Joyce/Derrida

Meaning as Potentiality and the Illegitimacy of the Institution

Submitted by

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Summary

The relationship between the Irish modernist James Joyce and the French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida demonstrates that Meaning (interpretive certitude; the final exhaustion of the text’s semantic resources) cannot occur. Instead, after a ‘double reading’ of the institution whereby Derrida’s close, faithful and exhaustive analysis contains alternative interpretations and semantic resources which undermine its legitimacy, and as the context this institution provides finds itself fragile in the works of Joyce and Derrida, meaning is presented only as a series of potentialities, exceeding any single, univocal reading. It is not that these radical and subversive avant-garde texts lack meaning, but that they contain (or fail to contain) an unconditional and irreducible overabundance, producing an undecidability which prompts Derrida’s placement of the critical institution ‘under erasure’ even as a series of provisional meanings are produced in the wake of so many textual movements. This is exhibited here through tropes of the missed encounter and the interruption of conceptual and interpretive finality. Following Joyce’s ludic performance of this erasure of meaning, inviting a playful correspondence between Joyce and Derrida (intellectual homology), metaphorically staged as a series of correspondences between them (intellectual dialogues), this thesis performatively enacts its argumentative contention, displaying the potential illegitimacy that is always already a possibility for the institution, by taking the ficto- and/or post-critical form of an aleatory and fragmented (but not unstructured, nor anarchic) series of failed encounters, frustrated correspondences, and abortive dialogues.
My texts belong neither to the “philosophical” nor to the “literary” register.\(^1\)

So it is necessary to determine or delimit another space where we justify relevant distinctions between certain forms of literature and certain forms of ... I don’t know what name to give it, that’s the problem, we must invent one for those “critical” inventions which belong to literature while deforming its limits.\(^2\)

A more oblique style, modelled on the umbrella with its veils and shafts, parodic rather than demagogic, seems best suited to the academic revolution.\(^3\)

Think what Joyce would have done ... \(^4\)


The puzzles in *Ulysses* are the place to begin.¹

The staging of a title, a first sentence, an epigraph, a pretext, a preface, a single germ, will never make a beginning. It was indefinitely dispersed.²

The *pre* of the preface makes the future present, represents it, draws it closer, breathes it in, and in going ahead of it puts it ahead. The *pre* reduces the future to the form of manifest presence.³

We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace ... has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely.⁴


³ Derrida, ‘Outwork,’ 7.

Five Notes on the Composition of this Text

Shall we forever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?

Are we forever to be twisting, and un-twisting the same rope? Forever in the same track—for ever at the same pace?¹

If it is not a novel, that is simply because the novel is a form which will no longer serve; it is because the novel, instead of being a form, was simply the expression of an age which has not sufficiently lost all form to feel the need for something stricter.²

These five notes serve as a short exegetical but polemical introduction to the major themes and concerns of the ensuing thesis: how the texts of the Irish modernist James Joyce and the French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida figure Meaning as potentiality, and how this troubles the critical institution. They also serve as an exegetical justification for the post-critical form it takes, which while situated within the requirements for a dissertation, a thesis, also needs to take this radically different form. The first note concerns the nature of Meaning in Joyce and Derrida, and how each writer must necessarily place so much faith in the reading subject. The


second note addresses the foundations of the institution and begins to argue for its inevitable insufficiency, illegitimacy, even incompetency, when faced with these unclassifiable and unmasterable texts of Joyce and Derrida, establishing this thesis as a ‘double reading’ of the institution whereby Derrida’s close, faithful and exhaustive analysis always already contains alternative interpretations and semantic resources which might undermine its legitimacy. This is not an argument for either the elision or destruction of the institution, but simply the assertion that the context it provides will always already have found itself fragile in the works of these two thinkers. The third note turns toward the exemplary genres or modes of ficto-criticism and post-criticism as the post-Joycean and post-Derridean strategies which best embrace this work-by-example approach required in the wake of these literary-philosophical revolutionaries, and which can best account for if not reconcile the irreducible and unconditional presences which haunt the institution. The fourth note briefly addresses the themes of the unmasterable text and ‘ambiviolence’ (defined as a motile play of writing and erasure or burning) that are crucial to the construction of Joyce’s undecidable texts, and so prove central to the composition of this over-potentialised—excessive, aleatory and fragmentary, but not unstructured, nor anarchic—thesis. The fifth note offers a didactic overview of the thesis, the general arguments and forms of its twelve chapters, and explains how these will be performatively enacted, exposing the unity or disunity of argument and performance. Realising that there is no simple and unproblematic ‘outside’ to the institution, these five notes lay the foundation for the opening of a space within the institution for a text which the institution could never predict nor exhaust,
embracing the production of the text as a motile and ambivalent play of potential future readings and interpretations.

I. Reading and Meaning

A key issue at stake in this thesis is the relationship between reading, writing and Meaning. What occurs as we read a text and assign its formulation of letters and words, these black lines scribbled on the blank page, a series of meanings?

Between Joyce and Derrida, we face a written word—and a literary text—not imbued with any inherent Meaning, but instead producing contingent and motile meanings through endless, unpredictable, readings and re-readings. Meaning occurs as a playful and intimate exchange between, entre nous, the reading subject and the text. This is no startling revelation, but simply the point we have reached after reading the literary modernism of Joyce and the deconstruction of Derrida. A key concern of this thesis, then, must be how this hermeneutic process, striving towards the goal of a capitalised Meaning that is determined and finite—in a word, knowable—is problematized in the wakes of Joyce and Derrida.

The OED straightforwardly defines Meaning as ‘the significance, purpose, underlying truth, etc., of something,’ and as ‘that which is indicated or expressed by a (supposed) symbol or symbolic action.’ This definition talks of ‘the sense or signification of a word, sentence, etc.’ as if Meaning might be an inherent quality, and also of ‘the thing, person, etc., for which a word or expression stands.’ As the relationship between reference and sense, it relies on signification, and the way the sign supposedly points (back) towards an object, value, or truth. For Derrida, Meaning is a product of signs, produces the need for signs, and leaves us with
nothing but signs: ‘From the moment that there is meaning there are nothing but signs. We think only in signs.’\textsuperscript{3} ‘Preceded by a truth,’ this sign connotes a sense of closure, semantic exhaustion, and interpretive certitude, referring back to ‘a meaning already constituted by and within the element of the logos,’\textsuperscript{4} a knowledge exterior to the sign, representing the presence of a transcendental signified which Derrida deconstructs in Of Grammatology. Derrida hopes to end an ‘epoch of the logos ... [which] debases writing considered as mediation of mediation and as a fall into the exteriority of meaning.’\textsuperscript{5} Debasing the sign, this pre-modernist and pre-deconstructive epoch rejected any conception of meaning as exterior to the object, value, or truth to which the sign refers, and instead sought to place meaning before and/or outside of signification: ‘The thematics of the sign have been for about a century the agonised labour of a tradition that professed to withdraw meaning, truth, presence, being, etc., from the movement of signification.’\textsuperscript{6} But Derrida seeks a return to a meaning drawn from this ‘movement of signification,’ asserting that ‘writing ... is not originally subordinate to the logos and to truth.’\textsuperscript{7} Referencing Friedrich Nietzsche, Derrida explains that ‘reading, and therefore writing’ are ‘“originary” operations,’\textsuperscript{8} before he enunciates a threefold treatment of Meaning. Firstly, he seeks a motile Meaning, unsettled as it plays across the page and between

\begin{footnotes}
\item[3] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 50.
\item[4] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 14.
\item[5] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 12-3.
\item[6] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 14.
\item[7] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 19.
\item[8] Derrida, Of Grammatology, 19.
\end{footnotes}
the signifiers, constituted only in the moment these words are read, and then re-read and re-signified with each reading from a new perspective. Secondly, he seeks a Meaning that is relational and associative, produced between signifiers both present and absent, the reader drawing a series of associations between paratactic fragments of the text, or simply between words placed besides each other on the page. Thirdly, he seeks a Meaning that is subjective, ‘in the eye’ of each reading subject, the meaning of the texts he reads and those he writes open to a proliferation of interpretations by a multitude of readers. Importantly, as John D. Caputo points out in the exegetical component of Deconstruction in a Nutshell, ‘Derrida is not arguing that “anything goes” nor is he turning truth over to caprice, but he is arguing strongly for a democratic open-endedness.’

Rather than a relativistic treatment of Meaning, Derrida proposes a Meaning that is volatile and changeable in its refusal to be restrained by definite limits or structures.

The text only achieves Meaning in its reading. This unframed or open text is akin to the ‘writerly’ text proposed by Roland Barthes in S/Z, whereby ‘the goal of literary work ... is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text.’ The reader takes an active role in the construction of the text, and the stable Meaning offered by the transcendental signified is replaced by a proliferation of meanings:

The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language ... can be superimposed; the writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play

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of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticised by some singular system ... which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages.\textsuperscript{11}

The text cannot be reduced to a singular set of meanings. We face the end of metanarratives, a proliferation of the possibilities of the text’s once unified and univocal narrative, its decentralisation, dispersal and dissemination. This treatment of meaning is closely aligned to Derrida’s declaration of literature as an unconditional ‘right to say everything’\textsuperscript{12} (discussed in detail in the following section), which is neither the desire nor need nor ability to say everything, but instead a refusal to be restrained by the definite limits or structures imposed by the transcendental signified, and so the opening of the possibility that any Meaning perceived by the reading subject might potentially be legitimate. Such a treatment of Meaning also manifests a particularly modernist shift from the placement of Meaning in the object itself to its placement in the subject: the text is not an object containing meanings waiting to be straightforwardly read, but is instead a network of signs waiting to be pieced together by the reader, by each reader. This shift can be traced back through the works of some exemplars of literary modernism concerned with presenting rather than interpreting their narratives, refusing to frame their works and negating any authority they of their texts might have once possessed. This trait is also common to the ‘production’ of Meaning in the texts of both Joyce and

\textsuperscript{11} Barthes, S/Z, 5.

Derrida, and is the starting point from which this work on their relationship theoretically departs.

Outlining his program in 1967’s *Of Grammatology*, one of Derrida’s primary concerns is with how writing does or does not produce Meaning. He begins by drawing his understanding of Meaning from a tradition of structural linguistics concerned with the dissociation of signifier and signified, before turning away from the signified to embark on a more subversive reading of the problem of origins and the absence of the transcendental signified:

By a hardly perceptible necessity, it seems as though the concept of writing—no longer indicating a particular, derivative, auxiliary form of language in general (whether understood as communication, relation, expression, signification, constitution of meaning or thought, etc.), no longer designating the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, the signifier of a signifier—is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus comprehends language. ... The secondarity that it seemed possible to ascribe to writing alone affects all signifieds in general, affects them always already, the moment they enter the game. There is not a single signified that escapes, even if recaptured, the play of signifying references that constitute language. The advent of writing is the advent of this play; today such a play is coming into its own, effacing the limit starting from which one had thought to regulate the circulation of signs, drawing along with it all the reassuring signifieds, reducing all the strongholds, all the out-of-bounds shelters that watched over the field of language. This, strictly speaking, amounts to destroying the concept of
“sign” and its entire logic. ... Either writing was never a simple “supplement,” or it is urgently necessary to construct a new logic of the “supplement.”\footnote{Derrida, Of Grammatology, 6-7.}

Derrida marks a shift away from a writing that straightforwardly records and/or signifies speech, towards a writing that is no longer derivative, no longer only the exterior surface of Meaning, no longer supplementary or secondary, but instead produces Meaning as it dynamically comprehends language through ‘an oblique and always perilous movement,’\footnote{Derrida, Of Grammatology, 14.} a movement which might always already have represented a slippage, a fall away from origins and ‘truth.’ This writing destroys the logic of the sign because there is no signified as such (and no transcendental signified), but just more signifiers, signifiers of signifiers, layer upon layer of potential meanings to be endlessly excavated by the reader. (Again, this is not a plunge into the relativism of a system consisting only of shifting signifiers, but instead that ‘democratic open-endedness’ which defies the limits or structures once imposed by the transcendental signified.) More radically, the nature of the sign itself is also brought into question: ‘the sign is that ill-named thing, the only one, that escapes the instituting question of philosophy: “what is ...?”’\footnote{Derrida, Of Grammatology, 19. Originating in the work of Martin Heidegger, this crossing out is a strategic action of sous rature, signifying the necessity yet inadequacy of the word in question: ‘That mark of deletion is not ... a “merely negative symbol.” That deletion is the final writing of an epoch. Under its strokes the presence of a transcendental signified is effaced while still remaining legible. Is effaced while still remaining legible, is destroyed while making visible the very area of the sign. In as}
limit of the sign, Derrida effaces the idea of the origin to which a capitalised univocal Meaning might once have been traced back, showing how the infinite complexity of any act of signification can never be completely known. The most basic element of this semantically overwhelmed system of signification is the grammè, an arbitrary written mark, ‘an element without simplicity,’ ‘whether it is understood as the medium or as the irreducible atom,’ which ‘one must forbid oneself to define within the system of oppositions of metaphysics.’\(^\text{16}\) The grammè is also a mark which ‘in principle renders absurd the so easily admitted notion of the “sensible signifier”,’\(^\text{17}\) the easy notion that the sign alone might hold onto Meaning. For all these signifiers alone are meaningless: ‘The written signifier is always technical and representative. It has no constitutive meaning. This derivation is the very origin of the notion of the “signifier”.’\(^\text{18}\) Meaning is posited in the reading of the sign, established in the relationship between the reader and the sign. As such, Joyce and Derrida place an enormous amount of faith in their unknowable future readers. I place an enormous amount of faith in my future readers.

\[\text{II. Illegitimate Institutions: ‘I love institutions’}\]

much as it de-limits onto-theology, the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism, this last writing is also the first writing’ (Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 23).


\(^{17}\) Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 10.

\(^{18}\) Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 11.
When Joyce and Derrida get together, reshaping the semantics of the text so that any certain Meaning is transformed into a proliferation of subjective and contingent meanings produced between the text and the reader, their chance encounter threatens the logocentric edifices or institutions of literature and philosophy. Derrida notes this in his famous address to the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium, the Augmented Ninth, in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1984:

All of you are experts and you belong to the most remarkable of institutions. It bears the name of a man who did everything, and admitted it, to make this institution indispensible, to keep it busy for centuries ... But ... it is an institution for which he did everything he could to make it impossible and improbable in its very principle, to de-construct it in advance, even going as far as to undermine the very concept of competence, upon which one day an institutional legitimacy might be founded.19

For Derrida, the institution—the University, but the Humanities in particular: literature and philosophy—is founded on the promise of a legitimacy-to-come, an ideal towards which the institution endlessly strives even as it will always already have fallen short. If, as he writes, ‘nothing is beyond question’20 and the university is without condition, then the very nature of the institution itself must be called into question. The unconditionality it is afforded simultaneously exposes its strengths


20 Derrida, ‘The University Without Condition,’ 205.
and weaknesses, displaying its ‘vulnerability’\textsuperscript{21} to that which is ‘outside’ its boundaries. Derrida’s double reading of the institution, denying hierarchies and hegemonies by affording this place ‘an unconditional freedom to question and to assert,’\textsuperscript{22} allows a space within this institution for the possibility of its weakening, its destabilisation: ‘In order to identify itself, to be what it is, to delimit itself and recognise itself in its own name, it must espouse the very outlines of its adversary.’\textsuperscript{23}

In the same public engagement with Joyce quoted earlier, Derrida famously suggests that there can be ‘no Joycean foundation ... no Joycean legitimacy,’\textsuperscript{24} and questions the possibility of a Joycean expert: ‘when it comes to Joyce, what is an expert?’\textsuperscript{25} The possibility or not of a Joycean competence or expertise is directly linked to the crisis into which Joyce and Derrida will have plunged the institutions of both literature (‘the right to say everything publicly, or to keep it a secret, if only in the form of fiction’\textsuperscript{26}) and philosophy (‘what is irreducible about it must be exposed as such’\textsuperscript{27}). The secret which thus lurks beneath this tense relationship between Joyce and Derrida, this series of failed encounters, frustrated correspondences and abortive dialogues, \textit{sur le bord}, on (the) edge, is that the common deconstructive ‘principle of

\textsuperscript{21} Derrida, ‘The University Without Condition,’ 206.

\textsuperscript{22} Derrida, ‘The University Without Condition,’ 202.


\textsuperscript{24} Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 49.

\textsuperscript{25} Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 35.

\textsuperscript{26} Derrida, ‘The University Without Condition,’ 205.

\textsuperscript{27} Derrida, \textit{Who’s Afraid of Philosophy?} 9.
unconditional resistance’\textsuperscript{28} which impels us toward the ideal of an institution without condition will always already have produced this institution as potentially inadequate, incompetent, and illegitimate, owing to the admitted presence of something irreducibly Other within its borders. This adversary unsettles the institution by suggesting that Meaning (interpretive certitude and the final exhaustion of the text’s semantic resources) cannot occur. Instead, as the texts of both Joyce and Derrida suggest, this adversary admits to Meaning’s constitution as a series of potentialities, exceeding any reading and always already gesturing towards other possibilities, by way of the endless deferral of final Meaning, even as a series of provisional, contingent meanings are produced in the wake of so many volatile ambiviolent textual movements, this play of writing and erasure. This is not so say that these radical, subversive, avant-garde texts (both Joyce’s and Derrida’s) lack meaning, but instead that they contain (or fail to contain) an irreducible and unconditional overabundance, ‘a meaning not null and void but not yet arrived,’\textsuperscript{29} ‘a meaning in waiting, still empty or vacant,’\textsuperscript{30} producing an undecidability which places concepts such as adequacy, sufficiency, competence, authority, and legitimacy ‘under erasure.’

Of course, it would not be possible to say any of this without or outside of the critical institution. As Caputo notes, ‘deconstruction is in fact a philosophy—and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{28} Derrida, ‘The University Without Condition,’ 204.


\textsuperscript{30} Derrida, \textit{Rogues}, 8.
\end{flushright}
practice—of institutions.'³¹ We must operate by the rules—no matter how unpalatable—of the system within which we are placed, and in so doing attempt to make these institutions ‘liveable’:

As a philosophy of institutions, deconstruction is, while suspicious of institutional power, intent on making institutions liveable—open-ended, porous, and on the \textit{qui vive}—and structured around programs that do not try to program everything.³² Speaking at a roundtable at Villanova University in October 1994, Derrida makes it clear that, even as deconstruction challenges the institution to accommodate this ‘right to say everything,’ ‘what is called “deconstruction” ... has never, never opposed institutions as such, philosophy as such, discipline as such.’³³ He sees that deconstruction must follow the rules of the system in order to reinvent the system:

The paradox is that the instituting moment in an institution is violent in a way, violent because it has no guarantee. Although it follows the premises of the past, it starts something absolutely new, and this newness, this novelty, is a risk, is something that has to be risky, and it is violent because it is guaranteed by no previous rules. So, at the same time, you have to follow the rule and to invent the new rule, a new norm, a new criterion, a new law ... That’s why the moment of the institution is so dangerous at the same time. One should not have an absolute guarantee, an absolute norm; we have to invent the rules.³⁴

³¹ Caputo, \textit{Deconstruction in a Nutshell}, 49.  
³² Caputo, \textit{Deconstruction in a Nutshell}, 50.  
This is not just an abstract understanding of the institution, but does have real-world applications. As his first example of an attempt to reinvent the rules of the institution, Derrida cites his involvement with the group known as GREPH:

On the one hand, I was fighting or opposing the rigid definition of programs, disciplines, the borders between disciplines, ... So we founded another institution in 1975, a movement called the “Research Group for the Teaching of Philosophy” [GREPH, *Le Groupe de Recherches sur l’Enseignement Philosophique*], which opposed the dominant institution ... There should be philosophy across the borders, not only in philosophy proper, but in other fields, such as law, medicine, and so forth. To some extent these struggles were a failure; nevertheless, I am still convinced it was a good war. But at the same time I emphasised the necessity of discipline, of something specifically philosophical, that we should not dissolve philosophy into other disciplines, that we need at the same time interdisciplinarity, crossing the borders, establishing new themes, new problems, new ways, new approaches to new problems, all the while teaching the history of philosophy, the techniques, professional rigour, what one calls discipline.\(^{35}\)

Derrida fights, opposes and critiques the dominant institution from within, GREPH working towards ‘new themes, new problems, new ways, new approaches’ with which the ‘old’ logocentric institution could not adequately deal. The situation is starkly similar regarding another group with which he was involved:

In 1983, some friends and I founded a new institution called the “International College of Philosophy,” in which tried to teach philosophy as such, as a discipline, and at the same time, to discover new themes, new problems, which have no

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\(^{35}\) Derrida, ‘The Villanova Roundtable,’ 6-7.
legitimacy, which were not recognised as such, in existing universities. That was not simply interdisciplinarity, because interdisciplinarity implies that you have given, identifiable competencies—say, a legal theorist, an architect, a philosopher, a literary critic—and that they worked together on a specific, identifiable object. That's interdisciplinarity. But when you discover a new object, an object that up until now has not been identified as such, or has no legitimacy in terms of academic fields, then you have to invent a new competency, a new type of research, a new discipline. The International College of Philosophy granted a privilege to such new themes, new disciplines which were not, up to then, recognised or legitimised in other institutions.

So, you see, I am a very conservative person. I love institutions and I spent a lot of time participating in new institutions, which sometimes do not work. At the same time, I try to dismantle not institutions but some structures in the given institutions which are too rigid or are dogmatic or which work as an obstacle to future research.36 This ‘new object’ requires a new competency, a new legitimacy, and a new institution—an institution that is not static, solid, and certain. This institution must be able to accommodate future research which it cannot foresee, such that the future of the institution itself remains unpredictable and unknowable. Through the use of these examples, Derrida clearly shows us that deconstruction is not destruction. We must acknowledge the dependence of this thesis on the institutions it seeks to destabilise:

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structures, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.37

This critique of the institution cannot take place except by inhabiting the institution ‘in a certain way,’ full away not that it might but that it must fall prey to its own work. Beyond Derrida’s two sustained engagements with Joyce—the lecture-essays ‘Two Words for Joyce’ and ‘Ulysses Gramophone’—there are many contemporary Joyce critics engaged in such an endeavour, working both within and against this institution: essays by Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer, Hélène Cixous, Stephen Heath, Shari Benstock, Murray McArthur, Andrew Mitchell, Sam Slote, and recent full-length studies by Alan Roughley and Peter Mahon, all taking place within some of the most staid institutions of Joyce criticism, consist of a series of gestures which inhabit these institutions in certain ways, borrowing their hermeneutic strategies to challenge the assumptions commonly made when the reader confronts Joyce. From such works generated paradoxically within and against the institution, we begin to learn to read otherwise.

As this text is formed at the juncture where these two irresistible forces will have inevitably, prophetically, met, yet missed each other too, so many false starts

37 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 24.
and eschewed beginnings marking the vital improbability of this relationship, nothing more than a series of chance encounters, perhaps even a mistake, ‘a chapter of accidents,’ the we will always already have been plunged into the midst of a crisis over what it means to write ‘literature’ and ‘philosophy,’ what it means to write in response to the monumental literatures and philosophies of Joyce and Derrida, the philosophically-inclined literature of Joyce and the manifestly literary philosophy of Derrida. (Derrida is, writes McArthur, ‘the philosopher writing philosophy as if it were literature’—a comment, I think, on the ludic performativity of Derrida more than any inherent ‘literariness.’) Four a-concepts—traces and strategies ‘existing’ outside of and otherwise than the realm of the philosophical concept—form the basis of this investigation, aligning Derrida’s philosophical works with the notoriously impenetrable literary works of Joyce.

1. As ‘the irreducibility of the Other,’ espacement is the foundational spacing between words, concepts, and subjects, which establishes at once their distance and distinction from one another and their proximity and mutual dependence. It intervenes here to problematize the space between the subject-identities ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida,’ frustrating attempts to establish any determined semantic ground between the two.

2. Taking spacing less metaphorically, the parergon is the theoretical frame based on the literal frame of the work of art, which similarly separates words,

40 Derrida, Positions, 94.
concepts, and subjects from their oppositional Others, holding ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ apart, patrolling the border, yet proving always already to be porous, inadequate. Here, it explodes the spatial composition of the text to reveal the framing third term which opens a series of gaps or wounds, the very presence of these undecidable spaces threatening to destabilise Meaning.

3. Displaying the undeliverability of the letter due to a *destinerrance* (destiny, inheritance, and errancy) which means the addressee remains unknown and unknowable and the message carried by the letter never reaches its destination, the postal principle too places the ‘destination’ Meaning in a messianic future (a future structured by the promise of an arrival, but no arrival as such), whereby non-arrival becomes vital to the motile semantic play of the text.

4. Conceived temporally as deferring and spatially as differing, *différance* destabilises Meaning by making it reliant on context and possible future contexts. It operates here as a doubled—perhaps two-faced—a-concept, a species of play which exhibits precisely how meaning cannot be limited, contained, or exhausted, and so how the subversion of that meaning by adversarial alternative interpretations is always already under way.

The effect of these interstitial a-concepts as they are performatively enacted across the following twelve chapters is a tentative emergence of meaning that is vitally undercut by the transient nature of this textual undecidability, exhibited here by ambiviolent tropes of the missed encounter and the interruption of conceptual and interpretative finality as the irreducible institution always already falls short of its
impossible unconditional ideal: that it have the right to say everything, even those things which might destabilise its own foundations.

III. The Ficto- or Post-Critical Impulse

Defending his thesis in 1980, more than a decade after his early works brought fame and notoriety, Derrida suggests he found himself pushing his work towards textual configurations that were less and less linear, logical and topical forms, even typographical forms that were more daring, the intersection of corpora, mixtures of genera or of modes, changes of tone ... satire, rerouting, grafting, etc., to the extent that even today, although these works have been published for years, I do not believe them to be simply presentable or acceptable to the university and I have not dared, have not judged it opportune, to include them here amongst the works to be defended.41

Where Derrida errs (or performs an erring before ultimately presenting his thesis to the institution), this text perseveres. This ‘unstable book’42 offers only ‘the illusion of completeness’43 and interpretive certitude; it is a text where, like Ulysses, ‘the most ill-assorted phenomena are equally parts of an all-encompassing whole,’44 and

where the performative play between the content and the form, argument and enactment, concept and metaphor, brings meaning into question.

In the wake of the polemical and provocative claims of English experimental novelist B. S. Johnson that ‘literary forms do becomes exhausted, clapped out,’\(^{45}\) and his crowning of Joyce as ‘the Einstein of the novel,’\(^{46}\) this text refuses to abrogate the experimental legacies of both Joyce and Derrida. (‘Why ... do so many novelists still write as though the revolution that was Ulysses had never happened’\(^{47}\)). Like Johnson, we must realise that ‘the novel is an evolving form, not a static one,’\(^{48}\) and that critical texts must too evolve. In the relentless avant-garde push of what biographer Jonathan Coe refers to as Johnson’s ‘post-Joycean universe,’\(^{49}\) and in our own post-Derridean universe, these radically new forms, techniques, styles and

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\(^{46}\) Johnson, Aren’t You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?: ‘His subject matter in Ulysses was available to anyone, the events of one day in one place; but by means of form, style and technique in language he made it into something very much more, not a story about anything. What happens is nothing like as important as how it is written, as the medium of the words and form through which it is made to happen to the reader. And for style alone Ulysses would have been a revolution. Or, rather, styles. For Joyce saw that such a huge range of subject matter could not be conveyed in one style, and accordingly used many. Just in this one innovation (and there are many others) lies a great advance and freedom offered to subsequent generations of writers’ (12).

\(^{47}\) Johnson, Aren’t You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?, 15.

\(^{48}\) Johnson, Aren’t You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?, 12-3.

strategies now available to an unconditional literature and an unconditional philosophy are by their very nature violently unsettling to the institution.

Here, I will have been deforming the limits of literature and philosophy in such a way as to suggest correspondences and encounters between Joyce and Derrida, by way of a series of critical experimentationations made necessary by this questioning of the institution and this positing of meaning elsewhere. I will have been implicated in a critical invention and intervention belonging properly to neither Joyce nor Derrida. Responding to Derrida’s call for the invention of a new name ‘for those “critical inventions” which belong to literature while deforming its limits,’50 a new name for this work which will have been more-than-literature, more-than-philosophy, more-than-criticism, Australian writer Stephen Muecke begins to define the interstitial ‘genre’ called ‘ficto-criticism’:

The name we would have given him was ficto-criticism, but he went on anyway to write, and perform, critically, and sometimes fictionally, for instance by telling stories while making his philosophical arguments. 51

Geoffrey Hartman observes this tendency in Saving the Text: Derrida ‘blurs genres or engages in so interminable a mode of analysis that the sanity of writing—its indebtedness to evolved conventions, as well as its apparent realism—is threatened.’52 Literature begins to break down (‘blur the line which separates a text

50 Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 52.


from its controlled margin,53 writes Derrida), as the borderlines between fiction and criticism are always already blurred:

When criticism is well-written, and fiction has more ideas than usual, the distinction between the two starts to break down. It is a little crisis because criticism can’t be relied upon to “keep its distance,” and fiction can’t be relied upon to stay in its imaginary and sometimes politically irrelevant worlds. The whole artifice of literary criticism was built up in order to do one thing really: to unmask the secrets of art. And the fiction was always there re-enchanting the world by putting on the beautiful masks again and again.54

This is a literature of ‘the graft, the hybridisation, the migration, the genetic mutation,’55 a literature deforming its own limits, and where we are forced ‘to read without model or map, neither critical, theoretical, or by literary precedent.’56 ‘But the fall!’57 writes Muecke, perhaps echoing Joyce’s symbolically polysemous ‘fall ... of a once wallstreet oldpair’58 from Finnegans Wake, and Derrida’s doubled philosophical ‘fall into the monument’59 and the fall of ‘the remain(s)’60 from the

53 Derrida, ‘Tympan,’ in Margins of Philosophy, xxiii.
54 Muecke, ‘The Fall,’ 108.
56 Martin McQuillan, ‘Foreword: “What is Called Literature”,’ in Derrida, Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius, xii.
57 Muecke, ‘The Fall,’ 112.
doubled *Glas*: after the critical interventions of Joyce and Derrida, and after the mutant, hybrid, transgressive genre-bending of ficto-criticism, the law of convention falls. As they depart from convention (‘Where I depart from convention, it is because the convention has failed, is inadequate for conveying what I have to say’61) Joyce’s revolutionary novel *Ulysses* and Derrida’s radical textual configurations mean that we must learn to read otherwise, and to ‘write otherwise.’62 As well as ficto-criticism, this otherwise is also suggestive of what Gregory Ulmer refers to as ‘post-criticism,’ a mode which breaks with representational realism, and which is ‘constituted precisely by the application of the devices of modernist art to critical representations.’63 It is a mode which claims to follow Barthes in declaring ‘the unification of poetry and criticism,’ that ‘the categories of literature and criticism … [can] no longer be kept apart,’ and ‘that now there … [are] only writers.’64 It is a mode which works by example and exhibition rather than explanation or explication: it marks

> the shift away from commentary and explanation, which rely on concepts, to work instead by means of examples—both in terms of the substitution of examples for

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60 Derrida, *Glas*, 1.

61 Johnson, *Aren’t You Rather Young to Be Writing Your Memoirs?*, 19.


64 Ulmer, ‘The Object of Post-Criticism,’ 86.
arguments in one’s own writing, and of approaching the object of study (when it is
another critical or theoretical text) at the level of the examples it uses.65 Ulmer points to a passage in *The Post Card*, referring to what he translates as ‘de-
monstration,’ in order to elaborate on this modernist mode of criticism:

De-monstration proves without showing, without evidencing any conclusion,
without entailing anything, without an available thesis. It proves according to a
different mode, but proceeding with its step of demonstration [*pas de
demonstration*] or non-demonstration. It transforms, it transforms itself, in its
process rather than advancing a signifiable object of discourse.66 This is also a mode which produces its meanings in strange and unconventional
ways: ‘As the form which criticism takes when it is art, the essay maintains a
distinctive relationship with knowledge—it mentions without asserting knowledge.’67

Only ever alluding to its knowledge and potential meanings, such a post-critical text
is what we face here, between Joyce and Derrida: a monstrous, fantastically
experimental mutant ‘hybrid of literature and criticism, art and science,’68
responding to the political and poetical crisis prompted by the experiments of
Joyce’s ‘literature’ and Derrida’s ‘philosophy,’ positioned uncomfortably between
the work of art and the work of criticism, and also positioned to better deal with the
destabilisation of both the institution and Meaning than traditional realist modes.

Occurring between content and form, concept and metaphor, and following the

65 Ulmer, ‘The Object of Post-Criticism,’ 90.


67 Ulmer, ‘Of a Parodic Tone Recently Adopted in Criticism,’ 558.

68 Ulmer, ‘The Object of Post-Criticism,’ 94.
example of their intensely performative texts, this thesis invites a playful correspondence between Joyce and Derrida (intellectual homology), metaphorically staged as a series of correspondences between them (intellectual dialogues). It also performatively enacts its argumentative contention, questioning the conventions of the institution by taking the ficto- or post- critical form of a series of failed encounters, frustrated correspondences, and abortive dialogues, producing something unconditionally and irreducibly ‘other-than-literature’ and ‘other-than-philosophy,’ something which neither Joyce nor Derrida alone could have written.

IV. The Unmasterable Text

The realisation that texts are unmasterable, and will return new answers as long as there are new questions, new questioners, or new contexts in which to ask questions, and that Joyce’s texts display this characteristic more openly than most, is a thread that is barely visible in the vast library of scholarly and critical material that now overwhelms Joyce’s two thousand published pages.69

As the institution opens itself to the possibility of its own destabilisation, and as Joyce and Derrida perform these excessive readings as a series of potentialities, the text, itself now unconditional and irreducible, becomes unmasterable. Introducing the seminal collection *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, Attridge and Ferrer admit to the desire ‘to produce Joyce’s texts in ways designed to challenge rather than comfort, to antagonise instead of assimilate.’\(^7\) In the wake of the contributions by Derrida, Cixous (this ‘foremost interpreter of Joyce’\(^7\)), and Heath to this collection, my own sprawling text will have made a futile play at ‘controlling the unruly Joycean text,’\(^7\) controlling too the unruly Derridean text, only to be faced with a radical uncertainty, an undecidability, ‘the infinite productivity of interpretative activity’ and ‘the incessant shifting and opening-out of meaning.’\(^7\) In the end, structured by a motile play of writing and erasure, this thesis will have made a point of problematizing the search for interpretive certitude, proposing a contingent meaning which only ever remains to come, a possibility awaiting us in an unknowable future. For Attridge and Ferrer, ‘the dream of final and total explication’ is transfigured into the ‘prospect of interminable accumulation’\(^7\) whereby an excess or overabundance of potential meanings not only obscures but makes impossible any final Meaning.

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\(^7\) Derrida, *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres, and Genius*, 25.


In the essay ‘Ambiviolences’ from this collection by Attridge and Ferrer, Heath writes of ‘a fundamental incompleteness’ which produces Joyce’s texts as patently—and vitally—undecidable: ‘the text produces a derisive hesitation of sense, the final revelation of meaning being always for ‘later’.’ ‘Later’ is the key for Heath: the idea of the whole—the unity of interpretive certitude: an institution reducible to itself, the certainty of the transcendental signified—is disrupted, absent from the present but promised in the future: ‘the text is not homogeneous, but ceaselessly discontinuous, a hesitation of meaning into the perpetual “later”.’ This prophetic postponement is produced by what Heath calls an ‘ambiviolence,’ an endless play of writing and erasure—or burning—whereby the writing is ‘continually destroying itself as object,’ only to reproduce itself anew. The resultant uncertainty, the endless slippage, means that ‘there is no conclusion to be reached in a reading of Joyce’s text other than an ambivalent extension of the text in a new practice of writing, arabesquing the page.’ These texts are akin to the intricately repeated geometric patterns of so many Arabesques—Ulysses is, writes Ezra Pound, ‘a triumph in form, in balance, a main schema, with continuous in-weaving and arabesque’—with their intentional mistakes and slippages (connoting, they say,

77 Heath, ‘Ambiviolences,’ 32.
78 Heath, ‘Ambiviolences,’ 32.
the humility and fallibility of the artist). This textual arabesquing is an ambivalent, unconditional, and irreducible extension of the texts of Joyce and Derrida, an array of prophetic and potentially mistaken performances which vitally refuse to remain, and which presently destroy themselves in the hope that some meaning might later be revealed.

V. Prophesising the Thesis

I will not feign, according to the code, either premeditation or improvisation. These texts are assembled otherwise; it is not my intention here to present them.81

Here form is content, content is form.82

Derrida is immediately wary of any attempt at premeditating—prophesising—the intentions or outcomes of any text. Nonetheless, it is necessary to briefly outline the contents, forms, and poetic strategies of the ensuing twelve chapters of this thesis, which while sometimes framed in terms of regular academic conventions also hopes to remain unmasterable in its own way. It is broken down into two halves, each containing six chapters, framed overall by the four a-concepts already briefly outlined. Mimicking the forms and styles of the eighteen episodes of Ulysses, it

81 Derrida, 'Outwork,' 3.

progresses from a more realist mode in the earlier chapters to more radically experimental ficto- and post-critical forms in the later chapters, before finally pulling itself together to offer something by way of a conclusion. Throughout, the concern remains with the subversive interplay between content and form, concept and metaphor, the production of meaning as potentiality, and questions over the destabilisation of the necessarily irreducible and unconditional institution.

*A Poetics and Politics of Spacing*

The first three chapters plunge the reader into an interstitial space between Joyce and Derrida, struggling to get a grip on these subjects and establish a determined semantic ground for this thesis after a double reading of the institution. As they each further unfold the a-concept *espacement*, the irreducibility of the Other, we are turned away when faced with an excess of textual and interpretive potentialities and the blurring of the borderline between the supposedly discrete subject-identities ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida.’

1. The two spiralling subject-columns from which Chapter 1 is constructed—that is, Joyce and Derrida—will always already have disrupted the straightforwardness of a reading of this thesis. Channelling the bifurcated focus of Derrida’s early excursus *Glas*, it will also have produced a ‘blank’ or ‘empty’ interstitial space in between, from within which the authorial ‘I’ can intervene and mediate this *espacement*. This mediation is also the blurring of the distinction between Self and Other, until there is nothing left between Joyce and Derrida but the promise of the revelation of some meaning-to-
come in their relationship, and so a legitimacy-to-come for the institution which tries to read them.

2. The transfigurations hinted at by the reflexive Chapter 2 display an ambivalent slippage between the material (the body, the corpse) and the metaphorical (the corpus, the book), problematizing the spacing between the object and the word-object, trying in vain to account for the loss of the solidity and finality of the corporeal body and the subsequent descent into the linguistic uncertainties of the book.

3. The crypt which forms the monumental foundation of Chapter 3 also attempts to conceal such a slippage beneath a monument to the dead, but only serves to highlight a glaring absence through the cryptic nature of language, and its indecipherability. It hides at its heart the secrets of the languages of Joyce and Derrida: the absence of any body within the crypt conceals the troubling thought that there is no meaning here and now, today, that it only ever awaits us in the future, a promise of what is to come—which is perhaps, vitally, an empty promise.

In each of these three chapters, a space is opened which holds final meaning apart from the present, reserving its revelation, a semantic crack which the institution might attempt to cover over with the undeliverable promise of interpretive certitude.

Framed by the a-concept of the *parergon*, the next three chapters shift the focus toward architectures both literal and literary in the hope that a turn or return to spatiality in writing might reveal more clearly this *espacement* between Joyce and Derrida. They also begin to mediate a more apparent dialogue between the content
of the words and the form they take, their excessively fragmentary and paratactic forms disrupting the production of meaning within this thesis by lacking steady context and thus supplying an overabundance of potentialities.

4. Fighting against the columnar form of the typed page, Chapter 4 offers a brief discourse on the paralysing madness of Nelson’s phallic-imperialistic Pillar within *Ulysses*. As the newspaper headlines of the Aeolus episode begin to disrupt the linearity of reading, and then to place the very nature of these columns of text under question, this chapter uses motifs of laughter and sexual disease to display just how so many adversarial cracks might also appear in the institution.

5. The crumbling Babelian tower of Chapter 5 similarly represents the fracturing and fragmenting of Meaning through the polyphony of so many languages, voices, lips, and tongues, and thus the negation of a singular language. This is made materially manifest by the three fonts—representing Joyce, Derrida, and myself—and the slippage between them. The result is a disorienting confusion at the fall of this once monolithic, monolinguistic tower, shattering a unified and logocentric discourse, exposing the institution to a comparable polyphony which destabilises any univocal authority.

6. Scattered, the mad *folies* of Chapter 6 represent a further spaced-out disorientation, presenting on the one hand a perfectly structured and rational sequence, but on the other and at the same time, on the same page with the same words, a conflicting double interpretation as the logic of the rigidly ordered numbering system is defied by the excessive randomness of the thirty-five discrete but interweaved *folie* forms, an irreducible Other
always already haunting—deconstructing—this architectural-literary structure.

As the space between writing and architecture closes, as the page, paragraph, sentence, even word, begins to take on the characteristics of the architectural structure, the text becomes scandalously labyrinthine. Despite the best intentions of so many guides and markers, the reader is lost. In this textual maze, meaning leads us on an exhausting but never exhaustive chase before it finally eludes us.

**Sur le bord: Postal, Gramophonic, and Telephonic Exchanges**

Determined to elaborate the a-concept of the postal principle, chapters seven to ten perform a series of frustrated encounters and abortive dialogues between Joyce and Derrida, each displaying the undeliverability of the letter and the vital inadequacy of the post system. This postal principle is an a-concept and metaphor which potentially destabilises the institution simply by carrying its desired Meaning away, holding it in an undecidable stasis between sender and addressee.

7. The fragmentary counter-odyssey of Chapter 7 and the undeliverable postcards of Chapter 8 partake in a series of deferrals and disruptions which resist interpretation. Taken together as a doubled correspondence addressed on the one hand to Derrida and on the other to Joyce, they perform the frustration of a desire to reach the ‘destination’ Meaning through the essential undecidability of the decision over who the addressee is or should be.

8. Here, the form, the postal genre itself, disrupts any straightforward meaning:

‘The proliferation of the postcards undermines a systematic analysis of how
the postcard in general might operate even as it makes the pretence of performing that analysis.\textsuperscript{83} The excess of postcards, and their irreducibility to a single context and thesis, is prompted no doubt by the unconditionality of a right to say everything, and must necessarily destabilise the institution.

9. The form of the spinning gramophone of Chapter 9—the concept and metaphor underpinning these words—concerns the placement of the author, the authority and legitimacy behind the words, asking: whose voice is speaking? With no determined speaking subject, the firm ground of meaning slips away. Structured too by the impossibility of any perfect repetition, it circles around and around in a search for meaning, only to find itself returned to the beginning, forced to begin again, turning and turning towards a moment in the future when all shall be revealed.

10. The distorted telephonic telepathic tendencies of Chapter 10 also play on this confusion of voices, other voices, voices of the Other, endlessly intervening and interrupting meaning on its necessarily erroneous path, deferred by this telephonic-postal principle. It also records the prophetic yet unknowable and unpredictable status of this dialogue between Joyce and Derrida, a reminder of the impossibility of pre-empting a meaning and an institutional legitimacy which both remain, necessarily, to come.

No matter how many times we reiterate our readings of them, the messages carried by these four chapters—by the postcard, the gramophone, and the telephone—remain undeliverable and undecidable.

Framed by the uncapitalised a-concept *différance*, the final two chapters revolve around the unreliability, undecidability, and motile playfulness inherent in meaning, a semantic state which the institution (hoping to sure up its own legitimacy) will have tried to conceal but which this double reading will necessarily have exposed. Differing and deferring, the a-concept itself remains unknowable, neither presence nor absence as it is endlessly written and erased, so that all we can perceive are its traces and effects.

11. The myriad border transgressions and linguistic folds of Chapter 11 fight against the rampant logocentrism of institutionalised meaning. The flowing *écriture féminine* of this surreal dreamscape is endlessly disrupted and disruptive in its eschewal of interpretive certitude and its admittance of this irreducible adversarial Other in the form of this volatile Other-language. As we cross subjects and subjectivities, the interwoven words of Antigone, Molly Bloom, and Hélène Cixous, Marilyn Monroe, and Penelope operate on the prophetic promise of events to come, yes, but disrupted by the conjectural nature of the reading of the tarot cards, yes, the possibility that a mistake might have been made, that the interpretation might always already have been unstable, even untenable.

12. Chapter 12 stages a literary investigation into the mystery surrounding the enigmatic man in the Macintosh wandering throughout *Ulysses*. It suggests that he does not hold the secret of interpretive certitude, but instead symbolises a structure of apophatic secrecy where the secret is that there is no secret. Defying the coming of the Messiah, the ultimately ‘empty’ identity of the prophet Elijah-Macintosh finally reveals the frustrating emptiness of
the secret. Necessarily kept secret because of its lack of presented meaning and its promised future revelation, meaning is concealed as prophecy, like the legitimacy-to-come of the institution. We are forced simply to wait, trembling.

Through traversing a series of subjects and subjectivities, concealments, revelations, and prophecies, these chapters will have destabilised Meaning to the point where a conclusion might seem if not impossible, then certainly undesirable.

**Coda**

A conclusion would sit uncomfortably at the end of these twelve chapters, therefore I offer an excessive thirteenth chapter which draws an array of loose ends together to reveal just how precarious and unreliable meaning will have been in a thesis structured by a double reading which proposes the vulnerability and potential illegitimacy of the irreducible and unconditional institutions of literature and philosophy as they strive to exhaust the text’s semantic resources.

The chance or accidental nature of this ‘Coda,’ the thought that it might all have been a mistake, finally reveals the theoretical and performative foundation of this assertion of the potential illegitimacy of the institution: in the wake of this double reading, exposing a series of continuities and ruptures between the argument and its enactment, we have not arrived and cannot arrive at any sense of an ending, and are still waiting on the off chance that the secret will have been revealed.
A Poetics and Politics of Spacing

Spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing is the irreducibility of the other.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{84} Derrida, Positions, 94.
Espacement

We live in spacious times.¹

I hear the ruin of all space ... ²

Let us space.³

We are in space, spellbound, always already, within an act of spacing, espacement. Between the Self and the Other, between Joyce and Derrida, we are in the throes of that inaugural ‘return to the place, to spatiality and writing,’⁴ which Derrida will always already have called for, pleaded for, and waited for. Let us space. That is, let us probe the spaces which both separate and unite the words, concepts, and subjects of Joyce and Derrida, writing and erasing the porous, permeable borderlines in the same deconstructive gesture, in the hope of revealing a relationship which means more than either Joyce or Derrida alone could.

In ‘Plato’s Pharmacy,’ Derrida writes of ‘the space of writing, space as writing.’⁵ This prompts Mark Wigley to declare that Derrida’s work might simply be

² Joyce, Ulysses, 24.
³ Derrida, Glas, 75.
⁵ Derrida, ‘Plato’s Pharmacy,’ in Dissemination, 111.
Derrida displays an enduring concern with producing space, the writing of space, and the writing of a space in which writing can take place: ‘Writing is not simply located “in” space. Rather, it is the production of space. There is no space before the writing that appears to go on within it.’ Writing conjures both the material spaces of the words on the page, and the spaces represented by those words, imagined or recreated in the mind of the reader. French novelist Georges Perec makes the possibility of space contingent on words (which is not to say in an idealist manner that reality is contingent on words, but that our understanding of it is):

This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolano-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbours, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text.

For Perec, the book is space. He writes, and he creates space: ‘I trace words on a page’ and ‘letter by letter, a text forms, affirms itself, is confirmed, is frozen, is fixed.’ ‘I’—this authorial trace—am all-powerful, as if I might be able to contain the world and everything in it within a book:

7 Wigley, The Architecture of Deconstruction, 69
9 Perec, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, 9.
Before there was nothing, or almost nothing; afterwards, there isn’t much, a few signs, but which are enough for there to be a top and a bottom, a beginning and an end, a right and a left, a recto and a verso.¹⁰

Fellow French novelist Jean Genet makes a similar claim in the opening paragraph of the memoir *Prisoner of Love*:

The page that was blank to begin with is now crossed from top to bottom with tiny black characters—letters, words, commas, exclamation marks—and it’s because of them the page is said to be legible. But a kind of uneasiness, a feeling close to nausea, an irresolution that stays my hand—these make me wonder: do the black marks add up to reality? The white of the paper is an artifice that’s replaced the translucency of parchment and the ochre surface of clay tablets; but the ochre and the translucency and the whiteness may all possess more reality than the signs that mar them.¹¹

This is ‘space as inventory, space as invention,’¹² the writer cast in the role of Creator: ‘In the beginning was the Word …’

Derrida marks a shift from such a conception of writing as space to writing as spacing, the production of an intimate relationship between the Self and the Other. Writing (and its logocentric pairing or apparent opposite: speech) takes place as spacing, a dialogue staged with the Other. He writes in *Of Grammatology* that this is ‘the spacing (pause, blank, punctuation, interval in general, etc.) which constitutes

¹⁰ Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, 10.


the origin of signification,’13 describing the original species of writing, ‘arche-writing,’
this ‘possibility of the spoken word,’14 as ‘the opening of the first exteriority in
general,’15 and the relationship of ‘an inside to an outside: spacing.’16 Here, the
figure of the Other is inescapably implicated, with arche-writing cast as ‘an other
writing, with all the implied risks.’17 Spacing is this relationship to the Other:
Spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of
its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing
is the irreducibility of the other.18
It is both a distance from and a proximity to the Other:
Spacing is that which produces both the sense that things are exterior to each
other, that they are spaced out in some kind of space, and the sense that space is
itself exterior to some other domain, that the spatial world is detached from one
that is without space. Spacing is the “distance” of representation: both the spatial
intervals between signifiers and the effect of substitution, the production of the
sense that the material signifier “stands in for” something detached from it, the
sense that space is an exterior domain of representation detached from that of
presence, which is to say, the sense of an exterior divided from an interior.19

13 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 68.
14 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 70.
15 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 70.
16 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 70.
17 Derrida, Positions, 53.
18 Derrida, Positions, 94.
This is the spacing taking place between the ‘inside’ of the institution and its ‘outside,’ between that which is given admittance and authority, and the adversarial Other which threatens to undermine this so-called legitimacy. This ‘irreducible alterity’\(^{20}\) is most explicitly displayed in Derrida’s texts in the balance between an engagement with their overt themes and content, and an interest in their own spatiality or spatial poetics and/or politics, the materiality of the words on the page:

Most of his texts engage with their own spatiality, spacing themselves out in polemical ways and interrogating their own spatial structure. This interrogation is carried out as much by the spatial structure as it is by the words it appears to structure. Indeed, Derrida’s texts only attain their force inasmuch as they undermine the traditional distinction between space and discourse.\(^{21}\)

A series of polemical spacings undermining this traditional distinction between spatiality and writing, Derrida’s works probe the distance between a material sense of space (the literal spatiality of the words on the page) and a more metaphoric sense of space (say, this originary relationship to the Other), which is no more apparent than in the monumental *Glas*:

Let us space. The art of this text is the air it causes to circulate between its screens. The chainings are invisible, everything seems improvised or juxtaposed. This text induces by agglutinating rather than demonstrating, by coupling and decoupling, gluing and ungluing, \([\text{en accollant et en décollant}]\) rather than by


exhibiting the continuous, and analogical, instructive, suffocating necessity of a
discursive rhetoric.\textsuperscript{22}

So then: let us space. The two spiralling, labyrinthine columns of \textit{Glas} wrap around
each other, both beginning and ending with neither in fact occurring, that on the
left-hand side of the page addressing German idealist philosopher G. W. F. Hegel,
that on the right-hand side addressing French novelist Genet. This revolutionary
structure is based on the typography of Genet’s \textit{1967} essay ‘What remained of a
Rembrandt torn up into very even little pieces and chucked into the crapper.’ In this
essay, Genet tells of a passing encounter with a passenger on a train, claims to
realise that ‘any man is \textit{worth} any other,’\textsuperscript{23} and then elucidates a particularly
Derridean conception of the Other: ‘How had I passed from the knowledge that
every man resembled any other to the notion that every man is \textit{is} every other man, I
was incapable of saying.’\textsuperscript{24} In the wake of Genet, Derrida’s text mediates a dialogue
between Hegel and Genet, not only in the words he writes (and does not write) but
in the spatiality of those words, the two columns separated by the smaller, empty
third column, which stands in too for the act of spacing occurring as Hegel and Genet
converse through the medium Derrida; materially it is the empty space between
written columns, metaphorically the not-so-empty space between speakers, the
interstitial space through which the message is carried—or perhaps (after \textit{The Post

\textsuperscript{22} Derrida, \textit{Glas}, 75.

\textsuperscript{23} Genet, ‘What remained of a Rembrandt torn up into very even little pieces and chucked into the
Faber, 1972, 78. Genet’s italics.

\textsuperscript{24} Genet, ‘What remained \textit{of} a Rembrandt …,’ 84.
Card, as we shall witness) stranded—and the space of this authorial I. Both conceptually and spatially outside of Hegel’s column, Genet is still necessarily implicated in it, and vice versa. Resting against each other, the columns are at once opposed to each other and dependent upon each other: ‘To be against (opposed to) is also to be against (close to, in proximity to) or, in other words, up against.’25 This ‘ambivalence of the interstitial’26 is spacing, an interstitial structure and structuring par excellence, blurring ‘the distinctions between inside and outside, self and other, presence and absence.’27 It also demonstrates the lack of a semantic ground in any attempt to construct and address a subject discrete from its Other.

As Derrida insists, ‘deconstruction … is not neutral. It intervenes.’28 This intervention is ‘the harsh law of spacing,’29 the interval or fissure between these two immense columns of twentieth-century literature and philosophy, between the aesthetic concerns of poetics and the revolutionary relationships connoted by politics, and between the unconditional institution and its irreducible Other.

27 Blackburne, ‘(Up) Against the (In) Between,’ 22.
28 Derrida, Positions, 93.
29 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 200.
1. Inauguration: Between Joyce and Derrida

I. Origins

First lines of a book are always the most important. One cannot be too careful about them.¹

In the beginning was the word, in the end the world without end.²

It was he told me I’d begun all wrong, that I should have begun differently. He must be right. I began at the beginning, like an old ballocks, can you imagine that? Here’s my beginning. Because they’re keeping it apparently. I took a lot of trouble with it. Here it is. It gave me a lot of trouble. It was the beginning, do you understand? Whereas now it’s nearly the end. Is what I do now any better? I don’t know. That’s besides the point. Here’s my beginning. It must mean something, or they wouldn’t keep it. Here it is.³

Always already addressing the Other, I cannot help but begin to write, to speak, to construct this uneasy and inexhaustible, dislocated and disembodied dialogue. Yet through a series of false starts, erasures, de-facements and turnings-away, I might

² Joyce, Ulysses, 479.
perhaps avoid, or at least defer, the end. Already, always, a poetics and a politics of spacing will have intervened. Always already there will have been some blockage or slippage in between, and the message will have been undeliverable.

Remembering that this start might always already have been a false one, faced with so many possibilities and potentialities, there must be a first time, a beginning, an inaugurating moment, an origin to which this can all be traced back. I write not of my own autobiographical origin here, but of the origins of the dialogue being traced, constructed or reconstructed, hypothesised, between Joyce and Derrida.

But where to begin?

What occurs from the moment Derrida first encounters Joyce? Or from the moment Joyce first foreshadows, anticipates, Derrida?

Somewhere, sometime, in a simply biographical context, and although he might vigorously deny it (claiming to have always already been reading Joyce, perhaps before he read anyone else, and perhaps before anyone else read Joyce), Derrida encountered Joyce, his momentous and monumental works, for the first time, and first saw the potential in his works. When did he first hear the proper noun ‘James Joyce,’ and then associate it with the immense corpus stretching through *Dubliners, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*? When did he first read Joyce? There must have been a moment when he started reading Joyce. There must have been a moment when these spacings between Joyce and Derrida, inaugurated by this act of reading, this dialogic encounter, commenced. And then, a series of moments, over the course of which Derrida went from not having read Joyce to having read Joyce—or at least to having begun the interminable
process of reading Joyce, reading and re-reading Joyce, never knowing whether or not he had made a false start. A few words—‘There was no hope for him this time’\(^4\) or ‘Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, was literally run off her feet,’\(^5\) ‘Once upon a time,’\(^6\) ‘Stately plump Buck Mulligan’\(^7\) or ‘riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s,’\(^8\) or perhaps simply ‘yes’\(^9\)—and Derrida began to read Joyce—but perhaps never finished, could never bring himself to conclude anything, only ever capable of producing another series of false starts. There is perhaps a framing moment here (with the accompanying questions about the interstitial placement of the frame, its undecidable status), separating the pre-Joyce Derrida from the post-Joyce Derrida—as if there could ever be a ‘post-’ to Joyce, as if Derrida could ever get past or move beyond Joyce, as if there could be life for Derrida after Joyce, and so without Joyce. Yet still, there must have been a moment (again, only biographical—or autobiographical) when he first read Joyce, probably *Dubliners*, perhaps marvelling at the sheer psychological realist majesty of stories such as ‘Araby’ and ‘The Dead.’ Then he might have read *Portrait*, the semi-autobiographical and supposedly more accessible Joyce, as a foundation before he approached the epically anti-epic *Ulysses*, perhaps beginning to take account of all of those deconstructive yeses. And finally he might have read (begun to read, never finished reading, but always already been reading) the scandalous


\(^5\) Joyce, ‘The Dead,’ in *Dubliners*, 175.


\(^7\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 3.

\(^8\) Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 3.1.

\(^9\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, passim.
anti-book *Finnegans Wake*. Or maybe he started here: maybe, at the outset of his reading strategies known as ‘deconstruction,’ he was always already trying to read *Finnegans Wake*?

There must have been a moment too, in a more scholarly context, when he first read Joyce in the sense of interpreting Joyce, when he first spoke on Joyce, wrote on Joyce, and published on Joyce.

I face so many possibilities, so many starts and false starts.

So again: where to begin?

It may well have been, as noted by both Geoffrey Bennington in *Jacques Derrida* and Alan Roughley in *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, in the Widener Library at Harvard University, in 1956, at the age of twenty-five, while there on a scholarship to study some unpublished works by the Austro-German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, that Derrida first ‘reads Joyce.’ He might have read Joyce earlier; no-one can be too sure. It is certainly here that he begins reading (interpreting) Joyce, absorbing Joyce into *Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry: an Introduction*, first published in 1962. But then, as Derrida famously writes in ‘Two Words for Joyce’ (his first sustained explicit, public engagement with Joyce, from 1984), no-one ever really ‘reads’ Joyce:

the utterances “I am reading Joyce,” “read Joyce,” “have you read Joyce?”

produce an irresistible effect of naivety, irresistibly comical. What exactly do you mean by “read Joyce”? Who can pride himself on having “read” Joyce?


We are always only ‘on the edge of reading Joyce,’ Derrida goes further: ‘I have the feeling that I haven’t yet begun to read Joyce, and this “not having begun to read” is sometimes the most singular and active relationship I have with this work.’ Never having even begun to read Joyce signifies for Derrida not only this feeling of inadequacy or illegitimacy when faced with his sprawling, monumental corpus, but also the impossibility of ever offering a reading that has not been pre-empted by the text in question. As he notes of *Finnegans Wake*, ‘the future is reserved in it.’ It has always already been ‘read and pillaged in advance,’ Joyce setting up a hypermnesiac machine, there in advance, decades in advance, to compute you, control you, forbid you the slightest inaugural syllable because you can say nothing that is not pre-programmed on this 1000th generation computer.

He writes something similar about *Ulysses*: ‘Yes, everything has already happened to us with *Ulysses* and has been signed in advance by Joyce.’ Here is a machine that

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15 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 149.
16 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 151.
17 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 147.
'remembers through a process of sublimated self-substitution and self-erasure,' a 'metonymic envoy' remembering in advance a message which 'never quite arrives at its destination.'19 ‘Everything has already happened to us with Ulysses’: most notably, the readings offered by Derrida. Just as deconstruction always already takes place, will always already have taken place, is built into the texts it operates upon, remembered as a future interpretation, Derrida has a presence, always already, no matter how liminal or marginal, in Joyce’s texts. ‘Nothing new can happen,’20 writes Caputo:

The very thing that one would most expect from Joyce, the invention of the other, the singular novelty of another yes, an other reading, a new counter-signature, new ways to sign on to Joyce, endlessly, joyously discovering new ways to rejoice in Joyce, to re-Joyce, to say yes—all that has been “cut off” in advance, circumcised and circumscribed, by none other than Joyce.21

‘Two Words for Joyce’ and ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ Glas and The Post Card, were anticipated, perhaps prophesised, by Finnegans Wake and Ulysses, Derrida gesturing towards these traces of deconstruction that were always already there, constructing his dialogue with Joyce, tentatively but not timidly setting about the interminable process of deconstructing his own readings pre-programmed into Joyce’s texts; it is not just that he war is already written in Finnegans Wake or that all those yeses are


20 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 191.

21 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 190-1.
already contained in *Ulysses*, but that Derrida’s comprehension and interpretation of these textual events already appears to have been accounted for by Joyce. This prompts another question: why could Joyce not have read Derrida first? Or, more radically, and more problematically: did Joyce read (in both senses: read *and* interpret) Derrida first?

