary because women were not expected to express sexual desires at the time. With the first-person access to Gerty’s romantic thoughts, Joyce portrays subjective accounts of female construction of sentimental, courtly love; that is to say, she is a “victim of Romantic imagination” (McGee 1987: 307) who needs to find her voice. Suzette Henke postulates, “Gerty cannot speak: she can only gaze” (2004-2005: 92), highlighting that she has to preserve her virginity and to make the world bearable, involves herself in an erotic intimacy; Gerty noticed that Bloom’s “hands and face were working” (*Ulysses* 299), that she is an object of Bloom’s carnal/phallogocentric desire, so her maximum exposure when she “swung her leg more in and out in time” (*Ulysses* 256), serves to gaze back rebelliously to what Laura Mulvey calls ‘male gaze’ (Kancilia 2020: 233). After both of them reach the climax of masturbation, as Gerty limps away, Bloom

immediately comes to the point of the “coarse epiphany – “O” ! ... that explains her pathetic sexual compliance. She is lame” (Habegger 1989: 1):

tight boots? No. She’s lame! O!” ... Poor girl! That is why she’s left on the shelf and the others did a sprint. Thought something was wrong by the cut of her jib. Filted beauty. A defect is ten times worse in a woman. But makes them polite. Glad I did not know when she was in show. (*Ulysses* 301)

With this act, Joyce may be suggesting freedom of sex, his attitude towards life that “love, lie, and be handsome for tomorrow we die” (*Ulysses* 311). Subsequently, with a surrogate act of sex, masturbation, the world becomes a little more bearable to him. Eventually, Leopold Bloom’s destabilising sexual turmoil and subconscious, repressed fear led him to the surreal hallucinations in “Nighttown”. This episode of “Circe” is perhaps the most vivid example for dwelling on Freudian motifs. “Physically and mentally estranged” (Brown 1988: 67), Bloom has socially constructed female and male qualities and often appears as an androgynous male. Throughout the day, he wonders what it is to be a woman. At the end of the novel, he becomes “a finished example of the new womanly man” (*Ulysses* 403), who finds his spiritual son, Stephen. From this, we can conclude that Leopold Bloom’s “loss is his gain” (Ehrlich 1984: 120).

One final example of *Ulysses*’ epiphany is a continuous flux of Molly’s stream-of-consciousness in “Penelope”. In the final coda of Molly’s post-coital soliloquy, the word ‘YES’ is repeated throughout the episode 80 times (Olk 2015: 323), resulting in the effect of a constant ongoing epiphany. Molly has been perceived from different perspectives as “earth mother” (Scott 1984: 157), “satanic mistress” (*Ulysses* 157), “thirty-shilling whore” (*Ulysses* 157), etc. In either case, Joyce wrote to Frank Budgen about Molly: “perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib. Ich bin der Fleisch [sic] der stets bejaht*” (Ellman 1982: 215). Translated as “I am the flesh that constantly affirms” (Slote 2013:121), Molly is in direct conflict with what it is called *Das Ewig-Weibliche* and with her fornication, she is antagonistic to *Mater Gloriosa* (Slote 2013: 121). She may not have been intellectually equal to his husband, Bloom, but she gives a reasonable output of how women, in general, were suppressed in a male-dominated Ireland in 1904.

After making love to Boylan, Molly reminisces about past events and, mostly, her thoughts are connected to sex. Even though she liked the act, she still protests how Boylan slapped her “one thing I didn’t like his slapping me behind” (*Ulysses* 122), highlighting the fact that unsophisticated Boylan does not have respect towards her, that she is not “a horse or an ass” (*Ulysses* 610). She goes further and protests patriarchal traits: “they [men] can go and get whatever they like from anything at all with a skirt on it and were not to ask any questions but they want to know where were you [women] where are you going” (*Ulysses* 614).

Perhaps, the most striking indication of Molly’s monologue is her protest of socially ascribed roles for women. Molly realises that women have a vulnerable position in society; they have to constantly try to beautify themselves; otherwise, they are not desirable on the ‘market’, “as for being a woman as soon as you’re old they [men] might as well throw you out in the bottom of the ashpit” (*Ulysses* 624). She also goes against the catholic church, which condemns every kind of sexual activity that does not serve procreation; that is why Molly makes the physical aspect superior, God-like aspect of life. She says, “what the idea making us like that with a big hole in the middle of us ... nice invention they made for women for him to get all pleasure” (*Ulysses* 611). Even though Molly reinforces some stereotypical behaviour by making herself a sexual object to men, she makes a focal comment, “why can’t you kiss a man without going and marrying [commitment] him first” (*Ulysses* 610).

