

Reading Medievally in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*

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List of Abbreviations

Languages

Fr. – French

Ger. – German

Ir. – Irish

Lat. – Latin

Nor. – Norwegian

Works by Joyce

D – ‘Dubliners’

FW – ‘Finnegans Wake’

OCPW – ‘Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing’

P – ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’

U – ‘Ulysses’

Abstract

This thesis characterises the medievalism of *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939) by James Joyce, by analysing the reading experience of those novels. Both these novels' intense difficulty is seen to modify the reading experience, although a product of this difficulty is that no one reading experience is the final authorising one. This modification takes place through medieval reading strategies, reading mediievally, which each chapter considers in turn. The introduction defines the term 'reading mediievally' and sets up Joyce's prevailing attitudes to the medieval.

In the first chapter after the introduction, analysing the novels' attitude to the body, an imaginative theorisation emerges that reconfigures the relationship of the reader to the text along medieval lines. Reading is grounded in the body, and the books present themselves as bodily objects, agents in a reading process which is reconfigured as a process of biological and literary generation. To elucidate these findings the thesis turns to the hand, the skin and the belly as found in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

In the next chapter, the way the novels mediate their philological sources is analysed. The books engender this time a modified attitude towards the medieval by means of a 'worst-text' method over Joseph Bédier's 'best-text' method. This technique enables the books to induce an ideological and aesthetic distance between themselves and the nationalist, racist prerogatives of their forebears. An imaginative theorisation emerges here that enables the reader to read as if she too is a philologist, as if reading a medieval, not a modern, text.

The final chapter analyses the aesthetics of variance in the novels, informed significantly by a reading of Bernard Cerquiglini's *In Praise of the Variant*. Here the reading experience is affected by a persistent emphasis across both novels on literary anonymity and errors, reconfigured in both as merely variants. The medieval aesthetic prerogative of *varietas* is also used to explain this effect on a larger scale than the variant word or sentence. This aesthetics of variance destabilises the monological literary authority of Joyce, though the chapter closes by considering the inherent paradoxes involved in such a statement, before offering the notion of the works as continually in progress through reading.

The conclusion continues this notion, opening up the discussion through a synthesising element found throughout the thesis: the notion of Joyce having made the past present within the present. A queer temporality of reading in the middle, implied by the term 'reading mediievally', is seen to be the product of these novels' fascinating resistance to readerly finality.

Declaration

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Introduction

*Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna...*
Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso XXXIII*, 85-87

1. *A Characterisation of Joyce's Medievalism: Lessons From Arthur Power*

The notion of James Joyce (1882-1941) as a medievalist author is relatively uncontroversial among those in the academic community dedicated to studying his works.¹ There have been numerous studies of Joyce's medievalism, mostly conducted by medievalists with a particular interest in his works.² The most recent call-for-papers for the 27th International James Joyce

¹ Medievalism as a field has an extensive bibliography. Useful in this regard in the region of literary studies is the foundational work by Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970). This focuses on Victorian medievalism as the apogee of overt medievalist aesthetics, showing it as, overall, a tendency towards a conservative, anti-modern programme. Subsequent pictures of Victorian medievalism complicate this image: one useful example is Charles Dellheim, "Interpreting Victorian Medievalism" in *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Florence S. Boos (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 39-58. More recent studies broaden the definition of medievalism to include less explicit or overt cases. The journals *Studies in Medievalism* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer), and *postmedieval* (London: Palgrave), routinely offer examples of this broadened scope. Works that will prove useful later in the thesis also fit into this category: David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), provides an up-to-date, accessible and useful overview of the field; Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer, "Introduction: The A-chronology of Medieval Film" in *Medieval Film*, eds. Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 1-19 offers a theoretical insight into how medievalism alters our understanding of time, as does Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out Of Time* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), traces the medieval presence within modernist and postmodern aesthetic movements. Other useful avenues for interested readers into the study of medievalism take the form of more general reflections on historical memory, such as Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), and Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, vol. 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994). These works show the permeable boundaries between past and present, pathbreaking modernity and preservative tradition; they also make use of this ambivalence to imagine how the past can be used to shape our time and future times. I will further develop my definition of medievalism below.

² Arguably the first to do so is William T. Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), which draws Joyce into dialogue with medieval philosophers like Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. Another landmark publication is Umberto Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce* (Milan: Gruppo Editoriale Fabbri, Bompiani Sonzogno Etas S.p.A., 1962) trans. Ellen Esrock as *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), drawing Joyce into direct dialogue with Eco's understanding of medieval aesthetics. More recently, Joyce's medievalism has received more sustained attention thanks to such work as Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in Finnegans Wake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Lucia Boldrini, ed., *European Joyce Studies 13: Medieval Joyce*

Symposium on ‘Omniscientific Joyce’ made sure to include an accommodation for medievalist Joyce among its suggested topics, for ‘Medieval science; the trivium and the quadrivium’.³ It is uncontested among Joyce scholars that he has made extensive use of the medieval, but this use still generates a further question: ‘what does the medieval afford for Joyce and his readers?’⁴ While arguably all studies of medievalism in Joyce go some way to answering this question, this thesis takes this question as the foundation of its study.

In beginning to answer this question, this introduction will begin by outlining an attitude to the Middle Ages as a whole, emerging from Joyce’s recalled conversations with a fellow Irishman abroad, Arthur Power. In doing so I aim to provide a sense of why the characterisation of Joyce’s medievalism is important for understanding his broader aesthetic prerogatives; the medieval is imaginatively retheorised as being present within the present. After this initial phase, I will move on to use his texts as a basis for the definition of a category of reading I will call ‘reading mediievally’, where medievalism as a literary effect affects the reading experience. ‘Reading mediievally’, a multifaceted term which I will enumerate, develop, flesh out, complicate progressively through this work, is a priming of readerly behaviours that register the aesthetic benefits of the medieval as a category, to the extent of inviting fantastic rereadings of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as if they are in some way medieval: imaginative theorisations that each of my chapters will explore, showing a

(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), and most recently an exhibition in Marsh’s Library in Dublin curated by Anne Marie D’Arcy, attended with a publication: Anne Marie D’Arcy, *James Joyce: Apocalypse & Exile* (Dublin: Marsh’s Library, 2014).