Perhaps Derrida is in Joyce as much as Joyce is in Derrida. This encounter across manifold pages throughout a range of texts, no matter how ghostly and ethereal, inevitably engages the two in a poetics and politics of spacing: a spatio-temporal encounter which somehow eschews the vast disparities between the biographical times and places of Joyce (his life in Dublin, Pola, Trieste, Zurich and Paris, between his birth in 1882 and his death in 1941) and those of Derrida (moving throughout Algeria, France and the United States, amongst many other travels, for nearly seventy-five years between 1930 and 2004), somehow placing both Joyce and Derrida in a new time and place—an untimely time that is perhaps not a time, and a place that is perhaps not a place. Given the permeability of the frames attempting to section off these two temporalities and spatialities, trying to separate these two subjects and biographies, perhaps their relationship is not one akin to literary-philosophical father and son, some quasi-generational progress or progression where one comes after the other, where once takes precedence. Perhaps it is instead a relationship of colleagues, equals, these two immense, intertwined columns of twentieth-century writing staging a dialogue, collaborating in a metaphoric scene starkly reminiscent of that represented by Matthew Paris in his thirteenth-century postcard-etching, featured as the frontispiece to the fortune-telling book *Prognostica Socratis basilei* and as the cover art and a major motif (in a
multitude of senses) for Derrida’s *The Post Card*. The postcard depicts Plato peering over the shoulder of the seated Socrates as he perhaps writes or perhaps erases—perhaps one with his left hand, the other with his right. This engraved scene represents ‘philosophical or intellectual relations in general’ made manifest in its depiction of ‘the first or founding relation between Plato and Socrates.’ But it is also a scene where ‘other figures can be and are positioned in the place of the two philosophers.’ So who is Plato and who Socrates? And does such a question matter after deconstruction? In *The Post Card*, on 4 June 1977, Derrida writes:

> Have you seen this card, the image on the back [dos] of this card? I stumbled across it yesterday, in the Bodleian (the famous Oxford library), I’ll tell you about it. I stopped dead, with a feeling of hallucination (is he crazy or what? He has the names mixed up!) and of revelation at the same time, an apocalyptic revelation: Socrates writing, writing in front of Plato, I always knew it, it had remained like the negative of a photograph to be developed for twenty-five centuries—in me of course. Sufficient to write it in broad daylight. The revelation is there, unless I can’t yet decipher anything in this picture, which is what is most probable in effect. Socrates, the one who writes—seated, bent over, a scribe or docile copyist, Plato’s secretary, no? He is in front of Plato, no Plato is *behind* him, smaller (why smaller?), but standing up. With his outstretched finger he looks like he is indicating something, designating, showing the way or giving an order—or

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22 McArthur, ‘The Example of Joyce,’ 228.


dictating, authoritarian, masterly, imperious. Almost wicked, don’t you think, and voluntarily. I bought a whole supply of them.25 The postcard, and the fragmented, fractured, disjointed, aphoristic, paratactic text titled *The Post Card*, both perform this deconstructive action, disrupting any chronology which would place Socrates before Plato, or even Plato before Socrates—and so Joyce before Derrida, or Derrida before Joyce. There is not one time here, nor is there no-time, nor many times; instead, time is porous, so that Joyce and Derrida can and do come into contact, so that they can and do speak to each other. For surely Joyce and Derrida inhabit neither the same time nor place or space (in a historical, biographical sense). Yet there they are sitting across each other at a writing desk, or one leaning, peering, over the shoulder of the other, seated, staging an endless dialogue founded upon a ceaseless play of writing and erasure, an interminable process of reading and re-reading, but also an undecidability and impossibility: ‘Unless I can’t yet decipher anything in this picture …’

But, unlike Plato and Socrates, they have somehow missed each other, and so while Joyce awaits Derrida’s arrival, Derrida awaits Joyce’s return.

II. Autobiography and the Separatrix

It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir.26

Everything I write is terribly autobiographical.27

This inauguration will have served as a play at opening a space between Joyce and Derrida, ‘twisting the separatrix,’28 searching out and destabilising that which divides or separates Joyce from Derrida and Derrida from Joyce. /Joyce and Derrida/. Architectural critic, theorist and designer Jeffrey Kipnis attempts, twice, to define it:

The separatrix is the incision of decision, the cut that is the possibility of management, of rendering complexity manageable (from the French, *traitable*), of keeping things in line, keeping them straight.29

The separatrix is the /, aka *solidus*, *virgule*, *slash*, *slant*, *diagonal*, and, in French, *ligne*, *barre oblique*, *trait*. It marks among its many punctuations: rations and fractions (2/3), simultaneity (president/commander-in-chief), choice (and/or), opposition (nonserious/serious, inside/outside), and all other manner of structured relationships (signified/signified, ornament/structure).30

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29 Kipnis, ‘/Twisting the Separatrix/,’ 32.

30 Kipnis, ‘/Twisting the Separatrix/,’ 32.
Joyce/Derrida. The separatrix, the slash, /, is revealed as ‘the inseparability of those terms that it separates,’31 problematizing the idea of Joyce apart from Derrida and Derrida apart from Joyce. Through this ‘irreducibility of the Other,’32 the Self holds out a hand towards the Other, the separatrix refusing to allow either ‘Joyce’ or ‘Derrida’ to be closed in on itself, representing both the irreducibility of the Other (that is, Joyce will not be reduced to a simple aspect of Derrida’s identity, and vice versa) and the unconditional expansion of both identities to incorporate the other as Other, to incorporate each other (one) as Other, ‘tout autre est tout autre.’33 Impossibly, this Other is both within and without, necessarily and completely inassimilable. One is never completely without the Other, and yet somehow remains singular: ‘Joyce and Derrida’ but also ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida.’ Their relationship is complicated by the deconstruction of this borderline or threshold, the pairing irreducible now to either ‘Joyce’ or ‘Derrida,’ so that we are left simply with ‘Joyce and Derrida,’ or with ‘Joyce’ ‘and’ ‘Derrida’—for just what does this conjunctive ‘and’ signify?

The separatrix also points toward the mediatory role performed by that third term, that which is in between. Joyce/I/Derrida. (Here, the remarkable graphic similarity between the ‘/’ and the ‘I’ should not go un-noted.) It points toward a presence lurking between Joyce and Derrida, a subjective and autobiographical presence. It also points toward the necessarily autobiographical nature of any

31 Kipnis, ‘’Twisting the Separatrix,’’ 32.
32 Derrida, Positions, 94.
writing: writing and autobiography (confession or testimony, alliance with the Other, and this ‘narrowing of the space between subject and object,’ 34 which is also ‘the opening of a new space’ 35) cannot be separated. The act of writing is an autobiographical act.

Hesitating between literature and philosophy, fiction and truth, art and criticism, poetics and politics, writing is perhaps, always already, what Derrida calls ‘an autobiographically deconstructive writing.’ 36 Derrida creeps silently into his work, the autobiographical ‘I’ lurking as he addresses the Other. As Claude Lévesque suggests in response to Derrida’s ‘Otobiographies,’ the presence of the name or signature means that Derrida is inevitably hidden or veiled in his writing:

In the inscription of his name, Derrida withdraws behind the curtain. He is hidden in the writing, which moves away from itself, does not make its ends meet, repeats, unlimits, and disseminates itself, keeping his name by losing it. “I write in order to lose my name,” as Bataille has said. 37

The act of writing is one of concealment. Yet, no matter its pretensions toward the erasure of the writer, and so toward objectivity, an act of writing must contain this subjective ‘I’. Treating writing as an urge towards confession, an urge to give up our secrets in response to the Other who, we hope, one day, will arrive, but who remains, always already, to come, deconstruction will also have revealed what

36 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 85.
37 Claude Lévesque, in Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 74.
Robert Smith calls the radical ‘tendency of the autobiographical ... to burst through the subjective, throwing it into disarray.’ The subject is problematized as its relationship to the Other, its dependency on the Other, a dialogue with the Other, is exposed.

Reflecting on his earliest encounters with writing in ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ Derrida hesitates as he approaches autobiography:

No doubt I hesitated between philosophy and literature, giving up neither, perhaps seeking obscurely a place from which the history of this frontier could be thought or even displaced—in writing itself and not only by historical or theoretical reflection. And since what interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy, I’m amused by the idea that my adolescent desire—let’s call it that—should have directed me toward something in writing which was neither the one nor the other. What was it?

“Autobiography” is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today. At this moment, here, I’m trying, in a way that would commonly be called “autobiographical,” to remember what happened when the desire to write came to me, in a way that was as obscure as it was compelling, both powerless and authoritarian. Well, what happened then was just like an autobiographical desire ... Deep down, there was something like a lyrical movement toward confidences or confessions. He then situates these reflections in relation to a writing that is preoccupied with genre classifications: ‘Already we’d have trouble not spotting but separating out


39 Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 34.
historical narrative, literary fiction, and philosophical reflexion." Rodolphe Gasché describes Derrida’s work as a transgression of ‘that internal border of work and life,’ the ‘border on which texts are engendered.’ There is a gesture here towards the expansion of the genre ‘autobiography’ to encompass far more than its traditions or conventions would dictate, moreover a gesture towards the problematizing of the space between the supposedly objective work, the subjective personal narrative (the story of a life: an autobiography), and a mode of writing built upon an unconditional and irreducible relationship to the Other.

Robert Smith writes that the autobiographical impulse embedded in writing is an attempt to reveal ‘philosophy’s debt to something other than its conscious rational self.’ We are plunged into the purely subjective. To write is inescapably a subjective act, yet after deconstruction even this subjectivity is thrown, as Smith has written, ‘into disarray.’ (Here, even my own steady authorial hand begins to tremble. The ‘I’ begins to show signs of vulnerability, fragility.) The autonomous subject is problematized, and we are faced with ‘the impossibility of a finite autobiography, or a closed subjectivity.’ For Derrida, the ‘I’ derives from the necessity of responding to the Other. The ‘I’ is reliant on the Other’s ability to hear this call from the ‘I,’ and then to respond. This is partially the gesture made by Paul de Man in ‘Autobiography as De-Facement’:

40 Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 35.
41 Rodolphe Gasché, in Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 41.
Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts. The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between the two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution. The structure implies differentiation as well as similarity, since both depend on a substitutive exchange that constitutes the subject. This specular structure is interiorised in a text in which the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding, but this merely makes explicit the wider claim to authorship that takes place whenever a text is stated to be by someone and assumed to be understandable to the extent that this is the case. Which amounts to saying that any book with a readable title page is, to some extent, autobiographical.45

Each time he writes or responds, Derrida confesses to his presence, a past presence recorded in his addresses to the Other and promised as a future presence. This is who ‘I’ am, he says: ‘I tell my life to myself; I recite and recount it thus for me.’46 Yet Derrida’s autobiography is focused on the Other. The subject is effaced, defaced, de-faced. As Joseph G. Kronick writes, there is a ‘shattering of the mirror in order to face the Other to whom he is responsible.’47 Shattering the mirror, ‘autobiography is put into motion by this trace of the Other. Before “I am,” the Other is there.’48 Before ‘I am,’ the Other is here: Joyce is here, Derrida is here, and so I am here.

46 Derrida, The Ear of the Other, 12.
Exhibiting the porous borders between Joyce and Derrida—the object Joyce in the critical analyses of Derrida, and of the objects Joyce and Derrida within this critical analysis; and of these subjects as writers—and then between these two figures and my own authorial ‘I,’ a crisis of identity, authority, and legitimacy threatens the logocentric institutions of literature and philosophy. They are refused the stable ground of a certain object of and subject in writing. Both Joyce and Derrida are thus figured as potentialities. This thesis is also figured as such an unconditional and irreducible ‘meaning.’

III. Derrida Reading Joyce: Between Literature and Philosophy

Joyce has flowed deeply into Derrida’s pen and been at work on Derrida almost from the beginning of his studies.49

Each time Derrida writes, commits words to paper and so responds to the Other, ‘Joyce’s ghost is coming on board.’50 They touch upon each other everywhere, and in doing so the myriad potential interpretations proposed by these irreducible Others threaten to destabilise the foundations of the institution.

Caputo best explains the vital placement of Joyce, and of the proper noun ‘Joyce,’ within the project of deconstruction:

49 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 181.
50 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 149.
“Joyce” is the name of one of the poles of deconstruction, the name of one of its tropics, the name of a body of texts in which the chance, the contingency, the associative powers, the mobility, the energy, and the “joy” of the trace are almost perfectly summoned.\textsuperscript{51}

Caputo names Joyce as a force always already at work in deconstruction: “‘Joyce’ is ... early on, a name for an operation, an energy, that is always at work in language, and, hence, in deconstruction.”\textsuperscript{52} McArthur too claims that ‘there would have been no deconstruction without Joyce.’\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps this is where it all began, with this trace of Joyce in deconstruction: always already, Joyce will have ‘flowed deeply into Derrida’s pen.’\textsuperscript{54} But how do we then explain the often marginal, liminal placement of Joyce in Derrida’s work? And how are these references distinguished from those Derrida makes to a raft of other literary writers?

The repeated references to Joyce and his texts in the interview ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature’ are enough to indicate an ongoing interest on the part of Derrida in Joyce and his work. But he shows a deep and persistent interest in many writers: Stéphane Mallarmé, Maurice Blanchot, Francis Ponge, Philippe Sollers, Paul Celan, Georges Bataille, Jean Genet, Antonin Artaud, Edmond Jabès, and Franz Kafka, to name just a few. So what is special about his relationship with Joyce? Twisting the separatrix, probing the affinities and intersections between their more explicit engagements, we can see just why Joyce is so central to Derrida’s work, and

\textsuperscript{51} Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 184.

\textsuperscript{52} Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 184.

\textsuperscript{53} McArthur, ‘The Example of Joyce,’ 227.

\textsuperscript{54} Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 181.
Derrida so central to Joyce’s. We will see precisely how and why Joyce’s ghost is always coming on board, and why too Derrida’s ghost, for Joyce, is always already on board—but also, perhaps, sur le bord, on edge and on the edge. McArthur notes the placement of Joyce, transfigured into a funerary monument, in The Post Card:

What is first interesting about Derrida’s later placement of the statue is that it appears at neither the structural nor the actual centre ... in a work so obsessively generated by codes, numeric and otherwise. The centring is figural and relational.55

As his literal, structural, and actual placement on the margins or periphery of Derrida’s text is deconstructed by his figurative or metaphoric placement at the centre of Derrida’s endeavour, we will bear witness to Joyce as the first ‘example or exemplar’56 of deconstruction, both ‘outside’ and irreducible.

It begins, as Bennington and Roughley have noted, with Derrida’s work on Husserl. Stretching back to 1956, Derrida ‘began to draw on Joyce as an alternative model for the complex relationships among culture, language and history he was investigating in Husserl.’57 Treating Joyce from the beginning as more than simply a writer of literature (he is elevated here, set up in opposition to Husserl, to the position of philosopher—whatever that means), Derrida spends roughly three pages of his introduction to Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry contrasting Joyce’s ‘synchronic, equivocal forms of writing’58 as they relate to history and culture, with


57 Roughley, Reading Derrida Reading Joyce, 2.

58 Roughley, Reading Derrida Reading Joyce, 2.
Husserl’s phenomenological ‘imperative of univocity.’\textsuperscript{59} Derrida identifies two distinct endeavours here. Joyce attempts to repeat and take responsibility for all equivocation itself, utilising a language that would equalise the greatest possible synchrony with the greatest potential for buried, accumulated, and interwoven intentions within each linguistic atom, each vocable, each word, each simple proposition, in all worldly cultures and their most ingenious forms (mythology, religion, sciences, arts, literature, politics, philosophy, and so forth).\textsuperscript{60}

On the other hand, Husserl attempts to reduce or impoverish empirical language methodically to the point where its univocal and translatable elements are actually transparent, in order to reach back and grasp again at its pure source a historicity or traditionality that no de facto historical totality will yield of itself.\textsuperscript{61}

The difference is between a singular, pre-Babelian language (Husserl), and a heteroglossic system or structure which can contain or hold on to a Babel-like polyphony and cacophony, this multitude of voices, tongues and languages (Joyce). But ‘neither a pure univocity nor pure equivocity is possible, and therein lies another (asymmetrical) parallel between the projects of Husserl and Joyce.’\textsuperscript{62} The impossibility of the endeavours of each, this tension between the one (voice) and the many (voices), this perfectly aporetic structure—where, impossibly but

\textsuperscript{59} Roughley, \textit{Reading Derrida Reading Joyce}, 2.


\textsuperscript{61} Derrida, \textit{Edmund Husserl’s Origin of Geometry}, 103.

\textsuperscript{62} Roughley, \textit{Reading Derrida Reading Joyce}, 6.
essentially, the answer lies in neither one nor the other, but somehow in both, somehow between the two, in the space in between—will continue to haunt (but also structure) each of Derrida’s encounters with Joyce.

Already we have glimpsed traces of a certain hauntology typifying the relationship between Joyce and Derrida, which will continue in their next encounter, in *Writing and Difference*. Attridge describes the ghost as a ‘borderline creature, an insider as well as an outsider,’ which is precisely the marginal yet paradoxically central position of Joyce’s ghost in his three appearances here: footnote four to ‘Force and Signification,’ the second epigraph to ‘Cogito and the History of Madness,’ and the final paragraph of ‘Violence and Metaphysics.’

The sentence in ‘Force and Signification’ to which the fourth footnote is attached reads:

63 Hauntology is a term which originates in Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*, a portmanteau of ‘haunt’ and ‘‐ology,’ which is intended to interrogate the paradoxical status of the spectre as neither present nor absent. Colin Davis defines the term: ‘Hauntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present not absent, neither dead nor alive’ (Davis, ‘État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms,’ *French Studies*, 59:3, 2005, 373). The ghost is a supremely interstitial figure, haunting the margins and peripheries, only ever on the threshold of being, of life. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, the ghost is also torn between its always already prophesised return and its necessarily postponed arrival: ‘the ghost is not only a revenant (a returner, the French for “ghost”), but also an arrivant, one who arrives’ (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Ghostwriting,’ *Diacritics*, 25:2, 1995, 71). This is precisely the impossible placement of Joyce in Derrida’s oeuvre.

Criticism henceforth knows itself separated from force, occasionally avenging itself on force by gravely and profoundly proving that separation is the condition of the work, and not only of the discourse on the work.  

It is concerned with the separation between the work of art and the work of criticism:

Delacroix, Diderot, Balzac, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Proust, Valery, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf are called upon to bear witness to the fact that separation is diametrically opposed to critical impotency. By insisting upon this separation between the critical act and creative force, we are only designating the most banally essential—others might say, structural—necessity attached to these two actions and moments. Impotence, here, is a property not of the critic but of criticism. The two are sometimes confused.

Although Joyce is absent from that list, he too is implicated in this deconstruction of the borderline or threshold between the work of the artist and that of the critic, twisting the separatrix: art/criticism. Joyce is implicated here not only because he covertly participates in this deconstructive project alongside Derrida, but more explicitly because the footnote moves quite swiftly onwards to list Joyce in reference to the influence of Hegel. Derrida quotes Gustave Flaubert: ‘And when the translation of Hegel is finished, Lord knows where we will end up!’ He then writes: ‘The translation of Hegel hasn’t been finished, thank the Lord, thus explaining

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67 Gustave Flaubert, Préface à la vie d’écrivain, quoted in Derrida, ‘Force and Signification,’ n4.
Proust, Joyce, Faulkner and several others.'68 Between Marcel Proust and William Faulkner then (inhabiting yet another interstitial space in Derrida’s work, between one of the earliest modernists and one of its later practitioners), Joyce is cited as another unfinished translator of Hegel, placed in a similar position here to that which he has been previously placed in regarding Husserl: never central, always only marginal, and yet exerting that spectral influence over Derrida’s work, always coming on board. Between the work of art and the work of criticism, between the original and its translation—here is where we find Joyce in Derrida: always already in-between, and so forever uncertain.

Similarly, the second epigraph to ‘Cogito and the History of Madness’ places Joyce in a literally marginal position in Derrida’s work, further showing deconstruction to be focused on the margins, the neglected corners and crevices of the text, attempting to exhibit in this exclusion their paradoxical centrality to the text, and so problematizing the very concept of the margins and borderlines, refusing the hegemonic hierarchy and twisting the separatrix: centre/periphery. The sentence appears beneath the first epigraph, in a column besides the main text of the essay, Derrida quoting Joyce referring to Ulysses: ‘In any event this book was terribly daring. A transparent sheet separates it from madness.’69 Again taking up the theme of borderlines and thresholds, Joyce’s presence here represents ‘a marginal, polysemous use of words and phrases simultaneously signifying in several different


69 Derrida, ‘Cogito and the History of Madness,’ in Writing and Difference, 31.
directions.’ This gesture or movement resembles the deformed, over-potentialised structure of *Finnegans Wake*, and makes the connection (no matter how tenuous) between Joyce and madness (the actual content of the essay: Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilisation*), linking outside (Joyce) to inside (madness) in an attempt to deconstruct this boundary: inside/outside.

Joyce appears a third and final time in *Writing and Difference* in ‘Violence and Metaphysics,’ an essay concerned with alterity in the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas. Returning in part to the fourth footnote to ‘Force and Signification,’ it is also concerned with Hegel, more precisely with the Hegelian dialectic, described by Roughley (although not using Hegelian terms): ‘the antithesis operates as the Other of the thesis until it is sublated and brought into the thesis and set to work until another antithesis arises.’ It is concerned with this dialectic as it operates in Lévinas, but more so for our purposes as it operates between the two ‘points of influence’ famously noted by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*, cited by Derrida as the epigraph to this essay:

Hebraism and Hellenism—between these two points of influence moves our world. At one time it feels more powerfully the attraction of one of them, at another time of the other; and it ought to be, though it never is, evenly and happily balanced between them.72

70 Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, 12.

71 Roughley, *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*, 17.

Derrida explicitly returns to this in the final paragraph of the essay, where he also approaches Joyce, moving towards a conclusion:

Are we Greeks? Are we Jews? But who, we? Are we (not chronological, but a pre-logical question) first Jews or first Greeks? And does the strange dialogue between the Jew and the Greek, peace itself, have the form of the absolute, speculative logic of Hegel, the living logic which reconciles formal tautology and empirical heterology after having thought prophetic discourse in preference to the Phenomenology of the Mind? Or, on the contrary, does this peace have the form of infinite separation and of the unthinkable, unsayable transcendence of the other? To what horizon of peace does the language which asks this question belong? From whence does it draw the energy of its question? Can it account for the historical coupling of Judaism and Hellenism? And what is the legitimacy, what is the meaning of the copula in this proposition from perhaps the most Hegelian of modern novelists: “Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet.”

These connections between Judaism and Hellenism are perhaps best exemplified by Joyce throwing together the Greek epic hero Ulysses and Dublin’s wandering Jew Leopold Bloom, deconstructing these inaugurating sources of Western culture, twisting this separatrix Greek/Jew: ‘Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet.’ But two further extremes meet here: the most extreme exponent of ‘literature’ and the most extreme exponent of ‘philosophy’ in the twentieth-century: not just literature/philosophy, but Joyce/Derrida. And then, perhaps, deconstruction: literature/deconstruction/philosophy, Joyce/deconstruction/Derrida.


74 Joyce, Ulysses, 474.
Joyce’s presence in Derrida continues in *Dissemination*. ‘This (therefore) will not have been a book’\textsuperscript{75} might as equally apply to *Finnegans Wake* as it does *Dissemination*. Derrida notes in ‘Two Words for Joyce’ that Joyce has a particularly strong presence in the essay ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’:

I had the feeling that without too much difficulty one could have presented *La Pharmacie de Platon* [Plato’s Pharmacy] as a sort of indirect reading of *Finnegans Wake*, which mines, between Shem and Shaun, between the penman and the postman, down to the finest and most finely ironised detail, the whole scene of the pharmakos, the pharmakon, the various functions of Thoth, ‘th’other, etc.\textsuperscript{76}

The double mark, and the double structure (repeated later in *Glas*) of ‘Plato’s Pharmacy,’ the twisting of the separatrix between Shem the Penman and Shaun the Post (the twins charged with the inscription and carriage of their mother’s message respectively in *Finnegans Wake*), between the words written on the page and the message they attempt to carry, and between the inside and the outside of the text, ties Derrida’s work here to *Finnegans Wake*, which performs such an action in literature: as the end returns to the beginning the text is folded back in on itself, the outside dragged inside as the cover is enveloped by the pages that are supposed to be contained within it (echoing, perhaps, Derrida’s famous and often misused assertion ‘*il n’y a pas de hors-texte*’\textsuperscript{77}). The form of the ‘book’ threatens to collapse.

\textsuperscript{75} Derrida, ‘Outwork,’ 3.

\textsuperscript{76} Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 150.

\textsuperscript{77} Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 158. Commonly translated as ‘there is nothing outside of the text,’ it has also been taken as meaning ‘there is no outside-text,’ and even more radically that ‘there is no escaping the text.’ Often wrenched from its context (in a supremely un-Derridean act of violence) and
Derrida’s project in *Glas* is simply the re-staging of a deconstruction of the book which will always already have been anticipated and accounted for by Joyce. But Joyce’s role here runs much deeper than this: as Caputo notes, ‘Joyce is a writer who practiced, who enacted, the “dissemination” of which Derrida dreamed and wrote.’78 Dissemination is first and foremost in the style of Joyce, in the wake of Joyce:

Dissemination is an attempt not to decimate meaning but to explain it by exposing its Joycean underside, laying bare the nominalistic contingency of what we call meaning, making plain, in short, the constructedness and, hence, the deconstructibility of meaning.79

Meaning’s ‘Joycean underside’ is the manifest undecidability which forms the basis of Derrida’s theorisation of dissemination, this inability of the reader to ever exhaust the text’s potential present or future meanings. Each time Derrida reads a text, and so faces the impossibility of its semantic exhaustion, Joyce’s ghost will be there, on board, exerting its influence—yet because of this spectral nature he will remain, always, at the margins, on the periphery, *sur le bord*, incapable of taking centre stage, avoiding the spotlight.

commonly maligned as decadent and nihilistic, it was intended to point out that ‘there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the “real” supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc.’ (159). In this endless chain of ‘dangerous’ supplements and substitutions, the text is everywhere, and we are plunged into writing. There is no context outside of this fall or descent into language.


Glás is, writes Derrida, ‘a sort of wake.’ Yet its relationship to Joyce and specifically *Finnegans Wake* is not easy to discern; there is no direct reference to Joyce in the text. It is, explicitly at least, about two writers (one of philosophy, and the other of literature): one column is concerned with Hegel, the other with Genet. Yet perhaps we can begin to close the gap between the two texts, and between Joyce and Derrida. Roughley points out three key textual components of *Finnegans Wake* which are taken up by Glás:

The three *Wake*an techniques foregrounded in *Glás* are: 1) a radical exploration of paronomasia, 2) the use of a circular structure for the text, and 3) the construction of pages from columns and marginalia engaged in a textual interplay.

In this trinity the book is further deconstructed along the lines already foreshadowed in *Dissemination*: 1) in a display of the most radical inter-textual play, the relentless movement of the polysemous puns, these playful act of paronomasia, problematizes meaning in any straight-forward, realist manner, shattering the possibility of a univocal or ‘master’ reading; 2) the circular textuality of *Glás*—the two columns endlessly looping in and around each other, crossing over the once-blank space in-between, but also beginning and ending without either as such—puts an end to the traditional beginning, middle and end narrative structure originally theorised by the Greek arch-structuralist Aristotle; and 3) the borderline between inside and outside

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80 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 150.


82 ‘A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which itself does not follow necessarily from anything else, but some second thing naturally exists or occurs after it.'
is deconstructed, and the centre exploded by bringing the margins into primary focus, the centre deconstructed so that there are only really these margins, an action which suddenly, starkly places the once-marginal Joyce in a vital and lively position in Derrida’s oeuvre.

Poised as it is between art and criticism, poetry and politics, The Post Card takes the form of a collection of postcards—literary, philosophical and autobiographical in equal measure—in which Joyce and Derrida, finally, at various points and in various ways, meet. Derrida quite literally encounters Joyce on 20 June 1978, when he details his visit to Joyce’s tomb at Friedhof Fluntern in Zurich, Switzerland, and encounters him again by engaging again with the structure of Finnegans Wake:

The Post Card’s solicitation of the ideology of the book is staged through its identification of itself as a series of related postcards rather than as a unified book; the Wake’s identification of itself as a letter, rather than a book, written by Shem the penman and carried by Shaun the post, haunts Derrida’s meditations on postcards and postal systems as well as his ideas on the relationships between writers, their writings, and addressees.83

Conversely, an end is that which does itself naturally follow from something else, either necessarily or in general, but there is nothing else after it. A middle is that which itself comes after something else, and some other thing comes after it. Well-constructed plots should therefore not begin or end at any arbitrary point, but should employ the stated forms.’ Aristotle, Poetics (trans. Malcolm Heath), London: Penguin Books, 1996, 13-4.

83 Roughley, Reading Derrida Reading Joyce, 32.
Between *The Post Card* and *Finnegans Wake* then, we see a shared interest in the postal principle (the undeliverability of the postcard or the letter) and *destinerrance* (the necessary wandering and erring of the message on its path):

Joyce’s preceding of Derrida in his massive exploration of postal technology, of letters and writing, of sending and receiving, of pairing and coupling, of babelising in the *Wake*, his reading or plundering of all of us, as Derrida puts it at the centre of the book, his living on, haunts and drives Derrida.84

Yet the correspondences run deeper. Wedged firmly in the middle of ‘Envois,’ on a postcard simply dated ‘a day in May 1978,’ Derrida addresses Joyce: ‘Never have I imitated anyone so irresistibly.’85 This is not just mere imitation (taking from Joyce, performing and deconstructing his texts, and translating his works of deconstruction), Derrida will have been staging a dialogue with Joyce, from that early proclamation of the end of the book in *Of Grammatology* to *Dissemination*, *Glas*, *The Post Card* and beyond—beyond even his final published works, as a posthumous dialogue continues to be staged, drawing on the overabundance of potential meanings and correspondences between these writers. Mimicking the structure of the relationships between Socrates and Plato depicted in the Matthew Paris postcard-etching, and between Shem and Shaun in *Finnegans Wake*, Derrida finally positions Joyce as his own irreducible and unconditional deconstructive Other:

Writing gives rise to this “metempsychoses” of One and Other that drives the pen, that is heard in the dialogue of all writing, so that the writing of letters—the establishment of a correspondence—creates a set of doubles, doubled: the


dialectic of One and Other hypothesised in the setting of pen to paper is realised in the persons of je and toi and manifested in the sender and receiver of the message.86

Joyce and Derrida become interchangeable as je (I) and toi (you), the separatrix always already twisted, the ghost of the one always already on board the Other as they write this series of letters or postcards that never really settle, never find a destination, restless and perpetually unpredictable, on the edge and from the edge, between Joyce and Derrida, Joyce/Derrida. Je/toi. Oui, oui. The subject-identities ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida’ become further blurred.

By the time of this encounter in The Post Card, Derrida is mired in a crisis of his own: having avoided a direct confrontation up until now with the imposing Joyce, he is irresistibly, inevitably, faced with the uncertainty of just how to speak of and on Joyce as the vitally marginal Irishman becomes a major focus of his works from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. For Derrida, the competency of the Joycean institution is always already under question not only because his texts are presented only as potentialities for future interpretations, but also because Joyce by nature must remain sur le bord, on edge and on the edge, outside of the centralised institution, marginal, peripheral, liminal, irreducible, as well as conjectural, speculative, ghostly. Responses to Joyce, this elusive object of literary and philosophical study, must thus also remain unconventional, experimental, requiring an approach which not only negates but also actively deconstructs the critical norm of an institution striving

toward the ideal of unconditionality, even as it struggles to acknowledge the Other which troubles its borders. Crucially, such a response must also take into account the possibility of making a mistake, a grave error, and the risk of a plunge into an interpretive, semantic crisis.
2. The Poetics of Transfiguration: Touching Responsibility Between the Body and the Book

Even if you did not believe what I am writing on it, you see that I am writing it to you, you are touching it, you are touching the card, my signature, the body of my name, me—and it is indeed you who, now, right here ...—do you love me?\(^1\)

One lives in writing. Writing is a way of living.\(^2\)

Having threatened to spiral out of control as the legitimacy of the Joycean institution is critically destabilised by the irreducibility and unconditionality of its Other, the text pulls itself back together, establishing the supposedly safe, stable ground of autobiographical reflection, proposing a study of the relationship between reading, mourning, touching, and responsibility as it is manifested in the experience of reading a well-worn first edition of *Ulysses*. The short distance between the reader and the pages of the book will become a touching poetic symbol of a responsibility to read and interpret faithfully, and not to read Joyce—or Derrida—with a desire for interpretive certitude. Reflecting the preceding chapter’s hesitation between the two immense columns of literature and philosophy, it opens interstitial spaces between Joyce and Derrida, problematizing the ontological status of these two figures, and what it means to write and to write on Joyce and Derrida, by drawing on

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\(^1\) Derrida, *The Post Card*, 73.

Sarah Kofman’s reading of Rembrandt’s 1632 painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolas Tulp*, through which the body is transfigured into the book in an act of affirmation and survival [*sur-vivre*], a joyous Joycean ‘yes.’ This poetics of transfiguration finally reveals the possibility of a return, the revival of Joyce, and then perhaps of the revenant Derrida. But, in this double reading between the body and the book, we are thrown back, denied ontological certainty, and plunged into a crisis of semantic undecidability.

I. Reading *Ulysses*, Mourning Joyce

In this place so far from anywhere near to where Joyce’s corporeal body has ever been, I face him, touch him, and Joyce lives. The responsibility—the endurance of an undecidable decision, an impasse or aporia, between the demands of the wholly other (Joyce) and those of a more general community of readers; a decision between the particular and the universal; the desire to do right by Joyce and to do right by not only his but my own potential future readers—is almost too much to bear. I must read closely and faithfully, and remain ‘true’ to the spirits, intentions, and forms of their texts even as I embark on the composition of my own. Like Derrida, who says, after Jan Patočka, that responsibility overlaps with ‘a genealogy of the subject who says “myself,” the subject’s relation to itself as an instance of liberty, singularity, and responsibility, the relation to self as being before the Other,’3 I must act responsibly toward this Other so that I may act responsibly to and for myself. I must act responsibly toward their texts, in accurately and faithfully interpreting their text, so

that I may produce a responsible text of my own. I must act responsibly within the formal conventions of the thesis, although much of the impetus behind this work and those of Joyce and Derrida entails an incendiary anti-institutional tendency. Always already, an irresistible and irreducible sense of irresponsibility infiltrates these responsibilities.

On an overcast Monday afternoon, I am seated in the Heritage Reading Room at the State Library of Victoria, here in Melbourne, Australia, so very far away from Dublin, Paris, Pola, Trieste, Zurich, and all those real, material places Joyce inhabited. Before me on the table sit the two boxes I had been handed by the rare books librarian, only moments ago. I undo the string tie which holds closed the first of the boxes. I cannot say what I was expecting? Was there anything to expect but an old book? The original copy of *Ulysses* has been split in two, for a reason I do not know, in an act of textual violence I cannot comprehend or forgive. Re-bound as two volumes, with dark blue covers and gilded lettering, the break comes arbitrarily after page 368, three pages into the Oxen of the Sun episode. The last word of the first volume is ‘dust,’”4 as if that is what, one day, it threatens to become. It seems so random, so uncalculated, so diametrically opposed to the structural and thematic unity, which Joyce so painstakingly conceived and brought to fruition in the seven years he took to write *Ulysses*. It was surely an act of archiving: ordering, controlling, and making it fit into the library’s immense collection, just another book. (It has the little sticker stuck to the spine too, with the Dewey number printed on, like all library books, catalogued, archived, for ease of access but also, I cannot help suspecting, as

4 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 368.
an unconscious and vain attempt to make everything fit). But perhaps too it was an act of preservation, survival, literally keeping this Joycean text alive in a new and renewed form as its old binding proved inadequate.

*Ulysses* was finally published on 2 February 1922, by Sylvia Beach’s Shakespeare & Co. in Paris. The ordeal is documented by Richard Ellmann: only two copies were completed by this date by the printer, Maurice Darantière in Dijon (he struggled, I suspect, with the magnitude of the task, and Joyce’s endless re-edits—mostly lengthy additions), the books arriving in Paris on the Dijon-Paris express on the morning of the second, Beach picking them up from the station, crossing the Seine and delivering the first to Joyce at 9 rue de l’Université, and placing the second on display at Shakespeare & Co., 12 Rue l’Odéon, people crowding from nine o’clock until closing time to see it.\(^5\) It is as though, in keeping with the book’s circular structure and valiant eschewal of an endpoint, its arrival was destined to be postponed. That evening, Joyce and his partner Nora Barnacle joined a group of friends for dinner at the Italian restaurant Ferrari’s. The day was his fortieth birthday, a day to which he superstitiously attached great significance, Beach gifting him ‘the present that would please him most.’\(^6\) The package remained unopened, beneath Joyce’s chair, until after desert, when he untied the parcel and placed the book on the table before his guests. A toast was proposed.


Now, the book’s original cover is brittle, the paper thin, and I expect it would not take much for it all to fall apart, crumble to dust. The cover is a fading blue, *Ulysses* printed in a now off-white—the Greek colours, which Joyce considered lucky, ‘the white island rising from the sea.’ ¹⁷ It is not a beautiful book, by any stretch of the imagination. It might have been back in 1922, but it certainly is not now. But then, it is *Ulysses*, and should not be a beautiful book: it is one of the most confronting, obscene, explicit, grotesque and scatological texts in literature—in so many ways, not just for the content it contains. Yet it also overflows with such affirmative, generative, disseminative energies: the magnificent cacophony of voices shouting out from its pages, the chaotic structure with its myriad stories to tell (tangential and otherwise, structurally necessary and perfectly pointless, trivial and frivolous), and Joyce’s almost humanitarian or humanistic devotion to a detailed, positively filthy realism (‘a revolting record of a disgusting phase of civilisation,’ ²⁸ wrote George Bernard Shaw) over a romanticised and idealised rendering of 1904 Dublin.

Then follows the authorial attribution: ‘by James Joyce.’

On the next page, there is another title, a repetition of the singular word ‘Ulysses,’ printed in black on the recto. It sits alone, solitary, more emphasis placed upon, forced upon, this word than seems usual simply for the title of a book. This proper noun takes me back to the inaugurating moment of Homer’s *Odyssey*, and I note the incomprehensibility of the time which separates Homer from Joyce, and

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then Joyce from me. This passing of time disturbs me, reminding me of the transient
nature of the life so forcefully affirmed in *Ulysses*, reminding me that Joyce is no
longer with us (though he has not gone too far). Reading, I realise, has become an
act of mourning: I read this first edition of *Ulysses*, and I mourn the death, the
absence, of the author of this book, James Joyce. I mourn the passing of time, of
Joyce’s time, typified by the passing of the day on which *Ulysses* is set—16 June
1904—and not only the impossibility of a return to this date, but of a return for
Joyce. He will never be here again.

Yet somehow he has survived, and continues to survive.

I turn the page and am confronted too with the passing of time, by the title
page—
—and the way it ties this book back to that singular time and place, that momentous historical moment which can no longer be recovered, but can always be recalled, must always be recalled, preserved in memory, archived.

I begin to wonder how the library acquired its copy. It seems a strange journey from Dijon to Shakespeare & Co. in Paris to Melbourne, to the State Library of Victoria over eighty years later. Ellmann notes that a week after the first two copies were delivered, Darantière had still only managed to print fifty copies,9 the first fifty copies, amongst which was this copy, number twenty-five. I notice, later, on the very first page of text, in the immense blank space above the words ‘Stately, plump Buck Mulligan,’10 that the book is date stamped, a smudged purple-blue oval containing the date it was acquired: 22 August 1922. (The stamp recurs at various stages throughout the book.) I suspect the library to be its first and only owner. It might simply have taken that long to find its way from Shakespeare & Co. to Melbourne. But maybe there was someone in between.

II. ‘Signatures of all things I am here to read’

It is signed. ‘Signatures of all things I am here to read’11 takes on a new, strange import: reading Joyce’s signature is what I am here to do, but not this literal signature. I should not really say signature, for it is only a facsimile of Joyce’s

9 Ellmann, James Joyce, 525.
10 Joyce, Ulysses, 3.
11 Joyce, Ulysses, 37.
scrawled name which appears below a neat square of text explaining the printing of *Ulysses* as a limited edition of only one thousand. It is a trace of a trace. (Immediately, I am surprised that this book, possibly the most infamous and influential literary text of the twentieth-century, was published in such a limited edition, surely curtailing its dissemination no matter how much hype and controversy surrounded the work. I read later that this edition was subscribed to in advance, by such notable writers as André Gide, William Butler Yeats, Ezra Pound and Ernest Hemmingway, though George Bernard Shaw famously refused.) Yet still, it is there before me, in his own hand, the proper noun ‘James Joyce.’ It is tiny in comparison to the text above it, inconsequential, and yet there is something about this scribble which seems significant, something which makes this book somehow more real and intense knowing Joyce’s signature sits on this page, that he took the care to place it there. By testifying to the presence of this text as original, Joyce’s signature completes *Ulysses*. It also represents a contract between he and the reader, one in which Joyce places his trust in the reader to read (read and interpret) his text in good faith, but to continue to read it too, always to read it, keeping it alive; and the reader takes on this immense responsibility, placing their own faith in Joyce that he is not misleading them, that he is not asking for anything the reader cannot freely give.

They exude a certain aura, the signature and the first edition. With the now endless dissemination of literature through the mechanical action of the printing press—not to mention, these days, the possibilities of the internet, this hyper-Alexandrian online archive making nearly everything available to nearly everyone—in what Walter Benjamin called the age of mechanical reproduction or
technological reproducibility, the withering of this aura would seem somewhat inevitable. And yet perhaps it has enhanced that aura surrounding something so real and tangible, so concrete and material, as a book, especially an aging, decaying first edition of Ulysses. A certain aura does remain around these quasi-originals, not only because they appear in a form and style as close to the intentions of the author as possible (the typography of Ulysses is a prime example of this; it has evolved a long way it seems, from what Joyce intended to what gets reprinted today), but because they stretch back into the time and place, this singular context, of their author, and link us readers, here and now, today, with that long-gone historical moment, that time and place—Joyce in Paris in 1922.

I cannot dissociate any of this from Derrida’s approach to the signature in ‘Signature, Event, Context.’ For him, the signature represents ‘a written sign ... proffered in the absence of the addressee.’12 This signature is placed before me in the absence of Joyce, as proof of his existence (then, but also now), his continued and continuing presence:

By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical non-presence of the signer. But, it will be said, it also marks and retains his having-been present in the past now, which will remain a future now.13 It represents his remains. It is all that remains of his life. It is also an affirmation of this life, that it was but more so that it still is—simultaneously a ghostly signifier of absence and presence, placed in a supremely uncertain or undecidable position. This

12 Derrida, ‘Signature, Event, Context,’ in Margins of Philosophy, 315.

13 Derrida, ‘Signature, Event, Context,’ 328.
signature precisely is, here and now, today, for us, James Joyce. The text *Ulysses* performs a similar function, for this is as much the signature of Joyce as are the words ‘James Joyce’ scrawled on one of its pages. Here, his presence—along with everything that occurs on the singular date 16 June 1904, both in the text and outside of it—is marked and retained in the traces of his hand hovering over the narrative.

This notion of the signature as more than just the proper noun ‘James Joyce,’ as a text or even a textual presence, no matter how contingent, resonates with something Maurice Blanchot writes in *The Space of Literature*:

> What we call mortal remains escapes common categories. Something is there before us which is not really the living person, nor is it any reality at all. It is neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another person, nor is it anything else.\(^\text{14}\)

The signature too escapes common categories: it is there but not there, here but not here. It is simply what is left, all that is left. The signature also escapes common categories because it figures the revelation of the presence or absence of Joyce (any sense of certainty over his ontological status) as undecidable. Derrida questions the ontological status of writing: ‘as a disseminating operation separated from presence (of Being) according to all its modifications, writing, if there is any, perhaps communicates, but does not exist, surely. Or barely, hereby, in the form of the most improbable signature.’\(^\text{15}\)


\(^\text{15}\) Derrida, ‘Signature, Event, Context,’ 330.
writing lingers. Writing (is) remains. It represents survival, and so the affirmation of the life of the deceased, the lost object, confirmation that, yes, although they are neither here nor there, they were once here, that they remain here with us, and that, yes, they might too return to us one day. In this metaphoric monument or paper memorial (the signature, the text *Ulysses*, and this text—the signature is threefold, multiplied and disseminated; as Hartman notes, ‘The true name of a writer is not given by his signature, but is spelled out by his entire work’), this structure endlessly gesturing towards the future, Joyce lives.

At the end of the second volume, on the final page, as it has appeared in subsequent editions of *Ulysses* to this very day, Joyce signs the text with the place and the date: ‘Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914-1921.’ It occurs to me that this is more than just a record of where and when *Ulysses* was composed. This date is (like the first edition, and the signature itself) tying the reader back to this singular event, tying me to Joyce, to his middle-aged body perched over a writing desk, pen or pencil or whatever in hand, scribbling away at this manic manuscript. I am so close I can almost touch him, ‘touch without touching’ as Derrida would say, touching Joyce not in a material sense, but only metaphorically. Still, it is more than enough.

I place both volumes back in their boxes, fasten the string ties, and return them to the librarian, *Ulysses* returning home. It is time to leave.

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16 Hartman, *Saving the Text*, 128.


III. *fort/da*: the Trace and the Supplement

Writing is dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself.\(^{19}\)

They want to oppose fort and da!!! There and here, there and there ...\(^{20}\)

‘More than enough,’ I say, as if this metaphoric ‘James Joyce’ will ever have been adequate. Later, I realise just how dangerous this violent slippage from the ‘real’ Joyce to this supplement might prove to be.

‘A trace of a trace,’ I say, a trace of this ‘word that cannot be a masterword,’\(^{21}\) refusing to present itself ‘as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master.’\(^{22}\) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak defines the trace as a track indicating the path—written or spoken, linguistic or grammatological—of an absent Other: ‘The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent.’\(^{23}\) Here, it traces the presence-absence of Joyce, marking what Derrida describes as ‘the presence-absence of the trace.’\(^{24}\) Joyce is stranded, suspended, in the inevitably elusive space between presence and absence; he is

\(^{19}\) Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 144.


\(^{22}\) Spivak, ‘Translator’s Preface,’ xv.

\(^{23}\) Spivak, ‘Translator’s Preface,’ xvii.

\(^{24}\) Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 71.
spaced between the dichotomous pairing, a poetic act of spacing producing Joyce’s corpse/corpus as an interstitial trace, neither here nor there. This is what the child’s game of fort/da signifies for Sigmund Freud: the object is thrown away, fort, gone, and then reappears, is rediscovered, da, there.25 The game plays upon the undecidable distinctions between ‘gone’ and ‘there,’ present and absent, blurring the distinction, twisting the separatrix: fort/da, presence/absence, Joyce/Derrida.

Just as the object stands symbolically for the mother in Freud’s theorisation, so the trace is a substitution, a deferral: ‘We take or give signs. We signal. The sign, in this sense, is deferred presence.’26 This supplement replaces the thing itself with a linguistic mark, replacing presence with a marker or sign of absence: ‘We are dispossessed of the longed-for presence in the gesture of language by which we attempt to seize it.’27 The supplement marks in the one case a sense of accumulation, adding-on: ‘The supplement adds itself, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It culminates and accumulates presence.’28 Perhaps in this way it is also excessive, marking an exorbitance: ‘The supplement itself is quite exorbitant, in every sense of the word.’29 But above all it marks a gap, a lack, a void or abyss, as it replaces something that is missing:

27 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 141.
28 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 144.
29 Derrida, Of Grammatology, 163.
But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes and image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory ... and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance that *takes-(the)-place* [*tient-lieu*]. As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of *itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.30

This is what I faced as I sat before the copy of *Ulysses* and read his signature: Joyce is supplemented, the signature taking the place of the thing itself. This interstitial trace (‘the mid-point and the mediation, the middle term between total absence and the absolute plenitude of presence’31) is central to deconstruction: ‘And here the supplement occupies the middle point between total absence and total presence. The play of substitution fills and marks a determined lack.’32 So, too, Joyce is now placed between total absence and total presence, his status as either living or dead, here or not-here, dangerously undecidable.

In ‘the structural necessity of the abyss’ which ‘has always already infiltrated presence,’33 the supplement brushes up against the structure of spacing: ‘the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself,’ or ‘the irreducibility of the


other.'\textsuperscript{34} We cannot underplay the role of the radically Other here, as the supplement remains necessarily exterior to that which it replaces, a proxy not only for an absent Other, but through an absent Other:

The supplement will always be the moving of the tongue or acting through the hands of others. In it everything is brought together: progress as the possibility of perversion, regression toward an evil that is not natural and that adheres to the power of substitution that permits us to absent ourselves and act by proxy, through representation, through the hands of others. Through the written [\textit{par écrit}].\textsuperscript{35}

This radical Other is made not just possible but essential by the trace, by its ‘erasure of selfhood, of one’s own presence,’\textsuperscript{36} and so the consequent ‘threat or anguish of its irredeemable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance.’\textsuperscript{37} Here, we face Joyce’s potential erasure in the space between the two columns, this gaping textual wound or abyss. The trace puns on the near-synonymity of deferring/differing, to write for itself a track whereby its very appearance is also its disappearance:

As rigorously as possible we must permit to appear/disappear the trace of what exceeds the truth of Being. The trace (of that) which can never be presented, the trace which itself can never be presented: that is, appear and manifest itself, as such, in its phenomenon. The trace beyond that which profoundly links

\textsuperscript{34} Derrida, \textit{Positions}, 94.

\textsuperscript{35} Derrida, \textit{Of Grammatology}, 147.

\textsuperscript{36} Derrida, ‘Freud and the Scene of Writing,’ in \textit{Writing and Difference}, 289.

\textsuperscript{37} Derrida, ‘Freud and the Scene of Writing,’ 289.
fundamental ontology and phenomenology. Always differing and deferring, the
trace is never as it is in the presentation of itself. It erases itself in presenting
itself, muffles itself in resonating. 38
This is the danger. The ‘presence’ of the trace not only also represents its ‘absence,’
but the trace also actively plays a role in absenting itself, in causing its own
disappearance. It takes part in its own erasure: ‘Since the trace is not a presence but
the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it
properly has no site—erasure belongs to its structure.’ 39 This is what Derrida
suggests when he ponders the placement of Socrates and Plato in the postcard upon
which The Post Card has been written. The seated figure of Socrates writes with one
hand as he erases with the other, Plato looking keenly on over his shoulder:

He is erasing with one hand, scratching, and with the other he is still scratching,
writing. Where will all this information have been stocked, everything he will have
scratched and scratched, that one? 40
Writing and erasure are performed in the same action, with the same motion

But how can a solid foundation ever be established for this work when there
is so much uncertainty and conjecture over the ontological status of the so-called
dead, suspended here between death and life?


IV. Conjuring Death, Conjuring Life

Later still, I am struck, thinking about when I held the book in my hands, by the nexus between reading, touching and responsibility. If the threefold signature represents the mortal remains of the author, my reading of his name and *Ulysses*, and then my writing upon this moment, might represent my own touching upon Joyce’s body (though there is nobody here, no body here, nothing to touch as such):

‘I touch—you, perhaps, when I say or write the word to you—or I touch meditatively, or thought touches as an “I” would touch.’\(^{41}\) Here, we find ourselves contemplating a place ‘where book, cadaver, corpus, and corpse exchange places.’\(^{42}\)

The book supplements the body, maintains a trace of the body. The body is transfigured into the book, which I read, touch, and act responsively towards, then write upon.

I am drawn, inevitably, towards Sarah Kofman’s brief essay ‘Conjuring Death,’ which offers a reading of Rembrandt’s *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolas Tulp* of 1632. The doctors hardly see the cadaver before them:

They do not seem to identify with the cadaver stretched out there. They do not see in it the image of what they themselves will one day be, of what, unbeknownst to themselves, they are in the process of becoming. They are not fascinated by the cadaver, which they do not seem to see as such, and their solemnity is not the sort that can be awakened by the mystery of death.\(^{43}\)


\(^{43}\) Sarah Kofman, ‘Conjuring Death,’ in *Selected Writings*, 238.
This autopsy is literally an eye-witnessing, although the eyes of the doctors do not witness that corporeal body before them, but another, more elusive body represented in the painting. Death is treated with a sense of casualness and nonchalance, perhaps bordering on disrespect. It is neither the focus of the doctors nor of the painting itself. Instead, their scientific gaze is fixed elsewhere:

The fascination is displaced, and with this displacement, the anxiety is repressed, the intolerable made tolerable, from the sight of the cadaver to that of the book wide open at the foot of the deceased, who might serve as a lectern.

This opening of the book in all its light points back to the opening of the body. For the book alone allows the body to be deciphered and invites the passage from the exterior to the interior. It is this book (and the opening it provides into the science of life and its mastery) that attracts the gaze, so much more even than does the point of the scissors that has begun to peel away the skin from the body stretched out there.\(^4\)

Death is suppressed, the doctors’ gaze not fixed on the cadaver, these mortal remains, this symbol of death and decay, but instead on the book, which represents a type of memorial (the body is represented, preserved, in the book, a corporeal entity preserved in words, on paper), the survival of the deceased through or in the book:

The lesson of this Anatomy Lesson is thus not that of a memento mori; it is not that of a triumph of death but of a triumph over death; and this is due not to the

\(^4\) Kofman, ‘Conjuring Death,’ 238.
life of an illusion, but to that of the speculative, whose function, too, is one of occultation.45

Instead, something else, something other, other than death, is the focus here. The book is not a reminder of death (‘remember you are mortal’ is the rough translation from the Latin memento mori) but a medical, scientific text designed to overcome death, perhaps cheat death, striving to put an end to death, and so to ensure survival. This something other than death which the book represents is a form of life, the affirmation of life, a life after death, beyond death, without death.

Derrida addresses ‘Conjuring Death’ in his extensive introduction to Kofman’s Selected Writings, at once an act of writing, a eulogy, and a work of mourning. Charting ‘the story or history of a preference for the book,’46 he focuses on the transfiguration of the body into the book:

One wonders what is taking place. One wonders what a place is, the right or just place, and what placement is, or displacement, or replacement. One wonders about such things insofar as a book always comes to take the place of the body, insofar as it has always tended to replace the proper body … to become its name even, and occupy its place, to serve in place of this occupant, and insofar as we collaborate with this substitution, lending or giving ourselves over to it, for this is all we ever really do, we are this, and each word speaks volumes for lending itself from the very first moment to this spiriting away of the proper body, as if already at the behest of the proper body in question...

45 Kofman, ‘Conjuring Death,’ 239.

What is a place, then, a right or just place when everything seems to be ordered, and seems to begin, by the mourning of this replacement?

What is a just place when everything takes place as if the dying wish of the so-called proper, or lived, or living body ... as if the supreme affirmation of this headstrong living being were this testament, the oldest and the newest: “this is my body,” “keep it in memory of me,” and so, “replace it, in memory of me, with a book or discourse to be bound in hide or put into digital memory. Transfigure me into a corpus. So that there will no longer be any difference between the place of real presence or of the Eucharist and the great computerised library of knowledge”.47

The chain of substitutions or supplementations quoted earlier—book, cadaver, corpus, and corpse—involves coming to terms with the space in between the Self and the Other, the space which makes possible reading, touching and responsibility: ‘between the body and the book, between the open book and the closed one, there would be, here and there, the third, the witness, the terstis, testimony, attestation, and testament.’48 This protest or protestation, this testimony or testament, not by or from but as this terstis (connoting third, but also interstitial, in between), leads to a displacement, the shifting of the body/book into a no-place or non-place. Reaching back to Blanchot, in a space between, neither one nor the other, these remains escape common categories, never nowhere, always somewhere, but not exactly here. They also escape death. Like Kofman, Derrida too conceives of the book not as

a denial of death, taking away the possibility of death, or taking the chance out of death, but as a problematization of what it is to be dead, absent:

This book ... stands up to, and stands in for, the body: a corpse replaced by a corpus, a corpse yielding its place to the bookish thing, the doctors having eyes only for the book facing them, as if, by reading, by observing the signs on the drawn sheet of paper, they were trying to forget, repress, deny, or conjure away death—and the anxiety before death.49

Conjuring death: conjuring away death as such, and conjuring up the potential life, out of nowhere, the nowhere and no-place that is writing, conjuring a metaphoric body in the metaphoric space of the book, this place without place. The writer is a conjurer, a textual magician, with the potential to resuscitate or resurrect the dead, doing away with death as such, conjuring up the dead, making them rise from the grave. This is the status of the body as it is transfigured into the book, ‘signs on the drawn sheet of paper’: it lingers, traces remain, but that is all. And yet, displaced from the actual physical body, this apostrophised, metaphoric body ‘does not fail to reaffirm life—operating in fact so as to reaffirm life, but without resurrection or redemption, without any glorious body.’50 Life goes on; it is affirmed and endlessly re-affirmed. The body survives, not as it once was, now in a place that is not really a place, a place that is written and metaphorical rather than real or physical. This affirmation of life is our responsibility to the dead as Other, ‘the promise and the gift of the body,’51 the gift of a body transfigured into a book, which Derrida would

describe as a ‘both posthumous and living—so very living—text’\textsuperscript{52}: the former because it comes after death and is beyond death, the latter because now there is no death here, only this beyond death that is the gift of life, and this book as a ‘cunning affirmation of life.’\textsuperscript{53} This is not life as such, but potential life, life as potential for a future presence, a return. It is a species of survival (‘life is survival,’\textsuperscript{54} \textit{sur-vivre}, to out-live, literally ‘on-living’ or ‘living-on’), haunted by ‘the inherited promise’ and ‘entrusted responsibility’\textsuperscript{55} taken on by we Others, endured as an undecidable ethical impasse between a responsibility to ourselves, to the Self, and to these wholly Others, the spectral dead-but-potentially-living.

\textbf{V. Joyce in the Archive}

As the body is transfigured into the book, the material corpse supplemented by the immaterial and metaphoric corpus, Joyce is archived. This is what the library will have done to Joyce, and it is akin to murder.

‘We are \textit{en mal d’archive},’ writes Derrida: ‘in need of archives.’\textsuperscript{56} This is what I believe as I sit in the Heritage Reading Room at the State Library of Victoria: the archive is necessary for the survival of Joyce. It is an affirmation of his life, cunning

\textsuperscript{52} Derrida, ‘Introduction,’ 9.
\textsuperscript{53} Derrida, ‘Introduction,’ 10.
\textsuperscript{55} Derrida, \textit{Learning to Live Finally}, 30.
for its storage of something that will always already have been past, lost, recording something that no longer exists. But it ‘takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of ... memory,’\textsuperscript{57} and is necessarily incomplete, unreliable, which might be what Derrida means when he talks of this \textit{mal d’archive}. I will later read David Wills, who will tell me that ‘the production of an artefact is the production of an archive; it means depositing in the present—in some “present”—an object, which, as it inserts and catalogs itself in the past, will become available for a future retrieval.’\textsuperscript{58} But, as the Joycean body is transfigured onto the page, into writing, inscribed on paper, ‘a sheaf of paper burning with some kind of fever or madness,’\textsuperscript{59} something slips, for the archive is unreliable: ‘Derrida’s archive ... is mnemonically unreliable insofar as it is somewhat feverish, hallucinatory, fragmentary.’\textsuperscript{60} If ‘every archive ... is at once institutive and conservative,’\textsuperscript{61} gathering together the writer’s corpus (this transfigured corpse), it also proves to be an inadequate container, letting something slip between the two. The archive cannot hold its own creation, and the resultant destruction, when ‘order is no longer assured,’\textsuperscript{62} is akin to suicide, ‘making my way toward it, you hear, toward you. And je

\textsuperscript{57} Derrida, Archive Fever, 11.


\textsuperscript{59} Herman Rapaport, ‘Archive Trauma,’ Diacritics, 28:4, 1998, 68.

\textsuperscript{60} Rapaport, ‘Archive Trauma,’ 69.

\textsuperscript{61} Derrida, Archive Fever, 7.

\textsuperscript{62} Derrida, Archive Fever, 5.
me trie/tue [I sort myself/I kill myself].63 To archive, I realise, is to murder; sorting is
death. Look at this death-book, not just shabby and violently split in two, but
secreted away in the obscure storage facilities of the library, brought out only for
special occasions or when a committed reader requests it, because of its rarity, its
worth, its monetary value, its dissemination almost completely halted. Manifesting
an urge towards destruction, a drive towards death, the archive is disastrous,
catastrophic: 'The first catastrophe is the ignoble archive which rots everything, the
descendence into which everything tumbles.'64 The fever burns

The archive is cremated, consumed by the flames, as Derrida commands:
'burn everything.'65 The archive must reduce the book to cinders, if only to save it, as
destruction and deconstruction are equated with salvation, life, survival. For the
cinder works as an agent of dissemination, deviously spreading and sowing the seed,
everywhere: ‘Là written with an accent grave: là, there, cinder there is, there is,
there, cinder.'66 Marking both the writing and erasure of place, the cinder takes
place at the intersection of the place and the name, the intersection of the place of
Joyce, and the name of Joyce, Joyce taking place now as an act of naming, writing, at
once concealed and revealed in the archiving and burning of this edition of Ulysses,
its production by readers and librarians (these archons, guardians of the archive) the
world over as a work that could and should be archived. But salvation is predicated
on the fire, destruction by fire, and by no other method: ‘to give it to the fire, to

65 Derrida, The Post Card, 40.
destroy it in the flame, and not otherwise. Derrida calls this burning ‘my small library apocalypse,’ a vital volcanic catastrophe where nothing is saved: ‘For a totally incinerated envois could not be indicated by any mark.’ Leave no trace.

If I declare that ‘I will commission to the flames any incendiary,’ this does not mean that everything shall be destroyed. Instead, the command that we must burn everything becomes an affirmation, and a resurrection:

when I first wrote “burn everything,” it was neither out of a prudence and a taste for the clandestine, nor out of a concern for internal guarding but out of what was necessary (the condition, the given) for the affirmation to be reborn at every instant, without memory.

The phoenix rises from the ashes, and Joyce is reborn, reread, in the very same moment he will have been consigned to the flames. ‘After the burn’: only then will Joyce have begun to live, to live again.

