Religion and Secularization in Modernist Novels

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## Abbreviations

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<td>A</td>
<td>The Antichrist</td>
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<td>BC</td>
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INTRODUCTION

‘Nothing can be more contrary to religion and the clergy than reason and common sense,’ said Voltaire (qtd in Reyes 254). Leonard Woolf certainly seemed to have this distinction in mind when he wrote a review in The Nation and Athenaeum on 12 June 1926 explaining that with his rationalist mind he could hardly understand the Christian view in Arthur Clutton-Brock’s Essays on Religion (1926); he saw no life in the Church or religion (Gillespie 84). The review raised a protracted controversy. Readers responded that claims about the loss of religion and the death of the Church were in need of evidence (84). Woolf emphasized that he spoke from experience, but he agreed to examine the issue by means of a questionnaire, which was circulated among readers of The Nation and the Daily News (see Appendix 1) (84).

However, the idea that sufficient evidence can be obtained from a questionnaire this size indicates Woolf’s insouciant attitude to the matter. He addressed the issue in a questionnaire of less than a page with condensed questions that can only be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and do not allow for a nuanced conception of secularization. Question six, for example, asks about belief in ‘any form of Christianity’. This shows that Woolf had not considered the possibility that secularization might affect different forms of Christianity to a different extent. The size and format of the questionnaire show that Woolf had underestimated and undervalued the issue. It is focused on external aspects of religion, such as belief in God, church attendance, and the credibility of the scriptures and Christian doctrine, but it does not concern spirituality. Perhaps due
to this fact, the analysis of the surveys demonstrated inconclusive results (87). The results between the - rather similar - journals proved incompatible. For instance, 72% of the *Daily News* responders claimed belief in a personal God against 40% of *The Nation*. The analysis demonstrated a ‘pervasive agnosticism’ and indicated that religious belief persisted in a complicated form that ‘[was] of an exceedingly strange character’ (86; 87). This belief no longer corresponded with teachings of the scriptures or Church or interpretations thereof; it was a personally shaped version. Consequently, whether someone was religious was no longer determined by churchgoing or belief in God (87). These things were no longer a ‘guarantee of belief’, and yet they constituted the focus of the questionnaire (87). Research by R. B. Braithwaite revealed that the questionnaire was slightly biased against religion (Gillespie 87). The dubiousness of the survey notwithstanding, religion had indeed become a complicated issue in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Pericles Lewis calls it a ‘new sense of religious crisis’ (*REMN*, 35). It is no longer about the question of Truth, but about rediscovering the position and essence of religion in the midst of secularization.

Lewis discusses secularization in relation to modernist novels. Several of his pioneering works refer to the questionnaire, such as *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (2010) in which he explores the ‘limits of the secularization thesis’: the idea that modernity requires or relies on a rejection of religion and the supernatural (24; 26). He argues that, although it seems the novels present a secular world, the modernists experimented with alternative ways to portray religious experience (19). Lewis examines the work of major novelists of the period...
- Henry James, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and Virginia Woolf - in light of theories on religion by William James, Émile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, and Max Weber. While he acknowledges the decline of public religion, he posits that the novels should not be seen as ‘secular’ (24). He points out that ‘a sense of the sacred persists even in the apparently godless modernist novel’ (24). They ‘dispensed with the supernatural’ and offered a ‘way of seeing aspects of human experience itself as set apart, venerable, inviolable’ (27; 30). Lewis calls this the ‘secular sacred’ (25).

This dissertation examines religion and secularization in three modernist novels.1 In this context, secularization is not an evaluative judgement about phenomena, society, and characters in the novel; rather, secularization is dynamic process that affects these elements. E.M. Forster’s A Room with a View (1908) presents a society in which social mores are changing. In this transition, metaphorically described as from medievalism to the renaissance, ‘the thing never talked about - religion - was fading like all other things’ (Forster 216). In their response to this decline of religion, however, Lucy and George reveal an urge to create a personal version, which they share among the two of them, to help them make sense of the world around them. In James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916), Stephen Dedalus decides to abandon ‘the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar’ (Joyce 143). Yet, his coming of age indicates both the decline and prevalence of religion. The profound interiority of

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1 The term ‘modernist novel’ applies to ‘the novel written in English in the early years of the twentieth century’ while I use ‘modernism’ to denote the literary movement of this period (Shiach 8).
religion in his character demonstrates that piety remains a distinct possibility; he believes that ‘God had called him’ through the hellfire sermon even after his conscious rejection (105). Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway (1925) portrays a post-war society in which a focus on subjectivity has necessitated a rejection of religion as well as an urge to preserve religious elements. Through Clarissa, the novel illustrates this tension: she believes that religion ‘would destroy … the privacy of the soul’ and at the same time feels that she needs some form of belief in afterlife and spirituality to exist and be known (Woolf, MD 107). Although these novels all depict a secular or secularizing society, the variety of responses to secularization that can be provided by them indicates that the dynamics of changing religiosity are more complex than the idea of the ‘secular sacred’ or the claim that modernist novels depict ‘a world that has been abandoned by God’ and present and acknowledge an absolute and inevitable secularism (Lukács qtd in Lewis, REMN 23).

Through the analysis of A Room, A Portrait, and Mrs Dalloway, I demonstrate that religious sentiment can still be traced in the novels, but that the secularization thesis also still stands in the sense that the loss of public religion is well represented and acknowledged. Moreover, I show conceptually that the impact of secularization in the novels is nuanced by the ways in which characters respond to it and by differences between the novels in terms of form, major themes, publication dates, and narrative style. First I explore the complexity of secularization in the modern period, showing how problematic it is to pinpoint the state of religion. This research helps to present definitions of ‘secularization’,
‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ that serve as a premise for the analyses of the novels. Subsequently, I consider the validity of the secularization thesis through a brief discussion of the early modernist novel *Heart of Darkness* (1988) by Joseph Conrad. In what follows, I demonstrate how the differences between Forster, Joyce, and Woolf offer widely divergent contexts for the decline of religion, which, in turn, leads to differences in the way in which the effect of secularization in these novels might be regarded. On the surface *A Room* seems a lighter story, but it actually is a dark story in which public religion is radically but inconspicuously rejected. This happening below the surface, both religious and irreligious sentiments are revealed sporadically by a third person narrator. Conversely, religion and secularization are central, ingrained topics in Stephen's coming of age in *A Portrait*. Since the novel is centrally occupied with Stephen’s psychological interiority, it depicts an inward response to secularization. *Mrs Dalloway* only shows the impact of secularization in one day. Woolf’s use of the stream of consciousness offers various, sometimes contradictory, responses to religion, which are influenced by the post-war context. Despite being so different, the novels all indicate that there is no single, definite statement that can describe the impact of secularization. How, then, should this issue be approached?
CHAPTER 1
RELIGION AND SECULARIZATION IN THE MODERN PERIOD

‘Well, if a man is not to believe in himself, in what is he to believe?’
(Chesterton, Orthodoxy)

Leonard Woolf’s claim about the loss of religion was not without foundation. The modern period is often seen as a secular age: the nineteenth-century rise in unbelief had culminated in a society in which people discarded all religion. As it transpired, the idea that ‘modern civilization cannot but bring about “a death of God”’ became pervasive and entrenched in theories about secularization (C. Taylor 21). Yet, the modern period was not the end of God and religion. Pericles Lewis states that ‘if God died in the nineteenth century, He had a long afterlife in the twentieth’ (“MR” 18). The position of religion in the modern society is far more complex than just its demise, along with the death of God. To begin to appreciate the impact of secularization on modernist novels, it is necessary that attention be given to historical and intellectual context. This will provide a frame for the analyses of the novels and a clear understanding of what ‘secularization’, ‘spirituality’, and ‘religion’ mean in the context of this dissertation.

The modern period saw new forms of ‘democratic representation, independence of mind and conscience, and evidential standards of proof’ (Hobson 19). In 1901 and 1902, William James described the effect of these standards on religion:

[The] vast literature of proofs of God’s existence drawn from the order of nature, which a century ago seemed so overwhelmingly convincing, today does little more than gather dust in libraries, for
the simple reason that our generation has ceased to believe in the kind of God it argued for. (74)

Not only did people cease to believe ‘in the kind of God [they had] argued for’; they also stopped believing in many other elements essential to the Christian creed. Gilbert K. Chesterton observes that people started to deny sin and the existence of hell (O, 24). In fact, now that they had proclaimed the death of God, the ‘motto of the modern world’ became ‘that man will get on; he believes in himself’ (20). With this kind of freedom available, the authoritarianism of orthodoxy was unacceptable (C. Taylor 302). In 1938, Ezra Pound concluded that ‘belief as the pious once used the term is alien to our age’ (26). This shows that people not only revised their image of God and evil but also of religion itself.

This process can be traced back to the early and middle nineteenth century, which ‘saw a great rise in unbelief’ (C. Taylor 322). There were signs of the separation of church and state and education (Hobson 18). The nineteenth century saw the increase in anticlericalism and various scientific discoveries that undermined the credibility of religious beliefs (Lewis, “MR” 185; 184). Moreover, a move towards religious tolerance commenced in this period (Hobson 18). The range of alternatives to Christian faith expanded, and ‘unbelieving outlooks were more deeply anchored in the lifeworld … of nineteenth-century people’ (C. Taylor 322-23). Pound concludes that ‘Christianity and/or religion in the Anglo-Saxon world … [had become] optional’ (26).

Despite this spirit of tolerance, secularization complicated issues of both belief and unbelief. In some ways, ‘the complete liberty of all the creeds’ created a
prison (Chesterton, H 15). Since religious sentiment was no longer an acceptable, common topic in the public sphere, it became difficult to profess belief (15). Orthodox convictions came to be a strictly private matter (Hobson 19). However, atheism was a difficult option as well (19). Just as much as ‘it is bad taste to be an avowed Christian’, ‘it is bad taste to be an avowed atheist’ (Chesterton, H 15). Religious or irreligious convictions had been driven into the private sphere in the sense that ‘private faces in public spaces / Are nicer and wiser / Than public faces in private places’ (Auden I).