³ < <http://joyce2020.org/cfp/> > [Accessed 1 Apr 2020]

⁴ I take this language of ‘affordance’ from Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 6-8. This language of affordance, explained by Levine, refers back to the world of design, where a given object is seen to ‘have’ an affordance, in that the particularity of its form gives rise to a particular kind of functionality: for example, a spoon affords scooping, a knife affords cutting. This form, ‘social or literary, lays claim to a limited range of potentialities’ (p. 6), though Levine is careful enough not to subscribe to a simplistic and functional account of art. In short, by using this language of affordance I am both attending to the particularity of medieval as a category while also asking what benefits this particularity yields for Joyce’s art.

hopeful, critical, progressive politics at work in these books. In short, this thesis will show that modifications to reading experience emerge as a necessary outcome of Joyce's aesthetic project: the reader is refashioned into a comrade in this project, with both the reader and text together transforming the adjective 'medieval' into an adverb modifying the initial word 'reading'. Additionally, understanding the particular modifications to reading brought about by Joyce's medievalism, namely the inculcation of this multifaceted practice I will call 'reading mediievally', move us towards a fuller understanding of this project, which is why I devote space later on in this introduction specifically to the question 'What is reading mediievally?'. It is then that I will conclude this introduction by setting up the remaining chapters of this thesis.

Such a question as the one motivating this study (what does the medieval afford Joyce?) seems akin to asking 'what does history itself afford Joyce?'—a massive topic that to the Joycean arrives, ironically enough, laden with its own history.⁵ What unites these perspectives is the idea that Joyce works his aesthetic project through his place in history, as an Irish man of Catholic background, in constant relation to European imperialism and a broad, almost 'bird's-eye-view' understanding of the past. However, inevitably, these studies cannot provide too much of a picture of the precise texture afforded by a Joycean medievalism. Yet the Middle Ages seems to have held, after all, a special position in Joyce's

⁵ Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx: History and Desire in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), functions as both an intervention into the study of Joycean history-writing but also a reflection on the conversation up to that point. Milestone studies include Robert Spoo, *James Joyce and the Language of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), placing Joyce within an understanding where a 'long' history, especially Irish history, weighs on his present, and where his literary project commits to an explicit articulation of such conditions. Chapters 6 & 7 of Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), "Joyce, Jameson, and the Text of History" (pp. 78-86), and "Wakean History: Not Yet" (pp. 86-93), are also very valuable interventions showing how Joyce, through a modified reading experience, navigates a dialectic between history as narrative and history as objective totality of events. More recent material includes Chrissie van Mierlo, *James Joyce and Catholicism: The Apostate's Wake* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), focusing on *Finnegans Wake's* relationship to the long history of Catholicism.

conception of history: for example, there is a wealth of biographical detail that can provide a glimpse of Joyce's attitude here. In his influential and compelling biography of Joyce, Richard Ellmann provides extensive evidence of Joyce's interest in as well as his affinity for and respect for such individual medieval writers and thinkers as Dante, Chaucer, or St. Thomas Aquinas, names that might seem themselves synonymous with the medieval.⁶ However, a more complete characterisation of the medievalism of Joyce can only see such admiration as preliminary—these figures are not metonymies for the Middle Ages as a whole, nor is Joyce's project interested in admiring from a convenient temporal distance.⁷

We can begin by defining the ways Joyce can be said to infuse his text with the medieval: the study of medievalism comes equipped with a panoply of taxonomies, where the changing usefulness of the Middle Ages can be inferred from its many usages. David Matthews has created something of a master taxonomy for medievalisms, split between two basic types: the grotesque and the romantic Middle Ages, where an affective response to the medieval moulds the basis of its usage.⁸ For Matthews, these two are by no means a strict binary: shifting in their applications within a given discourse, neither is more or less ideological than the other.

A further taxonomical division is offered later to nuance this initial demarcation, based on the relations between the given cultural production and the expected version of the Middle Ages depicted. There are five such sub-categories in total: works that depict 'The Middle Ages "as it was"' (i.e. primarily aim at a kind of realism), 'The Middle Ages "as it might have been"'

⁶ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p.2, pp.196-97. This synonymity with the medieval can sit in contrast to these figures' instrumentality for the modern age. As Matthews notes, this canonicity, especially in the case of Chaucer and Dante, can even arise because they are viewed 'less as a *medieval* author than as [writers] positioned as the first of the moderns' *Medievalism*, p. 132.

⁷ Also, Joyce's relation to such figures is not merely admiration. For example, as Lucia Boldrini has shown, Joyce's relation to Dante is far more complex and interesting, with Joyce performing a 'silent silencing' of Dante through appropriation of his techniques and theories, while simultaneously allowing for the latter to resonate throughout his text in *Joyce, Dante*, p. 2.

⁸ Matthews, *Medievalism*, pp. 19-35.

(i.e. a legendary, rather than historical, understanding), and ‘The Middle Ages “as it never was”’ (i.e. a totally fantastical reimagining of the medieval), and finally two modes of medievalist incorporation into cultural productions, one where a cultural production ‘based largely on medieval elements incorporates modern references or motifs’ and one where a cultural production ‘essentially of its own time, looks back to the Middle Ages with greater or lesser explicitness’.⁹ The point of such a taxonomy is not to pin Joyce’s work down into one of these categories, but rather to show how pliable the Middle Ages can be, and indeed how one can conceive of artworks that bridge between these categories. This provides some image of the difficult terrain we navigate when asking how to characterise Joyce’s medievalism.

