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Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva
Emory University

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Rethinking the Canon: *Ulysses*: Modernist — Postmodernist — Minor

Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva

Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva is a Ph.D. candidate in the Program in Comparative Literature at Emory University. She is currently working on a project, "Reference, Trauma, and History: The Testimonies of Western (American, British) and East European (Russian, Bulgarian) Postmodernism," which challenges the increasingly popular belief that postmodern literature and deconstruction have cut off literary and theoretical discourse from reality, thereby obstructing and invalidating our access to history.

Ulysses, Joyce's groundbreaking novel, is generally and rightfully crowned as the preeminent modern accomplishment, an epitome of the classical modernist narrative. Nevertheless, throughout the years, the novel has become a provocative seedbed of theoretical issues. *Ulysses* seems persistently to undermine the idea of an unequivocally modernist status and to invite a plurality of alternative exegeses. The ensuing inquiry in no way seeks to defy *Ulysses* the aura of modernism. It simply suggests that, although it would be reductive to label the novel postmodernist, the examination of its incipient postmodern tendencies is in some measure appropriate.

The first part of this study will look at those moments where the novel goes against the grain of traditional expectations and marks the encroachment of postmodernist sensibility upon the allegedly modernist narrative. It will explore the rationale behind reading *Ulysses* as a herald of postmodernist fiction by focusing on the "Wandering Rocks" chapter of the novel. The second part will go further in claiming that *Ulysses* refuses to be assimilated to any major paradigm, including the postmodernist one. I will argue that the novel's status as always challenging the totality of a canon subscribes it to the condition of *minor* within the corpus of literature. The analysis will center on the "Proteus" episode and will seek to establish *Ulysses* as *minor* not in the demoted sense of the word, but in terms of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari institute as *minor literature*.

Critics of *Ulysses* have debated whether the novel evinces a dead end in fiction or nestles the seeds of a

new beginning. *Ulysses* has been seen as a focal work, linking poststructuralism with tendencies incipient in modernism. This kind of thinking seems seminal in bridging the space between widely dissimilar literary movements, in delineating continuity rather than instituting a break. Gerald Graff, among other critics, asserts that “postmodernism should not be seen as a break with romantic and modernist assumptions but rather as a logical culmination of the premises of these earlier movements” (32). Thus a natural development leading from Joyce to poststructuralism can aptly be traced and *Ulysses* envisioned as straddling the realms of modernist and postmodernist temper. Much in this line, Graff reveals in the superseding of modernist fiction by the literature of deconstruction “a logical evolution” that “connects the romantic and postromantic cult of the creative self to the cult of the disintegrated, disseminated, dispersed self and of the decentered, undecidable, indeterminate text” (51). Or, as he succinctly sums it up: “The very concepts through which modernism is demystified derive from modernism itself” (62).

Ulysses is a vivid instance of fresh, postmodern beginnings deriving from the very womb of modernism, an illustration of how broad and complex the range of modernism is. Espousing a broader theoretical agenda, my study of *Ulysses* traces the elision between modern and postmodern literary values, and serves as springboard to a more overarching conceptualization of “modernism” and “postmodernism.” A productive relationship between these major theoretical terms, I argue, eschews their facile classification as oppositional, adverse, and incompatible. Resisting the urge for safe and clear-cut division between the modern and postmodern province, one finds an area where they actively overlap. There, the techniques of both schools prove unexpectedly similar. One thing, however, is indubitably different: the epistemology has shifted, as private knowledge gives way to a knowledge that persistently defies possession.

Attempting to trace the demise of modernism proper and to uncover the emergence of a new, postmodern spirit in *Ulysses*, I will explore the manifestations of a nascent antimimetic impulse in the novel and elaborate on the incipient breakdown of the modernist tenets of total subjectivization and authorial dominion. My further inquiry thus broaches the question of how *Ulysses* problematizes the conventional concepts of reality, author, and literary character.

Ulysses subverts the notion of a definable literary text whose beginning and end denote the points of readerly departure and arrival at an ultimate meaning. All of *Ulysses* recreates a single day, 16 June 1904, Bloomsday, through which we, as readers, are invited to cruise and activate complex webs of meaning. The reader of *Ulysses* is never a passive receptacle, relying on the authorial agency for translating into meaningful patterns the omnipotent knowledge assembled in the novel. Joyce repeatedly frustrates the reader’s expectations for assistance in solving the riddle of *Ulysses*, often deliberately thwarting our journey to a more stable grasp of fictional realities, and consistently effacing his authorial presence in the text.

It is in this sense that *Ulysses* inaugurates an unprecedented literary practice: it dauntlessly deflates the prestige traditionally allotted to the idea of a transcendental signified and denies omniscience to the author. Stepping down from the pedestal of a divine and godlike creator, in a letter to George Antheil,

Joyce jokingly asserts he will be “quite content to go down to posterity as a scissors and paste man for that seems to me a harsh but not unjust description” (“To George” 297). Demystifying authorial dominion, the novel turns to the reader and places him/her into a field of multifarious relationships. The unweaving of the entangled narrative web, accomplished with more than the routine hermeneutical means, demands the reader’s metamorphosis from a passive receptacle to an active producer of the text. Arguing in favor of the reader’s aggressive participation in *Ulysses*, Stephen Heath introduces Julia Kristeva’s insightful observation: “For the Ancients the verb ‘to read’ had a meaning that is worth recalling and bringing out with a view to an understanding of literary practices. ‘To read’ was also ‘to pick up’, ‘to pluck’, ‘to keep a watch on’, ‘to recognize traces’, ‘to take’, ‘to steal’. ‘To read’ thus denotes an aggressive participation, an active appropriation of the other. ‘To write’ would be ‘to read’ become production, industry: writing-reading, paragrammatic activity, would be the aspiration towards a total aggressiveness and participation” (quoted in Heath 31).