But with everything burned, vitally reduced to cinders, destroyed, murdered, how can I proceed?

\[67\] Derrida, Cinders, 37.
\[68\] Derrida, The Post Card, 11.
\[69\] Derrida, The Post Card, 5.
\[70\] Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 426.2.
\[71\] Derrida, The Post Card, 23.
\[72\] Joyce, Ulysses, 702.
3. 20 June 1978: Posthumous Letters in *The Post Card* and the Crypt

The critical architectural condition of the crypt is that both the illicit pleasure it buries and the burial site are illegal. The crypt hides the forbidden act within the very space in which it is forbidden. It breaks the law merely by occupying that space, and this violation must itself be concealed. To locate this spacing that disrupts space and is itself hidden, Derrida too must break the law by rupturing the space in some way.\(^1\)

For Derrida, too, deconstruction is a process of decomposition at work within the very root metaphores—the philosophemes—of Western thought.\(^2\)

Everything burns and entropy increases. The text is decomposing, the flames sparked by the Joycean incendiary eating away at a decidable Meaning. But from these cinders, life issues forth. Rescuing this work from the impasse of the ‘murder by archiving’ of the preceding chapter, this chapter charts a general progression in deconstruction from the absence that is death to a volatile potentialised movement akin to life through the work of mourning, resulting in the revelation of writing as, always already, a writing of survival. Performed as a series of ‘memorials’ circling around the empty space of the crypt, the empty space left by the loss of the dead, this double reading exhibits a life-affirming potential in the joyous irreducibility and

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\(^1\) Wigley, *The Architecture of Deconstruction*, 149.

\(^2\) Ulmer, ‘The Object of Post-Criticism,’ 106.
undecidability of the relationship between the dead Joyce and the living Derrida on 20 June 1978. Both figures, both subject-identities, break the law and rupture the sanctity of the space of the crypt, designed to hold and hold onto, contain, the deceased, the lost object. Transgressing this border by an inability to make a decision over their own ontological status, they release an inexhaustible semantic Other which works to undermine a univocal institutional authority.

‘Always prefer life and constantly affirm survival …’ concludes Derrida, as if the ellipsis itself might represent not the absence of his final words, but the potential for, always already, more words.

I. Mourning, Memorials, and Monumental Bodies

If there is a primal scene of writing, it is having one’s name inscribed on a monument or tomb.

The signifier ‘memorial’ can no longer simply point to a material structure, some bleak stone monument, a grimly-worded plaque or headstone above a grave, a crypt solemnly containing the body of the deceased, a garish depiction in concrete of their body as it was in life, representing the eternal, ultimate absence of this lost object—death. Nor can the word simply indicate a gathering of friends in commemoration or celebration of an ended life, dependent as this is on living bodies.


4 Hartman, Saving the Text, 14.
inhabiting a lived, experiential space. No. After deconstruction, the entropic memorial will have been transfigured into a doubled act of mourning and writing, marking a response which in turn prompts a response, calling (on) the dead as Other, hoping to open a dialogue, keeping them talking, hanging on the other end of the line. The memorial will have been transfigured into this symbol of the endless, exultant, excessive, and exorbitant affirmation of the potential for life. But entropy increases, and these monumental bodies crumble. That which is written, engraved, must be erased in the same gesture.

Mourning is central to reinvigorating the memorial, this symbol or symptom of memory-as-erasure. Derrida builds his own theory upon that proposed by Freud in ‘Mourning and Melancholia.’ Freud writes that through mourning ‘the existence of the lost object is psychically prolonged.’ Derrida, reinterpreting these words after deconstruction, writes: ‘Surviving—that is the other name of a mourning whose possibility is never to be awaited. For one does not survive without mourning.’

Always already under way from the inaugurating moment of any friendship, any relationship to the Other, mourning is a species of survival. An originary mourning, a ‘mourning before death,’ it is also a pre-originary mourning, a mourning before life, a mourning at the origin, or at the very limit, challenging the ontological status of


7 Derrida, On Touching, 192.
both the living and the dead, producing the dead as manifestly undecidable. We experience the death of a friend, realising our role in the endless work that is mourning, always already calling for a response to the Other, to the dead as Other, enacting or performing a poetics and/or politics of spacing. Our calling for, and then awaiting, this response hopes to breathe life into the dead, the existence of the lost object prolonged in the space between the twinned psychological processes of incorporation and introjection. The distinction is small but not trivial: in the former, the subject takes into and retains within itself objects from the external world, drawing elements into the body (here, not only body, but book: book-as-body); in the latter the subject replicates in itself behaviours and attributes of the surrounding world, but these are not incorporated into the body, and so remain capable of a life of their own. It is the manifest uncertainty over the status of the objects (taken into the subject from the outside—incorporated; or replicated within the subject from the inside—introjected) which interests Derrida, describing a blurring of the borderline between the two concepts in ‘Foreword: Fors,’ his foreword and response to The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: a Cryptonymy by post-Freudian psychoanalytic theorists Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok:

I pretend to keep the dead alive, intact, safe (save) inside me, but it is only in order to refuse, in a necessarily equivocal way, to love the dead as a living part of me, dead save in me, through the process of introjection, as happens in so-called normal mourning.8

Addressing this aberrant mourning, Derrida is concerned with the work of mourning which saves the dead, safeguards their presence by what Abraham and Torok call a ‘casting inside’\(^9\) (‘safe (save) inside me’) which is also a refusal to accept the dead as ‘a living part of me’ (‘save in me’; except in me, and so not in me) and so causes them, somehow, through this impossible but necessary aporetic structure, to survive—not as they once were, never again wholly present, but as traces, discursive ghosts, potential revenants. The ghost is a survivor—embodied, perhaps, in the very idea of a macabre funereal monument, the monumentalising in stone of the absent body of the lost object. As entropy increases and the text decays, such ghosts or spectres represent a form of life after the death of the corporeal, living body, but before the death of that which lives beyond this body, in memorials, memories, scenes of writing. But there is no life here at all, only the potential for life, for the return of the dead-as-Other.

Mourning is aligned here with the rhetorical act of prosopopoeia, a figure of speech or an act of writing in which an imaginary, dead, or absent person speaks, responds, and so lives again: ‘Prosopopoeia ... consists in staging, as it were, absent, dead, supernatural or even inanimate beings. These are made to act, speak, answer as is our want.’\(^{10}\) But prosopopoeia also indicates what Nouri Gana describes as ‘an unresolvable uncertainty as to the ontological status of the dead, who may thereby

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prove to be more insistently present than the living. In this relationship structured by a sense of reciprocity, we the living also act, speak and answer (for) the dead, as is their want. Prosopopoeia problematizes this space between the living and the dead, the institution and interruption of an unending dialogue where the living and the dead take the place of one another. Implicated in acts of mourning and memory, writing, naming, and erasing, conjuring the dead, de Man names prosopopoeia as ‘the fiction of an apostrophe to the absent, deceased, or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter’s reply and confers upon it the power of speech.’

Derived from the Latin apostrophus and the Greek apostrophos or prosoidia, the apostrophe is threefold: firstly and most commonly, it marks the possessive; secondly, it is a turning away or elusion, marking an omission or even loss, the absence of something which might not be recoverable, or something that both is and is not recoverable; thirdly, turning again to rhetoric, it is a diversion or aversio made in order to address an absent Other. These last two senses bring into focus the use of the apostrophe as a presence which marks an absence, aligning it to the act of prosopopoeia. Apostrophising the dead, speaking to and towards this absent Other, holds out the possibility of a response from the dead as Other, the possibility of a return of the dead—although not, perhaps, as living bodies, never again as they once were. As Michael Riffaterre writes, central to the process of prosopopoeia is the idea that ‘no real personification need take place’: ‘it is not necessary that the fictitious


embodiment of the animated entity be physical enough to demand verisimilitude.'\textsuperscript{13}

Here we have the potential for life, but a ghostly life without total presence, a life between presence and absence, implicated in this interstitial poetics and politics of spacing, suspended between death and life, irreducible to one or the other, supremely undecidable.

Shouldering this immense responsibility of raising the dead, the memorial, the monumental body, becomes an act of survival and an affirmation of life, inaugurated by a death while it also defers a death, inaugurated by this absence that is never completed due to the work of mourning. Writing on the writing of the deceased, responding to the writing of the deceased—after prosopopoeia, this is their life. This is life as writing and writing as life, writing as the ‘unconditional affirmation of life’\textsuperscript{14} which deconstruction will always already have been—but a life, built improbably on the structure of the aporia so central to deconstruction, spaced somewhere between death and life, neither death nor life but somehow both at once, and yet something else, something other. We cannot decide.

II. A Disturbance of Memory at Friedhof Fluntern: a Ghost Story

I will appear to you after death. You will see my ghost after death. My ghost will haunt you after death.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} Riffaterre, ‘Prosopopoeia,’ 108.

\textsuperscript{14} Derrida, Learning to Live Finally, 52.

\textsuperscript{15} Joyce, Ulysses, 110.
I address you as Sigmund Freud would address you, and I suspect as Jacques Derrida would too, with the three words which begin ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis’: ‘My dear Friend.’

I have a ghost story to tell, or a story of ghosts, a story of places haunted by memories of those no longer here, no longer present, in the present, in that strict ontological or phenomenological sense. Responding to Derrida’s address ‘The Time is Out of Joint,’ Attridge sees ghosts too:

I saw a ghost last night. More important, I heard a ghost, I was addressed by a ghost, we were addressed by a ghost.

...

It said many things but in saying everything that it had to say it also said:

“Remember me!”

I see two ghosts, and have two ghost stories to tell, through the eyes, words and memories firstly of Freud, and then secondly of Derrida. Two haunted places, two haunted scenes of writing, come into focus here: the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, as it is represented by Freud in ‘A Disturbance of Memory at the Acropolis,’ and Friedhof Fluntern in Zurich, Switzerland, as it is briefly represented by Derrida in the entropic ‘Envois’ section of The Post Card.

Dated January 1936, ‘A Disturbance of Memory’ is Freud’s open letter to his friend, the French novelist and Nobel Laureate Romain Rolland, on the occasion of


17 Attridge, ‘Ghost Writing,’ 223.
the latter’s seventieth birthday. Both men are ghosts, here and now, in this scene of writing. The letter, like Derrida’s postcard, is a gift—‘All that I can find to offer you is the gift of an impoverished creature who has “seen better days”,’ writes Freud—a pure or absolute gift given with neither the request nor expectation of anything in return, transforming this real, material lived encounter into words on paper, a written and metaphorical encounter, hoping to keep that singular moment it depicts—the time, date, place, and most importantly the people—alive. But this written encounter is a haunted place: haunted by the absence of Freud’s actual visit to the Acropolis, haunted by the absence of this place in this scene of writing, and haunted too by the absent-present ghost of the autobiographical Freud.

Freud’s letter tells the story of how, in Trieste, on their way to the Greek island of Corfu in late August or early September of 1904 (he cannot remember), Freud and his brother are suddenly, inexplicably, compelled, upon the suggestion of a business acquaintance of his brother, to forego the trip to Corfu and travel instead to Athens: ‘The Lloyd boat sails this afternoon ... That would be more agreeable and more worthwhile.’ Freud writes of a depression affecting he and his brother after this first encounter, both agreeing that the proposed change to their plans was ‘impracticable,’ seeing ‘nothing but difficulties in the way of carrying it out.’ Yet there they are, wandering the streets ‘in a discontented and irresolute frame of

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18 Freud, ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,’ 239.


20 Freud, ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,’ 240.
mind’ waiting for the Lloyd offices to open.\(^{21}\) ‘When the time came,’ they booked their tickets for Athens, ‘as though it were a matter of course.’\(^{22}\) Arriving in Athens, standing upon the Acropolis, memories come flooding back for Freud, memories of this haunted place, the existence of which he had, impossibly, doubted until now, doubted because until now it had only really retained a ghostly presence:

> When, finally, on the afternoon after our arrival, I stood on the Acropolis and cast my eyes around upon the landscape, a surprising thought suddenly entered my mind: “So all this really does exist, just as we learnt at school!”\(^{23}\)

The Acropolis really did—exist, really does exist. But not here, not now, today, for us, before us, in this scene of writing committed by Freud. All we are left with in ‘A Disturbance of Memory’ are Freud’s uncertain memories of this date, and this place, mere traces of a time and a place. (This memory, this archive, is fallible.) Memory is tied to place, to the representation of place, the re-presentation of place in writing. This writing is haunted by the memory of that place. That haunted place is preserved as this ghostly trace, safeguarded in literature, which deconstruction equates with the figure of the ghost: ‘the ghost is literature,’\(^{24}\) writes Attridge. They are not much, nothing tangible, yet these literary remains or remainders are enough to ensure we are able to, or are prompted to, remember Freud’s ghostly encounter on the Acropolis. So Freud’s ghost has a textual presence here too, haunting both that scene of writing penned in 1936, and this scene of writing penned more than

\(^{21}\) Freud, ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,’ 240.

\(^{22}\) Freud, ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,’ 240.

\(^{23}\) Freud, ‘A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,’ 240-1.

\(^{24}\) Attridge, ‘Ghost Writing,’ 224.
seventy years later. This act of writing, inscribing, recording, is an always already futile attempt at allowing or forcing that context (time and place) to survive, affirming its presence both then and now. But something slips, and the memory is erased.

Derrida writes an equivalent ‘open letter’ to his own great friend and fellow landmark deconstructionist James Joyce, dated 20 June 1978 and contained within *The Post Card*. This postcard sits in a similar position between Joyce and Derrida as Freud’s letter does between Rolland and himself: it is ‘something that might bear witness to my gratitude to you as a writer who has afforded me so many moments of exaltation and pleasure.’ It speaks of Derrida’s debt to Joyce, his admiration for Joyce, and his responsibility to the legacy of Joyce, keeping alive the legacy of Joyce. The scene plays out in a similarly haphazard manner to that represented by Freud. Derrida ‘had not come back to Zurich since spring 1972,’ and yet here he is, met at the airport by Hillis—deconstructive critic J. Hillis Miller we suspect, although we are never told—and driven ‘to the cemetery, near to Joyce’s tomb.’ He writes of the visit or visitation, his stumbling upon this ghostly trace of Joyce, as an accident: he claims he ‘didn’t know that … [Joyce] was here,’ and refers to it in ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ as a ‘chance encounter.’ Yet chance is only part of it, and if the encounter was not quite preordained, it was somehow inevitable—for


deconstruction the encounter will have always already taken place. ‘You accompany me everywhere,’30 writes Derrida as he begins the postcard dated 20 June 1978. For Derrida, the Other Joyce is potentially always already everywhere.

Derrida’s description of Joyce’s tomb, this ‘great landmark in the history of deconstruction,’31 is brief but not trivial:

Above the tomb, in a museum of the most costly horrors, a life-size Joyce, in other words colossal in this place, seated, with his cane, a cigarette in hand it seems to me, and a book in the other hand.32

Derrida is faced with the seated statue of Joyce—designed by the American sculptor Milton Hebald, and inaugurated twenty-five years after Joyce’s death, on Bloomsday in 1966—after what seems to be ‘an aimless wandering, a random trek.’33 Derrida is also faced with the death of Joyce, the absence of Joyce, his mourning for this literary-philosophical father-figure, his memories of this man, Joyce, and his oeuvre, his responsibilities to this immense pillar of twentieth-century art and culture. He is faced with the ghost of Joyce. Here we see Joyce and Derrida touching without actually touching, and so sharing in the excess or exorbitance of responsibility upon which friendship and the relationship to the Other are, for Derrida, founded. (As Derrida stands beside the statue of Joyce, the ghosts of Socrates and Plato also haunt the scene: it is starkly reminiscent of the postcard upon which The Post Card has been written.) Just as Freud can hardly believe his eyes—‘seeing something with


31 Derrida, quoted in Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 26.


one’s own eyes is after all quite a different thing from hearing or reading about it. So too there is a sense in which Derrida is incredulous at the sight of Joyce’s tomb, suppressing this monumentalised body by quickly passing over it, moving on after half a paragraph of the postcard to discuss Edgar Allan Poe, Yale, and ‘the inventor of something like the telescriptor, Egon Zoller.’ Yet this half-paragraph holds no small significance: what we witness is Derrida’s shock realisation of Joyce’s continued and continuing presence (no matter how untouchable, intangible and immaterial his actual body remains), his survival as a ghostly presence akin to Freud’s Acropolis. Transfigured into Derrida’s postcard, the tomb suggests that Joyce lived—but more importantly that he might continue to live. We are faced with the potential for his survival. This postcard is his ghost, a lingering presence, a trace of a life once lived that is no longer. It is, in short, an unconditional affirmation of Joyce’s monumental life, writ large and wedged neatly in The Post Card.

The writing of place is imbued here with the power to call forth or conjure the ghost of Joyce. As Derrida writes in response to Kofman’s ‘Conjuring Death,’ the body is transfigured into the book, ‘the corpse is replaced or displaced, its place taken by the book.’ We turn from the living body to the written body. Here, on 20 June 1978, the body is transfigured into the act of writing that is the postcard, resurrected through the writing of this place. In the course of this transfiguration

there is a fault, a gap, a slippage, and we are left with a remainder: this is the ghost of Joyce.

For Derrida, Joyce’s ghost ‘is ‘always coming on board.’ Joyce is always already on board, and calling back. Calling back to Derrida, commanding: ‘Remember me!’ Derrida makes this demand too now, as I try to remember (or try not to forget), striving through these always already inadequate words to create or recreate a scene of writing in which Joyce and Derrida can, perhaps, continue this ghostly encounter, this spectral dialogue.

But still, something is missing. Joyce is missing. As entropy increases, he is slowly, silently, slipping away.

III. Suicide and Spacing

Spacing here will have become a case of giving oneself to death, or of putting oneself to death. ‘Murder is everywhere, my unique and immense one,’ writes Derrida in The Post Card. But this is not murder; this is suicide, the giving up or gifting of one’s own life, which is perhaps not one’s to give. Earlier in The Post Card, Derrida has related a notable anecdote:

Afterward, on the lawn where the discussion continued, wandered along according to switch points as unforeseeable as they were inevitable, a young student (very handsome) thought he could provoke me and, I think, seduce me a bit by asking me why I didn’t kill myself. In his eyes this was the only way to “forward” (his word) my “theoretical discourse,” the only way to be consequent

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37 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 149.

and to produce an event. I answered with a pirouette, I’ll tell you, by sending him back his question, by signifying to him that he must be savouring, along with me, the interest that he visibly was taking, at this very moment, in this question that I moreover concerned myself with along with others, among them myself. In private. And what proves to you, I said to him if I remember correctly, that I do not do so, and more than once. I ask you the same question, by the same courier.39

The espacement revealed by Derrida’s ‘theoretical discourse,’ ‘deconstruction,’ involves an endless flow or outpouring of quasi-suicides akin to Derrida’s concept of autoimmunity whereby ‘a living being, in a quasi-suicidal fashion, “itself” works to destroy its own protection, to immunise itself against its “own” immunity.’40 This ‘contradictory process in which a self puts a partial end to itself in order to live-on’41 represents the giving up of one’s life by way of offering oneself wholly up to the Other, ‘tout autre est tout autre.’42 There is also a gesture of writing and erasure at play here: erasure is aligned with death and absence, writing with life and presence—witnessed in the desire expressed in The Post Card to vitally ‘burn everything,’43 suicidally destroying the correspondence in the hope of saving it, not archiving it, but reviving it. This is what we witness on 20 June 1978, in the space

39 Derrida The Post Card, 15.


42 Derrida, ‘The Gift of Death,’ 82.

43 Derrida, The Post Card, 40.
between the living Derrida and the dead Joyce, between the monument and its written representation: a suicidal play of writing and erasure will have opened up a space, a deconstructive faultline, a gap, a wound, an abyss, a cryptic space beyond the grave, beyond death as such, which offers potential for the survival of the texts it acts upon—here, that is Joyce, Derrida, and the shared, chance encounter in this postcard on that summer day in June 1978.

Postal Monuments

Before anything else, the structure of this monument is perhaps best exemplified by the affinities and disparities between two very different types of monument: Joyce’s gravesite memorial at Friedhof Fluntern, and the monument constructed by Derrida within the pages of Glas. Beside the gravesite monument to Joyce, we should set the opening passages from each of the two columns of Derrida’s monumental text:

what, after all, of the remains, today, for us, of a Hegel?

For us, here, now: from now on that is what one will not have been able to think without him?

For us, here, now: these words are citations, already, always, we will have learned that from him.44

“what remained of a Rembrandt torn into small, very regular squares and rammed down the shithole” is divided in two.

As the remain(s) [reste].

44 Derrida, Glas, 1.
Two unequal columns, they say distyle [disent-ils], each of which envelop(e)(s) or sheath(e)(s), incalculably reverses, turns inside out, replaces, remarks, overlaps [recoupe] the other.\textsuperscript{45}

There are many questions between these two monuments, between Joyce and Derrida, that all have to do with remains. What remains, after all, today, for us, here and now, of the two unequal columns of Joyce and Derrida? For us, here, now: from now on that is what one will not have been able to think without them. What remains as this violent, suicidal play of writing and erasure takes place? What remains beyond the stone structures that are Joyce’s funerary monument, and Derrida’s own modest monument in a cemetery near his home in Ris-Orangis, outside Paris? What remains of the postcard written by Derrida both \textit{about} and \textit{to} Joyce on 20 June 1978? What is left of the postcards sent by and between the deconstructive landmark Joyce and the landmark deconstructionist Derrida? What do we make of these various remains or remainders, after the deaths of Joyce on 13 January 1941 and Derrida on 8 October 2004? Reflecting or mirroring the labyrinthine structure of \textit{Glas}, how do these two columns envelop(e), sheath(e), reverse, replace, remark and overlap each other? What concerns do the columns Joyce and Derrida share in terms of death, mourning, writing, survival and life? Where do they touch upon each other? Finally, how do we act respectfully and responsibly towards these remains? What are our responsibilities to the remains of

\textsuperscript{45} Derrida, \textit{Glas}, 1.
Joyce and Derrida as this entropy increases? What is the relationship here between these remains, our responsibilities, and the work of mourning?

I can imagine seeing Joyce’s body sitting atop that squared plinth in the green gardens of Friedhof Fluntern, surrounded by a few scraggy shrubs and bushes, the man himself slightly hunched over, his legs crossed, right over left, his right arm holding a book opened at a right-angle (is this, perhaps, one of his own books?) as his elbow rests gently on his right thigh, his left hand holding a cigarette, hovering before his face, his bald head twisted to the right-hand side, gazing off into a distance we cannot see, perhaps a future we cannot conceive, the failing sight of his old Irish eyes hidden behind those pince-nez refusing to see me back, refusing to take part in this game of Othering, playing around with death, suicide, and survival. Beneath it, a few metres in front of this monumentalised Joyce, cut into the green grass, a marble slab bears his name and the dates of his birth and death, alongside those of Nora Barnacle, their eldest son Giorgio, and his wife Asta. It hovers, perhaps, over the actual gravesite, the body hidden beneath this immense slab and six feet of earth. But the remains concealed here no longer signify Joyce’s body; they no longer are Joyce’s body except in a corporeal sense. The monument is not his body either, no more than my own rendering of it on these pages is his body. It is only a representation in stone of his body, life-sized but nonetheless not living, although it points towards a life that was once lived. Surely, it represents solidity, stability and certainty, but perhaps it also represents that paralysis or hemiplegia which Joyce was so opposed to in his structurally volatile and explosive literature, setting out to deconstruct such stasis and stagnancy by creating so many endless, rhizomatous and often violently unsettling movements throughout *Ulysses* and
Finnegans Wake. No. After deconstruction, Joyce’s body is not here; it is concealed somewhere else, in a place that is perhaps not a place at all, in a place which deconstructs placement through the motile play of writing and erasure and the transfiguration of the body into the impossibly irreducible and over-potentialised revenant.

Constituted of and structured by those two unequal columns spiralling around each other between Hegel and Genet, Glas concerns the remains of writing, this dialogue between the Self and the Other, and how it remains, as we see in this excerpt from the second column, responding to Genet:

Almost.

Of the remain(s), after all, there are, always, overlapping each other, two functions.

The first assures, guards, assimilates, interiorises, idealises, relieves the fall [chute] into the monument. There the fall maintains, embalms, and mummifies itself, monumemorises and names itself—falls (to the (tombstone)) [tombe]. Therefore, but as a fall, it erects itself there.

The other—lets the remain(s) fall. Running the risk of coming down to the same. Falls (to the (tombstone))—two times the columns, the watersprouts [trombes]—remain(s).46

Remains—represented here not only in writing but as writing, this response to the call of the Other—exhibit two overlapping functions. Well, almost. Firstly, they are

46 Derrida, Glas, 1-2.
concerned with the act of safeguarding (‘assures,’ ‘guards,’ ‘interiorises,’ ‘maintains,’ etc.), aligned with processes and actions of naming, the name keeping the dead alive, inside me but not inside me. But then, these remains are also concerned with the tombstone, the erection of the tombstone, the construction of this monument, which perhaps belies its concrete name by here refusing a material form, manifesting instead as a written memorial, words on paper, traces in a text, the whole thing set in a violent motion of writing and erasure as the second function lets the remain(s) fall (the linguistic similarity between the English ‘tomb’ and the French ‘tomber,’ to fall, is central here for Derrida), only to rebuild them in an unending struggle to keep whatever it is they represent alive. As Hartman writes, ‘Glas conspires with language, as it were, and becomes a critique of monumentalising in all areas.’ It refuses the solidity of the monument while at the same time inescapably, necessarily taking part in this act of monumentalising. It also refuses the solidity of the institution, a memorialising ‘structure’ par excellence, standing in ruin in the wake of Joyce and Derrida, after deconstruction. What is central here (but at once peripheral, marginal, liminal) is the space between these two functions of the remains, between the two columns of Glas, and between these two monuments (Joyce’s grave and Derrida’s Glas):

Between the words, between the word itself as it divides itself in two (noun and verb, cadence or erection, hole and stone), (to) insinuate the delicate, barely visible stem, an almost imperceptible cold lever, scalpel, or stylus, so as to

enervate, then dilapidate, enormous discourses that always end, though more or less denying it, in attributing an author’s rights: “that (ça) comes (back) to me.”

But as always there are ‘border crossings,’ the one column bleeding into the other and vice versa, the scalpel or stylus working back and forth between the two paper structures until they are so inextricably entwined that they cannot be separated: ‘The double columns, then, should be read conjointly or in a binary way.’ They should not be separated—if they are separable at all—for this act of reading between Hegel and Genet, mediated by Derrida, and this act of reading, here, between Joyce and Derrida, mediated by me, depends on these discursive ghosts or spectres, surviving precisely through the call-and-response of these border crossings, the interstitialities and potentialities of writing and erasure, surviving in the space between the concrete Joyce at Friedhof Fluntern and Derrida’s monumental and monumentalising endeavour recorded in *Glas*.

The twinned columns of *Glas*, Derrida’s structural response to all these questions regarding remains, are deliberately juxtaposed here with the Joycean monument as though the two could ever have some apparent or inherent affinity, in the hope that reading them alongside each other will represent the deconstruction (but not the destruction) of Joyce’s material monument, returning these remains to the realm of the metaphoric, the space in which they can not only remain, but in which they can perhaps learn to live finally, saved from the death of this act of monumentalising, given the potential for life by this refusal to become concrete,

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49 Hartman, ‘Homage to *Glas*,’ 346.

50 Hartman, ‘Homage to *Glas*,’ 353.
stable, certain, or paralysed. Stranded in the suicidal contretemps between the potential presence of life and the absence of death, Joyce is neither living nor dead, but transfigured into a spectral trace which, like the aphorism, ‘lives much longer than its present.’ What remains is nothing but this fleeting glimpse of Joyce, this undecidable and irreducible potential that ‘lives longer than life.’ It is not much, nothing more than chance. But still, it remains.

Perhaps the closing passages of Glas best reveal this dialogic structure of suicide and survival, the urge to build these monuments only to tear them down again in the same gesture, writing and erasure. The whole thing is staged in the space between the metaphor-figures of Christ and Dionysus, this ‘origin of literature,’ between the premature birth and then rebirth of the twice-born Dionysus (torn or born from his dead mother’s womb, sewn into his father Zeus’s thigh, and then born again), perhaps a ‘delayed birth,’ and the resurrected or reborn Christ after the Crucifixion. Embedded in the debris of writing is an urge towards Resurrection, a perpetual sequence of life, death and resurrection, forever having new life breathed into it, again and again and again ...

A time to perfect the resemblance between Dionysus and Christ.

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53 Derrida, Glas, 262.

Between the two (already) is elaborated in sum the origin of literature.

But it runs to its ruin [perte], for it counted without [sans]55

What I had dreaded, naturally, already, republishes itself. Today, here, now, the
debris of [débris de]56

Monumental Postcards

Turning and returning, Derrida finally makes it (back) to Zurich, finally comes face to
face with Joyce, and refuses to let go of the encounter, refuses to let Joyce go, by
recording the moment the postcard dated 20 June 1978, the grave engraved into this
scene, inscribed, written and erased, as an audacious act of suicide and survival.

Derrida makes it known from the outset, so we know it matters to him, that
he has not returned to Zurich in six years—as though he might already have been
here, might always already have been here. Yet ultimately this absence means
nothing to us. What matters is Derrida’s presence in Zurich, in the untimely time of
this postcard wedged between those dated 15 June 1978 and 22 June 1978—and
not, as we might have expected, between 19 June 1878 and 21 June 1878, between
that which directly precedes and proceeds it. The date is crucial—‘we write of the
date, about certain dates, but also as of certain dates, at or to [à] certain
dates’57—yet it also represents a false grounding which must be done away with if

55 Derrida, Glas, 262.
56 Derrida, Glas, 262.
57 Derrida, Sovereignties in Question: the Poetics of Paul Celan (ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen),
deconstruction is ever to take place, if the potentialities of the text are to be revealed. Because, in deconstruction, dates are history; the date is consigned to history, to the past. *The Post Card* is in many ways the end of the date, a history of the end of the date. As it records 20 June 1978, it represents the end of this particular date: the date of the postcard and the scene depicted now exist only here, in the scene of writing staged in the postcard, never again present but never absent either, traces of a day that has passed, that is now in the past, remaining only here, in this postcard. This is all we have left—these remains, these traces, the spectres that are (now) Joyce and Derrida.

Here, on 20 June 1978 *and* here and now, today, as we again and again read his words, Derrida is staging or stumbling into, perhaps being drawn inevitably towards, an encounter he has always already had with Joyce. The gesture he makes here, claiming this to be a ‘chance encounter,’58 an accident, nothing more—or less—than the result of ‘an aimless wandering, a random trek,’59 might ring slightly false, appearing not only improbable but impossible, and yet the gesture must be made nonetheless. The chance that Derrida would ever arrive at this moment, like the postcard embarked on its random route, perpetually stranded in a *contretemps* between sender and addressee, is far less than slim—it is all but impossible. Like the postcard, Derrida was destined, always already, never to arrive. And yet, impossibly, here they are, Derrida standing before, being confronted by, the seated statue of Joyce, in the gardens of Friedhof Fluntern on this summer day over thirty years ago,

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the living Derrida alongside the dead Joyce, touching without touching, contemplating the impossibility of mourning, and already plotting his part in the survival of Joyce beyond this stony signifier of death. It is only by chance that they have ever met, so many moments along the way when they could have missed each other. But they did not, and although Derrida claims otherwise (perhaps protesting too much), he could never have let such a reckless omission or gap occur. So we see him here standing face-to-face with Joyce on the page, in his writings and those of others, writing and speaking to Joyce, meeting that stony gaze hidden behind those pince-nez, looking him in those failing Irish eyes, and wondering what to make of these remains of this writer who has (if only by chance, for what does that matter now that they have finally met?) influenced his work perhaps more than any other. Here are the two columns of this Glas-style monument, recreating the scene from Matthew Paris’s postcard-etching, sharing in an excess or exorbitance of responsibility that can only take place between the living and the dead. As with the columns of Glas, what concerns us here as much as the columns themselves, is what occurs in the space between them, in a once-material space which can no longer exist, transfigured into this metaphoric, written space, structured precisely so it might survive, preserving Joyce and Derrida and what occurred between them simply by stranding them in the contretemps of the postcard and The Post Card.

Again, as in ‘Conjuring Death,’ the body is transfigured into the book. Earlier, it was Joyce’s body transfigured into his own act of writing that is the three-fold signature. But here, Joyce’s body (as it is represented to Derrida by the monument) is resurrected in an act of writing by another (an Other): that is, Derrida’s postcard, dated 20 June 1978, wedged neatly in this text called The Post Card. There is an
injunction here too, the deceased body, the stony-faced monument, similarly commanding: ‘transfigure me into a corpus.’ Derrida tries to write, and Joyce tries to live, but erasure necessarily intervenes, and frustrates their desires.

The end, writes Derrida, is also not really the end: ‘In French one sometimes calls the end of a text a chute. One also says, in place of chute, the envoi.’ There is no end. ‘You see, life goes on,’ he writes in response to Kofman, calling out to her: ‘It is still the same old story ...’

‘always too late’

I see Derrida reaching his hand out to the monumentalised Joyce, Derrida touching Joyce. But it is too late. The two have missed each other, always already missed each other, the space between them too immense to overcome—as Derrida says, ‘it is always too late with Joyce.’ Like the great lovers Romeo and Juliet, ‘they missed each other, how they missed each other!’ He is too late for Joyce, and so mourns (for) Joyce. Yet, like Romeo and Juliet, Joyce and Derrida have survived, ‘lived, and lived on’ [auront survécu]. There is a certain amount of guilt involved here, I am

60 Kofman, ‘Conjuring Death,’ 2.
63 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 145.
64 Derrida, ‘Aphorism Countertime,’ 128.
sure, on Derrida’s behalf, ‘survivor’s guilt’\textsuperscript{66} not because he misses Joyce now but because he missed Joyce and will continue to do so, that he survives beyond Joyce—guilt too, perhaps, that the space between them remains so great. This urge towards an autoimmunity-driven quasi-suicide has always already rent them apart. It was always already too late.

\textbf{IV. Displacement and Disintegration: Place, Death, and the Cipher in the Wolf Man’s Crypt}

Question concerning the Wolf Man: does an incorporated letter arrive at its destination? And can one give to someone other than oneself, if to give, the giving must also be introjected?\textsuperscript{67}

Arriving always already too late, Derrida arrives at the crypt, and finds the body decomposing. In the words of translator Nicholas Rand, characterising a tendency towards erasure inscribed in deconstruction, ‘the counter-history of disintegration is discovered.’\textsuperscript{68} If ‘every analysis ... leads to new names for and new procedures of disintegration,’\textsuperscript{69} every analysis also presents the potential for hidden meanings (the


\textsuperscript{67} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 195.


\textsuperscript{69} Rand, ‘Translator’s Introduction,’ lxvii.
holding or concealment of the cryptonym, the keeping secret of this name) as a displacement takes place between the crypt and the cryptonym, the place and the name. As the crypt is displaced into the cryptonym, founded on the psychoanalytic tension between introjection and incorporation and the manifest undecidability between holding the external object inside and self-producing an internalised object (‘safe (save) inside me’70), what is revealed by this erasure is the prosopopoeic potential for the dead to live again. But just as the crypt(onym) is an act of writing, so it is an act of erasure. The body of the deceased, the lost object, continues to disintegrate, and the transcendental signified of the institution, Meaning, continues to be problematized and destabilised.

**Place (Topoi)**

Derrida begins ‘Foreword: Fors’ with the question: ‘what is a crypt?’71 It is a question which he proceeds to repeat throughout the text too, as if to eschew any progress he might make towards uncovering an answer. He continues with another: ‘what if I were writing on one now?’72 Clearly the space of the crypt is concerned with writing: it is conjured by an act of writing. But the crypt is first and foremost concerned with place, a place which improbably holds and hides the lost or erased object:

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70 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xvii.
71 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xi.
72 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xi.
The grounds [lieux] are so disposed as to disguise and to hide: something, always a body in some way. But also to disguise the act of hiding and to hide the disguise; the crypt hides as it holds.\(^73\)

This crypt is not a natural place \([lieu]\), but the striking history of an artifice, an \(architecture\), an artefact: of a place \(comprehended\) within another but rigorously separate from it, isolated from general space by partitions, an enclosure, an enclave.\(^74\)

This hiding and holding, this veiling, represents an immense act of responsibility made towards the lost object, an attempt to save \(fors\) them through the work of mourning. The hope is to prolong the existence or presence of this lost object through drawing it into a space somewhere between incorporation and introjection, a ‘casting inside’ which is simultaneously the denial that the dead is a living part of me. A ‘system of partitions’\(^75\) is constructed with various ‘inner and outer surfaces,’\(^76\) to repress or suppress the secret absence by a violently divisive (‘the crypt itself is built by violence’\(^77\)) but nonetheless necessary act: the crypt ‘can constitute its secret [the dead] only by means of its division, its fracture. “I” can save an inner safe only by putting it aside inside “myself,” beside(s) myself, outside.’\(^78\) Here, on 20 June 1978, that secret which Derrida represses beneath the postcard-crypt, fractured as it

\(^73\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.
\(^74\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.
\(^75\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.
\(^76\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.
\(^77\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xv.
\(^78\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.
is thrust outwards into the postcard while at the same time being held onto and kept safe, archived, within *The Post Card* (it is both inside and outside, part of the living and not, a public and a private act), is the death of Joyce, the absence of Joyce from the scene of writing, the postcard. The crypt is structured by this urge not to reveal a presence, but to reveal an absence, an exclusion, an erasure:

What the crypt commemorates, as the incorporated object’s “monument” or “tomb,” is not the object itself, but its exclusion, the exclusion of a specific desire from the introjection process.79

As he writes and erases the postcard, Derrida hopes to establish a place for the exclusion, a place where he might be able to save the lost object through what he will call the ‘sepulchral function,’80 proposing ‘a stratagem for keeping safe a place or rather a no-place in the place’81 a stratagem he knows is impossible, futile, but which he is impelled to perform nonetheless. But this place is no-place:

The topography of the safes requires us to think ... about a no-place or non-place within space, a place as no-place. It is necessary to keep, save (except for, *hormis, fors*) (,) in a no-place the other place.82

This ‘place as no-place’ is an aporetic definition of the scene of the postcard dated 20 June 1978, somehow neither place nor no-place. This interstitiality haunts Derrida’s reflections on remains and spectres: neither here nor there, not really dead,

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80 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxi.
82 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxi.
somehow alive, but not that either, always something else which eludes definition and naming.

_Death (Atopoi)_

As no-place, but the potential for future place, ‘the cryptic place is also a sepulchre.’\(^8^3\) The crypt is not only a burial vault, a tomb, or a receptacle for sacred relics, but also (having split from the same etymological Latin root _sepelire_) the act of burying the dead, the repression of the dead, the repression of death. For Derrida, the very act of containing or holding onto the remains of the dead in this cryptic space represents the possibility of ‘something other than death’:

> The sepulchral function in turn can signify something other than simply death. A crypt, people believe, always hides something dead. But to guard it from what? Against what does one keep a corpse intact, safe both from life and from death, which could both come in from the outside to touch it? And to allow death to take no place in life?\(^8^4\)

For Derrida, this sepulchral function, troubled by the undecidability of the status of the lost object (incorporated or introjected; present or absent) and the irreducibility of the dead-as-Other means that ‘the inhabitant of a crypt is always a living dead, a dead entity we are perfectly willing to keep alive, but as dead.’\(^8^5\) Alive, ‘but as dead,’ the lost object continues to disintegrate as memory erases, as the crypt is written, erased, and rewritten by this incessant work of mourning which ‘never finishes

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\(^8^3\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxi.

\(^8^4\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxi.

\(^8^5\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxi.
anything off. The crypt, then, is closely aligned to the structure of *Glas*, the space between ‘tomb’ and ‘tomber,’ the ruins built up and torn down simultaneously, composed by this violent tension between its construction and deconstruction, the stylus erasing as it writes: ‘It is erected by its very ruin, held up by what never stops eating away at its foundations.’ The displaced, disintegrating crypt starkly resembles Derrida’s remembrance and recording of his visit to Friedhof Fluntern on 20 June 1978: here, Derrida acts as cemetery guard, and the ‘foreign place’ is the encounter projected outwards (from the familiar place within) into the scene of writing of the postcard, hoping to keep the secret of Joyce’s absence, his death, a secret:

The Self: a cemetery guard. The crypt is enclosed within the self, but as a foreign place, prohibited, excluded. The self is not the proprietor of what he is guarding. He makes the rounds like a proprietor, but only the rounds. He turns around and around, and in particular he uses all his knowledge to turn visitors away.

*The Cipher*

Derrida now turns towards the idea of the crypt as cipher or cryptonym, as secreted or hidden word. The space of the crypt unfolds ‘according to the angle of the words,’ according to the veiling performed by the writing and erasure of the words as they hope to conceal the crypt (and its secret) from sight. As in Freud’s famous

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87 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxiii.
89 Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxxvi.
case study of the Wolf Man, both ‘Foreword: Fors’ and The Post Card (specifically the postcard dated 20 June 1978) display a textual event whereby ‘the absence of objects and the empty mouth are transformed into words,’\(^90\) Derrida thereby transforming Joyce’s absence into the words of the postcard, and so hoping to conceal that absence in the secret code of the crypt:

\[\textit{To crypt: }\text{I do not think I have yet used it as a verb. To crypt is to cipher, a symbolic or semiotic operation that consists of manipulating a secret code, which is something one can never do alone.}\(^91\)

With a word so thoroughly dispersed or disseminated throughout The Post Card that there is no trace left but its myriad effects (the word forever remaining illegible), Derrida conceals the death of Joyce beneath a veil of other words, so many other words, preserving the potential for life, hoping to ensure his survival, by an elision he refuses to openly admit, to cover an absence he too refuses to admit, or is perhaps incapable of admitting, and incapable of overcoming.

This secret code, the unknowable-ness of this word, the cryptonym, although we know it exists and is here, is only really present as the possibility of meaning. Deciphering or decrypting the code is an endless, impossible procedure without an endpoint, without the possibility of exhausting the code’s—and the text’s—semantic resources. The crypt is not about containing the cryptonym (whatever this word may be, here, between Joyce and Derrida); instead, it is about loudly proclaiming its existence, its potential, only to eschew any questions regarding its definitive content.

\(^90\) Abraham and Torok, The Shell and the Kernel, 128.

\(^91\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xxxvi.
This is what keeps, holds, the dead amongst the living. It is also the space of the adversary which continues to haunt the institution, the space within which holds but cannot hold onto the Other, a space within the institution which necessarily destabilises the institution. The crypt, then, is at once about revelation and concealment, a concealment which ‘overflows its own bounds and encloses, naturally, its others, all others.’ \(^9^2\) Joyce and Derrida will not be contained, cannot be contained; they are always already exceeding, forcing themselves beyond, the space of the crypt, beyond the secret code of the cryptonym. The cryptonym, the potential of this secret code, is their lifeline.

**Interment**

As Miller notes, ‘mourning ... is not successful unless we can be sure that the corpse is really dead and safely buried in one identifiable place.’ \(^9^3\) Thus the impossibility, for Derrida, of mourning an irreducible Joyce: although the material monument standing at Friedhof Fluntern represents the body buried in one identifiable place, the moment Derrida writes the postcard, constructs this cryptic space (split between place, death and the cipher), transfigures the corpse into the corpus, Joyce’s body is dispersed, disseminated, forever continuing on as a trace or spectre, destined for nowhere except ‘silence and exile.’ \(^9^4\) This crypt ensures there is no (one) place, no

\(^{92}\) Derrida, ‘Foreword: Fors,’ xiv.


singular identifiable place where Joyce’s body is safely interred, and thus that Joyce, wandering and erring in death, may, perhaps, live.

Coda: ‘always in abeyance’

What does it matter. All that remains is the feeling of lightness that is death itself or, to put it more precisely, the instant of my death henceforth always in abeyance.  

and I write between two resurrections, the one that is given and the one that is promised, compromised to this almost natural monument which becomes in my eyes a sort of calcinated root, the naked spectacle of a photographed wound—the bedsore cauterised by the light of writing, to fire, to blood but to ash too.

Writing of himself in the third person, and distancing himself from this third person, Maurice Blanchot writes of a figure who should die but does not: ‘I remember a young man—a man still young—prevented from dying by death itself—and perhaps the error of injustice.’ He is prevented from dying by a reprieve which came only by chance:

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96 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ in Bennington and Derrida, Jacques Derrida, 54.

I know—do I know it—that the one at whom the Germans were already aiming, awaiting but the final order, experienced then a feeling of extraordinary lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing happy, however)—sovereign elation? The encounter of death with death?

In this place, I will not try and analyse. He was perhaps suddenly invincible. Dead—immortal. Perhaps ecstasy. Rather the feeling of compassion for suffering humanity, the happiness of not being immortal or eternal. Henceforth, he was bound to death by a surreptitious friendship.

At that instant, an abrupt return to the world, the considerable noise of a nearby battle exploded. Comrades from the maquis wanted to bring help to one they knew to be in danger. The lieutenant moved away to assess the situation. The Germans stayed in order, prepared to remain thus in an immobility that arrested time. 98

Opening a space between a first and a second death which represents a deferral of death, ‘prevented from dying by death itself,’ Blanchot has prepared himself for death, for a death that is also an immortality. Invincible, the death within him has occurred, but that outside of him never comes:

There remained, however, at the moment when the shooting was no longer but to come, the feeling of lightness that I would not know how to translate: freed from life? the infinite opening up? Neither happiness, nor unhappiness. Nor the absence of fear and perhaps already the step beyond. I know, I imagine that this unanalysable feeling changed what there remained for him of existence. As if the

death outside of him could only henceforth collide with the death in him. “I am alive. No, you are dead.”

This indecision he feels at his ontological status speaks of a split between two selves, one on the side of life and the other on the side of death: ‘I am alive. No, you are dead.’ But both appear to be contained with Blanchot himself, voices not only arguing over his ontological status but closing the gap between life and death by proposing simultaneously that he is alive and dead. Even in death he is afforded some ontological status: as both Blanchot’s corporeal body and his text, his corpse and corpus, decay, this ‘you are’ indicates that something remains, that a trace endures, that the ghost lives on.

Yet ultimately Blanchot dismisses this conjecture to simply declare that his death has been—and will remain—deferred and irreducible, potentialised or over-potentialised, always in abeyance. In a companion essay to ‘The Instant of My Death,’ Derrida refers to this abeyance in aporetic terms as ‘the impossibility of deciding, but the impossibility of remaining [demeurer] in the undecidable.’ The impasse of this undecidability places the death in the ‘always later, the future always later, the permanent future [l’avenir à demeure].’ It remains, ultimately, to come.

Stranded between two deaths, he—Blanchot, but also Joyce, and Derrida—lives, and lives-on.

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101 Derrida, ‘Demeure,’ 102.
**Parergon**

The framing *parergon* marks a shift here from a conceptual or theoretical approach to the spacing between Joyce and Derrida to a literal, spatial manifestation of this encounter. The uneasy dialogue is now mediated by the material spaces of the written page, this textual architecture. A dialogue also begins to emerge between the content of the words and the form they take (‘Here form is content, content is form’):

Beckett has always already blurred the borderlines, as if the one might potentially deconstruct the other, as if an ambivalent adversarial irreducibility haunts this relationship between content and form, writing and spatiality.

A play—a pun, a joke—on the German *kante*, meaning ‘edge,’ ‘angle,’ ‘border’ or ‘square,’ constructing the frame from this fortuitous etymology between *kante* and the German enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, the *parergon* explodes the spatial composition of *The Truth in Painting*, exploding too its status as either a work of art or a work of criticism: ‘That mark, a half-crochet,’ writes Derrida, ‘is a not-too-distant relative of our quotation mark, used in the first printed books of the fifteenth-century to distinguish between text and commentary.’

This devious half-crochet declares war on the status of writing itself, splitting original and quotation, art and criticism: ‘That deconstructive faultline is visible in the open corner of every one of the half-crochets appearing throughout “Parergon”.’

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3 Wills, ‘Lemming,’ 27.
fault line opens up, and Derrida’s eye drifts towards a passage near the centre of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, a passage central yet marginal in this text, in which he approaches the relationship between the object and what is supplementary to it:

> Even what is called ornamentation (*parerga*) i.e. what is only an adjunct and not an intrinsic constituent of the complete representation of the object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so only by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of the beautiful form—if it is introduced like a gold frame merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called finery and takes away from the genuine beauty.⁴

In the midst of Kant, in the proper noun Kant, Derrida glimpses the *parergon*, and then sets about eroding any such distinction between what is and is not structurally or formally necessary to any work of art. Existing outside of or beyond the edges or borders of the frame, Derrida does not find the *parergon* easy to define: they are ‘neither work (*ergon*) nor outside the work [*hors d-oeuvre*],’⁵ ‘neither inside nor outside,’⁶ but ‘what the principal subject *must not become,*’⁷ ‘something which comes as an extra, *exterior* to the chosen field,’⁸ and also ‘the exceptional, the

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strange, the extraordinary.\textsuperscript{9} A third term—‘Position: opposition: frame’\textsuperscript{10} which insinuates itself not only between but also within the position and its opposition, thesis and antithesis, the frame is ‘without and with at the same time.’\textsuperscript{11} Produced at once by interiority and exteriority, semblance and otherness, the \textit{parergon} ‘comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon,’\textsuperscript{12} and yet ‘touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside.’\textsuperscript{13} It is produced ‘first of all on (the) bo(a)rd(er) \textit{[Il est d’abord l’à-bord]},’\textsuperscript{14} on board and on the border, taking place ‘as a form of rupture.’\textsuperscript{15} But ‘the frame fits badly,’\textsuperscript{16} imperfectly, manifesting a violence which can only ever multiply itself (‘violence of the framing multiplies’\textsuperscript{17}), producing a violent uncertainty and undecidability, for when ‘the frame is missing, the edges of any context open out wide,’\textsuperscript{18} and meaning must necessarily remain contingent.

This problematization of the status of the frame produces a doubled text where on the one hand we can be presented with a legitimate claim for interpretive certitude, but where on the other hand the lack of context means that there is nothing but potentialities. Without the certainty and stability provided by the frame

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 58.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 75.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 54.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Wills, ‘Lemming,’ 31.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 69.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 69.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Derrida, \textit{The Truth in Painting}, 1.
\end{itemize}
and for the a-concept of the frame by its own definition, without the work performed by the frame, the framework, possible interpretations are multiplied, and the idea of a hierarchical and hegemonic univocal or ‘master’ text is exploded as the responsibility to produce meaning is shifted from the supposedly objective author to the subjective reader, the critic, struggling with their own interstitial placement within a doubled institution that is both unconditional and irreducible to itself, founded on the possibility—if not the necessity—of its own deconstruction.
4. General Paralysis of the Insane

Out of the stones that life threw at him he made a labyrinth, so that Stephen earned the surname Dedalus. The labyrinth is no home for a monster, however; it is a house of life, its corridors ringing with song and laughter.¹

Laughter casts a glance, charged with the mortal violence of being, into the void of life.²

‘Read all about it!’ An unsettling laughter is generated by this mortal violence, the text beginning to crumble as the porous, always already transgressed frame can no longer hold onto or contain the text, and these acts of spacing pull these towering, monumental words—and the institution itself—apart in their decomposing, disintegrating, deconstructive fashion. This double reading tries on the one hand to hold this semantic edifice together and produce some meaning, but on the other is only really capable of pointing out the cracks which threaten to bring that towering Meaning down.

Kant suggests that ‘laughter is an affection rising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing.’³ Henri Bergson similarly

³ Kant, Critique of Judgment, 117.
suggests that with every burst of laughter ‘the whole thing threatens to break down, but manages to get patched up again’\(^4\):

The rigid, the ready-made, the mechanical, in contrast with the supple, the ever-changing and the living, absentmindedness in contrast with attention, in a word, automatism in contrast with free activity, such are the defects that laughter singles out and would fain correct.\(^5\)

Between two explosive bursts of laughter we witness the motile play of the writing and erasure. Faced with the uncertainty of the void as this laughter deconstructs, this chapter addresses the paralysis symbolised by Nelson’s Pillar erected in the centre of Dublin, disrupting the materiality of the city by manipulating the materiality of the written page, spaced between the square feet and column inches of the city and the newspaper respectively. (Freud defines one form of laughter in terms of a similar displacement: ‘Does not every meaning give occasion for a displacement—for a diversion of the train of thought from one meaning to the other?’\(^6\)) Reducing the stagnant city to rubble, and producing the written page as the site of potential meaning, it is punctuated by bold newspaper headlines which mimic the textual violence instigated by Joyce in Aeolus, performing a species of deconstruction in anticipation of Derrida. Taking the form here of a series of nervous bursts of laughter, dislocating and displacing this paralysed city and language, it


\(^5\) Bergson, *Laughter*, 64.

attempts to liberate these species of spaces and open them up to the exultant possibilities of motile re-significations and myriad future meanings.

**PARALYSED, DUBLIN LAUGHS, PROTESTS, DECONSTRUCTS**

‘General paralysis of the insane.’ Buck Mulligan overhears the initialisation of this term—‘g.p.i.’—in a pub, and in the Telemachus episode reports it back to Stephen Dedalus, the subject of the gossip. The term refers to a neuropsychiatric disorder caused most commonly by a syphilis infection (more prevalent in the nineteenth-century, before the advent of penicillin), whereby the sufferer eventually succumbs to various symptoms culminating in incapacitation; effectively, they become bedridden and die. The reference is not an oblique one; it points to Stephen’s apparent lack of response and emotional indifference to his mother’s death in the space between the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the beginning of *Ulysses*. But, for Joyce, there is more to it than simply a son paralysed by the loss of his mother; opening a text which has a dual focus on geographical movements around the labyrinthine Dublin and the labyrinthine polysemous movements of his words, Joyce relates this disorder to the madness of his city and language, which have both, like Stephen, been paralysed by a loss which they cannot mourn, which they find impossible to mourn.

Joyce chooses to combat this paralysis through an uncertain laughter. But laughter is no laughing matter here. (Here, the double meaning of this ‘Re-Joyce’

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which Anthony Burgess proposes in Re-Joyce, alongside the pun on the proper name, intrigues me: firstly, the ‘re’ suggests return, perhaps also rebirth, even resurrection, in this case of ‘Joyce’, of the Joycean corpse and corpus, and corpus-as-corpse; secondly, it suggests a homonym with the word rejoice, to be happy or celebrate, perhaps also to laugh.) This affirmative, potentially life-giving laughter decimates the paralysis of Dublin and Ulysses by refusing to take it seriously—yet knowing, full well, just how serious, and how potentially fatal, it is. We can observe this trend from a deathly paralysis to a lively laughter as Ulysses progresses: in Telemachus, speaking to Dedalus, the Englishman Haines tells us, in reference to Buck Mulligan’s jovial blasphemies, that ‘We oughtn’t to laugh, I suppose’\(^8\); much later, in the Ithaca episode, Bloom offers this parenthetical comment on the clearly mock-epic Everybody’s Book of Jokes: ‘1,000 pages and a laugh in every one’\(^9\); and then, finally, as though to affirm this trend away from the repression of laughter and towards the construction of laughter as a necessity for both the city and language, the text and life, Molly Bloom’s manic and highly-sexualised soliloquy contains the excerpt: ‘I had to laugh yes.’\(^10\) For Joyce, laughter has become a compulsion. But he remains hesitant. Cixous refers to ‘the nervous laughter of writing’\(^11\) which peals throughout the pages of Ulysses, a ‘nervous laughter’\(^12\) representing hesitation or paralysis when confronted with on the one hand the stultifying Dublin of Joyce’s text, and on the

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\(^8\) Joyce, Ulysses, 19.

\(^9\) Joyce, Ulysses, 632.

\(^10\) Joyce, Ulysses, 704.

\(^11\) Cixous, ‘Joyce: the (R)use of Writing,’ 22.

\(^12\) Joyce, Ulysses, 27.
other the linguistic uncertainties, impossibilities, potentialities, and excesses, of his polyphonic, polysemous writing. This ontology of laughter—‘to laugh or not to laugh’—holds the potential for reinvigorating these texts and their meanings in a motile play of on the one hand a series of displacements, and on the other writings and erasures.

IN-SPIRE-ING—SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE PILLAR

Aeolus, in which laughter proves central, revolves or circulates around the newspaper offices of the labyrinthine Dublin. But it also revolves around Joyce’s depiction—and deconstruction—of Nelson’s Pillar. When Joyce wrote, the Pillar stood in the centre of Sackville (now O’Connell) Street, just north of the River Liffey. Erected in 1808 to commemorate Lord Nelson’s famous victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 (long before Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square in London, which went up in 1849), the Doric granite Pillar rose 121ft from the ground, topped by a 13ft statue of Nelson, sculpted from Portland stone by Cork sculptor Thomas Kirk. The adult public could pay sixpence (and children under twelve half the price) to climb the 168 spiral steps to a platform atop the Pillar which gave a bird’s-eye view of the city. The Pillar caused much debate and conjecture, facing opposition not for its loaded political symbolism, but mostly on aesthetic grounds. Yet it remained, leering over Dublin, for more than a century and a half. If imperialism is all about staking territory, this is perhaps one of the more forceful symbolic power-grabs made by Britain in the long history of its conflict with Ireland.
The past tense in which I write is crucial here. At 1:27 A.M. on 8 March 1966, a group of I.R.A. men planted a bomb which destroyed the upper half of the Pillar, thrusting large chunks of what was once the statue of Nelson out into O’Connell Street. The terrorist act—possibly codenamed Operation Humpty Dumpty—was staged to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising, which took place on 24 April 1916. No-one was hurt by the explosion, and two days later the Irish Army blew up the rest of the Pillar, engineers having judged the vestigial structure to be too unsafe to restore. This planned demolition caused more destruction on O’Connell Street than the original blast. The whole episode plays out with an irreverent humour, the absurdity of the scene drawing a nervous laughter in response to these violent and potentially tragic acts. A succession of folk songs ensued—‘Up Went Nelson’ by the ‘Go Lucky Four,’ ‘Lord Nelson’ by Tommy Makem, and Joe Dolan’s ‘Farewell Nelson’—which stand as acts of protest against Nelson’s Pillar and all it symbolised: Ireland’s historical subservience to Britain, its placement on the colonial periphery, its endless struggle for independence from such authoritarian structures and institutions, freedom from the panopticon-like gaze of Nelson and the British Empire. Here, laughter stands as an act of liberation, akin to the process described by Freud: ‘By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him.’

Between these intensely political bursts of laughter, the imperial institution falls.

Between its destruction in 1966 and 2003, the site where the Pillar once stood was simply paved over, the Dublin Corporation caught in its own type of

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paralysis. Today, the Spire of Dublin or the Monument of Light (An Túr Solais) stands in its place—a large, stainless steel, pin- or needle-like monument rising 390ft, reaching from the ground up into the sky, contemptuously dwarfing the absent Nelson’s Pillar. The architects, Ian Ritchie Architects, describe the intention behind the Spire’s design as responding ‘to the character and climate of the Irish landscape’ as it ‘gently sways in direct response to the wind’ and ‘softly reflects the light of Ireland’s sky.’\textsuperscript{14} Reflecting the surrounding streetscapes and skies, the surfaces also reflect the Irish people, the flowing mercury embedded in the surface symbolising ‘the people of Dublin and Ireland flowing, responding to movement and pressure with and by the people, to separate, to return and to fuse together as one, as with the Diaspora.’\textsuperscript{15} But, always already, Joyce has anticipated this deconstructive gesture of the Spire.

I am sure though, that traces remain of Nelson’s Pillar: if not material traces, buried beneath the Spire, then at least ghostly traces, memories—more than enough to still haunt Dublin today.

\textbf{‘TOPPLING MASONRY’—RECLAIMING TERRITORY, RE-SIGNIFYING SPACE}

\textsuperscript{14} Ian Ritchie Architects, ‘Spire of Dublin: a New Monument in O’Connell Street for Dublin and Ireland,’ \url{http://www.ianritchiearchitects.co.uk/projects.html} [accessed 18/4/2009], n.p.

\textsuperscript{15} Ian Ritchie Architects, ‘Spire of Dublin,’ n.p.
The spatial politics of *Ulysses*, particularly in *Aeolus*, is all about ‘toppling masonry.’\(^\text{16}\) The deconstructive gesture at work within Joyce’s representation of Nelson’s Pillar (already at least once removed from the actual material structure) replicates the intense historical, political, cultural and discursive struggle between British imperialism and Irish independence, the towering phallic edifices of the Pillar (and the absent Column, Nelson’s Column, in Trafalgar Square, London) symbolising an ongoing conflict over ‘the meanings and memories encoded in particular places.’\(^\text{17}\) Imperialism is all about staking territory; *Ulysses* is about reclaiming this territory. These places are not only real, geographical lived spaces, but also textual and discursive spaces: the spaces of the city and language, Dublin and *Ulysses*.

Andrew Thacker’s argument in ‘Toppling Masonry and Textual Space’ on the Pillar is, like *Ulysses* itself, heavily grounded in a critique of British imperialism in Ireland (ground well covered by Joycean scholars):

> In the initial reference to Nelson’s Pillar we see how Dublin’s geographical heart, and the heart of its transport system, contains a material presence linking the city to its imperial ruler, London.\(^\text{18}\)

As a material structure, the Pillar was ‘a monument conceived to represent British imperial rule in Ireland,’\(^\text{19}\) to paralyse the Irish people under the yoke of British repression. In Joyce’s text it also plays the metaphoric role of Foucauldian

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\(^\text{16}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 43 and 542.


\(^\text{18}\) Thacker, ‘Toppling Masonry and Textual Space,’ 197.