The question, for example, of whether Joyce held a ‘romantic’ or ‘gothic’ attitude towards the Middle Ages will perhaps not be satisfied by simply looking at his complex works. The conversations Joyce held with the Irish painter Arthur Power after he had written *Ulysses* in 1922 provide a compelling window into Joyce’s attitudes that seems to suggest something of a general preference for the period.¹⁰ In these he claims that

[the medieval] was the true spirit of western Europe [...] and if it had continued, think what a splendid civilisation we might have had today. After all, the Renaissance was an intellectual return to boyhood [...] Indeed one of the most interesting things about present-day thought in my opinion is its return to mediaevalism.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

¹⁰ Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999); James Joyce, *Ulysses*, (London: Bodley Head, 2008). I say ‘suggest’ in this sentence as we cannot be entirely sure Power transcribes these conversations entirely correctly: however, that is not to say it is a discredited source. I read these passages searching more for tone and sentiment than exact wording. For *Ulysses* I am citing in-text from the Gabler edition of the text, formatted thus: (*U* [episode number].[line number]).

¹¹ Power, *Conversations*, pp. 105-106.

I understand the tone here as somewhat flippant and hyperbolic, alluding vaguely as it does (vagueness is not a typical attribute of Joyce) to a ‘true spirit of Western Europe’, and an impossible counterfactual of a European modernity without large-scale expansionist European imperialism, or a transition to the totalising world-system of capitalism. But the casual, possibly even experimental or provisional nature of this comment nevertheless conceals an important dynamic for this thesis: an affirmation of the medieval for Joyce as something that bucks most traditional, teleological models of historical development, where the Renaissance is a kind of course-correction, a maturation past the supposed ‘naivety’ of the Middle Ages into the re-nascence of a better age, as opposed to a regression to ‘boyhood’. One could see this repudiation of teleological development as particularly inflected by Joyce’s understanding of colonialism.¹²

In the conversations with Power, this understanding of the colonial links explicitly to an understanding of the medieval and the modern: Joyce is alive to the possibility of reimagining modernity with recourse to often daring, bracing anachronisms. What I mean by this is that, in the case of his conversations with Power, he refers to a particularly Irish

¹² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (New Edition)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), provides an interesting window into the continuing legacy of such a model of historical development, and also opposes a prevalent and simplified spatial dimension where ‘the West’ is seen to develop first, then ‘the Rest’. This book is most useful in its explanation that the teleological model of history is ideologically implicated in the project of colonialism. Especially illuminating on the relation between the medieval and historical and economic ‘development’ is work that directly locates medievalism within the ideological work that goes into the colonial project. The essay collection edited by Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul, *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of ‘the Middle Ages’ Outside Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), is a superlative contribution, tracing the idea of the Middle Ages as imperialism made its impact on world history. The essays by José Rabasa (“Decolonizing Medieval Mexico” pp. 27-50) and Ananya Jahanara Kabir (“An Enchanted Mirror for the Capitalist Self: The *Germania* in British India” pp. 51-79), the latter of which I will deal with further below, have been especially useful for me on this theoretical problem, namely the extent of the term ‘medieval’ and its role in implying teleological narratives of development. A response essay by Dipesh Chakrabarty (“Historicism and Its Supplements: A Note on a Predicament Shared by Medieval and Postcolonial Studies” pp. 109-122), similarly tackles the basic question: what about describing something as having ‘medieval’ characteristics might implicate the description in the project of colonialism?

perspective on the Middle Ages that warps the linear development of time periods, referring to a non-linear temporality present within modernity:

And in my opinion one of the most interesting things about Ireland is that we are still fundamentally a mediaeval people, and that Dublin is still a mediaeval city. I know that when I used to frequent the pubs around Christ Church I was always reminded of those mediaeval taverns in which the sacred and the obscene jostle shoulders, and one of the reasons is that we were never subjected to the Lex Romana as other nations were. I have always noticed, for instance, that if you show a Renaissance work to an Irish peasant he will gape at it in a kind of cold wonder, for in a dim way he realises that it does not belong to his world. His symbolism is still mediaeval, and it is that which separates us from the Englishman, or the Frenchman, or the Italian, all of whom are Renaissance men. Take Yeats, for example [...] *Ulysses* also is mediaeval but in a more realistic way.¹³

Once again, this quote provides a sense of the not entirely serious—this is because there is a careful irony constructed here with the ‘Irish peasant’ being somehow medieval, and therefore backward, incapable of understanding the products of a more ‘advanced’ civilisation, only for this construction to invert the racial conception of just such an imperial subject by presenting it as a positive quality. However, this irreverence is not reason to dismiss it, but only further reason to see how Joyce might incorporate such reconceptions into his work, because, as I will argue, this work makes use of a playful and imaginative retheorisation of modernity via the medieval. This Irish peasant in some ways figures the constant Joycean awareness of how a universal reading, a universal reception of his works is impossible—a point that enables us to understand Joyce’s heterogeneous aesthetic project and how medievalism fits into it. The medieval aids Joyce in such work with its ability to stand outside a network of classical or classicising rules, aesthetic or otherwise, still present within the modernity of nations affected by the ‘Renaissance’ (which is how I interpret the

¹³ Power, *Conversations*, p. 116

reference to the *lex romana*). The temporal and aesthetic ‘jostling’ of Dublin’s city layout itself, a product of medieval town-planning or lack thereof, provides an aesthetic model of the medieval which, contrasting with Joyce’s understanding of classical, classicising artistic prerogatives, prefers precisely this kind of heterogeneous ‘jostling’. Jostling here means not just vibrancy but also the productive friction and variety created by internal difference, which for Joyce is more amenable to a medievalist rather than classical aesthetic. This quote therefore provides an understanding of how Joyce’s aesthetic concerns and modified understanding of time overlap.