Chapter 3: Sexual Ethics, Gender Relations, and Respective Moments of Epiphany in Virginia Woolf’s Creativity

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is hailed as one of the leading representatives of the Modernist canon, whose artistic genius and progressive ideas have immensely contributed to the twentieth century. Woolf was not only a writer but a literary critic, essayist, diarist, journalist, biographer, and, on top of this, a publisher. She founded the – “commercial hippogriff” (Southworth 2010:

1) – Hogarth Press in 1917 with her husband, Leonard Woolf. Operating the publishing house, which started as a hobby, soon became a possibility to completely get rid of editorial censorship. The Hogarth Press published a plethora of works by well-known writers' works, such as the psychological writings of Sigmund Freud. Later, it also published the artistic endeavours by the Bloomsbury group, which consisted of the collective of friends surrounding Virginia and Leonard Woolf. Politically left-liberal, the Bloomsbury group, or the so-called "civilising fraction" (Roe and Sellers 2000: 3), became an enormous intellectual provocation and stimulation for emerging the modernist spirit for comprising the larger ideas of modernity. Along with other humanist Bloomsberians, such as E.M. Forster, and G. E. Moore, Virginia Woolf was one of the first female writers deeply interested in social problems, particularly advocating equal rights for women. As E. M. Forster specifies, "there are spots of [feminism] all over her work and it was constantly in her mind" (Marder 1968: 1).

Woolf's central project addresses fundamental human rights issues and sets in motion a different way of reflecting and arguing about them. Woolf satirises a lot of social aspects into this conundrum by making central and significant what was peripheral and marginal or insignificant throughout previous centuries. But altogether, Virginia Woolf cannot only be restricted to feminism; she was also a revolutionary writer exploring unknown territories of the consciousness and psyche of human beings. Woolf "is usually considered the most inward of all British writers" (Harker 2011: 1); that is to say, she gracefully mastered the literary technique of stream-of-consciousness as a narrative device by penetrating the mind of characters instead of solely describing their actions. Fittingly, Woolf's modernist interiority was also resisting the conventional genres and styles, and by doing so, she explicitly criticised formal writing periods. In *Modern Fiction* (1919), she writes that those traditional writers "are concerned not with the spirit but with the body that they have disappointed us" (Woolf 1966: 104). Woolf further comments on and gives much importance to the aesthetic object of literature: "everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss" (Woolf 1966: 110). Woolf creates her theoretical discourse in which

human nature is essential. Woolf was a conscientious writer for whom ‘moments of being’ constituted a necessary aspect of her creativity that triggered epiphanic moments. Thomas Hardy’s collection of poems *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses* (1917) found great resonance in Virginia Woolf’s *Moments of Being* (Woolf 1976: 64-137). Woolf writes in a review of the book *Trivia* written by the British essayist and critic, Logan Pearsall Smith:

It is his purpose to catch and enclose certain moments and enclose certain moments which break off from the mass, in which without bidding things come together in a combination of inexplicable significance, to arrest those thoughts which suddenly, to the thinker at least, are almost menacing with meaning. Such moments of vision are of an unaccountable nature (Woolf 1966: 250-251)

Woolf knew that the term ‘moments of vision’ was not originally coined by Hardy but taken from the novel *Lord Jim* (1900) by Joseph Conrad (Hewitt 2018: 64). Even though Woolf speaks of Conrad as “his books are full of moments of vision. They light up a whole character in a flash” (Hewitt 2018: 65), she praises Hardy for giving much importance to those moments (Hewitt 2018:65). Such vision became an appealing concept for her art, which she borrowed and fictionalised in her own unique way.

Interestingly, Morris Beja notes that Woolf did not create a theory of ‘epiphany’ itself like Joyce, but still ‘moments of being’ are identified as epiphanies that have a central part in her creativity (Beja 1971: 114). To avoid misunderstanding, Woolf decodes those moments under different terms, such as ‘moments of vision/importance/being’ that can be used interchangeably. For her, similar to other modernists, depicting reality becomes an integral modernist paradigm that needed to explore a pattern that was traditionally beyond “the cotton wool” (Woolf 1976: 72) of daily life. In her memoir *A Sketch of the Past* (1939), Woolf depicts the difference between ‘being’ and ‘non-being’ as an opposite part of the continuum. For her, ‘non-being’ embodies an ordinary life experience that does not record those privileged moments, conscious awareness of individuals while doing something, and are, in this way, unimportant. Woolf says that “a great part of every day is not lived consciously. One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; ... cooking dinner;

bookbinding; When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger” (Woolf 1976: 70). While ‘moments of being’ catches the mind in an active, vital phase, like an epiphany, it makes “a minute seem a year” (Beja 1971: 118). Virginia Woolf writes: “such moments of vision are of an unaccountable nature; leave them alone and they persist for years; try to explain them and they disappear; write them down and they die beneath the pen” (Woolf 1918: 43). Lorraine Sim in *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* characterises those ‘moments of being’ as positive and negative (2010: 140). The positive outcome to stimulus, for Woolf, is physical sensation – ecstasy or rapture: “I am hardly aware of myself, but only of the sensation. I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture” (Woolf 1976: 67). As for the negative output, Woolf reminisces the sexual abuse from her half-brother Gerald Duckworth and recalls ashamed “looking-glass” (1976: 69) event which triggers the moments of “sudden violent shock” (1976: 71), “something terrible” (1976: 71), a “trance of horror”, or “a peculiar horror and a physical collapse” (1976: 72), leaving her in a state of paralysis.