The reader’s participation in the text of *Ulysses* facilitates his/her communication with the novel. Partaking in an interactive network, s/he is no longer to look for a transcendental signified where it might simply be missing. On many occasions where the reader’s comprehension is hampered, and all attempts to pin down the elusive signified seem bound to failure, *Ulysses* performs at its best, uncovering a comic dimension once relished by its contemporaries. The reader is no longer to look for the author’s *style* either. In a network milieu, any attempt to locate the *style* of the author as something consistent and traceable throughout the entire work becomes inappropriate. Joyce does not express himself in any singular style but actuates a multiplicity of different styles, each equally important for unraveling the involute network of *Ulysses*.

The notion of a network pattern in *Ulysses* seems justifiable because of a number of specific manifestations: a disrupted linear flow of the narrative; radical time-axis manipulation; a problematized mimetic view of reality; a shattered belief in the cause-and-effect principle; encroachment on the unity and coherence of characters; dispersion, dissemination, and fragmentation of the self — all of these epitomized in the definitive refusal of the novel to subject itself to the logic of secure meaning and a centered universe. It is in this sense that the labeling of *Ulysses*’s sections with the names of their Homeric analogues seems an imposition on a narrative network that Joyce chose to leave indeterminate and open.

“Wandering Rocks,” the episode often regarded as a small-scale model of the novel as a whole, is among the most illuminating substantiations of these tendencies. “Wandering Rocks” topples the notion of an anthropomorphic authorial dominion and, if read from the perspective of the Homeric narrative, presents one of the scarce cases where blind mechanism is at work. The subversion of authorial control is likewise suggested through the art of the episode, mechanics, which dislodges the highly celebrated authorial intention in favor of a practice of unintentionality.

Although postmodernist in flavor, “the creation of a new art having an organization, and governed by principles, which are at present exemplified

unintentionally, as it were, in machinery,” was clearly, T. E. Hulme attests, a major modernist concern (104). Hulme in fact defined the “new and modern art” as “something which was to culminate in a use of structural organisation akin to machinery” (98). Similarly, in postmodern conditions, Deleuze and Guattari launch a ruthless attack on the barrenness of organic as opposed to machinic structuralization. Arguing in favor of a body without organs, with no internal organization and differentiation, the critics seem to subscribe to Antonin Artaud’s association of the organs with the tyranny of transcendental values, personified by God (Artaud 79). Thus, in the distinction between a constructed and natural art, between mechanism and organicism, both modernism and postmodernism align with the former values.

“Wandering Rocks” illustrates the transition from an organic text, produced and governed by the intentions of the author, to a mechanical construct in which the eighteen parts of the episode interlock like a system of cogwheels. The subversion of authorial command results in disrupting the continuity of the narrative. On a more concrete level, this is embodied in the textual instances of recurring detour and reversal of direction, as in the description of Emmet’s burial: “Corpse brought in through a secret door in the wall. Dignam is there now. Went out in a puff. Well, well. Better turn down here. Make a detour” (*Ulysses* 240). In the severed linear flow of “Wandering Rocks,” the characters, just like Homer’s prototypical rocks, outline a number of different and constantly changing configurations. They wander in a labyrinthine, often stochastic fashion, constantly change their position in the Dublin network pattern, move toward one another, confront one another, and sometimes bump together, alluding to the mechanical movement of Homer’s wandering rocks. We witness the perambulations of Father Conmee, the movements of Stephen Dedalus, the one-legged sailor, and Mr. Bloom, the clashing together of Mr. Dedalus and his daughter Dilly, of Haines and Buck Mulligan, of Lenehan and Mrs. Bloom, and so on. The network of the episode thus generates a multiplicity of disparate effects, definable through the complex laws of mechanics.

In the attempt to capture the inchoate postmodern propensities of *Ulysses*, the novel’s relation to reality is another controversial knot. It juxtaposes the belief in the novel as objectively mirroring the outside world to the subjectivism of a solipsistic reliance on nothing but the knowledge of the self. *Ulysses* has often been denied relation to reality: “Joyce, as representative modernist, found life in the twentieth century too complex and devoid of anchoring and orienting values to treat realistically with traditional methods of expression,” Stephen Tanner claims (276). In a similar stance, David Daiches sees in *Ulysses* the culmination of an antimimetic impulse (94-5). In Daiches’s view, *Ulysses* creates its own system “outside of which the author never once needs to trespass” (93). In short, Joyce’s method in the novel “does not involve mimesis at all; it is re-creation, not imitation” (92).

Joyce’s novel signals the impending incertitude around the problematic provinces of language and reality, heralding the forthcoming autonomy of language. As John Gross points out, “In *Ulysses* language is already beginning to work loose from its hinges; in *Finnegans Wake* it breaks free completely and words take on a capricious life of their own” (75). In the network of such self-

referential, self-sufficient language, whose nascent stages we discern in *Ulysses*, there is no difference in nature between creative statements (revealing something new) and imitative statements (repeating known information). We have, as Foucault argues from a somewhat different perspective, “a domain that is active throughout,” “not a group of inert areas broken up by fecund moments” (145).

Disavowing the realist tradition of mimetic representation and hankering after an interactive network of enunciation, *Ulysses* enacts the gradual encroachment of *textuality* upon representational narrative. At many points in the novel textuality foments the genesis of effects rather than stable characters: “What is produced by this textual production is a physical, rather than representational, flow of textuality that forges connections and disconnections continually. . . . Characters and events emerge and function in the literary machine not as symbols and meanings, but as temporary entities alongside the machinic movement of textual production” (Miller 213). Among the whole cast of *Ulysses*’s characters, the one who most stubbornly resists categorization as a full-fledged personality is Molly. Thinking of her in terms of a Molly-effect, defined in its nomadic passage through the various zones of the novel, appears much more tenable. To claim, however, that *Ulysses* is pure *text* seems rather beside the point. Reality abundantly informs the novel, at times saturating the narrative to the point of exorcism. Joyce is often quoted as telling his friend, the painter Frank Budgen: “I want to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (quoted in Chace 153).