This divide between private and public created a divergence between religion and spiritualism. Secularization notwithstanding, there remained the spiritual sense of an unknown existence (Pound 26). According to James, this awareness can exist because there is ‘in the human consciousness … a perception of what we may call “something there”‘ (58). Susan Hobson suggests that distinguishing between religion and spirituality might help to understand this awareness. She classifies spirituality as a commitment to the ‘inner truth of religion rather than its external or social forms’ (20). Thus, spirituality refers to the internal and mystic relation with an unknown existence, while religion entails collective practices, symbols, and beliefs (20). This distinction led to a new notion of religion: one in which belief would be ‘lived rather than preached’ (22). Spirituality became an option that replaced the Church. The prestige of the ministry gradually declined as well as the Church’s visibility in and influence on society. The increase in modern research on this topic - the science of religions - resulted in a further separation of religion and spirituality: religion became ‘more tightly bound to
social forms’ while spirituality ‘increasingly floated free from tradition of any kind of religion’ (20).

The high phase of modernism gave rise to the secularization thesis: ‘the idea that modernism implies, demands, or depends upon a rejection of belief in the supernatural or the sacred’ (Lewis, “MR” 181). This theory supposes that essential parts of modern civilization, such as urbanization and migration, had a deleterious effect on religious forms (C. Taylor 436). They either complicated these forms or caused them to lose meaning or power (436). All in all, the notion is that ‘modernization and secularization go hand in hand: as societies modernize, they secularize through a process that is inevitable and irreversible’ (M. C. Taylor XIII).

Although the current tendency is to disagree with this thesis and to point religious aspects, Charles Taylor points out that ‘there has certainly been ‘a “decline” of religion’ in the sense that modernity has lead people to accept outlooks antithetical to religion (437; 436).

Yet, Lewis postulates that the early twentieth century did not ‘[mark] a further stage’ of secularization, but ‘witnessed a great deal of anxiety about the dangers of secularization and alternatives to the privatized, liberal religion that had dominated the late nineteenth century’ (“MR” 186). He proposes that it is more appropriately described as a battlefield arising from the ‘conflict over the possibilities for religious life in the modern world’ (188). Indeed, people also responded to secularization by developing new and alternative beliefs, ‘partly through the founding of new dominations [and partly] through new modes of organization and new spiritual direction in older established churches’ (C. Taylor
This gave impetus to, for instance, Christian Science and Protestant liberalism. Catholic resistance to reform and modernization attracted people as well. However, religion also ‘adapted relatively well to modern conditions’ by permitting individuals to ‘take the spirituality without the collective behaviour and/or the community without the doctrine’ (Hobson 30; 31).

What exactly the terms ‘secularization’, ‘spirituality’, and ‘religion’ denote can be observed in debates on the issue in the modern period. Philosophies by Friedrich Nietzsche and Gilbert K. Chesterton provide insight into the essence of unbelief and belief, and theories by William James and Émile Durkheim give an account of the modern understanding of spirituality and religion. The examination of these works will serve as premise for the analyses of the modernist novels.

Nietzsche’s later works (after 1880) may be seen as the antireligious literature of the modern period (Mencken 11). Nietzsche portrays Christianity as weakness based on several erroneous elements, such as the notion of infinity, the freedom of will, and the connection between belief and truth; and presents unbelief as strength (GS 197; §110). He asserted that modern people had ‘outgrown Christianity and are averse to it’ (378; §377). Nietzsche’s views on religion and secularism affected the modernists to such an extent that he has been called ‘the prophet of modern secularism’ (Lewis, “MR” 182). Nietzsche’s madman publicly announced that ‘God is dead’ (GS 211; §125). He goes to the marketplace looking for God and concludes that He has been murdered: ‘We have killed him— you and I’ (211; §125). Nietzsche propounded that the shadow of God is yet to be defeated; nonetheless, it is a point of no return, because with the murder of God
humans ‘have destroyed the land behind [them]’ (195; §108; 210; §124). He assumes that people might start to feel homesick and long for the land, but ‘God is dead. God remains dead’ (210; §124; 211; §125). The madman laments the emptiness, infinite nothingness, cold, and darkness that remains. This is the ‘ultimate cruelty’ of the modern people: ‘to sacrifice God for nothingness’ (BGE 67; §55). The murder of God elicits nihilism, which must be understood as a devaluation of the highest values (Markov 47; Rampley 218). The nihilistic state is characterized by anxiety and confusion and may result in passivity (Rampley 218). The modern man sighs: “I don’t know either the way out or the way in; I am whatever doesn’t know either the way out or the way in” (Nietzsche, A 35; §1). This rudimentary crisis of values thus requires a new principle for valuation: now God has died, ‘now we will that the superman live’ (Markov 48; Nietzsche, TSZ 253). The Übermensch is a higher man, and the ‘wickedest is needed for [his] best’ (Nietzsche, TSZ 253; 254). Indeed, the Übermensch breaks the old values to ensure the ‘will to procreation, impulse to the end, to the higher, to the more remote, to the more manifold’ (105). In other words, Nietzsche posits the death of God and unbelief as a potential to preserve and enhance human life (Markov 48).

Chesterton concurs with Nietzsche’s claim that modern people have killed God; however, in Orthodoxy (1908), he argues against the theories of agnostic, antichristian, or rational thinkers such as Nietzsche. His work illustrates the reasons for belief amidst increasing secularization. Belief, according to Chesterton, arises out of the conviction that the ‘world does not explain itself’ and the awareness of ‘something personal in the world’ (O 115). He advocates the relation between truth
and belief and asserts that it is precisely Nietzsche’s theory – with its lack of morality and purpose – that would incite madness (73; 74). He insists that the Übermensch, believing in nothing but himself, shall be imprisoned ‘alone in his own nightmare’ (44). Conversely, belief will help the individual keep their sanity, freedom, and joy by means of its capacity to help them ‘understand everything by the help of what [they do] not understand’ (47). Chesterton thus argues for the logic and power of the tenets of Christianity.

James’s contribution to the debate in *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* (1902) offers a clear account of what ‘spirituality’ meant in the modern period; additionally, his work illustrates the notion behind the religion/spirituality divide. Although James still uses the term ‘religion’, his theory describes what Hobson has classified as ‘spirituality’. This shows that, despite the divide, spirituality was still associated with religion in some ways. James proposes to ignore the institutional side of religion along with beliefs and traditions; he focuses solely on ‘personal religion pure and simple’ (29). He finds the latter more fundamental than institutional religion: ‘the primordial thing’ (30). Having created this sharp distinction between the set of collective conventions that constitutes religion and the personal religious experience, James defines ‘religion’ as ‘the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine’ (31). This relation can be ‘moral, physical, or ritual’ (31). With the word ‘divine’ James means ‘any object that is godlike, whether it be a deity or not’ to which the individual feels the need to respond (34; 51). Personal religion provides an
enchantment in which the individual feels safe and sound: ‘when the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste’ (48). In that sense, religious feeling results in a liberation of the soul. James suggests that this experience springs from ‘mystical states of consciousness’ in which the individual ‘becomes one with the Absolute’ (379; 419). These mystical states have four characteristics: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. They produce intense feelings that cannot be conferred with other people, but they are ‘states of knowledge’ as well in the sense that they appear as revelations and illuminations about ‘the depths of truth’ (380). Mystical states do not last long and are so intense that the individual is taken over by them and feels as if ‘held by a superior power’, but they can only be recalled - imperfectly - in the memory of an individual (381). Mystical states are not bound to developments in the tradition of religion and are hardly affected by differences in religious beliefs; they are a fundamental part of all religions.

Durkheim’s analysis of religion in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) shows how collective, institutional religion was seen in the modern period. Durkheim’s theory is that religion is a social entity: ‘society is the soul of religion’ (868). Religious forces are thus by nature human forces (868). Durkheim also states that all religions have something common and permanent which forms the ‘objective contents of the idea which is expressed when one speaks of religion in general’ (37). Therefore, religion cannot be explained in terms of the supernatural, mystical, unknowable, and inconceivable, because the feeling of mystery is a
modern concept (Durkheim 74; 78). Rites and beliefs as religious phenomena, however, are permanencies and commonalities. All these rites are centred on an object with a special nature, and the ‘bipartite division of the whole universe’ into the profane and the sacred is characteristic of all beliefs (108; 870). Durkheim excludes magic as a mark of religion, because it is not collective and its goal is to break the ‘bipartite division’. The concept of church, however, is inseparable from religion (117). Durkheim speculates that the religious individualism of the modern times - in which ’individuals have differentiated themselves more and more and the value of an individual has increased’- may radically change this situation, but he explains that he cannot analyse religion based on what it will be (881).

Durkheim arrives at the following definition of ‘religion’: ‘a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things … – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them [and thus] an eminently collective thing’ (122).

Having thus examined the attitude towards and understanding of secularization and religion, this chapter posits the following definitions of ‘secularization’, ‘religion’, and ‘spirituality’. ’Secularization’ is the process of ‘the loss of plausibility and credibility affecting beliefs held within religious traditions’ and ‘a displacement of religious authority’ and practice from public institutions to the individual person (Hedley Brooke 104). ‘Religion’ is a social and collective, external expression of beliefs and practices that may result in theology, philosophy and religious intuitions. ‘Spirituality’ is a personal commitment to and relation with an
unknown, godlike existence that cannot be experienced collectively. The spiritual experience offers the individual a redeeming union with the unknown.
CHAPTER 2
AFTER GOD: SECULARIZATION IN THE MODERNIST NOVEL

The idea that modernist novels reflect the causal connection between modernity and secularity has proven to be pervasive. The current tendency, just as with the socio-historical debate, is to argue against this view, notably in Lewis's work; nevertheless, there are some grounds on which the secularization thesis can be applied to the modernist novel. Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, depicts the darkness and individualism that remains after the death of God. The novel was published in 1899, around the time of the debates on the issue of religion discussed in Chapter One. An early instance of modernism, *Heart of Darkness* is seen as one of the novels to ‘set the seal on the achievements of literary Modernism in English’ (Graham 204). Using it as an example, this chapter briefly discusses why modernist novels might have been considered ‘secular’ fiction.

In some ways, modernist novels invite this interpretation. According to Hobson, they regularly state ‘the idea of a burgeoning literature of unbelief’ (22). She explains that this entails not only antireligious works, but also literature that shows ‘the godless nature of the times’ (22). Even though many modernist writers rejected the scepticism of such works, they still depict a strong sense that ‘to believe in God is to swim against the powerful tide’ (22). Scholars of modernism subsequently developed corollaries of the secularization thesis: firstly, that the result of the death of God was a secular worldview; and, secondly, that modernists plainly acknowledged the concept of secularization (Lewis, “MR” 181).
Lewis argues that these corollaries are false and that ‘secularization’ is the wrong term for modernist novels (182). He concurs with the notion that the relation to the sacred changed radically, but he does not agree with the idea that the novels embrace secularity. Lewis proposes that the modernists sought new ways to describe the sacred and religious experience: they pursued ‘new forms of spirituality’ inspired by Christianity, the occult, new paganism, or religious experience in general (191). He summarizes this tendency as ‘an impulse towards the re-enchantment of the world’ (193). Yet, *Heart of Darkness* depicts a disenchanted world in which unbelief is connected with power.