To provide an example of the modified prerogatives of Joyce’s literary project and its rejection of the ‘classical’, later in this conversation Joyce expands on his preference for the medieval by aligning it with formal flexibility and a kind of emotional truth: ‘what we want to avoid is the classical, with its rigid structure and its emotional limitations. The mediaeval, in my opinion, had greater emotional fecundity than classicism, which is the art of the gentleman, and is now as out-of-date as gentlemen are’.¹⁴ Modernity itself not only accommodates but demands a medievalist aesthetic—and in saying so Joyce aligns medievalism here with a general artistic disruption of aesthetic, temporal and gender prerogatives. It is not a coincidence that this layering of references that bear the imprint of basic oppositions will recur and recur throughout this thesis: British and Irish, sacred and profane, medieval and modern. This aesthetic preference for internal variety and even contradiction makes *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* the most likely candidates of Joyce’s fiction for this analysis—copious, varied, and, as I will show, deeply invested in medieval ways of knowing the world and of interpreting it.¹⁵ In order to embark on such an analysis,

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

¹⁵ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008). For *Finnegans Wake*, the recent edition by Finn Fordham shall be cited in-text in a similar way to *Ulysses*: (*FW* [page number].[line number]).

however, I will first need to expand on how I will understand the terms ‘aesthetics’ and ‘temporality’ in relation to Joyce.

The definition of ‘aesthetics’ I will use throughout this thesis centres on a view of literary experience: the reader’s potential apprehensions of the text. However, I take care not to separate the aesthetic from the political. Instead, I will attempt to delineate how Joyce’s medievalism, being a literary effect, has *therefore* a political quality. Medievalism, in fairness, is rarely thought of as an apolitical aesthetic—in fact, it is often the case that it is conceived of as a plastic *langue* whose individual *paroles* enable it to be politically useful across the spectrum of opinion (especially in the Victorian era).¹⁶ However, the purpose of this thesis is to characterise a medievalism which is not so explicit in its claims about medieval (and thereby modern) history. What is more useful here is a perspective that sees modern thought in continual dialogue with the past. Nagel, for example, in his book outlining the medieval survivals in modern aesthetics, delineates how the use of medieval Christian Europe has a potentially special political resonance in artistic thought: ‘To return to the Christian Middle Ages is not simply to stay in “the West.” It is to encounter a decentralised and also decentered Europe [...] [For example,] unlike Islam or the Jewish diaspora, Latin Christendom read and sang its sacred texts in translation, a fact that was never forgotten.’¹⁷ Therefore, the marginal conditions of medieval Europe compared to its modern hegemony inform political thought from such figures as Homi Bhabha, Giorgio Agamben, and Marc Augé, whose writings likewise inform the aesthetic concerns of Nagel.¹⁸ This is an example of how aesthetic or political ideas from such figures are illuminated by an understanding of

¹⁶ Dellheim, “Interpreting Victorian Medievalism”, pp. 51-53 expands on this point.

¹⁷ Nagel, *Medieval Modern*, pp. 29-32.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

medieval art, whether or not such an understanding directly intersects with the subject matter of their writing.

The question therefore remains how we might delineate an aesthetic experience that is open to being reimagined along such medievalist lines, as ‘reading mediievally’ will come to connote, while not losing sight of the political charge of such aesthetics. One useful thinker here is Herbert Marcuse, who noted how ‘the political and the aesthetic, the revolutionary content and the artistic quality, tend to coincide’.¹⁹ A more precise formulation of this relationship follows:

Under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily *sublimated*: the immediate content is stylized, the ‘data’ are reshaped and reordered in accordance with the demands of the art form, which requires that even the representation of death and destruction invoke the need for hope—a need rooted in the new consciousness embodied in the work of art.²⁰

The political here is the set of potential hopeful horizons to which art points. ‘Necessarily’, by being a work of art, it creates a separate world that contains a latent hope in that it enables a perception alternative to that required to process reality. Art enables the imagination of a new autonomous reality, representing as it does a separate world, a conception putting Marcuse in opposition to some other Marxist aestheticians who view the affirmation of an autonomous art as antithetical to the more appropriate aim of mimetic representation: the ‘more direct’ description of the world as it is or should be.²¹ This affirmation of autonomy, however, should not be mischaracterised as a quixotic attempt at the ‘apolitical’ or the ‘neutral’ as it can seem on a superficial reading, but rather a profoundly political

¹⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. Herbert Marcuse & Erica Shorever (Boston: Beacon, 1978), p. 2.

²⁰ Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p. 7

²¹ See for example György Lukács, “Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline,” in *Essays on Realism*, ed. R. Livingstone, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 153-73.

understanding of art. Distinguishing his position from the idea that mimetic representation best presents the world as it is and as it should be, Marcuse writes

If art were to promise that at the end good would triumph over evil, such a promise would be refuted by the historical truth [...] Authentic works of art are aware of this: they reject the promise made too easily; they refuse the unburdened happy end. They must reject it, for the realm of freedom lies beyond mimesis.²²

This aesthetic freedom therefore consists in the artwork presenting an autonomous world to the one who apprehends it. Consequently, in my understanding of Marcuse's thought, no account of the aesthetics of a literary artwork (which enables the imaginative theorisation of alternatives to given reality) is complete without accounting for the reader's position in relation to it, an account of the readerly experience.

Though Marcuse's work here calls for an understanding of 'authentic' works of art, and elsewhere sees this aesthetic dimension as proposing 'transhistorical' or 'universal' truths,²³ he nevertheless reveals an imaginative dimension to art that retains explanatory power even in contexts that openly disavow such language of authenticity or universality. This imaginative dimension to aesthetics will prove especially germane to this thesis; the reader in this thesis will continually be one who is provoked into creative, imaginative theorisation because of the world conjured by the work. This provocation can, but does not necessarily, lead to the good; though the picture of reading mediocrally I will paint will be an affirmative one. This conception does not depend on Marcuse's notions of universality or universal reading, which would inevitably make this thesis a hostage to fortune. Though primarily known for her socio-political work, one thinker who finds this formulation useful while

²² Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p. 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

rejecting such notions of ‘universality’ is Angela Davis, who quotes Marcuse while demarcating the commingled aesthetics and politics of the transformative art of another modernist movement, the blues:

Art never achieves greatness through transcendence of sociohistorical reality. On the contrary, even as it transcends specific circumstances and conventions, it is deeply rooted in social realities. As Herbert Marcuse has pointed out, it is at its best when it fashions new perspectives on the human condition, provokes critical attitudes and encourages loyalty ‘to the vision of a better world, a vision which remains true even in defeat.’²⁴

Thought of in this way, any literary-critical affirmation of Joyce, which this thesis is, must show how the given work fashions such new perspectives and critical attitudes, and even encourages certain loyalties.