\(^\text{19}\) Thacker, ‘Toppling Masonry and Textual Space,’ 199.
panopticon, from which the imperial centre observes and controls the periphery, the ‘conquered’ colonial margins:

the literary form of his text is implicated in spatial relations of power-knowledge,
as the column shadows the opening and closing of the chapter, forming an impression of the city and the chapter as being under surveillance.\(^{20}\)

Nelson stands atop the Pillar, peering down upon the Irish people, keeping them in line, paralysed by fear of the punishment he might mete out. But here Thacker does something more than simply read the material monument as a symbol of British imperialism which must be destroyed if Irish independence is to be achieved, if Ireland is to break free from the paralysing stranglehold of Britain. He observes ‘the importance of connecting metaphoric space—such as that of the literary text itself—to material space, particularly sites within the city of Dublin,\(^{21}\) arguing that the spatial politics of *Ulysses* ‘is best found not only in the manner of his representation of space and place ... but also in the textual space of his novel, and in the interrelationships between material and metaphoric senses of space.’\(^{22}\) For Thacker, building upon Henri Lefebvre’s theorisation of the distinction between representations of space and representational spaces,\(^{23}\) Joyce’s representation of Nelson’s Pillar encapsulates ‘a conflict between an official representation of space

\[^{20}\] Thacker, ‘Toppling Masonry and Textual Space,’ 199.


and the aesthetic symbolism of a representational space, the relationship between the two—between the representation of space and the representational space, between the social space and the literary form—opening up a space from within which Joyce begins to deconstruct Ireland’s political, cultural and linguistic associations to Britain.

While Thacker sees a strong sense of protest, and perhaps deconstruction, in Joyce’s treatment of Nelson’s Pillar, he dangerously neglects the use of laughter as a potential subversive tool in Ulysses, particularly in its treatment of Nelson, the ‘onehandled adulterer,’ and his phallic Pillar. This is perhaps typical of a too-serious tone haunting—perhaps also paralysing—too much Joyce criticism: too many Joyce scholars are still too nervous to laugh.

**Square Feet and Column Inches—The Power of the Presses**

Directly preceded by a short burst of nervous laughter from Mr. Power, Nelson’s Pillar first appears in Ulysses only in passing, in the Hades episode as the carriage carrying the mourners Leopold Bloom, Martin Cunningham, Simon Dedalus and Jack Power rattles its way to Glasnevin cemetery for Paddy Dignam’s ‘paltry funeral.’ It is followed by a call from Cunningham that ‘we had better look a bit serious,’ and a

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25 Joyce, Ulysses, 142 and 143.

26 Joyce, Ulysses, 97.

27 Joyce, Ulysses, 92.
sigh from Dedalus, but for now the Pillar simply watches on silently over the lives of Joyce’s characters. Its second appearance beneath the bold headline ‘IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS,’ opening Aeolus, comes with a description of the routes of the Dublin tramways, originating from nearby to where the Pillar stands:

Before Nelson’s pillar trams slowed, shunted, changed trolley, started for Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Clinksea, Rathgar and Terenure, Palmerston Park and Upper Rathmines, Sandymount Green, Rathmines, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Harold’s Cross. The hoarse Dublin United Tramway Company’s timekeeper bawled them off.29

The tramways return towards the end of the chapter, the only content under the headline ‘HELLO THERE, CENTRAL!’30:

At various points along the eight lines tramcars with motionless trolleys stood in their tracks, bound for or from Rathmines, Rathfarnham, Blackrock, Kingstown and Dalkey, Sandymount Green, Ringsend and Sandymount Tower, Donnybrook, Palmerston Park and Upper Rathmines, all still, becalmed in short circuit. Hackney cars, cabs, delivery wagons, mail vans, private broughams, aerated mineral water floats with rattling crates of bottles, rattled, lollled, horse drawn, rapidly.31

In this traffic standstill, the Pillar is represented by its absent Presence. It is central, even though absent. Aeolus ends with J. J. O’Molloy strolling along the street, beneath the bold headline ‘HORATIO IS Cynosure This Fair June Day.’32 And

28 Joyce, Ulysses, 112.
29 Joyce, Ulysses, 112.
30 Joyce, Ulysses, 142.
31 Joyce, Ulysses, 142-3.
32 Joyce, Ulysses, 143.
Horatio is cynosure here in *Ulysses*; his Pillar is the centre of attention. The paralysis it causes is central too. More importantly, though, the Pillar plays a major role in the attempts of both Joyce and his characters to protest against this paralysis of both city and language, its deconstruction taking place somewhere in the space between the materiality of the labyrinthine city and the less tangible but no less powerful immateriality of Joyce’s labyrinthine language.

Suddenly, the Pillar appears not as concrete as it once might have been. Its materiality is challenged, eroded, exploded—violently, yet with a burst of laughter, a laughter which affects a sense of both difference and deferment in the production of the Pillar as a cultural artefact, and as both a literal and a symbolic structure. Throughout *Aeolus*, the Pillar attempts to stand in contrast to, defiance of, the bold newspaper headlines, the spaces of the page which imply newspaper columns, perhaps calling to mind Leopold Bloom’s earlier thoughts as he scans the death notices: ‘Inked characters fast fading on the frayed breaking paper.’ The fading ink and frayed breaking paper, the transitory nature of the newspaper columns, suggests not the demise of the newspaper, for that will be reprinted and renewed each day, and so will survive, but points towards the destruction or deconstruction of the other columns. In an hilarious, joyous act of displacement, inversion and ‘topsy-turvydom,’ the materiality of the Pillar is challenged by the playful ‘paper’ materiality of *Aeolus*, with its bold newspaper headlines fracturing the substantial text (thirty-two pages in the original format) into smaller pieces, representing

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33 *Joyce, Ulysses*, 88.

perhaps the deconstruction of Nelson’s Pillar—that is, if we can read the immaterial column of the printed page as an analogue to this solid granite column. ‘SOME COLUMN!’ proclaims part of one disdainful headline.35 Although it has brought Dublin to a standstill by the end of Aeolus, the stone column of the British Empire is no match for the ink-and-paper columns of the Irish press.

Claiming it to be ‘one of the first great subversive shocks of Ulysses,’ Thacker notes the predominance of the newspaper columns, ‘the typographical layout of the newspaper headlines,’ over the Pillar and the Column, claiming that ‘the headlines disrupt the flow of the narrative and foreground the space of the printed page itself.’36 The newspaper headlines shatter the sanctity of the printed columns of the book, disrupting the panopticon-like gaze of the reader, disrupting any attempt at observing or reading Ulysses. Joyce’s deconstruction-by-newspaper-headline is mirrored by Derrida’s Glas, in the one-eyed, narrow-visioned reader’s refusal or inability to read this two-columned text, their gaze endlessly interrupted by the goings-on in the other column, and the myriad asides set out on the printed page, the diverse fragments of text littered like odd literary-philosophical advertisements or journalistic titbits, floating throughout the columns. Here, faced with the extreme, dangerous unreadability and undecidability of Ulysses and Glas, we witness the triumph of column inches over square feet: the triumph of the written columns of the Irish press over these stone columns of the British Empire, the triumph too of

35 Joyce, Ulysses, 141.

Joyce’s *Ulysses* over the city of Dublin, of the immateriality of language over the materiality of the city.

‘**DEAR DIRTY DUBLIN**’—A BAWDY TALE

When Nelson’s Pillar appears later in *Aeolus*, beneath the headline ‘DEAR DIRTY DUBLIN,’ it is again central. A bawdy tale is told sporadically towards the end of the episode, by Stephen to the editor Myles Crawford, who only occasionally offers a tentative laugh in response; ‘That tickles me,’ he says. The tale involves two old women atop Nelson’s pillar, ‘two Dublin vestals ... elderly and pious,’ Anne Kearns and Florence MacCabe:

They want to see the views of Dublin from the top of Nelson’s pillar. They save up three and tenpence in a red tin letterbox moneybox. They shake out the threepenny bits and a sixpence and coax out the pennies with the blade of a knife. Two and three in silver and one and seven in coppers. They put on their bonnets and best clothes and take their umbrellas for fear it may come on to rain. ... They buy one and fourpenceworth of brawn and four slices of panloaf at the north city dining rooms in Marlborough street from Miss Kate Collins, proprietress. ... They purchase four and twenty ripe plums from a girl at the foot of Nelson’s pillar to take off the thirst of the brawn. They give two threepenny

37 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 139.

38 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 143.

39 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 139.
bits to the gentlemen at the turnstile and begin to waddle slowly up the winding staircase, grunting, encouraging each other, afraid of the dark, panting, one asking the other have you the brawn, praising God and the Blessed Virgin, threatening to come down, peeping at the airslits. Glory be to God. They had no idea it was that high.40

When they have eaten the brawn and the bread and wiped their twenty fingers on the paper the bread was wrapped in, they go near to the railings. ... But they are afraid the pillar will fall. ... They see the roofs and argue about where the different churches are: Rathmines’ blue dome, Adam and Eve’s, saint Lawrence O’Toole’s. But it makes them giddy to look so they pull up their skirts...41

It gives them a crick in their necks, Stephen said, as they are too tired to look up or down or to speak. They put the bag of plums between them and eat the plums out of it one after another, wiping off with their handkerchiefs the plumjuice that dribbles out of their mouths and spitting the plumstones slowly out between the railings.42

The fears harboured by ‘THOSE SLIGHTLY RAMBUNCTIOUS FEMALES’43 that the Pillar might fall are perhaps tied to Irish Catholic anxieties about sexuality, fears of the body and its erotic possibilities, particularly as Stephen soon tells of how the women

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40 Joyce, Ulysses, 139.

41 Joyce, Ulysses, 141.

42 Joyce, Ulysses, 142.

43 Joyce, Ulysses, 142.
‘settle down on their striped petticoats, peering up at the statue of the onehandled adulterer.’ The aura of the onehandled adulterer Nelson and his phallic British imperialistic Pillar dissipate as the irreverent and absurd tale of the two women is told, with their dribbling and flowing plum juice, spitting the plum stones from atop the Pillar, their petticoats hitched high around their thighs, passers-by perhaps catching a glimpse. Stephen calls his tale ‘A Pisgah Sight of Palestine or the Parable of the Plums.’ The word ‘Pisgah’ has two common uses, referring to either a moment of spiritual clarity of revelation, or to a situation where a leader visualises a future he or she may not live to see. Mount Pisgah is the mountain in the Bible from which Moses saw the Promised Land for the first time. Suggesting the messianic à venir and l’avenir both so central to deconstructive thought, perhaps the two elderly women visualise a future free from dual imperialisms: the authoritarian imperialism of Britain, and the sexual repression of Irish Catholicism. This is a clear case of ‘liberating pleasure by getting rid of inhibitions,’ liberating pleasure by laughing at our inhibitions. Meanwhile, the Pillar is lost amidst a discursive labyrinth as Stephen tells his fragments of a tale here and there throughout the episode; again, the Pillar is in fragments, fractured, deconstructed.

Like the two women, Bloom also climbs to the top of the Pillar, during an hallucination in the Circe episode: ‘Bloom walks on a net, covers his left eye with his left ear, passes through several walls, climbs Nelson’s Pillar, hangs from the top ledge

44 Joyce, Ulysses, 142.
45 Joyce, Ulysses, 143.
by his eyelids.’ 47 Later in the same hallucination, he also recounts the tale of the two women: ‘steel stark stone onehandled Nelson, two trickies Frauenzimmer plumstained from pram falling bawling.’ 48 Even more so than Stephen’s tale, the Pillar has now become lost amidst the cryptic and manic language of the passage, the phallic column of the onehandled adulterer reduced in stature to a blurred vision glimpsed within an hallucination of a dirty old man visiting a brothel. It is also reduced from a material structure to something even less substantial than Joyce’s writing: not even speech, but simply a thought, a dream, an illusion.

‘ENGLAND EXPECTS …’—STUMBLING SAILOR CIRCUMNAVIGATES CITY

Prompted to wonder if there might not be more to the term ‘onehandled’ than simply a reference to Nelson’s loss of his right arm, the reappearing onelegged sailor of the Wandering Rocks episode comes to mind: ‘A onelegged sailor, swinging himself onward by lazy jerks of his crutches, growled some notes’ 49 Lacking a limb, but not immobile, he does not make it too far: ‘A onelegged sailor crutched himself round MacConnell’s corner, skirting Rabaiotti’s ice-cream car, and jerked himself up Eccles street.’ 50 He is singing, repeatedly: ‘For England … home and beauty.’ 51 Later, heading perhaps in the direction of Nelson’s Pillar, although his destination remains

47 Joyce, Ulysses, 467.
48 Joyce, Ulysses, 538.
49 Joyce, Ulysses, 210.
50 Joyce, Ulysses, 216.
51 Joyce, Ulysses, 216.
undisclosed (and ultimately matters little), he has progressed only slightly on his lame odyssey: ‘the onelegged sailor growled in the area of 14 Nelson street.’\textsuperscript{52} He is still singing, this time a slightly different tune: ‘\textit{England expects ...}’\textsuperscript{53} He does not make it to Nelson’s Pillar, but he travels far enough for the point to be made: the reference to Nelson street (in the north of Dublin, intersecting with Eccles Street) is a metaphoric flattening or demolishing of Nelson’s Pillar—the name, the proper noun, the word—reduced in stature to a street upon which this lame sailor stumbles, Nelson trodden on by a onelegged sailor who pointedly refuses, for all his possible excuses, to let the paralysis of Dublin and \textit{Ulysses} affect him.

But it is his song which most strongly links the sailor to the deconstruction of the Pillar and the Column: \textit{For England ... home and beauty}, and then \textit{England expects}. The sailor’s plight is clearly a result of that represented by the Pillar, a victim of British imperialism and wars fought in others’ names. This England is not his home, is not beautiful in his eyes, and yet England expects ...: ‘England expects that every man will do his duty,’ as Nelson signalled to his fleet from the flagship H. M. S. Victory as the Battle of Trafalgar began. But, as \textit{Ulysses} itself begins, Buck Mulligan has always already deconstructed this fervent nationalistic motto, as he pleads for money from Stephen: ‘Today the bards must drink and junket. Ireland expects that every man this day will do his duty.’\textsuperscript{54} Later, Joyce reduces ‘duty’ to a mocking ‘and

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{52} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 239. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 239. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 15. 
\end{flushleft}
so on': ‘when duty called Ireland expects that every man and so on.’ This linguistic pillar of British imperialism stands in ruin, and Nelson’s signal is lost amidst the irreverent cacophony of Ulysses, but most notably in the silence of the sailor as he only ever utters ‘England expects …’ and cannot finish—or refuses to finish—his scripted line.

SYPHILIS-ATION—DISEASES OF EMPIRE

The sexual innuendo built into the depiction of Nelson and the Pillar in Ulysses is inescapable. But it is also more than just bawdy humour and cheap laughs. This general paralysis of the insane, this result of the sexual disease syphilis, is clearly linked to these twinned imperialisms: the British Empire and the Catholic Church. Throughout all this, the city and the text, Dublin and Ulysses, are written (about) in terms of the body, an organic, mortal, susceptible-to-disease body. This body needs treatment, a remedy. Common early treatments for syphilis (dating back as far as the eleventh century) included Guaiacum and Mercury, administered either orally, rubbed onto the skin, or by injection. The first antibiotic was used in 1908 (a drug named Salvarsan, developed by the Japanese bacteriologist Sahachiro Hata, containing arsenic), but was not 100% effective. It was not until the discovery of penicillin by Scottish scientist Alexander Fleming in 1928 and its widespread use after World War II that syphilis could be widely and reliably cured. Joyce’s concern

55 Joyce, Ulysses, 586.
then is taking this penicillin and transforming it into a remedy applicable to this body of language.

In Voltaire’s *Candide*, the eponymous character’s mentor and teacher, Pangloss, contracts syphilis from a maidservant, and by the time he and Candide are reunited, the disease has ravaged and deformed his body. Joyce’s penicillin is to rewrite the deformed body of his Dublin, to cure the deformations of the British Empire and the Catholic Church, these so-called civilising or syphilis-ing agents. He does this by mockingly, jocosely destroying the phallogocentric, panopticon-like Pillar and its imperialistic connotations, re-signifying the site of the Pillar as a place of linguistic mockery, bawdy tales, sexual innuendo, lame sailors, and raucous laughter.

Laughter is curative, restorative, and regenerative. Laugh and you shall be cured. Yes.

‘Pen is Champ’—Erasing Empire, Writing Ireland

Almost as an afterword, a final thought, Thacker writes that ‘Joyce’s pen ... has the final say over Nelson’s phallic column.’ With a joyous Joycean exclamation of ‘ITHACANS VOW PEN IS CHAMP’ we witness not just a triumph of an irreverent Irish nationalism over British imperialism and Roman Catholicism, but also the triumph of the newspaper columns circulating throughout *Ulysses* over the material columns erected in Dublin, the triumph of the materiality of the printed page over


57 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 142.
that of the city (both the real Dublin, and Joyce’s representation). The headlines reject the paralysis of the city and language, transforming the ‘general paralysis of the insane’ into a boisterous cacophony, a text filled with ‘peal after peal’\textsuperscript{58} of laughter, where the only response is to join in. These two towers are perhaps one of Joyce’s most elaborate puns:

In the pun, the same sentence appears to offer two independent meanings, but it is only an appearance; in reality, there are two different sentences made up of different words, but claiming to be one and the same because both have the same sound.\textsuperscript{59}

Through this punning between the tower of Nelson’s Pillar (and all it symbolises) and the tower of words represented by the words on the pages of \textit{Ulysses}, the gap between material and metaphoric space is bridged, the material re-signified through Joyce’s relentless mockery and unyielding laughter.

Navigating our way through the newspaper headlines of Aeolus and the insane printed materiality of \textit{Ulysses} as a whole, perhaps we are implicated in a ‘spatial intoxication,’\textsuperscript{60} disoriented, drunk on the thought that this might be a joke, laughing nervously in our uncertainty, at our inability to produce any sure sense or significance from these over-potentialised bursts of laughter. Having lost our heads in this way, having been driven slightly mad by these twinned imperialistic diseases, perhaps all we can do is laugh.

\textsuperscript{58} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 249.

\textsuperscript{59} Bergson, \textit{Laughter}, 59.

5. The Politics of Translation: the Force of the Word

If the tower had been completed there would be no architecture.¹

No translation is secondary. In the end, there is nothing without translation.²

The politics of translation: this does not concern the translation between Joyce’s Anglo-Irish tongue and Derrida’s French one, or even really a general theory of linguistic translation, but instead the potential for the use of translation as a symbol of an undecidability which haunts the unconditional institution. It is an attempted spacing, via Joyce and Derrida, between the materiality of matter (architectural space, lived experience, the corporeal body) expressed literally by the parergon, and the immateriality or metaphoricity of the language we use to represent it (the words on the page, the play between the black inscriptions and the blank spaces; but also the less literal spaces of speech and writing) manifested in a more conceptual approach to the parergon. Rigidly structured and yet unframed, this chapter moves toward a fragmented, paratactic textual form which defies interpretive certitude by refusing to offer readily discernible contexts, and so opens an infinite number of potential translations, interpretations, and meanings. These distinctive spacings are manifested here in the way these words, reconstructed from the ruins or remains of three fragmented texts concerning a string of translations—designed around the


three literary-philosophical architects: Joyce, Derrida, and this authorial ‘I’—paradoxically represent a solid and singular tower of words and defy the impossibility of a coherent whole as cracks appear between the three discourses and the edifice threatens to crumble, disintegrate. The text is splintered as espacement and the parergon problematize the discrete subjects ‘Joyce,’ ‘Derrida,’ and ‘I,’ through a chain of spatio-temporal faultlines improbably drawing Joyce and Derrida together just as they hold them apart.

I.

Between the material and the metaphoric, and between Joyce’s Martello Tower and Derrida’s Tower of Babel, I am lost, disoriented, dazed and confused, amongst so many lips and tongues, voices, unable to translate their words into a language I can readily comprehend. In the end, always already, language will have betrayed us: between its semantic overabundance and its proffering of alternative interpretations, it will have offered us only the potential for meaning in the future, but nothing more.

II.

It begins as I walk east along Nassau Street, turn left into Lincoln Place, around the back of Trinity College, and another right up Westland Row, glancing as I turn back at Sweny’s Chemist, which until a few months before my arrival in Dublin had been one of the few commercial sites featuring in *Ulysses* still operating as it had in 1904. Leopold Bloom bought a bar of lemon-scented soap there. It now stands boarded up and forlorn. I slot a few coins into the ticket machine at Pearse Street Station, just
enough to get me to Sandycove & Glasthule and back, walk through the turnstile, and step onto a southbound train. It begins (again) with *Ulysses*, building up layers of native and foreign languages, which require translation before anything else, pointing towards the impossibility of linguistic origins, in the words of Telemachus and the stones of the Martello tower. It begins (again, a third time—an originary trinity) with the first great and most notable monument, edifice, or tower in the history of language: the Tower of Babel, staged or performed in a space between architecture and translation, in the play between presence and absence opened up by the unfinished or incomplete structure of Babel.

III.

Derrida most directly approaches the Tower of Babel in his essay ‘Des tours de Babel,’ in the context of translation, confusion, naming, and the name of the father (i.e. ‘God,’ ‘G—d,’ ‘Yahweh,’ ‘YHWH,’ ‘Babel,’ etc.). Concerned with the implications of the proper noun ‘Babel,’ transgressing or exploding the once-monologic limits of language, he proffers a discourse on the placement of the name, and the generation and dissemination of this Bakhtinian heteroglossia (the coexistence of different ‘levels’ or types of speech within the novel—that of characters, narrators, even the author—which serve ‘to express authorial intentions, but in a refracted way’[^1]), this plurality of voices and languages expressed through the myth of the Tower of Babel.

IV.

Roughly twenty minutes later, having snaked along the east coast past Sandymount and Sydney Parade, Booterstown, Blackrock and Dun Laoghaire, I step off the train at Sandycove & Glasthule, to the southeast of Dublin, not too far from the mouth of the River Liffey.

V.

Immediately, before the text of Derrida’s essay begins as such, the Tower of Babel is pluralised, multiplied, disseminated. Because before anything else, the title, a proper name: ‘Des tours de Babel.’ Beyond this simple duplication, multiplication, or dissemination of the proper name, there are manifold possible English translations of an always already pluralised French title: ‘Of the Towers of Babel,’ ‘From the Towers of Babel,’ ‘Of the Turns of Babel,’ ‘From the Turns of Babel,’ ‘Some Tropes of Babel,’ and ‘Detours of Babel.’ Eve Tavor Bannet offers a range of others, based on the translation of Babel as the name of the father, or God: ‘Of turns (or turnings) from God, Of Detours from God, God’s turns (or tricks), God’s tropes, and God’s detours.’ She then offers more, translating Babel as ‘confusion’ after Derrida’s ‘confusing’ of the two proper names ‘Babel’ and ‘God,’ mirroring or imitating the result of the Tower of Babel’s mythical destruction or deconstruction: ‘Confusion’s

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Turns, Of Towers of Confusion, From Tropes of Confusion, or Confusion’s Detours.\textsuperscript{5} This pluralisation represents a fracturing and dissemination of the title, the dispersal of the proper name, and so the name’s potential untranslatability. Portraying the desperate need or desire for translation, it also displays the vital impossibility of what Bannet describes as ‘the production of any single, transparent, adequate, and true translation ... and the rebuilding of any single, towering, and universal construct of or through language.’\textsuperscript{6} After Babel, our origin in the fall of the Tower of Babel, and after Joyce’s endlessly polysemous texts, any language defies unity, unification, uniformity and univocity. Staged between Joyce and Derrida, this pluralisation marks an incursion into the institution from its irreducible adversarial Other, an Other with many more tongues than the institution can readily translate.

\textbf{VI.}

A poster gracing a wall at Sandycove & Glasthule station points me in the right direction, towards the coast and the Martello tower. It is an overcast day, and a light drizzle falls as I walk along the path snaking next to the wintry coastline, towards the tower, this sacred Joycean site.

\textsuperscript{5} Bannet, ‘The Scene of Translation,’ 587.

\textsuperscript{6} Bannet, ‘The Scene of Translation,’ 587.
VII.

For Joyce, first and foremost, the Babel myth is encapsulated in the sacred text *Finnegans Wake*—a work anticipated by the ‘Babelian book’* Ulysses*—with its cacophonous structural heteroglossia. Bloomer argues that *Finnegans Wake* is ‘a *tour de Babel*: a tower of Babble and a tour of language. Also a wheel of chatter (*tour du babil).* But *Ulysses* is also this: a tower constituted of babbling characters, a tour through multitudinous languages, and a circular, turning narrative-wheel returning to the ‘beginning’ with the manically chattered yeses of Molly Bloom, concluding, affirming and testifying to the whole thing with a final capitalised ‘Yes.’

In the apparently inconsequential babblings of Dedalus, Haines and especially Buck Mulligan, alongside a series of punning word-games played throughout the tangled weave of the inaugurating Telemachus, we see the inescapably intertwined dual focus of the Babel myth: firstly, naming and the placement of the proper name; and secondly, the endless uneasy search for both genetic and linguistic origins, for a foundation from which the exchanges of translation can begin. The Martello tower *is* Babel. Telemachus/Babel.

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VIII.

I approach the Martello tower through a small side road, a short walk uphill between some private houses and the ‘Forty Foot,’ formerly a male-only bathing place, but now a popular swimming place for all, even on this coolish June day. At the peak stands the sandstone tower, constructed by the English in the early nineteenth-century to withstand an invasion by Napoleon: ‘Billy Pitt had them built, said Buck Mulligan, when the French were on the seas.’ This tower’s dimensions mirror those of most other Martello towers erected throughout Great Britain and Ireland. Round in shape, it rises roughly forty feet into the air, two stories and a gun platform at the very top. Added onto the first level is a small, box-shaped annex, containing a gift-shop.

IX.

Given the polyphony of this inaugural episode and its manifold linguistic leakages, Ulysses is not contained here at all. It is simply not containable. This is best exhibited by the spatial politics of the setting of these first scenes, which take place atop the tower, in the open air of the Irish countryside, outside of the tower, and yet also remaining within the tower. Telemachus is structured by this doubling and this border-crossing, a play between the inside (a military, almost prison-like symbol of English dominion over Ireland) and the outside (the wild and free Irish landscape). Staged in an interstitial space between inside and outside, between Mulligan and Dedalus, and between England and Ireland, the episode frames Ulysses as a series of

\[10\] Joyce, Ulysses, 17.
spacings, threshold- and border-crossings, journeys both geographic and linguistic. The words of Dedalus and Mulligan are endlessly contaminating the sanctity of the frames with their excesses spilling out as the choric vessel is always already broken, leaking.

X.

Derrida’s work on translation is indebted to Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Task of the Translator.’ Benjamin begins with a basic question: ‘is a translation meant for readers who do not understand the original?’ His answer begins with the contention that ‘any translation that intends to perform a transmitting function cannot transmit anything but communication.’ De Man reads this to mean that

The relationship of the translator to the original is the relationship between language and language, wherein the problem of meaning of the desire to say something, the need to make a statement, is entirely absent. Translation is a relation from language to language, not a relation to an extra-linguistic meaning that could be copied, paraphrased or imitated.

The spaces between languages open infinite possibilities: any mistake could be made, the wrong path taken, the message intercepted, never received, or distorted in the transmission. Benjamin writes of a scenario where the relationship between

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original (the Tower of Babel) and translation (the myth of the Tower of Babel) would not be one of replication or resemblance, but of kinship, arguing that ‘no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original.’\textsuperscript{14} In the spacing between the original and the translation, ‘the original undergoes a change.’\textsuperscript{15} The life of the original continues through a textual evolution, but also dissemination: ‘the life of the originals attains its latest, continually renewed, and most complete unfolding.’\textsuperscript{16} And yet through this ‘provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages,’\textsuperscript{17} Benjamin discovers that, always already, language remains alien to us, a prosthetic or supplement at once necessary and excessive. In this alienation from language, Benjamin reveals the possibility that translation contains within itself its Other, its own impossibility: any translation always already contains an untranslatability. For de Man, this untranslatability is the motile play of writing and erasure revealed by deconstruction:

They disarticulate, they undo the original, they reveal that the original was always already disarticulated. They reveal that their failure, which seems to be due to the fact that they are secondary in relation to the original, reveals an essential failure, an essential disarticulation which was already there in the original.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{14} Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator,’ 256.
\textsuperscript{15} Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator,’ 256.
\textsuperscript{16} Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator,’ 255.
\textsuperscript{17} Benjamin, ‘The Task of the Translator,’ 257.
\textsuperscript{18} De Man, ‘Conclusions,’ 84.
Translation is displaced; ‘meaning is never reached,’ carried away, destined to wander and err.

XI.

The scene begins with Dedalus and Mulligan, the latter ‘bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed’ as he leans on the gunrest and calls down the stairs to the former:

Solemnly he came forward and mounted the round gunrest. He faced about and blessed gravely thrice the tower, the surrounding country and the awaking mountains. Then, catching sight of Stephen Dedalus, he bent towards him and made rapid crosses in the air, gurgling in his throat and shaking his head. Stephen Dedalus, displeased and sleepy, leaned his arms on the top of the staircase and looked coldly at the shaking gurgling face that blessed him, equine in its length, and at the light untonsured hair, grained and hued like pail oak.

But, in the midst of a series of false starts spread throughout Ulysses, the scene began earlier, with Mulligan’s mock-religious performance, robed in his yellow dressing-gown, as he ‘held the bowl aloft and intoned’ in Latin: ‘Introibo ad altare Dei’ (‘I will go in to the altar of God’), an untranslated invocation to an absent-present God which neither Mulligan nor Dedalus believe in. Reducing this sacred, holy Roman Catholic rite to a scene of early-morning tomfoolery and disobedience

\[19\] De Man, ‘Conclusions,’ 91.

\[20\] Joyce, Ulysses, 3.

\[21\] Joyce, Ulysses, 3.

\[22\] Joyce, Ulysses, 3.
with his ‘dignity-cum-pomposity,’ Mulligan’s textual violence is not only an act of subversion but also one of deconstruction—not only of this religious ritual, but of the transcendental signified represented by the omniscient God (the transcendental signified), the grounding principle which could make language and translation possible, the absence of which results in a Joycean polyphony and polysemy, the spacings of an impossibly chaotic modernist heteroglossia and a Babelian untranslatability.

XII.

As the two men shave, Mulligan mocks Dedalus’ name: ‘The mockery of it, he said gaily. Your absurd name, an ancient Greek.’ Noting the name’s untranslatability from its Greek origins to its new Anglo-Irish context, the loss of the first a (between the classical Daedalus and Stephen’s Dedalus) is perhaps an indication of this reckless or careless attempt at translation, the a misplaced, a lost remainder, opening a space in which deconstruction might take place.

XIII.

Stemming from the linguistic displacement or dissociation which looms over both Benjamin’s essay and de Man’s reading of this essay, ‘the scene of translation is an inevitable failure.’


24 Joyce, Ulysses, 4.

What most concerns Derrida is the name, the proper name, the proper noun, Babel: “‘Babel’: first a proper name, granted. But when we say “Babel” today, do we know what we are naming?”26 What we are naming is a myth of origin, perhaps ‘the myth of the origin of myth,’27 described by Derrida:

Out of resentment against the unique name and lip of men, he [Babel, God] imposes his name, his name of father; and with this violent imposition, he initiates the deconstruction of the tower, as of the universal language; he scatters the genealogical filiation. He interrupts the lineage. He at the same time imposes and forbids translation. He imposes and forbids it, constrains, but as if to failure, the children who henceforth will bear his name, the name that he gives to the city.28

The myth tells of the eternal inadequacy of translation:

Telling at least of the inadequation of one tongue to another, of one place in the encyclopaedia to another, of language to itself and to meaning, and so forth, it also tells of the need for figuration, for myth, for tropes, for twists and turns, for translation inadequate to supply that which multiplicity denies us.29

Bridging the gap between the material and the metaphoric, this myth tells of the impossibility of a completed structure:

The “tower of Babel” does not merely figure an irreducible multiplicity of tongues;

it exhibits an incompletion, the impossibility of finishing, of totalising, of

29 Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 191.
saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system, and architectonics.\textsuperscript{30}

Perhaps such incompleteness is our myth of origin. It certainly haunts Mark Wigley’s approach to the deconstruction of architecture, or a deconstructive architecture: ‘the ideal of the edifice is forever suspended in a scene of endless rebuilding, an interminable displaced discourse about building.’\textsuperscript{31} As he observes of ‘Des tours de Babel,’ ‘for Derrida, the incompletion of the tower is its very structure.’\textsuperscript{32} This metaphor is manifested in deconstruction’s search for ‘the untranslatable, unpresentable, even unrepresentable remainder,’\textsuperscript{33} its quest for ‘an opening in the structure, a structural opening, a gap that cannot be filled,’\textsuperscript{34} for the ‘structural flaw’\textsuperscript{35} which represents the potential fall of the tower.

\textbf{XIV.}

The contemporary entrance to the tower overlooks the ‘Forty Foot,’ Dublin Bay, and beyond that, the Irish Sea. Massive windows offer this immense view from the inside, from the gift shop of the James Joyce Museum. A vast desk sprawls across the right of the room as I enter, a small bookcase to the left. The rectangular room also contains some glass-topped display cabinets, exhibiting an array of Joycean

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{30} Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 191.
\bibitem{31} Wigley, \textit{The Architecture of Deconstruction}, 24.
\bibitem{32} Wigley, \textit{The Architecture of Deconstruction}, 26.
\bibitem{33} Wigley, \textit{The Architecture of Deconstruction}, 24.
\bibitem{34} Wigley, \textit{The Architecture of Deconstruction}, 26.
\bibitem{35} Wigley, \textit{The Architecture of Deconstruction}, 26.
\end{thebibliography}
artefacts, sacred relics, mostly manuscripts and copies of rare books, and a few other pieces of random Joyceana. I take particular notice of a key, said to be the original front door key to the tower: ‘He wants that key. It is mine, I paid the rent.’36 There is another smaller room off to one side, leading to the staircase which takes me to the tower proper. The room contains more cabinets displaying Joyceana: an original ceramic pot bearing the label, emblazoned in a dark blue, Plumtree Home Potted Meats, and a bar of lemon soap, wrapped in brown wax paper and string, bearing the name F. W. Sweny & Co. Ltd. Dispensing Chemist. There are also death masks adorning the walls. I make my way through the room, towards the staircase.

XV.

After Derrida, as Bloomer states, the tower and the text are always under construction: ‘The work is always in progress. It is generative. It is never complete, never completely clear.’37 The work is always already incomplete; any translation is always already incomplete. Derrida, this survivor or inheritor, indebted to the forefather Benjamin (but to the structures and spaces of Joyce’s texts too), ‘explores the curative possibility enveloped in the wandering, errance, and exile of language and in the inevitable failure of translation.’38 Language wanders and errs. This Joycean text wanders and errs. The staircase is narrow, hardly enough space to manoeuvre myself up each tiny step as it spirals around and upwards to the first

36 Joyce, Ulysses, 20.

37 Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 35.

38 Bannet, ‘The Scene of Translation,’ 585.
level. This *destinerrance*, this ‘loose thread in a tangled skein that turns out to lead to the whole ball of yarn,’\(^3^9\) is noticed by de Man in his reading of Benjamin’s ‘original’ essay:

> This movement of the original is a wandering, an *errance*, a kind of permanent exile if you wish, but it is not really an exile, for there is no homeland, nothing from which one has been exiled.\(^4^0\)

This originary exile, this foreignness and alienation, this lack of a homeland, is akin to the fall not from language, but into language. (Language was not the original sin, but the punishment, the expulsion. As Heath writes, ‘the fall into language is the fall into limitation and negation.’\(^4^1\)) The staircase winds around and around, until I find myself standing in a large round room, dressed up as someone would expect it to have appeared not in Joyce’s time, but in Joyce’s text, in *Ulysses*: separated from the display by a blue velvet rope, I see fireplace, a bed, a hammock, a trunk, various nineteenth- or early twentieth-century accoutrements, a few scattered chairs, and a table set for tea (teapot, milk jug, and three teacups), at which is propped another chair. An old medical text also sits on the table, opened to the page describing the disease peritonitis, an inflammation affecting the abdominal cavity. This is the moral, if you will, of the myth of the Tower of Babel (for Benjamin, de Man, Derrida, and perhaps most notably Joyce): it is an endless *destinerrance*, an aimless and random wandering, and also ‘a struggle for the survival of the name, the tongue, or the


\(^4^0\) De Man, ‘Conclusions,’ 92.

\(^4^1\) Heath, ‘Ambiviolences,’ 51.
Wandering and survival, both genetic and linguistic, are intimately joined together.

XVI.

Etymology is important here, as is the role Joyce asks the name to perform. The name Dedalus is first and foremost a reference to the mythical Greek sculptor Daedalus, most famous as the architect of the labyrinth, built for King Minos to imprison his wife’s son, the Minotaur. In The Aeneid, Roman poet Virgil refers to Daedalus’ artistry as ‘a maze of unbroken walls, with thousands of blind alleys, to keep the venturer guessing and trick him, so that the right path, Into the heart of the maze was a puzzle to find or retrace.’ Later, Ovid’s Metamorphoses fleshes out the idea of the labyrinth as a ‘built bafflement’ where ‘appearances were all confused,’ and where Daedalus ‘led the eye astray by a mazy multitude of winding ways.’

There is a tension in this doubled structure, between the labyrinth as a light-hearted game or series of puzzles to be solved, and its darker purpose of hiding or containing the grotesque and monstrous Minotaur. Perhaps this concealing or veiling of its true nature, hiding beneath the textual violence of a series of impossible twists and turns, is a function of the labyrinth. Certainly it is replicated in Ulysses, through a

42 Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 207.
45 Ovid, Metamorphoses, 8.161-2.
46 Ovid, Metamorphoses, 8.162-3.
similar play of writing and erasure, concealment and revelation, this écriture double, a double and doubled writing, unfolding throughout a series of blind alleys, winding passages, and volatile textual events, as we are plunged into the ‘spatial torture’\textsuperscript{47} of this loss of bearings. Between the beginning and the end, between alpha (A) and omega (Ω), the literary critic embarks on a ceaseless search for meaning, hunting for our own Theseus carrying Ariadne’s golden thread—a figure whose arrival is, perhaps, indefinitely postponed.

Between Daedalus and Dedalus—the loss of the a, representing not the origin as such but the possibility of the origin (a is alpha, the father, the beginning, the origin: ‘In the beginning was the Word …,’ because language is our origin, but here it is lost) the labyrinth sets up a relation with the Other, opening a space between a series of doubles: the Self and the Other, the tongue and the ear, Dedalus and Daedalus, Dedalus and Mulligan, Dedalus and Haines, Ireland and England, Joyce and Derrida.

\textbf{XVII.}

I stand in the vast round room, looking bemusedly at the display hoping to re-create both Joyce’s time and Joyce’s text. And the sounds reverberate. The sounds of the real-life Joyce, the surgeon, poet and senator Oliver St John Gogarty, and the Englishman Samuel Chevenix Trench resound throughout the space from the time they lived there, Joyce for just six days in 1904. History resounds. The seemingly

inconsequentially babbled sounds of the fictional Dedalus, Mulligan and Haines also resound, particularly their conversation on English and Irish with the old milk-woman. Fiction resounds. Trace of these voices, real or otherwise, remain.

Am I experiencing some kind of alienating ‘Wakean peregrinism (exile, use of foreign linguistic elements)’\(^\text{48}\) as I attempt to bridge the space between their voices, their, words, their languages, and my own?

**XVIII.**

For Dedalus, the master/servant dialectic is embedded in Irish art: ‘It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked looking-glass of a servant.’\(^\text{49}\) The episode is structured by these concerns with art and language as acts of subjugation and repression. At breakfast, the tower almost literally becomes a tower of babble. Mulligan, Dedalus, and Haines encounter the elderly milk-woman, and Joyce stages a battle between the English and Irish languages, focused farcically on the inability of the milk-woman to translate the Englishman Haines’ words from the Irish he speaks into her own English tongue:

—Do you understand what he says? Stephen asked her.

—Is it French you are talking, sir? the old woman said to Haines.

Haines spoke to her again a longer speech, confidently.

—Irish, Buck Mulligan said. Is there Gaelic on you?

—I thought it was Irish, she said, by the sound of it. Are you from the west, sir?

—I am an Englishman, Haines answered.

\(^{48}\) Slote, ‘No Symbols Where None Intended,’ 195.

\(^{49}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 7.
—He’s English, Buck Mulligan said, and he thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland.

—Sure we ought to, the old woman said, and I’m ashamed I don’t speak the language myself. I’m told it’s a grand language by them that knows.

—Grand is no name for it, said Buck Mulligan. Wonderful entirely.\(^50\)

In the absurdity of an Englishman speaking Irish and an Irishwoman unable to understand the language which should by right be her native tongue, Joyce creates a scene of a very disturbing dispossession, a scene almost of madness, the old Irish woman not having lost her native tongue but never having had it to begin with. Here, for Joyce, language is not just a mischievous word-game, but an apparent performance of the untranslatability from one language to another, and the uncertainty of the relationship to the Other given that this relationship is, always already, mediated by language.

**XIX.**

Telemachus is filled with characters who take on disguises and identities, for the purpose of deconstructing, culminating in an accusation apparently made jointly by Dedalus and Joyce: ‘Usurper.’\(^51\)

Usurper.

\(^{50}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 14.

\(^{51}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 23.
XX.

I leave the room and return to the staircase. I continue my climb upwards through this narrow, increasingly claustrophobic space. Finally, I see daylight, and emerge on what would once have been the gun platform, but which would now be better known as the setting for the first scenes of Ulysses. I see it in the past in Joseph Strick’s film adaptation of 1967, where sixty-three years after the event he tries to recreate this inaugural scene, with a pompous T. P. McKenna cast as Mulligan and a morose Maurice Roëves in the role of Dedalus. I expect today the view looks much the same as it has since the tower was first erected: the expanses of the snotgreen sea below, crashing into the rocky shore, the sky mostly grey and overcast.

Peering over the edge, I notice it is not as tall as I had expected.

XXI.

As Bloomer notes, ‘The connections between Babel, babble and falling should not go un-noted.’ The fall of the Tower of Babel is the fall into language. Bloomer continues: ‘Not to fall from, but into. The fall from is hierarchical and you can hurt yourself. The fall into is labyrinthine, dreamy, a dancing fall, a delirious fall.’ A delirious fall, like the ‘great fall of the offwall’ from that first Edenic scene in Finnegans Wake (‘riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and

52 Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 154.
53 Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 162.
54 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 3.18-9.
Environ’s⁵⁵, into Finnegans or H.C.E.’s or humanity’s sexual-textual exploits: ‘The fall (bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonbronrontonroonntunntunnuhouna wnskawntoohooordenenthurnuk!) of a once wallstrait oldparr ...’⁵⁶ Expressed here with the sound made by Finnegan/H.C.E./humanity falling as well as in this text’s cacophony or polyphony of lips, tongues, voices and languages, this fall is also present in Ulysses, in the form of the de-centred or disseminated narrative structure and its deconstruction of the ordered environs of the city of Dublin. This fall both causes and is caused by the confusion embodied by the unfinished structure of the Tower of Babel, representing the primal scene, the origin or inauguration, of language—and deconstruction.

This (f)all leads (back), perhaps by that ‘commodius vicus of recirculation,’⁵⁷ to the process of naming, and to the first, primal, originary name. Before anything else, even before language, and before translation, confusion, says Derrida, is the proper name of ‘Babel’:

The proper name Babel, as a proper name, should remain untranslatable, but, by a kind of associative confusion that a unique tongue rendered possible, one could have thought to translate it, in that very tongue, by a common noun signifying what we translate as confusion.⁵⁸

Then, even the meaning of the word ‘confusion,’ this translation of the name of ‘Babel,’ becomes confused:

⁵⁵ Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 3.1-3.
⁵⁶ Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 3.15-7.
⁵⁷ Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 3.2.
⁵⁸ Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 192.
the confusion of tongues, but also the state of confusion in which the architects find themselves with the structure interrupted, is such that a certain confusion has already begun to affect the two meanings of the word “confusion.”

Thirdly, Babel is confused with the patronymic, the name of the father, the name of God as the name of the father:

Babel means not only confusion in the double sense of the word, but also the name of the father, more precisely and more commonly, the name of God as name of father. The city would bear the name of God the father and of the father of the city that is called confusion.

For Derrida, Babel is not only the proper name or noun and the name of the Father, but precisely is the father: ‘Babel, the father, giving his name to the confusion, multiplied the lips, and this is why we are separated and that right now I am dying, dying to kiss you with our lip the only one I want to hear.’ The ‘father’ is the origin: Babel, the myth of the Tower of Babel, is the origin of language. But the confusion, the separation, is like death—a death symbolic of the destabilisation of the institution and the destabilisation of the subject-identities ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida,’ which exist now only as potentialities.

XXII.

Here, Babel has also become a city. BEARING the name of God and the name of the Father, it is a city called confusion. This is perhaps the Dublin represented in Ulysses:

60 Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 192.
with its gathering of a city’s worth of characters across so many dispersed geographical locations, its plethora of lips, tongues, voices, languages, its various disseminated plotlines and de-centred narratives, Joyce’s Dublin is a confused and confusing city *par excellence*. Such a textual structure is the myth of Babel ‘personified.’ It turns out that for Derrida, Joyce’s Dublin is at the origin of language(s):

In giving his name, in giving all names, the father would be at the origin of language, and that power would belong by right to God the father. And the name of God the father would be the name of that origin of tongues.62

Joyce’s Dublin is at once the myth of Babel, a city of babble, a city of confusion, a city named confusion, the city as father, the city as God, and the city as origin or inauguration. *Ulysses*, as it contains but does not really contain Joyce’s city of confusion, is all these things too: it assumes the position of Babel, confusion, God, and the Father. Babel is the name of the father. God is the name of the father. Confusion is the name of the father. *Ulysses* is the name of the father. Babel, God, Confusion, Ulysses: so many names, so many fathers, so many origins. Joyce and Derrida too, perpetrating the endless, abyssal fall into language, with their endless translations of the myth of the Tower of Babel in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and ‘Des tours de Babel.’

XXIII.

And yet there is only one name, one origin. And ‘the war that he declares has first raged within his name: divided, bifid, ambivalent, polysemous: God deconstructing.’63 Babel/God/confusion/Father/Ulysses, perhaps also Joyce/Derrida: always already deconstructing.

XXIV.

This polysemy, this absurd confusion of tongues and names and subjects, is the force of the Word.

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63 Derrida, ‘Des tours de Babel,’ 196.
6. Deconstruction’s folies

Continuing to explore the possibility that the architectural metaphor might be able to shed some light on this encounter, that the structure or form might reveal as much if not more than the content, this chapter departs from two claims Derrida makes on architecture. The first is that ‘the pure philosopher, the metaphysician, will have to operate like a good architect, like a good tekhnēs of edification.’\(^1\) The second is that ‘there is nothing more architectural than deconstruction but also nothing less architectural.’\(^2\) Amidst the fragmented discourse of ‘Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword,’ he also proposes to deconstruct the notion that because ‘this is a word, a sentence … this is not architecture.’\(^3\) ‘But prove it,’ he continues, ‘present your axioms and your definitions and your postulates.’\(^4\)

Madness might be the only way forward as the thirty-five folies of this scattered text—circulating around the designs of Inigo Jones, Bernard Tschumi, Jennifer Bloomer, and Joyce and Derrida—display the futility of ordering or controlling meaning (presenting axioms, definitions, postulates, propositions), problematizing the institution’s search for meaning by placing it outside of this text and only in an unknown and unknowable future. Unframed and ‘assembled otherwise,’\(^5\) the following thirty-five folies are derived from a volatile confrontation

\(^{1}\) Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, 40.


\(^{5}\) Derrida, ‘Outwork,’ 3.
between Derrida and the architect Peter Eisenman over the design for the urban space at Parc de la Villette in Paris. The rigidly ordered numbering system serves to simultaneously give the illusion of certainty and, through its sheer excess and randomness, allows a certain madness to intervene, opening a crack for an irreducible Other to deconstruct this structure. Each folie negates its own presence, figured only as the potential for future, reader-produced meanings, for ‘it is not my intention here to present them.’\(^6\) The frame is not missing, but is bent, warped, perhaps broken.

**Folie 1**

1.1. ‘The philosopher is first and foremost an architect, endlessly attempting to produce a grounded structure.’\(^7\) This might have been self-evident before Derrida.

1.1.1. Wigley elaborates: ‘The architectural metaphor is not simply a metaphor among others. More than the metaphor of foundation, it is the foundational metaphor. It is not simply one other metaphor.’\(^8\)

1.1.2. Derrida hopes to test just how far it can be said that the philosopher is an architect: ‘It remains to be seen what happens when one speaks of an architectural paradigm for other spaces, other techniques, arts, writings.’\(^9\)

Much of his oeuvre will have circled around this statement: the placement of

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\(^6\) Derrida, ‘Outwork,’ 3.

\(^7\) Derrida, ‘Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword,’ 118.


\(^9\) Derrida, ‘Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword,’ 118.
the architectural paradigm (structure) in the writing of both philosophy and literature.

1.1.2.1. Just look at Glas as an example.

1.2. ‘Structure is first the structure of an organic or artificial work, the internal unity of an assemblage, a construction; a work is governed by a unifying principle, an architecture that is built and made visible in a location.’\(^{10}\)

1.3. There was once a unity, a whole, but that has been shattered and scattered, disseminated, into thirty-five folies, pulling together and yet violently drawing apart this fracturing, fragmenting text.

1.3.1. Geoffrey Bennington suggests that ‘everything begins and ends in plurality or dispersion.’\(^{11}\) ‘I prefer to call it “scatter”,’ he continues, ‘and immediately scatter “scatter” here.’\(^{12}\) The folies are scattered, and the folies scatter.

1.3.1.1. Lacking an authoritative and presented framework, and lacking context, scatter is potential.

1.3.2. Bennington turns to the OED for some definitions of ‘scatter,’ as both a noun and a verb.

1.3.2.1. As a noun, the word refers to ‘the action of scattering; wide of irregular distribution; dispersion.’\(^{13}\) It is also ‘a quantity loosely

\(^{10}\) Derrida, ‘Force and Signification,’ 15.


\(^{12}\) Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 1.

\(^{13}\) Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 1.
distributed or interspersed.'\textsuperscript{14} Finally, it is ‘the scattering of light or other radiation.'\textsuperscript{15}

1.3.2.2. As a verb, the word means ‘to dissipate, squander,'\textsuperscript{16} ‘to separate and drive in various directions,'\textsuperscript{17} and ‘to throw about in disorder in various places.'\textsuperscript{18} It is ‘to throw or send forth so that particles are distributed or spread out; to sow or throw (seed, money, etc.) broadcast; to sprinkle, strew; to diffuse.'\textsuperscript{19}

1.3.3. ‘Take it also as a prescription,’ Bennington says: ‘“scatter! scat!”. In all senses, \textit{dans tout le sens}.'\textsuperscript{20} The text commands us: scatter!

1.4. Madness intervenes.

1.4.1. The seeds are planted. ‘The eminently teleological figure of the seed is already in tension with the randomness of its scatter.'\textsuperscript{21}

1.4.2. Scatter, dissemination, and madness are brought into conjunction by the random dispersal of the thirty-five \textit{folios}.

\textsuperscript{14} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 1.
\textsuperscript{15} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 1.
\textsuperscript{16} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 1.
\textsuperscript{17} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 2.
\textsuperscript{18} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 2.
\textsuperscript{19} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.
\textsuperscript{21} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.
Folie 2

2.1. This also has to do with heterochronic space, layers of meaning and the same textual space, the same folie, holding or containing multiple meanings, even in its endless dispersal, scattering, and dissemination.

2.1.1. Michel Foucault explains this in the essay ‘Of Other Spaces’: ‘The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time, and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be coloured with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not super-imposable on one another.’

2.1.1.1. This scattered heterochronic space rejects a linear conception of time, narrative, signification, and meaning: ‘We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein,’ its own loose shape.

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23 Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces,’ 22.
2.1.2. Sites, cities in particular, are only ‘slices in time’\textsuperscript{24} of the history of any geographical place, a space in which we experience ‘time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect.’\textsuperscript{25} London is especially rich in this regard, endlessly written and re-written.

\textit{Folie 3}

3.1. This all circles and circulates around Covent Garden. Perhaps no site has been re-written more than Covent Garden, the sprawling urban space in the centre of the city, on the north side of the Thames, surrounded by Fitzrovia, Bloomsbury, Clerkenwell, Holborn, Soho, and Westminster, bounded by High Holborn to the north, Kingsway to the east, the Strand to the south, and Charing Cross Road to the west. Its history dates back to the first century A.D., when a settlement existed on the site in Roman times. In the seventh century the area became a busy Saxon trading port named Ludenwic, but was abandoned when Viking invaders began to arrive in the ninth century. The site’s name dates back to the reign of King John in the thirteenth century, when a forty acre area was used as a kitchen garden for the Abbey of St. Peter at Westminster. In 1630, the architect Inigo Jones was commissioned to build houses on the site and, inspired by his travels in Italy, created the Piazza, ‘the first of London’s formal squares,’\textsuperscript{26} the first open square in England. A highly experimental act of town planning, Jones designed a perfectly straight grid

\textsuperscript{24} Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces,’ 26.

\textsuperscript{25} Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces,’ 26.

of streets surrounding the Piazza, in contrast to the more disorganised road system common throughout London at the time. In 1642, Samuel Pepys wrote of the first Punch and Judy shows being staged in the area, a practice enduring through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, theatres began appearing in the area, Theatre Royal Drury Lane being the most notable, opening in 1663. The geographic centre of the area, the Covent Garden Piazza, flourished as a flower, fruit and vegetable market from the sixteenth-century until 1974 when the market moved to new premises at Nine Elms, and the site fell into disrepair. The central piazza was re-opened in 1980s, transformed into a shopping centre and tourist attraction. Today, the area is perhaps most famous for its shopping (particularly the Seven Dials district), abundant and diverse street performers, and as one of London’s major theatre districts.

3.1.1. There are so many stories told of the one place, re-significations abounding, the place multiplying, fracturing, splintering, as if Covent Garden were always already scattered.

**Folie 4**

4.1. Inigo Jones plays a larger part here than it first seems.

4.1.1. Giles Worsley describes Jones’s Classicism, this ‘particular fascination with the Classical orders and the richness of Classical ornament,’\(^27\) as ‘a

comet bursting dramatically into view in the night sky.'²⁸ Jones is also noted for the concept of ‘varying with reason’ which haunts his theory of design: ‘the judicious selection and adaptation of classical architectural forms to create well contrasted but harmonious effects according to the needs of a particular building or part of a building.’²⁹

4.1.1.1. The design of Covent Garden unfolds via such a structure, a sequence of imitations, interpretations, adaptations, inventions, and variations.

4.1.1.2. But Jones is perhaps revolutionary for more than just this radical ‘varying with reason’ Classical aesthetic.

4.1.2. He is concerned with a correspondence between architecture and literature, but also a tension between them:

4.1.2.1. Elizabeth Jordan describes this relationship: ‘Jones created a new synthesis, animated by both literature and architecture, which responded to antique and Italian Renaissance prototypes and provided new and philosophically tempered aesthetic standards not only for poetry and buildings but also for English culture.’³⁰

4.1.3. He transformed the literary into the architectural, and the architectural into the literary: ‘As a working architect, Jones moved beyond the literary

²⁸ Worsley, Classical Architecture in Britain, 1.
manifestation of architecture described both by his poetic contemporaries and by himself. His theoretical writings become manifest in his theatrical settings for the masques and physically present in his buildings.  

4.1.4. This is not simply a case of transforming plans, lines drawn on paper, into buildings, but of uncovering a poetry of architecture, the translation of an immaterial writing into a material architecture: ‘The shaping force of his monumental imagination has translated his words into eloquent stone,’  

writes Jordan.

Folie 5

5.1. But, in a gesture taken out of Jones’ masterful hands, something he could never have foreseen, the history of the geographical sites resists his architectural designs.

5.1.1. Attempts at accurately recording the history of Jones’s impact on Covent Garden’s architecture have proven problematic:

5.1.1.1. ‘Anyone who attempts to unravel the architectural history of Covent Garden is immediately faced with the problem that almost from the moment the square and surrounding buildings were built, fact and fancy have been so intertwined as to quite easily lead the researcher astray.’


5.1.1.1. The architecture resists being written in one singular and solid form; instead, it is written and re-written.

5.1.2. Any attempt at establishing a correspondence between literature and architecture will always already have been doomed. Jones’ design unintentionally represents the impossibility of a correspondence between the two (on the one hand, the architecture will not be written, can only be reduced to something other than architecture; on the other hand, writing will always already lack the materiality of an architecture), a theme which Bernard Tschumi takes up in his polemical redesign of Covent Garden, his dialogue with Jones’s architecture more than three centuries after these attempts at translating Jones’s writings into buildings, a dialogue also with the literature of Joyce.

Folie 6

6.1. It must be madness to propose any correspondence between literature and architecture.

6.1.1. Yet Tschumi suggests otherwise. In the wake of Derrida’s attempt to learn to ‘write otherwise,’ he attempts to produce an architecture that is otherwise.

6.1.2. Tschumi’s entire oeuvre consists of something otherwise than architecture.

34 Derrida, ‘Tympan,’ xxiv.
6.2. Joyce responds pre-emptively to Tschumi’s claim in Architecture and Disjunction that ‘there is no way to perform architecture in a book,’ that ‘words and drawings can only produce paper space,’ which, ‘by definition ... is imaginary.’

6.2.1. He does so through the construction of a succession of grand Babelian edifices, towering literary monuments, beginning with the Martello tower in Telemachus, and ending in the bedroom at 7 Eccles Street in Penelope (then blossoming again in the heady excesses of Finnegans Wake.) Still, this is only paper space, imagined, though perhaps not imaginary.

6.3. ‘Scatter is Babel,’ writes Bennington. Or: Babel is scatter. Ulysses is scatter.

6.3.1. ‘Translate, please.’

Folie 7

7.1. The title, the subtitle, says it all: “‘Joyce’s Garden’ in London: a Polemic on the Written Word and the City.’

7.1.1. Meshing Finnegans Wake with an uninvited architectural design for a reinvigoration of the urban spaces of Covent Garden, Tschumi’s design is more than simply an attempted re-telling of the narrative of Covent Garden, endeavouring to re-signify this urban space (if only in Tschumi’s ‘imaginary’ design, and not in any material reality).

35 Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 93.

36 Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 7.

37 Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 7.
7.1.2. The design offers a polemical provocation to take part in a dialogue between literature (Finnegans Wake) and architecture (Covent Garden), each speaking its own untranslatable language:

7.1.2.1. ‘Joyce’s garden is an urban project on a huge scale whose programme is liberally based on James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake. Although the project contains numerous references to certain literary techniques, to the characters of Anna Livia Plurabelle or the twin brothers Shem and Shaun (such as the double crescents and their disintegration), it would be absurd to attempt to establish a direct relationship between the novel and the project for the city. The one can only provoke the other. It must be made clear that Joyce’s Garden is above all a polemical work on the writing of the city.’

7.2. It is also a provocation directed at the Other, a passionate and polemical call for a response from the Other, hoping to open a dialogue with literature’s possible Other, architecture.

7.3. So much of Dublin only acquires significance from its placement in, and its continuing relationship to, Joyce’s writing. He wrote, in that now famous letter to Frank Budgen, of the desire to ‘give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city

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one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of ... [his] book.  

7.3.1. More than simply creating a map of the geography, architecture, and urban spaces of Dublin, Joyce produced—and continues to reproduce—a city in language, in poetry.

**Folie 8**

8.1. Perhaps, as Barthes would later suggest in relation to Paris (the other city featuring heavily in the production and publication of *Ulysses*; a myriad-minded place, a city of infinite possibilities), the city is only ever a work of poetry: ‘For the city is a poem ... but not a classical poem, not a poem centred on a subject.’

8.1.1. The city is a poem, perhaps akin to Stéphane Mallarmé’s fantastically scattered *Un coup de Dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*: the black words are written in multiple fonts and sizes, the text spread or splashed across these eleven vast, sparse, blank and unnumbered verso/recto pages, containing several complex interwoven narratives, themes and structures, a spatial profusion compounded by how the printed words only highlight ‘the surrounding blankness,’ and ‘meaning serves only to emphasise meaninglessness.’


Folie 9

9.1. Tschumi claims to have composed “Joyce’s Garden” in London not from establishing a direct or even coherent relationship between the Covent Garden site and Finnegans Wake, but instead as an act of sheer folly, with which he violently throws, pushes or forces the two texts together, probing this possible if improbable relationship, producing or imposing a relationship (no matter how uneasily or tangentially) between these discordant texts.

9.1.1. A relationship is established in this lack of a relationship, a contrived relationship and so a contrived lack of relationship. After all ‘the architecture was derived, by analogy or opposition, from Joyce’s text.”

Folie 10

10.1. Events unfold.

10.1.1. The relationship between architecture and literature circles around the concept of events: ‘The unfolding of events in a literary context inevitably suggests parallels to the unfolding of events in architecture.”

10.2. Tschumi’s first hypothesis concerns this tense and edgy—uneasy and marginal: on (the) edge—relationship:

10.2.1. ‘James Joyce didn’t invent anything that [seventeenth-century Roman sculptor architect Gian Lorenzo] Bernini hadn’t discovered nearly 300 years

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42 Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 146.

43 Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 146.
beforehand. The manipulation of space is related to the exploration and perversion of language. This import-export process in invention (from architecture to writing, from writing to painting and so on) finds an unexpected reversal in Joyce’s Garden: it pays homage to the man who, by a most intense exploration of the faculties of language, has shown architecture what it discovered, despite itself, a long time ago.\textsuperscript{44}

10.2.2. The architectural structures of Bernini are brought into proximity to the literary or linguistic ones of Joyce. As is the case when Covent Garden and “Joyce’s Garden” touch upon each other, when Joyce and Derrida touch upon each other, the relationship is founded on the manipulation and perversion of the conventions and traditions of the institutions representing ‘architecture’ and ‘literature.’