Furthermore, what makes Woolf an extraordinary writer is her capacity to receive those revealing moments of shock and take up and transform what she sees or feels into art (1976: 72). By depicting the physical malaise, pain and trauma of those events, Woolf greatly emphasises negotiating a corporeal and an aspect of mind “as a crucial medium between her mind and the ‘real thing’ behind the ‘cotton wool’ of daily appearances” (Sim 2010: 154). The consequences of such reasoning make Woolf record “the thing itself” (1976: 72) that “take[s] away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together” (1976: 72). Woolf uses those moments in her creativity as an instrumental force for reflecting on her sexual and gender philosophy that is, in this sense, equivalent to Joyce’s secular epiphanies.

Virginia Woolf has a particular place in feminist discourse. Even though she had a somewhat ambivalent, anti-establishment attitude towards suffragists as political feminism and saw it as “too narrow a cause” (Roe and Sellers 2000: 210), she was heavily influenced by it. Her artistic input for the liberation of women from the ideological constraint primarily got addressed in the period of Second-Wave feminism. Woolf wanted to create “something

much more interesting and profound than an advocacy of equal rights” (Marder 1968:106). Woolf’s non-fictional works, her feminist manifestoes *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938) in tandem, explain her doctrine and have a central part in feminist literary criticism. As Alex Zwerdling claims, we cannot have a comprehensive understanding of her artistic commitment to feminism. This is because “until we see [her] work as a response to some of the received ideas of her time about women and ‘the cause’, we will not fully understand it” (1986: 211). Woolf portrays a broad picture of the rigidity of social norms of the nineteenth century and its detrimental role in the lives of women. Women were primarily presented in the domestic sphere, did not have a right to property, voting, and public education, etc. All in all, they were completely submissive to the opposite sex. In *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Alice Walker comments on the moral turpitude of that time that made women “enter loveless marriages, without joy; and become prostitutes, without resistance; and become mothers of children, without fulfilment” (2004: 233). As one can infer from the underlying reality described above, women were altogether silenced; they did not have their voice to speak up. Since women could not earn money for their own or could not afford to be single, marriage was seen as *idée fixe*, a fundament of social stability. Correspondingly, deviation from these social expectations could ruin respect and reputation that was utterly important in the highly stratified social reality. It is under these circumstances when Walker says that “when we have asked for love, we have been given children” (2004: 237), satirizing women’s dependence on marriage for a better living. Woolf was hyperconscious of many aspects of social asymmetry and moral codes of that time, which is why she overturned the *status quo* of womanhood. Even though these attitudes began to change in the twentieth century and transform into progressive ideas, for Woolf, “the psyche was much more resistant to change than the law” (Marcus 1997: 42). Throughout the centuries, patriarchy was the norm, where women experienced gender discrimination and inclination to the domestic chores as “men deprived us [women] of all proper education, and then jeered at us because we had no knowledge” (Grand 1894: 272).

Woolf's experimentative writings make high demand on readers with abundant references to the conventional perceptions of Victorian womanhood. At the Women's Service League meeting, on January 21st, 1931, with her written text *Professions for Women*, Virginia Woolf delivered a message of how troublesome it is for women to become female writers in a strictly dominated male canon. Woolf says that without her literary ancestors, Fanny Burney, Aphra Behn, Harriet Martineau, Jane Austen, George Eliot, etc., women would still have to struggle to express themselves, their views, and their opinions in their writings (Woolf 1966: 284). In other words, Woolf says that in contemporary society, killing a phantom, "the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer" (Woolf 1966: 286). As Elaine Showalter describes the middle-class female identity in England and America is "a woman who would be a Perfect Lady, an angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the Home" (Showalter 1977: 14). This generates pathos by displaying the systematic gender-biased problem that made women inferior to men and to what society expected them. This image comes in direct conflict with those women who chose a profession as a novelist, making them appear – compared to others – as "selfish, unwomanly, and Christian" (Showalter 1977: 22), distancing themselves from the contemporary female ideal. For female novelists, it became paramount to resist those oppressive ideals by arranging the plots in the novel in a way that undermined or punished their heroine's aspirations of independent life by making a frustrating compromise, such as getting married (Showalter 1977: 22).