However, it would be fair to characterise Joyce as an author who is not overt about the loyalties he expects the reader to share having read his books—his preferred mode, like Marcuse’s, is one not of direct didactic politics in his books, but rather a more suggestive one.²⁵ Similarly, I would suggest that he as a *modernist* artist also attempts to engender a *modernist* reader. To define ‘modernism’ I use Marshall Berman’s deliberately ‘broad and open’ conception of the word as the endeavour to assert oneself as not merely the ‘object’ of modernity but also the ‘subject’ of modernity.²⁶ Berman’s broadness works alongside many

²⁴ Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday*, (New York: Vintage, 1998), p. 183.

²⁵ This point is obvious to most readers because so much is only suggested in Joyce; but Dominic Manganiello quotes Joyce’s own words regarding his authorial preferences: ‘I want the reader to understand always through suggestion rather than direct statement.’ *Joyce’s Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 95. It is still worth noting that this preference does not necessarily mean that ‘direct statement’ is completely avoidable, however.

²⁶ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 5.

other redefinitions of modernism that have sought to push its theoretical boundaries beyond small milieux in Western imperial metropolises and so-called ‘high art’.²⁷

Berman’s broadness is not necessarily its virtue as a result: one example can be the most daring challenge to the definition and periodisation of modernism, which arguably comes from Susan Stanford Friedman, whose broadened definition of modernity and modernism is limited precisely by its relation to the medieval.²⁸ *Planetary Modernisms* aims to consider ‘modernities and their modernisms over the millennia’ and ‘multiple, polycentric and recurring modernities’, even pre-dating 1500, taking examples from the Tang Dynasty and the nomadic Mongol Empire.²⁹ This fascinating, provocative, and often productive approach, however, obscures the link between modernity and the totalising process of capitalism from the early modern period onwards. In doing so, it in fact preserves the notion of modernity defined as a broadly positive disruptive development against a medieval which must necessarily be synonymous with ‘backwardness’. After all, why is the book compelled to talk of planetary *modernisms* if what Friedman describes is a certain continuity between periods and places? The book could equally be describing ‘multiple, polycentric and recurring *medievalities*’ instead. This definitional work is therefore an example of how modernity as a concept (and therefore modernism) requires temporal others like the medieval—hence broadening modernity itself runs into methodological risks. However, the virtue of Berman’s

²⁷ David Bradshaw, ed., *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), extends its discussion beyond art and aesthetics to thematic discussions of e.g. eugenics and technological innovation. Similarly, Raymond Williams, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (London: Verso, 1989), considers modernism from his own position of cultural materialism. Maria DiBattista and Lucy McDiarmid, eds., *High and Low Moderns: Literature and Culture, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), is an essay collection important to exploding the myth that modernism is exclusive to notions of ‘high art’. Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *Bad Modernisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), takes an evaluative approach that sees how the ‘bad habits’ of modernist art are inextricably linked to those aspects that draw praise, making it an indispensably provocative volume of essays; modernism here is less a coherent school of artistic practice and more a direct challenge to practically everyone.

²⁸ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-12

conception here is that in its broadness it encompasses a range of currents all dialectically involved in the unfolding of modernity, meaning that we can include the reader as herself a modernist, asserting the abovementioned subjectivity through the medium of Joyce's work.

The hopeful autonomy of Marcuse's definition of art, joined with Berman's understanding of an assertive modernism, enables us to imagine a reader for whom Joyce's work presents a hopeful, autonomous potentiality within modernity that reveals alternative existences, imaginative theorisations that create the possibility, ultimately, for a heightened understanding of modernity itself through the difference between possible and actual. These imaginative theorisations will be elucidated in my three main chapters (more on which later): first, that of the book as a body, which reconfigures the relationship between reader and text to one that sees both as engaging each other reciprocally, recalling a model of sensory, bodily encounter that is thoroughly medieval, encouraging an ethos to reading grounded in somatic experience before intellectual comprehension; second, that of the book as an object of philological study, which engenders a philological attitude in reading and an embrace of its aesthetic difficulty, professionalising the amateur reader and enabling her to articulate a critique of the overriding nationalist prerogatives of much contemporary philological scholarship; third, that of the book as full of variants, which enables the pluralisation of the single text, reversing many of the stifling imperatives and legal fictions of intellectual property. As the thesis will show, all of these imaginative theorisations are reacting to some facet of the contemporary experience of reading as Joyce understood it, and therefore to a major facet of modernity. Berman usefully defines modernity as an environment experienced totally, that is as both a global phenomenon and something felt throughout an individual's experience (in our case the reader), containing both progressive promise and destructive threat 'for close to five-hundred years'—a 'maelstrom' of contradictions nevertheless

undergirded and ‘unified’ by the economic and social logic of capitalism.³⁰ Because of this thinking, Berman undoes the typical periodisation of modernism, the diverse range of artistic practices falling into the range of 1880-1939, used as an initiating point in such standard pedagogical aids as Jeff Wallace’s *Beginning Modernism*.³¹ Instead, he proposes works both literary and philosophical from earlier in the nineteenth century—Goethe, Marx, Baudelaire, Gogol are examples showing the kind of range Berman operates within—as instigating this artistic determination to explain and explode this dialectical ‘maelstrom’, to become subjects as well as objects. That Joyce, on the evidence I will unfold in this thesis, considers readers comrades in this project is itself a powerful, affirming defence of the enduring value of his work. In this thesis, I will articulate less how the reader is involved in the project of situating themselves within the maelstrom, and emphasise more the imagination of alternatives, through the medium of reading mediinally, although both are necessarily joined dialectically in Berman’s conception.