Research on Conrad’s novel has established the failure of religion. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan demonstrates that Marlow’s pilgrimage has no mystical object, which makes it a pilgrimage without meaning (419). She claims that Marlow had hoped to find an Adam in Eden at the end of his journey, but what he finds is a dark Eden with an evil man: Kurtz (417; 420). Marlow is robbed of his belief and returns empty-handed (421). Cedric Watts also points to the defeat of religion. He suggests that the parallel between Faust and Kurtz indicates severe scepticism towards religion. The characters all lead secular lives and the only one who has any religious significance, Kurtz, ‘has [his] significance granted [by] the intensity of his evil’ (Watts 51). Such failure of religion can be explained in light of the two corollaries of the secularization thesis: the death of God leading to a secular worldview and the lack of resistance against it.

In response to the absence of God, the narrator depicts an inverted Christian worldview. Marlow’s journey to ‘the centre of the earth’ is in essence an
exploration of the beginning and the end simultaneously (Conrad 13). He sees it as ‘travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world’, but at the same time he invokes imagery of death, such as a sepulchre and catacomb, to describe it (33; 9; 14). In a Christian world, Marlow would find God at the beginning and the end. However, instead of finding God, Marlow finds a rotting corpse and darkness (8; 9). This inversion of religious outlooks is typical of Heart of Darkness. The title, in fact, points to this issue: instead of a sacred heart enlightened by love and humanity, there is just darkness. In this context, there is no place for religiosity.

Marlow is told that ‘no man here bears a charmed life’ (28). This shows that the death of God has lead to secularity. Indeed, Christian values of being compassionate, charitable and humble have all collapsed. Marlow observes that materialism has taken over these values (57). The result is a meaningless existence in which ‘men [are] strolling aimlessly’ (23).

Although this situation is experienced as traumatic, unbelief is not necessarily condemned and rejected. Marlow admits that his pilgrimage bears traces of nightmares (14). His explorations cause a ‘moral shock’ (64). Kurtz describes his quest using the famous phrase: ‘The horror! The horror!’ (69). Yet, Marlow also points to the power of the unbelief of Kurtz, who relies only on his ‘own innate strength’ (49). The Übermensch will do the evilest to become the best (Nietzsche, TSZ 254). Kurtz too has no restraint and no heart – he is ‘hollow at the core’; his single purpose is ‘science and progress’ and ‘higher intelligence’ (Conrad 68; 25). Marlow frequently refers to Kurtz as devil or ‘Mephistopheles’, which indicates the extent of Kurtz’s immorality (16; 49; 26). Nonetheless, people
see the potential in his antichristian way of life, and recognize him as ‘a prodigy’ and ‘a special being’ (25).

The two corollaries that Lewis claimed were false are thus reflected in the novel. The absence of God results directly in a secular worldview focused on materialism and individualism. Marlow describes it as a nightmare and Kurtz as a ‘horror’, but this should not be seen as a rejection of secularity. The world that Marlow describes is antithetical to the world only one generation ago, as is evident in his aunt’s religious views. Naturally, this radical change and its sudden consequences are disturbing. The potential of unbelief is acknowledged, nevertheless, by the positive evaluation of Kurtz’s achievement. The fact that Heart of Darkness allows this type of analysis suggests why other and later modernist novels have been seen as presenting secular worlds. Though the novel may not be antireligious: its narrator does acknowledge, and to some extent accept, the darkness after God and religion.
CHAPTER 3
‘THE THING ONE NEVER TALKED ABOUT’: RELIGION AND SECULARIZATION IN E.M. FORSTER’S A ROOM WITH A VIEW

A light story, or a ‘cheerful Bildungsroman’, has long been the common description for E.M. Forster’s A Room with a View (1908) (Scherer Herz 138). In fact, he called it ‘his “nicest” book’ (Stone 216). This characterization and the view that the novel is more familiar with the ‘conventions of the nineteenth-century realists’ than with the complexity and experimentation of modernism might create the impression that Heart of Darkness is in a dim and distant past (Walhout Hinojosa 72). A Room is less ‘modernistic’, which means it is less affected by secularization, and thus it presents lighter story. In 1969, Oliver Stallybrass gave notice: ‘Light in touch it may be, but it is very far from lightweight’ (18). The view that the story is dark and complex has since replaced the buoyant reputation (Scherer Herz 138). The novel’s antitheses, such as dark/light and truth/falsehood, have become recognized as interconnected parts of the story, instead of ‘either-or-terms’ (139). Lynn Walhout Hinojosa emphasizes that A Room has many features that are generally considered quintessentially modernist, such as the complicated treatment of morality and aesthetics (73). Adding to this complexity is the novel’s attitude towards religion and secularization, which has often been overlooked (Walhout Hinojosa 72). An outright rejection of religion is complicated by the society presented in the novel, but there are signs that public religion is in decline. This chapter will show that despite these signs, the characters in A Room are
hesitant to choose against religion and preserve elements to make sense of their lifeworld.

Extant work on *A Room* barely addressed the notion of religion. Judith Scherer Herz, Randall Stevenson, Stallybrass, and Lionel Trilling, though their analyses were not primarily concerned with this topic, made brief remarks about religion. Scherer Herz asserts that spirituality in *A Room* is no longer strictly restricted to the pastoral space, to which it originally belonged, but has become part of the domestic space as well (146). Stevenson alludes to mystical states when he observes the ‘brief yet intense experiences dominating entire subsequent lives’ (215). Stallybrass notices that Forster’s ‘invincible anti-clericalism’ had influenced the change from good to evil in Mr Beebe (17). In *E.M. Forster*, Trilling examines this transformation. He remarks that the novel first gives the impression that Mr Beebe is different from Mr Eager, but when the clergyman reveals his true intent, it becomes evident that Mr Beebe is just the same: he is ‘trying to murder Lucy’s soul’ (110). In response to this passage, Trilling states that ‘the feeling against religion in this novel is naive and direct and makes a small sub-plot’ (109).

Walhout Hinojosa has further analysed this ‘feeling against religion’ and concludes that it is not a small sub-plot but a fundamental part of the novel (72). Through a typological analysis, she shows that the Puritan worldview is inverted in the novel (77). The developments in the novel are an inversion of the developments that a typological analysis would normally reveal. That is, instead of moral judgement and clarity about providence, Lucy learns a ‘new spiritual truth

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2 A Puritan typological reading may have many functions, such as providing insight into God’s providential plan and ‘the moral and spiritual state of one’s self’ (Walhout Hinojosa 74; 75).
and the morality of egalitarianism’ and can never be sure of divine foresight (78; 87). She does not find a new self in Christ; rather, proselytization is from medievalism -representing the judging character - to the renaissance - denoting moral egalitarianism (79). Finally, the plot is centred on events that seem to have spiritual significance, but these are no longer accompanied by the sense of a God who initiates and controls (87; 89). Walhout Hinojosa concludes that the novel uses Puritan typological ideas about morality, the self, and events that characters experience, but replaces all the Christian aspects with renaissance aesthetic ones (92). This practice points to secularization, but Walhout Hinojosa does not use this term.

Even so, A Room reflects the secularity of the modern period in two ways: firstly, the novel depicts a society in which the external and collective aspect of religion is undermined; secondly, it shows how traditional Christian creeds are redefined to correspond with the characters’ personal sense of religion. This resembles the loss of the public function and the move to personal experience of the modern period.

The Church and religious community are no longer acknowledged in the world of the novel. The narrator observes that the Church as an institution ‘had lost its charm’ (Forster 216). This loss of appeal is confirmed by the attitude to churchgoing. The Rector’s niece, for instance, cannot see the purpose and ‘[is] taken to church protesting’ (168-169). Lucy’s brother is hard to persuade to visit church and Lucy herself becomes reluctant as well: ‘no church for me’ (26; 216). The narrator explains that ‘the church [is] invisible’ (216). With such rejection of the
position and visibility of the church – an essential aspect of religion according to Durkheim - the externality of religion is presented as being in decline (Durkheim 122). The novel also reflects the loss of communality by showing that beliefs and rites are being eroded – again fundamental features of religion (122). This is implied in the novel by the notion that one can be in a temple where there might not be any true believers present (Forster 114). This idea is similar to the modern notion that one can have ‘the community without the doctrine’ (Hobson 31). The diminution of belief is accentuated by the impact of philosophy and science on the clergymen in the novel. Mr Beebe is praised for his ‘liberal-mindedness, his enlightened attitude towards philosophy and science’ (111). Nigel Rapport suggests that Mr Beebe has trouble distinguishing his ‘professional and philosophic energies’ (107). The characters claim that ‘no one would take him for a clergyman’ (Forster 30). Instead of being occupied with Providence, he firmly believes in coincidence (147). Furthermore, he does not understand why people would listen to his sermons (51). This shows that not only Mr Beebe himself is not as much interested in Christian doctrine; he also expects that other people are not interested. Mr Eager neglects his faith and focuses on science. Lucy doubts that ‘Mr Eager was as full of spirituality … as she had been led to suppose’ (73). He speaks of faith, but he rather takes on a ‘scientific standpoint’ (91). Lucy resolves to describe him as ‘truly insincere’ (117).

With the public function in the decline, the strict division between what is religious and what is secular is fading in the society that the novel portrays. Machiavelli, known as ‘an atheist and immoral cynic’, is taken for a saint from whom
virtue can be obtained (Mansfield, par. 1; Forster 41). Similarly, Mr Emerson – the advocate of the profane – has ‘the face of a saint’ while the face of Mr Beebe – a man connected with God – becomes ‘inhuman’ (Forster 225; 224). This emphasizes the loss of public religion, because it points to the collapse of the bipartite division of sacred and profane, as formulated by Durkheim (870).

The result of this loss in the modern period was that people started to revise religious concepts according to their personal sense of belief. The narrator of the novel reports a similar effect. Sin is no longer disobedience to God; instead, it is described as the revolt of those who are devoutly religious ‘against passion and truth’ and a crime against Eros, the god of love, and Athene, the goddess of reason (Forster 194). Note that now public religion is declining, the narrator reverses the category of sinners: not the unbelievers but the religious become sinners. The choice of gods, of love and reason, reveals the humanist perspective. Nonetheless, religious concepts like ‘sin’, ‘deities’ and ‘vengeance’ are used (194). The narrator has created a personal belief, which has floated free from collective religion.