Ulysses, however, is much more than the guardian of a singular truth about reality. The novel demands a rethinking of our readerly habits and, as Hans Walter Gabler’s edition asserts, supports a distinctly postmodern interaction with the text. Guided by this conviction, Gabler presents the reader with an intricate Ulyssean network, incorporating all important editions of the novel from the first edition to the 1961 Random House text. In this network design, the synoptic manuscript text, that is, the copy- or genetic text, is in interminable communication with the reading text of *Ulysses*, which, provided next to the synoptic text, represents the ultimate stage reached by the continuous manuscript text. The reading text is ascribed a role only supplementary to that of the synoptic text, a help in its decoding. “It is, however,” Jerome McGann argues, “beside the synoptic text, a pallid, chill, and drear document — disappointingly abstract, simple, and one-dimensional where the other is rich, complex, and many-leveled. Perhaps the most remarkable quality of the synoptic text is its capacity to preserve both the facts and the *relationships* of many kinds of detail, from the most dominant to the most marginal and tenuous” (299; emphasis added).

How should such a “continuous[ly] productive text” (304) be read? By filling in its gaps with reference to exterior sources? By restricting our comprehension solely to the text-provided clues? By letting the blanks function in their differential relationship to the black letters around them? Or by stuffing them with heaps of data? As any one of these options, taken by itself, seems somewhat extreme, it might be appropriate to consider them in their comple-

mentarity, envisaging ourselves as both producing and produced by the text. Trusting the text's collaborative effort helps relinquish the passion for encroaching on and overcoding the story. Joyce himself urges the reader to cede some of his/her authority to the text itself and let it work on him/her: "Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from every side, with all gestures, in each our word" (*Finnegans Wake* 614.20-21, quoted in Mahaffey 234). Such an interactive procedure, favoring neither author nor reader nor text, recognizes that reading is as much a process of pleasure as it is a means of knowing, that "the reader is in part produced by the effects of the text and is simultaneously analyzing those effects" (McCormick 63).

On the one hand, the reader is overwhelmed by the all-inclusiveness of *Ulysses*. The account of a single day resembles an extensive encyclopedia of Western culture. On the other, s/he encounters a *Ulysses* that ceaselessly omits things. Most of it is one huge gap, waiting to be filled by the reader. Taken together, the two types of experience testify to the amplitude of a novel that, in a Bakhtinian sense, accommodates both the centripetal and centrifugal, the centralizing and decentering, the homogenizing and dispersing forces. Yielding to the urge for interpretative mastery impudently violates this balance, as Richard Pearce has observed: "Isn't there something smug about the posture we have taken toward Joyce after years of rereading him and supporting an industry built on the filling in of the holes — or refusing to recognize that *Ulysses* was 'ineluctably constructed upon the incertitude of the void?'" (44).

Within the structure of *Ulysses*, "Wandering Rocks" could be singled out as the episode where gaps most threaten to win out over any pattern of coherence in the novel. *Ulysses's* defensive response is the vigorous flow of extra material designed to smother any further proliferation of gaps. "Wandering Rocks," Hugh Kenner asserts, is the end of *Ulysses* the naturalist novel, and the end of the book's first Homer, "a Homer who did not like inventing, based characters on people he knew . . . and set down words locked to things, places, physical actualities" (83). The second half of *Ulysses* abounds in ebullient stylistic exercises, various nonfunctional elements and superfluous words, "heaped up," as Vincent Sherry argues, "under the sign of gratuity" (72). The novel bursts out in an onomatopoeic richness of sound. From here on, Sherry remarks, language "begins to document in earnest what does *not* happen."

The strategy of documenting experience negatively, by looking at what does *not* happen rather than at what happens in *Ulysses*, appears particularly intriguing. Joyce's writing consistently refuses available meanings and explications and, through evading or baffling the given, defines its negativity. The practice recalls the negative (apophatic) trend in Christian theology, expounded in the works of such mystics as Dionysius the Areopagite, whose teachings maintain that God cannot be expressed through any image nor characterized in words, for he is greater than all possible knowledge and definitions. A similar apophatic tactic seems at work in Joyce's deliberate and persistent documentation of "what does *not* happen." As transcendental meaning is greater than all knowledge, wisdom, and truth, and the Ineffable Word is impossible to grasp or render in positive terms, Joyce chooses to define it negatively, through what is *not* meaningful, what does *not* happen, what is *not* seen. That is why, as Der-

rida aptly remarks on the subject of *Ulysses*, “what remains *untranslatable* is at bottom the only thing *to translate*,” that is, the meaning per se (“Ulysses Gramophone” 28; emphasis added).

For the proper operating of the often untranslatable *Ulysses* network, the breakups and the zones of information are equally important. Thinking of *Ulysses* in terms of a network configuration is a preeminently postmodern attitude. Its rationale, however, can be found in the precepts of modern theories and thought. It rests on the assumption that the meaning *within* the elements that constitute the textual system is in no way more important than the meaning situated *between* the spatially designated and discrete signs, in the *space* among them, in the geometrical *figure* outlined by their arrangement. As Friedrich Kittler claims from the perspective of German criticism: “The beginner has to learn to look, not simply at the form of the letters, but constantly BETWEEN the letters. . . . A reversal of every habit or faculty thus grants the ‘BETWEEN’ the same status as the positive marks it separates” (255). This kind of analysis treats with equal esteem both the unities themselves and the vibrant areas *between* them, the areas where the letters juxtapose one another and accentuate the white spaces *between* each other.