This discussion of a political aesthetics has led us necessarily to Joyce’s relationship to modernity. But any discussion of medievalism is itself one that should take into account the affordances of an intrusion from another time period—in short, the way the text ruptures a commonsense understanding of temporality and generates a new understanding of the moment at hand. Even rupturing the boundaries between periods, between modernity and the medieval, represents a rebellious attitude to convention. But in the case of the quote above, Joyce’s medievalism does not necessarily emerge from a desire to be ‘rebellious’ as such but also reflects to a small degree a certain mimetic principle; Ireland is ‘medieval’, therefore *Ulysses* is medievalist ‘in a realistic way’. For Joyce, the present moment has an undeniable

³⁰ Berman, *All That Is Solid*, p. 16.

³¹ Jeff Wallace, *Beginning Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p.1-2.

aspect of the medieval to it, despite being also the present moment; medievalism represents not so much an intrusion on the text as a contemplation of the contemporary's heterogeneity. Discussions of medievalism that have accounted for this tendency to complicate our understanding of temporality include Dinshaw, whose work is 'dedicated to asynchrony', arguing from this for a heterogeneous, queered understanding of what one could call 'nowness' as an unruly, affectively charged tissue of different temporal experiences.³² Vital to such an understanding of nowness is Dinshaw's broad engagement with medieval and medievalist texts; likewise, Bernau and Bildhauer's discussion in their edited collection uses a similar concept of 'a-chronology' to characterise the valuable way 'medieval film' (their deliberately jarring term for films 'from' the Middle Ages) 'resists' the stricter, rigidly historicist temporal mode of 'chronological history'.³³ Both of these perspectives draw their explanatory power from not merely evaluating representations of the Middle Ages on the basis of a fidelity to historicist standards, but rather seeking to understand how a medievalist perspective is itself a queer one, one that disrupts prevailing understandings of temporal development regardless of its failures. They therefore provide some of the necessary foundations for my attempt to characterise Joyce's medievalism—not as a series of references, but rather itself a project of redescribing the contemporary moment. In this case, Joyce's modified temporality is itself not unique, as it is a defining technique of medievalism. However, drawing on these scholars' understandings of asynchrony and achronology, I will show for example how Joyce modifies our understanding of temporality by emphasising this 'jostling' he described in the quote above: by this I mean that he seeks not to partition the medieval from the modern but rather to let the medieval resurface persistently within the modern.³⁴ In short, the model of temporality I will reiterate in many different ways

³² Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, p. 7

³³ Bernau and Bildhauer, 'Introduction', p. 3.

³⁴ For another discussion setting Joyce's modified understanding of temporality within a broader modernist aesthetic context, see Gregory Castle, "Destinies of *Bildung*: Belatedness and the Modernist Novel" in *A History*

throughout this thesis is one of Joyce making the past present within the present, a succinct summation of Joyce's aesthetic priorities here and the modified experience of the reader herself.

2. *What Is Reading Medievally?*

I have begun to articulate a characterisation of Joyce's medievalism via an understanding of Joyce's aesthetic priorities that I have gleaned from his conversations with Arthur Power. Turning to the works of Joyce will expand significantly on these preliminary observations of the affordances of the medieval to Joyce, and will occupy me for most of the rest of this thesis. This section of the introduction, however, will focus on establishing the meaning of the phrase 'reading medievally' and tackling methodological questions raised by it. As I have articulated already, the characterisation of Joyce's medievalism is achievable via an elucidation of how the medieval emerges in the reading experience—meaning a heterogeneous aesthetic where the past emerges as present within the present. In this conception, the reader is therefore a key component in Joyce's art, asserting with Joyce an imaginative retheorisation of modernity via the medieval. Establishing these points will only be achievable by beginning to articulate what the experience of reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is like, however.

of the Modernist Novel, ed. Gregory Castle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 483-508, which aims to position Joyce, especially with his inversion of the *Bildungsroman* in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as among those writers creating 'recalcitrant subjects' who are 'out of synch with the nation-time that nurtures classical *Bildung*' [i.e. Romantic Goethe-influenced notions of cultivation, education, formation of a young male individual] (p. 487). Bernau and Bildhauer discuss, in fact, how medieval film is itself an inherently belated medium in "The a-chronology of medieval film", p. 11.

We can recall Matthews' taxonomy from earlier in the introduction to begin thinking about how we might characterise the medievalism present in the texts.³⁵ One could convincingly argue the presence of four of the five sub-categories of medievalist representative strategies to be present in Joyce's fiction; only the first ('The Middle Ages "as it was"') seems to be ruled out given all his material is concerned overtly with the modern day. Nevertheless, the remaining categories all find representation in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, the two experimental epic comic novels written between 1914 and 1939 that constitute Joyce's most challenging and both reviled and lauded work. Some examples: Chapter II.4 of *Finnegans Wake* reimagines and repurposes the 'Tristan and Isolde' myth; the fourteenth 'episode' of *Ulysses*, 'Oxen of the Sun', contains an extended section reimagining modern-day Dublin as medieval, with prose style to match; references to Dante, Chaucer,³⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, the Irish Middle Ages, heretics, Franciscans,³⁷ the One Thousand and One Nights, among many other medieval personages, events, artefacts and concepts abound. The final of Matthews' five modes (a cultural production of its own time looking back on the Middle Ages) is predominant, given that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are not primarily texts about the Middle Ages; rather, the particular characteristics of these texts' relationships to the medieval require elucidation.

The prevalence of Matthews' last category of medievalist modes here is significant because it is arguably the predominant mode for most artefacts that we can call medievalist. Arguably every artwork has some kind of subtextual undercurrent of periodisation implicating not only an attitude towards modernity but also, by necessity, an attitude towards preceding periods, whether it is an explicit representation of those periods or not. Like most modernist works,

³⁵ Matthews, *Medievalism*, pp. 35-38.

³⁶ See, for example, Helen Cooper, "Joyce's Other Father: The Case for Chaucer" in *Medieval Joyce* ed. Lucia Boldrini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 143-164.

³⁷ Anne Marie D'Arcy, *Apocalypse & Exile* (Dublin: Marsh's Library, 2014).