There are thus clear signs of secularization in A Room, but there is no direct and open rejection or defence of religion. The narrator observes that ‘the thing one never talked about – religion – was fading like all the other things’ (216). This observation embodies the general modern attitude towards public religion: its loss is seen as being part of a constellation of things that seem to be fading with modernity, except this we do not talk about. It is significant that this is also reflected in the shape of the novel: there are not many instances in which unbelief
and belief are discussed or promoted by the narrative voice. The question is why it is not really on the surface despite the obvious signs of secularization. The answer is that *A Room* portrays a society in which religious and irreligious sentiments and convictions coexist and are private affairs. The narrator draws a parallel between engagement and creeds and argues that it is ‘a private matter, and should be treated as such’ (116). Indeed, Mr Beebe, who is supposed to preach and teach religion, feels the need to keep his principles ‘carefully concealed beneath his tolerance and culture’ (207). He follows the modern idea that ‘it is most undesirable that things of that sort should be spoken about … in public’ (Chesterton, *BC* 39). It had become bad taste to share sacred sentiment. However, religion is not just an indecorous topic; religious beliefs and practises are, in essence, unfashionable. When the Rector’s niece is taken to church in spite of her protests, the young men who stay behind ‘[mock] her with ungenerous words’ (Forster 169). The narrator claims that the pious ‘follow neither heart nor brain’ and that their piety is a show bound to end in cynicism, hypocrisy, and discomfort (194). Similar principles apply to irreligious sentiments and convictions. When Lucy tells that her brother is reluctant to visit church, she suddenly hesitates and corrects: ‘it’s not often we get him to ch —– The church is rather far off, I mean’. This implies that irreligious practises are unseemly. Mr Emerson - known as ‘an irreligious man’ - is barely tolerated by the company of the novel (74). The avowed atheist is not accepted by the clergy, and he is rejected by those ‘who represented intellect’ and those ‘who stood for good breeding’ (58). Religion and secularization are banned from the public domain in *A Room*; they are taboo subjects and
practices. This explains the hesitance in the choice against religion and, naturally, obscures the process of secularization. The decline of public religion as shown in the novel, however, clearly demonstrates the influence of secularization.

Nonetheless, both Lucy and George have conserved the religious concept that accounts that there is a personal force or immortal being, because it helps them to make sense of the world; moreover, they share the conviction that this is true. Lucy claims that there are still times when ‘unfamiliar things are real’ (62). She suggests that at these times people feel that something is happening to them (61). To explain this, she accepts the sense of something beyond the human construct that can impact her life. This action echoes Chesterton’s idea that belief helps the individual to ‘understand everything by the help of what [they do] not understand’ (O 44). Chesterton added that this is also the reason belief exists: the realization that the ‘world does not explain itself’ (115). Lucy’s awareness accumulates at the Loggia. It no longer looks like a gallery but is ‘the triple entrance of a cave, wherein many a deity, shadowy, but immortal, looking forth upon the arrivals and departures of mankind’ (Forster 61). Here she perceives the existence of something godlike. She confirms this sensibility when she describes the presence of ‘a Being not visible to the mortal eye - a Being who whispered to her soul...’ (173). Considering Chesterton’s argument, it is significant that she experiences this when she feels that ‘the well-known world had broken up’, when her world is no longer self-evident (76). George, too, has a feeling that ‘the things of the universe’ do not fit and, unlike his father, he cannot live with the idea that he will not untangle the knot (47). Despite his upbringing ‘free from all superstition’, George
disagrees with his father about the body after death, which indicates that he has a sense of a place beyond this world (46; 44). George, like Lucy, is sensible of something unseen that is present in his life, namely Fate: ‘We are flung together by Fate, drawn apart by Fate’ (147). Once they are together, Lucy and George share the perception of something personal. In that sense, they have preserved the collectivity of this belief as well. Both of them ‘[are] conscious of a love more mysterious…’ (230). Scherer Herz argued that this phrase points to the final vision of love in Dante’s Paradiso (146). She suggests that it refers to ‘love … that moves the sun in heav’n and all the stars’ (Dante 602). This phrase denotes ‘the fond gaze of the joyful Creator’ (Jacoff 122). From this perspective, the lovers’ sensibility to ‘something there’ can be specified as an experience of sacred existence. James and Chesterton considered this an essential condition of the personal relation with an unknown godlike existence.

Notwithstanding the secularism in the novel, Lucy and George both undergo and need mystical experiences to know who they are and what they want. They understand that the murder at the Loggia has spiritual significance. They see that ‘it isn’t exactly that a man had died’: ‘something tremendous has happened’ (64). That is, something happened beyond what they have seen and it cannot be described consciously, but it has had a great impact. Lucy understands that she ‘had crossed some spiritual boundary’, and she can feel the inward effect of it herself: ‘wings seemed to flutter inside her’ (64). George has the same awareness of the spirituality in the event and he, too, cannot interpret its meaning (64). There is no union with an unknown, godlike existence; nevertheless, their experience
corresponds with James’ notion of the ineffability, noetic quality, transience, and passivity of mystical states. Lucy and George cannot communicate the experience among themselves, with others, nor with the reader. They have no language to describe what happened to them, which points to the degree to which spiritual language has declined in the society of the novel. Lucy cannot yet determine the meaning of the event, but for George the state has noetic quality; it reveals to him the depths of his soul. While Lucy’s wings only flutter, he decides: ‘I shall want to live’ (66). Although they were submitted to the power of the event, Lucy and George soon move away from it to the realization that something happened. Although this spiritual experience plays only a small role in the plot, it is the moment in which George decides to be independent and make his own decisions and Lucy becomes aware of this possibility. Lucy’s final revelation about nearing darkness and death is so strong that it ‘seize[s] her’ (188). She responds with a conversion, a choice to leave an old life behind, to the memory of the transient experience she has when Phaethon leads her to the place where ‘light and beauty enveloped her’ (88). She feels ‘wings flutter inside’ after the first mystical consciousness, but soon experiences ‘the sense that she had found wings, and meant to use them’ (112). When Mr Emerson reminds Lucy of this feeling, she decides to live. This, paradoxically, points to the power that spirituality can have in a secularizing society. Lucy and George are depicted as young people who still have to discover who they are and what their place is in the world around them. It testifies to the power of spirituality that they can discover this in spiritual
experiences. At the same time, it demonstrates the limits of secularity, which has not been able to provide an alternative.

To conclude, *A Room with a View* reflects the modern decline of public religion, but the response of Lucy and George indicates the limits of secularization and the essential position of elements of religion in understanding their destiny and identity. The society portrayed in the novel problematizes issues of religion and secularization. The fact that they are taboo and not meant to be discussed in public spheres makes an outright rejection or defence of religion difficult; it also means that a large part of the discussion and process in the novel happens beneath the surface of the plot: the narrative voice only allows little glimmers and instances. Lucy’s reluctance to go to church and the mockery of the pious, for example, or the habits of the clergymen to focus on philosophy and science – especially Mr Beebe’s devotion to coincidence – are instances that reveal secularization in the novel. The novel also shows secularization’s limits through the reaction of Lucy and George. Mystical states still fulfil an important function in their lives, and they retain a sense that there is an immortal being or force present, which they experience among themselves. This divergence between the impact of secularization on public life and private feelings in *A Room* illustrates that some nuance is necessary: a focus on public life demonstrates that the impact is profound while a focus on private life suggests the importance of religion and spirituality. In that sense, secularization cannot be seen as a continuous and ineluctable. Moreover, the new collectivity that religious remnants attain in the lives of Lucy and George hints at the possibility that – even after a rejection –
religion might re-emerge, which leaves doubts about the definiteness of secularization.
CHAPTER 4
‘I NEITHER BELIEVE NOR DISBELIEVE IN IT’: THE TENSION IN JAMES JOYCE’S A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

Contrary to E.M. Forster, James Joyce is usually considered ‘modernist par excellence’ (Stewart 133). Although nationalist and revivalist movements were more obvious choices for Irish writers, he rather identified with modernism (133).

Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916) is often seen as an exemplar of the modernist bildungsroman or kunstlerroman: he cleverly depicts Stephen Dedalus’s moral, emotional, and intellectual development in relation to the modern period.3 Joyce has been called a ‘literary messiah’ who came to ‘found his own church’ (137). The importance of the religious dimension, in particular the influence of Catholicism, in Joyce’s work has consistently been recognized in literary criticism. The connection between religion and A Portrait is by no means underdeveloped, but the link with modern secularization has been somewhat overlooked. In A Portrait, Joyce deals with Stephen’s formative years and, simultaneously, depicts the process of secularization. The novel shows a strong tension between the rejection of religion and the sustenance of religious sentiment that is influenced by Stephen’s interior development.

A Portrait is usually seen as a bildungsroman or kunstlerroman affected by the tenets of Catholicism. It is considered ‘one of the major examples of the genre’; nonetheless, it is by no means a traditional version (Babaee & Montashery 142;

3 Kevin Farrell suggests that A Portrait carries properties of both the bildungsroman and kunstlerroman, especially at the beginning of text (31). He associates the former with Stephen’s life as a priest and the later with Stephen’s life as an artist. Since this chapter argues for a more nuanced approach, it refers to both terms.
According to Kevin Farrell, multiple critics have suggested that the novel deliberately frustrates the teleological structure of the classic *bildungsroman* (27). Farrell explains that Joyce has replaced the structure with a new ‘template of development’: the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church (28). This, then, accounts for the conflicted dynamics of the novel (29). Farrell points out that critics generally contend that the influence of Catholicism on the structure of the novel is extensive (28). This seems a logical outcome, not only because of the cultural footprint of religion but also, and mainly, because issues of religious faith are much closer to the surface of *A Portrait* than, for instance, *A Room with a View*.