Ulysses teaches its readers to forget about the fear from the black-white contrast and not to mitigate the shock of opposition by attenuating the contrast. Does not the black dot at the end of “Ithaca” function as foil to the white background around it? The belief that “letters are what they are only against and upon a white background” (Kittler 255) is prelude to a much broader problem. The latter lies at the heart of Foucault’s valorization of archaeology over the history of ideas. For the history of ideas, “the appearance of difference indicates an error, or a trap; instead of examining it, the clever historian must try to reduce it: to find beneath it a smaller difference, and beneath that an even smaller one, and so on until he reaches the ideal limit, the non-difference of perfect continuity” (Foucault 171). Archaeology, on the other hand, does not aim to overcome the differences, but to study them, to explore their character, to classify them. Instead of yearning for a homogeneous continuity, it seeks a differential heterogeneity.

If this intrinsically postmodern argument was brought *in extenso* to my study, it was for the purpose of delineating the striking resemblance it bears to a central modernist concern. In his essays on humanism and the philosophy of art, Hulme speculates on the notions of reality, continuity, and discontinuity, attributing to these the weight of inherently modernist issues:

For an objective view of reality we must make use both of the categories of continuity and discontinuity. Our principal concern then at the present moment should be the re-establishment of the temper or disposition of mind which can look at a *gap* or *chasm* without shuddering. . . . Most of the errors in certain subjects spring from an almost instinctive attempt on our part to glaze over and disguise a particular *discontinuity* in the nature of reality. It was then necessary first of all to deal with the source of this instinctive behavior, by pointing out the *arbitrary character of the principle of continuity*. (4; emphasis added)

The profuse incorporation of gaps and discontinuities in the texture of *Ulysses* evinces Joyce's authorial refusal to sustain a continuous line of narration through time. Still, as Clive Hart observes, "Joyce never abandoned . . . the realist side of the book represented by the drive towards seamless continuity. He merely coupled the development of the illusion of continuity with its vigorous breakup" (434).

Ulysses exhibits the mastery of creating spatial relationships outside the dimension of time, of delineating a spatial form while inhibiting action. A look back at the history of art reveals that the dividing line between literature and painting has always been meticulously emphasized, especially since Gotthold Lessing's treatise *Laocoön, or On the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (1766). The twentieth century, however, ventured the temporalization of painting and spatialization of literature. The famous work of Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," places the problem in a modernist perspective. Frank recognizes in the introduction of myth and archetype in literary texts an endeavor to lead literature beyond the confines of time into a spatial dimension of pure existence — an outlook particularly illuminating as regards the mythologically based design of *Ulysses*. From a somewhat different perspective, Mikhail Epstein remarks on the time and space figurations chiselled out in Joyce's writings: "The works of Joyce and Kafka are static, in their structure, and vivid pictures of a particular mythical space — unique word sculptures that have stopped time" (*Vera i Obraz* 143; my translation).

Joyce himself was interested whether the structure of the double storyteller in the "Cyclops" chapter resembled modern Italian art: "Does this episode strike you as being futuristic?" he asked Frank Budgen (quoted in Ehrlich 11). "Rather cubist than futurist," Budgen answered, and he proceeded by comparing the writing of *Ulysses* to the composition of a cubist painting: "Every event is a many-sided subject. You first state one view of it and then draw it from another angle to another scale, and both aspects lie side by side in the same *picture*" (emphasis added). Alluding to the prevalently spatial design of *Ulysses*, Heyward Ehrlich concludes: "Neither Joyce nor Budgen thought it odd to discuss literature as though it were painting" (11). Associated with the mode of painting, the postcard becomes another of *Ulysses's* emblems. "*Ulysses* [is] an immense postcard," Derrida observes ("*Ulysses* Gramophone" 30), and further on defines it as "a postcard without a text, which *could be reduced to the mere association of a picture and an address*" (31; emphasis added). In a way, all of *Ulysses* is one magnificent performance in space, a performance "inscrib[ing] remoteness, distance, difference, and spacing in sound (*phoné*)" (39).

In seeking to explore the incipience of postmodern temperament in a novel acclaimed to be the vindication of modern sensibility, my study has been constantly oscillating between two widely dissimilar theoretical poles. One marks the encroachment of a new attitude on the already canonized interpretation of the novel. The other seeks to expand the modernist canon by sustaining a pretense of all-inclusiveness and appropriating as its own the seeds of upcoming developments. "Deconstruction could not have been possible without Joyce," Derrida argued at the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium in Frankfurt (quoted in Jones 77). "My own sense is that Modernism, in its fiction in

particular, is still very much alive, still continuing to change and to grow, and that the claims for its demise are a sign of our cultural insularity” (Ehrlich 137), the other pole of the debate asserts.

Whether instituting a postmodernist beginning or enhancing the gamut of literary practices *within* the modernist tradition, the novel, as developed by Joyce, displays immeasurable freshness and originality. *Ulysses* questions the unprecedented authority of the author, his/her distant, aloof, and inviolable posture. Pushing the burden toward the estate of the reader, the novel demands the reader’s active collaboration in unweaving the web of character and event. Joyce undermines the notion of modernist fiction as an elitist activity, designed solely for the chosen few. In a much more democratic attitude, every reader is endowed with the potential of producing his/her own Ulyssean net of meanings, as the literary text supports myriad plausible readings.

In its abundant references to advertising, radio, newspapers, the typewriter, and the press throughout the novel — in the journalistic and cinematographic rendering of the “Aeolus” chapter, in particular — *Ulysses* attests in yet another way to the inchoate condition of a literature that has begun to lose its privileged status as a sacrosanct, singular, and elite system of ideas. Joyce, who, besides being a writer, took pride in establishing the first movie theater in Dublin, demonstrates a keen awareness of the extent to which language has become infused with the ramble of competing information technologies, thus acquiring the multiform dimensions of a discourse network. The written word’s revered status in the culture of the West is threatened. “What becomes of it after?” the narrator asks in the “Aeolus” episode, referring to the fate of the “webs of paper” after they become newspapers (*Ulysses* 120). The first use mentioned, “O, wrap up meat, parcels,” trivializes the written document’s effectiveness as a communicative medium. Even in the moments of profuse media babble as in “Aeolus,” however, Joyce’s writing never utterly shakes free from the prestige allotted to the realm of modern art, never thoroughly transmutes into a network pattern.