After all, this became a catalysing factor in the society to gradually eliminate the systematic injustices displayed to women, but for Woolf

it is not education only that is needed. It is that women should have liberty of experience; that they should differ from men without fear and express their differences openly (for I do not agree with Affable Hawk that men and women are alike
(Marcus 2004: 36)

To overcome gender prejudices, Woolf fashioned the idea of a non-binary – androgynous mind that was initially referred to by T.S. Coleridge (Farwell 1975: 433), and that has fused female and male attributes within one person:

in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; ... The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live

in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. Androgenous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided. (Woolf 2015: 74)

Woolf's gender-neutral theory has been well-canvassed by scholars, and despite the contention, Woolf achieves wholeness in her art by operating with an ideal mind that became "a corrective for the excess of feminism" (Marder 1968: 110). In this context, Woolfian 'moments of importance/vision/being' play a significant role in her novels *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), particularly in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931) initially called by Woolf *Moments of Being*, to reveal and illuminate character's inner self.

3.1. *Mrs Dalloway* – Gender, Sexuality, Epiphany

Mrs Dalloway, a masterpiece of literary Modernism, originally titled *The Hours*, is Virginia Woolf's most popular book, full of intense moments of "short significant separate scenes" (Beja 1971: 113). Woolf did not intend to write *Mrs Dalloway* as a novel until she encountered the "tunnelling process" (McNichol 1992: 9), in which she could expose the human psyche. Woolf writes: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each come to daylight at the present moment" (Woolf 1961: 116). The narrative in *Mrs Dalloway* moves in and out of the character's mind, a stream of consciousness that encourages her to deeply discover the conscious part of the human mind in a trivial setting. Woolf not only abandons a traditional linear narrative but creates two different narrative lines with two different protagonists – Mrs Dalloway, who is preparing for a party and Septimus Smith, a 'shell-shocked (PTSD³¹) soldier', who suffers from the brutality of war which ultimately drives him to commit suicide. Even though they do not intersect physically with each other, they are connected through their perceptions. Woolf's mode of narration from the standpoint of the indirect interior monologue gives her the possibility to place herself "between

³¹ Post-traumatic stress disorder

the character's psyche and the reader. The author is an on-the-scene guide for the reader" (Rachman 1972: 3). Like *Ulysses*, *Mrs Dalloway* is also set on a single day in London, in June 1923. And most importantly, like Joyce's epiphanies, Woolf masterfully incorporates moments of being through the character's subjective consciousness. Even though not much occurs in the plot from an exterior perspective, Woolf creates an intimate relationship with readers and her characters by directly penetrating their minds and showing how they perceive the external world.

'Moments of being' become a driving force for Woolf to construct the meaning of the world. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the reality can only be grasped from the character's inner perception; objective truth is never fixed for anyone, but varies from person to person. Even though "variability of epiphany as a concept makes it difficult to define" (Neuhold 2009: 14), one of the most remarkable parts of moments of being is to demonstrate "the revelation to a character of his own loneliness [privacy], or to the reader of the essential isolation in which we all live" (Beja 1971: 133), and, most importantly, an escape from the quotidian existence. Those privileged moments also perpetuate the characters' complex relationships and give them insight into their passionate, lesbian, and marital love.

Mrs Dalloway, the wife of the politician Richard Dalloway and mother of Elizabeth, starts her day as an adventure. She metaphorically plunges into a day of joy by celebrating and appreciating life itself: "what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge!" (*MD* 3). While she is walking from her house in Westminster towards Bond Street, living in two different spatial dimensions, past and present, simultaneously, she realises the privileged moment when she positively accepts the world: "life, London; the moment of June" (*MD* 4). One of the important aspects of the novel is addressing time and memory that brought changes in her life. Mrs Dalloway's mind is constantly preoccupied with remembering a past time of her girlhood in Bourton. Symbolically, on her way to the florist shop, "Big-ben strikes. There! Out it boomed" (*MD* 4) becomes an omnipresent theme reminding Clarissa of a constant movement to the future, transience and her mortality of passing time. She sees "divine vitality" (*MD* 6) in the city, but on the other hand, she feels desperate: "did it matter that she must inevitably

cease completely; all this must go on without her” (*MD* 8). Fear becomes a concomitant of Clarissa’s life: “she had a perpetual sense ... feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day” (*MD* 7).

In retrospect, Clarissa Dalloway recalls the youth she used to enjoy at Bourton before getting married. She reflects on herself and her life by reminiscing and intertwining past and present events. From this first episode, we see Clarissa as isolated and lonely; Clarissa realises that she compromised her identity to become Mrs Dalloway, a woman of comfort and high social class:

had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (*MD* 9)

And a verisimilitude, whether she made a good decision by marrying Richard or not, becomes a matter of Clarissa’s constant questioning. Juxtaposed to it, what comes to the fore, despite being haunted by the past, is her realisation that she made a pragmatic decision: Clarissa “had been right – and she had to – not to marry him [Peter]” (*MD* 7). She needed autonomy, self-agency from traditional, a monolithic type of marriage, “a little license, a little independence” (*MD* 6) to keep the radiance of her life. While imagining another scenario of marrying Peter was threatening to her existence, “everything had to be shared” (*MD* 7) and “it was intolerable” (*MD* 7), not **strategical**, even though she cares for him. To balance these extreme worlds and avoid the past from destabilising herself, she needs to perform a party as a hostess to enjoy being alive as a coping mechanism to overcome unbearable life and existential crisis. In this regard, Clarissa could be paralleled to Stephen Hero, who tries to make a meaningful pattern from her life and become an artist by transcending ordinary to extraordinary.