Previous research has addressed the tension in the novel between attachment to and rejection of the Church. Farrell argues that, despite the impact of religion, the novel ultimately rejects it. The sacramental cycle, which acts as a model around which Stephen’s growth towards maturity is fashioned, loses its validity (28; 30). It is ‘frustrated by … intellectual rebellion’ and closed when Stephen realizes the platitudinousness of religious life (34; 36). However, the aesthetic cycle that replaces the sacramental one still draws from religious life (37). Steven Centola established the same attachment-detachment pattern. He calls it an ‘attraction-repulsion response to the Catholic Church’ (96). He expounds the idea that Stephen is enthralled by its sacred mystery but still comes to a detachment signified by the subversion of the white imagery that traditionally presents a positive association with the Church (96; 97). *A Portrait* introduces a ‘negative connotation’ of this imagery (99). Stephen’s turn to art seals his rejection (102). Joseph Buttigieg disagrees with the theory that Stephen abandons religion
and embraces art. He claims that the two are, instead, inseparable (44). Buttigieg proposes that this is characteristic of the modern period, since ‘during the turn of the century, the context within which Stephen develops, religion and aesthetics were as inextricably intertwined as they had ever been’ (44). For Stephen, it creates a confusion by which art becomes transcendental (46; 51). Geert Lernhout concurs that ‘art is discussed in religious terms’ in the novel (130). He believes that the interconnection is not just peculiar to aestheticism and religion: it also marks Stephen’s alienation from the Church. He points out that Stephen’s rebellion ‘is still part of a Catholic framework’ in the sense that he challenges God with this refusal (137; 138). Although the novel depicts Stephen’s ‘detachment … from religion’, there is a weakness in his revolt: he still respects religious doctrine (138). John Paul Requilme finds that Stephen’s detachment ‘is only partial because an effect remains’ (110). Requilme emphasizes that Stephen’s reasoning in particular remains affected by religion (110).

These debates point to the complexity of Stephen’s attitude towards religion, but critics have not considered the relationship between religiosity as depicted in *A Portrait* and the issue of modern secularization. The focus has been on the ascendancy of aestheticism and not primarily on the loss of religion. This chapter will analyse Stephen’s coming of age and his stance on religion within the context of secularization in the modern period.

In the novel’s first chapter, the omnipresence of God is an undeniable reality for Stephen. He realizes that ‘it was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried to think what big thought that must
be; but he could only think of God’ (Joyce, 13). Stephen identifies God as an omniscient Being: only God knows the structure of the universe, and His knowledge is greater than the understanding of humankind. Additionally, Stephen assumes that ‘God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages’ (13). This idea confirms that Stephen believes that God is a universal reality unrestricted by culture or nationality. However, this is not to say that Stephen submissively accepts God’s totality. In fact, it ‘pains him that he did not know … where the universe ended’ (13). He does not want to rely on God’s supremacy and longs to find out for himself how the world exists. This phase in his development - where he cannot go beyond the reality and power of God, but also becomes annoyed with the boundary - corresponds to the Victorian period in which the eagerness to make scientific discoveries began threatening the authority of religion.

Stephen believes in the existence of God and the truth behind religious concepts, such as sin and evil, as well as ecclesial rituals. Religion is a sure and infinite truth in his childhood. Stephen has such a strong belief in sin, for example, that the thought of it can make him quiver (39). At Conglowes, he is convinced that prayer will deliver him from evil in this life and the next. He explains that he must ‘kneel and say his own prayers … so that he might not go to hell when he died’ (15). When he is scared of supernatural beings, he prays: ‘Visit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, this habitation and rive away from it all the snares of the enemy’ (14). This illustrates his belief in hell, sin, grace, and prayer. Furthermore, Stephen acknowledges the authority of the Church. He assumes that it is holy because of its
connection with God. The smell of the chapel is a ‘holy smell’ (14). The notion of a ‘holy smell’ hints at the unquestionable relation between God and the chapel instinctively established via Stephen’s senses. When students at Conglowes steal the censer, Stephen imagines that it ‘must have been a terrible sin’, because God dwells in the censer (38). This realization, too, originates in his faith in the relation between the Church and God. Religious tenets and rites as well as the Church, which Emile Durkheim considered essential elements of religion, thus hold a pertinent power in Stephen’s childhood (Durkheim 122). It is not just integrated in his thinking; it is also part of the way in which he perceives the world.

However, the conversation at the Christmas dinner towards the end of chapter one encourages Stephen to move away from this stage of childhood. The dinner debate is the first instance in the novel in which religion is discussed in context of the political concerns of Ireland at the time. It is pertinent that this is also the time at which Stephen begins to doubt the authority and appeal of religion. Mr Dedalus and Mr Casey disagree with Dante about the political role of the Church. Dante defends the Church using passages from scripture, which she calls ‘the language of the Holy Ghost’, probably to strengthen her argument and position (Joyce 26). Mr Dedalus undermined the authority of the Bible, when he replies that it is ‘a very bad language’ (26). They ignore Mrs Dedalus’s warning that Stephen is present (27). Dante reinforces her orthodox views: ‘God and religion before everything!’ (32) However, it is Mr Casey’s proposal that there has been ‘too much God in Ireland’ and to do ‘away with God’ that sticks with Stephen (32). He starts to doubt whether Father Arnell is right to be angry and concludes that the prefect of
studies has been ‘cruel and unfair’ (40; 43). His questioning whether they are right to act as they do is a mild version of the dinner debate. In chapter two, Stephen starts to express heretic thought in an essay, which makes him feel a ‘vague general malignant joy’ even though his classmates ignore him afterwards (66). Indeed, Stephen diverges from religious creed whenever it suits him, regardless of the consequences. He is first called a heretic when he admits he appreciates Byron, even though he knows of the poet’s heretics and immorality (68). This, too, is a mild version of Mr Casey’s stance, namely that he does not care whether Parnell was a sinner (26). Stephen’s behaviour is typical of the modern period in which the Church’s authority had gradually declined.

In his process towards maturity, Stephen further rejects religious rites and truths. The goal of becoming a good catholic becomes meaningless. The voices ‘urging him to be a good catholic above all things … had now come to be hollow-sounding in his ears’ (70). In fact, Stephen develops ‘another nature’ (70). He still attempts to resist it, but his prayer is empty and has no religious significance, because it is ‘addressed neither to God nor saint’ (73). His alienation from religion is emphasized by ‘the memory of his childhood suddenly [growing] dim’ (77-78). The childhood in which religion and God were absolute powers is ‘dead or lost’ (80). Stephen’s epiphany at seeing the word ‘fœtus’ triggers a process of ageing.4 It confronts him with what he assumed existed only deep inside him (76). Although there is no connection with a godlike existence, the epiphany still has spiritual

4 It is well-trodden ground that Joyce revised the meaning of ‘epiphany’. The term originally meant ‘the “shewing-forth of Jesus in the temple”’, but Joyce turned it into a secular phenomenon meaning “a sudden spiritual manifestation” in which the significance of some ordinary person or object is revealed with great clarity in spite of being “the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (Stewart 137).
qualities and value. Stephen’s experience is a state of new knowledge, but it is at
the same time beyond intellectual understanding. This corresponds to the
ineffability and noetic quality of the mystical state as outlined by William James
(380). The epiphany also has transient and passive qualities: it is brief but so
intense that it makes his brain ‘powerless’ and takes him ‘beyond the limits of
reality’ (Joyce 77; 78). The word ‘fœtus’ continues to trigger revelations with
mystical qualities, but they unite Stephen with his lust rather than with a great
unknown. In chapter three, he claims that ‘he cared little that he was in mortal sin’;
he feels pride (83; 87). This implies that Stephen no longer believes in the power
of the concept. It seems as if he has completely abandoned religion. He has
enough of ‘dull piety’ and his ‘devotion had gone by the board’ (87).

Yet, he cannot move away from religious doctrine and keeps a strong
awareness of its concepts, such as sin. He applies the term ‘sin’ to his actions and
uses negative imagery to describe it: ‘darkness’, ‘evil seed’, and ‘a swamp’ (89).
Moreover, Stephen identifies with sinners, as shown by his move away from God
towards Mary: ‘the refuge of sinners’ (88). He may not believe in the power of sin
anymore, but he still accepts the term. Stephen describes his sin as ‘a sudden
movement of his own will’, but does not reject the idea of evil forces (85). At his
urge to sin, he perceives ‘some dark presence moving irresistibly upon him from
darkness’ (83). In general, Stephen rejects devotion, but still enjoys ‘following up
to the end of the rigid lines of the doctrines of the church’ (89). Stephen has thus
separated religious feeling and commitment from religious creed. Similar to
people in the modern period, he retains the doctrine without the piety. His
development at this stage reflects modern secularity coinciding with remainders of religion.

This makes a return to piety quite possible, as is reflected by Stephen’s development in chapter four. Just before the famous hellfire sermon, his memories of Conglowes encourage him to ‘[become] again a child’s soul’ (91). According to James, the connection between the great unknown and the subject is always personal (31). Stephen acknowledges this personal connection when he feels that ‘every word was for him’ (Joyce 97). The power of the sermon is great, not only because Stephen personalizes it but also because the priest continually encourages him to make the descriptions real. For instance, he asks the listener: ‘place your finger for a moment in the flame...’ (102). Religious beliefs become powerful verities again for Stephen after the sermon:

God had called him. Yes? What? Yes? His flesh shrank together as it felt the approach of the ravenous tongues of flames, dried up as it felt about it the swirl of stifling air. He had died. Yes. He was judged ... Flames burst forth from his skull like a corolla, shrieking like voices: –Hell! Hell! Hell! Hell! Hell! (105)

The fact that is able to have this experience proves that he believes again in the reality of religious creed. This epiphany, in contrast to Stephen’s earlier ones in which he only became aware of his earthly desires, does involve a connection with God. Stephen accepts devotion again: ‘He would be at one with others and with God. He would love his neighbour. He would love God who had made and loved him. He would kneel and pray with others and be happy’ (120). He participates in
rituals again, such as prayer and the Eucharist, with a certainty of their power. He even makes the confession he earlier rejected and, in line with Chesterton’s reasoning, it brings him joy: ‘till that moment he had not known how beautiful and peaceful life could be’ (123). Stephen’s coming of age indicates here that the secular development is not conclusive.