10.2.3. Perhaps Tschumi is right to claim that we cannot perform architecture in a book.

10.3. But Tschumi’s second hypothesis undercuts his claims as he attempts to address this interchangeability between architectural and literary narratives, strengthening these irrational, impossible, insane claims of a correspondence:

10.3.1. ‘Every function can be replaced by another. A barn can become a theatre just as a theatre can become a barn. And if a book will not replace a cathedral, it will know how to replace the gods of that cathedral. Joyce’s Garden, then, takes a book rather than a function as its point of departure. Here, the project plays on the de-construction of a narrative structure

\textsuperscript{44} Tschumi, “Joyce’s Garden” in London,’ 22.
comparable to a journey from one point to another. A journey rather than a use, because the construction of a new district does not compensate for the void produced by the destruction of another.\textsuperscript{45}

10.3.2. Architecture and literature depart from a similar immersive ontological or experiential foundation.

10.3.2.1. It is Tschumi’s hope simply to reveal the structure making possible this unlikely correspondence.

\textit{Folie 11}

11.1. Perhaps a grid might be able to control or contain the scattered \textit{folios}.

11.1.1. The application of the grid reinforces the strain, the tension, between a material architecture and an immaterial literature.

11.1.2. Tschumi’s ‘polemical work on the writing of the city’ theorises the narrative as an unforeseeable journey between a series of points or events performed across this grid.

11.1.3. The grid acts as an abstract foundation. That is all. That is the correspondence.

11.1.4. ‘The intersections of an ordinance survey grid became the locations of each architectural intervention, thereby accommodating a heterogeneous selection of buildings through the regular spacing of points. Moreover ... the point grid functioned as a mediator between two mutually exclusive systems of word and stones, between the literary program (James Joyce’s book) and

\textsuperscript{45} Tschumi, “Joyce’s Garden” in London,’ 22.
the architectural text. *Joyce’s Garden* in no way attempted to reconcile the disparities resulting from the superimposition of one text on another; it avoided synthesis, encouraging, instead, the opposed and often conflicting logics of the different systems. Indeed, the abstraction of the grid as an organising device suggested the disjunction between an architectural signifier and its programmatic signified, between space and the use that is made of it.  

11.1.5. Disjointed and endlessly disruptive, the grid produces a series of sequences, movements in space between events across the grid:

11.1.5.1. ‘The final meaning of any sequence is dependent on the relation space/event/movement. By extension, the meaning of any architectural situation depends on the relation S E M. The composite sequence SEM breaks the linearity of the elementary sequence, whether S, E, or M.’  

11.1.6. The focus here is on accumulation and juxtaposition (‘All sequences are cumulative. Their “frames” derive significance from juxtaposition’), these spacings across this fractured and fragmented grid, which are also found in the ‘infinite possibilities’ of Joyce’s text: ‘Through its regular and

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repetitive markings, the grid defined a potentially infinite field of points of intensity: an incomplete, infinite extension, lacking centre of hierarchy.\textsuperscript{50}

**Folie 12**

12.1. Is an architecture of dissemination possible?

12.1.1. Can the grid contain this dissemination, this scattering, of the over-potentialised *folios*?

12.1.2. Tschumi brushes up against dissemination: the instability and endless energy of the grid produces the text in this play between these events, the movements in space between these events:

12.1.2.1. ‘Every term, every germ depends at every moment on its place and is entrained, like all the parts of a machine, into an ordered series of displacements, slips, transformations, and recurrences that cut out or add a member in every proposition that has gone before.’\textsuperscript{51}

12.2. Always already, the *folios* will have been displaced by their scattering, their dissemination.

**Folie 13**

13.1. The *folios* are disjointed, displaced, dislocated, and discontinuous.

\textsuperscript{50} Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 194.

\textsuperscript{51} Derrida, ‘Dissemination,’ in *Dissemination*, 330.
13.1.1. Writing a series of displacements, slips, transformations, and recurrences, dislocations and repetitions, deliberately provoking fractures, breaks and oppositions, Tschumi composes his design for “Joyce’s Garden” in London,’ a series of actions he describes as an architecture of disjunction.

13.1.1.1. ‘Ex-centric, dis-integrated, dis-located, deconstructed, dismantled, disassociated, discontinuous, deregulated ... de-, dis, ex-.’

These are the prefixes of today. Not post-, neo-, or pre.’

13.1.2. ‘Dis-’ is a highly positive, active, affirmative, and excessive prefix, violently dismantling and deconstructing, producing a series of dissociations and disjunctions.

13.1.3. This is a volatile architecture of the event, which is also the decentred structure of Ulysses, where apparently random and aimless wanderings from one point to another spread throughout the text.

13.1.4. It is at once architectural and not-architectural, literary and not-literary.

**Folie 14**

14.1. The scattering of the *folios* is a form of violence.

14.1.1. ‘There is no architecture without action, no architecture without events, no architecture without program.’

14.1.2. ‘By extension, there is no architecture without violence.’

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14.2. ‘Architecture,’ writes Tschumi, ‘is not unlike fireworks,’\textsuperscript{55} exploding in the night sky, or scattered across the page a la Mallarmé.

14.2.1. We experience pleasure as we witness the volatile movements of the multi-coloured flames of the fireworks, but also violence as they explode against the blank canvas of the darkened night sky.

14.2.2. ‘The pleasurable and sometimes violent confrontation of spaces and activities’\textsuperscript{56} in architecture (and perhaps in literature too) mirrors the confrontation between the space (the night sky), the movements (the arcs of the fireworks, their trajectory) and the events (the explosions).

14.3. Architecture (and so its possible Other: literature) is always already on the edge of revolution:

14.3.1. ‘Architecture’s inherent confrontation of space and use and the inevitable disjunction of the two terms means that architecture is constantly unstable, constantly on the verge of change.’\textsuperscript{57}

14.4. ‘Like any form of violence, the violence of architecture also contains the possibility of change, of renewal.’\textsuperscript{58}

14.5. The textual violence and volatility, and a sense of their unpredictable generative possibilities, means fireworks are perhaps ‘the greatest architecture of all’:

\textsuperscript{54} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 121.

\textsuperscript{55} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 29.

\textsuperscript{56} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 4.

\textsuperscript{57} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 19.

\textsuperscript{58} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 132.
14.5.1. ‘Good architecture must be conceived, erected and burned in vain. The greatest architecture of all is the fireworks’: it perfectly shows the gratuitous consumption of pleasure."59

14.5.2. This framework of the firework might also be applied to the literary text, an endlessly renewing act of violence taking place as the letters and words (movement) are inscribed on the page (space) to create the text (event), an exultant violence perpetrated over and over as the words are re-inscribed in the pen of the writer and through the eyes of the reader.

14.5.3. This is precisely the ‘violence’ perpetrated by both “Joyce’s Garden” in London’ and its uneasy origin in Finnegans Wake: ‘Finnegans Wake implied that particular transgressions could attack the constituent elements of architectural language—its columns, stairs, windows, and their various combinations—as they are defined by any cultural period, whether beaux arts or Bauhaus. This formal disobedience is ultimately harmless and may even initiate a new style as it slowly loses the excessive character of a violated prohibition. It then announces a new pleasure and the elaboration of a new norm, which is in turn violated."60

14.5.4. In both ‘Joyce’s Garden’ and the Wake, this violence, juxtaposition and opposition plunges both the living bodies moving through architecture and those moving through literature into a realm where they lack


60 Tschumi, Architecture and Disjunction, 134.
recognisable ‘spatial markings,’\textsuperscript{61} and are forced into a kind of ‘spatial intoxication,’\textsuperscript{62} or a ‘spatial torture.’\textsuperscript{63}

\textit{Folie 15}

15.1. Embedded in this ‘formal disobedience’ is an endlessly and explosively generative gesture essential to the relationship, the confrontation or conflict, between architecture and literature, as though the settling of Tschumi’s text over both Jones’ and Joyce’s might only be a bridge to another text as “Joyce’s Garden” in London’ ‘is in turn violated,’\textsuperscript{64} or deconstructed—as if the text might somehow be surviving, living on, or simply learning to live, finally.

15.2. ‘No, deconstruction is always on the side of the yes, on the side of the affirmation of life. Everything I say—at least from “Pas” (in \textit{Parages}) on—about survival as a complication of the opposition life/death proceeds in me from an unconditional affirmation of life. This surviving is life beyond life, life more than life, and my discourse is not a discourse on death, but, on the contrary, the affirmation of a living being who prefers living and thus surviving to death, because survival is not simply that which remains but the most intense life possible.’\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{61} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 124.
\textsuperscript{62} Hollier, \textit{Against Architecture}, 59.
\textsuperscript{63} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 137.
\textsuperscript{64} Tschumi, \textit{Architecture and Disjunction}, 134.
\textsuperscript{65} Derrida, \textit{Learning to Live Finally}, 51-2.
16.1. The Wandering Rocks episode of *Ulysses* is laid down across a grid of Dublin, just as Inigo Jones’s Covent Garden and Tschumi’s “Joyce’s Garden” in London are both laid down upon a grid of this district of London.

16.1.1. Wandering Rocks is treated as a ‘spatial object.’

16.1.2. Ruth Frehner suggests that ‘Studies on literary spaces—rooms, houses, cities, landscapes—abound. On the other hand, attempts at treating a text as a spatial object, and with it the reading process as a spatial experience, have only recently become concerns—even in Joyce criticism.’

16.2. There is a polysemous absurdity to Wandering Rocks.

16.2.1. First absurdity: rocks do not wander.

16.2.2. Second absurdity: the episode itself suggests that architecture might be mobile, that the streets and buildings of Dublin are wandering.

16.2.2.1. The episode is supposed to mirror the eighteen episodes of *Ulysses* with eighteen sections of its own. But Wandering Rocks is excessive in that it consists of nineteen discrete sections.

16.2.3. Third absurdity: architecture cannot be performed in a book.

16.2.4. There are others.

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17.1. Frehner’s ‘Text as Architecture’ stands as an exegesis of sorts for her artistic attempts to come to terms with the literal spacing of Wandering Rocks.

17.1.1. To usher in the new millennium, Zurich’s Strauhof Literary Museum and the city’s Cultural Department commissioned the Zurich James Joyce Foundation to mount an exhibition.

17.1.2. Frehner responded with a work based on Wandering Rocks, in which she hoped to produce ‘a portrait of the artist’s Joycean work rather than a documentary of Joyce the literary artist.’\(^67\) Her work attempted to exhibit or to encapsulate the complex spatialities and temporalities presented by this episode of Joyce’s text: ‘Ulysses, being set on one single day, puts a whole universe into a spatial and temporal nutshell.’\(^68\) She interprets Wandering Rocks as an intensely non-linear, non-sequential work (‘the text is not as straightforward a narrative as it pretends to be’\(^69\)) where nothing is straightforward or easy: ‘Fixed structures (the schema of the book, the street map, the inevitable sequentiality of the text) reveal themselves as traps.’\(^70\) In her view, the whole text is littered with spatial, temporal and linguistic traps, the results of ‘Joyce’s Dedalic ingenuity,’\(^71\) which may well plunge the reader into madness.

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\(^68\) Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 203.

\(^69\) Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 207.

\(^70\) Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 208.

17.1.3. With this interpretation acting as a foundation, Frehner’s artwork hoped ‘to bring out the visual and spatial qualities of Joyce’s texts, that is, to reveal in the most literal sense their architecture.’\textsuperscript{72} In the end, the installation consisted of nineteen glass panels in a slight curve arranged left to right, each containing the text of one of the corresponding scenes from Wandering Rocks. The texts inscribed on the panels is dependent not on where these scenes appear in Joyce’s text but on the time they actually occur, replicating the complicated simultaneous temporality of the episode taking place between 2:55 and 4pm, perhaps performing this temporality far better than Joyce’s text could hope to. A series of fluorescent wires were then used to connect related scenes or allusions to other scenes: red wires highlight interpolated passages that are ‘fragments from another scene’\textsuperscript{73}; yellow wires highlight ‘interpolated passages that do not relate to another scene but recur as motifs throughout the chapter’\textsuperscript{74}; and blue wires highlight ‘simultaneities that are not marked as interpolations or ... that reflect the interaction between two characters,’\textsuperscript{75} or ‘events narrated in fragments.’\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{72} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 201.

\textsuperscript{73} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 212.

\textsuperscript{74} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 212.

\textsuperscript{75} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 213.

\textsuperscript{76} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 213.
18.1. Frehner’s artwork reveals spatial relationships which might not be readily observable in any straightforward reading of Joyce’s text.

18.1.1. Existing in space, it replicates the movements of the characters throughout Wandering Rocks:

18.1.1.1. ‘In the exhibition, visitors could read the whole text (if they felt like it), or they could take the individual glass panels as independent stories that are somehow linked. Moreover, with the panels arranged side by side, visitors could walk along them. Then they were on the move in the text—on the move like those Dubliners who people this chapter. When they tried to follow a link between two or more passages, there was a danger that they would lose track, perhaps because they could not follow the thread that had to go through the dividing side wall.’\textsuperscript{77}

18.1.2. But the artwork only reveals the impossibility of replicating Joyce’s literary work as lived, spatial experience, the madness and sheer excesses of Joyce’s text, its impossible sequences and infinite possibilities, plunging the reader into the exhibition space with no bearing, no markers, no guide: the reader is faced with ‘the sheer impossibility of taking it all in, of keeping track of all the links, of getting, in short, the full picture of it.’\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 219.

\textsuperscript{78} Frehner, ‘Text as Architecture,’ 221.
18.1.3. Exhibiting an interpretative violence inherent in Joyce’s work, this is the madness and the folly of the correspondence between architecture and literature.

Folie 19

19.1. The spatial experience of the living body in architectural space is akin to that of the reader wandering throughout *Ulysses*, in the footsteps of these ‘Bloomers on the Liffey.’

19.2. The reader is an accidental tourist.

   19.2.1. The tourist wanders through Joyce’s text, violently loses their spatial markings, wrenched from any recognisable context.

   19.2.2. This is a kind of spatial torture.

   19.2.3. The tourist begins a descent not into madness, but into the space, the abyss, between madness (or un-reason) and reason.

19.3. Addressing the role of literary tourism in Dublin, Nuala Johnson describes Joyce’s works as ‘metaphorical maps of the city, maps which tourists and natives can use to wander, sometimes aimlessly and sometime self-consciously, through the city’s streets and buildings.’

   19.3.1. This text is also some kind of metaphorical map.

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20.1. Tschumi’s design for the urban space at Parc de la Villette in the 19th arrondissement of Paris is one of the most explosive, violent, and mad architectural events ever conceived.

20.2. Derrida’s reading of Tschumi’s La case vide—a folio containing and explaining the conceptual structure for the design at Parc de la Villette—in ‘No (Point of) Madness’ is necessarily just as violent and explosive.

20.2.1. ‘No (Point of) Madness’ does not address the architectural structure per se, the actual buildings at Parc de la Villette, but only the ‘folio-folie’\textsuperscript{80} which contains the various plans and blueprints.

20.2.2. La case vide acts as the intermediary between the spaces of the architectural and the written text, situated in the space between one and the Other.

20.2.3. The space between architecture and literature has been closed.

20.3. And yet this will not have been...

20.3.1. architecture.

20.3.2. literature.

20.3.3. philosophy.

20.4. Here, of course, Joyce will always already have intervened.

**Folie 21**

21.1. Derrida describes the essay as ‘a series of cursive notations through the *Folies* of Bernard Tschumi, from point to point, notations that are hazardous, discontinuous, aleatory.’

21.1.1. The structure of this critique reflects that upon which Tschumi has built Parc de la Villette: the grid and sequences, the movement of events in space.

21.2. Weaving a heady discourse on folly, madness, meaning, impossibility, and the Other, it is also a powerful polemical response to his own earlier provocation towards applying the architectural paradigm to literature.

21.2.1. ‘It remains to be seen what happens when one speaks of an architectural paradigm for other spaces, other techniques, arts, writings.’

**Folie 22**

22.1. Between *La case vide* and ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ Derrida produces an *écriture double*.

22.1.2. Deconstruction is (crossed out because ‘deconstruction is not’) an architecture of the *écriture double*.

22.2. Derrida’s discourse is deeply indebted to architectural metaphors, literature and philosophy built upon this shadowy Other.

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82 Derrida, ‘Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword,’ 118.
22.2.1. This is his *écriture double*, not just a doubled reading but a doubled writing.

**Folie 23**

23.1. As Derrida writes, ‘we appear to ourselves only through an experience of spacing that is already marked by architecture.’\(^83\)

23.1.1. Spacing is already marked, always already marked, insinuated, by (an) architecture.

23.2. ‘There is an *intermundus* (which is not a *mundus*, not globalisable or *mondialisable*) between every apparent element of a scatter.’\(^84\)

23.2.1. ‘Including of course this scatter here.’\(^85\)

23.2.2. This is the *parergon*, the framework intervening, attempting to fashion the text into a meaningful whole, attempting to contain it.

**Folie 24**

24.1. The correspondence between architecture and literature may be made manifest, even embodied, and so made possible, by the dialogue between its myriad-minded practitioners.

24.1.1. Writing the introduction to the peculiar architectural text *Chora L Works* (exploring the often volatile collaboration between Derrida and

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\(^83\) Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 88.

\(^84\) Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 9.

\(^85\) Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 9.
Eisenman on Parc de la Villette), Tschumi claim that the design for Parc de la Villette was an attempt to define ‘a new urban strategy, a new type of park, which would as much draw on ideas from film, literature or philosophy as it would propose an innovative concept in city organisation.’

**Folie 25**

25.1. The design consists of thirty-five stark red *folies*—actual structures housing sport and recreation areas, playgrounds, a science and technology museum, a botanical garden, a cinema, a library, and a music centre—constructed between 1983 and 1998 on the 125 acre site of a former slaughterhouse in the 19th *arrondissement*.

25.1.1. The design questions ‘the notion of unity’ with its ‘facts [that] never quite connect’ and its careful maintenance of spatial ‘relations of conflict … rejecting synthesis or totality.’

25.1.2. Each of the *folies*—in architectural terms, buildings constructed solely as decoration, serving no practical purpose; ornaments or supplements, to drift into a Derridean terminology—is based on a cube and then deconstructed, with no functional considerations, according to an impossible set of rules (rules without any order) structured by a philosophy of repetition,

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88 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 211.

89 Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 211.
distortion, super-imposition, cut-ups, interruption, fragmentation and juxtaposition, whereby ‘the idea of order is constantly questioned, challenged, pushed to the edge.’

25.1.3. The aim is to ‘encourage conflict over synthesis, fragmentation over unity, madness and play over careful management.’

25.1.4. Promoting a ‘programmatic instability,’ we become lost, disoriented, in all the violent cuts and fractures performed by the folies.

**Folie 26**

26.1. The design focuses on ‘the superimposition of different systems,’ three in particular: the events of the folies, the movements of the paths, and the various open spaces.

26.1.1. Through this superimposition it shares much in common with Joyce’s texts (*Finnegans Wake* but also *Ulysses*, particularly *Wandering Rocks*).

26.1.2. Tschumi states that the design is also an attempt to consider ‘a pre-existent spatial organisation as a model that could either be *adapted* or *transformed* in the manner that Joyce “transformed” Homer’s *Odyssey*.’

26.2. Tschumi returns to the grid:


93 Tschumi, ‘Introduction,’ 125.

26.2.1. ‘The point grid is a strategic tool of the La Villette project. It both articulates spaces and activates it. While refusing all hierarchies and “compositions,” it plays a political role, rejecting the ideological a priori of the master-plans of the past. The urban park at La Villette offers the possibility of a restructuring of a dissociated world through an intermediary space—folies—in which the grafts of transference can take hold.’


26.2.2. Spread across the grid, these folies refuse to remain static, instead taking part in an endless play of opening and closing, writing and erasure: ‘The red point of each folly remains divisible in turn, a point without point, offered up in its articulated structure to substitutions or combinatory permutations that relate it to other follies as much as to its own parts. Open point and closed point, not opened and not closed.’

96 Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 89.

26.2.3. The result is a sequence of endless disruptions and interruptions, a fragmenting and disassociation: ‘Each point is a point of rupture: it interrupts, absolutely, the continuity of the text or of the grid. But the inter-ruptor maintains together both the rupture and the relation to the other, which is itself structured as both attraction and interruption, interference and difference: a relation without relation.’

97 Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 101.
Folie 27

27.1. An architecture on the edge, at the limits, crossing thresholds, these *folies* also take part in an act of spacing: ‘The red points space; they maintain architecture in the dissociation of spacing.’

27.1.1. Such spacing produces an architecture of the trace, a trace architecture:

27.1.1.1. ‘Fragments of architecture (bits of walls, of rooms, of streets, of ideas) are all one actually sees. These fragments are like beginnings without ends. There is always a split between fragments that are real and fragments that are virtual, between memory and fantasy. These splits have no existence other than being the passage from one fragment to another. They are relays rather than signs. They are traces. They are in between.’

Folie 28

28.1. This all takes place somewhere between presence and absence,

28.1.1. and the potential for a future presence.

28.2. Perhaps we can establish a correspondence between this trace-architecture and a trace-literature.

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98 Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 102.

28.2.1. Derrida stresses that these *folies* ‘do not amount to the “absence of the work”’,\(^\text{100}\) although neither do they amount to a presence. Neither here nor there, this trace-architecture, an architecture of fireworks, and its literary corollary, this trace-literature, a literature of fireworks, occupies an irreducibly over-potentialised space between presence and absence.

28.2.2. Through this challenge to architecture’s ‘obsession with presence, with the idea of a meaning immanent in architectural structures and forms that directs its signifying capacity,’\(^\text{101}\) and the corresponding challenge to literature’s obsession with presence, the text is set in play, through a cycle of writings and erasures.

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**Folie 29**

29.1. ‘*La Villette* moves toward interpretative infinity, for the effect of refusing fixity is not insignificance but semantic plurality.’\(^\text{102}\) It has access to an overabundance of semantic resources.

29.1.1. As both Derrida and Tschumi push architecture to its very limit, the product is a plurality, polyphony, and polysemy.

29.1.1.1. Architecture thus resists interpretation, definition.

29.2. Derrida makes it very clear that ‘these *folies* do not destroy.’\(^\text{103}\)

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\(^{100}\) Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 90.

\(^{101}\) Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 200.

\(^{102}\) Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 203.

\(^{103}\) Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 94.
29.2.1. They are intensely creative, productive, generative, disseminative, holding all the chances, accidents, possibilities and impossibilities of deconstruction:

29.2.1.1. ‘The course followed through the follies is undoubtedly prescribed, from point to point, to the extent that the point grid [trame ponctuelle] takes account of a program of possible experiences and new experiments ... But the structure of the grid and of each cube—for these points are cubes—leaves room for chance, formal invention, combinatorial transformation, wandering.’

29.2.1.1.1. The structure of the grid leaves—or creates—room for an abundance of potential meanings.

Folie 30

30.1. Michel de Certeau writes of the walker, the itinerant traveller, the flâneur, as the creator or architect of the city, the one who produces its potential meanings: ‘The story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together.’

104 Derrida, ‘No (Point of) Madness,’ 96.

30.1.1. ‘The walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else.’

**Folie 31**

31.1. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari suggest that ‘writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.’

31.1.1. Proposing their conception of the rhizome, this root metaphor, they write of how it has ‘no points or positions’ but ‘only lines,’ how it might be ‘broken, shattered,’ but will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines, and how it must be followed and written by ‘rupture’: ‘make it vary, until you have produced the most abstract and tortuous of lines of n dimensions and broken directions.’

31.2. Perhaps the best definition of the rhizome occurs when they cite the example of Joyce as typical of a rhizomatous or rhizomorphous writer:

31.2.1. ‘Joyce’s words, accurately described as having “multiple roots,” shatter the linear unity of the word, even of language, only to posit a cyclic unity of the sentence, text, or knowledge.’

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**Folie 32**

32.1. Addressing the possibility of a textual architecture, the projection of one field onto another, by way of a short series of examples (Sir John Soane, Francesco Borromini, Tschumi, and Eisenmann), Jennifer Bloomer suggests that ‘Joyce was the master, *Finnegans Wake* is the model.’

32.2. ‘In *Finnegans Wake* the operations that necessarily bound a text—writing and reading—constitute the substance of the text to such a degree that the narrativity of the text—the story, the representation—nearly disappears. The ostensible object, the narrative, is strung out, thin, and incidental to the substantial, monumental object: the two great enclosing parentheses that themselves with the text constitute the essential narrativity. The reading of this text must be a rewriting, or a misreading, for Joyce has waived any rights to authority with respect to meaning and representation. Ambiguity is not only rampant; it is the rule.’

32.3. She is concerned with the twisting of the separatrix architecture/text, staging an epic dialogic text between two great pillars (mirroring those of *Glas*, but also those on display here: Joyce and Derrida): the eighteenth-century architect Giovanni Battista Piranesi (particularly the three designs titled *Campo Marzio*, *Collegio*, and *Carceri*), and the *Wake*. Her interest lies in the gaping abyssal wound, between the two immense columns.

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112 Bloomer, ‘Hold It (Meditations Upon a Gorgonzola Cheese),’ 8.

113 Bloomer, ‘In the Museyroom,’ *Assemblage*, 5, 1988, 63.
32.3.1. Noting Joyce’s self-prescription of the term ‘architect,’ she directly and unproblematically describes his work in architectural terms:

32.3.1.1. ‘On more than one occasion, James Joyce referred to himself as an architect. *Finnegans Wake* is a monumental construction, a quasi-three-dimensional text, and in its interwoven and colliding geometries its incorporation of familiar, old materials and entities and fragments, its various connections, and its ambiguous signification it contains an intricate architectonic that reinforces its identity with the city. It is an allegorical work, a multi-layered palimpsest, bits and pieces of previous and succeeding texts read through other texts.’114

32.4. Departing from architecture *per se*, she delineates a conception of the literary text which is starkly reminiscent of the forms produced by Joyce: ‘In literary texts where the chronological structure of narrative is faded or indistinct, the reader must construct the narrative by sifting through the debris of the text. In these works ... meaning resides in relations of parts and structures—or apparatus—of the text rather than in explicit narrative content. At the point where meaning is not in a one-to-one relation between thing and concept but in a constructive operation upon many possible connections at many levels of scale (letter, word, sentence, paragraph, plot), the literary work not only begins to bear a resemblance to architecture ... but also becomes a model of what architecture might be.’115


115 Bloomer, *Architecture and (the) Text*, 145.
Folie 33

33.1. Non-linearity—and so spatiality; the spatialisation of meaning—emerges as a major theme for Bloomer in conceiving of the literary text:

33.1.1. ‘The story, or narrative, of the book does not unroll along a line of time. Its units of narrative are assembled in space—in the space of the text.’

33.2. Bloomer observes a fractured, disjointed, aphoristic text built upon such overlappings, spatterings, splatterings, tears, holes, leaks, breaks, fissures, fragments, but also connections, associations, analogies, oppositions, juxtapositions, and ‘strange loops’:

33.2.1. ‘The book is a construction of innumerable fragments of culture spattered, disseminated, upon a fuzzy symbolic armature, an armature of overlappings, tears and holes, strange loops.’

33.2.2. This is what Derrida suggests when he writes of the aphorism as both a fragment and a sign—a memory—of a totality: ‘Despite their fragmentary appearance, they signal toward the memory of a totality, at the same time ruin and monument.’

33.2.3. Disjointed, and taken out-of-time, this structure is instead concerned with spatial relationships: ‘It is made from parts found or stolen, appropriated, plagiarised; things then twisted, deformed, manipulated so as

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116 Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 12.

117 Bloomer, ‘Hold It (Meditations Upon a Gorgonzola Cheese),’ 8.

118 Derrida, ‘Fifty-Two Aphorisms for a Foreword,’ 125.
to join readily to their neighbours. It concerns neighbours and spatial relations, not sequences of events and causes and effects.\textsuperscript{119}

33.3. Joseph Frank describes how Joyce ‘breaks up his narrative and transforms the very structure of his novel into an instrument of his aesthetic intention,’\textsuperscript{120} by presenting ‘the elements of his narrative ... in fragments, as they are thrown out unexplained in the course of casual conversation or as they lie embedded in the various strata of symbolic reference.’\textsuperscript{121}

33.3.1. David Hayman similarly writes of Joyce as a ‘paratactician,’ opening with this definition of parataxis from the OED: ‘the placing of propositions or clauses one after another without indicating by connecting words the relation (of co-ordination or subordination) between them.’\textsuperscript{122}

33.3.2. Building his narrative by a series of ‘large temporal leaps’\textsuperscript{123} which reject easy connections to passages placed before or after, in a past or a future, Joyce ‘invented (or perhaps, after Rabelais and Sterne, reinvented) for the modern novel the use of parataxis as a structural and formal principle.’\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{119} Bloomer, \textit{Architecture and (the) Text}, 15.


\textsuperscript{121} Frank, ‘Spatial Form in Modern Literature,’ 18.

\textsuperscript{122} OED, cited in David Hayman, ‘James Joyce, Paratactician,’ \textit{Contemporary Literature}, 26:2, 1985, 156.

\textsuperscript{123} Hayman, ‘James Joyce, Paratactician,’ 157.

\textsuperscript{124} Hayman, ‘James Joyce, Paratactician,’ 156.
Folie 34

34.1. Bloomer contends that ‘the language of Finnegans Wake is always oscillating and transforming.’\textsuperscript{125} Reflecting Joyce’s working title for Finnegans Wake (that is, Work in Progress), the text is only ever a work in progress: ‘The work is always in progress. It is generative. It is never complete, never completely clear.’\textsuperscript{126}

34.2. ‘An unsatisfactory status quo. But things are not so bad. We can grab it, clutch it, hold on to it, hold it. Hold it. Think what Joyce would have done...’\textsuperscript{127}

Folie 35

35.1. Bennington suggests that the urge of the philosopher is towards order: ‘Philosophy tries to gather, organise, and unify scatter.’\textsuperscript{128}

35.1.1. He asserts that ‘Concept is gathered and grasped scatter.’\textsuperscript{129}

35.1.1.1. But the philosopher cannot control this scatter. The contrast is between the (logocentric) philosopher and his Other: ‘The philosopher against the scatterbrain.’\textsuperscript{130}

35.2. In a short piece titled ‘Hold It (Meditations Upon a Gorgonzola Cheese),’ Bloomer approaches the subject of containers, both architectural and literary: ‘Architecture has always been about holding things. Even before it was sheltering, it

\textsuperscript{125} Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 21.

\textsuperscript{126} Bloomer, Architecture and (the) Text, 35.

\textsuperscript{127} Bloomer, ‘Hold It (Meditations Upon a Gorgonzola Cheese),’ 9.

\textsuperscript{128} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.

\textsuperscript{129} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.

\textsuperscript{130} Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.
was holding: recall two of the constructions of the mythical first architect—the
labyrinth and the *daidalon*, holding respectively the monster bull-man and his
progenetrix, who was for a while architecture herself, containing. Architecture:
holding secrets, the spirits of the dead, the bodies of the living, but also holding
down. Holding down the transient in the knowledge that it cannot be made
permanent. Holding the culture, containing it, keeping it, preserving it. Architecture
has performed the same task as the Pythagoreans, the mystic priests, medieval
monks, books. It is the writing of culture.”

35.3. In this heady nexus here swirling around the trinity of architecture, writing and
holding, we come to the idea that the book acts as a container or vessel which is
charged with the task of holding onto the culture in which it exists...

35.3.1. ...or at least holding onto traces and remains of that culture as best it
can, certain that something must slip through its metaphorical fingers.

35.4. ‘Scatter remains (as scattered remains). Scatter is (what) remains.”

35.5. Fragmented, scattered, the *folies* are pure potential.

35.6. ‘[Scattered]’

131 Bloomer, ‘Hold It (Meditations Upon a Gorgonzola Cheese),’ 8.

132 Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 4.

133 Bennington, ‘Scatter,’ 43.
We should remember that if *Finnegans Wake* is the sublime babelisation of a penman and a postman, the motif of postal difference, of remote control and telecommunication, is already powerfully at work in *Ulysses*.  

*Envois* of all sorts—letters, telephone calls, telepathy calls—will accompany the undertaking in order to confound its apparent deductive intention.

Post-critics write with the discourse of others (the already-written) ...
The Postal Principle

I resemble a messenger from antiquity, a bellboy, a runner, the courier of what we have given one another, barely an inheritor, a lame inheritor, incapable of RECEIVING, of measuring himself against whatever is his to maintain, and I run, I run to bring them news which must remain secret, and I fall all the time.¹

for finally the fort:da is the post, absolute telematics. And the post is more than it was at the time of the hemerodromes and the foot-runners, as they appear to BELIEVE. And moreover, it never simply amounted to that.²

Derrida addresses a series of letters to his wife/lover/Other Marguerite. But, after the pen has hit the paper and the letters have been posted, they lose their way, are lost, misplaced or misdirected, and resurface in The Post Card, a unexpected array of unknown and unknowable addressees receiving and reading this private correspondence. This misdirection, this mistake or slippage of the post office, this vital inadequacy of the postal system, is the postal principle.

The Post Card, writes Derrida, ‘refers to some general theory of the ENVOI and of everything which by means of some telecommunication allegedly destines itself.’³ This all has to do, writes Andrew Mitchell, with issues of ‘sending and reception,

¹ Derrida, The Post Card, 8.
² Derrida, The Post Card, 44.
³ Derrida, The Post Card, 3.
destiny and meaning,"⁴ the space between the missive’s embarkation and its destiny, or its past and future. The missive is sent but never delivered, neither present nor absent but only ever a trace, remains or remainders, cinders, stranded in an interstitial discursive space between sender and addressee. Reflecting the irreducibility and undecidability of the two monumental columns of Glas, the postal principle is concerned with the possibility of the undeliverability of the letter. Michael O’Driscoll writes that ‘the letter cannot find its proper place,’ and so ‘can always not arrive at its destination.’⁵ Wills best describes the impossibility of the letter’s deliverability with one easy slippage, a tiny act which closes a seemingly insignificant space: ‘if the letter can not arrive, quite simply, it cannot arrive.’⁶ That is, always already implicated in the possibility of the letter’s non-arrival will be the impossibility of its arrival. Laurie Johnson writes: ‘If the letter is destined at all, it is destined to be errant.’⁷ Its delivery is postponed indefinitely—although we hope that it might still, improbably or impossibly, arrive.

Exhibiting ‘the graphicality of language’ as ‘the condition of possibility,’⁸ this postal principle is at once a spatial phenomenon and a conceptual one; just as spacing occurs in the twinned columns of Glas, and is manifested in the framing

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⁸ Wills, ‘Lemming,’ 29.
parergon, the postal principle occurs on the page as both materiality and metaphoricity. For example, the postcards which populate The Post Card explode the spatial composition of this text, just as the parergon of The Truth in Painting explode the spatial composition of that text. But the frame is missing in The Post Card: violently, the spaces between the manifold postcards, and the fifty-two blank spaces or mute marks where the postcards have been destroyed, burned, fracture the flow of the literary-philosophical narrative. The interstitial spatiality of the postcards, the abysses endlessly produced and reproduced between them, defers any definite interpretation of their relationship as the context potentially shifts and changes from one reading to the next (ultimately, we are even unsure who the intended addressee of these postcards might be), placing meaning, always already, in the future. In the process of performing this literary-philosophical destabilisation, producing the postcard as radically uncertain, the incendiary Derrida opens a series of cracks in which the unconditional institution’s irreducible Other proposes to negate any claims it might make for authority or legitimacy.

This postal principle also applies beyond the written letter, beyond the actual postcard. A telephone conversation, any dialogue, is structured by a similar motile destinerrance: there is a lag in the line, a delay, and we are unsure just who we are speaking to, who we are addressing and who is addressing us. The gramophone effect comes into play here too, capable of reproducing the living voice through the technology of the phonograph disk in the absence of the living presence, and yet here we are listening and waiting for that ‘yes yes’ which affirms not only a presence on the other end of the line (or at least marks the absence of said presence), but our own presence, our being (or being-in-relation-to). An act of spacing and posting
concerned with an absolute alterity, the postal principle brings my speech and writing into proximity with the ears and eyes of the Other, at once separating the Self and the Other and beginning to bridge the gap, blurring the subjects, making possible the relationship between the two while at the same time making this correspondence if not impossible then certainly improbable. But the chance, the possibility (no matter how slim) of arrival, the possibility that *destinerrance* might not carry the message away, is more than enough for us to hold out hope. ‘I await only one response and it falls to you.’

‘You are receiving me?’ Derrida asks Joyce in ‘Ulysses Gramophone.’ Perhaps Joyce does not hear him, or has not heard yet, or the message has simply been lost. For the answer does not come, or has not come. Not yet. But it might. Perhaps. One day.

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10 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 27.
7. Derrida’s Counter-Odyssey

8. Love, Cinders, and the Art of the Post

What does it mean to depart? What does one want, what does one wish to accomplish with a departure? Does one want to depart or does one want to arrive?¹

They want to authenticate. As if one could not pretend to write fictive letters with multiple authors and addressees! and even oneself to write to oneself! While saying that one has never written anything oneself.²

In the wake of the postal principle and the manifest undecidability it produces in any always already doubled reading of the texts of Joyce and Derrida (proposing Meaning only by proposing its problematic status), these twinned and inexplicably entwined chapters continue to play on the fort/da game discussed by Freud in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle.’ Irreducible in their imitation of the immense twinned columns of literature and philosophy (Joyce and Derrida), they propose that a series of deferrals is central to the relationship between the gone-and-there, absently-present, spectral, conjectural Joyce and Derrida. They consist of a collection of unframed and misguided missives, thus constituting a wayward correspondence,

¹ Cixous, ““Mamae, disse elle,” or, Joyce’s Second Hand,’ Poetics Today, 17:3, 1996, 343-4.
² Derrida, The Post Card, 84.
addressed to no-one but the unknown and unknowable addressee who happens, by chance, accident, fortune, or mistake, to read them.

But the discourse is beginning to splinter, to scatter, as the doubled correspondence is staged. The first is addressed to Derrida and concerns the theme of travelling-with and the deferral of the traveller’s arrival, employing the Odyssey as a metaphor for the destinerrance of meaning. The second is addressed to Joyce and conjectures on his response to the postal principle. It is etched extensively on the back of a collection of postcards depicting Dublin scenes as a further performative enactment of an argumentative contention: contexts are endlessly open, open to chance and mistake, open to near-infinite reinterpretation in an unconditional institution. Of course, these excessive ‘postcards’ (metaphors for a correspondences between Joyce and Derrida) could never be confined to the back of postcards. The words ambiviolently overflow.

The only certainty here is that Joyce and Derrida will have perpetually missed each other, the messages becoming confused, the correspondence thrown out-of-step or out-of-joint, the postman failing in his vital duty, stumbling, falling. If to be delivered is to arrive at the ‘destination’ of interpretive certitude, they are undeliverable.

You wander and err, Jacques, and you travel. The movements, the gestures, are the same. But, asks Catherine Malabou, how do you ‘traverse various countries, frontiers, cities, and languages’?

Written on the back of a postcard simply labelled ‘Dublin,’ featuring a scene of O’Connell Street, with a three-way split focus on the statue of Jim Larkin in the right foreground, the G. P. O. on the left-hand side, and the Spire of Dublin centred in the distance.

The Post Card is an archive of a theoretical correspondence, taking place between Jacques Derrida and his Other, his lover, his wife, Marguerite. But this ‘lacuna-filled series of letters’⁴ only records one side of the story. Always already, something will have been missing. For all the endeavours of the post office, James, this will have been a palpably undecidable correspondence: ‘A correspondence: this is still to say too much, or too little. Perhaps it was not one (but more or less) nor every correspondent. This still remains to be decided.’⁵ The undecidable nature of the correspondence is manifested in the undeliverability of these letters:

In their content as well as their form, these postcards position themselves at the borders of signification, proliferating around the difficulties of communication: the distance between parties, the contingencies of delivery, and the impossibility of the transmission of messages without a remainder.⁶

I find it impossible to communicate these words to you. I fear the distance too great, and the words unable to carry.

⁵ Derrida, The Post Card, 3.
Homer's *Odyssey* is the template, constructed by the traveller between their embarkation and arrival. But for you the *Odyssey* represents the impossibility of this destination: the traveller *can always not* arrive, transmuted into the tragedy that the traveller *cannot* arrive. A literary catastrophe, Ulysses cannot return home. In a similar vein, Jean-François Lyotard suggests that

*Ulysses* is not the history of a homecoming, because the hero never left his home. He suddenly finds himself in the position of an immigrant or a ghost, shall we say, of an outsider. A Dubliner, he does not succeed in being or residing there, he does not return there, he roams its streets, or rather he loiters there. He is suffering from a lack of rootedness in the present.7

11/6/2009

*Written on a postcard depicting a black and white photographic portrait of James Joyce, taken by Berenice Abbott in 1926. Joyce sits, in shirt and tie with his signature hat, his arm perched on the armrest of a wooden chair, his cane handing in the other hand, eyes hidden behind round glasses, gazing almost wistfully off to the right-hand side of the frame.*

I did not see it at first, it is not readily apparent, the connection between the Lotus-eaters appearing in the *Odyssey*, and the fifth episode of *Ulysses*, labelled Lotus-eaters on the Gilbert schema. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses encounters the lotus-eaters, the *lotophagi*, towards the beginning of book IX:

Nine whole days

I was borne along by rough, deadly winds

on the fish-infested sea. Then on the tenth

our squadron reached the land of the Lotus-eaters,
people who eat the lotus, mellow fruit and flower.

We disembarked on the coast, drew water there

and crewmen snatched a meal by the swift ships.

Once we’d had our fill of food and drink I sent

a detail ahead, two picked men and a third, a runner,
to scout out who might live there—men like us perhaps,
who live on bread? So off they went and soon enough

they mingled among the natives, Lotus-eaters, Lotus-eaters,
who had no notion of killing my companions, not at all,
they simply gave them the lotus to taste instead ...

any crewmen who ate the lotus, the honey-sweet fruit,
lost all desire to send a message back, much less return,
their only wish to linger there with the Lotus-eaters,
grazing on lotus, all memory of the journey home
dissolved forever. But I brought them back, back

to the hollow ships, and streaming tears—I forced them,

hauled them under the rowing benches, lashed them fast

and shouted out commands to my other, steady comrades:

“Quick, no time to lose, embark the racing ships!”—

so none could eat the lotus, forget the voyage home.

They swung aboard at once, they sat to the oars in ranks
and in rhythm churned the water white with stroke on stroke.\(^8\)

The scouts or messengers refuse to send a message back—they are, after the Lotus-eaters’ gifts, incapable of sending a message back. While, for Homer, Ulysses acts the hero and saves the men from the mesmerising or hypnotic or hallucinogenic charms of the lotus-flower, your Lotus-eaters stand in the way of the message ever being delivered. They stand for the undeliverability of the message: it is stranded here between the arrival of the scouts at the Lotus-eaters’ feast and their return home (or at least back to their ship), stalled by the Lotus-eaters who perhaps know more than Ulysses—who himself should be well-versed in structures of hesitation and postponement, his journey home to Ithaca endlessly deferred, his intentions frustrated, over the course of the twenty-two books of the *Odyssey*.

What are the places and spaces of your own Odyssey or counter-Odyssey? Is this simply ‘yet another Odyssey?’\(^9\)

\(12/6/2009\)

*Written on the back of a postcard depicting a bustling, fashionable Grafton Street in the centre of Dublin, taken looking in the direction of St. Stephen’s Green, which is not in view.*

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\(^9\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 49.
Derrida’s postal principle begins with the simple post, perhaps the letter carried by Shaun the Post across the pages of *Finnegans Wake*:

In the beginning, in principle, was the post, and I will never get over it. But in the end I know it, I become aware of it as of our death sentence: it was composed, according to all possible codes and genres and languages, as a declaration of love. In the beginning the post, John will say, or Shaun or Tristan, and it begins with a destination without address, the direction cannot be situated at the end. There is no destination, my sweet destiny.

‘Our death sentence’ is just such an exile, a lack of destination: ‘The condition for it to arrive is that it ends up and even that it begins by not arriving. This is how it is to be read, and written, the carte of the adestination.’

Already a distance is opening between the Self and the Other, between me and you:

you understand, within every sign already, every mark or every trait, there is distancing, the post, what there has to be so that it is legible for another, another than you or me, and everything is messed up in advance, cards on the table.

This distance and articulation makes this correspondence possible. But the deviation, the errant path of the message, *destinerrance*, means this is only ever a potential correspondence.

The French verb *dériver* means to derive or to drift, on the one hand ‘a continuous and ordered trajectory from an origin to an end,’ and on the other ‘a loss of

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control, to deviation or skidding.” This *destinerrance* is the ‘veritable *tragedy of destination*’ which haunts your counter-odyssey.

13/6/2009

Written on a postcard depicting the Cross of Cong, the ornate 12th century Christian processional cusped cross made for Turlough O’Connor, King of Connacht and High King of Ireland, held at the National Museum of Ireland.

Your fantastically epic *Ulysses* is constructed like a directory of the city, your labyrinthine Dublin a textual map built upon all the addresses and addressees contained in (but, always already, spilling over the edges of) ‘*Thom’s Dublin Post Office Directory, 1886.*’ It is also structured by a sequence of movements reflecting this *destinerrance*, the hesitant wandering of the postcard. It seems centred on the post office, Dublin’s General Post Office, as the disseminator of such messages, the distributor of letters and the letter. But, as if in anticipation of Derrida’s undeliverable letter, you also seem concerned with the deconstruction of the post office.

As if to deconstruct the *lotophagi* of Homer, your own Lotus-eaters episode focuses not on the G.P.O. (which lurks silently in the background), but on Bloom’s visit to the slightly marginal Westland Row post office, which becomes central in other ways than the geographic centrality of the G.P.O. (located then as it is now at

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13 Malabou, *‘The Parting of Ways,’* 1.
14 Malabou, *‘The Parting of Ways,’* 1.
15 Malabou, *‘The Parting of Ways,’* 16.
16 Joyce, *Ulysses,* 832.
Lower O’Connell Street, right in the city centre, although now slightly worse for wear, the grand Doric columns riddled or scarred with bullet marks from the Easter Rebellion. This marginalised post office is thematically and structurally central to your narrative.

It begins with a sequence of geographic movements, Bloom walking through the labyrinthine Dublin:

By lorries along Sir John Rogerson’s Quay Mr Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill Lane, Leask’s the linseed crusher’s, the postal telegraph office. Could have given that address too. And past the sailors’ home. He turned from the morning noises of the quayside and walked through Lime street...17

He arrives at the post office in Westland Row, suspecting that he might be out of time, that he might be too late:

From the curbstone he darted a keen glance through the door of the postoffice.


He handed the card through the brass grill.

Are there any letters for me? he asked.18

He then wonders if there is any mail for him, if he will receive a response to a letter sent to his young sweetheart, Miss Martha Clifford: ‘No answer probably. Went too fast last time.’19 But there is a letter, addressed to Bloom’s alias ‘Henry Flower’:

17 Joyce, Ulysses, 85.
18 Joyce, Ulysses, 87.
19 Joyce, Ulysses, 88.
The postmistress handed him back through the grill his card with a letter. He thanked her and glanced rapidly at the typed envelope.

Henry Flower, Esq.

c/o P. O. Westland Row,

City.

Answered anyhow.\textsuperscript{20}

The content of the letter is of little consequence except as a gesture toward the leaking away of meaning as the letter travels, Martha almost begging Bloom to write back, to respond to her missive and so at least acknowledge its receipt: ‘Please write me a long letter and tell me more. Remember if you do not I will punish you. So now you know what I will do to you, you naughty boy, if you do not write.’\textsuperscript{21} Bloom pockets the letter and departs, returning to his wanderings through the streets of Dublin, having not read the letter. As he walks, the letter makes another minor movement: ‘He drew the letter from his pocket and folded it into the newspaper he carried.’\textsuperscript{22} Transferred from the private space of his pocket to the public space of the newspaper (published each day, and read widely across the city), it becomes far more than just a letter shared between two sweethearts: it becomes a publicised symbol of the irreducible dialogue between the Self and the Other, and a sign that there is always already something missing, that any communication remains incomplete. In the first case, neither Bloom nor Martha is sure of the nature of their

\textsuperscript{20} Joyce, Ulysses, 88.

\textsuperscript{21} Joyce, Ulysses, 95.

\textsuperscript{22} Joyce, Ulysses, 94.
relationship, particularly as Bloom uses the alias Henry Flower. More than the adoption of a false identity to keep his real self hidden, this gestures toward the impossibility of conveying the message without something being misunderstood, something being mistaken. In the second case, because Bloom both is and is not the Henry Flower to whom the letter is addressed, and although the letter has arrived, it has also erred and wandered in reaching Leopold Bloom (who, despite appearances, is not strictly the addressee). The letter has not really reached its destination because that destination does not really exist. This is your own postal principle, made manifest in a short, simple love letter.

And yet, despite placing the letter in the public space of the newspaper, Bloom still guards his secret with much vehemence: ‘He turned into Cumberland street and, going on some paces, halted in the lee of the station wall. No-one.’ The letter is still concealed, hidden within the newspaper, as he furtively reads it: ‘He opened the letter within the newspaper.’ Nothing much concerns Bloom about the letter except the letter itself (‘Changed since the first letter. Wonder did she write it herself’), and he returns it to another pocket: ‘Having read it all he took it from the newspaper and put it back in his sidepocket.’ If the letter once occupied the public space of the newspaper, was symbolically published in the newspaper, the envelope (the mechanism or structure which carried the letter, by which the message was sent), is further publicised, further disseminated throughout Dublin:

23 Joyce, Ulysses, 94.
24 Joyce, Ulysses, 94.
25 Joyce, Ulysses, 95-6.
26 Joyce, Ulysses, 95.
Going under the railway arch he took out the envelope, tore it swiftly in shreds and scattered them towards the road. The shreds fluttered away, sank in the dank air: a white flutter then all sank.\(^{27}\)

Torn into pieces which carry the message away, the envelope is multiplied, pluralised, disseminated, and scattered. It is also destroyed, and the potential for this destruction is necessary to the postal principle.

Your counter-odyssey is also haunted by the verb *arriver*, to arrive, in the first case ‘to reach a destination and attain one’s goal, reach the end of one’s voyage, succeed,’\(^{28}\) and in the second ‘what happens, what comes to, surprises, or falls from the event in general, what is anticipated as well as what is not expected.’\(^{29}\)

\(14/6/2009\)

*Written on the back of a postcard depicting a whitewashed wall containing a small window, through which a white curtain is visible. Upon the windowsill sit side-by-side a bottle of milk and a bottle of Guinness. It is captioned ‘Another daily pint.’*

You anticipated the centrality of the post office, this ‘site of the great affair,’\(^{30}\) which Derrida proposes in *The Post Card*: ‘When I enter the post office of a great city I

\(^{27}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 97.


\(^{29}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 2.

tremble as if in a sacred place, full of refused, promised, threatening pleasures.\textsuperscript{31} By some perverse logic or illogic, Derrida is attracted to the dead letter office:

There is a centre in France which assembles all lost letters, all the letters sent P. R. that are not picked up by their addressee after a certain date (the time limit is shorter than you would think), the letters whose addressees and senders cannot be found. I don’t know how long they keep them, before destroying them I suppose.\textsuperscript{32}

Derrida’s own letters become the objects of loss and destruction:

On a trip, I had sent to myself, Poste Restante, a packet of letters that I did not want to keep on myself. I thought I had a very wide interval at my disposal for picking them up, after my return. Mistake: when I presented myself at the post office, they were unfindable.\textsuperscript{33}

Derrida is too late, and the letters are lost:

All the precautions in the world are taken in vain, you can register your \textit{envois} with a return receipt, crypt them, seal them, multiply coverings and envelopes, at the limit not even send your letter, still, in advance it is intercepted. It falls into anyone’s hands, a poor post card.\textsuperscript{34}

This unanticipatable interception is the risk one takes in corresponding, in addressing the Other, in posting.

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\textsuperscript{31} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 69.

\textsuperscript{32} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 50.

\textsuperscript{33} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 50.

\textsuperscript{34} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 51.
The nomadic placeless one, the tourist, the traveller, the wanderer, exists in the slippage between and within this pair of doubled words—dériver and arriver.

15/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting the statue of Molly Malone by Jeanné Rynhart which stands near the corner of Grafton and Nassau Streets. It carries a verse from the famous song: ‘In Dublin’s fair city, where the girls are so pretty, I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone.’ The statue is known colloquially as ‘the Tart with the Cart,’ ‘the Dish with the Fish,’ and ‘the Trollop with the Scallops.’

This undeliverability of the letter is a slippage which constitutes a relationship to an irreducible Other, the unknown one to whom these words are written, you. ‘The post is always an outlet onto the Other,’35 writes Mitchell. Writing is always an outlet onto the Other. Writing reveals the Other. Even in your absence, you are revealed in my writing, in this post. The subject, the ‘I,’ that you or I write onto the paper is always already doubled. But it is also a distancing, the disaster which distances the Self and the Other, you and I:

The one in the other, the one in front of the other, the one after the other, the one behind the other?

I have always known that we are lost from this very initial disaster an infinite distance has opened up

this catastrophe, right near the beginning, this overturning that I still cannot succeed in thinking was the condition, the condition of everything, not so?, ours,

our very condition, the condition for everything that was given us or that we
destined, promised, gave, loaned, I no longer know what, to each other

we lost each other—one another, understand me?36

This catastrophic spacing is the possibility of our correspondence. In this I feel like
Derrida: as ‘you will always precede me,’37 I know only that ‘you know everything,
before me.’38 You will always already have known the danger involved in this post.

If we accept that ‘in one way or another the Western traveller always follows in the
steps of Ulysses,’39 we must also accept that, unlike Ulysses and Bloom, we can
never return home, that as travellers we precisely are the slippage that takes place
between dériver and arriver.

16/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting a first edition copy of Ulysses by James
Joyce, from 1922. The cover is a fading blue, with faint darker water damage, the
edges beginning to wear and fray.

This undeliverability was perhaps made manifest when this great celebration of
yours finally began, on 16 June 1954, the fiftieth anniversary of your original
Bloomsday. Poet Patrick Kavanagh, novelist Flann O’Brien (a.k.a. Miles na Gopaleen,

and Brian O’Nolan: ‘three divinely humorous personae in one’\(^{40}\) and literary magazine editor John Ryan led a small troupe who visited locations such as the Martello Tower, Glasnevin, Davy Byrnes’s, and 7 Eccles Street (and many other pubs besides, not featuring in your text), on a drinking tour, reading relevant and favourite parts of *Ulysses* as they went. The day began with a scuffle between Kavanagh and O’Brien, and by their arrival at the Bailey pub in the city centre, in the midst of the Lestrygonians episode, the pilgrimage had been abandoned, long before they could reach their planned destination and return to Eccles Street, via the former brothel district ‘nighttown.’ Too many of the travellers were too drunk and too belligerent to continue.

As the revellers and wanderers, following in the footsteps of Dublin’s wandering Jew, fail to arrive, Bloom himself, by association with these itinerant travellers, has become undeliverable.

Composed in the tension between an ordered trajectory, hoping to reach a destination, and a loss of control or deviation, ‘Ulysses’ path would then be a *derived drift*, apart from yet toward a founding point.\(^{41}\) This interrupted circumnavigation, the tidal pull of the *dériver* and *arriver* ‘taking the Odyssey by surprise,’\(^ {42}\) means that ‘Ulysses cannot not return.’\(^ {43}\) Destined to return, the traveller instead deviates, is


pushed and pulled towards and then away from the shores, relentlessly, so that you are ‘perpetually missing ... [your] appointment with Ulysses.’ This is the counter-odyssey.

17/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting a painting by the Irish modernist Jack B. Yeats (brother of poet W. B. Yeats), titled Men of Destiny (1946). It is housed at the National Gallery of Ireland in Merrion Square West.

I write to the Other, and I love the Other:

What impels me to write you all the time? Before I can even turn around to look, from the unique destination, unique you understand me, unnameable and invisible, that bears your name and has no other face than your own, before I can even turn around for a question, at every moment the order to write you is given, no matter what, but to write you, and I love, and this is how I recognise that I love. This correspondence is figured as a love affair:

we were living Tristan and Yseult, that is Tancredi and Clorinda in an epoch when telecommunicate technology made all of that untimely, absolutely impossible, anachronistic, outmoded, out of sync, forbidden, grotesque, “old hat.” Apparently. For the opposite is also true: we would have been, yes, impossible without a certain progress of telemachination, acceleration in the speed of angels (all angels, all the messengers we have provided ourselves by slipping the coin

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45 Derrida, The Post Card, 10.
into the automatic: we could have never gotten away with the manual, supposing that, okay), not a day without a fort:da plugged into computers of the nth generation, great-grandsons of computers, descendants of the pioneers.46

The originary technology of the post advances, but the spacing remains the same, cast off and away into a future towards the nth generation. This love affair is also a love of spacing, a love of telecommunication, a love of the post; I do this ‘for a love of post cards.’47 My love, my desire, wanders and errs, between you, my addressee, and the technology of the post, the post card being carried: ‘I never write or produce anything other than this destinne-rancy of desire, the unassignable trajectories and the unfindable subjects but also the only sign of love.’48

As a ‘travelling-with,’ the counter-odyssey can no longer simply be reduced to ‘leaving arriving moving around moving on going coming bulging crossing (yes, yes, there’s something there perhaps, “crossing [traverser]”), or visiting exploring changing places.’49 You hesitate over ‘crossing,’ which stands for a traversal or border-crossing that is the relationship to the Other, the ‘with’ marking the limits of the Self and the Other while simultaneously blurring such distinctions.

46 Derrida, The Post Card, 44.
47 Derrida, The Post Card, 163.
48 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ 199.
49 Derrida, ‘Correspondence,’ in Counterpath, 3.
18/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting the ruined crumbling façade of the original Gresham Hotel in O’Connell Street, destroyed during fighting in the civil war of 1922.

There are ‘the remainders of a recently destroyed correspondence,’ burnt by desire, by a burning desire that the message reach you:

Destroyed by fire or by that which figurative takes its place, more certain of leaving nothing out of the reach of what I like to call the tongue of fire, not even the cinders if cinders there are [s’il y a là cendre].

Destroyed ‘save [fors] a chance,’ the chance that something might survive the incineration of the post, the post defies its destruction:

Yes, you were right, henceforth, today, now, at every moment, on this point of the carte, we are but a miniscule residue “left unclaimed”: a residue of what we have said to one another, of what, do not forget, we have made of one another, of what we have written one another.

I write ‘in order to destroy, so that nothing is preserved except an illegible support,’ the support of the post card which is destined, always already, to be burned, burned because this correspondence ‘immediately got beyond us,’ and we

50 Derrida, The Post Card, 3.
51 Derrida, The Post Card, 3.
52 Derrida, The Post Card, 3.
54 Derrida, The Post Card, 32.
must somehow attempt to rein it in, to contain it—even as such attempts at controlling these miniscule residues remain impossible.

This all takes place around the edges of the Mediterranean.

19/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting the statue of Oscar Wilde at Merrion Square by artist Danny Osborne, situated just across the road from his childhood home. Wilde lounges back laconically atop a large rock, wearing a green jacket with pink collar and cuffs. It is nicknamed ‘The Fag on the Crag.’

The archive is disastrous, catastrophic: ‘The first catastrophe is the ignoble archive which rots everything, the descendence into which everything tumbles.’56 This correspondence must be saved, not archived and preserved, but saved by burning, by the accidental selections of flames, ‘a very strange principle of selection’57 for our scandalous correspondence.

You perform a deconstruction of the borderlines between a series of doubles. The edges of, for example, the Self and the Other are troubled: ‘The porousness of edges and limits is continually experienced in his work.’58 So too, in the wake of your genre-

57 Derrida, The Post Card, 3-4.
bending, limit-deforming ‘critical inventions,’\textsuperscript{59} is ‘the dividing line traditionally held to obtain between the “theoretical” and the “biographical”.’\textsuperscript{60} The Odyssey becomes a biographical, an \textit{autobiographical}, endeavour.

\textbf{20/6/2009}

\textit{Written on the back of a postcard depicting the famous Eve Arnold photograph from 1954 of Marilyn Monroe wearing a bathing suit, seated on a seesaw in a park at Long Island, New York, reading Ulysses.}

‘Our entire library, our entire encyclopaedia,’ addresses one fundamental question: ‘What do post card collectors do?’\textsuperscript{61}

In Dublin, visiting the National Library of Ireland, I was given access to what they call the Joyce papers. I needed to firstly join the National Library and receive a reader’s ticket, then obtain a supplementary manuscript reader’s ticket, and seek access to the manuscript reading rooms, in another building in Kildare Street, where I could make an appointment to see what amounted to a collection of seven notebooks you kept between 1903 and the end of the 1910s. I signed a copyright waiver before I could see anything. The secrecy, the inaccessibility—which seems quite standard for this kind of material—still strikes me as overkill. The notebooks had been digitised, and I sat before the computer which contained the images of the entire contents of the notebooks (which themselves remained hidden away). What

\textsuperscript{59} Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 52.

\textsuperscript{60} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 13-4.

\textsuperscript{61} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 53.
the images showed me were pages filled with writing, but most of it crossed out in red or blue pencil, passages which might easily have fitted into Ulysses, but did not. The marginalia is extraordinary: you seem to have produced a series of notebooks, working towards a ‘whole’ text, where ‘the margin is no longer a secondary virginity but an inexhaustible reserve,’\(^{62}\) where the text has become ‘the margin of a margin.’\(^{63}\) And then you have attempted to destroy it, although you did not or could not burn it. Still, this is your archive, as good as destroyed.