This is what makes Clarissa’s solitary mind worth living, finding life symbols, truth, beauty, vitality in trivial things – “the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and singing” (*MD* 4). She appreciates life and feels “blessed and purified” (*MD* 22) by connecting to the world with the cluster of everlasting moments for what “one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments” (*MD* 22). After entering the

social domain and her feeling of inconsistency, Clarissa comes back from the city endowed with rampant feelings; she understands from Lucy that she has not been asked to lunch with Lady Bruton while her husband, Richard, has. Clarissa once again encourages herself to “fear no more” (*MD* 22). She feels her solitariness, “there was an emptiness about the heart of life” (*MD* 23), like a nun entering in her cloister and, in a melancholy mood, secludes herself in her attic room to unmask and retreat her social self. Unlike a ‘mad woman’, Bertha Masson’s oppression in her attic room, Clarissa’s space becomes a room of her emotional release – catharsis. She comes to the mundane revelation, epiphany, “women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe ... narrower and narrower would her bed be” (*MD* 23). According to Maria DiBattista, this ‘must’ is a Kantian dictum, categorical imperative for women in a society where “men have abandoned – or delegated – responsibility for the house and its mysteries to women” (1988: 48). In addition to this, one of the reasons for Clarissa’s discontent is her ageing process - “one does not want people after fifty; one does not want to go on telling women they are pretty” (*MD* 57). Equally important, Richard also cannot tell Clarissa that he loves her; that is why he brings roses to Clarissa but is incapable of putting into words his feelings for her.

For Clarissa, life becomes a space of memory equated and incarnated to presence. If one’s self is comprised of multiple aspects, then Clarissa has predominantly two different faces, one social and one private, that go hand in hand. That is to say, in either case, if any of them is threatened, then her existence might suffer. She knows that she lacks “something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together” (*MD* 24). With this, Woolf questions the integrity of marital relationships by revealing Clarissa’s intimacy, exalted moments when she gets pleasure hearing women playing the violin. By doing so, Clarissa’s socially fixed identity and her deeper insecurity that “had to see things through his [Richard’s] eyes (*MD* 55) start to crumble. Violin sound becomes a particular stimulus for provoking a state of ‘trance’ that saliently reveals Clarissa’s repressed sexual identity and doffs her social role. Woolf audaciously vocalises an after-effect of transmitted

“power of sounds” (*MD* 24) of the violin that triggers intense epiphanic moments of rupture:

Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over – *the moment*. (*MD* 24, my own emphasis)

Clarissa remembers that sparking moment – an “erotic pause” (Haffey 2010: 137) – in her life, that queer moment that lasted even after thirty years. She recalls her feeling of love, “the purity, the integrity” (*MD* 25) with Sally Seton that critics have long identified as Woolf’s fight against heteronormative society. As Alex Zwerdling states, this retrospective epiphany is Clarissa’s sudden “revulsion from heterosexuality” (1986: 170) that reveals lesbian tendencies of the book and offers an erotic glimpse, a flashback to her past that immortalises the moments that are preserved in her mind:

she and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared, there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it – a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked ..., she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling! – when old Joseph and Peter faced them: “star-gazing?” said Peter. (*MD* 26)

Clarissa questions herself, “had not that, after all, been love?” (*MD* 24), her passion with Sally, who compared to Clarissa, had a free spirit - “she was – very absurd” of her time: smoking cigars, riding a bicycle, running naked at home, etc. Sally and Clarissa were speaking of marriage as a ‘catastrophe’. It is her conventionality – “this coldness, this woodenness, ... an impenetrability” (*MD* 44) – that makes Clarissa unable to later answer Peter’s question: “are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard—” (*MD* 35). Sally also raised her voice to defend women’s rights at Bourton when she confronted Hugh and made men such as him responsible men such as him for the conditions of “those poor girls in Piccadilly” (*MD* 52).

Another aspect of this issue is that, as Claudia Olk points out, Clarissa “relies on a doubly-encoded presence which evokes a dual vision of past and present, and likewise describes the pervasiveness of the two levels of time” (2014: 187). Clarissa preserves and cherishes those moments in her mind to make sense of her life, while Septimus Smith, also alienated from society, stuck in memory, is destructive. Woolf submits her statement in her diaries while writing *Mrs Dalloway*: “I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity: I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work at its most intense” (Rachman 1972: 4). Rather than attacking the social order directly, Woolf chooses a deliberate, implicit way to examine the male-dominated ruling class spirit and “the snobbery of the English” (*MD* 121) in the Post First World War England. After the outbreak of the catastrophes of the Great war, “The war was over” (*MD* 4). However, the transition from war to peace in London society still registers the presence of the repercussions of the war: desperation, loss, a crisis of identities, collective and individual traumas, disillusionment, “tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing” (*MD* 8), etc. As a doppelgänger of Clarissa, Septimus is doomed for death because “he could not feel” (*MD* 62) and reintegrate into the post-war society. His post-traumatic experiences are not negotiated, and the uncivilised brutality of the war is not spoken about so that the community understands Septimus. Woolf ridicules Sir William Bradshaw, who diagnoses Septimus with “losing a sense of proportion” (*MD* 72) or trivialising his condition by saying that “we all have our moments of depression” (*MD* 70). Septimus also feels guilty for marrying Rezia without loving her and acknowledges that his first love was Miss Isabel Pole from his Shakespeare classes. So that he cannot give new importance to life and “the verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death” (*MD* 65).