Although he eventually rejects a personal commitment to religion, he cannot abandon it. Despite his everyday ‘resolute piety’, Stephen’s starts to doubt his ecclesial life and questions the authority of the priests again, which signals that he will depart from the religion he clung to in childhood (124). He remembers that ‘lately some of their judgments had sounded a little childish in his ears’ [my emphasis] (131). As he moves further towards maturity, he rejects religious life because of ‘the remoteness of his own soul from what he had hitherto imagined her sanctuary’ (136). After this rejection Stephen becomes aware of his name - ‘his strange name seemed to him a prophecy’ - and this leads to a new epiphany of ‘a winged form flying above the waves and slowly climbing in the air’ (142). The imagery refers to the ancient artist Daedalus. Stephen internalizes this vision as he imagines his own body and soul on a flight (142). He experiences it as ‘a deliverance from the wind [and] the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that called him to the pale service of the altar’ (142). The way that he describes the voice that once called him betrays his feelings of institutionalized religion: he does not find it appealing. Conversely, he is enchanted by the sound of his new vocation. It seems, then, that Stephen substitutes religion with art. However, he cannot abandon it and
describes the experience as a religious one. He suggests that ‘his soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her grave-clothes’ (143). This imagery clearly points to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This pattern is typical of Stephen’s maturation in chapter five; he does not leave religion behind, rather, he decides that it is not for him. Stephen is described as ‘an individual mind’, but he acknowledges that he is shaped by religion with his remark that ‘this life produced [him]’ (168; 170). It is only natural that his poetry is profoundly influenced by religion: ‘[his] mind is supersaturated with the religion in which … [he] disbelieves’; but it is revealing that religion is just as much part of Stephen’s life as it is not (202). Stephen wants to escape its influence and at the same cannot let it go. About the Eucharist he says: ‘I neither believe nor disbelieve in it’ (201). This statement accounts for the entirety of Stephen’s religiosity: it coexists with his secularity. Stephen says he has ‘lost the faith’, but at the same time he supposes that there is ‘a malevolent reality’ behind his fear that God is present in the Eucharist (205). In other words, he has positioned himself outside the binary and refuses to choose one or the other. Nonetheless, he follows a secular path in the sense that he ‘will not serve’ (208). In that sense, Stephen’s development corresponds with the modern idea that religion had become optional and had lost its authority. Stephen chooses to find spirituality not in the church, but in aesthetics: ‘an enchantment of the heart’ (182).

To conclude, along with Stephen’s maturing, modern secularity is echoed in *A Portrait*; however, the novel simultaneously depicts how persistent religious sentiment can be, especially because it has been so significant in Stephen’s early
interior development. Religion is so integrated into his mind and perception that a powerful recollection of his childhood soul can invoke pious feelings, although Stephen always associates them with immaturity. Unlike *A Room*, religion is a central topic in *A Portrait*, and Joyce shows how it develops over a long period of Stephen's life. Different stages in his life reveal different attitudes towards belief and unbelief. In one phase, Stephen rejects religion, but in the next he chooses a life of devotion. This tension ultimately causes Stephen to position himself outside the binary: he refuses to choose between belief and unbelief, and religion and secularization coexist in his mind. Stephen’s development suggests two things about secularization in *A Portrait*: firstly, that it is not an irreversible and inevitable event; and secondly, that there is a possibility to withstand the tension between religion and irreligion. Adding to the complexity is that secularization usually functions as a social force; it can be observed mainly in the public sphere, as can be seen in *A Room*, but *A Portrait* concentrates mostly on the inner life of Stephen. It does not narrate secularization as it is in the world, but it shows how it is understood, felt, and thought about in the interior mind of Stephen. This suggests that secularization and religion in the modernist novels might be dependent on the inner self instead of the world around.
CHAPTER 5
‘I AM THIS, I AM THAT’: THE IMPACT OF SUBJECTIVITY ON THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION IN VIRGINIA WOOLF’S MRS DALLOWAY

‘Mr Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame,’ says Virginia Woolf in “Modern Fiction” (190). She approved of his focus on the spirit and interiority. Woolf had a great dislike for Victorian materialism and she always created a strong contrast between ‘materialism’ and ‘spiritualism’ (Whitworth, “VWMM” 113). She criticized materialist novels for their focus on the body and ‘for having no life independent life of the material world they refer to’ (Woolf, “MF” 184; Whitworth “VWMM” 110). In fact, she worried about the ‘irreligious triviality’ of famous English novels (Woolf, “MF” 194). Her concerns meet the effect of the Great War in the society she portrays in Mrs Dalloway (1925), a novel ‘at the heart of her oeuvre’ (Goldman 49). John Charlton Hardwick claimed that, above all else, ‘the Great War really accelerated the Church’s decline’ (Gillespie 89). This chapter argues that this development is only partly reflected in Mrs Dalloway. The War intervenes in the secularization of the society depicted in the novel, but it both encourages and discourages the decline of public religion and simultaneously prompts and deters the privatization of belief.

Religion in Mrs Dalloway has not received much scholarly interest. Elyse Graham and Pericles Lewis conclude that there is a ‘general absence of attention’ (92). Critics who have written on the topic have situated it in the social-historical context of the War. Christine Froula, for example, treats the novel as a post-war
elegy that ‘poses the great question of Europe’s future after … World War I’ (127). She suggests that Miss Kilman’s religious sentiments should be seen in light of the ‘dynamics of nationalism and class‘; that is, Kilman turns to religion when these fail her, which ‘[parodies] Marx’s attack on religion as palliating the masses’ suffering without curing its social causes’ (141; 143). Froula argues that the novel thus ‘pointedly declines to dissociate God and the soul from commodities, nationalism, and class’ (143). She describes Clarissa’s atheism and Kilman’s religion as ‘contending metaphysics’ through which the novel presents the ‘competing truths and values in a post-theological cosmos’ (138). Graham and Lewis disagree with the idea that the novel presents a post-God or post-religious universe. They propose that religion is rejected for its ‘intolerance and narrow-mindedness’ but at the same time embraced, because religious experience helps to find meaning after the horrors of the War (91). Graham and Lewis state that Woolf depicts ‘the collision of post-war angst with the rising talk of God’s own death’ and the subsequent ‘privatized turn of religion’ (98; 96). In this context, Septimus’s death presents to Clarissa alone a modern version of resurrection and has ‘no metaphysical power‘; therefore, it does not allow a messianic reading (105; 106). The religious experience in the novel has a mere individual locus.

Other criticism has focused more on the negative attitude towards religion in Mrs Dalloway. Christopher J. Knight discusses the dislike for public religion in Woolf’s fiction. He draws a parallel between William James’s theory of religious experiences and Woolf’s writing: they show the same suspicion of institutionally bound religion (28). This then, is the reason that Miss Kilman is given an ‘authorial
drubbing’ (28). Despite the general criticism on religion in Woolf’s writing, Knight claims it ‘is not reducible to its moments of religious rebuke, its moments of blasphemy’ (30). Religious representations, such as images of the church and illusions to Scripture, still pervade Woolf’s work (34; 33). Alice Van Buren Kelley speaks of ‘spiritual cannibalism’ and ‘narrow dictates’ (91; 100). She applies these terms to Miss Kilman’s convictions and Sir William Bradshaw’s belief in proportion, which they use as ‘a personal power of conversion’ (91-92). Van Buren Kelley also creates a distinction between public religion and private spirituality when she contrasts their convictions with the ‘visionary moments’ of Septimus and Clarissa, which she categorizes as moments ‘of spiritual merging with all people and things’ (99-100). She describes Septimus’ death not as a messianic sacrifice, but as martyrdom for ‘total vision’ (100).

The post-war context and the distinction between private and public religion are crucial dimensions in the discussion of secularization in Mrs Dalloway. However, this chapter will show that the War has created a complex dynamics between religion/secularization and subjectivity, which results in a multifarious perception of religion. To illustrate this point, it is first necessary to examine the issue of subjectivity in the novel and state the effect of the War on this particular concept.

Mrs Dalloway demonstrates a great concern for subjectivity. The impact of the War is strongly felt in the novel. Clarissa explains that ‘it bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears’ (Woolf, MD 8). Apart from the sorrows, the War has also given rise to a fear of loss. Clarissa worries whether ‘it [matters] that she
must inevitably cease’ (8). However, when she observes that ‘there was in the
depths of her heart an awful fear’ this refers to the loss of subjectivity more than
the loss of life as such (157). Not only is Clarissa’s anxiety a response to the
realization that people like Bradshaw ‘force the soul’; her worry about death is that
no one will know what she had loved in life (157; 103-104). To explain this fear, it is
necessary to discuss the impact of the War on subjectivity. During the War,
individuals had been reduced to ‘indifferent shapes’ (Ender 127). The collective
body of the War – the ‘mass of … human beings: men and women caught in
historical time, marching to their deaths’ – inspired modernists to reconsider the
singular and private body (125). Mrs Dalloway reflects this urge. Clarissa does not
want to define someone’s identity, ‘she would not say of anyone in the world now
that they were this or were that’, but at the same time she cares very much about
who people are (Woolf, MD 7). The fact that she will not read any book except
‘memoirs in bed’ is testament to this (7). This habit displays a desire to ‘know’ and
study another person. Similarly, Clarissa ‘would not say of herself, I am this, I am
that’, but she is alert to her subjectivity and capacity for change (7). She knows that
her self consists of many, incompatible parts and is aware that when she is ‘being
Mrs Dalloway, not even Clarissa anymore’ the ‘body she wore … this body, with all
its capacities, seemed nothing – nothing at all’ (32; 9). Additionally, Clarissa is
conscious that powers such as patriarchy and conversion – that is, repentance and
the change to godly life – are ‘forcing the soul’ (157). This phrase emphasizes
awareness of the vulnerability of the freedom and of the ‘soul’, of the ‘soul’ being
indeterminable.
This concern for individuality causes a general move towards private life in the novel. Septimus has an urge to withdraw from the social environment: ‘Away from people - they must get away from people’ (21). Clarissa protects her privacy and avoids exposing who she really is. She hates that with Peter ‘everything had to be shared’ (7). The identity she shows to the world is not her true self. She explains that only ‘some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre’ (32). Peter’s notion that ‘in privacy one may do as one chooses’ confirms how privacy is seen as a place where powers ‘forcing the soul’ cannot exert their influence (128). It is a safe place where the characters can be sure that there are no threats to their subjectivity. Peter asserts that privacy is part of ‘the truth about the soul’: the self ‘fish-like inhabits deep seas and plies among obscurities threading her way between the boles of giant weeds, over sun-flickered spaces and on and on into the gloom, cold, deep, inscrutable’ (136). Although Peter also acknowledges that it ‘suddenly … shoots to the surface’ out of ‘a positive need to brush, scrape, kindle herself, gossiping’, the imagery of the fish in the ‘cold, deep, inscrutable’ suggests the notion that the self has a natural tendency to reclusion (136).