The conception of *Ulysses* in terms of a discourse network is likewise encumbered by moments of unforeseen authorial conspicuousness. Joyce is seen dispersed in a plurality of possible positions and functions. And yet, it is probably the awareness of Joyce’s immense artistic erudition and excellence in all realms of human knowledge that thwarts his dissolution in the network milieu. “Our admiration for Joyce ought to have no limit, no more than should the debt owed to the singular *event* of his work,” Derrida argues in a gesture of concession, still preferring “to talk of an event rather than a work or a subject or an author” (“Two Words” 146). Nonetheless, even as we drown in the narrative maelstrom of *Ulysses*, the master’s image continues to loom above the waves. At these very points, however, where Joyce seems somewhere above, somehow singular, aloof, he jestingly alerts us to the danger of reading him too seriously. “I am the foolish author of a wise book,” he claims, dispersing any fear of authorial dictatorship (quoted in Cixous 15). And *Ulysses* jokingly asserts that we can take his word for that.

The first section of this study has attempted to argue that, despite habitually celebrating the age of modernism as the age of James Joyce, *Ulysses* consistent-

ly challenges the modernist canon, calling its coherence into question. While willing to embrace a number of postmodernist tenets, however, Joyce's novel ultimately resists association with any major literary paradigm, including the postmodernist one. The subsequent analysis will attempt to read *Ulysses* as *minor*, not in the devalued sense at times ascribed to the word, but in terms of what Deleuze and Guattari have come to designate a *minor literature*.

Deleuze and Guattari have laid out the theory of a minor literature in response to an observation Kafka made on the condition of Czech Jews who write in German, thereby creating a literature substantially different in cultural terms from that of German writers. According to Deleuze and Guattari, there are three preeminent characteristics of a minor literature: the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation, announcing the debacle of regimes of subjectivity (*Kafka* 18). The ensuing analysis of the "Proteus" episode will attempt to outline the ways in which Joyce's seminal work subscribes to the condition of a minor literature. As *Ulysses*, a novel undermining the political canon in a number of significant ways, yields more easily to a demarcation as minor in the context of nationalism, I will elaborate on the more problematic ideas of the collective assemblage of enunciation and deterritorialization of language as explicated in the "Proteus" chapter.

Essential to understanding the relevance of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblage of enunciation to *Ulysses* is an awareness of the tripartite framework of operation shared by representational meaning and oedipal desire, a framework "Proteus" subverts as it destroys the myth of the omniscient narrator who strives to attain transcendental knowledge and pin it down for the reader in a stable representational form. The principal characteristic of the oedipal model is that it positions subject against object, with the means of expression or the realm of representation in a third, transcendental spot. What is oedipal about this model is its triangularity: subject and object are both envisioned as lacking in relation to the transcendental term, the governing *logos*. It alone is complete, which is how it charges the triangular circulation of desire (see Mahaffey 220-21).

Deleuze and Guattari call for a reconceptualization of all three terms, so that subject and object no longer function as lacking with respect to a transcendental truth. Some Joyce scholars not only reverse the correlation within the oedipal triangularity but take this reversal to a terminal degree: Vicki Mahaffey claims, for instance, "that Joyce's writings reflect the transition from a representation of desire as oedipal . . . to a model that draws its power not from lack, but from excess, surfeit, waste" (221). This revised model dethrones representational meaning from the inviolable position of singular and transcendental, governing and subordinating, to the status of just one among a multiplicity of possible meanings.

The "Proteus" chapter epitomizes how the ostensibly fixed and undisputed *being* of representational signification is supplanted by an unstable and continually slipping "*and*-condition" of semantic in-betweenness. My subsequent analysis attempts to demonstrate that the meaning of "Proteus" is *not* definitive and stable, that no meaning in the episode is at all. Meaning rather emerges in the constantly evolving chain of this *and* that *and* another meaning, each term

transcending the previous one, in a ceaseless becoming. Guattari remarks on this same process: "Subject and object are no longer face-to-face, with a means of expression in a third position; there is no longer a tripartite division between the realm of reality, the realm of representation or representativity, and the realm of subjectivity. You have a collective set-up which is, at once, subject, object, and expression. The individual is no longer the universal guarantor of dominant meanings. Here, everything can participate in enunciation" ("Everybody" 91).

The "Proteus" chapter of *Ulysses* erases the differentiating line between the realm of reality (the world) and the realm of representation (the book). The two are in constant interchange, continually effacing their boundaries and flowing into one another's territory. Objective reality invades from outside the textual territory of *Ulysses*; the two form intercommonalities and eliminate all need of a mediating guarantor of meaning. When outer reality flows into the novel's textual realms, both undergo metamorphosis. If such an intercommunication between objective and textual reality is accomplishable by itself, the position of the author as proprietor of universal knowledge becomes obsolete and altogether intrusive. The striving after an unattainable transcendental meaning remains an illusion of the past; rather than impotent and always lacking in relation to the governing and colonizing knowledge, both object and expression emerge as self-sufficient and excessively empowered to produce this knowledge. The latter, no longer fixed and singular, irresistibly flows as dynamic and multiple.

"Proteus" makes a very provocative theoretical argument for how *Ulysses* should be read, for the way art and in particular philology (the art of the episode) relates to the world, and for the manner in which language (symbolized by the tide) brings the realms of reality and representation together through the textual enactment of metamorphosis. The idea of a continually transforming reality is active on all levels of *Ulysses*. In a somewhat larger sense it is intimately linked to metempsychosis, the Greek faith in the "transmigration of souls," as spelled out by Mr. Bloom: "Some people believe that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before. They call it reincarnation. That we all lived before on the earth thousands of years ago or on some other planet" (*Ulysses* 65). The "Proteus" chapter subscribes in its own way to the creed of continual existence uninhibited by the transience of individual life: "See now. There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end" (37).