In the end, Septimus’ suicide becomes a key moment for Clarissa to recreate into life and choose life over death. This is what Woolf wanted to portray in *Mrs Dalloway* – “the world seen by the sane and insane side by side” (DiBattista 1988: 41). After hearing the news from Lady Bradshaw, she is shocked: “Oh! Thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here’s death” (*MD* 129) and solitudes herself to think about him, leading her to the longest climactic epiphany of the novel:

Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them, closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (*MD* 130)

She connects with an old lady and gradually reveals a hidden pattern of life “there! The old lady had put out her light! The whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the most robust epiphany came to her, “fear no more the heat of the sun” (*MD* 131). Altogether, Mrs Dalloway is feeling “glad that he had done it; thrown it away” (*MD* 131). She affirms life by reflecting and putting herself in Septimus’ shoes. Those epiphanies become itinerary in changing Clarissa’s awareness of the world. After the solemnity of revelation, Mrs Dalloway realises the need for her social stamina because “what she liked was simply life” (*MD* 86).

3.2. *To the Lighthouse* – Gender, Sexuality, Epiphany

To the Lighthouse is Woolf’s well-known and monumental semiautobiographical and experimental novel. Initially, the idea of writing the book came to Woolf after spending the holidays with her family at Talland House in St Ives. The framework of the plot is well-organised, employing a three-part, tripartite story structure: “The Window”, “Time Passes”, and “The Lighthouse”. They correspond to Mrs Ramsay’s life and unfulfilled promise to take her son James to the Lighthouse, following her death and, in the end, completion of Mrs Ramsay’s portrait by Lily Briscoe as a culmination. As for its title, the anticipated voyage to the lighthouse is an analogy to *Voyage Out* and embarks on larger ideas of a psychological and spiritual journey into life. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf uses free indirect discourse and depicts characters’ inner monologues. The story is told from the third person, heterodiegetic, so to say, omniscient narrator. The novel also integrates temporal and spatial settings. For Woolf in this novel, what matters is a process of promise fulfilment, a family voyage out to the lighthouse and in a parallel setting finishing Lily Briscoe’s picture. Woolf is more interested in detecting how the characters perceive the world and struggle for their integration with “their “instincts, affections, passions, attachments” (*TL* 80) rather than dwelling on the finished product. Correspondingly, epiphanies

predominantly serve and contribute to achieving and celebrating this effect of enhancing the novel's subject matter to become aware of what is beyond the 'cotton wool'. And most importantly, it is a transition from the position of 'non-being' to 'the moments of being' that level up characters' introspection to reveal the hidden patterns of their life.

Moreover, its central concern is to depict the psychological perspective of how 'I', 'selfhood' is integrated and negotiated with the external world and how they relate to each other. In its search for meaning, it becomes crucial to examine those everlasting 'moments of being' that lead us towards an ultimate epiphanic realisation of creating the aesthetic project of finishing Mrs Ramsey's picture and with-it successful reconnection to the world. *To the Lighthouse* is a prerequisite of unfolding all-encompassing 'moments of being' to immortalise their critical role in the process of aesthetic creation and, most importantly, human relationships. Additionally, its scope also elevates to challenge the long-established gender norms. More pertinently, as Suzette Henke mentions, the fundamental function of the epiphanies in this novel is to create a space to articulate "the expression of repressed and protracted bereavement" (Tigges 1999: 80) happening in the characters' inner selves.

The setting of the novel takes place from 1910 to 1920 in the pre-and post-World War period, in the upper-class Ramsay summerhouse with their eight children and family friends in the Hebrides, an archipelago of Scotland. The story starts with Mrs Ramsay's promise to her son, James, that they might make a voyage to the Lighthouse with the words "yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow" (TL 181), followed by Mr Ramsay's antagonistic statement: "But ... it won't be fine" (TL 181). From the very start of the novel, Woolf presents Mr Ramsey as an utterly patriarchal, 'phallic' person who always has the last word in the family. Mr Ramsay represents a stereotypical male who is mentally and intellectually superior to Mrs Ramsay, and accordingly to all women; what he says is simply adamant – "always true" (TL 182). To put it in other words, Woolf emphasises how both genders internalise gender bias and disposition and in what manner they deliver information to their children. Mrs Ramsay, who is supportive, cares for others' comfort and preserves her promise to her son because "children never forget" (TL 224), while her

husband, Mr Ramsay, annuls her wish of providing their child comfort and discourages her wife for the unlikelihood of the good weather, as his prerogative is to talk with facts. He is someone who always demands respect, sympathy, and attention from others: “petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is tyrant; he wears Mrs Ramsay to death” (*TL* 197). As for Mrs Ramsay, an actual matrimonial figure perpetuates a typical Victorian angel who had to perform her daily life with Victorian conventionality – “extreme courtesy” (*TL* 184).