Considering the anxiety about subjectivity and the turn to privacy, the rejection of public religion is inevitable. According to Emile Durkheim, religion is in essence ‘an eminently collective thing’ (122). He claims that ‘society is the soul of religion’ (868). This strongly contrasts with the focus on privacy in *Mrs Dalloway*. It hints at the possibility that public religion might be seen as a threat to the soul.
Prayer and confession would impose on privacy and make the soul vulnerable to forces that can alter its essence. Clarissa indeed believes that religion ‘would destroy that, … the privacy of the soul’ (Woolf, MD 107). She feels that it imposes itself and likes to ‘see her own features stamped on the face of the populace’ (85). Charles Taylor explains how this might be interpreted as a threat to subjectivity. He points to the tendency to ‘find and live out one’s own [humanity], as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed … from outside, by society, or the previous generation, or religious or political authority’ (475). The idea of proselytization gives Clarissa indeed a feeling that she cannot be herself anymore: ‘Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves?’ (Woolf, MD 107).

According her feeling that religion endangers her true identity, she calls it ‘the cruellest [thing] in the world’ (107). Clarissa describes conversion as a woman who ‘shrouds herself in white and walks penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; offers help, but desires power’, which indicates that she sees it as a human force instead of a divine reality (85). Miss Kilman represents such a force to Clarissa. She describes Kilman with the same words that she had used to describe religion: ‘a brutal monster’ (10). She explains that she hates her, because of the hypocrisy, corruptibility, and desire to overpower that Kilman represents (148). Indeed, this detestation is not directed at Miss Kilman herself, but at ‘the idea of her’ (10). Peter explains that Clarissa stopped believing in gods ‘and so evolved this atheist religion of doing good for the sake of goodness’ (66). The term ‘atheist religion’ is interesting, especially considering the fact that Clarissa also discards the rites, such as prayer: ‘anything more nauseating
she could not conceive’ (101). The idea that she reveals her soul to some other being disgusts her. Clarissa’s nontheistic religion without rituals and purpose is humanist: it is essentially based on nothing religious. Peter admits too that he is ‘by conviction an atheist perhaps’ (48). Clarissa’s reluctance to abandon the idea of religion as well as the hesitancy in Peter’s renunciation of religion reveal some uncertainty about their lifestyle; nevertheless, note that, contrary to Chesterton’s observation that secularism is bad taste, the overt rejection of religion in the novel is presented as rather becoming due to the parallel with subjectivity (Chesterton, O 15). A choice against religion goes hand in hand with the recognition of the fact of uniqueness.

The concentration on privacy and the subsequent turn from public religion initiates a personal version of religion in Mrs Dalloway. Peter calls it Clarissa’s ‘transcendental theory’ (Woolf, MD 129). Jules Romains observed that in the ‘mysterious interconnection’ between the characters the ‘individual consciousness is not spatially restricted to the body, but extends beyond it as an intangible field of force’ (Whitworth, “VWM” 160). Romains thus touches upon the spiritual quality of this phenomenon. In effect, Clarissa’s idea describes a mystical union with a person or a place after death instead of a union with a divine. It does not resemble the one proposed by William James but incorporates the idea of Universal Being (M.C. Taylor 113). It is not a transient experience with noetic quality; it is a transcendentalist idea of a constant network through which life is sustained (113). The theory is Clarissa’s solution to afterlife now that God is no longer part of that. In that sense, it follows the divide between institutional religion and the
privatization of belief that is so typical of the modern period (Lewis, “MR” 183).

Peter applies the theory to life in general, asserting that ‘nothing exists outside us except a state of mind’, though he then he realizes that ‘he can conceive of [Clarissa]’, and the trees immediately reflect her womanhood (Woolf, MD 48). In other words, as soon as Peter becomes aware of his connection with Clarissa, other organisms start to show this connection too, confirming the idea that everything is related. Septimus also recognizes this ‘mysterious interconnection’.

He experiences that ‘trees were alive [and] the leaves … connected by millions of fibers with his own body’, and calls it ‘the birth of a new religion’ (19). It is pertinent that Septimus classifies it ‘a new religion’, though it is essentially a form of personal spirituality that does not involve a connection with a divine unknown and Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus all believe in it but do not experience it collectively. The moments of being in the novel also acquire a spiritual dimension. These moments bear a strong resemblance to Joyce’s epiphanies and relate to William James’s mystical states (Whitworth, “VWM” 153). Clarissa describes such a moment as ‘a sudden revelation, a tinge … an illumination’, which corresponds to the transient quality of the mystical state (Woolf, MD 27). The experience is very intense: ‘one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer’ (27). This marks the passivity that James thought characteristic of mystical states. Clarissa’s moments of being also carry the ineffability and noetic quality. She is aware of the importance and meaning of the experience; she feels it is ‘swollen with some astonishing significance’, but it

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5 Woolf’s ‘moments of being’ are moments in which a person experiences a consciousness that it so intense that it brings about deep revelations (Adams 545).
remains ‘an inner meaning almost expressed’ (27). In other words, Clarissa cannot explain the meaning to herself, nor can she describe it for others. The language through which these experiences can be categorized has declined along with the framework of institutional religion. Clarissa decides to call the revelation following Sally's kiss ‘a religious feeling’ (30). This description is significant, because it emphasizes that she does not know the terms to discuss the revelation although she recognizes that it is an instant of spirituality. There is no connection with a divine unknown, as James supposed. Contrary to Clarissa, Septimus does have a connection with an ‘unseen’: ‘the unseen bade him, the voice which now communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind’ (22). Naturally, with Clarissa’s rejection of God, the invocation of an ‘unseen’ does not suit her version of belief anymore. Septimus hardly has the words to describe the spiritual moments; that is, he ‘muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths’, yet he does know the meaning (57). This shows that Clarissa’s spiritualism is far more secularized than Septimus’s.

Despite the secularism, there are traces of religious creed in the convictions of the characters. Clarissa, for instance, believes that people ‘will live on in each other’ after death (8). This thought still features a form of the belief in the afterlife. Although it does not entail the idea of living on after death, it retains the concept that ‘the unseen part’ of a person will never die (130). She holds on to the idea that ‘a part of Sally must always be; Peter must always be’ (154). Clarissa believes that spiritualism exists in the connections with other humans, organisms, and places and that her essence is preserved by an attachment to these things, because they
are part of her (130; 129). Septimus, too, hangs on to this belief. He acknowledges the presence of the dead, but claims that ‘there is no death’ (21). This seemingly contradictory principle makes perfect sense in the light of Clarissa’s belief in afterlife: the ‘soul’ will never die. Septimus, moreover, keeps his belief that ‘there is a God’ (21). Yet, he is not religious; his convictions involve only traces of religion. Unlike Miss Kilman, he does not participate in religious rituals, such as praying.

According to Durkheim, true religion must always have both aspects (122). Septimus has created his own version of belief. For instance, his conviction is that ‘leaves were alive, trees were alive’ (Woolf, MD 19).

Mrs Dalloway shows that there is no absolute secularization; religion still exists in gradations. Clarissa and Peter openly confess their atheist conviction, and the church has receded into ‘the midst of traffic’: it has no longer a prominent position, but has been absorbed into modern life (113). Richard Dalloway believes that Elizabeth’s praying is just a phase that will ‘pass over’, which indicates that he sees religiosity as being naïve (101). Septimus believes in God, but he is not religious and has just created a personal sense of spirituality. In other words, the post-war society of Mrs Dalloway gives the impression that collective religion has come to an end. Yet, its decline is not absolute. The man who ‘stood on the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral’ demonstrates that religion has not lost its appeal entirely (24). He hesitates to enter the Church, possibly because he commonly did not visit it. His doubt originates in the knowledge that he will find ‘victories not over armies, but over … that plaguy spirit of truth seeking which leaves [him] at present without a situation’ (24). He wants to find the truth somewhere and still feels that religion
could offer it to him. Furthermore, he likes the idea that he will belong somewhere, be part of a great tradition: ‘membership of a society; great men belong to it; martyrs have died for it’ (24). Miss Kilman turns to institutionally bound religion, because it helps her to make sense of ‘her grudge against the world’ (105). In the Church, ‘the turbulent feelings which boiled and surged in her had been assuaged’ (105). Additionally, ‘religious victory’ makes her feel powerful, and Christian doctrine gives purpose to her suffering as it poses that ‘knowledge comes through suffering’ (106; 110). What public religion still seems to offer, after it has been consciously accepted, is comfort – something that is naturally highly valued in a sorrowing post-war society.

Even if the choice is made against religion, there remains an urge to preserve parts of it. Clarissa and Peter rejected public religion, but they retain a personal sense of it: some form of belief in afterlife and the spiritual experience. Michael Lackey’s notion that the death of God results in the death of the subject explains this situation (347). With the death of God, there is no origin or foundation. When Marlow in Heart of Darkness explores this origin, he finds out that the centre is dead and dark. The framework within which humans can exist is gone, and they are wholly subjected to ‘the fluxes and flows of the natural world’ (M.C. Taylor 314). Clarissa expresses this idea through her fear that once she has died ‘no one in the whole world would know how she had loved it all’ (Woolf, MD 104). She is afraid that when she dies, she loses her subjectivity and still be an indifferent shape, not really known. Once there is no reality beyond life, the reality of being is endangered. The contrast between Septimus’s extreme rationality and
intensified spirituality confirms this idea. He realizes that ‘[he] has been dead, and yet [is] now alive’ (58). By the ‘new religion’, the human becomes godlike and can preserve their subjectivity. When Holmes and Bradshaw force Septimus’s old rationality upon him, they pose a threat to this ‘new religion’. Clarissa immediately knows that Septimus had to take his own life to preserve his subjectivity (158).

In conclusion, *Mrs Dalloway* shows both the rejection of religion and desire to hold on to it as a consequence of the focus on subjectivity after the War. Miss Kilman is drawn to religion, because it empowers her and gives purpose to her suffering; Clarissa hates religion, because the essence of public religion - collectivity - opposes her desire for privacy and subjectivity. However, she also needs the spiritual experience and certain aspects of religion to exist and be known. This demonstrates, firstly, that secularization is not one single movement. Different characters reshape their beliefs to different degrees. Such gradation is typical of the modern period in which the emphasis was on personal choice and spirituality. The disparity between the feeling against religion and the spirituality of Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus and their urge to preserve religious remnants suggests, secondly, that there is still a fundamental need for religion in a secular society. Rather than presenting a general view of how secularization impacted the world and society, *Mrs Dalloway* shows the messy, multifarious, and intimate response of different people on an ordinary day. Moreover, it emphasizes the extent to which this response can depend on the psychological interiority of people. This implies that secularization in the modernist novel should not be treated as a continuous and solid movement; instead we might ‘record the atoms
as they fall upon the mind [and] trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance’ (Woolf, “MF” 190).
CONCLUSION

According to Mark C. Taylor, ‘religion is often most influential where it is least obvious’ (XII). This principle applies to the modernist novel. The assumption that it reflects the decline in religion and rationalist outlook of the modern period has been taken at face value just as the connection between modernity and secularity has often been overstated, though not without foundation. As shown in Chapter One of this dissertation, there has been an unprecedented decline in religion, which caused the emergence of beliefs antithetical to the Christian creed. This resulted in the revision of the image of God, evil, and other religious concepts; in a divide between collective religion and personal spirituality; and in a new notion of religion based on the religious convictions of the individual instead of the teachings of the Church.