The engagement of "Proteus" with the idea of transformation is most evident in the Homeric narrative of metamorphosis, depicting the transmutations of Proteus in the ineluctable grip of his captor, Menelaus. Homer has it that when Menelaus and his company rushed upon Proteus, who was needed to instruct Menelaus on the way of his return home, Proteus first "turned into a bearded lion, and thereafter into a snake, and a pard, and a huge boar; then he took the shape of running water, and of a tall and flowering tree" (Gilbert 120). Joyce scholars have long studied the endless series of transformations in "Proteus." Morse Mitchell, for instance, observes a variety of less blatant Protean changes: "The old terrorist Kevin Egan's cigarette tobacco becomes gun-pow-

der, the match with which he lights it a fuse" (42). Other "changes . . . represent recurrent patterns with variations" (47): dance motions, word reiteration, rhythm, and word sound, all reflecting disparate literary styles.

The idea of metamorphosis in "Proteus," however, acquires a much broader significance with the figures of Stephen and the tide. The chapter renders Stephen in constant communication with external reality, whose stimuli initiate myriad transformations in his inner self. Walking along the shore, Stephen first attempts to apprehend the external world through his eyes. "The ineluctable modality of the visible" makes it possible for Stephen to communicate with the visual signs reality has left behind: "Signatures of all things I am here to read, seasawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs" (*Ulysses* 37). Closing his eyes, Stephen then switches off the modality of the visible and lets outer reality penetrate him through the modality of the audible: "Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six: the *nacheinander*. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible."

In the "Proteus" chapter, the modalities of the visible and the audible do not introduce the outward world to the novel's narrative realm under the disguise of a mimetic representation that, while incarnating real characters and events, remains safely autonomous from them. Rather, the outside world vigorously penetrates Stephen's personality and *detrterritorializes* it in a number of significant ways. Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of *detrterritorialization* in their discussion of "assemblages," which they define as having "both *territorial sides*, or *reterritorialized sides*, which stabilize [an assemblage], and *cutting edges of detrterritorialization*, which carry it away" (*Thousand Plateaus* 88). *Detrterritorialization*, Deleuze and Guattari argue, "is the movement by which 'one' leaves the territory. It is the operation of the line of flight" beyond which nothing can retain its former quality, autonomy, and self (508). *Reterritorialization*, on the other hand, "does not express a return to the territory, but rather [the] differential relations internal to D[etrterritorialization] itself, this multiplicity internal to the line of flight" yet unable to traverse it (509). The concepts of *de-* and *reterritorialization*, I propose, reflect the manifold becomings that occur in "Proteus" and reveal the chapter as nomadic, transformational in character.

A close look at the "Proteus" episode reveals numerous transformations of objective, outer realities into inner, textual events. Stephen's walk along the shore communicates to Stephen's narrative persona thoughts on the modality of the visible and the modality of the audible. The subsequent appearance of two midwives marks externally the inner transformation of Stephen's musings, which now center on his life in Dublin: his birth, father and mother, aunt Sara and uncle Richie, his life as a priest and an artist. Continuing his walk, Stephen's thoughts turn to France and signal his encounter with Patrice Egan, the free spirit, and with Kevin Egan, the rebel. Another outer change marks the transition to an inner, psychological event. Stephen turns back, sits on a rock, and the topic of France is *detrterritorialized* into a reflection on Ireland, its

mythical and medieval history. As a dog bounds down to the shore and runs over to another dog's corpse, and at the sight of the cocklepickers in the water, Stephen's thoughts focus on his present life. Later in the course of narration, the outer event of Stephen's gaze at the movement of the water is transfigured into the inner truth of his poetic inspiration and his thoughts on love, death, and metamorphosis.

The list of correspondences, interpenetrations, and mutual transformations between the different modalities of reality can be further expanded. It will still remain inadequate, however, without taking account of Stephen's centrality as a nuclear knot, a crossroad at which an interference among the multifarious transformational trends occurs. Stephen is not the agent of this dynamic exchange, however. He is just the body upon which it inscribes itself and which thus continually trespasses the limits of a fixed identity.

So multifarious are the narrative realizations of Stephen in "Proteus" that it seems hard to arrest what is traditionally named Stephen's character. Stephen resists being pinned down to an assigned space within narrative reality and refutes any attempt to be read as a symbol, an entity distinct from and standing for a particular objective reality outside the confines of the text. Stephen is consistently undermining the possibility of capturing his identity by means of stable definitions. It is thus in the continuous crossing over the limits of his former self that Stephen is most approachable. Effacing the line between reality and textuality, Stephen joins the cast of *Ulysses's* personae who (as Joyce once professed of himself) feel just as comfortable in newspaper excerpts as in the distant universe of the novel. Partaking of *Ulysses's* enunciative assemblage, Stephen seems to fully comply with its demarcation by Joseph Valente as something that "cannot properly be said to *be* at all, only to become incessantly and multiply with and as the productive activity it names" (194).

Stephen's identity is persistently deterritorialized into new dimensions. In "Proteus" he imagines himself a priest, an artist, a lover, a drowning man, and he identifies with the philosophers he cites, a basilisk, a girl, Mallarmé's faun, and so forth. Sometimes the deterritorialization of Stephen is obvious, marked by a personal pronoun next to the pronoun denoting the character Stephen becomes: "*Descende, calve, ut ne nimium decalveris.* A garland of grey hair on his comminated head see **him me** clambering down to the footpace (*descende*), clutching a monstrance, basilisk-eyed. Get down, bald poll!" (*Ulysses* 40; bold-face added). Or, in the paragraph where Stephen identifies with Dan Occam: "Dan Occam thought of that, invincible doctor. . . . Bringing his host down and kneeling he heard twine with his second bell the first bell in the transept (*he* is lifting his) and, rising, heard (now *I* am lifting) their two bells (he is kneeling) twang in diphthong" (emphasis added). Having projected his self into that of a priest, Stephen undergoes yet another metamorphosis. He becomes an artist. Stephen's deterritorialization into the unattainable image of an artist is rendered in terms of a painful reminiscence: "Books you were going to write with letters for titles? . . . Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years."