Furthermore, Mrs Ramsay is confined to domesticity, does not have her private domain, a feeling of “privacy to debate anything, everything” (*TL* 185). Despite her submissiveness and benevolence towards the opposite sex, Mrs Ramsay acknowledges her vulnerable position. She is afraid of revealing that her commitment does not give him happiness, but a feeling of loneliness, emotional distancing from her husband. Even though she is pushing Lily Briscoe and William Bankes to meet the gender expectations and encourages them to marry, she comes to the pragmatic realisation that marriage “need not happen to everyone” (*TL* 223). Moreover, she admits that her desire for matchmaking - “people must marry; people must have children” (*TL* 223) - and encapsulating women in a common model of womanhood, is driven from repressed self as a self-defensive trait. Even though she follows Victorian conventionalism and is intellectually inferior to Mr Ramsay, she “knew without having learnt” (*TL* 200). She is a complex character who observes, reads other characters’ thoughts, and brings order and stability to her family. After her self-renunciation and “feed[ing] eight children on philosophy” (*TL* 195), Mrs Ramsay feels “relief when they went to bed” (*TL* 224-225) so that she found some time only for herself, to knit, escape others’ demands and ease her tension, not to think, but to rest her mind “to be silent” (*TL* 225). From this time when life “sank down for a moment” (*TL* 225) she finds a possibility to recreate herself and articulate her silence in a “wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others” (*TL* 225). Mrs Ramsay mystically transmutes herself by the sudden illumination to escape sanctioned tasks, suffocating reality where she is controlled and watched by others:

[...] and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and

pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing *the long steady stroke*, was her stroke. Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at – that light, for example. ... It will end, it will end, she said. It will come, it will come, when suddenly she added. We are in the hands of the Lord. (TL 225)

Woolf pities more than judges Mrs Ramsay for her submissiveness. Mrs Ramsay cannot subvert the patriarchal positioning of women. She contemplates her life with moments of vision, not because she takes a pessimistic tendency as Mr Ramsay accuses her of, but she observes her life and tries to find meaning. As the plot proceeds, epiphanies open a new dimension of her life with the privileged moments of her consciousness and help her negotiate life that turns out to be excruciating for her. Woolf says:

Only she thought life – and a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes – her fifty years. There it was before her – life. ... She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private, which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, and she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; ... [stasis] And here she was, she reflected, feeling life rather sinister again. (TL 223)

In the climactic passage of the novel, Mrs Ramsay, like Mrs Dalloway, organises dinner to create a space for bringing unity and connecting people. But it becomes a space of alienation, emptiness, and lack of love instead. Lily, who tries to escape the unpleasant moments of the dinner, one more time realises that she does not want to marry and “undergo that degradation” (TL 254). Meanwhile, Mrs Ramsay experiences an ephemeral epiphany in her musing that gives life its significance in contrast to many ‘non-beings’ of life, that “there is a coherence in things, a stability; something she meant, is immune from change” (TL 256), and that in life those static aspects that endure life bring “tender peace, of eternity” (TL 256).

Robert Langbaum comments on epiphanies in *To the Lighthouse* stating that they “reduce the action to a series of still, silent moments that give the text a fragmented quality” (Tigges, ed. 1999: 48). Woolf thrives from this fragmented structure or effect to achieve unity, which can be an analogy of Mrs Ramsay promising to voyage to the lighthouse and Lily finishing the

picture. Woolf has to deconstruct traditional femininity to give space for Lily Briscoe to follow her artistic endeavour as a woman and promote her resilience to go against the established norms of patriarchy. On Mrs Ramsay's insinuation that "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (*TL* 215), she needs to respond vigorously, "But this is what I see; this is what I see" (*TL* 193). In contrast to Mrs Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, a family guest, and a painter, "would never marry" (*TL* 191). She is different, lacks moral and outer perfection and integration and, by doing so, is not equal to Mrs Ramsay. By establishing such a polarity, Woolf implies a further revolutionary movement to give her heroine autonomy and thrives towards undermining, 'killing the angel' that hinders Lily Briscoe from fulfilling her artistic vocation. In this way, one can conclude that these restrictions imposed upon women are directly proportional to men's "weakness and self-doubt" (Burt 1982: 891). Woolf constructs the novel in a way that makes discontent between the female and male characters.