‘To arrive, by drifting, in a foreign place: such is the order that renders possible the unveiling of the other.’\(^{64}\) But ‘Derrida does not drift.’\(^{65}\) You do not arrive in that wholly foreign place, stopping short of the edge, of the other side: ‘The other side is also the side of the Other, whom or which it is impossible to reach altogether.’\(^{66}\) This crossing of the edge is complicated, because

- every border is perforated by a multiplicity of openings that render infractions of it ungovernable, uncontrollable, even impossible. The frontier always intersects or breaches itself. Everything that is kept outside of it, expelled, not tolerated by it, comes back at it from the other side, confrontationally or indirectly.\(^{67}\)

\(^{62}\) Derrida, ‘Tympan,’ xxiii.

\(^{63}\) Derrida, ‘Tympan,’ xxiii.

\(^{64}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 6.

\(^{65}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 8.


\(^{67}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 164-5.
That sectioned off by the border, the limit, returns from the other side by a simple circular movement, an Odyssean circumnavigation. It slips in the back way, circles around and approaches the border from the other side.

\[21/6/2009\]

\textit{Written on the back of a postcard titled ‘Doors of Dublin,’ depicting a series of twelve photographs of brightly painted doors.}

To forget, to destroy by forgetfulness, is necessary to our correspondence: ‘Amnesia, what a force. It is necessary to forget, to know how to forget, to know how to forget without knowing. To forget, you understand, not to confound.’\textsuperscript{68} ‘I forget in order to love you,’\textsuperscript{69} and to remain faithful to this love, faithful to you in this failing correspondence.

This approach to the other side, and from the other side, the \textit{destinerrance} of this circular movement, is structured by the doubled logic of the \textit{pas}:

The problematic of the approach to the other is inseparable from the logic of the \textit{pas}, which has to be understood in two ways: the \textit{pas} as noun relating to passage (step, advance), and the \textit{pas} of negation. Both signal toward the act of crossing a border and at the same time the impossibility of passage.\textsuperscript{70}

The border-crossing, passage, drifting and deviation, is at once the possibility and the impossibility of the counter-odyssey.

\textsuperscript{68} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 77.

\textsuperscript{69} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 173.

\textsuperscript{70} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 168.
Written on the back of a postcard depicting a black and white photograph of labour leader James ‘Big Jim’ Larkin, arms outstretched, reaching towards the sky, addressing a meeting in Sackville (O’Connell) Street in 1913. A monument to Larkin now stands in O’Connell Street, depicting this famous pose, carrying an inscription taken from the speech: ‘the great appear great because we are on our knees: Let us rise.’

‘Pure is the word. It calls for fire.’ Derrida, Cinders, 37. This love affair is reduced to cinders, to ‘the idea of this great fire, call it “burning”’ Derrida, The Post Card, 173. which permeates The Post Card. It is ‘the great act of faith, the great burning of us,’ Derrida, The Post Card, 173. the holocaust of our love:

burn everything, forget everything, in order to see if the force of starting again without a trace, without an opened path

The symbol? a great holocaustic fire, a burn-everything into which we would throw finally, along with our entire memory, our names, the letters, photos, small objects, keys, fetishes, etc. And if nothing remains Derrida, The Post Card, 40.

Even as they are ‘all that remain of the path that might someday lead back (or forward) to the origin of language,’ Derrida, The Post Card, 173. the cinder works to destroy the letter, and must: destruction and deconstruction will have become the survival of the post. The

71 Derrida, Cinders, 37.
74 Derrida, The Post Card, 40.
salvation of the letter is predicated on the fire, destruction by fire, and by no other method: ‘to give it to the fire, to destroy it in the flame, and not otherwise.’

Derrida calls this burning ‘my small library apocalypse,’ a vital volcanic catastrophe where nothing is saved: ‘For a totally incinerated *envois* could not be indicated by any mark.’ I will burn, ‘you will burn,’ it will all burn.

This irresolvable aporia of crossing/not-crossing the border represents a displacement:

A permanent displacement is what motivates each book or lecture, bearing witness also to the reality of an involvement in thinking that uproots the researcher and writer, implicating him in a constant time lag, between one continent and another, one country and another, one language and another.

This exile is the path of the wandering Ulysses, and the archetypical wandering Jew Leopold Bloom. Embarked on this counter-odyssey, both figures are placed in-between, neither here nor there, but always already stranded between origin and destination.

Stranded.

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76 Derrida, *Cinders*, 37.


23/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting an unattributed black and white photographic portrait of Nora Barnacle, the caption simply describing Nora as ‘companion and wife of James Joyce.’

And you must be the one to burn it (‘you will burn it, you, it has to be you,’ commands Derrida), you the addressee who can never receive these undeliverable missives. You must destroy me. Leave no trace.

Travel is being out-of-place, a lack of place. Haunted by the doubled pas, this passage is predicated on the lack of the place of arrival: ‘everything that happens owes its chance to non-arrival.’ This non-arrival ‘can be thought of as a point of departure,’ a deviation, yet ‘this chance is precisely not an origin from which what arrives derives.’ That which arrives arrives without an origin in any sense, without deriving, by chance or not, from an origin from which it will have departed.

24/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting a charcoal drawing by Sean O’Sullivan of poet and rebel Padraig Pearse, one of the signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic of Ireland in 1916.

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81 Derrida, The Post Card, 256.
84 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 142.
If I declare that ‘I will commission to the flames any incendiary,’\(^8^5\) this does not mean that everything shall be destroyed. Instead, the command that we must burn everything becomes an affirmation, and a resurrection:

when I first wrote “burn everything,” it was neither out of a prudence and a taste for the clandestine, nor out of a concern for internal guarding but out of what was necessary (the condition, the given) for the affirmation to be reborn at every instant, without memory.\(^8^6\)

The phoenix rises from the ashes, and our love, our correspondence, is reborn in the very same moment we will have consigned it to the flames.

This play between displacement, derivation, and departure, non-arrival and non-place, is a concern not only of geography with its borders and limits, and the relationship to the Other, but also of language: words ‘already raise in and of themselves the question of displacement.’\(^8^7\) Language always already represents the distancing of the word from the object, the signifier from the signified. It represents precisely that lack of place which is the precondition of the counter-odyssey. Such language ‘contaminates everything it touches,’\(^8^8\) the borders porous, always already infiltrated, penetrated, transgressed.

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\(^8^5\) Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 426.2.


\(^8^7\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 14.

\(^8^8\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 16.
Written on the back of a postcard captioned ‘Dublin in the 1960s,’ depicting four black and white street scenes of Dublin city: buses on O’Connell Bridge, Garda directing traffic with the Daniel O’Connell monument in the background, the Gael Linn building on the corner of Grafton Street and South King Street looking from St. Stephen’s Green, and the view looking up O’Connell Street towards the G. P. O.

This command to burn everything ‘is like an interminable murder,’ murder and salvation performed in the same action of auto-immunity. I kill you as I create you, consign you to the flames as I produce you simply by addressing these words to you, sending these post cards towards you. I am responsible for you: your life and your death. ‘J’accepte.’

You are troubled throughout this Odyssean circumnavigation by the thought that this lack of place might also be a lack of language, the thought that ‘one never possesses a language.’ Language is grasped only momentarily, endlessly invented and reinvented as the traveller wanders: ‘There is my language, but in order, precisely, that it be mine, I must invent it my whole life through, enter it in my own way, delineate my style within it.’ You are thus ‘always at once master and hostage

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of ... [your] language,93 and the counter-odyssey is a struggle with language, your language, your multiple tongues:

One always speaks more than one tongue. At the same time, it is from the perspective of this multiplicity of languages that one can indeed resist colonisation.94

The wandering Jew, outsider and outcast from pseudo-colonial Algeria, a racial and religious minority in this predominantly Muslim country, which is in turn ruled and oppressed by France, you multiply the tongue of the oppressor, resisting colonisation by any tongue, even his own. This resistance to colonisation, geographically and linguistically, is precisely the role of the traveller: resisting placement in this doubled sense, without place and without native tongue, the traveller is freed from this hostage situation.

What else is the Odyssey if not a literary manifestation of this liberation?

26/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard with the bold title ‘James Joyce Tower’ splashed across the top in white, and ‘Sandycove’ across the bottom, the photograph depicting a beach scene with the Martello Tower (now the James Joyce Tower, open as a museum) in the background.

A certain violence is always already factored into the postal principle. There is a war on the post:

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4 September 1977.

if you knew, but it’s killing me with my mouth wide open, and you don’t have to be afraid to send me walking: weg! One day it is you who will tell me, as I pretend to threaten you occasionally, “so long!” Go away! and to the war indeed, the worst one, we will march off again, the war of all against all, once the telephonic wire is cut: for if we deliver ourselves to a war without mercy, the worst of all, if it lasts at least and still holds us together, it is that we are at peace, you will not forget, at peace as never anyone, and for eternity.95

It is an eternal war over the post, between sender and addressee, between the message and its undeliverability. ‘And he war,’96 you command, and Derrida spells these last two words out:

HE WARS—he wages war, he declares or makes war, he is war, which can also be pronounced by babelising a bit (it is in a particularly Babelian scene of the book that these words rise up), by Germanising, then, in Anglo-Saxon, He war: he was—he who was (‘I am he who is or who am,’ says YAHWE). Where it was, he was, declaring war, and it is true. Pushing things a bit, taking the time to draw on the vowel and to lend an ear, it will have been true, wahr, that’s what can be kept [garder] or looked at [regarder] in truth.

He, is ‘He,’ the ‘him,’ the one who says I in the masculine, ‘He,’ war declared, he who has declared war, declaring war, by declaring war, was he who was, and he who was true, the truth, he who by declaring war verified the truth that he was, he verified himself, he verified the truth of his truth by war declared, by the act of

95 Derrida, The Post Card, 55.

96 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 258.12.
declaring, and declaring is an act of war, he declared war in language and on language and by language, which gave languages, that’s the truth of Babel when YAHWE pronounced its vocable, difficult to say if it was a name…

This ‘he’ he refers to is not just you, but also Derrida—war on two fronts, but united, orchestrated in perfect precision, between Shem and Shaun, between the Penman and the Post, and between yourself and Derrida.

“‘He war,” God’s signature,’ but also ‘His’ counter-signature, as it ‘confirms and contradicts, effaces by describing,’ both writes and erases, and ambiviolently burns this correspondence.

There is an originary exile here, of Ulysses from Ithaca, Bloom from 7 Eccles Street, and you from the home of Algeria, which causes tears: ‘The child cries, therefore, when he has to leave home.’ The tears do not end here, but continue as the child endures the exile: ‘The child cries when he is lost.’ Finally the child cries for loss of this place, this home, he can now never return to: ‘But he also cries out of a sense that his native country is already lost to him,’ always already lost to him.

99 Derrida, ‘Two Words for Joyce,’ 158.
100 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 77.
102 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 77.
27/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting Trinity College, showing Regent House, taken from Parliament Square.

It is a war in the future, over the future, the future of the post, and the receptivity and deliverability of these letters. And yet it will always already have been fought. You will have prophesised this, Derrida acting as medium:

When we fell upon each other, I knew right away, you can verify this in the very old letters, that everything was played out in advance, written into the disaster, an ordered set of parts “like music paper”.

Everything will have been played out in advance—even our fiery deaths, our murders: ‘You are my fortune-teller, the seer and indicator of my death.’ You foresee the end, my apocalypse.

The motif of the wandering Jew returns again and again, forcing itself upon the counter-odyssey, a loss which haunts your writing. You suggest that the Judaism of your younger self represents an exile: ‘The young Jew’s access to his Jewishness (language, culture, religion) was itself subject, in its own way, to a type of prohibition.’ Like Bloom, you are displaced from your original, primary language, culture, and religion.

103 Derrida, The Post Card, 118.


28/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting an unattributed black and white photograph of Padraig Pearse surrendering to General W. H. M. Lowe in 1916 after the failed Easter Rebellion. Pearse was executed by firing squad at Kilmainham Gaol on 3 May 1916.

As I record this correspondence, as I foresee you and as you foresee me, we are doubled, we become twins:

Our story is also a twin progeniture, a procession of Sosie/sosie, Atreus/Thyestes, Shem/Shaun, S/p, p/p, (penman/postman) and more and more I metempsychose myself from you, I am with the others as you are with me (for the better, but also, I see clearly, for the worse, I do the same things to them). Never have I imitated anyone so irresistibly. I am trying to shake myself for if I love you infinitely I do not love everything about you I mean those inhabitants of you with their little hats.106

We are like Shem and Shaun, the twins of telecommunication, or perhaps Plato and Socrates. ‘You are my only double, I suppose, I speculate, I postulate.’107 We are doubled, and although he might not directly address you in The Post Card, you are doubled here too, tripled even, placed up against or alongside Derrida: ‘James (the two, the three), Jacques, Giacomo Joyce—your contrefacture is a marvel, the counterpart to the invoice: “Envoy: love me love my umbrella”.’108 Giacomo, James, Jacob: derived from the Hebrew, it means he who supplants, he who succeeds, he

106 Derrida, The Post Card, 142.
107 Derrida, The Post Card, 147.
who replaces. The envoy comes in place of another, carrying a message from the Other. This letter is an envoy. ‘Envoy: love me love my umbrella,’\textsuperscript{109} ends the final page of the mad sixteen-page written manuscript known as \textit{Giacomo Joyce}, a fragmentary epistle propounding an ethics of sympathy, ‘feeling beside, never usurping, never assuming, never taking up my place.’\textsuperscript{110} Derrida transfigures your beloved into the umbrella, ‘love my ombre, elle—not me,’\textsuperscript{111} not just love my ombrelle but also love my ghostly ‘her,’ my shadowy lover and Other, and the reader begins to love the ‘shadowy representation’\textsuperscript{112} of this Other who has spurned your love, forced you to shelter beneath the symbols of the hat and the umbrella, these weapons, which she has left behind. The umbrella is an envoy for your absent beloved, and \textit{Giacomo Joyce} becomes an envoy for this love. This correspondence too becomes an envoy of a conversation you and I could never have had, just as \textit{The Post Card} becomes an envoy of a conversation you and Derrida could never have had.

Yet there is a further slippage: ‘I forgot, Giacomo also has seven letters.’\textsuperscript{113} Already an envoy for you, James, Giacomo is drawn into parallel with the seven-lettered Jacques, as if Giacomo might also be an envoy for Derrida, who too commands us: ‘love me love my umbrella.’ We might also note, finally, that Stephen has seven letters, not just your own autobiographical and fictional Dedalus with his

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{110}] Marian Eide, \textit{Ethical Joyce}, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 144.
\item[\textsuperscript{111}] Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 238.
\item[\textsuperscript{112}] Eide, \textit{Ethical Joyce}, 145.
\item[\textsuperscript{113}] Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 239.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
'absurd' name, but also my own name, as if Giacomo might be an envoy for me, and Giacomo Joyce an envoy for this spaced-out sequence of love letters.

Issues of citizenship come up: what it means to be a citizen, and what it means to have that citizenship taken from you, what it means to be foreign or alien to a place, or even in your own place, your home. Under the heading ‘The Other Shore of Judaism,’ Malabou cites a list of Jewish émigrés, ‘a family of linguistic travellers’—Franz Kafka, Emmanuel Lévinas, Gerhard Scholem, Walter Benjamin, Paul Celan, Hannah Arendt, and Franz Rosenweig—who share a similar predicament to yourself, attempting but failing to write themselves into a place: ‘All of them exiles or foreigners who write in order to invent their citizenship, a citizenship that has, in a sense, been lost since or from its origin.’ But this citizenship is always already lost, and you are left to wander, placeless, along the coast of this ‘symbolic archipelago’ formed by their Odyssean-Joycean-Derridean travels, the incessant desire to return home, and the impossibility of ever doing so.

29/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard shaped like a pint of Guinness, depicting a pint of Guinness.

114 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 90.
115 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 90.
Our names are multiplied, our addresses dispersed and disseminated, by Derrida renaming us—you and I, and himself—after a fusion of the fleet-footed winged messenger Hermes, and the goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality, Aphrodite:

We are Hermaphrodite himself ... Hermaphrodite, not hermaphrodites despite our bisexualities now unleashed in the absolute tête-à-tête, Hermaphrodite in person and properly names. Hermes + Aphrodite (the post, the cipher, theft, ruse, voyage and envoi, commerce + love, all loves).117

Our many names—James, Giacomo, Jacques, Stephen, so many envoys—place us in the midst of the post, uncertain, indecipherable, illegible, and perhaps stolen, but always already travelling, voyaging, away from ourselves, splintered from ourselves, scattered.

This is why we love.

In this exile, ‘the course of the world is out of kilter, limping.’118 Lacking the origin from which to depart and the destination at which to arrive, these exiled travellers are somehow out-of-step. ‘Time is disjointed,’119 and the traveller is faced with ‘the non-coincidence of self with self, or of self with the other.’120 This disease, the disorder or disjunction of contretemps, prompts a temporal displacement, into a present haunted by a possible future, but a future which remains, always already, to come. This is the time of the counter-odyssey.

118 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 93.
120 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 103.
30/6/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting an old painted tin sign, bearing the famous slogan ‘Guinness is good for you.’ On the blue wall beneath it, painted in red, are the words ‘it’s an illusion.’ Beneath this, oddly, a yellow cylindrical gas tank is also painted on the wall.

‘Joyce’s own text is not simply about deferment, distance and loss, but it is written in direct confrontation with these problems.’ Your texts are written in direct confrontation with The Post Card, with the postal principle.

The traveller is lame, limping, like the sailor purposefully and yet without mission hobbling throughout Ulysses, and like Ulysses himself stumbling around the edges of the Mediterranean. Such falling is a postal manifestation of the structural destinerrance of the counter-odyssey.

1/7/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting Dalkey, captioned ‘the historic village of Dalkey, Co. Dublin,’ showing the Queens bar and restaurant, and Dalkey Castle.

Finnegans Wake confronts love, loss, distance, and the post. It begins with ALP, Anna Livia Plurabelle, ‘Anah the Allmaziful, the Everliving, the Bringer of Plurabilities,’ textual ‘Mummum,’ and her flowing, riverrunning ‘untitled


122 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 104.1-2.
mamafesta.'\textsuperscript{124} She dictates the letter to her son Shem the Penman, and charges her surly and disgruntled son Shaun the Post with its delivery to their father, HCE: ‘Letter, carried of Shaun, son of Hek, written of Shem, brother of Shaun, uttered for Alp, mother of Shem, for Hek, father of Shaun. Initialled. Gee. Gone.’\textsuperscript{125} But the letter never reaches its destination, instead arriving in a midden heap where it is unearthed by a hen named Biddy. The whole text is a discourse on the letter, an endless reiteration of this letter:

Jenny Wren: pick, peck. Johnny Post: pack, puck. All the world’s in want and is writing a letters. A letters from a person to a place about a thing. And all the world’s on wish to be carrying a letters. A letters to a king about a treasure from a cat. When men want to write a letters. Ten men, ton men, pen men, pun men, wont to rise a ladder. And den men, dun men, fen men, fun men, hen men, hun men wend to raze a leader. Is then any lettersday from many peoples, Daganasanavitch? Empire, your outermost. A posy cord. Plece.\textsuperscript{126} A posy card, a post card. Although Shem inscribes them and Shaun delivers them, ALP speaks them— they are her words. She is the mother, the womb, the choric O, the receptacle from which all of Creation springs forth. She speaks excessively, which is perhaps what strands her letter: ‘The excessive language of \textit{Finnegans Wake} ensures that there will be no reception of a message.’\textsuperscript{127} This over-potentialised

\textsuperscript{123} Joyce, \textit{Finnegans Wake}, 259.10.
\textsuperscript{124} Joyce, \textit{Finnegans Wake}, 104.4.
\textsuperscript{125} Joyce, \textit{Finnegans Wake}, 420.17-9.
\textsuperscript{126} Joyce, \textit{Finnegans Wake}, 278.12-24.
\textsuperscript{127} Mitchell, ‘Meaning Postponed,’ 72.
letter is consigned to the midden heap as if it is illegible, unreadable, and so useless, rubbish.

The traveller is delayed. Every missive holds the possibility of its own destinerrance, its non-arrival:

Inasmuch as it does not derive from an assignable origin, every address made to the other, and consequently every correspondence, every apostrophe can always not arrive, or miss its addressee.128

This possibility that the traveller might not arrive, that each journey holds out the possibility of non-arrival, is akin to ‘the being-destined-to-wander of the message.’129 This delay is the ‘ridiculous reprieve separating the traveller from his own end.’130 This reprieve means that, like Ulysses, Bloom and yourself, the message wanders. It is without place, displaced: ‘No longer assigned to residence, the event of encountering or accosting the other … owes its chance, paradoxically, to the possibility that it won’t reach its goal.’131 Encountering the Other through the series of border-crossings, testing limits and pushing margins, which is the counter-odyssey, is perhaps instead a series of turnings-away from the Other, the other approach beyond the borders of the Self revealing how, ‘in a space where mooring points are lacking, what happens or arrives never reaches its ends.’132 The Odyssean-

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Joycean-Derridean quest for the Other, this attempt to understand the foreigner, the alien, never reaches its end.

2/7/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting an old man, cloth cap and tweed jacket, cigarette in hand, sitting on a red leather seat in a pub, an elderly Jack Russell on a leash sitting at his feet, looking up keenly. It is captioned: ‘the thoughtful and the expectant in a Dublin pub.’

The first of the twins is Shem the Penman, ‘Shem Skrivenitch,’133 sitting at his desk and ‘making believe to read his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles, édition de ténèbres,’134 that is, making believe to read Ulysses. She sat, and ‘he scrabbled and scratched and scrobbled and skrevened,’135 the ‘inkerman militant’136 whose words triumph over the speech of ALP, but then face the courrier who is unable to deliver them. ‘Aboriginally ... of respectable stemming,’137 Shem is described as a ‘Sham,’138 as Shaun assassinates his character in book I, chapter VII. He is a ‘bardic’139 forger and ‘our low hero,’140 who Shaun charges with plagiarism: ‘how very many forged

133 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 423.15.
134 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 179.25-6.
135 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 182.13-4.
136 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 433.9.
137 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 169.2-3.
138 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 170.24.
139 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 172.28.
140 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 184.11.
palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist pen? Yet Shaun also regards Shem as creator, divinely inspired, life-giving (‘He lifts the lifewand and the dumb speak’), almost supernatural: ‘Pain the Shamman!’ The Sham-man is also a shaman.

‘Only such an itinerant [voyageuse] identity bodes well for the future.’ The traveller stumbles into the future. There is a messianic tone throughout all this derivation, deviation and destination. The traveller is akin to the Messiah, whose arrival is deferred until the final day. The arrival is always to come, awaiting the traveller in the future. This is ‘a waiting without any horizon of waiting,’ the messianic exposing itself to the ‘absolute surprise’ of ‘waiting without awaiting itself, without expecting.’ This messianic arrival is foreshadowed by you as the traveller Elijah, Elie el-Biar: the coming of Elijah precedes the coming of the Messiah, this wholly other (tour autre). This arrivant remains hidden, veiled: ‘The wholly other is a figure without a face [figure], with the unrepresentable visage of the arrivant.’

Unable to see who or what is coming, all we can do is wait and hope.

141 Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 178.2-3.
142 Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 195.5.
144 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 234.
Written on the back of a postcard depicting a stylised map of the Howth peninsula, to the north of Dublin. It carries the tourist slogan ‘Howth is magic.’ Another slogan on the back reads: ‘Home of the Dublin Bay Prawn.’

In his vitriolic description of his twin brother, Shaun rails against the writer of the letter, knowing he must deliver it, deliver it by destroying it. He rails too against the postal principle: the inevitable non-arrival of the letter, the frustration of a task so personal to him that he bears its name (‘the meaning he bears is the meaning that defines him, and it is not his own’148), that he becomes the undeliverable letter: Shaun the Post, not Postman, but Post. Mitchell describes ‘dear dogmestic Shaun’149 as ‘a mediator’150 between the dictator and the writer of the letter, ALP and Shem respectively, and the absent addressee. He becomes a courrier, and ‘a receptacle, a vehicle for another,’151 bearing a debt which ‘he is desperate to discharge’152 in his role as ‘collector general,’153 not archivist but destroyer of the letter, incendiariist.

149 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 411.23.
153 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 192.5.
The neologism *envoyage* is derived from *The Post Card*, where you wrote: ‘This continual voyage is exhausting and yet ...’\(^{154}\) It suggests a being in-voyage, en-route, a placelessness, but also a synonymity with the *envois*, this structure of sending, this postal principle, which troubles, haunts, the traveller.

Like the post, the route mapped out by the traveller, in the footsteps of Ulysses, ‘happens and comes only by effacing itself.’\(^{155}\)

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4/7/2009

*Written on the back of a postcard depicting the Oliver St. John Gogarty pub in Temple Bar. The building is painted a bright yellow. Temple Bar’s famous cobbled stone streets are visible in the foreground.*

He knows too that ‘delays are dangerous.’\(^{156}\)

*Finnegan Wake* is an endless, interminable delay. You wrote that book III of *Finnegans Wake* constitutes ‘a description of a postman travelling backwards in the night through the events already narrated,’\(^{157}\) taking place as ‘a barrel rolling down the river Liffey.’\(^{158}\) Shaun rolls down the Liffey, ‘and may his hundred thousand welcome stewed letters, relayed wand postchased, multiply, ay faith, and lustily!’\(^{159}\)

\(^{154}\) Derrida, *The Post Card*, 140.

\(^{155}\) Derrida, ‘The Retrait of Metaphor,’ in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 1*, 75.

\(^{156}\) Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 308.1.


\(^{159}\) Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 404.6-405.1.
This comical delay is your ‘Outragedy of poet scalds! Acomedy of letters!’\textsuperscript{160} It is a repetition, a return, but also a deferral, a continuation, a postscript. ‘P.S.’\textsuperscript{161}

The voyage (envoyage—envois) is impossible without the post: ‘Sending is not possible without the post.’\textsuperscript{162} Travel is predicated on the postal principle, on the structure of The Post Card, this text

whose “Envois” play on the possibility of creating a departure between the current understanding of the formula “postal principle”—post (office) as institution, technique, telecommunication centre, etc.—and its wider sense, “arche-post,” in other words, mode of dispensation of the trait and of the cutting of a path.\textsuperscript{163}

As a work of travel writing, a sequence of movements through places both literal and figurative, material and metaphoric, The Post Card charts this destinerrance as a geographic and a linguistic structure, the route of ‘a letter or traveller’\textsuperscript{164} following this same pattern of differing and deferring. ‘Everything begins with the post, which is to say, doesn’t begin.’\textsuperscript{165} Shem the penman writes, Shaun the postman delivers, and through this series of ‘posts and sendings … this disseminative pluralisation of

\textsuperscript{160} Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 425.24.

\textsuperscript{161} Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 406.20.

\textsuperscript{162} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 152.

\textsuperscript{163} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 152.

\textsuperscript{164} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 158.

\textsuperscript{165} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 153.
the _envoyage_ robs the postal principle of its unity of sense, that is to say of its path.\(^{166}\)

5/7/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting Dublin’s new tram or Luas passing along Abbey Street, through the city centre. The opening of the two Luas lines in June 2004 marked the return of trams to Dublin for the first time in more than half a century.

As ‘you detour everything that I say,’\(^{167}\) all of this will have concerned waiting: ‘from the beyond, like his ghost which says to him “wait,” hold on, come back with your spool, don’t hang up.’\(^{168}\) Derrida calls this ‘a great halt of postal technology,’\(^{169}\) when in fact it is precisely the structure of the postal principle. We wait for the letter, but it is undeliverable. The postman never comes; Shaun the Post never arrives:

To post is to send by “continuing” with a halt, a relay, or a suspensive delay, the place of a mailman, the possibility of going astray and of forgetting (not of repression, which is a moment of keeping, but of forgetting).\(^{170}\)

This delay is necessarily, and vitally, dangerous.

The path is ruined by the reversibility of the postcard, its dissemination as the missive scattered in every direction:

\(^{166}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 158.

\(^{167}\) Derrida, _The Post Card_, 13.

\(^{168}\) Derrida, _The Post Card_, 31.

\(^{169}\) Derrida, _The Post Card_, 32.

\(^{170}\) Derrida, _The Post Card_, 65.
“The space of reversibility” could be another name for *The Post Card* for it explores such a space in every sense and direction. Indeed, what is a postcard if not reversibility itself, a message that gets turned around, image and text, a brief message sent while one is travelling, legible to all along the way, although reserved for one addressee in particular, delivering its secret to whichever postman comes along?171

The postcard is turned around, and this reversibility ‘destines every messenger,’ every traveller, ‘to run without respite, to receive the baton without ever being able to catch up with the starting point of the first archive,’172 The traveller—Ulysses, Bloom, you, and I—is trapped on an endless loop, a ‘circle [which] can never be closed, instead being repeated, diffused in its very impossibility.’173 In the slippage between *carte* (map, chart, card, or postcard) and *ecart* (gap, departure, or deviation), you show us that ‘what can happen or arrive is situated in the irreducible opening [*écart*] that at once separates and unites what can be guessed or foreseen.’174 Always already, in this disrupted and disruptive *contretemps* of the latter and the traveller, Ulysses and Bloom will have returned, you will have returned.


172 Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 188.


6/7/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting Leonard da Vinci’s Mona Lisa, holding a pint of Guinness, and sporting a foam ‘moustache.’ The caption reads: ‘Mona Lisa Murphy, Ireland.’ On the back, the picture is attributed to Leonardo Mc Vinci.

These letters, delayed as they are, represent a series of open secrets exchanged between you and I, but also made public, published: ‘What I like about post cards is that even if in an envelope, they are made to circulate like an open but illegible letter.’ This is why Derrida loves the postcard:

This is why I am somewhat hung up on post cards: so modest, anonymous, offered, stereotyped, “retro”—and absolutely indecipherable, the interior safe itself that the mailman, the readers, the collectors, the professors finally pass from hand to hand with their eyes, yes, bound.

Others who read them might not gauge their meanings, but ‘you know the secret,’ and only you might, perhaps, one day, take delivery.

Always already, this could be the last voyage:

And if this voyage were to be the last? The haunting fear of an accident, of not coming back, a feeling of imminent peril accompanies Derrida everywhere he goes, punctuating his writing, darkening the landscape. From what cape, from what Land of Fire, will death come?

175 Derrida, The Post Card, 12.
176 Derrida, The Post Card, 47.
The correspondence is consumed by fire as in *The Post Card*, the letter and the traveller destroyed: ‘To give something to be read is to rush headlong toward death, to kill, to consign to the flames.’\(^{179}\) All that remains are cinders.

7/7/2009

Written on the back of a postcard depicting a view of the River Liffey, looking westwards, over the Liffey or Ha’penny Bridge, the Millennium Bridge, Grattan Bridge, and O’Donovan Rossa Bridge. Not visible is James Joyce Bridge in the far distance, crossing the river in front of 15 Usher’s Island.

The end draws near: ‘Our holocaust is to come, very close even, I feel it.’\(^{180}\) Our correspondence threatens to go up in flames:

I think that these are, you understand, the last letters that we are writing each other. We are writing the last letters, “retro” letters, love letters on a bellépoque poster, but also simply the last letters. We are taking the last *correspondance*. Soon there will be no more of them. Eschatology, apocalypse, and teleology of epistles themselves.\(^{181}\)

Their destruction is akin to my suicide, ‘making my way toward it, you hear, toward you. And *je me trie/tue* [I sort myself/I kill myself].’\(^{182}\)

‘When did the gathering of cinders begin?’\(^{183}\)

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\(^{179}\) Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 194.


\(^{182}\) Derrida, *The Post Card*, 16.
289

8/7/2009

Written on a postcard depicting firstly the Martello Tower at Sandycove, secondly the statue of Joyce in North Earl Street, known colloquially as ‘the Prick with the Stick,’ and thirdly Davy Byrne’s ‘moral pub’ in Duke Street, one of the few remaining establishments which was visited in Ulysses.

‘What do you think? I await your response.’


9. Derrida’s Gramophone: a Play in One Act

The fractured state of this postal discourse threatens to undo this correspondence. The multitude of meanings is overwhelming; the ocean of potential interpretations threatens the viability of this text, to say nothing of the always already vulnerable institution.

Perhaps a return to the safe ground of autobiographical reflection is in order, but framed with a further post-critical twist. This chapter takes the form of a manuscript for an impossible performance which, due to the structural destinerrance of the post, will never have taken place. Here, we will listen for the sounds emanating from and reverberating around the prosthetic, prophetic, technology of Derrida’s gramophone—by way of Ulysses’ circumnavigations, the postal principle in Ulysses, and the words of Derrida’s address ‘Ulysses Gramophone.’ Its performative enactment raises questions over who speaks and who has the authority to speak, and if—after Derrida’s double reading of the institution—it is possible to speak with the univocal voice of interpretive certitude in the wake of Joyce and Derrida.

The record is scratched, the needle jumps, and the message—however warped and distorted—repeats itself.

You stand before a small podium at the front of this unexpectedly full room, facing a crowd of gathered scholars, seated in rows of non-linearly arranged chairs. The anticipatory chattering of the audience reverberates throughout the space. An old-fashioned gramophone—the eponymous gramophone—stands to the left side of the stage. A small table stands a few feet to the right side of the podium, upon which sit
a jug of water and an empty glass. Behind you, projected on a large white screen, is the title of the address you are about to deliver: ‘Derrida’s Gramophone.’

You look out over your audience, surveying the mostly unfamiliar faces, judging you, judging your words, your work.

You take a deep breathe, exhale, and begin.

Speaker: Derrida’s Gramophone is a technological manifestation of spacing, this ‘irreducibility of the Other,’\(^1\) Other with a capital ‘O.’ Emptying or clearing an interstitial space between the Self and the Other, between the ‘bell’ or ‘horn’ of the gramophone and the ear of the listener, this gramophone represents the space traversed by the message, the postcard, the letter, the love letter, the speech act, the song, the love song. It also—and not coincidentally—represents the space traversed by Ulysses, the proto-typical Western traveller.

You pause, take a deep breath, look down at your notes, and then across to the table. You take a few steps, pour yourself a glass of water, and drink. The silence lasts only twenty or so seconds before you return to the podium.

Speaker: Derrida subtitles his address ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ with these five words ‘Hear say ... yes in Joyce.’\(^2\) This is all only ever hearsay, gossip, resounding in the ear, circling around the cochlea, of the hesitant listener, who remains always already

\(^1\) Derrida, *Positions*, 94.

\(^2\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 27.
uncertain of the reliability of what they hear, and unable to repeat the message as it was heard, unable to replicate the context of the endlessly spinning gramophone—but propelled to try nonetheless. These voices will not be silenced.

Derrida stands before the awaiting crowd of gathered Joycean scholars in Frankfurt, Germany, preparing to address the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium, the Augmented Ninth as it is still known, in 1984, and utters these inaugurating words: ‘Oui oui, you are receiving me, these are French words.’3 ‘Yes yes,’4 can you hear me? Does my voice carry? And how can you understand these words I am saying? Are you really hearing me at all if you cannot understand, cannot translate, these French words? ‘Can oui be quoted or translated?’5 How do we quote the voice, reproduce it on the page? Can Derrida’s spoken oui be translated into writing? What does the word lose in this attempted translation? What do we lose in any translation, in any instance of communication-as-translation? Perhaps ‘you are not receiving me loud and clear at all.’6 Perhaps we are not receiving Derrida’s words well at all. We are at an impasse, plunged into incomprehension, untranslatability, and undecidability, into the midst of a series of leaks and slippages between one and the other, a chain of substitutions between his voice and the ear of the listener, and then between his spoken words and those written down, translated from French into English by Tina Kendall, and published in James Joyce: the Augmented Ninth four years later, in 1988. But nobody is coming in loud and clear,

3 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 27.
4 Joyce, Ulysses, passim; Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ passim.
5 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 27.
because the prosthetic nature of this technology produces a disembodied gramophone: no bodies, only words, free-floating, destined to wander and err in search of someone to hear them, capable only of offering the potential for future meaning. Perhaps only the gramophone—even with its necessary imperfections—can save this address, save Derrida’s words.

Derrida’s voice resonates across the audience he addresses in Frankfurt, if they hear him or not. Derrida too hears Joyce, echoed throughout this Joycean gathering, echoed too throughout the philosopher’s own words, and those of others. As he speaks, this ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ Joyce’s gramophone, plays in the background, quiet but noticeable, slowly building in volume as Derrida speaks, until Joyce’s words rival his own in this polyphonic soundscape. Joyce’s words reverberate behind Derrida’s. As these two voices emanate from Derrida’s once-singular but now-fracturing address, this doubled address, a dialogue begins to emerge, across the twentieth-century, the space between the two slowly bridged. These voices sometimes come in clear, but are often muffled, distorted, slightly confused, and indecipherable in the cacophony. They become undecidable. The two streams of speech, recorded and reiterated, sometimes meet up, occasionally, if only by chance, the two speaking the same words with the one voice. But often, too often, necessarily, vitally, their words miss each other, the two voices stranded out of time, the dialogue bifurcated, the sounds carried away, straying along this path of destinerrance.

This uncertainty over the reception of Derrida’s words or missives, coupled with these memories of Joyce’s words, precisely is ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ not only this famous lecture on Joyce, but also the structure of the Odyssean gramophone.
effect, outlined in this passage from John D. Caputo, with requisite reference to Joyce:

A signifier, like a scientific experiment, is not significant unless it is repeatable; a meaningful message is woven from repeatable marks. An absolutely singular, unprecedented, and unrepeatable mark would be unrecognisable and meaningless. The analysis of repeatability is brought to bear in a paradigmatic way in this essay on “yes,” because the yes, if it really is a yes, implies repetition, “yes, yes,” as Molly Bloom teaches us so memorably.7

The gramophone is above all concerned with the ability to replay the sounds emanating from the machine, again and again and again. This journey between the ‘bell’ and the ear allows for the vital possibility that the message may become distorted, may go missing, may never reach its destination. So the gramophone actually reveals both the necessity of the repeatability or ‘iterability’ of the message being delivered, and the vital impossibility of ever accurately recording and then replaying the message, the possibility that the message might always already have strayed. It all has to do with reception:

So, you are receiving me, saying yes in Joyce but also saying it so that the yes (le oui) which can be noticed, the saying yes (le dire oui), sallies forth like a quotation or a rumour going about, circumnavigating, as it were, the ear’s labyrinth, which is what we know only by hear-say (oui-dire). They play on “hear say yes,” l’oui-dire and l’ouï-dire, can only be fully effective in French, which exploits the obscure, babelian homonymy of oui with just a dotted “i,” and ouï with a diaresis. This untranslatable homonymy can be heard (by oui dire, that is) rather than read with

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7 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 187-8.
the eyes, with the last word, eyes, noticed in passing, saying yes in the passage, giving itself to reading the grapheme yes rather than hearing it. Yes can only be a mark in *Ulysses*, a mark at once written and spoken, vocalised as a grapheme and written as a phoneme, yes, in a word, gramophoned.8

To be ‘gramophoned’ is to be quoted, repeated, and thrust off on a discursive circumnavigation where the destination remains obscured, the addressee uncertain until the message arrives. To be gramophoned is not to be received; it is to be not-received. The sound is written (‘vocalised as a grapheme’), and the writing is spoken (‘written as a phoneme’), *Ulysses*—a text that ‘is both heard and read, reproduced by the ear and by the eye’9—participating in this attempted translation between the words Joyce and Derrida speak and those they write, a necessary aporia structuring the gramophone effect: in attempting to close a gap, we witness the supreme lack of equivalence—the undecidability—between the two. This structure of citation means that the translation between the vocalised yes and the written yes, the phoneme and the grapheme, speech and writing, is only ever the potential for translation between media. Replicating the turning of the record on the gramophone, this postponement also means that final or definitive Meaning is never present or presented.

You place your notes down on the podium. You step out from behind the podium, and walk towards the front of the stage, the edge. Without your notes, you continue. As you speak, you slowly walk back and forth across the front of the stage, pausing

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8 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 36.

every so often to emphasise a point, as though your movement is somehow crucial to your words.

Speaker: ‘The Western traveller always follows in the steps of Ulysses.’ Derrida follows in the footsteps of both Ulysses the man and *Ulysses* the book. The dividing line between geography and the book is blurred. In an act of joyous Joycean polysemy, Derrida’s address also constitutes a reflection on the address, on the relationship of geography to writing and speech, and the placement of the traveller in the wake of Ulysses and *Ulysses*. Attridge writes of ‘the essay’s wandering path,’ and Derrida himself calls his address ‘an aimless wandering, a random trek.’ The metaphoric geography of this address—which takes Derrida from Frankfurt to his own travels in Tokyo and Ohio, back to Joyce’s various places, the travels of Bloom throughout Dublin in *Ulysses*, and those of Ulysses throughout the Mediterranean in the *Odyssey*—is structured like the spinning of the gramophone record, or like the Odyssey of Ulysses and *Ulysses*, where we ‘traverse the whole and return home again.’ The address itself is structured as ‘a series of circular movements that keep returning to themselves and at the same time opening themselves beyond previously established limits.’ Attridge describes this cyclical traversal as

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14 Attridge, introduction to ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 253.
manifesting ‘the necessary connection between chance and necessity,’\textsuperscript{15} unsure that the gramophone can perform this vital iterative function, uncertain if we are not always already embarked on ‘yet another Odyssey,’\textsuperscript{16} destined to stray precisely because there is—can be—no presented destination. The gramophone record cannot stop spinning.

‘Ulysses Gramophone’ is the tale of an autobiographical and a geographical journey, Derrida’s counter-Odyssey in response to memories of Homer’s \textit{Odyssey} and Joyce’s \textit{Ulysses}, in response to his memories of these journeys, an attempt to record them before he forgets. This mythological geographical Odyssey is also the journey of the letter, the postcard destined to err and wander, and the journey of the address, the words emanating from the doubled gramophone of Joyce and Derrida. Derrida crosses the borderline in ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ between geographical or linguistic places, written and then spoken: between the \textit{Odyssey}, \textit{Ulysses}, and ‘Ulysses Gramophone.’ Ulysses moves along a geographical path, across land and sea, the ‘immense postcard’\textsuperscript{17} while \textit{Ulysses} similarly moves ‘along a discursive path, or more precisely, along a narrative path.’\textsuperscript{18} He describes Ulysses’ Odyssey as mimicking the deferred structure of the postal principle:

\begin{quote}
You will no doubt know better than I that the whole pack of postcards perhaps hints at the hypothesis that the geography of Ulysses’ trips around the
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{15} Attridge, introduction to ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 253.
\textsuperscript{16} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 49.
\textsuperscript{17} Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 30.
\textsuperscript{18} Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 30-1.
\end{footnotesize}
Mediterranean lake could have the structure of a postcard or a cartography of postal dispatches.\textsuperscript{19}

In this conjunction of geography and the postcard, where Derrida is ‘perpetually missing his appointment with Ulysses,’\textsuperscript{20} the traveller misses his destination, and the postcard misses its addressee. These paths—geographical and literary—replicate the turning of the record playing on Derrida’s gramophone: Ulysses sails in a strangely disrupted circle around the Mediterranean, returning home to Ithaca only to begin his Odyssey again with each reading of the text, and Bloom too partakes in his aimless, random trek across Dublin, returning to the beginning at 7 Eccles Street as he retires for the night at the close of the Ithaca episode, only to rise again the next day and embark on a similar but never identical journey, \textit{Ulysses} thus completing the cycle without any sense of closure. ‘The exposition of \textit{Ulysses} is necessarily circular,’ writes Harry Levin, ‘it plunges the reader, with epic vengeance, \textit{in media res}.’\textsuperscript{21} This iterability is the gramophone effect, at each turn removed from any sense of a solid foundation as it cascades down from the geography of \textit{Ulysses} through the less tangible letters of \textit{Ulysses}, to the transient voices recorded on Derrida’s gramophone.

\textit{You have by now returned to the podium. From beneath your notes, you produce a large, square cardboard envelope. It is a record sleeve. You do not make a show of it,}

\textsuperscript{19} Derrida, ‘\textit{Ulysses Gramophone},’ 30.

\textsuperscript{20} Malabou, ‘The Parting of Ways,’ 28.

\textsuperscript{21} Levin, \textit{James Joyce}, 95.
do not acknowledge to the audience that you even have it in your possession as you walk towards the gramophone. You continue.

Speaker: Turning and turning, spiralling around the cochlea, the gramophone is a modernist technology *par excellence*. Sebastian Knowles notes that ‘modernism grew up right alongside the gramophone,’ pointing out the centrality of this technology—both real and metaphoric—to *Ulysses*:

The gramophone that was developed by 1904, the year in which *Ulysses* is set, was both positive and negative: wax pressings of the recordings (positive) were transferred onto a stamping press (negative) to allow for their mass production. Bloom is in such a way gramophoned, doubled, his voice and his desires are both positive and negative, immediate and reproduced, real and parodied. The structure of this modernist gramophone concerns a series of doublings, noted by Friedrich Kittler: ‘writing and reading, storing and scanning, recording and replaying.’ The relationship between speech and writing has shifted, as speech is now recordable, preservable. Speech has been transformed into what Knowles calls ‘a mocking reproduction of all that is vital,’ an attempt to ‘simulate the real’ which only ever points out the absence of the real, the absence of the speaker. Not

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22 Knowles, ‘Death by Gramophone,’ 2.
26 Knowles, ‘Death by Gramophone,’ 8.
only has the gramophone caused this absenting of the speaker, but it has also afforded us not the possibility but the incontrovertible fact of ‘writing without a subject,’ where ‘it is no longer necessary to assign an author to every trace.’

Traces of the absent voice and the absent subject are inscribed on the cylinder, problematized by this troubling thought that ‘something ceases not to write itself.’

Kittler pointedly refuses to state here that something writes or begins to write itself, proposing instead this double negative as a play at presenting the gramophone’s dependence on iterability, its role in remembering or recalling rather than producing, and the lack of agency involved in the recordings placed on the gramophone, and those emanating from it, each structured by this Derridean destinerrance. Perhaps, ultimately, the gramophone is simply synonymous with memory as erasure, akin to Freud’s mystic writing pad, which brings along with it all the myriad possibilities of distortions, erroneous messages and mistaken identities.

Freud adopts the metaphor of the Mystic Writing Pad in describing the psychological structure of memory, claiming he is ‘able to supplement and guarantee its working by making a note in writing.’ What is essential, for Derrida, is that the message be repeatable: ‘A writing that is not structurally readable—iterable—beyond the death of the addressee would not be a writing.’

27 Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, 44.

28 Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, 3.


30 Freud, ‘A Note Upon the “Mystic Writing Pad”,’ 227.

must be iterable; this is ‘an implacable performative law, the law of iterability.’32 Every iteration is a reiteration, a quotation or citation of words that have been written and spoken before, always already performed and pre-performed, perhaps even pre-empted, predicted, prophesised. But ‘iterability alters.’33 What the Mystic Writing Pad reveals for Derrida is that the memory, the message, remains recoverable, repeatable, but also that there is something missing, a slippage: memory is fallible, and the recall or repetition is never the same as the original: ‘memory is not a pure breaching that might be re-appropriated at any time as simple presence; it is rather the ungraspable and invisible difference between breaches.’34 The breach opens up a trail, a track, tracing the path of the memory—but it errs, wanders. Always already, the technology will have failed us in the slippage whereby ‘iterability alters’ and the message is distorted.

You stand before the gramophone, your back to the audience. You lift the needle, remove the record from its sleeve, and place it on the turntable. You do not place the needle in the groove, but instead turn to the audience, clutching the empty record sleeve, and continue.

33 Derrida, Limited Inc., 62.
34 Derrida, ‘Freud and the Scene of Writing,’ 201.
**Speaker:** Turning and returning, we return to the gramophone—Joyce’s and Derrida’s—and see that it is ultimately concerned with the lack of an address.

Derrida describes *Ulysses* as

a diary of the conscious and the unconscious in the chance form of letters, telegrams, of newspapers called *The Telegraph*, for example, long-distance writing, and also of postcards for which sometimes the only text, taken out of some sailor’s pocket, merely exhibits a fantasy in the form of an address.³⁵

This fantasy of the address, as though the reception of the postcard could ever be anticipated or preordained, is exhibited in Cyclops, by the postcard produced from the pocket of the sailor:

He fumbled out a picture postcard from his inside pocket, which seemed to be in its way a species of repository, and pushed it along the table. The printed matter on it stated: *Choza de Indios. Beni, Bolivia.*³⁶

The postcard is a marker of place, marking this scene in Bolivia, depicting ‘a group of savage women in striped loincloths, squatted, blinking, sucking, frowning, sleeping, amid a swarm of infants ... outside some primitive shanties of osier.’³⁷ Yet in another way its points towards a lack of place: in the possession of the sailor, Bloom suspects that this ‘messageless postcard’³⁸ has not reached its intended address:

Mr Bloom, without evincing surprise, unostentatiously turned over the card to peruse the partially obliterated address and postmark. It ran as follows: *Tarjeta*

³⁵ Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 32.


³⁷ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 581.

Postal. Señor A. Boudin, Galeria Becche, Santiago, Chile. There was no message evidently, as he took particular notice. 

Such a postcard ‘has no proper addressee, apart from the person who acknowledges having received it with some imitatatable signature.’

Bloom unintentionally receives the postcard, momentarily becomes its addressee as it is passed on by the sailor, whose own identity is brought into question, Bloom detecting ‘a discrepancy between [the sailor’s] name ... and the fictitious addressee of the missive.’

Here, the destination is entirely absent; as far as Ulysses is concerned, there is no Señor A. Boudin and no address in Chile. Yet the postcard—like the sailor, and the traveller Ulysses—must continue this journey of destinerrance towards an unknown and unknowable addressee, and an un-anticipatable future.

So the gramophone continues to turn, returning to the beginning, beginning again, endlessly deferring the end. It records layer upon layer of ‘the autobiographical-encyclopaedic circumnavigation of Ulysses,’ layer upon layer of writing etched onto the sailor’s and Derrida’s postcards, layer upon layer of voices—questions, assertions and interjections—emanating from the address before that audience in Frankfurt, the untimely time of this distorted and disruptive dialogue crafted by and between Joyce and Derrida.

You turn back to the gramophone. Your hand hovers above the needle.

39 Joyce, Ulysses, 581.
40 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 30.
41 Joyce, Ulysses, 722.
42 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 32.
Speaker: This is an excerpt from the very end of Penelope, part of the manic and highly sexualised monologue delivered by Molly Bloom to an absent addressee, perhaps an absent lover, by way of some sort of closure, an improbable—dare I say impossible—conclusion.

You gently place the needle into the groove.

Gramophone: ‘as for them saying there’s no God I wouldn’t give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning why don’t they go and create something I often asked him atheists or whatever they call themselves go and wash the cobbles of themselves first then they go howling for the priest and they dying and why why because they’re afraid of hell on account of their bad conscience ah yes I know them well who was the first person in the universe before there was anybody that made it all who ah that they don’t know neither do I so there you are they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow …’

The record skips, repeats itself.

Gramophone: ... rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow rising tomorrow... 

43 Joyce, Ulysses, 731.
You briefly utter an apology, a short sorry, as you lift the needle from the record, and gently replace it.

*Gramophone:* ‘... the sun shines for you he said they day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was on true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldn’t answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things ...

*The record skips again, repeats itself.*

*Speaker:* Sorry again. It’s old, a bit scratched.

*You lift the needle from the record again, and gently replace it.*

*Speaker:* Hopefully this time.

*Joyce, Ulysses, 731.*
Gramophone: ‘... and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes’

You stop the record, lift the needle, remove the record, and gently slip it back into the sleeve.

Speaker: So, in the wake of and in anticipation of Molly’s affirmations, ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ unfolds, Derrida tells us, as a play at ‘preparing the ground to speak to ... [us] about oui,’ to speak to us about ‘some of the modalities of oui.’ ‘Yes yes,’ adds Joyce: ‘and yes I said yes I will Yes.’

45 Joyce, Ulysses, 731-2.
‘Ulysses Gramophone’—now not just an essay but also a synonym for the polyphonic, polysemous, and prosthetic cacophony emanating from *Ulysses* itself—charts ‘the gramophony of yes’.

Derrida’s purpose, as he addresses his audience of Joyce scholars in Frankfurt, is ‘to question what happens when the word yes is written, quoted, repeated, archived, recorded, gramophoned, or is the subject of translation or transfer.’ He tries to tally the yeses, as though taking account of them all might just be possible. He ‘casually’ counts ‘more than 222 yeses in the so-called original version.’ But this only takes into account the ‘explicit yeses,’ neglecting the numerous ‘other examples of yes without the word yes’ which run throughout *Ulysses*, for ‘yes can be implied without the word being said or written.’

Derrida later departs from this attempt at accountancy to articulate two yeses, both primary in the relationship between the Self and the Other:

Yes comes from me to me, from me to the Other in me, from the Other to me, to confirm the primary telephonic “Hello”: yes, that’s right, that’s what I’m saying, I am, in fact, speaking, yes, there we are, I’m speaking, yes, yes you can hear me, I

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48 Joyce, *Ulysses*, passim.


50 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 37.

51 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 35.

52 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 35.

53 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 35.

54 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 35.

55 Derrida, ‘*Ulysses Gramophone,*’ 61.
can hear you, yes, we are in the process of speaking, there is language, you are receiving me, it’s like this, it takes place, happens, is written, is marked, yes, yes.56

The first is an ‘I will’ (‘yes I will Yes’57), and ‘I am here,’ a marker of presence awaiting the response of the second; and the second marks a response, made in reply to the call of the first. But this second yes is also an originary yes of its own, a first yes calling for a response from another ‘second,’ awaiting it in the future. The first yes must be repeated, so that the second yes is shown not to be counterfeit:

So “yes” has to be repeated and repeated immediately. That is what I call iterability. It implies repetition of itself, which is also threatening, because the second “yes” may be simply a parody, a record, or a mechanical repetition. You may say “yes, yes” like a parrot. The technical reproduction of the originary “yes” is from the beginning a threat to the living origin of the “yes.” So the “yes” is haunted by its own ghost, its own mechanical ghost, from the beginning. The second “yes” will have to reinaugurate, to reinvent, the first one.58

This gramophoning of the two yeses prompts an endlessly repetitive cycle, yeses potentially iterated and reiterated ad infinitum. This potentially infinite number of yeses is endlessly disseminated throughout Joyce’s sprawling text, breaking free of the constraints of the book and its printed pages, embarking on their own journey structured by this Odyssean destinerrance, by the turning and returning of the record on the gramophone. These yeses ‘exist’ only because they contain within themselves the possibility of their own repetition:

56 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 61.

57 Joyce, Ulysses, 732.

In order for the yes of affirmation, assent, consent, alliance, of engagement, signature, or gift to have the value it has, it must carry the repetition within itself. It must a priori and immediately confirm its promise and promise its confirmation.59

You shrug your shoulders, and the quotation trails off.

You walk back across the stage, place the first record on the table besides the podium, and from beneath your notes produce a second gramophone record. You return to the gramophone, and set up the second record as you did the first.

Speaker: In contrast to Molly Bloom’s yeses, this is an excerpt from Derrida’s address ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ concerning notions of Joycean competency and the great hypermnesis or hypermnesiac machine.

The needle drops again.

Gramophone: ‘Joyce experts are the representatives of as well as the effects of the most powerful project for programming the totality of research in onto-logico-encyclopaedic fields for centuries, all the while commemorating his own proper signature. A Joyce scholar has right at his/her disposal, has the right to dispose of, the totality of competence in the encyclopaedic field of the universitas. He has at his command the computer of all memory, he plays with the entire archive of

59 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 43.
culture—at least of what is said to be Western culture, and of what in this returns to itself according to the Ulyssian circle of encyclopaedia; and this is why one can always at least dream of writing on Joyce and not in Joyce from the fantasy of some Far Eastern capital, without, in my case, having too many illusions about it. The effects of this pre-programming, you know better than I, are admirable and terrifying, and sometimes of intolerable violence. One of them has the following form: nothing can be invented on the subject of Joyce. Everything we can say about Ulysses, for example, has already been anticipated, including, as we have seen, the scene about academic competence and the ingenuity of meta-discourse. We are caught in a net. All the gestures sketched in to allow an initiatory movement are already announced in an over-potentialised text that will remind you, at a given moment, that you are captive in a language, writing, knowledge, and even narration network. This is one of the things I wanted to demonstrate before, in recounting all these stories, moreover true ones, about the postcard in Tokyo, the trip to Ohio, or the phone call from Rabaté. We have verified that all this had its narrative paradigm and was already recounted in Ulysses. Everything that happened to me, including the narrative that I would attempt to make of it, was already foretold and forenarrated, this unusualness being dated, prescribed in a sequence of knowledge and narration: within Ulysses, to say nothing of Finnegans Wake, by a hypermnesis machine capable of storing in an immense epic work, with the Western memory and virtually all the languages in the world including traces of the future.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 48.
Again, you lift the needle from the record, remove the record from the gramophone, and slip it back into its sleeve. You return to the podium, and place this second record on the table alongside the first.

*Speaker:* This hypermnesiac machine not only records all of these yeses, but prerecords them, anticipates their coming, their arrival. Perhaps this series of affirmations precisely is the hypermnesiac machine, this onto-logico-encyclopaedic hyper-memory affirming Joyce’s own memories of the *Odyssey* as expressed in Ulysses, Derrida’s memories of both the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses* as expressed in ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ and my own memories, here and now, today, of the *Odyssey*, *Ulysses*, and ‘Ulysses Gramophone.’

The yes ‘keeps in advance of the memory of its own beginning.’ It masks its own absence of origin by creating these false memories of a beginning, construing itself as its own memory of this impossible origin. ‘The affirmation of the word yes is the affirmation of memory.’ The yes propels this vast hypermnesiac machine, its immense endeavour of recording and preserving, but doing so in the future, from the future. It is both past and future, beginning and end:

“Yes” is not only, or not merely, a determinate word in the language, written or spoken, an element of language analysable in linguistics, but also, more importantly, a word that comes before language, and after language, and traverses the whole of language, being co-extensive with every statement.

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61 Derrida, ‘The Villanova Roundtable,’ 27.


63 Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 194.
The yes gramophones itself: it quotes and repeats itself, propels itself off on a strange discursive circumnavigation from an origin it cannot remember towards a future it can never know, for always already it is distorted by the uncertainty and undecidability of destinerrance. Even the hypermnesiac machine cannot completely eradicate the possibility of these mistakes and mistaken identities.

Coming into this transient, interstitial being only through the ‘constant practice and repetition,’ the yes is also a promise to remember:

if I say “yes” today and then excuse myself tomorrow, then my “yes” will not have been a “yes.” I cannot be confident about “yes”; I cannot sit back and rest on the oars of “yes.” When I say “yes,” I promise to remember. The yes promises to remember itself, ‘can only express itself by promising itself its own memory.’ It makes this promise to itself, but also to the Other:

When I say “yes” to the other, in the form of a promise or an agreement or an oath, the “yes” must be absolutely inaugural. Inauguration is the theme today. Inauguration is a “yes.” I say “yes” as a starting point. Nothing precedes the “yes.” The “yes” is the moment of institution, of the origin; it is absolutely orioginary. But when you say “yes,” you imply that in the next moment you will have to confirm the “yes” by a second “yes.” When I say “yes,” I immediately say “yes, yes.” I commit myself to confirm my commitment in the next second, and then tomorrow, and then the day after tomorrow. That means that a “yes” immediately duplicates itself, doubles itself. You cannot say “yes” without saying

64 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 196.
65 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 188.
66 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 43.
“yes, yes.” That implies memory in that promise. I promise to keep the memory of that first “yes.”

In signing *Ulysses* with that final, capitalised ‘Yes,’ Joyce makes a promise to Derrida that he is present and listening, that he hears what Derrida, in the future, has to say. (After all, Joyce has foreseen, ‘foretold and forenarrated,’ everything Derrida could have to say.) Repeating this yes, multiplying it, disseminating it, yes yes, throughout *Ulysses Gramophone*, Derrida too makes a promise to Joyce that he is present and listening to what Joyce has to say. I too make a promise to remember these yeses, to gramophone them; ‘yes,’ I say to Joyce and Derrida, I am here, I hear you; no matter how distorted the message is, I am receiving your words in some way.

_You pause and look at your wristwatch, before returning to your notes. You shuffle through a few pages, and continue._

_Speaker:_ But I wander too far from my point, too far from the prosthetic, prophetic technology of Derrida’s gramophone. I seem to be lost.

As we have heard in relation to *Ulysses*, yes is ‘the last, capitalised word in the book, which even looks like the signature signing the book—the book of “Yes”.’ When ‘the Other signs,’ offers this affirmation, ‘the yes relaunches itself to infinity,

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67 Derrida, ‘The Villanova Roundtable,’ 27.


69 Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 186.

70 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 71.
even farther.’71 The yes spins, turning and returning, endlessly iterated and reiterated, on the turntable of the gramophone. This hypermnesiac machine of the gramophone, recording and recalling past, present and future, is the yes, yes yes, which makes possible what I stand here before you and do today.

I want to note that throughout all this talk of the gramophone, ‘the telephone is missing.’72 I want to depart with the thought that ‘wherever there is a yes, whatever break may have taken place in the monologue, the other is hooked up somewhere on the telephone.’73

The gramophone continues to turn. After the wandering and erring of this hyper-memory, attempting to take account of all that Joyce and Derrida have and could have spoken, written, gramophoned, all that their texts could possibly mean, and record it on the spinning gramophone, all that remains are traces of future interpretations; all that remains is the potential for future meaning to be produced, absent from the present but promised in the future.

All that is left is to ‘Re-Joyce, say yes.’74

Your final words are met with silence.

71 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 71.
72 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 35.
73 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 35.
74 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 198.
10. Telephones and Telepathy: ‘You are receiving me?’