It seems obvious then, as Lewis pointed out, to treat the modernist novel as secular fiction about ‘a world that has been abandoned by God’ (Lukács qtd in Lewis, REMN 23). There is indeed a rationale behind the application of the secularization thesis to the modernist novel. The brief discussion of *Heart of Darkness* in Chapter Two has demonstrated this fact. The absence of God in Marlow’s journey results directly in a secular worldview focused on materialism and individualism. Although this is experienced as traumatic, Marlow tolerates the darkness that remains and acknowledges the potential of unbelief.

However, there are reasons to argue against the thesis as well (Chapter One). The modern period was not the end of religion. This period also saw the development of new denominations and new systems of organization in
established churches (C. Taylor 436). Hobson concludes that - although secularization had made it possible to ‘take spirituality without the collective behaviour and /or community without the doctrine’ – religion adjusted relatively well to secularism (31; 30). Lewis has followed up on the idea that the modernists abided by this approach, namely that they sought new ways to experience religion within a secular framework.

Between the three of them, *A Room with a View*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Mrs Dalloway* show how complicated the situation is. Being mindful of the process of secularization, which is by definition unfinished, this dissertation has demonstrated, through close reading with awareness of the historical and intellectual context, that these novels depict the impact of modern secularization as well as traces of religion. Moreover, this thesis has shown that the impact of secularization is more complex than the two corollaries of the secularization thesis claim and the idea of the ‘secular sacred’ (Lewis, *REMN* 25).

The secularization thesis posits that the death of God leads to a secular worldview, but this dissertation has shown that secularization in *A Room*, *A Portrait*, and *Mrs Dalloway* is not absolute and continuous. A sense that there is a reality beyond the physical world keeps a hold on the characters: they have the feeling that there is a force or being that extends the existence of their single self and exercises some form of control. *A Portrait* demonstrates this by Stephen’s continuously recurring recognition of the existence of God (Chapter Four). The novel depicts how secularization is interrupted by an almost, cyclical resurgence of religious feeling belonging to Stephen’s youth. This indicates the persistent
possibility of return to an abandoned piety. Mrs Dalloway demonstrates a similar development in the post-war society (Chapter Five). Miss Kilman believes in the reality of God and the man on the stairs of St Paul's considers accepting this reality. Moreover, they acknowledge the appeal of public religion, especially the comfort and sense of belonging that it offers. Mrs Dalloway depicts the chaos of reality.

Despite believing in God, Septimus is not a religious man in the sense that he does not participate in rites or in collective creed. A similar situation occurs in A Room: amidst the rejection of collective religion, Lucy and George retain a belief in an immortal being and have created a new type of collectivity beginning with only the two of them (Chapter Three).

Furthermore, secularism in A Room, A Portrait, and Mrs Dalloway is not a single, unitary outlook, but is, rather, characterized by multiple, personal perspectives. The novels reflect the decline of public religion: firstly, they feature the loss of authority and/or visibility of the Church; secondly, they show the decay of essential aspects of public religion, namely rites and beliefs. However, the inner, private lives of the characters reveal various ideas and attitudes of religion.

Whereas Septimus’s privatized version does involve the presence of an unknown, divine existence, Clarissa’s is focused on the connection with other people, organisms, and places. She has rejected the notion of God. Conversely, God is the locus of Miss Kilman’s personal attitude. In A Room, Mr Emerson has done away with all religious creeds, while George still believes in the afterlife. The discussion over Christmas dinner in A Portrait describes a similar gradation of adherence to religious principles: Dante is strict about religious principles while Mr Casey only
wants to keep them as long as they do not interfere with politics. Due to the public/private divide and the increasing authority of the individual, the novels present a wide, and sometimes contradictory, variety of personal responses to secularization.

These novels also show how religion is transmuted into different personal attributes. In A Room elements of religion have become a means by which Lucy and George can understand their identity, destiny, and forces that interact with the self. The presence of an invisible being as a way to explain this should not be mistaken with God's providential plan; God is not acknowledged. Rather, the old system is transformed in accordance with the characters' sense of spirituality and belief, instead of having a new system take over. Furthermore, in A Portrait, Stephen uses religion as an aesthetic force. The 'enchantment of the heart' helps him to create and shape his writing and theories (Joyce 182). For Miss Kilman in Mrs Dalloway, religion is a personal power of comfort and strength by which she can overcome others in a spiritual realm instead of the material sphere in which she is powerless. Religious remnants and spirituality facilitate a structure in which Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus feel they are connected with other beings or objects without compromising on their subjectivity and human agency. This shows that, although the influence of personal spirituality and religious aspects is visible in all, the novels do not allow straightforward claims about the remaining function of aspects of religion.

What is more, the challenges of modernist fiction add to the complexity of secularization in these novels. Michael Bell, in his analysis of the metaphysics of
modernism, points out that modernist literature ‘is often concerned with the question of how to live within a new context of thought, or a new worldview’ (10). In other words, modernist novels reflect and respond to the changing religious environment of the modern period. Peter Brooker instituted the term ‘early modernism’, a category that should include E.M. Forster (Shiach 11). Brooker’s distinction not only imply that modernism is not a cumulative process but a process of constant change and development, it also indicates - taking Bell’s comment into consideration here - that the historical context in which a work was written has a significant influence on the way the novel approaches it. This can be seen in the appeal of public religion for Miss Kilman in the post-war society of Mrs Dalloway. It also accounts for the differences between the three novels in this dissertation. For instance, it explains why irreligious behaviour is seen from the corner of the eye and seen as unbecoming in A Room, while the overt rejection of religion by Clarissa and Peter is presented as fashionable in Mrs Dalloway. Woolf observed that around ‘December 1910, … human character changed’ (20 qtd in Shiach 9). Charles Taylor explains that this observation should be seen in light of the new focus on authenticity: it became more and more common to realize one’s own identity and ‘declare openly … the mode of life that one felt inspired to create and live’ (475). This indeed determined Stephen’s choice to reject religion; he is determined to escape this ‘[net] flung at [the soul] to hold it back from flight’ (Joyce 171). Similarly, Clarissa and Peter reject religion for the power that it might exercise on their soul, and they retain a personally shaped spirituality for the same
reason. The connection of the modernist novel with the society it seeks to understand nuances the way in which secularization is depicted in these novels.

Another aspect that should be considered is the inward turn, a modernist movement ‘away from physical reality toward subjectivity’ (Lehan 63). It is characterized by a focus on inner reality (49). The narrative voice of A Room is still omniscient, outlining the way in which the single being is connected with another and stands in relation to the outside world – even directly addressing the reader to explain. In the other novels, the omniscient narrator has been replaced by a third person narrator and the narrative voice, following the inward turn, is far more concerned with the thought processes of the individual characters. This means that there is no longer a voice to make sense of the essential being in relation to the world and others; the characters have to understand the outer world and their relation to it by themselves. In this context, elements of religion and spirituality offer a framework by which the self can be understood and conveyed. This notion is exemplified in Mrs Dalloway where the ‘mysterious interconnection’ serves this purpose. The challenges of modernist fiction thus create an interplay between the urgency to welcome secularism and the need for a personalized form of religion.

This tension is fundamental in A Room, A Portrait, and Mrs Dalloway. The term ‘secularization’ has been used in this conclusion to describe the processes in these novels, because they depict this development even in relation to religious remnants. For instance, the fact that they present interior outlooks on religion and personal versions of spirituality and religion emphasizes the absence in public expression. Similarly, the resemblance of spirituality in the novels to James’s
mystical states indicates the urge to these experiences but draws attention to the
disappearance of God and religious language from these states. In other words,
the novels do reflect the modern process of secularization. The tension between
this process and the sustenance of religion and spirituality, however, is not
resolved. Stephen, with his solution that he ‘neither [believes] nor [disbelieves]’
positions himself outside the binary. In general, these novels should not be
regarded in either/or terms. The chaos of the inner thoughts and feelings
expressed in the novels establish a fluid dynamics by which secularization and
religion are shaped and reshaped. The dissertation concludes that the tension
between religion and secularization thus requires a finer definition. These novels
present many states and, just like Leonard Woolf’s survey, these cannot be
approached in terms ‘yes’ or ‘no’ statements.
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**APPENDIX 1: THE NATION AND ANTHENEUM SURVEY**

Fig. 1 “Questionnaire on Religious Belief” (Gillespie 85).

**Supplement to The Nation.**

**Questionnaire on Religious Belief**

<table>
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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you believe in a personal God?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do you believe in an impersonal, purposive, and creative power of which living beings are the vehicle, corresponding to the Life Force, the &quot;Eisai Vital&quot;, the Evolutionary Appetite, &amp;c.?</td>
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<td>3. Do you believe that the basis of reality is matter?</td>
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<td>4. Do you believe in personal immortality?</td>
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<td>5. Do you believe that Jesus Christ was divine in a sense in which all living men could not be said to be divine?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do you believe in any form of Christianity?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Do you believe in the Apostles' Creed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do you believe in the formulated tenets of any Church?</td>
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<td>9. Are you an active member of any Church?</td>
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<td>10. Do you voluntarily attend any religious service regularly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Do you accept the first chapter of Genesis as historical?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Do you regard the Bible as inspired in a sense in which the literature of your own country could not be said to be inspired?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Do you believe in transubstantiation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Do you believe that Nature is indifferent to our ideals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Signature**

**Address**

**Date**

This questionnaire should, when completed, be returned to the Editor, "THE NATION," 35, Great James Street, London, W.C.1.

Signatures are required as a guarantee of good faith; but all answers and the names of all persons answering will, of course, be kept strictly confidential. The results will be published in "The Nation" in the form of aggregate figures of those answering "Yes" and "No" respectively to each question; but no names will be published or otherwise divulged.