Joyce's books take place in a modern setting. Yet I would argue that the presence of the medieval still needs to be traced in modernism if only because modernity is never fully defined in itself, positively. As I began to articulate above in discussing Berman's definition of modernity, the concept of modernity rests upon an other latent within it, whether say a racial other embodied in a person as a subject of modernity or a more abstract temporal other.³⁸

The medieval presents a category that is adjacent to modernity in time; that is, just before capitalism and imperialism as world-systems begin to manifest as dominant and dominating modes of organisation and to begin the process of totalisation that arguably defines modernity itself.³⁹ This adjacency makes it a proximate other, and being a proximate other, lacking sufficient distance, it is therefore found indelibly within modernity, present within the present, as I have already articulated it—Bhabha calls it 'the *aporetic coexistence* within the cultural history of the *modern* imagined community, of both the [...] "medieval" traditions (the past) and the [...] cross-time of modernity (the present)'.⁴⁰ I will use this concept of proximate otherness to traverse something of a tension within Joyce's works, where the medieval is felt present within the present. It could be argued that this elision of medieval and modern undermines historicism, the name given to the processes by which the past becomes an object of knowledge in the discipline of history.⁴¹ However, I will be arguing also that

³⁸ Important theoretical work here includes: Raymond Williams, "MEDIEVAL" and "MODERN", *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 207-209. This serves as an introduction to how modernity defines itself relatively in time. Similarly Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004) sees such difference, such a relation as necessarily temporal in nature, resting on a 'time lag'—see esp. pp. 226-235, a discussion of Benedict Anderson's understanding of modernity via Walter Benjamin, and pp. 341-42. A piece I have already mentioned with direct bearing on this discussion is José Rabasa, "Decolonizing Medieval Mexico", esp. p. 28.

³⁹ On the relevance of this view of the totalising world-system and the process of its development to literary studies as a whole, see Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), esp. pp. 6-10.

⁴⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 358-59. Bhabha's emphasis.

⁴¹ A definition neatly expressed in Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Historicism and Its Supplements", p. 109.

Joyce does demand a historical understanding on our part, namely, an understanding of material contexts informing reading. Indeed, in my chapter on philology, I will argue that the imaginative retheorisation of the book as an object of philological inquiry leads to a better historical understanding. Showing the medieval as present within the present serves as a better description of the present than Chakrabarty's understanding of the historicised imagination. The question therefore remains as to how Joyce threads the medieval through his prevailing representation of modernity—and the way I will answer this question depends on the experience of that coexistence, in reading mediievally.

My abiding concern is not to chronicle a new history of the composition of these works, although the subfield of Joyce studies known as genetic criticism is making significant strides towards such a literary-historical understanding.⁴² Rather, I will consider the literary effects of medievalism as an aesthetic phenomenon encountered by the reader within the 'finished' text. This focus on literary effects arises because, in my attempt to characterise this medievalism, more explanatory power can be derived from the aesthetic experience of the texts themselves than a reconstructed history prior to the text: the series of questions that provoke such a record of composition are only ever provoked by the texts themselves in the first place. Such a focus on literary effects ultimately means, however, that a complete or even satisfactory picture of Joycean allusions to the Middle Ages will not be forthcoming in this thesis, because instead it will be a consciously partial understanding of the medieval as it manifests in Joyce. After all, as Joyce's example of the 'Irish peasant' shows, there is no single reader who encompasses the entirety of *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* as she reads. In fact, surely the point of these works' massiveness, the point of the long and difficult process

⁴² The scholarly journal *Genetic Joyce Studies* is freely available online at <geneticjoycestudies.org>, and is also probably the best ongoing source of such work.

of reading such works, is that they render impossible the attempt of summary, and reveal it as necessarily a partial interpretation regardless: this account of reading is therefore not an invitation to see this study of ‘reading mediievally’ as an exercise in detailing an ideal, mean or universal reader response as a way of determining the general meaning of these books.⁴³ However, this project distinguishes itself by not prioritising the extraction of a *general* meaning via an account of the reading experience. Such an endeavour puts the thesis in danger of universalising readers’ experiences, but the point of difficulty in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is that they defy this universalising principle. Instead, the reader can only approach these texts in a particular way, in the sense of being one particle that makes up a larger substance that we might call the body of readership. This account instead provides an insight into Joyce’s aesthetic prerogatives in a particular arena. This is precisely the point: the advantage of reading a modernist text mediievally consists in its being different or unintuitive and its being possibly too particular, too niche, too relative. These are the same adjectives routinely and unfairly levelled at feminist, queer, and race theorists using such texts for their supposedly narrow purviews. Instead, the point of this particularity is to form one aspect of a larger critique of the very idea of a universal readership or universal reading experience, which works to disappear analogous minority subject positions.⁴⁴

⁴³ Elements of reader-response theory, whose proponents are drawn together by the idea that accounting for the process of reading itself yields the meanings of the work, therefore have obvious similarities with this project. Wolfgang Iser, “Interaction Between Text And Reader” in *Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism 2nd edition*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2010), pp. 1524-1532 outlines the way readers navigate the ‘gaps’ in a text; Stanley Fish, *Is There A Text In This Class?: The Authority of Textual Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), propounds a more sociological view of meaning as determined by readers, especially informed by readings of Milton; Hans Robert Jauss, “From Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory” in *Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism 2nd edition*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2010), pp. 1406-1419 sees readers as determining genre and the ‘horizon of expectations’ that a work navigates.

⁴⁴ An account of the experience of being branded ‘too niche’, with a good summation of this counterargument’s currency in feminist philosophy, can be found in Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 33.