...we venture to introduce the words Telessthenia and Telepathy to cover all cases of impression received at a distance without the normal operation of the recognised sense organs.¹

Derrida’s interest in scrambled messages is not a matter of taking devilish delight ... in reducing communication to chaos ... His desire is to keep the lines open, to prevent telecommunicational “systems” and “networks” from becoming scenes of totalisation and control, from enclosing senders and receivers encyclopaedically, instead of providing opportunities for new events, for novel twists and turns, for unheard-of ... messages.²

One never can be sure when or where it is Derrida speaking or writing.³

THE FRAME

There are too many voices to account for, too many vocal interventions threatening to fracture an already uncertain, unpredictable, over-potentialised text, too many cracks and crackles in the line through which its Other can enter. The resultant

² Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 187.
chapter, the manuscript of a potential prophetic polyphonic telephone conversation held between Joyce and Derrida, attempts to contact both figures, telepathically, hoping to intercept a spectral dialogue which displays the possibility of the message not reaching its destination. But the lines have become crossed, and the conversation is endlessly disrupted by a series of other voices. As these other voices intervene, the resulting polyphony will have revealed the Babelian confusion at the heart of the relationship between Joyce and Derrida, at the heart too of their doubled strategies designed to destabilise or deconstruct the Joycean and Derridean institutions, opening up the text to so many alternative interpretations and interventions that its semantic resources might never be exhausted.

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘I shall hang on to the telephone a little longer.’\(^4\) I ... deathly fear of putting it down, hanging up, ending this vital convers ... might call it ... this ‘telegramophonic obsession’\(^5\) of mine, as if ...

JAMES JOYCE

‘Hello? ... Who’s there?’\(^6\) The line keeps dropping out. ‘Are you there?’\(^7\) We have a bad connection. Perhaps the distance is too great. I cannot hear so well. You must ‘speak up for yourself.’\(^8\) Hello?

\(^4\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 37.

\(^5\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 38.

\(^6\) Joyce, Ulysses, 131.
‘Hello, I can’t make you out very well ...’

9 I need the telephone. It is vital, a vital technology. A primary technology. I mean, ‘in the beginning, there must have been some phone calls.’

10 There must have been someone else, someone on the other end of the line. Yes? ‘Before the act or the word, the telephone. In the beginning was the telephone.’

11 ‘We hear it resonate unceasingly,’ this telephonic origin. Yes?

JAMES JOYCE

Your telegramphonic obsession. Like the Roman, who ‘brought to every new shore on which he set his foot ... only his cloacal obsession.’

13 An excremental obsession. Not just bodily waste, not only faecal, but from the Latin excrementum, from the stem excretus, which is to sift out, to discharge, to separate. It constitutes this separation by telephone we are experiencing, here and now, today, at this moment. Not an expulsion, but a sifting out.

7 Joyce, Ulysses, 132.

8 Joyce, Ulysses, 133.


10 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 38.

11 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 38.

12 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 38.

13 Joyce, Ulysses, 126.
This excremental technology is the possibility of our conversation. The yes is excremental.

A pause.

JAMES JOYCE


A pause.

STEPHEN ABBLITT

The ‘bingbang’—doubled here, for a reason later to be exposed—represents not only a distortion of the voices travelling down the telephone line, but a rupture in the conversation, a breaking-in, an intervention, which problematizes any straightforward correspondence between the speakers.

JAMES JOYCE

Yes?

\textsuperscript{14} Joyce, Ulysses, 123.
I told them this as I stood there in Frankfurt, at that symposium of yours (I do not know if you heard me or not): ‘There are several modalities or tonalities of the telephonic yes, but one of them, without saying anything else, returns to mark, simply, that we are here, present, listening, on the other end of the line, ready to answer but not for the moment responding to anything other than the preparation to answer (hello, yes: I’m listening, I can hear that you are there, ready to speak just when I am ready to speak to you). In the beginning was the telephone, yes, in the beginning a telephone call.’15

Is this that telephone call, that call which marks the beginning? Is this that ‘certain telephonic yes’ which ‘resounds with a “Bingbang”,’ recalling ‘the origin of the universe’16?

A short pause.

You might call it a ‘telephonic spacing.’17 Yes?

Bingbang, bingbang. The line crackles.

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17 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 40.
NICHOLAS ROYLE

‘Rather than conceiving telepathy as something supplementary, something added on to the experience of a subject, Derrida situates it in accordance with the logic of a foreign body, as being at once outside-the-subject and at the very heart of the subject.’

STEPHEN ABBLITT

That is, Derrida positions telepathy at this aporetic intersection, the borderline between ‘subject’ and ‘outside-subject,’ supplementary in the same way as the framing parergon is neither inside nor outside, neither this nor that, incapable of being reduced to one or the other.

Bingbang.

JAMES JOYCE

What was that? A crossed line?

NICHOLAS ROYLE

‘I’m sorry: I didn’t catch that.’ ‘The line’s breaking up.’


SIGMUND FREUD

‘... you will not even gather whether I believe in the existence of “telepathy” or not ...

STEPHEN ABBLITT

These might too be Derrida’s words. Freud might have some telepathic link forwards towards the deconstructionist, who too refuses to reveal his belief or not in telepathy. It is unknowable, undecidable, unpredictable. Derrida does not know—not yet—if he is capable of believing in the ‘existence’ of telepathy.

JAMES JOYCE

Can you hear that? That other voice, reverberating?

Silence.

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘So, what do you want me to say?’

SIGMUND FREUD

Telepathy is a ‘suppressed wish.’


JAMES JOYCE

Again.

NICHOLAS ROYLE

‘There is an echo on the line.’24

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘You ask me, I ask myself: where is this leading us, toward what place? We are absolutely unable to know, forecast ..., /foresee, foretell, fortune-tell/. Impossible anticipation, it is always from there that I have addressed myself to you and you have never accepted it. You would accept it more patiently if something wasn’t telling us, behind our backs and in order to subject us to it, that this place, it, knows us, forecasts our coming, predicts us, us, according to its code.’25


PAMELA THURSCHWELL

The telephone is ‘a mechanism of transmission which refers back towards an original, archaic form of communication—language as inseparable from biology.’26 A natural extension, if you will, a biological supplement, of ...

STEPHEN ABBLITT

The voice is the first technology, the first prosthesis. If language is inseparable from biology, biology is inseparable from technology, extension and articulation.

JAMES JOYCE

Voices. Another one. An Other one.

JACQUES DERRIDA

You repeat yourself.

It is a problem, these intervening voices. ‘With the telepathic transfer, one could not be sure of being able to cut ... or to isolate the lines.’27

PAMELA THURSCHWELL

We are witnessing ‘a confusion over where tongues literally are: in whose mouths, in relation to whose bodies.’28


JAMES JOYCE

Yes.

JACQUES DERRIDA

This whole conversation is predicated, perhaps, on a sense of ‘telephonic interiority.’29 This telephonic technology is always already within us. It is already at work fracturing and fragmenting our voice, disseminating our words. ‘For before any appliance bearing the name “telephone” in modern times, the telephonic tekhnè is at work within the voice, multiplying the writing of voices without any instruments, as Mallarmé would say, a mental telephony, which, inscribing remoteness, distance, difference, and spacing in sound ... institutes, forbids, and at the same time interferes with the so-called monologue.’30

NICHOLAS ROYLE

‘Hello? Lost you there. So there’s no monologue, no monological voice in Bakhtin’s sense. Is that what you’re saying? Hello? OK: ignore me.’31

JAMES JOYCE

But there is no monologue and never has been. Not since before Babel.

28 Thurschwell, Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 115.
29 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 39.
‘The fantasy of telepathy engages both the potential failure of communication ... and the inevitability of communicative leakage, the impossibility of owning oneself and one’s thoughts in absolute privacy.’32 There is a leakage, or perhaps this is the wrong word. There is a blurring, a transgression of the borderline, between this Self and the Other, precluding the possibility of any sense of absolute privacy—or even, to borrow a term from Derrida, sovereignty.

**Bingbang.**

**Mark Taylor**

*Finnegans Wake* will always already have shown us this. ‘As the re-enactment of the entire epic tradition, *our* reading of the epic of epics brings to closure not only this tradition but individual selfhood.’33 It explodes the idea of an enclosed Self shut off not from a singular Other, but from a series of Others, a multitudinous, ravenous horde of Others, each making its own demands.

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32 Thurschwell, Literature, Technology, and Magical Thinking, 129.

JAMES JOYCE

They seem to think telepathy is a fantasy, certainly nothing more than the stuff of dreams. I had hopes that Finnegans Wake, this book of the dark, of the night, of the unconscious and the fantastic, might have put these questions to bed.

JACQUES DERRIDA

It belongs, perhaps, this crashing fall of Babel you speak of, to that uncanny category of things which have always ‘already happened to us in the future.’ Its return [is] always foreseeable, the catastrophe coming in advance, called, given, dated.

JAMES JOYCE

Forecast and foretold by that great encyclopaedic hypermnesiac machine you claim I was—or will have been; will always already have been—responsible for authoring?

JACQUES DERRIDA

Yes.

A pause.

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JACQUES DERRIDA

Yes. I think, always already, you will have been concerned, like I am, with ‘the one which foresees us,’ 36 whoever this might be, the one ‘by which I sense us predicted, anticipated, snapped up, called, summoned from a single casting, a single coming.’ 37 Always already we will have been hanging on the telephone, holding this conversation.

* A pause. *

JACQUES DERRIDA

Or at least trying to hold onto it.

STEPHEN ABBLITT

I do not think for a moment that any of this was predestined, predetermined. This would not be telepathy; telepathy is nothing like the Moirae, the Fates of Greek mythology weaving the thread of life and controlling each mortal’s destiny. The telepathy which interests Derrida is one which is by definition not sure of the future, not able to say what comes next, but which instead attempts to express the multitude of possibilities. Telepathy is possible because it is conceptually founded not on the future as such, but on the idea of the future as a series of unknown and unknowable possibilities.


A modern Tiresias. Seer and prophet. I lose my sight, and can suddenly see. Perhaps not so wise though. ‘Yes, yes’ said Ulysses, and shortly afterwards, the telepathist Tiresias called back, telling the traveller ‘to shun this island of the sun, the joy of man.’ Recalled from Ulysses’ past and projected into his future, Tiresias’s warning words seem to echo ...

Bingbang.

‘In the wake of Finnegans, I hesitate to begin again. I hesitate ... (in order) to begin.’

After Joyce, we must begin again.

After Derrida too. If there is an ‘after’ Derrida, if we can ever be ‘after’ Derrida. He will always already have come before, if he ever arrives.

This beginning again, after Derrida, but also as we await his arrival, is telepathic, ‘a response to a call’ which ‘can happen only in multiple voices.’ The future, subject of this telepathy, can only happen in multiple voices.

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38 Homer, Odyssey, 12.120.

39 Homer, Odyssey, 12.292.

40 Taylor, Tears, 55.
MARK TAYLOR

‘... voicing a question that is nothing other than the question of voice ...’

JAMES JOYCE

Whose voice?

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘It wasn’t sufficient to foresee or to predict what would happen one day, /forecasting is not enough/, it would be necessary to think (what does this mean here, do you know?) what would happen by the very fact of being predicted or foreseen, a sort of beautiful apocalypse telescoped, kaleidoscoped, triggered off at that very moment by the precipitation of the announcement itself, consisting precisely in this announcement, the prophecy returning to itself from the future of its own to-come. The apocalypse takes place at the moment when I write this, but a present of this type keeps a telepathic or premonitory affinity with itself (it senses itself at a distance and warns itself of itself) that loses me on the way and makes me scared.’

41 Royle, After Derrida, 78.
42 Taylor, Tears, 55.
‘You are not being serious.’

A pause.

‘I’m stalled.’ I do not know how to proceed.

‘Though I begin with the question of speaking, my hesitation involves the question of writing. Is it possible to write after someone (but who?) has said it all by saying the All? Or is it possible to write only after someone (but who?) has said it all by saying the All? If I am to begin again, my writing will have to be after all ... after the End.’

This is precisely why I too am stalled as I attempt to make this intervention between Joyce and Derrida. How is it possible to write after they have said it all? In what way have they said it all?

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46 Taylor, Tears, 56.
James Joyce

Perhaps begin again. Like Finnegans, who is—improbably—yet to come.

Stephen Abblitt

They have said it all because they have foreseen all the possibilities and potentialities awaiting us, in the future. They have not outlined these, stated these, but simply seen that they might exist, that this might be what the future holds, what awaits us, what is to come. This is telepathy.

Jacques Derrida

I might begin again with ‘the material of others, which comes to me by post.’47 I speak to you as though you are a close friend and confidante, and a like-minded thinker, and yet we ‘really only know each other by correspondence,’48 almost by proxy as the subjects and subjectivities we commit to paper come to stand in for the writing or speaking or thinking subject. You might say that ‘we have confided our telepathies by correspondence.’49 The postal principle is telepathic.

And I sense that somehow, before this correspondence could ever have been recorded, ‘you could already see me coming.’50 You were waiting for me. Always already.

49 Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 251.
50 Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 251.
JAMES JOYCE

‘yes wait yes hold on …’ I see you were ‘on the cards this morning.’ Every morning.

Bingbang.

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘Hold on, ne coupez pas [don’t hang up], do you think they mean the same thing?’

STEPHEN ABBLITT

Derrida is only just holding on to Joyce. The distance is yet to prove too great, but there are signs of the line breaking up. Ne coupez pas, he pleads, because when Joyce hangs up, when the Other hangs up, Derrida, the Self, is lost.

JAMES JOYCE

‘Hold to the now, the here, through which all future plunges to the past.’

JACQUES DERRIDA

I do not know if you can hear this, but ‘there is, between us, what do you want me to say, a case of /fortune-telling/stronger than me.’

51 Joyce, Ulysses, 727.
52 Derrida, The Post Card, 32.
53 Joyce, Ulysses, 178.
‘... by reflection from that which then I shall ...’

They interviewed me about writing an article for *Le Monde*. I refused, of course. I spoke to the editor about ‘our relation at the two ends of the line.’ I asked him: ‘To whom *do you want* me to address myself?’ He said the majority of my readers would ‘not be trained philosophers,’ as if there is such a thing as competency—legitimacy—here. I said: ‘Does this addressee exist? Does he or she exist *before* a reading which can also be active and determinant (in the sense that it is only then that the reader *would determine himself or herself*?)’

When I refused to write the article, told him ‘I’ll never make it ...’, he said ‘it’s almost done, yes it is, yes it is ...’

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54 Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 233.
JAMES JOYCE

You’re making this up.

JACQUES DERRIDA

Yes. But you miss the point.

Bingbang.

NICHOLAS ROYLE

He was making it up. ‘This text was presented as the transcription of a telephone conversation between Derrida and the editor, but actually it was a hoax. You read the text and perhaps wonder. Or alternatively perhaps you don’t. Will it have been a hoax?’62 Derrida asks us to consider just what a hoax is, and if such performative utterances as those he pretends to make in the article are not always already hoaxes.

This talk of hoaxes prompts Derrida to wonder if ‘the text’s creation of its interlocutor’63 is not just such a deception. ‘Derrida’s fictive telephone at once evokes and affirms the logic according to which a text can in some way alter or even invent its addressee.’64


64 Royle, ‘Jacques Derrida’s Language (Bin Laden on the Telephone),’ 178.
The fictive telephone replicates the *destinerrance* of the postcard, its lack of proper address and destined—or predestined, predetermined—addressee. The addressee only exists when the letter has arrived, or when the telephone call has gotten through, when someone picks up and waits on the other end of the line.

**Jacques Derrida**

The addressee is a necessary invention of the letter they receive. ‘The addressee, he or she, would let her/himself be produced by the letter, from its program, and, he or she, the addressor as well.’65 ‘No, one cannot say of the addressee that s/he exists before the letter.’66

‘I ask myself—this, I ask you: when it plays, from the start, the absence or rather the indeterminacy of some addressee that it nevertheless apostrophises, a published letter provokes events, /and even the events it foresees and foretells/, what is going on, I ask you.’67

‘I am not putting forward the hypothesis of a letter that would be the external occasion, in some sense, of an encounter between two identifiable subjects—and who would already be determined. No, but of a letter that after the event seems to have been launched toward some unknown addressee at the moment of its writing, an addressee unknown to himself or herself, if one can say

65 Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 228.


that. And who is determined, as you very well know how to be, on receipt of the letter; this is then quite another thing than the transfer of a message. Its content and its end no longer precede it.\footnote{Derrida, 'Telepathy,' 228-9.}

\textbf{James Joyce}

Reception is creation. ‘The joy of creation ...’\footnote{Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 239.}

\textbf{Stephen Abblitt}

This is modernism in a nutshell. Particularly from Joyce’s perspective, it is one grand experiment in reception, in how the reader receives and comprehends the text. It marks a major shift from the objectivity of realist and naturalist narratives to a more subjective presentation of the text, a shift from the placement of meaning in the external object to its placement within the interior subject, asking the reader to work as hard as—if not harder than—the writer, to produce a meaningful text.

It is a shift that is also marked in deconstruction.

\textbf{Jacques Derrida}

‘And not to reply is not to receive.’\footnote{Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 234.} Take your character Bloom, for example.
JAMES JOYCE

‘Bloom is at the telephone’?71

JACQUES DERRIDA

Yes. ‘Bloom-is-at-the-telephone.’72 ‘He is at the telephone, he is always there, he belongs to the telephone. He is hooked up to a multiplicity of voices and answering machines. His being-there is a being at the telephone.’73 His being is dependent on the reception of the words uttered by the Other at their own end of the telephone. Whoever that other might be is irrelevant; their presence, their presence-by-utterance, is what counts, and what Bloom holds out for. Ne coupez pas. ‘He belongs in his essence to a polytelephonic structure,’74 waiting for a series of Others to respond, to tell him who he is, to fill this empty vessel—this subject—with their words.

‘But he is at the telephone in the sense that he is also being waited for on the telephone.’75 That is, some Other is waiting for him to pick up the phone, to speak, to conjure them into their own being-at-the-telephone.

71 Joyce, Ulysses, 132.
72 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 40.
73 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 40.
74 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 41.
75 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 41.
Just as Bloom waits for someone to receive his call, and an Other waits for his call to get through, so too does Derrida await Joyce, and Joyce await Derrida.

*A pause. A crackle. Static.*

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘…’

*A pause.*

JAMES JOYCE

‘Here, don’t keep me waiting, damn you!’

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘… waiting for someone to respond to him, waiting for an answer, which the editor—who must decide the future of his text, its safekeeping and its truth—does not want to give, and who at this point sends him to hell, a *Verfallen* then into the hell of censored books. Bloom is waiting for an answer, for someone to say “hello, yes,” that is, for someone to say “yes, yes,” beginning with a telephonic yes

76 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 500.
indicating that there is indeed another voice, or an answering machine, on the other end of the line.’77

JAMES JOYCE

Yes.

NICHOLAS ROYLE

‘So we come back to that primary telephonic yes, a yes “more ancient than knowledge,” then, yes?’78

STEPHEN ABLITT

Yes. Beyond those primary telephonic yeses articulated by Derrida in ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ and elsewhere, this yes is a vocal manifestation of the hypermnesiac machine which will have pre-recorded and anticipated, prophesised or telepathised, this correspondence. It is also a promise to remember to pick up the telephone when the Other calls. Yes, yes.

JACQUES DERRIDA

Molly too ‘is at the telephone, even when she is in bed, asking, and waiting to be asked, on the telephone (since she is alone) to say, “yes, yes”.’79

77 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 41.


79 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 41.
JAMES JOYCE

Yes, yes.

JACQUES DERRIDA

Always already, she will have been waiting for that Other, this lover, Leopold or anyone else, to pick up the telephone, call her, love her, recognise and respect her affirmative desires, and not destroy her otherness.

JAMES JOYCE

The Other lover, Blazes Boylan. The fiery Other who writes and destroys the entire correspondence taking place in *The Post Card*, leaving nothing but the ‘miniscule residue “left unclaimed”’ by ‘the tongue of fire.’

JACQUES DERRIDA

‘I heard the news, but I already knew, by telephone,’ ‘a terrifying telephone’ which Blazes might also have destroyed in his passionately all-consuming fire, his burning desire. I do not believe it, and yet ...

A pause.

82 Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 231.
‘You are waiting holding your breath. You are waiting on the telephone, I imagine you and speak to you on the telephone.’ \(^84\) Waiting for me to give you an answer.

I already know what you are going to say. You have been ‘foretold and forenarrated,’ \(^85\) Elie.

‘Telepathy comes upon us.’ \(^86\)

Indeed. Yes.

I fear I must say adieu. I ...

The line breaks off.

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\(^84\) Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 245.
\(^85\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 48.
\(^86\) Derrida, ‘Telepathy,’ 261.
Nicholas Royle

‘I miss Jacques Derrida.’\(^{87}\) ‘In almost every sense, I miss him, keep missing him.’\(^{88}\)

‘Yes.’\(^{89}\)

James Joyce

I will always already have missed him. Maybe we will catch up again someday.

Nicholas Royle

‘No more. The end of the line.’\(^{90}\)

Stephen Abblitt

I hear you saying, reiterating, this exceptional excremental tele-patho-phonic obsession. And then ‘the context is cut, end of sequence.’\(^{91}\) But the end is only really another beginning as the needle is replaced in the groove and the record spins again.

So to speak.

We could be having this conversation forever.


\(^{89}\) Royle, ‘Jacques Derrida’s Language (Bin Laden on the Telephone),’ 193.

\(^{90}\) Royle, ‘Jacques Derrida’s Language (Bin Laden on the Telephone),’ 192.

\(^{91}\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 39.
MARK TAYLOR

P. S. Post scriptum. ‘Perhaps “The End” is impossible, or is possible only as the
eternal return of the fin again.’

A pause. A whisper.

MARK TAYLOR

‘... p. s. ... fin again ...’

STEPHEN ABBLITT

It ends, really, with a few words, not with a bang but with a whimper, a repeated
utterance of the one word Joyce will have referred to as at once ‘the most positive
word in the human language,’ and ‘the least forceful word ... [he] could possibly
find.’ The word is affirmative, generative and regenerative through its repetition,
even in translation.

From amongst the crackling static of the crossed line, there can barely be heard these
few final words:

____________________________________________________

92 Taylor, Tears, 56.
93 Taylor, Tears, 72.
94 Joyce, cited in Ellmann, James Joyce, 523.
95 Joyce, cited in Ellmann, James Joyce, 712n. Trans. Ellmann.
Oui, oui.
**différance**

I will speak, therefore, of a letter.

Of the first letter, if the alphabet, and most of the speculations which have ventured into it, are to be believed.

I will speak therefore of the letter a, this initial letter which it has apparently been necessary to insinuate, here and there, into the writing of the word *difference*; and to do so in the course of a writing on writing within writing whose different trajectories thereby find themselves, at certain very determined points, intersecting with a kind of gross spelling mistake, a lapse in the discipline and law which regulate writing and keep it seemly.96

Derrida’s famous ‘gross spelling mistake,’97 *différance* marks the possibility of articulation, both temporally and spatially. At the same time it also marks ‘the unreliability inherent in meaning,’98 an unreliability and undecidability which destabilises the institution through its sheer excessive possibilities. Yet ‘one can always act as if it made no difference.’99

In a fantastically Joycean manner, his letter, ‘the first letter,’100 is irreducibly and ambivalently polysemous: it is not only the first letter of the alphabet, but also

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96 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 3.
97 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 3.
99 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 3.
100 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 3.
the first letter of the post, a primal letter sent but still undelivered and undeliverable. And just like the Joycean letter, it too defers meaning through an endless chain of signifiers, placing it in the future.

For Derrida, *différance* is ‘literally neither a word not a concept.’\(^{101}\) It is an originary a-concept which ‘does not exist ... in any form,’\(^{102}\) before and outside of the kingdom of concepts, ‘a force that stands behind and outside us.’\(^{103}\) This ‘silent lapse in [the] spelling’\(^{104}\) of the word difference represents an ‘insistent intensification’\(^{105}\) of the play of the post, an uncertainty between sender and addressee, but also between speech and its inscription or recording, a mistake perhaps being made in the transcription, so that even if the wayward letter arrives, it still might not have arrived, its intended meaning seeping away, distorted, even lost. This ‘mute mark,’\(^{106}\) the slippage of the e into an a, also marks the split between speech and writing, the inability of the spoken word to represent this graphic difference/*différance*:

> Now it happens, I would say in effect, that this graphic difference (a instead of e), this marked difference between two apparently vocal notations, between two vowels, remains purely graphic: it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard.

> It cannot be apprehended in speech.\(^{107}\)

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101 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 3.

102 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 6.


104 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 3.

105 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 3.

106 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 4.

107 Derrida, ‘*différance*,’ 3.
We cannot hear this articulation between the French pronunciations of difference and *différance;* an interstitial space holds them apart. Derrida observes ‘a certain wandering in the tracing’ of this a-concept whereby, like the first letter, it is revealed to have been, always already, ‘immediately and irreducibly polysemic,’ excessively undecidable.

Playing famously on the doubling of differing/deferring, *différance* is conceived in terms of both a temporal and a spatial dimension. As deferral, as temporalisation, it is

_the action of putting off until later, of taking into account, of taking account of time and of those forces of an operation that implies an economical calculation, a detour, a delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation._

Then, as differing, as spacing, it is ‘to be not identical, to be other, discernible, etc.’ whereby ‘an interval, a distance, a spacing’ is opened between the Self and the Other. This polysemic play structures our relationship to the Other: ‘One is but the other different and deferred, one differencing and deferring the other. One is the Other in *différance,* one is the *différance* of the Other.’ *différance* remains always already unknown, unknowable, neither present nor absent as ‘it differs and defers

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108 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 7.

109 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 8.

110 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 8.

111 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 8.

112 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 8.

113 Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 18.
itself,'\textsuperscript{114} disappearing in the same moment as it appears, in the same gesture of writing and erasure: ‘In every exposition it would be exposed to disappearing as disappearance. It would risk appearing: disappearing.’\textsuperscript{115} \textit{différance} will never have been present or presented; all we can perceive, all we can grasp, are its traces and its effects on communication, and the slippage it causes.

As we witness Derrida grappling with such gross lapses ‘in the discipline and law which regulate writing and keep it seemly,’\textsuperscript{116} we also witness the ‘subversion of every kingdom’ by this uncapitalised a-concept:

It is not a present being, however excellent, unique, principal, or transcendent. It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises any authority. It is not announced by any capital letter. Not only is there no kingdom of \textit{différance}, but \textit{différance} instigates the subversion of every kingdom. Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within it that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. And it is always in the name of a kingdom that one may reproach \textit{différance} with wishing to reign, believing that one sees it aggrandised itself with a capital letter.\textsuperscript{117}

The undefinable, untraceable non-form of this uncapitalised letter threatens the authority of literature and philosophy. It manifests—not just in \textit{what} it means, but in \textit{how} it means; not just in its theorisation, but in its performance of itself—the presence, always already, of a irreducible Other within the institution which

\textsuperscript{114} Derrida, ‘\textit{différance},’ 20-1.
\textsuperscript{115} Derrida, ‘\textit{différance},’ 6.
\textsuperscript{116} Derrida, ‘\textit{différance},’ 3.
\textsuperscript{117} Derrida, ‘\textit{différance},’ 22.
problematizes both terms, destabilising such binary oppositions as Self/Other, inside/outside, and decidable/undecidable.

*différance* finally marks the aporetic possibility and impossibility of the post: it promises to carry the message towards its destination, promises that it can arrive, while at the same time ensuring a slippage whereby the message must remain, always already, undelivered and undeliverable. It also promises the legitimacy of the institution, only to defer the delivery of this promise, asking us to wait.
11. Penelope’s Dream: ‘and yes I said yes I will Yes’

Penelope is the clou of the book. The first sentence contains 2500 words. There are eight sentences in the episode. It begins and ends with the female word Yes. It turns like the huge earthball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning...¹

Apparently: words, sentences. Really: clashes of letters and sounds. Voices and names. Listen to the recording made by Joyce himself of a passage from *Finnegans Wake*—opera, madrigal, inflections, accents, intonations, shifting from tenor to alto, baritone to soprano, in the delicate, subtle, fluid, everchanging apparatus of sexual differentiation, spoken, sung, calling ... There are interjections, moanings, flashes of surprise, exclamations, questions which stop short, celebrations, mockings, whisperings, children, adults, men, women, old, young, low, high, depressed, euphoric, wilful, active, passive, reflexive.²

I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs.³

The descent into the realm of this a-concept, *différance*, outside the kingdom of the concept, is also a descent into the immaterial, symbolic, surreal realm of the dream,

¹ Joyce, in Gilbert and Ellmann, *The Letters of James Joyce, Volume 1*, 170.
shifting us further and further away from interpretive certitude as we strive, like the institution, toward unconditionality and the opening of a space to and for the Other. The institution craves boundaries, borders; ‘If we are to approach [aborder] a text, for example, it must have a bord, an edge,’⁴ writes Derrida. But this dreamscape problematizes the border: dreams are fuzzy, blurry, imprecise, and yet they feel more real than the real as the dreamer dreams; then the dreamer often wakes to a state of uncertainty over what is real and what was the dream. The borderlines are always already crossed, porous, made so by a fold—between reality and the dream; between the waking and sleeping worlds; between realism and surrealism—which is essentially Baroque in character: ‘the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other.’⁵ This encounter between the real and the surreal, between the rational and the non-rational (as opposed to the irrational), will have led us, inevitably, towards a confrontation with Joyce’s ‘pregnant word.’⁶ It is a polysemous word, the ‘female word,’⁷ yes, frantically shattered and scattered, giving ‘birth to too many meanings’⁸ and problematizing the very nature of reality, reason, and logocentrism. In the utterance of this word,

⁶ Joyce, Ulysses, 372.
⁷ Joyce, in Gilbert and Ellmann, The Letters of James Joyce, Volume 1, 170.
yes—proffered by Joyce as both a ‘final affirmation’\(^9\) and an ‘indispensable countersign’\(^10\)—a confrontation is staged between Leopold Bloom’s rampantly rational phallogocentric discourse and the dreamy ‘illogic’\(^11\) of Molly Bloom’s radical \(_{écriture féminine}\), this ‘inscription of the feminine body and female difference in language and text.’\(^12\) This conflict, and its resultant liberation, is Penelope’s dream.

Proposing this flowingly irreducible \(_{écriture féminine}\) as the undecidable Other unsettling the logocentric institution, threatening the stability of the ‘genres’ of literature and philosophy, this chapter unfolds as eleven fictionalised dream fragments, returning to the supposed safety of the personal pronoun, which is now pluralised, multiplied, as this short series of subjects and subjectivities is distanced from this authorial ‘I,’ in a cycle of performances akin to Joyce’s own ventriloquism of the feminine voice of Molly Bloom.

**The Death of the Tyrant: Antigone**

In the distance, a soft echo, I hear an ‘irreducibly polysemic’\(^13\) voice uttering one word, over and over again: \(_{différance}\). What is that word? It twists and swirls around me in the stifling air of this dry desert landscape. I hear this voice loudly proclaiming

\(^9\) Levin, *James Joyce*, 125.
\(^10\) Joyce, in Gilbert and Ellmann, *The Letters of James Joyce, Volume 1*, 160.
\(^12\) Elaine Showalter, ‘Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,’ *Critical Inquiry*, 8:2, 1981, 185.
\(^13\) Derrida, ‘\(_{différance}\).’ 8.
to have been, always already, ‘not far from announcing the death of the tyrant.’\textsuperscript{14} I do not know what this means, but as the words pass over me an image of the death of Creon—presiding over a play composed by Sophocles, and a play named for me—imprints itself on my mind. The paradox of having, impossibly, outlived him does not occur to me. I am standing barefooted in the warm sand, my feet gently sinking into the earth. I see no sign of life or civilisation around me, no structure, nothing but the voices whirling faintly but formidably through the air.

I am the eponymous heroine, named from the Greek \textit{anti-} meaning ‘opposite, in place of,’ and \textit{gone} meaning ‘womb.’ It might connote gestation, childbirth, and motherhood, but I am the opposite of all that is suggested by the womb. I am here—it could be anywhere, although I have my suspicions—and the tale of my life races through my mind, those tragic but powerfully liberating events. I defied him, buried my brother, and was punished by the tyrant, entombed, alive. I hanged myself—it was the only way out—to cheat the slow death he expected. The cloudless, starkly blue sky is at once expansive and repressive. The golden sands, arranged in rippling dunes as far as the earth stretches, give no sign of location, no sign of a path I might take. But I know. I hear a German accent labelling me ‘the everlasting irony … of the community.’\textsuperscript{15} I don’t know what this means. Then I hear another voice, this time female: she commends me, tells me that I articulate—

\textsuperscript{14} Derrida, ‘\textit{différance},’ 4.

continue to articulate—‘a pre-political opposition to politics.’\(^\text{16}\) I see a shadow, elongated, and at its farthest point, a figure, rapidly approaching me, talking to me, at me, manically, with words I can hardly make out for their relentless velocity. She says I am an anti-state, anti-authority counter-figure who represents—these are her words, coming at me faster and faster as her agitation rises—‘kinship as the sphere that conditions the possibility of politics without ever entering into it,’\(^\text{17}\) a being before and exterior to but vitally implicated in politics. My exile has made possible the polis from which I was exiled. I begin to move away, not because I fear her words, but because I feel that I should be exiled from them too. I hear her shouting as I am carried further and further away by a force at once my own—interior—and yet utterly alien: I am ‘outside the terms of the polis,’ but am also, ‘as it were, an outside without which the polis could not be.’\(^\text{18}\) Mine is an exile which figures ‘the threshold between kinship and the state,’\(^\text{19}\) an exile which embraces and embodies what the French philosopher will have called \textit{différance}, yes, (how do I pronounce that?), the possibility of articulation but also confusion. My transgression then—and this is what most troubles them, she cries—is not only political, legal, and geographical, but also one at the origin of signification, language, and Being. She calls this the legacy of my defiance: the active refusal of the laws of the polis, the refusal to remain within the limits of the kingdom. As she speaks these last words, I

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\(^{17}\) Butler, \textit{Antigone’s Claim}, 2.

\(^{18}\) Butler, \textit{Antigone’s Claim}, 4.

\(^{19}\) Butler, \textit{Antigone’s Claim}, 5.
hear another voice, a French accent, a male, perhaps the same voice as before. As I look back over my shoulder, I see another figure standing beside the woman. This second figure is talking feverishly about his a-concept, how from its place outside the kingdom of the concept it differs and defers, how this uncapsulated and uncapsulable word promotes ‘the scandalously impure,’\textsuperscript{20} a threefold impurity, permeability, and porousness impugning the borders of the state, language, and the Self—each founded on the viability of articulation but also always already crossed, traversed. His words trail off.

I keep walking, pushing my feet through the warm sand. Eventually, as the two figures fade into the distance, I am lost, alone, not only outside of Thebes but also outside of the reach of their words. This is my transgressive lesson—folding the borders of Thebes, the borders of the Self, and the borders of language—as if I might have foreseen this surreal language of flow and overflow. Yes.

**Silence: Molly Bloom**

A ‘language of flow,’\textsuperscript{21} interjects an Irish accented voice. Poldy? Didn’t sound like him, like his words. I lay here in bed, awake in this cramped bedroom upstairs at 7 Eccles Street, as he snores besides me, passed out drunk, the old pervert.

As these words flow through my mind, the bedroom falls down around me. It is disappearing. I first notice because the guttural, repetitive sound of his foghorn snoring no longer reverberates throughout this enclosed space. Then I notice that he

\textsuperscript{20} Butler, Antigone’s Claim, 5.

\textsuperscript{21} Joyce, Ulysses, 253.
is no longer there. The sprawling shape beside me in the bed has vanished. Ah, the stillness. But then, the four walls seem to collapse, silently, the floor falling away, the ceiling hurtling upwards.

Have I done this? Have my words done this? I am unsure I have ever fully realised the power of my words, my sometimes manic stream of conjectural and profane articulations and disarticulations. Has my language—breaking with convention, shattering the institutional bulwark of logocentrism—has this river-running language with its broken sentences and broken taboos, challenging the mores of 1904 Dublin and twentieth-century thought, done this? Are my words so powerful?

So here I am, lying in bed, half covered by the tangled sheets, surrounded by nothing. There is nothing but me and the bed. And my words. This absence—a feminine absence—is the point: ‘whats the idea making us like that with a big hole in the middle of us.’\textsuperscript{22} This absence is a choric space, womb-like, the origin of life. Issuing forth from this hole of the broken, porous choric vessel, this place of a radically Other, \textit{tout autre}, this container that cannot contain, is the whole of a life, yes. I am the creator. ‘they want everything in their mouth.’\textsuperscript{23} They wish they could produce such presences as she does from their empty mouths and words. Only I am ready to create.

But inarticulation abounds: I cannot say the right words.

\textsuperscript{22} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 694.

\textsuperscript{23} Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 705.
**Theban Transgressions: Antigone**

I am back in a sparse desert, a fierce wind whipping up the sand around me, biting my exposed skin, pinching at my cheeks. It is thick, dense, the blue sky now barely visible. I hear a voice—that same German accented voice (but see no body)—declaring that the tyrant doubles as the erection of the tomb, ‘an external environment in which an inner meaning rests concealed.’\(^{24}\) He calls Egypt ‘the country of symbols,’\(^{25}\) and I know the phrase means something I cannot yet articulate.

I know I am approaching its frontier, the borderline dividing their ‘real’ land from this symbolic land. Through the gusting wind and whirling sand, I see a structure, a great pyramid built from a golden-brown stone. Through the sandstorm I see a darker rectangle carved from the base of the pyramid. It is an opening, an entrance. The pyramid—‘the body of the sign’\(^{26}\)—marks a split between the interior and the exterior, ‘the inward kept firmly in view on its own account contrasted with the immediacy of existence,’\(^{27}\) and as I cross the threshold I see that I am transgressing the borderline separating the two. I see too the blurred boundaries between the realm of the existential and the realm of ideas, the realm of the sign, the ‘kingdom of the invisible.’\(^{28}\) I see before me a subversive double architecture.


\(^{26}\) Derrida, ‘*différance,*’ 4, n2.

\(^{27}\) Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 354.

Moving further and further inwards, winding my way through cold and dark passageways, I come to a room lit faintly by two torches, one lighting the wall to my left, the other the wall to my right. Carved into the stone walls is a pair of inscriptions. On the left-hand wall are these words:

One above ground, the other subterranean: labyrinths under the soil, magnificent vast excavations, passages half a mile long, chambers, adorned with hieroglyphics, everything worked out with the maximum of care; then above ground there are built in addition those amazing constructions amongst which the Pyramids are to be counted the chief. 29

On the right-hand wall are these words:

A path, which we will follow, leads from this night pit, silent as death and resonating with all the powers of the voice which it holds in reserve, to a pyramid brought back from the Egyptian desert which soon will be raised over the sober and abstract weave of the Hegelian text, there composing the stature and status of the sign. And there, the natural source and the historical construction both, though differently, remain silent. That the path, following the onto-theological route, still remains circular, and the pyramid becomes once again the pit that it will always have been—such is the enigma. 30

Gazing at these words, in the distance between the above and below of this structure, between the literal and symbolic, consciousness and dream, the pyramid and the pit, I perceive différence. Without discernible source, the Frenchman’s voice echoes in this cavernous space: ‘the pyramid becomes the semaphore of the sign,

29 Hegel, Aesthetics, 356.

30 Derrida, ‘The Pit and the Pyramid,’ in Margins of Philosophy, 76.
the signifier of signification.’31 Yes, I think; with malicious intent, ‘the word destroys its object.’32 The border between word and object is subverted, always already, by the assertion of ‘the absence of any natural relation of resemblance’33 between what is said and what is meant. Just as I am thrust out of Thebes, the word, the sign, remains foreign even at home, alienated, exiled, and dissociated from its object, beyond the border and outside the limits of the polis. Yes.

I wake with a start.

**Limits Dissolve: Molly Bloom**

I am back in the bedroom. 7 Eccles Street still stands. Poldy potters around downstairs. Preparing breakfast, I expect. I imagine him down there eating ‘with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls,’34 kidneys fresh with ‘a fine tang of faintly scented urine.’35 He creeps up the staircase; I hear him trying not to make a sound. He pauses at the bedroom door, peers in, and asks if I want anything for breakfast. I hear myself muttering a soft and non-descript ‘Mn.’36 He exits again, as if he might be offended by my utterance of these two very middle letters of the alphabet, always already stranded between the beginning a and the ending z, rejecting the raging relentless linearity of his phallogocentric discourse, rejecting a tired tradition

31 Derrida, ‘The Pit and the Pyramid,’ 83.
33 Derrida, ‘The Pit and the Pyramid,’ 84.
34 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 53.
36 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 54.
stretching back to the Homeric Odyssey and the Aristotelian Poetics, with just two letters. Not even a whole, discernible, sensible word. ‘Mn.’ I hear a voice echoing in the background—might it be the sounds from downstairs, or maybe out in the street—half garbled: ‘limits beginning to dissolve in the perversion of signifiers.’

Limits dissolve through this language of flow as I both destroy and create in the same gesture, with the same words.

He doesn’t realise what it’s like to be missing your mother country so. My thoughts endlessly return to that place, endlessly return home, to Gibraltar. I am home but not-at-home in Ireland, local and foreign, both and neither, inside and outside. I am a border-crosser, a transgressor. But limits dissolve. Here, as I lie in bed, I see myself being liberated by a slippage between this existential reality and the realm of thought, the kingdom of the sign. ‘were to be always chained up theyre not going to be chaining me up.’ As my thoughts cross between these places—this private home, and the public Gibraltar: inside and outside—I am doubled as an insider in 7 Eccles Street and an outsider in Dublin, but doubled also in my language, speaking from within the phallogocentric discourse but refusing to use its repressive tongue. ‘The vocal muse,’ they call me: ‘Dublin’s prime favourite.’ My geography becomes a symbol of my linguistic exile: neither Irish nor Gibraltarian, refusing to be positioned—chained—either inside nor outside of their discourse, I threaten all they stand for, all that stands.

37 Cixous, ‘Joyce: the (R)use of Writing,’ 18.

38 Joyce, Ulysses, 726.

39 Joyce, Ulysses, 130.
I feel a great rush of wind. The room has disappeared again. The bed is falling, plummeting. I am falling.

**War: Hélène Cixous**

I have a dream of formulating not a language as such, but a new mode of inscription which defies the rationality of the dominant logocentric—phallogocentric—discourse. Like the transgressive Antigone occupying a place both outside and within the laws and borders of Thebes, and like Molly Bloom who inhabits a place split between memories of colonial Gibraltar and her confined bedroom in Dublin, my mode of inscription also originates in a crossing of borderlines, being neither inside nor outside; it originates in my original placement in pseudo-colonial Algeria, the marginal Francophone world, and my continued Algeriance. (Like Jacques, I know, yet I face one more marginalisation.) I am alienated from my origins:

My way of thinking was born with the thought that I could have been born elsewhere, in one of the twenty countries where a living fragment of my maternal family had landed after it blew up on the Nazi minefield. With the thought of the chanciness, of the accidence, of the fall. Lucretius’s Rain of atoms, in raining, the atom of my mother had met the atom of my father.

The strange molecule detached from the black skies of the north had landed in Africa.40

I wander and err on this passport, ‘a fake,’41 foreign in all places and at home in none. I am ‘perfectly at home, nowhere.’42 Mine is an originary exile. ‘Womb? "

Weary?’ writes Joyce of the exiled Jew: ‘He rests. He has travelled.’ But he cannot rest, nor can I: always already, there are more borders to be crossed, transgressed. Writing from within the laws and borders of the French language, this placement necessarily prompts me to write against the law, towards political and linguistic rebellion:

I come, biographically, from a rebellion, from a violent and anguished direct refusal to accept what is happening on the stage on whose edge I find I am placed, as a result of the combined accidents of History.

To refuse is to fall, but also to create. In falling, I give birth to a new species of text, this vomiting, ‘disgorging’ or ‘outpouring.’ ‘I fall.—I am born—right in the middle of a scene that is the perfect example, the naked model, the raw idea of this very process: I learned to read, to write, to scream, and to vomit in Algeria.’ I side with the margins, the ‘injured’ and ‘trespassed upon,’ searching: ‘somewhere there must be people who are like me in their rebellion and in their hope.’

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41 Cixous, ‘My Algeriance,’ 206.
42 Cixous, ‘My Algeriance,’ 209.
43 Joyce, Ulysses, 689.
46 Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 70.
48 Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 72.
polemical ‘warlike texts,’⁴⁹ fantastically ‘rebellious texts,’⁵⁰ not a case of ‘he war’⁵¹ or even ‘she war,’ but ‘I war.’

**Thunder-Words: Molly Bloom**

I was woken by apocalyptic thunder. ‘yes because I felt lovely and tired myself and fell asleep as sound as a top the moment I popped straight into bed till that thunder woke me up as if the world was coming to an end.’⁵² After the fall ... I do not remember the fall, only know that it happened. It was a divinely raucous sound ‘like those awful thunderbolts in Gibraltar and they come and tell you there is no God.’⁵³ And then I was here. Now, I sit here, and listen to the cracks of thunder, and try to comprehend these primal, guttural words.

I am the inheritor of a raucous succession of thunder-words, eleven of them in all, ten of 100 letters and one of 101, that’s 1101 letters, ringing out from this river-running cacophony, disrupting the logos with so many splintering, crashing, cracking, flowing, disseminated, disseminating, anti-words, at once destructive and generative, regenerative. These are pregnant words, pregnant with potential meaning, so many potential meanings.

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⁴⁹ Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 72.
⁵⁰ Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 72.
⁵¹ Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 258.12.
⁵² Joyce, *Ulysses*, 693.
⁵³ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 693.
The Voice of Creation: Hélène Cixous

I am written, and I write. My body is articulated in language as I embark on my own border-crossing Odyssey (‘Woman’s voyage: as a body’\textsuperscript{54}), this endless exile where the body is recovered from language only to be interminably plunged back in:

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display—the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time.

Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. Our naphtha will spread, throughout the world, without dollars—black or gold—no assessed values that will change the rules of the old game.\textsuperscript{55}

My body is my text, my voice: ‘Text: my body—shot through with streams of song.’\textsuperscript{56} They are folded into each other, the body articulated in language and articulating language, ‘in ceaseless displacement.’\textsuperscript{57} Transfigured into my pen and my paper, this body is ‘fleshed,’\textsuperscript{58} given vital organs, a coursing heartbeat.

And I sing with the voice of Creation, conjuring presence and absence, as ‘a text forms, affirms itself.’\textsuperscript{59} Yes.

\textsuperscript{54} Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 66.
\textsuperscript{55} Cixous, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa,’ 880.
\textsuperscript{56} Cixous, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa,’ 882.
\textsuperscript{57} Cixous and Clément, ‘Sorties,’ 97.
\textsuperscript{58} Ellmann, \textit{Ulysses on the Liffey}, London: Faber & Faber, 1972, 171.
\textsuperscript{59} Perec, \textit{Species of Spaces and Other Pieces}, 297.
Flesh: Molly Bloom

Blood, like words, flow from me. ‘O Jesus wait yes that thing has come on me yes.’\(^{60}\) I feel as if there cannot be much more in me. This bodily by-product (‘the remainder of nature, nature’s excess and difference’\(^{61}\), this damned menstrual blood is also ‘nature’s artifice,’\(^{62}\) an excess of nature’s artifice: ‘have we too much blood up in us or what.’\(^{63}\) This artifice is also my language, a bodily language, flowing forth from within me. I feel I could drown the world in this potent symbol of potential creation.

Potentially written on the blank page of the bed sheet—though ‘I dont want to ruin the clean sheets the clean linen’\(^{64}\)—my flow of blood is boldly creative, generative, potentially life-giving, productive or reproductive, and affirmative. In the doubled flow of this blood and these words, my body folded into this text. ‘Menstruation is Promethean,’\(^{65}\) I hear a distant voice intoning. ‘O patience above its pouring out of me like the sea.’\(^{66}\) It is a frantic, fluid eruption of a text. ‘A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic.’\(^{67}\) The blood continues to

\(^{60}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 719.


\(^{63}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 719.

\(^{64}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 719.

\(^{65}\) Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, 171.

\(^{66}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 719.

\(^{67}\) Cixous, ‘The Laugh of the Medusa,’ 888.
flow, and the words flow. ‘Means something, language of flow.’ I am both creator and created, mother and child—biologically and artistically, I am born to Lunita Laredo in Gibraltar in 1871, and born of the words of that damned Irishman, my creator; and I am mother to a teenage daughter, Milly, and mother to these flowing words.

I stand upon a stage before a crowd, a full house, waiting with baited breath for my words, my song. They wait for my voice to fill this vast concert hall; they want me to conjure, to create. Their will for me to do so is palpable. As I stand silent, my body on display before them but my voice held back, private, I hear a voice declaring from the audience: ‘Weib. Ich bin das Fleisch das stets bejaht.’ Yes. Woman is the flesh that always affirms.

**Meandering: Marilyn Monroe**

I keep getting side-tracked. I’m in a public park somewhere on Long Island. I’m at a photo shoot with Eve Arnold. She loves to photograph me, and I like the way she doesn’t really let me play the dumb blonde even if I want to. I’m sitting here devouring the final pages of a worn hardback copy of *Ulysses*. I’ve only really been dipping in and out, a piece here and there, during a break. We’re at a playground, I think because I’m meant to be young and innocent and child-like? I began reading the last chapter, the one from Molly Bloom’s perspective, the feminine voice. I am perched on a wooden bench, painted red, attached to the metal frame of a

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69 Joyce, in Gilbert and Ellmann, *The Letters of James Joyce, Volume 1*, 170.
makeshift merry-go-round. I just sat down, and opened the book. I began to read, and something bothered me. She’d spent the morning taking posed photographs. I wasn’t comfortable. Joyce writes what a woman thinks to herself, her most intimate thoughts. I’m wearing a bathing suit, a one-piece with fantastically colourful horizontal stripes. Does he really know what she is thinking? Does he really how what she feels? The sun shines overhead, although sitting here in a bathing suit I feel a slight chill. But by now I’ve read the whole book—not straightforwardly, but in bits and pieces—and I think I understand. I think that Joyce is a writer interested in people, in their souls, whether they’re male or female. That’s his genius: the performance of people’s souls in his books. I wasn’t posing for the camera this time; she just began taking photographs of me as I sat and relaxed, sat and read. It doesn’t matter that Joyce doesn’t truly know the feeling of her menstrual cramp, or the desire she feels for so many past and future lovers, or the longing she feels for distant Gibraltar. I am struck by the silence of the park, not a sound except for the click click of the camera. Eve is saying something about moving my free arm, my left, which rests gently just beneath my knees as I hold the weighty book in my right, pushed into my right knee. I don’t hear what she says. I don’t move. Click click. You might think at first that this is some joke, the famous dumb blonde reading the greatest work of Western literature. The contrast is meant to make you laugh, a clash of cultures. But I’m only human, and Joyce is the great writer of what it is to be human. Click click. Plus, I feel a sense of sympathy—perhaps friendship, even love—with poor Molly, desired and possessed by so many men for much of the book before finally finding her voice only as it nears its end. I know how she feels. The irony of a professional singer who refuses to reveal her true voice except in the
privacy of her bedroom attracts me. She is powerful, in control. *Click click.* I want to be her, be her by playing her, performing her. It feels so liberating, this grand speech she gives to conclude this man’s book. I want to speak that, perform that, *be* that. Eve lowers the camera. ‘I think we’re done.’ If I could perform Molly Bloom, I could be anything.

**The Prophetess: Molly Bloom**

‘and yes I said yes I will Yes.’

It is morning. Again. I hear the words echoing in my head as I lay my tarot cards out on the table and look towards the future. I turn over the Fool. It is the card connoting ‘infinite possibilities,’

not just chance, nor unpredictability, but potentiality, as if anything might now be achievable. It also suggests a new beginning, the dawning of a new day—which perhaps, sadly, also means the end of the night-time, the end of this world of dreams. For now.

The Fool is finally a performer, perhaps a deceiver, playing the role required so that she or he may achieve a desired end. Poldy doesn’t like that part.

**Penelope’s Dream**

This is my dream.

My name is Penelope, daughter of Icarus, who flew too close to the sun. I am the wife of an absent husband, gone to war. I simply await his return. For twenty years I await his return. I dream of release, liberation. I weave and un-weave and re-

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*Joyce, Ulysses, 732.*

*Joyce, Ulysses, 25 and 636.*
weave the tapestry on my loom, as if the interminable action of creation and
destruction might not pass the time, but stall it, halt it. I am the cunning weaver.
And then coming back was the worst thing you ever did because it went without saying you would feel out of place as things always moved with the times.¹

They might be twins, Macintosh and Elijah, if only we could adequately establish the identity of either figure. Doubled here, Janus-faced, they represent a shared purpose: looking at once back into the past and forward into the future, each figure speaks of the search for a reducible, stable, singular, univocal Meaning, while simultaneously producing a destabilised series of meanings, an infinite series of potentialities.

At the National Gallery of Ireland, in Merrion Square West, Dublin, we can witness an entire gallery devoted to the Irish abstract impressionist painter Jack B. Yeats, brother of the more famous poet W. B. Yeats. Painted in 1946, Men of Destiny is perhaps his most famous work. It shows three abstracted figures, walking along the abstracted Irish coastline (perhaps having just disembarked from a small boat), the dark blue seas and lighter blue skies behind them, the viewer, outside of the frame, before them. They do not look directly at the viewer (as abstract impressionist figures, they have no identifiable eyes with which to see), but seem to look at these contemporary eyes and into the future, unforeseeable, unknowable—but having faith that it is to come. If I take the chance of casting the first figure as

¹ Joyce, Ulysses, 606.
Joyce, and the second as Derrida, who is the third? Perhaps he plays the role of
mediator between the two. Perhaps he is the critic. Perhaps, positioned temporally
between the two, he is an interpreter of Joyce, reading his futuristic and forward-
looking texts, and a prophet of Derrida, foretelling his coming, and the arrival of a
messianic deconstruction. Perhaps he is a seer, a prophet who sees better than
those with sight.

As a structural undecidability threatens to consume this text and the
institution, the mysterious man in the brown Macintosh intervenes. An anti-hero
who endlessly eludes and escapes the clutches of the Holmesian literary critic as he
stumbles across the pages of *Ulysses*, he evades capture through a series of mistaken
identities and interpretive illusions, but also offers a way forward based on
contingency, potentiality, prophecy, and the structure of the secret. His semantic
villainy is the opening out and holding onto of an interminable series of ‘infinite
possibilities,’ and the actions of the literary detective only serve to point out a lack
of answers and an excess of questions not just surrounding Macintosh but
throughout *Ulysses* generally. The prophet Elijah too offers a break with semantic
convention; always already, he defies interpretation by harbouring a secret which is
not a present secret but the secret of a future, unknowable, unpredictable secret. He
is, between Joyce and Derrida, a textual manifestation of what Miller calls
‘anachronistic reading’: Elijah foretells ‘a miniature apocalypse in the etymological
sense of an enigmatic unveiling of what has not yet happened.’

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2 *Joyce, Ulysses*, 25 and 636.

interpretation because they are prophetic, presaging their own readings, always already producing the need for more and more interpretation, though never for a definitive answer: 'Literary works program or encode their future readings, though in an unpredictable way.' Unpredictable and inexhaustible, the text will always already have produced itself as myriad possible future interpretations.

Nonetheless, holding onto the belief in the messianic revelation of both clues and answers, this potentially anachronistic investigation must proceed. It begins by attempting to piece together a brief ‘biography’ of Macintosh, accounting for his appearances and disappearances throughout Ulysses. It then moves on to position Macintosh as a potential prophet, introducing the figure of Elijah as an embodiment of a messianicity where the secret is safe and the Messiah never comes. All the while, the figure we know as Macintosh intervenes, to taunt his pursuers and point out the manifest futility of this forensic investigative endeavour—particularly as his own subjectivity begins to blur into that of the prophet, and then into that of the ‘secret name’ Elie.

But we are frustrated—vitally frustrated—at every turn.

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4 Miller, ‘Anachronistic Reading,’ 76.

5 Derrida, ‘Circonference,’ 87.
Faultlines

—Always already, I will have been on the run from the literary detectives. They relentlessly circle around and around what they think must—finally—be the answer, but they always arrive at an impasse.

—John Gordon describes me as ‘the most famous enigma of our literature.’ Frank Kermode suggests I am ‘a spurious identity, a factitious proper name’—perhaps labouring under the false assumption that there is any stable identity here that could be inauthentic, insincere, illegitimate, or deceptive, or that there is an fixed identity here at all. Robert Adams says I am simply a manifestation of my creator’s interest in playing with the reader’s ‘unfulfilled curiosity.’ He says that ‘the meaningless is deeply woven into the meaningful,’ so that the reader must decide what is and what is not interpretable. I am a symbol, then, of all that is uninterpretable, not just of the fallibility but of the futility of their literary investigations, their endeavours to explain and to order.


9 Adams, Surface and Symbol, 246.
My lack of identity—produced by the porousness of the borders establishing what should be my Self in contrast to the Other—is perhaps the most straightforward explanation I can give you to justify my presence in *Ulysses*.

The mystery deepens.

—My first explicit appearance is in the Hades episode. I am the unidentified thirteenth mourner at the funeral of Paddy Dignam, at Glasnevin cemetery. Bloom notices my lurking, lingering presence:

Now who is that lanky looking galoot over there in the macintosh? Now who is he
I’d like to know? Now, I’d give a trifle to know who he is. Always someone turns up you never dreamt of.\(^{10}\)

He counts the mourners, firstly thinking that he is the thirteenth, only to change his mind and decide that he is the twelfth, and I am the thirteenth:

Mr Bloom stood far back, his hat in his hand, counting the bared heads. Twelve.
I’m thirteen. Death’s number. No. The chap in the macintosh is thirteen. Where the deuce did he pop out of? He wasn’t in the chapel, that I’ll swear. Silly superstition that about thirteen.\(^{11}\)

Already I symbolise a slippage as Bloom and I exchange places, though only briefly, as if I might be Bloom himself. Of course I am not. Before I disappear again at the end of the episode, Bloom is responsible for erroneously, by another slippage, giving me the name ‘Macintosh’:

\(^{10}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 105.

\(^{11}\) Joyce, *Ulysses*, 106.
—And tell us, Hynes said do you know that fellow in the, the fellow over there in
the ...

He looked around.

—Macintosh. Yes, I saw him, Mr Bloom said. Where is he now?

—M’intosh, Hynes said, scribbling, I don’t know who he is. Is that his name?

He moved away, looking about him.

—No, Mr Bloom began, turning and stopping. I say, Hynes!

Didn’t hear. What? Where has he disappeared to? Not a sign. Well of all the. Has
anybody here seen? Kay ee double ell. Become invisible. Good Lord, what became
of him?12

So here I am, ‘the stranger ... given a spurious identity, a factitious proper name ... by
the same hand that distorts Bloom’s by calling him Mr. Boom—a diminution of
identity.’13 I am named, twice, but defy or negate this naming, this act of possession
and control, of explication, denying them the knowledge of my name. Three times
already I have embodied a critical faultline, disrupting the knowledge-flow of the
narrative: firstly by upsetting Bloom’s count of the mourners, secondly by potentially
trading places with Bloom and effacing his sense of self, and thirdly by disappearing
as though I might never have been there, a ghost or apparition not of Bloom’s world,
not of this fictional and literary world. I cannot properly, truly, be defined by or
contained within Joyce’s text.

12 Joyce, Ulysses, 107-8.

13 Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, 50.
—Later in the Wandering Rocks episode, I wander in front of the viceroy’s path—‘In the Lower Mount street a pedestrian in a brown macintosh, eating dry bread, passed swiftly and unscathed across the viceroy’s path’14—as the carriage winds its way through Dublin in a symbolic expression of Britain’s imperial claims over Ireland. The crossing marks a disruption of the ordered trajectory of the procession and of the ordering, controlling tendencies of the Empire—which stands too for a critical imperialism attempting to suppress and gain mastery over the infinite interpretative possibilities not only of my name and my identity, but of this polysemous, polyphonic, disseminative, and generative text held together under the name *Ulysses*. Disrupting the straightforwardness of the procession by cutting across its path, I also disrupt any straightforwardness of interpretation. There are too many alternatives.

—In the Cyclops episode, it is rumoured that ‘the man in the brown macintosh loves a lady who is dead.’15 I know what this means, but you do not, and never will. Gordon deduces, through some textual detective work and the too-easy elimination of a series of candidates, that I ‘must be the ghost of Bloom’s dead father, Rudolph.’16 I might symbolise the sins of the father returning to haunt the son.

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14 *Joyce, Ulysses*, 244.
15 *Joyce, Ulysses*, 319.
If I were a ghost, a spectral manifestation of the dead, a figure who ‘escapes common categories,’ I would be neither living nor dead, neither here nor not-here, neither present nor absent, neither being nor not-being, and neither meaning nor not-meaning. I would be outside of the categories they require if they are to interpret me, if they are to assign meaning to me.

Perhaps I am a ghost. Of sorts.

—In the Nausicaa episode, Bloom recalls my presence at the funeral—‘And that fellow today at the graveside in the brown macintosh. Corns on his kismet however’ and suggests I am famous for being unlucky. He does not know that ‘in French mes chances (my chances, strokes of luck) and méchance (bad luck) are pronounced the same,’ and is unable to foresee that for Derrida this méchance will have referred to ‘the bad luck of a perpetual drifting, wandering, or erring from a straight path,’ akin to the travels of Ulysses, or my straying in front of the viceroy’s path, which is perhaps also the greatest chance of all, the greatest stroke of luck imaginable.

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17 Blanchot, The Space of Literature, 256.

18 Joyce, Ulysses, 358.

19 Miller, ‘Derrida’s Destinerrance,’ 899.

20 Miller, ‘Derrida’s Destinerrance,’ 899.
—Perhaps only by chance will you get a grasp on just who I am, and what I might mean. But because of this chance, their investigation has hit an impasse. But perhaps ‘the impasse provides a certain impetus.’