Although I have so far been referring to Stephen's reincarnations in different personalities in terms of deterritorialization, they all remain internal to the

territory claimed by Stephen's persona. Deterritorialization is only negative, as it is overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialization that obstructs the line of flight and blocks the creation of a new cosmos. Stephen seems never fully to have transcended his identity and supplanted it by a qualitatively new one. The full-fledged metamorphosis of Stephen's character into a novel one, be it that of a priest, an artist, or some other cherished vocation or victimized hero, is always somehow internally subverted. Stephen never radically diverges from his true identity. He is repeatedly reminded of the impossibility of completely escaping from his present self: "Cousin Stephen, *you will never be a saint*" (40; boldface added). Or, in the ardor of his artist dream: "You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. *Hurray for the God-damned idiot! Hray! No-one saw: tell no-one*" (emphasis added). Mitchell points to the continual slippage attending Stephen's identifications with different personae. There is something residual in Stephen's becomings, something that persistently refuses to surrender: "Thus he begins to achieve the extremely difficult self-resolving contradiction of genius: to identify with the beast but retain his critical consciousness" (41).

Sometimes, however, the "I"-"he" articulation in the examples above is erased in an "unspeached" (*Ulysses* 48) interpenetration of mutually transforming identities. The self-effacing of Stephen's identity in the beloved's "all-wombing tomb" is revealed in a roar of effaced word borders as, for instance, in the "wayawayawayawayawayaway" disarray. This marks a transition to a deterritorialization termed positive in that it has prevailed over all compensatory reterritorializations within the ground claimed Stephen's.

The "Proteus" chapter of the novel provides the most extreme case of absolute deterritorialization, where Stephen is transformed into another entity; that is, his present identity crosses and goes beyond "the line of flight or deterritorialization," which Deleuze and Guattari define "as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature" (*Thousand Plateaus* 21). At the line of flight some realities disseminate, pulverize; others congeal, crystallize, precipitate. Here is how "Proteus" renders the thrust of absolute deterritorialization: "The man that was drowned nine days ago off Maiden's rock. They are waiting for him now. . . . Do you see the tide flowing quickly in on all sides, sheeting the lows of sands quickly, shellcocoa-coloured? If I had land under my feet. *I want his life still to be his, mine to be mine. A drowning man. His human eyes scream to me out of horror of his death. I . . . With him together down*" (*Ulysses* 45-6; emphasis added). Despite Stephen's innermost wish to impede it, absolute deterritorialization occurs, and Stephen sees himself irrevocably transformed into a drowning man. The process involves a "deterritorializing element" (that is, Stephen's present self) and a "deterritorialized element" (the drowning man). The latter are assigned two asymmetrical roles, however, as elements of a single becoming, currents of a single flow.

Looking closely at the Stephen-drowning man relation, it seems to subvert all familiar literary definitions. The drowning man functions neither metaphorically nor metonymically. Stephen is neither *like* the drowning man, nor can his name be substituted for *a drowning man* on the basis of any common association. Rather, Stephen *is* the drowning man. There is no inviolable

border between the two, although Stephen seems to covet one: “I want his [the drowning man’s] life still to be his, mine to be mine” (46). This radical differentiation, however, appears altogether impossible. With the *metabole*, a literary trope proposed by Epstein, “One thing is not simply similar or corresponding to another, which presupposes an indestructible border between them, the artistic predication and illusory quality of such juxtaposition; rather one thing *becomes* the other” (“Afterword” 282). Stephen can no longer retain his safe autonomy and *becomes* a drowning man, relentlessly going with him together down.

The *metabole* invokes the way a *rhizome* (as defined by Deleuze and Guattari) functions. It acts as a never-stopping machine that captures the flows of reality and produces between the textual layers assemblages that pilot new realities. An agent of vigorous metamorphosis, the *metabole* marks the surpassing of both metonymy and metaphor. In deconstructing the fundamental distinction between the literal and the figurative, Joyce makes the very notion of metaphor impossible. In a text where every element becomes the other, thus perpetually deferring meaning, there can be no criteria according to which elements can be identified as metaphors. Instead, *metaboles* function throughout. It is in their capacity to *become* that the *metaboles* are most remarkable. Metaphors remain just rudimentary tropes, “only the signs of metamorphoses that have not taken place and in the course of which things really, not apparently, exchange their essences” (Epstein, “Afterword” 282). The “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*, just as the Russian metarealist poems Epstein explores, seeks intently “for that reality wherein metaphor is again revealed as metamorphosis, as an authentic intercommonality, rather than the symbolic similarity of two phenomena.”

Beside the deterritorialization of the subject, object, and expression planes, a strong deterritorialization of language occurs in *Ulysses*. “Proteus” is executed on the basis of a minor usage of language. The famously manifold styles and languages, appropriated in the “Proteus” episode, evoke a typically minor literary experience — one feels like “a foreigner *in* one’s own language” (Mahaffey 234; emphasis added). This description is particularly elucidative as regards the nature of a minor language. It is not the Irish language that is minor in relation to the English one. As Marilyn Reizbaum astutely remarks, “not all Irish writers are minor” (185). Joyce, it seems, is in some way minor even as an Irish writer, since *Ulysses* “does not take or, at least, worries the nationalist position as regards the English language” (184). The central implication of a “minor language,” however, resides in the minor usage one discerns within the major English language, in the foreignness within the familiarity of a language one speaks all one’s life.