But most importantly, Woolf creates a platform in which characters begin to interact with the outer world with 'moments of vision' in the fluidity of time, and subsequently, in this process of fighting against their phantoms, they become "prey to revelations" (Beja 1971: 139). As Lily starts painting Mrs Ramsay's portrait on her canvas, she realises she lacks the conviction and confidence to balance the colours and shapes to fulfil her artistic endeavour. Lily, to free herself from her agony, wishes to "fling herself (thank Heaven she had always resisted so far) at Mrs Ramsay's knee" (*TL* 193), but simultaneously she cannot allow the existence of such an idea - "but what could one say to her? "I am in love with you?" (*TL* 193). This passage possibly offers a lesbian reading of the book as some critics suggest a great aspect of her clandestine sexual desire to her that she tries to repress in herself. It was rampant in Victorian England to make women inferior to men and confine them within the domestic sphere. Lily, like Mrs Ramsay, is an eternal victim of the system and is tormenting herself to transform, not to compromise, accomplish her work and break the prejudice articulated by Mr Tansley that "women can't paint, women can't write..." (*TL* 214). She is confounded to reveal her painting and even hides it from Mr Ramsay to stay

immune from his judging comments and destabilise herself by threatening her image of being a women painter.

Lily Briscoe's artistic calling did not stop even ten years later; at her forty-four "life stand still there" (TL 299). As she reminiscences on the past time when Mrs Ramsay attempted to make "the moment something permanent ... of the nature of revelation" (TL 299), Lily asks a rhetorical question and realises the answer for it:

What is the meaning of life? That was all – a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps did never come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark. (TL 299)

This also becomes a driving force for Lilly to create unity in her picture in the absence of Mrs Ramsay, and when they are approaching the lighthouse, she finishes her composition: "she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done. It was finished" (TL 334).

Conclusion

The emergence of Modernism as a mainstream cultural movement of the twentieth century brought profound changes in the Western realm of thinking. It did not only change the subject matter of literature as a contra product of realism and romanticism, but it also contributed to creating a wide literary platform which could set up examining all aspects of a human being. Modernism started questioning what had been taken for granted and began to rebel against those norms that hindered progressive human development. By subverting those destructive norms, Modernism advanced acute problems saturated for a long time in human nature and opened a space for portraying the inevitable existential crisis which accompanied the rising of capitalism. As stated at the beginning of this work, Modernism created the best strategy to make an entity that could display and elucidate marginalised and disintegrated 'inner self' that was suppressed and forgotten throughout the centuries. In this moral turmoil, Modernism becomes a revolutionary movement that can vehemently and most of the time adequately encode the

complexities of the consciousness of human nature by rejecting the dominant paradigm.

In this context, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf mastered a narrative mode – stream of consciousness and interior monologue – that captures the fluidity of our dynamic thoughts in a realistic manner to depict the ‘thing itself’ and, most importantly, excluding an embroidery way of storytelling. In this regard, for Joyce and Woolf, it has paramount importance to comprehend the world and to catch a great moment of transition by having an unexpected vision of something important. That is an umbrella term of epiphany taking place in a mundane, everyday setting. Both writers successfully encapsulate the moments of revelations in their artistic creativity and reflect on the characters’ minds with great significance. Even though it is utterly difficult to trace the exact configuration of epiphany because of its versatility and the way it functions generally, it is unequivocal that with those moments of epiphanies, the characters in the novels discussed in this thesis gain a deeper understanding and insight of the world, whether their epiphany is positive or negative. In this sense, both authors give a solid account to their characters to enlarge their scope of seeing things with different angles. The achievement of such moments is mostly celebrated in solitude from which an artist attempts to shape the meaning of life.

Secular epiphanies in Modernism become a reminder of the vitality of life. Each instance of sudden illumination brings substantial, life-altering moments to recreate the world around them. Those epiphanies played a significant role in addressing several grand themes in James Joyce’s and Virginia Woolf’s creativity, particularly in terms of sexual ethics and gender relations. The characters who are musing about their life epiphanies become a medium that catalyses discovering something new in terms of sex- and gender-specific themes. Its ramifications have only one goal - to contemplate new dimensions of human condition. Even though society does not allow or teach those characters how to thrive as individuals and overcome their existential crisis, sexual epiphanies eminently give them the possibility to analyse a hidden pattern beyond their life and to resolve those conflicting ideas.

By doing so, both authors intend to deconstruct socially marginalised, repressed sexual desires, taboos, and the asymmetrical gender realm by giving it central meaning. In this process of making radical changes, epiphanies become the main driving force to contribute to their progressive ideas of sexuality and gender. Epiphanies come to the fore in liberating characters from destabilising themselves from the rigidity of social norms. In contrast with religious and romantic epiphanies, in Modernist fiction ‘the great revelations’ never happen, as Lily Briscoe says in her soliloquy, at the end of the novel; but they serve as a pillar, “as a patch which, just for a split, intense second, dresses the wound” (Neuhold 2009: 203).

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