—in the Oxen of the Sun episode, I am re-named ‘Dusty Rhodes,’ amidst a raucous and cacophonic overabundance of clues about my myriad possible identities:

Golly, whatten tunket’s you guy in the mackintosh? Dusty Rhodes. Peep at his wearables. By mighty! What’s he got? Jubilee mutton. Bovril, by James. Wants it real bad. D’ye ken bare socks? Seedy cuss in the Richmond? Rawthere! Thought he had a deposit of lead in his penis. Trumpery insanity. Bartle the bread we calls him. That, sir, was once a prosperous cit. Man all tattered and torn that married a maiden forelorn. Slung her hook, she did. Here see lost love. Walking Mackintosh of lonely canyon. Tuck and turn in. Schedule time. Nix for the hornies. Pardon? See him today at a runefal? Chum o yourn passed in his checks? Ludamassy! ... I never see the like since I was born. Tiens, tiens, but it is well sad, that, my faith, yes.

As I make my journey by way of that ‘perpetual drifting, wandering, or erring from a straight path,’ by chance, accident, or mistake, by destinerrance, I am transformed, I become Dusty Rhodes, ‘walking Mackintosh of lonely canyon,’ the solitary traveller. I become the subject of this fragmentary, barely decipherable gossip as my day is pieced together, my steps retraced.

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22 Joyce, Ulysses, 406.

23 Miller, ‘Derrida’s Destinerrance,’ 899.
I am also commanded: ‘tiens, tiens,’ polysemously translated from the French as ‘hello, hello’ (tiens! tiens!), ‘take this, take this,’ and ‘why, why,’ les tiens meaning ‘yours,’ and the word itself derived from the verb tenir, ‘to hold’ or ‘to keep.’ ‘Hello, take this, keep this, hold this, hold onto this. Why? It’s yours.’ Hold onto what? I cannot even hold onto myself, as my identity interminably slips away, and I remain obscured, impossible to grasp, nothing here but conjecture and hearsay.

—The evidence they are gathering is inadmissible.

—I might return again in the Circe episode. I am unsure if Bloom’s subconscious means the figure to be me or not. A man in a brown Macintosh appears again in the hallucinatory Circe, definitely an apparition this time, to accuse Bloom of harbouring false identities:

(A man in a brown macintosh springs up through a trapdoor. He points an elongated figure at Bloom.)

THE MAN IN THE MACINTOSH

Don’t you believe a word he says. That man is Leopold M’Intosh, the notorious fireraiser. His real name is Higgins.

BLOOM

(A cannonshot. The man in the macintosh disappears ...)24

24 Joyce, Ulysses, 458.
This is an apparition of Lipoti Virag, Leopold’s grandfather, wearing a brown Macintosh:

(… Lipoti Virag, basilicogrammate, chutes rapidly down through the chumneyflute and struts two steps to the left on gawky pink stilts. He is sausaged into several overcoats and wears a brown macintosh under which he holds a roll of parchment. …)²⁵

Bloom’s own blood is accusing him of being false, betraying his true identity by refusing his father’s Hebrew name, Virag, for the surname Bloom. But I am not Rudolph Virag.

—The apparition might also be pointing an accusatory finger at a figure he perhaps imitates, disguises himself as. J’accuse. The apparition perhaps accuses me of villainy in my refusal to hold onto a singular identity, and in the sheer emptiness and undecidability of my identity. J’accuse. The apparition perhaps accuses me of being uninterpretable, of being a threat to the investigative endeavours of the critics. J’accuse.

—In the Eumaeus episode, an obituary in the newspaper reveals—or rewrites, reinterprets—the events of the funeral which I had appeared at earlier that morning:

²⁵ Joyce, Ulysses, 481.
This morning (Hynes put in, of course) the remains of the late Mr Patrick Dignam were removed from his residence, n° 9 Newbridge Avenue, Sandymount, for internment in Glasnevin. The deceased gentleman was a most popular and genial personality in city life and his demise, after a brief illness, came as a great shock to citizens of all classes by whom he is deeply regretted. The obsequies, at which many friends of the deceased were present, were carried out (certainly Hynes wrote it with a nudge from Corny) by Messrs. H. J. O’Neill & Son. 194 North Strand road. The mourners included: Patk. Dignam (son), Bernard Corrigan (brother-in-law), John Henry Menton, solr., Martin Cunningham, John Power eatondph 1/8 ador dorador douradora (must be where he called Monks the dayfather about Keyes’s ad.), Thomas Kernan, Simon Dedalus, B. A., Edward J. Lambert, Cornelius Kelleher, Joseph M. C. Hynes, L. Boom, C. P. M’Coy—M’Intosh, and several others.

Nettled not a little by L. Boom (as it incorrectly stated) and the line of bitched type, but tickled to death simultaneously by C. P. M’Coy and Stephen Dedalus, B. A., who were conspicuous, needless to say, by their total absence (to say nothing of M’Intosh), L. Boom pointed it out to his companion B. A., engaged in stifling another yawn, half nervousness, not forgetting the usual crop of nonsensical howlers of misprints.26

‘To say nothing of M’Intosh,’ thinks Bloom parenthetically, because there is nothing to say. I was there—Bloom knows this, remembers this—but now I am absented, the faultline covered over as Bloom nears the end of his Dublin circumnavigation, and has found no explanation, no answer, to this most troublesome question: ‘Who is

26 Joyce, Ulysses, 602.
M’Intosh?’ Who am I? And why do I concern them so much that I must be written out of the narrative?

—Finally, in the Ithaca episode, the homecomings of both Ulysses and Bloom, my journey too comes to an end of sorts. In my final appearance, some further questions are asked, the conjecture continues, but still there are no answers:

What selfimposed enigma did Bloom about to rise in order to go so as to conclude lest he should not conclude involuntarily apprehend?

The cause of a brief sharp unforeseen heard loud lone crack emitted by the insentient material of a strainveined timber table.

What selfinvolved enigma did Bloom risen, going, gathering multicoloured multiform multitudinous garments, voluntarily apprehending, not comprehend?

Who was M’Intosh?

What self-evident enigma pondered with desultory constancy during 30 years did Bloom now, having effected natural obscurity by the extinction of artificial light, silently suddenly comprehend?

Where was Moses when the candle went out?27

So much hearsay over my possible identities ends here, with too many questions and not enough answers.

27 Joyce, Ulysses, 681.
—One of their more adept detectives, Tony Thwaites, notes that ‘Ithaca is in the place in a narrative where one would expect a resolution,’ asserting that the disruptive catechistic structure of the episode undermines the possibility of an answer, a resolution: Ithaca is ‘a catechism in which answers call forth even more questions and where it may not even be quite clear which is the answer and which the question.’ For Bloom, in these three questions without three answers, or properly five questions and three answers, but also five questions and only one answer, ‘something arrives, seemingly out of nowhere, uncalled for and involuntarily apprehended.’ But—like me—this something remains unexplained, and perhaps inexplicable:

Crack. Something nags at Bloom as he is about to rise and go upstairs; something that involves him and that he even unwittingly sets in motion nevertheless continues to escape him, heading off on a tangent of its own.

And where was Moses when the light went out? Bloom has been puzzling over that one for ages, thirty years it would seem, and suddenly, just when he has turned off the light, he is no longer in the dark. The answer comes as if out of nowhere, with no conscious process of thought behind it: unheralded, unsought,


29 Thwaites, ‘Catechistics, or, Where was Moses When the Candle Went Out,’ 657.

30 Thwaites, ‘Catechistics, or, Where was Moses When the Candle Went Out,’ 654.
quite gratuitous, it is a small and almost meaningless gift. Crack: the penny drops.\textsuperscript{31}

As far as there is an answer, the answer to the riddle ‘Where was Moses when the candle went out?’ is simply: ‘in the dark.’ Bloom comprehends, although we do not learn what he comprehends (we remain ‘in the dark’), and the enigmas of Moses and me remain a mystery, due to an excess of questions and not enough answers. The only two questions in the entire episode that are answered with questions, following directly one after the other, my final appearance—or lack thereof—perhaps symbolises the doubled answer to the question of my identity: questions in place of answers (‘Q finds itself in A, and A in Q.’\textsuperscript{32}), and remaining in the dark.

Nearing his final lines before Molly takes command in Penelope, switching off the bedroom light, Bloom simply cannot comprehend me. Despite attempts at discovering my identity by those both within and outside of the text, I remain incomprehensible. Their investigation has struck another impasse.

—Perhaps my most notable interpreter-detective, Kermode looks outside of the text itself for an answer, and suggests a parallel between myself and Homer’s Theoclymenus. This figure appears firstly in the fifteenth book of the \textit{Odyssey} as an outlaw travelling with the prodigal son Telemachus (akin, perhaps, to the ‘outlaw,’ outsider, foreigner, wandering Jew Leopold Bloom travelling with the prodigal son

\textsuperscript{31} Thwaites, ‘Catechistics, or, Where was Moses When the Candle Went Out,’ 655.

\textsuperscript{32} Thwaites, ‘Catechistics, or, Where was Moses When the Candle Went Out,’ 660.
Stephen Dedalus), and later in the twentieth book as a seer and prophet, foretelling the suitors’ demise as they laugh at Telemachus:

The inspired seer Theoclymenus wailed out in their midst,

“Poor men, what terror is this that overwhelms you so?

Night shrouds your heads, your faces, down to your knees—

cries of mourning are bursting into fire—cheeks rivering tears—

the walls and the handsome crossbeams dripping dank with blood!

Ghosts, look, thronging the entrance, thronging the court,

go trooping down to the world of death and darkness!

The sun is blotted out of the sky—look there—
a lethal mist spreads all across the earth!’

... Oh I can see it now—

the disaster closing on you all! There’s no escaping it,

no way out—not for a single one of you suitors,

wild reckless fools, plotting outrage here,

the halls of Odysseys, great and strong as a god!”

Kermode contends that Theoclymenus’ prophecy is ‘banal and his presence in the story quite without point,’ writing that ‘he is simply an intrusion, and does not belong to the poem at all.’ But I am not this; I am not simply an unnecessary intrusion, and I am certainly not ‘gratuitous and fortuitous, a mere disturbance of

33 Homer, Odyssey, XX.391-414.

34 Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, 51.

the surface of the narrative. I am a symbol of the way meaning is produced and not produced—problematised, destabilised—in this text: my mystery, and the potentialities held open by my endless eschewals, this lack of answers and so the descent into conjecture, is vital to our understanding of my creator’s polysemous, polyphonic, violently undecidable language—displayed throughout Ulysses, and more so in Finnegans Wake—where his multivalent words defy the possibility of any firm, singular meanings. I am the narrative embodiment of an undecidability between irreducible potential meanings, a product of the unconditionality which destabilises the institution and produces its legitimacy as a legitimacy-to-come.

The detectives must despair.

—Turning away from Theoclymenus, Kermode proposes another potential identity as the solution to my mystery. He suggests that I, in my brown Macintosh, might be a modernist manifestation of the boy in the canvas shirt, an enigma in the Gospel According to St. Mark:

51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. 

The boy has ‘no business in the text at all,’ and apparently serves no purpose—or at least no purpose that is revealed in Mark. ‘We should not be unduly surprised that

36 Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, 52.

37 Mark, 14: 51-2. More accurately, the boy wears a sindōn, ‘a garment made of fine linen; not precisely a shirt, rather something you might put on for a summer evening, or wrap a dead body in, if you were rich enough’ (Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, 55).
the gospel, like its own parables, both reveals and conceals,\textsuperscript{39} continues Kermode: the boy and I both embody ‘a pattern of revelation and deception,’\textsuperscript{40} a sense that someone or something might be in disguise and waiting to be revealed.

—Perhaps we both also conceal ‘the ending that is not there.’\textsuperscript{41} Coming near to the close of Bloom’s contribution to \textit{Ulysses}, the question of my identity arises in order to negate a sense of closure: ‘There are ... ways of ending narratives that are not manifest and simple devices of closure.’\textsuperscript{42} ‘Literary criticism is not book-keeping,’\textsuperscript{43} writes Beckett, warning us against searching for coherencies, for answers, because ‘the danger lies in the neatness of identifications.’\textsuperscript{44}

—We are still in the dark, with more questions than answers, and we will have been able to comprehend so little. ‘A good deal of the story,’ Kermode suggests, ‘seems concerned with failure to understand the story.’\textsuperscript{45} Bloom fails to understand too:

Bloom failed with the man in the Macintosh; the hour was late, too late for him to sort out carnal and spiritual, manifest and latent, revealed and concealed. He had

\textsuperscript{38} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 55.
\textsuperscript{39} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 59.
\textsuperscript{40} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 67.
\textsuperscript{41} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 65.
\textsuperscript{42} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 68.
\textsuperscript{43} Beckett, ‘Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce,’ 4.
\textsuperscript{44} Beckett, ‘Dante ... Bruno. Vico ... Joyce,’ 3.
\textsuperscript{45} Kermode, \textit{The Genesis of Secrecy}, 69.
had a long hard day and went, quite carnally, to bed. Perhaps he returned to the
question later, as we must.46
Perhaps Bloom will return to the question, return again and again, turn back and try
again to solve the riddle, the enigma, comprehend the excess of questions and the
lack of answers.
   I will haunt him.

—The boy in the sindōn makes a second, far more conjectural appearance in Mark.
As the three women look upon the empty tomb of Jesus, there sits a young man, a
boy, draped now in white:

5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right
side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.
6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which
   was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.
7. But go on your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into
   Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.
8. And they went quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and
   were amazed: neither said any thing to any man: for they were afraid.47

If this is the same boy (we are unsure, and must be—the enigma is the whole point
of the gesture), then might I not also be such an emblem of negation, overseeing an
empty tomb (the absence of a central figure or identity, the absence of a crucial

46 Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, 73.
47 Mark, 16: 5-8.
element needed for interpretation), while awaiting a messianic return which might never come, and a revelation destined always already to be deferred.

**Perhaps: Waiting for Elijah**

No, Elijah is you: you are Elijah in *Ulysses*, who is presented as a large telephone exchange ..., the marshalling yard, the network through which all information must pass.48

Like Elijah knocking on our door! The first and the last, the constant word in deconstruction is come, *viens*.49

—Perhaps I remain a mystery because ‘I’—the knowledge of who I am—remain in the future. Like the prophet Elijah, this vast network through which all information must pass, perhaps I too carry a message which remains to come. The revelation of my secret—my secret name—remains to come. *Viens*.

—‘Elijah is you,’ Derrida tells me down the telephone line. I am not quite sure what he means.

—‘Elijah is coming,’50 proclaims Bloom in *Lestrygonians* as he embarks on his Dublin odyssey in search of lunch: *‘Is coming! Is coming!! Is coming!!! All heartily*

48 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 52.

49 Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, 156.
welcome.'51 He might be, like Derrida, ‘calling upon Elijah to come again,’52 to return in the hope he will carry with him more than just promises and potentialities.

—And Elijah does come.

—Elijah is firstly advertised as a ‘skiff,’ the crumpled throwaway, sighted three times throughout Wandering Rocks, ‘sailing’ along the Liffey. Of course, this is not a skiff as such, but a crumpled ball of paper, a throwaway—a small newspaper which in this case proclaims the coming of a new Elijah, Doctor John Alexander Downie, and which is also ‘a parody of modern advertising methods used to sell a false prophet.’53 It reappears three times in the episode after being discarded by Bloom, cast off the O’Connell Bridge. These appearances are presented out of order in the episode, the time disrupted, but the chronology is reconstituted here:

Elijah, skiff, light crumpled throwaway, sailed eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, amid an archipelago of corks, beyond new wapping street past Benson’s ferry, and by the threemasted schooner Rosevean from Bridgewater with bricks.54

50 Joyce, Ulysses, 144.
51 Joyce, Ulysses, 144.
54 Joyce, Ulysses, 240.
A skiff, a crumpled throwaway, Elijah is coming, rode lightly down the Liffey, under Loopline, shooting the rapids where water chafed around the bridgepiers, sailing eastward past hulls and anchorchains, between the Customhouse old dock and George’s quay.55

North wall and sir John Rogerson’s quay, with hulls and anchorchains, sailing westward, sailed by a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, rocked on the ferrywash, Elijah is coming.56

But, as John Hannay notes, the skiff is not a singular advertisement for the coming of Elijah; forensically tracing the supposed path of the throwaway along the Liffey, the timing of the journey and the currents of the river, he concludes that it cannot be the same crumpled ball of paper making these three appearances. He suggests there are two throwaways, just as there are two Elijahs (the false prophet present in Downie, and the true prophet who is absent). Both the skiffs and the prophets represent ‘not a reincarnation, but simply a duplication of the first,’57 as part of an episode-long discourse on resemblance, error, and mistaken identities—and perhaps novel-long, as so much conjecture continues to surround my uninterpretable identity. These wandering rocks are elusive, and deceptive: ‘Rather than a symbol of a successful passage through labyrinthine errors, the throwaway

55 Joyce, Ulysses, 218.
56 Joyce, Ulysses, 230.
may itself be one more “Wandering Rock” for the unwary reader.\footnote{Hannay, “The Throwaway of “Wandering Rocks”,” 438.} As the reader wonders just how the throwaway wanders and errs on its course, and as our perceptions slip between the two throwaways and the two Elijahs, the message returns in the Sirens episode, although it is muffled, garbled, not getting through, not coming in too clearly: ‘Elijah is com.’\footnote{Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 268.} The doubled skiff shows a \textit{destinerrance} haunting the message in general, and the message of Elijah in particular, the promise of a messianic deconstruction: as Wills suggests, ‘either it finds its way, against outside odds, to the winning post of interpretative certitude, or it follows a line of flux or flight, bobbing through eddy, rapids, and wake, out to sea.’\footnote{Wills, \textit{Dorsality}, 85.} The throwaway (both noun and verb: the skiff and the action of throwing away, discarding), the message and meaning of Elijah, is exiled from interpretative certitude: ‘The throwaway—element and operation of signification within a work of fiction—is, like the castaway, in exile, at a loss for home and country.’\footnote{Wills, \textit{Dorsality}, 88.} We are shipwrecked, far from home and waiting for the message to become clear, but uncertain which path we should take, uncertain if the message is not mistaken, as we face an impasse and are unable to distinguish between the two Elijahs, the prophet and the false prophet, waiting for the Other to come back, to call back. \textit{Viens, viens.}

—Macintosh/Elijah. Doubled again. \textit{Oui, oui.}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Hannay, “The Throwaway of “Wandering Rocks”,” 438.}
\item \footnote{Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 268.}
\item \footnote{Wills, \textit{Dorsality}, 85.}
\item \footnote{Wills, \textit{Dorsality}, 88.}
\end{itemize}

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—Like the critic waiting patiently for answers, for the text to reveal its meanings, viens, Caputo sees Derrida awaiting the arrival of some Other, something Other, after calling for a response, oui:

        He has his whole life long been “hoping sighing dreaming” over the arrival of something “wholly other,” tout autre, praying and weeping over, waiting and longing for, calling upon and being called by something to come.62

Derrida waits for Elijah, ‘who had promised to come,’63 promised to carry meaning, his own prophecy, but who is yet to deliver this message. In the figure of this doubled throwaway ‘advertising Elijah,’64 this wandering and erroneous promise of a revelatory arrival, Derrida is confronted with ‘a text whose message concerning Elijah is too hot to handle or only the value of a piece of refuse.’65 In either case, the message is not received. ‘You are receiving me,’66 he suggests in ‘Ulysses Gramophone’—but he himself is not receiving Elijah clearly at all.

—When the hallucinating ‘Ben Bloom Elijah’67 appears to end Cyclops, he responds to calls from heaven of his own name by calling out the heavenly Other’s name:

        When, lo, there came about them all a great brightness and they beheld the chariot wherein He stood ascend to heaven. And they beheld Him in the chariot,


63 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, xviii.

64 Joyce, Ulysses, 628.

65 Wills, Dorsality, 86.

66 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 27.

67 Joyce, Ulysses, 330.
clothed upon in the glory of the brightness, having raiment as of the sun, fair as the moon and terrible that for awe they durst not look upon Him. And there came a voice out of heaven, calling: Elijah! Elijah! And He answered with a main cry: Abba! Adonai! And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of fortyfive degrees over Donohoe’s in Little Green Street like a shot off a shovel.68

His response represents nothing so much as the impossibility of a response, the impossibility of the Other calling back, the making of a promise to come but then the requirement that we wait. Even as Leopold Bloom is transfigured into the potential prophet ben Bloom Elijah, the original call of Abba, Adonai, Yahweh, Jehovah, God, is misdirected (it reaches Bloom, not Elijah), and the response is transfigured into a frustrated messianic yearning.

—For it is the Messiah who does not come; the prophet will always already have been here, present and carrying the message, the message that a message is coming.

—‘Elijah is coming!’69 reiterates the closing passage of Wandering Rocks. His potential arrival and that of his message will not go away. He arrives as a question, a questioning, a promise, a secret, and a secret name.

‘What is Elijah to Derrida?’70 asks Inge-Birgitte Siegumfeldt. In ‘Circonfession,’ Derrida finally addresses ‘the “scandalously beautiful” hypothesis of my secret name,

68 Joyce, Ulysses, 330.
69 Joyce, Ulysses, 406.
Elie.'71 For Derrida, Elie is ‘the other name,’72 ‘his secret name, known only within the family circles.’73 It is the naming of an ‘election,’ a promise:

Elie: my name—not inscribed, the only one, very abstract, that ever happened to me, that I learned, from outside, later, and that I have never felt, borne, the name I do not know, like a number (but what a number! I was going to say matricule, thinking of the plaque of the dead Elie that Marguerite wears or of the suicide, in 1955, of my friend Elie Carrive) anonymously designating the hidden name, which I received without receiving in the place where what is received must not be received, nor give any sign of recognition in exchange (the name, the gift), but as soon as I learned, very late, that it was my name, I put it into it, very distractedly, on one side, in reserve, a certain nobility, a sign of election, I am he who is elected [celui qu’on élit], this joined to the story about the white taleth (to be told elsewhere) and some other signs of secret benediction ... 74

Derrida bears the name of Elijah and, unlike Bloom, does not hallucinate it: ‘So I have borne, without bearing, without it ever being written ... the name of the prophet Élie, Elijah in English.’75

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71 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ 87.
72 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ 83.
74 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ 83-4.
75 Derrida, ‘Circonfession,’ 96.
—Derrida’s secret name is my secret name, the name of one who carries a promise, the promise of a semantic revelation to come.

—But ‘Elijah is not me,’76 writes Derrida. Like me, he will always already have been waiting for Elijah, foretelling the coming of the prophet; as Caputo suggests, ‘all his life long he has been setting a place for Elijah, his namesake, making notes for a “book of Elie”’.77 Like the promise made but never delivered, Derrida’s ‘book of Elie’ is never published—like the messianic throwaway, its journey is disrupted, the message it carries erroneous, postponed, and undeliverable. Yet the potential still exists, or will always already have existed. Derrida will always already have been ‘advertising Elijah,’78 advertising the promised arrival of Elijah like the throwaway handed to Bloom.

—But Bloom crumples the throwaway, and casts it off of the O’Connell Bridge, into the flowing Liffey.

—Elijah intervenes once more, in the hallucinatory Circe, which plays out on the one hand as a surrealist theatrical performance, and on the other as a drug-induced dream or nightmare:

—

76 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 52.

77 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, xviii.

78 Joyce, Ulysses, 628.
FLORRY

(Sinking into torpor, crosses herself secretly.) The end of the world!

(A female tepid effluvium flows leaks out from her. Nebulous obscurity occupies space. Through the drifting fog without the gramophone blares over coughs and feetshuffling.)

THE GRAMOPHONE

Jerusalem!

Open your gates and sing

Hosanna ...

‘(A rocket rushes up the sky and bursts. A white star falls from it, proclaiming the consummation of all things and second coming of Elijah. Along an infinite invisible tightrope taut from zenith to nadir the End of the World, a twoheaded octopus in gillie’s kilts, busby and tartan filibegs whirls through the murk, head over heels, in the form of the Three Legs of Man.)’

THE END OF THE WORLD

(With a Scotch accent.) Wha’ll dance the keel row, the keel row, the keel row?

(Over the passing drift and choking breathcoughs, Elijah’s voice, harsh as a corncrakes, jars on high. Perspiring in a loose lawn surplice with funnel sleeves he is seen, vergerfaced, above a rostrum about which the banner of old glory is draped. He thumps the parapet.)

ELIJAH

No yapping, is you please, in this booth. Jake Crane, Creole Sue, Dave Campbell, Abe Kirschner, do your coughing with your mouths shut. Say, I am operating all
this trunk line. Boys, do it now. God’s time is 12:25. Tell mother you’ll be there. Rush your order and you play a slick ace. Join on right here! Book through to eternity junction, the nonstop run. Just one word more. Are you a god or a doggone clod? If the second advent came to Coney Island are we ready? Florry Christ, Stephen Christ, Zoe Christ, Bloom Christ, Kitty Christ, Lynch Christ, it’s up to you to sense that cosmic force. Have we cold feet about the cosmos? No. Be on the side of the angels. Be a prism. You have that something within, the higher self. You can rub shoulders with a Jesus, a Gautama, an Ingersoll. Are you all in this vibration? I say you are. You once nobble that, congregation, and a buck joyride to heaven becomes a back number. You got me? It’s a lifebringer, sure. The hottest stuff ever was. It’s the whole pie with jam in. It’s just the cutest snappiest line out. It is immense, supersumptuous. It restores. It vibrates. I know and I am some vibrator. Joking apart and getting down to bedrock, A. J. Christ Downie and the harmonial philosophy have you got that? O. K. Seventyseven west sixtyninth street. Got me? That’s it. You call me up by sunphone any old time. Bumboosers, save your stamps. (He shouts.) Now then out glory song. All join heartily in the singing. Encore! (He sings.) Jeru ...

THE GRAMOPHONE

(Drowning his voice.)

Whorusalaminyourhighhhhh ... (The disc rasps gratingly against the needle.)

THREE WHORES

(Covering their ears, squawk). Ahhkkk!
ELIJAH

(In rolledup shirtsleeves, black in the face, shouts at the top of his voice, his arms uplifted.) Big brother up there, Mr President, you hear what I done just been saying to you. Certainly, I sort of believe strong in you Mr President. I certainly am thinking now Miss Higgins and Miss Ricketts got religion way inside them. Certainly seems to me I don’t never see no wusser scared female than the way you been, Miss Florry, just now as I done seed you. Mr President, you come long and help me save our sisters dear. (He winks at his audience.) Our Mr President, he twig the whole lot and he ain’t saying nothing.79

The coming of Elijah is proclaimed, as is the end of the world. Both figures arrive (but as dreams, hallucinations, illusions), the former having to be heard over the noise of the latter, and of the gramophone playing ‘The Holy City.’ The messages of ‘Giddy Elijah,’60 garbled as they may be, are drowned out by the sounds emanating from the spinning record of the gramophone. They are lost.

—In ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ Derrida positions himself, like Bloom, in the place of the prophet, ‘as the anticipated but unpredictable outsider responding to the invitation implicit in Joyce’s text to open it, to counter-sign it.’81 Perhaps Derrida is Elijah. Perhaps the critic more generally is a prophet. Elijah is you, Derrida tells us as he addresses an audience of Joyce critics, literary scholars. (So Elijah is here, now, has

79 Joyce, Ulysses, 477-8.
80 Joyce, Ulysses, 513-4.
arrived with this reading; at least we are no longer awaiting his coming.) You are the prophets, he says, who carry the message of the promise of a revelatory meaning.

—Perhaps referencing the doubling of the crumpled throwaway Elijah, Caputo suggests this counter-signature takes place ‘between two Elijahs’82: the first is ‘Joyce’s image of Elijah as ... a vast telephone network through which all information must pass, a comprehensive, encyclopaedic system’83 and the second is ‘the guest ... the one whom we all await, having set a place for him at the table, Eli-jah as the figure of the other who is to come, to whom we say yes, yes.’84 For Derrida, Elijah is figured as simultaneously the encyclopaedic telephone network which makes possible the carriage of the message, and a necessary waiting which figures each of those messages as only ever the promise of a message-to-come.

—Bloom is at the telephone. Elijah is at the telephone. (Elijah is presently at the telephone, awaiting our call.) Derrida is at the telephone. I am at the telephone. It all revolves around a telephone call, structured by the same technology as the post:

If I am not mistaken, the first phone call sounds with Bloom’s words: “Better phone him up first” in a sequence entitled “AND IT WAS THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER.” A little before, he had somewhat mechanically, like a record, repeated this prayer, the most serious of all prayers for a Jew, the one that should

82 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, 255.
83 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, 258.
84 Caputo, The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida, 258.
never be allowed to become mechanical, to be gramphoned: Shema Israel Adonai Elohanu.85

This ‘telephonic Shema Israel between God ... and Israel’86 (Shema Israel means ... call to Israel, listen Israel, hello Israel87) is ‘a person-to-person call,’88 the ‘yes yes’ which affirms not only a presence on the other end of the line, but also our own presence, repeated, iterated and reiterated. The first yes is a marker of a presence awaiting the response of the second yes, and the second yes marks a response, a reply to the first, a yes which ‘connects us to the network of the prophet Elijah,’89 a prosthetic, prophetic, messianic network controlling all telecommunications, and where Elijah is irreducibly and unconditionally expanded to be ‘a skein of voices’:

        Elijah's voice acts as a kind of telephone exchange or marshalling yard. All communication, transport, transfer, and translation networks go through him.

        Polytelephony goes through Elijah's programophony.90

Elijah is polyphonic. He carries every voice, every message, between one subject and another, or a series of subjects and a series of Others. Schizophrenic, he carries a series of messages, each destined never to arrive, but to always exist as the promise of its delivery.

85 Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone,' 38.
86 Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone,' 38.
87 Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone,' 38.
89 Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone,' 42.
90 Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramophone,' 45.
—As Derrida speaks Elijah’s name, the ‘yes yes’ reverberates: ‘I pronounce Elie in the French way, but in the English name for Elijah, Molly’s Ja can be heard echoing.’\(^{91}\)

Molly’s Ja—Elie’s name—echoes, yes yes, ja ja, affirming the promised coming of Elijah. But her yeses, her affirmation and her promise, are also responsible for postponing ‘the apocalypse of Joycean studies, that is, the truth, the final revelation,’\(^{92}\) the arrival at a ‘destination’ of Meaning symbolised by the coming of the Messiah.

For ‘Molly is not Elijah (Elie),’\(^{93}\) and she has not arrived or returned to prophesise the coming of the Messiah, the End of Days, the Apocalypse of Joycean studies. Instead, let loose, her yeses represent

a lost signature without a proper name that only reveals and names the cycle of reappropriation and domestication of all the paraphs to delimit fantasy, and does so in order to contrive the break in necessary for the coming of the Other, who might just happen to be called Elijah, if Elijah is the name of the unforeseeable Other for whom a place must be kept, no longer Elijah, the head of the megaprogramotelephonic network, Elijah, the great telephone operator, but the other Elijah: Elijah, the Other.\(^{94}\)

She signs or counter-signs Ulysses, signs it in the name of the absent Messiah (‘Everything begins with the presence of that absence’\(^{95}\)), a proxy for this Joycean

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\(^{91}\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 44.

\(^{92}\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 52.

\(^{93}\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 54.

\(^{94}\) Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 59.

\(^{95}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 27.
Other. She bears witness to the text and calls out to the Other, but her message only reaches as far as the prophet, who is ‘called as witness’\(^{96}\) to affirm the end, called to respond to this cry from the frustrated Molly. Waiting for Elijah, beckoning, there is no refuge, no salvation; there is just the interminable wait as the crumpled throwaway floats down the Liffey striving in vain to carry its messianic message.

*Viens, viens.*

—‘Save, be saved, save oneself’\(^{97}\) commands Derrida, as if this could all have been avoided and as if salvation is possible. Addressing the aporia—‘a certain absence of way, path, issue, salvation’\(^{98}\) of faith and knowledge, Derrida turns to a ‘tele-technology’\(^{99}\) structuring the ‘two words,’ the ‘two sources,’ our ‘duplicity of origins’\(^{100}\): the messianic, and *chōra*. The latter situates ‘the abstract spacing, place itself, the place of absolute exteriority, but also the place of a bifurcation between two approaches to the desert,’\(^{101}\) opening a space where ‘an infinite resistance’\(^{102}\) might take place, and also a space in which the possibility of ‘an utterly faceless other’\(^{103}\) exists, in which this mysterious messianic figure might arrive, or return.

\(^{96}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 27.

\(^{97}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 2.

\(^{98}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 2.


\(^{100}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 17.

\(^{101}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 19.

\(^{102}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 21.

\(^{103}\) Derrida, ‘Faith and Knowledge,’ 21.
former, on the other hand, brings with it Macintosh-Elijah-Elie-I as a schizophrenic fleet-footed messenger, announcing the possible arrival of the Messiah. Caputo suggests that deconstruction has ‘a very messianic ring’:

The “messianic” ... has to do with the absolute structure of the promise, of an absolutely indeterminate, let us say, a structural future, a future always to come, à venir. The messianic future is not a future-present and is not sparked by a determinate Messiah; it is not futural simply in the sense that it has not as a matter of fact shown up yet, but futural in the sense of the very structure of the future. The messianic future is an absolute future, the very structure of the to-come that cannot in principle come about, the very openendedness of the present that makes it impossible for the present to draw itself into a circle, to close in and gather around itself.

Belonging ‘properly to no Abrahamic religion,’ this promise of the messianic represents ‘the opening to the future or to the coming of the other ... but without horizon of expectation and without prophetic prefiguration.’ The Messiah remains elsewhere:

The non-presence of the Messiah is the very stuff of his promise. For it is in virtue of the messianic that we can always, must always, have no alternative but to say, “come.” We can and we must pray, plead, desire the coming of the Messiah. Always.

104 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 156.
105 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 161-2.
108 Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell, 162.
The promise is structured by the absence of the Messiah, for with his arrival the promise is no longer a promise, and our contract, yes yes, would fall apart.

—I promise to tell you who I am, to reveal my identity and offer you the meaning you crave. But not yet.

—The praying, pleading, desiring, and hoping, sighing, dreaming, is the ‘apophatic secret’ and ‘messianic point’ of deconstruction, this rewriting of a negative theology: ‘there is no secret and the Messiah is never going to show up.’\textsuperscript{109} The content of Jacques’s secret—like Elie’s secret, Elijah’s secret, the secret carried by the throwaway, and my secret, my secret name—lies in the future, and all we are presented with here is the surface or appearance of a secret, the apophatic structure of an empty secret:

Jacques’s secret, if there is one, lies on a textual surface, inconspicuous by its superficiality, without a martyr to bear it witness, without a revelation to unveil it, without a second coming or even a first. It is always to come.\textsuperscript{110}

It is not the structure of the secret which troubles the literary detectives and destabilises their institution; the existence of the secret does not frustrate their investigative endeavours. What troubles them is the empty secret, without present and presented content, waiting to be filled with meaning by some promised prophetic revelation.


\textsuperscript{110} Caputo, \textit{The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida}, 102.
—*Viens, oui, oui.* Come, yes, yes. Come, but do not come now, come later, in the future, I can wait, between the yeses. I know you will arrive. You have promised that much. I have faith that you will arrive. In my faith, my belief in your promise, I prophesise your coming, as Joyce will always already have prophesised Derrida’s coming.

—And yet, the unnamed and unnameable eponymous hero in disguise who cannot return, and who cannot help but return, ‘turning in circles around me, a circumference licking me with a flame that I try in turn to circumvent,’\(^{111}\) I will always already have been there, guiding the way—the way towards the future, the way back towards the future.

—In the end, I will have been that eschatological impulse that has drawn us towards these final pages, where I will have revealed my secret only to conceal it again, deferring its revelation and instead illuminating an empty secret: the secret is, ‘there is no secret.’\(^{112}\)

\(^{111}\) Derrida, *‘Circonfession,’* 3.

—Here I am, ‘the one-eyed merchant,’ with ‘this card, which is blank,’ and ‘which I am forbidden to see,’ 113 carrying my message forwards into the future, where you will always already have been waiting.

I am an embodiment of the ‘miniature apocalypse’114 which destabilises the institution by transforming the critic into an anachronistic reader. A space is opened by the absence of an interpretation of who I am, into which the critic can step and offer their own future interpretations, ‘foretold and forenarrated.’115 I am ‘an enigmatic unveiling of what has not yet happened,’116 the promise of a revelatory interpretation that is always already to come.

—I—the revelation of the identity of this personal pronoun, the revelation of the subject to whom it is arbitrarily attached—will have been worth waiting for. ‘Perhaps,’ says the prophet, ‘one day, you will recognise my face, my figure, and know who I am. Incomprehensible in the present, perhaps one day I might reveal my secrets, my secret name. But for now I vitally remain a mystery.’

—Perhaps.


114 Miller, ‘Anachronistic Reading,’ 82.


116 Miller, ‘Anachronistic Reading,’ 82.
Coda

... you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on.¹

Oh, then suddenly you know,

You’re never going home.²


² Franz Ferdinand, ‘Ulysses’ (Kapranos/McCarthy), from the album Tonight: Franz Ferdinand (2009), published by Domino, n.p.
'a chapter of accidents'

Life is full of mistakes: this is the message of Bloomsday.¹

To reach the end is not to have reached the end at all. I can conclude nothing. Or, I can conclude nothing except the placement of an inexhaustible meaning in a series of potential futures. I can conclude nothing except the manifold unknowable promises of the text— theirs, my own, and others—in the wake of Joyce and Derrida, as if the irreducible excess of meaning might be an end in itself. I can conclude only with a declaration not of the institution’s illegitimacy, but of the possibility of its destabilisation through its own desire for unconditionality.

Perhaps I have made the mistake of believing, even up until now, that there might be some final discursive destination at which I might arrive and at which will be revealed the answers to these Joycean and Derridean questions which so trouble the institution. Perhaps I have made the un-deconstructive mistake of believing that I might master their unmasterable texts, and through my own sequence of ficto- and post-critical performances hold onto the content of a secret which remains, always already, vitally, unknowable. The preceding twelve chapters will certainly have given the impression of a knowledge or series of knowledges—often implied and mentioned rather than asserted or stated—as they have built towards this unlucky thirteenth. But the performative enactment of so many argumentative contentions, where so much is produced by the dialogue between the content and form, leaves

¹ Knowles, The Dublin Helix, 4.
little behind to point to by way of a thesis (a proposition, a statement to be proved, the taking of a clear position), little by way of argument except a sequence of sometimes circular and always over-potentialised texts. This is not a problem *per se* for a scholar of either Joyce or Derrida (or at least, by now, should not be), but it does prompt somewhat of a crisis for an institution—Literature, Philosophy, the Humanities, the University as such—which craves definite answers, final and finite Meanings. The context offered by the institution for the reading and interpretation of Joyce and Derrida remains brittle and precarious at best, incapable of predicting or exhausting the semantic resources of their texts. Yet we cannot be without context, without frames, without the borders—no matter how fragile or porous—of the institution.

Exhibiting an inconclusiveness that is definitely not a performance, this excessive thirteenth chapter retreats to a more conventional exegetical mode and academic style. Picking up a subtle play between themes of composition and decomposition, it strives to compose an argument from both the whole thesis and the twelve discrete chapters, but also begins to decay and disintegrate, to break down the work into its component parts in the hope of explaining its ficto- and post-critical examples. As decomposition appears to be the only way forward, it revisits its twelve predecessors with a desire to reveal something—*anything*—by way of a stable and ascertainable statement of knowledge in the hope of satisfying the needs of the institution while, at the same time, continuing to question its instability in the wake of Joyce and Derrida.
I. Condemned

Condemned, as the French symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire declared, ‘you’ll think I am hysterical’\(^2\) for producing this mad post-critical text that is so violently and vocally opposed to—actively engaged in the destruction or deconstruction of—the conventions and traditions that have gone before it, making these claims of being unsubmittable, unacceptable, and unassimilable to the institution. But I insist: ‘Read me, and learn to love this text.’\(^3\)

Baudelaire pleaded: ‘Have pity on me … or be damned!’\(^4\) I make no such plea. Instead, I ask—no, I insist—that the institution learn to read otherwise, just as we, after Joyce and Derrida, will have learnt to write otherwise. Already, as Chapter 1 disrupts the expectation of a straightforward thematic focus on either Joyce or Derrida or the explicit relationship between the ‘literature’ of the former and the ‘philosophy’ of the latter, we will have been reading otherwise. (Even the ‘scare’ quotes are enough to suggest something is awry.) Problematizing the idea of origins by performing an inability to find a firm position from which to begin, and working by the example of an undecidable oscillation between the two poles ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida,’ it produces a ‘blank’ or ‘empty’ interstitial space between them into which the authorial ‘I’ steps. It will always already have been blurring the distinction between the discrete subject-identities ‘Joyce’ and ‘Derrida’ by producing the separatrix as a problematically porous symbol of the mutual dependence (rather


\(^3\) Baudelaire, ‘Epigraph for a Condemned Book,’ 331.

\(^4\) Baudelaire, ‘Epigraph for a Condemned Book,’ 331.
than binary opposition) of Self and Other—Joyce/Derrida, institution/not-institution, question/answer—until the potential dialogue it signifies becomes the only possibility the critic can hold onto in their search for meaning, or meaning-to-come.

II. Slippages

It is not the slippage between subject-identities which troubles or destabilises the institution (Joyce/Derrida: Joyce slips into Derrida, and vice versa), but the motile play between the two positions, the interminable swaying movement which produces both as manifestly undecidable, unable to be placed on either side of a binary opposition: Joyce/Derrida are always already blurring and bleeding into each other, the borderline always already crossed. We witness such an undecidable impasse in Chapter 2 over the ontological status of the dead, and the choice which must, but cannot, be made between the material (the body, the corpse) and the metaphoric (the corpus, the book). Working by this example of the problematization of the spacing between the object and the word-object, the chapter performs a destabilisation of the either/or decision. The irreducible intervention of the one term into the other—of undecidability into the question of decidability, irresponsibility into responsibility, illegitimacy into legitimacy, or concealment into revelation—is the ambiviolent slippage which most troubles the institution.

III. ‘Pardon de ne pas vouloir dire’

Attempting to grasp just what literature is in the essay ‘Literature in Secret,’ Derrida suggests that it is linked to a conception of secrecy:
There there is secrecy \([it y a l\'a du secret]\), and we sense that literature is taking over these words, without, for all that, appropriating them in order to fashion them to its own purpose.\(^5\)

He then sets about attempting to reveal the secret behind the phrase \(pardon de ne pas vouloir dire\), translated from the French as ‘pardon for not meaning (to say) …,’ an apology it seems, at least in part, for refusing to reveal the secret. He writes later of ‘the perhaps secret-less secret of this phrase,’\(^6\) that we cannot fully understand its meaning or intention. Here, the ‘secret … is at the same time kept and exposed, jealously sealed and open like a purloined letter.’\(^7\) It indicates a similar ontological uncertainty as that performed by the crypt in Chapter 3, with its hidden meanings and empty promises: the structure of the crypt conceals the absence of the body, the troubling thought that there is no body, no symbolic transcendental signified, to be mourned. Just as the concepts of death and life are mutually dependent for either to have meaning, a certain presence is implicated in this absence of the deceased, and a certain absence in the presence of their funerary monument, literal or literary. Working by the example of secret name of the cryptonym, where the word refers to a hidden meaning, the crypt ultimately displays an indecipherability and undecidability which lurks at the heart of the secret languages of Joyce and Derrida.

‘The reader looks for his bearings,’\(^8\) suggests Derrida, and ‘he cannot exclude the possibility that this quasi-sentence, this spectre of a phrase that he repeats and


\(^6\) Derrida, ‘Literature in Secret,’ 133.

\(^7\) Derrida, ‘Literature in Secret,’ 131.

\(^8\) Derrida, ‘Literature in Secret,’ 130.
can now cite endlessly—“pardon me for not meaning (to say) ...”—is a ploy [feinte], a fiction, even literature.\(^9\) The publication of the phrase, the publication of its secrecy (but not the potential content of its secret), transforms it into literature:

Every text that is consigned to public space, that is relatively legible or intelligible, but whose content, sense, referent, signatory, and addressee are not fully determinable realities—realities that are at the same time non-fiction or immune from all fiction, realities that are delivered as such, by some intuition, to a determinate judgment—can become a literary object.\(^{10}\)

Derrida literary object radically alters the role of the institution, the purpose of literary criticism, and the question the literary critic must ask:

The investigator thus already sees himself in a situation that is no longer that of an interpreter, of an archaeologist, of a hermeneut, in short, of a simple reader having the full status that such a one is acknowledged to have: exegete of sacred texts, detective, archivist, text-processor mechanic, etc. Perhaps, besides all that, he is already becoming a sort of literary critic, even a literary theorist, in any case a reader who is prey to literature, vulnerable to the question that torments every literary corpus and corporation. Not only “what is literature?” “what is the function of literature?” but “what relation can obtain between literature and sense? between literature and the undecidability of the secret?”\(^{11}\)

The secret transforms literature into an object that is manifestly undecidable, necessarily indecipherable, structured not by knowledge but by possibility:

\(^9\) Derrida, 'Literature in Secret,' 130.

\(^{10}\) Derrida, 'Literature in Secret,' 131.

\(^{11}\) Derrida, 'Literature in Secret,' 131.
'Everything is given over to the future of a “perhaps”.'\textsuperscript{12} In the wake of this affirmative and generative ‘perhaps,’ \textit{pardon de ne pas vouloir dire} becomes not a plea for forgiveness, but both a powerful and playful declaration \textit{and} example of literature’s refusal to give away its secrets:  

Pardon for keeping the secret, and the secret of a secret, the secret of an enigmatic “not meaning (to say),” of a not-meaning-to-say-such-and-such a secret, of a not-meaning-to-say-what-I-meant-to-say—or of not meaning at all, no way.\textsuperscript{13}

\section*{IV. Rendezvous}

In ‘The Time of a Thesis,’ Derrida alludes to the \textit{contretemps} of a rendezvous he will always already have missed with the institution:

as if a rendezvous had forever been set for me with what should above all and with the utmost punctuality never have come at its appointed hour, but always, rather, too early or too late.\textsuperscript{14}

He hesitates in delivering his thesis, offering anything so definitive or conclusive:

concerning this place where I am going, I in fact know enough about it to think, with a certain terror, that things there are not going very well and that, all things considered, it would be better not to go there at all.\textsuperscript{15}

‘At the risk of never arriving,’\textsuperscript{16} he fears making a mistake, but more so fears the covenant he must make with the institution: that he will deliver, that he will present,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Derrida, ‘Literature in Secret,’ 131.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Derrida, ‘Literature in Secret,’ 131.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Derrida, ‘The Time of a Thesis,’ 34.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Derrida, ‘The Time of a Thesis,’ 37.
\end{itemize}
a thesis that is acceptable and meaningful. And he cannot make the decision. Such an indecision is perhaps symbolised by the paralysis experienced in Chapter 4, the immobility caused by Nelson’s phallic column, and the way through this impasse suggested by, on the one hand, the performance of a series of bursts of mocking laughter ringing out from the page and, on the other, by the performance of a paratactic ‘spatial intoxication’\(^\text{17}\) produced by manipulating the literal material spatiality of the page. Endlessly disruptive, the context of that subtly paratactic chapter, punctuated by newspaper headlines, remains uncertain, just as the context and reception of Derrida’s thesis within the institution will always already have been eminently undecidable. ‘It would be better not to go there at all’\(^\text{18}\) is thus neither an apology for not presenting what he would have preferred nor for the inadequacy or insufficiency of the thesis, but is instead a questioning of that fragile context from which the institution would presume to read Derrida’s unconditional thesis.

V. The Institutional Covenant

In attempting to define Derrida’s unique strategies of literary-philosophical criticism, Hartman suggests we are confronted with the ‘mortality’ of ‘covenanted meaning’:

Derrida’s commentary is a lens that gathers in the most varied texts and focuses them and burns through until we fear for them once again. It is so radical that, despite its reference to our dependence on the words of others, the contained (language) breaks the container (encyclopaedic book, concept, meaning) and


\(^{17}\) Hollier, Against Architecture, 59.

forces upon the reader a sense of the mortality of every code, of every covenanted meaning.19

Exposing the futility and potential insufficiency of such a covenanted meaning, Derrida’s strategies and the texts which exhibit them are inherently performative: what in particular made them just about unsubmittable as a thesis was less the multiplicity of their contents, conclusions and demonstrative positions, than, it seems to me, the acts of writing and the performative stage to which they ought to give rise and from which they remained inseparable and hence not easily capable of being represented, transported and translated into another form.20

Pre-empting what Ulmer later terms post-criticism, Derrida works by example, and in doing so produces a series of texts which might stand as literary monuments to a kind of secrecy, the refusal to state clear arguments and to instead conceal meanings in the interstitial spaces between contents and forms, concepts and metaphors. Such secrecy is performatively enacted by Chapter 5 as its fractured and fragmentary contents and forms expose the untranslatability always already destabilising any translation, an undecidability which ultimately keeps meaning secret. As three discourses and performances are staged between ‘Joyce,’ ‘Derrida,’ and ‘I’ in many tongues and languages, it refuses a singular monolithic tower not only in the sheer multiplicity of its own contents, conclusions, and demonstrative positions, but also in the very act of taking on these inseparable subject-identities—removed from the invisible ‘I’ of scholarly authority and impartiality—which cannot easily be translated into another form. This is the decision I make, though it might be a mistake: I am on

19 Hartman, Saving the Text, xvi.

the side of the undecidable as the exemplar of this uneasy relationship between Joyce and Derrida, unable as I am to reduce them to anything less than an infinite series of possibilities, unable as I am to institutionalise them.

VI. ‘a man who did everything’
Prompted by the undecidability implicated in any decision, this thesis is framed by such concerns surrounding the undeliverability of the thesis, and the potential that the thesis might be unacceptable to the institution. Addressing Joyce, Derrida will have said as much from the outset:

All of you are experts and you belong to the most remarkable of institutions. It bears the name of a man who did everything, and admitted it, to make this institution indispensible, to keep it busy for centuries ... But ... it is an institution for which he did everything he could to make it impossible and improbable in its very principle, to de-construct it in advance, even going as far as to undermine the very concept of competence, upon which one day an institutional legitimacy might be founded.21

In producing these texts which ‘belong neither to the “philosophical” nor to the “literary” register,’22 this highly orchestrated sequence of subversive limit-deforming ““critical” inventions,’23 I will have produced a text which, like the ‘literature’ of Joyce and the ‘philosophy’ of Derrida, is incapable of being consumed within or exhausted by those genre categories. This will have been something else, something

21 Derrida, ‘Ulysses Gramophone,’ 37.
22 Derrida, Positions, 71.
23 Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 52.
otherwise, both eminently Joycean and eminently Derridean. For the institution, the very idea must seem mad. But, as the rigid form is undermined by the random composition of their contents, the thirty-five *folios* of the infinitely scattered Chapter 6 will have shown us that madness and non-reason are always already implicated in sanity and reason or order, chance and disorder always already implicated in structure and order.

‘Think what Joyce would have done.’

Think what Derrida would have done. But then, think what neither alone would have done ...

**VII. Exiled**

I can’t go on with this ‘a chapter of accidents,’ and yet, ‘like another Ulysses,’ frustrated, interminably travelling towards his seemingly inevitable homecoming, I must. In the wake of the preceding characterisations of both Joyce and Derrida as undecidable thinkers and subjectivities, I am incapable of coming to any conclusion that is not always already frustrated by a kind of messianic distancing. I am exiled by the necessary decision to receive Joyce and Derrida as writers of infinite possibilities and so not irresponsibly reduce them to anything less. Addressing the sequence of letters constituting Chapters 7 and 8 to Derrida and Joyce respectively, I will be unsure, always already, that they reach their destination. Troubled by this destabilising inadequacy and vital undecidability of the postal system, we will have

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witnessed the non-arrival implicated in the arrival, the undeliverability implicated in delivery, and the a-destination deconstructing the possibility of there ever truly being any discernible predetermined semantic destination. We are exiled not from the institution, but from the certainty of a decision between two terms which are always already implicated. Even the concept of exile is destabilised by its dependence on ideas of return or homecoming.

VIII. Homecoming

Homer’s *Odyssey* is the story of a homecoming as Ulysses returns to Ithaca, just as *Ulysses* is the story of a homecoming as Leopold Bloom returns home to 7 Eccles Street in Ithaca. But this labyrinthine work, this undeliverable thesis, cannot return home. There is no sense of return, no closure; this will have been ‘a peregrination with no return.’27 There is no home to which the triumphant hero can return.

Addressing what might amount to two distinct species of spaces in *Ulysses* (the geographical and the cosmic, symbolically layered not one atop the other, but aside each other), Sam Slote suggests that Bloom’s Ithaca is ‘a seemingly infinitely expansible episode in that each answer to each question yields further questions.’28 He takes up more explicitly than Joyce the symbol of comets as listed in the Gilbert schema in reference to Ithaca:

The extreme elliptical orbits of comets take them from very close to the sun (*perihelion*) to very, very far away (*aphelion*). But, no matter how far a comet

27 Lyotard, ‘Going Back to the Return,’ 207.

travels, it will turn back towards the sun, even if the time between successive perihelia is millennia. Despite the vast distances they traverse, comets remain “suncompelled,” that is, susceptible to the sun’s gravitational influence. And so Joyce uses a comet as an astronomical figuration of, say, Odysseus, in that it inevitably returns after a lengthy absence.29

The comet’s elliptical orbit is necessarily a return, a return which is also a portent, ‘an unpredictable omen of some potentially epoch-chattering event,’30 perhaps also a prophesising of the future. Slote’s point, in reference to the path of the comet, is that ‘the entire hypothetical voyage of reference and return ... gets Bloom nowhere,’31 that in returning, homecoming, following in the footsteps of Bloom, we have gone nowhere at all. In the catechistic structure of Ithaca, the possibility of such a return becomes, for Bloom, manifestly irrational:

What would render such return irrational?

An unsatisfactory equation between and exodus and return in time through reversible space and an exodus and return in space through irreversible time.32

The madness is that ‘Bloom can return to his house but he cannot return to what has been lost during the interval of his exile.’33 In returning home to the institution after

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32 Joyce, Ulysses, 680.
this odyssey through the thoughts and works of Joyce and Derrida, we cannot return to the institution as it was before we departed. In proposing a homecoming, this anachronistic reading proposes to arrive at a point which can no longer exist.

**IX. The Altar of Meaning**

Addressing the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium in 1984, the same institutional body to which Derrida delivered ‘Ulysses Gramophone’ (where, as in Chapter 9, he performed a problematization of the status of the speaking subject, the firm ground of meaning further slipping away), French philosopher, literary critic and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva declares that Joyce’s texts unsettle meaning:

> I need not convey to you, *mesdames and messieurs*, eminent specialists of Joyce’s work, how trying, laborious, absurd, and exhilarating any attempt to speak of his oeuvre would be. Literary criticism, or what is left of it, remains fascinated by the rapidity of the imaginary movement accumulating representations—their concatenation, displacement, disappearance, or dissolution—with a speed which, if it in *Finnegans Wake* undermines the identity of the verbal sign, already in *Ulysses seduces* or *disconcerts*. On the other hand, judgment wavers between classifying this maelstrom of images in the symptom or in its passage, in an expenditure that would suggest the staging of sacred festivities against the altar of Meaning.34

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In declaring that Joyce’s writing undermines the identity of the sign, and in claiming that ‘he writes against, immediately up against, and completely elsewhere,’ Kristeva figures Joyce as a writer of uncertainty, undecidability, unconditionality, and secrecy: he is a writer of literature par excellence who wants nothing less than ‘to provoke the toppling over of meaning’s infinity into a nothingness of meaning.’ Of course, his texts are not meaningless. He offers meaning, excesses of meaning, an over-potentialised meaning—but not now, not yet. There are too many potential knowledges being mentioned, and too many still to mention, too many routes to take, and too many ways to read.

X. The End

By the end, as we at once return and are refused the possibility of return, having travelled and written otherwise and arrived elsewhere than we had originally intended, very little remains.

Attridge describes literature for Derrida as being ‘barely “there” at all, precarious, fleeting, to be experienced only by means of a certain kind of attention and effort, confirmed by a certain kind of act.’ Finnegans Wake also notably ties writing to remains: ‘The letter! The litter!’ Look at the distorted telephonic telepathic tendencies of the excremental dialogue presented in Chapter 10: both thoroughly excessive and purely excremental, it will have performed not just a

35 Kristeva, ‘Joyce “the Gracehoper” or the Return of Orpheus,’ 167.
36 Kristeva, ‘Joyce “the Gracehoper” or the Return of Orpheus,’ 167.
38 Joyce, Finnegans Wake, 93.24.
discharging, but a sifting out, a separating, a spacing, as the voices become confused and the messages are never really received by their intended addressees, an overwhelming of the postal-telephonic system. Similarly, the fragmentary oscillating voices and subjectivities of Chapter 11 (Penelope, Antigone, Molly Bloom, Marilyn Monroe, and Hélène Cixous) will have been excremental in their presentation of a series of strangely surreal dreamscapes, a language driven by the broken linguistic taboos of a flowing écriture feminine, by conjectures and mis-remembrances, and by prophecies and the promise of events to come. These letters are always already troubled by the possibility that they might become litter, that they might be lost, wasted, but more so that they might be unacceptable and external to the expectations of the institution which, although striving for unconditionality, might still not be sure how to read them without their logocentric frames, without exegetical context common to the work of criticism.

The theme of excrement echoes the sentiments of some of Joyce’s more derogatory critics: Wyndham Lewis described *Ulysses* as ‘an Aladdin’s cave of bric-a-brac in which a dense mass of dead stuff is collected’ and ‘a suffocating, moétique expanse of objects,’ declaring that Joyce ‘collected like a cistern in his youth the last stagnant pumpings of Victorian Anglo-Irish life’ and presented them as literature. D. H. Lawrence too decried *Ulysses* as ‘a stupid olla podrida [pot-pourri] of the Bible and so forth James Joyce is: just stewed-up fragments of quotation in the


sauce of a would-be-dirty mind. Such effort! Such exertion! Sforzato davvero [really excessive]! But for Evan Horowitz, ‘every vulgar detail becomes a window on the monumental,’ as if the excremental transformation which takes place between the letter and the litter might be more than just the loss of a letter, but also an intimation of something more universal taking place in literature and philosophy, and between Joyce and Derrida: resisting the urge to expunge such excessive wastages, the decomposing tendencies of any composition mean that the letter slips into the litter, and the litter slips into the letter, the distinction between the two both ambiviolent and undecidable.

So it will not have been wasted, this supremely excessive, excremental thesis.

XI. Of An Apocalyptic Tone
Perhaps all this will have been—after so many plays at revelation and concealment, writing and erasure, and then this turn toward excremental texts—‘the ruin of a monument which basically never existed.’ Having performatively enacted its argumentative contentions, having implied without asserting its knowledges, all I am left to do is wonder what remains of this correspondence between these two immense columns of twentieth-century literature and philosophy, and sift through

44 Derrida, ‘This Strange Institution Called Literature,’ 42.
the cinders of this ‘miniscule residue “left unclaimed”,’\textsuperscript{45} after an explosive destruction, this apocalyptic burning for which I will have been vitally responsible.

**XII. To Begin Again, Anachronistically**

As Miller writes, the prophet carries ‘a miniature apocalypse in the etymological sense of an enigmatic unveiling of what has not yet happened,’\textsuperscript{46} the text presaging its own unpredictable, unforeseeable, unknowable possible future readings. All we have are these anachronistic readings, doubled readings which hold a revelatory meaning in the future while also holding an empty secret in the present. This is the lesson learnt by the literary detectives of Chapter 12: as so much secrecy surrounds the coming or homecoming of the man in the Macintosh, and as we find it impossible to adequately solve the mystery of his identity, we are only offered cryptic and often indecipherable clues pointing toward a meaning-to-come. Our urge toward knowledge is frustrated by the unknowable and the undecidable.

In investigating Macintosh, we must be ready to begin again—interminably, again and again and again—as we work toward the revelation of his secret, even though we know there is ‘no end, no solution, no resolution,’\textsuperscript{47} nothing but a promise, an affirmation, and a frustrated messianic yearning.

\textsuperscript{45} Derrida, \textit{The Post Card}, 7.


\textsuperscript{47} Hayman, \textit{Ulysses: the Mechanics of Meaning}, 81.
XIII. Performances

So much of this will have concerned a series of performances, not only across the twelve discrete chapters with their ludic dialogues between contents and forms, and their ventriloquistic presentation of so many subjects and subjectivities, but also in terms of this exegetical component: like Derrida, I will have been feigning to destabilise the institution and its claims of legitimacy as a means of writing toward its democratic ideal of unconditionality. Performing so many undeliverable and undecidable texts, I will have been inescapably partaking in a discourse that is and must be—to an extent—deliverable and decidable, a discourse necessarily dependent on the authority and legitimacy of the institution. From the very first page with its fiery subtitle—‘Meaning as Potentiality and the Illegitimacy of the Institution’—to these few final words, this thesis will have been performing an incendiary destabilisation of the institution, from a position necessarily within and utterly dependent on the existence of that institution. However, this does not—and cannot—negate the need to perform so many incendiary destabilisations.

After so many performances refusing to state the argumentative contentions of this thesis, it will still have been intensely meaningful: the desire for a final and finite Meaning is frustrated, but the desire for a motile, ambiviolent, and undecidable meaning, both irreducible and unconditional, excessively Joycean and excessively Derridean, is not. Ultimately, this reconfiguration of meaning as potentiality in an attempt to reconcile it with the desire for an unconditional institution is the meaning of this thesis.
XIV. Affirmation

"Yes," concluded Joyce. But this first yes, my own originary yes, still awaits a response, a second yes, from any number of potential future Others, Joyce or Derrida, each manifestly irreducible and unconditional.

I await this second yes.

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