There are fragments of French, Latin, Spanish, German, Greek, Italian, Scandinavian, and other languages in the “Proteus” episode. Everybody in the chapter has his/her/its own unique language. The animate and inanimate world converse in countless languages and voices. The sea speaks its own language: “Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseicss, ooos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks. In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases. It

flows purling, widely flowing, floating foampool, flower unfurling" (*Ulysses* 49). The woman of Stephen's dreams "trudges, schlepps, trains, drags, trascines" her load (47). Touching her womb ("oomb, allwombing tomb"), Stephen's mouth "moulded issuing breath, unspeched: ooeehah: roar of cataractic planets, globed, blazing, roaring, wayawayawayawayawayaway" (48).

The most persuasively enacted deterritorialization of language occurs in the depiction of the sea tide. The latter is defined as the symbol of the chapter whose art is proclaimed to be philology. The tide is implicitly likened to language; sometimes the two are even coupled as in the phrase "language tide" ("These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here" [44]). There is a straightforward connection between the modifications of human speech and the movements of the tide. The tide and everything related to it, like the sighing, weary weeds it carries, are in a never-ceasing flux and reflux: "Under the upswelling tide he saw the writhing weeds lift languidly and sway reluctant arms, hissing up their petticoats, in whispering water swaying and upturning coy silver fronds. Day by day: night by night: lifted, flooded and let fall. . . . To no end gathered: vainly then released, forth flowing, wending back: loom of the moon" (49-50). Just like the tide, as Stuart Gilbert observes, "[l]anguage is always in a flux of becoming, ebb or flow, and any attempt to arrest its trend is the folly of a Canute" (130). It is equally folly to arrest the dynamic mutual transformations that constitute only in their intercommonality the enunciation of *Ulysses*.

The tide, language, as well as everything in the "Proteus" chapter of *Ulysses*, evokes the pattern of a system dealing with intensities and medialities, a system sustaining internal communication between the plateaus of reality and textuality along multiple interconnecting routes. This system of ever-flowing, buoyant intensities frustrates a congealing into a stable representational whole and precludes any possibility of arrest or climax. Gregory Bateson, who gave the word *plateau* a theoretical inflection, uses it to designate "a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus* 22). Likewise, everything in "Proteus" undergoes constant metamorphosis, with narrative plateaus situated "always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end" (21).

The finale of "Proteus" places the law of metamorphosis within the broader philosophical context of universal laws: "God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain" (*Ulysses* 50). The sentence, as pointed out by Gilbert, is a variant of the kabalistic axiom of metempsychosis: "a stone becomes a plant, a plant an animal, an animal a man, a man a spirit, and a spirit a god" (129). In its final judgment, "Proteus" is definitive. Through the continuous flow and transformation of essences, enacted on all levels, the chapter topples the tripartite division between the realm of reality, the realm of representation, and the realm of subjectivity. It bursts out of the oedipal mold into multiple sites of enunciation. Thus it proclaims the assemblage of enunciation as collective body, binding subject, expression, and object together, and obviates all need of a singular, omniscient guarantor of universal knowledge and power.

This essay has attempted to explore the status of *Ulysses* as a novel exhibiting radical resistance to facile classification. By problematizing the notions of author, reader, and text, it argues that *Ulysses* goes against the grain of modernist convention in a number of significant ways, thus revealing its untimely postmodernity. While the novel is obviously one of the pillars of literary modernism, it is at the same time pregnant with a nascent postmodernism, most conspicuous, perhaps, in the novel's mischievous refusal to take itself and its modern entourage in earnest. Despite the overt penchant for postmodernity that *Ulysses* shows, however, calling the novel postmodern gives its potentialities a false appearance of completeness. *Ulysses* thus shies away from close engagement with any literary movement. In refusing to be assimilated to any major literary paradigm, and in consistently challenging the very concept of a literary canon, the novel operates as *minor* in the sense with which Deleuze and Guattari have imbued the word.

Joyce's novel reconceptualizes the notion of *writer*. The writer emerges as continually effacing him/herself, leaving us caught in his/her archive as in an intricate spider's web. Readers of *Ulysses* collide with a text that refuses to be easily consumed or owned. Reading *Ulysses* is thus necessarily an aggressive participation. The novel's text is never closed, and the ideal reader is the one who accedes to its playful incompleteness rather than seeking to arrive at an ultimate meaning. Instead of the age-old question, *What does it mean?*, *Ulysses* suggests a somewhat disparate query: "What allows a text to both belong to a genre and destroy the idea of genre from within, to tell a story and to alert the reader to the artifice, the violence, of plot, to present characters and to invalidate the notion of discrete personal identity?" (Boheemen-Saaf 93).

What does it mean? violently disfigures the text by reducing it to a ready-made, decodable, symbolic structure, a home in which answers reside. Relinquishing our illusions of cognitive control immensely helps us communicate with the novel. If reading *Ulysses* produces a kind of response, it is not one that meets the demands of representational knowledge. *Ulysses* continuously urges readers to supply not one persuasive, totalizing reading but a variety of alternative or *playful* possibilities for meaning. In this, readers are invariably faced with the problem of how to respond to a narrative that overwhelms them with more than they can assimilate through hermeneutic means. A hint *Ulysses* readily gives is: by eschewing the passion for organizing the text and giving its corpus the organs it lacks. A *body without organs*, without any stable internal divisions, seems a much better image for the continual transmutation of essences that the novel enacts.

Ulysses is about incessant surprise, and letting the novel divulge its numerous secrets seems the only fair relation to it. Everything is unpredictable where the flow of textuality forges connections and disconnections continually, where characters stroll nomadically through disparate textual zones and language flows varied and unperturbed, unwilling to perpetuate representational meaning. In such an unabashedly promiscuous environment, the reader often feels a stranger. Exiled from a secure home within language, s/he continually fails, and each failure to interpret the idiom that *Ulysses* speaks marks the unique sensation of becoming a foreigner in one's own parlance. *Ulysses* is an unparalleled

literary experience that bears out Proust's remark that "[g]reat literature is written in a sort of foreign language" (quoted in Deleuze and Parnet 5).

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