Since such a partial or provisional interpretation is an effect of the books' difficulty, no account of reading these books can avoid the topic of difficulty, and so I will argue that the medievalism is itself part of the texture of difficulty that creates the experience of reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* for all readers, not just medievalists or Joyceans. This texture of difficulty partly explains my reluctance to engage in a game of 'hunt-the-allusion', because it seems self-evident to me that the medievalism of these works, or perhaps one could say 'medievalness', is not only accessible to an elite few who can decode the hidden referential puzzles Joyce plants into his text—an erroneous conclusion Joyce criticism can sometimes appear to proclaim. Rather, this medieval difficulty is something that shapes even the typical reading experience. Medievalism is here not merely a signifier of Joyce's erudition or cultural savvy but rather a thing that works as art, something that changes perceptions and has a concrete effect on the process of interpretation. This effect relates to the 'democratic' difficulty of Joyce's work, which is a topic I return to in my later chapter on philology. I take this conception from another acclaimed writer of difficult, sometimes medievalist, knowingly literary works, Geoffrey Hill:

One encounters in any ordinary day far more real difficulty than one confronts in the most "intellectual" piece of work. [...] I think art has a right—not an obligation—to be difficult if it wishes. And, since people generally go on from this to talk about elitism versus democracy, I would add that genuinely difficult art is truly democratic. And that tyranny requires simplification.⁴⁵

Just as *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are comic novels that abound in misunderstandings and everyday 'failures', so too the reading experience conjures this same ordinary and extraordinary difficulty—which in turn constitutes a politicised, 'democratic' project to

⁴⁵ Carl Phillips, 'Geoffrey Hill, The Art of Poetry No. 80', *The Paris Review*, 154 (2000). <<https://tinyurl.com/yctrk64u>> [accessed 12 May 2020]

modify reading practices so that they accommodate difficulty.⁴⁶ I say extraordinary as well as ordinary to define this difficulty so that I can bring this understanding of reading in conversation with Jack Halberstam, whose treatment of the ‘queer art of failure’ outlined the importance of the partial, the arguably misunderstanding or misunderstood in the injunction to ‘*Resist mastery*’.⁴⁷ This resistance entails the investment ‘in counterintuitive modes of knowing such as failure and stupidity’ which, far from being incapable of producing knowledge, rather lead to new, better conclusions by referring ‘to the limits of certain forms of knowing’.⁴⁸ My discussion of medievalist difficulty will therefore relate the Middle Ages to the accommodating ethos that produces such famous aphorisms as ‘A man [*sic*] of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery’ (*U* 9.228-9) and remakes errors as ‘errthors’ (meaning others/authors, *FW* 36.35). I do not mean to imply here that the Middle Ages is necessarily synonymous with failure, but only that by a dominant and dominating teleology of historical ‘progress’ with modernity as its necessary destination will it be seen as such. Difficulty is therefore more usefully conceived of as not fitting into such a prevailing logic, a circular peg in a square hole; so it is because of its temporal middleness that it is difficult if made present within the present. I argue the difficulty of the Middle Ages is itself encoded within the difficulty of the book.

My partial, incomplete, one might say ‘failed’ understanding of Joyce’s books comes with the awareness that the books repeatedly stage this failure, perhaps even teasing the reader with the prospect of this failure with their copious, but perhaps frustrating, untotalisability. A

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Iser, “Patterns of Communication in Joyce’s *Ulysses*” in *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction From Bunyan to Beckett*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 196-233 is an example of a relatively early Joyce critic articulating, along the typical lines of reader-response criticism, that the difficulty of *Ulysses* constitutes its meaning.

⁴⁷ Jack [Judith] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 11. See also this principle directly applied to Joyce in Declan Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Living* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p. 23.

⁴⁸ Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, pp. 11-12.

passage in *Finnegans Wake* that very literally illuminates such a readerly frustration in medievalist terms is this:

Yet on holding the verso against a lit rush [...] its recto let out the piquant fact that it was pierced [...] by numerous stabs and foliated gashes made by a pronged instrument. These paper wounds, four in type, were gradually and correctly understood to mean stop, please stop, do please stop, and O do please stop respectively[...] (*FW* 123.34-124.5)

As with any passage from *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses*, the analysis that follows is necessarily partial and incomplete. However, these marks, interpreted as diacritical marks and punctuation, are also the inscription of readerly impatience with a text that, like Molly Bloom's soliloquy, and like early medieval text, seemingly has little-to-no punctuation (*FW* 123.33). Importantly, though, the frustrated reader stabbing the text to give it 'stops' is not the only one granted speech. The material itself is granted the agency to 'let out the piquant fact' (rather than saying something like 'analysis reveals'), with the aural suggestion that the page has a body, with the similarity of 'recto' to rectum. In context, this fact also appears when the text is beginning to determine the 'unmistaken identity of the persons' responsible for making a document known as the Letter, by now clearly standing in for the text of *Finnegans Wake* among other forms of inscription. One of these persons is a reader who stabs the paper itself with a fork in the manner of someone preparing a medieval manuscript by pricking the page and ruling lines on it. The text therefore poses as a document with entirely unfamiliar characteristics—either marked by failure or marked by the medieval. Notably the text glosses such a gesture as both comic, in its surreal portrayal of the exhausted reader and the farting page, and disturbing, with marks becoming wounds, reading becoming violence—an intensifying desire for the text to 'stop' with every additional inscription, a reversal of the medieval procedure that allows the text to begin.

This mockery of stopping, this unending quality does considerable work in defining reading in Joyce—*Finnegans Wake* ends without a full stop, allowing the reader to circle back to the very beginning, the word ‘riverrun’. Perhaps this passage can be taken as a warning against bad readings, which here mean readings that aim to freeze a river of text that should forever be in motion. This self-reflexive chapter opens with the proclamation that it is—and note here how a language of failure, inverted to be a positive resistance to mastery, co-opts the exalting language of the Lord’s Prayer (‘on Earth as it is in heaven’)—‘unhemmed as it is uneven’ (*FW* 104.3). In seeking to provide an articulation of reading mediievally, I am therefore avowedly not attempting a mastery over the text, a final ‘correct’ interpretation that only means the death of further reading.

But now that the general outlines of this attitude have been made, I will now begin to develop the methodology I will use by looking in more detail at Joyce’s texts, and starting to delineate the experiences of reading that can be called reading mediievally. The uniqueness of the medievalism in these texts is in part due to their experimental or even bizarre attitude to time and history. *Ulysses* produces a past that is not merely influential on the present, but present in the present, a paradoxical state of historical contemporaneity alluded to in Stephen Dedalus’ famous proclamation that ‘[h]istory ... is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake’ (*U* 2.377). History can even be superimposed over the present, like a filter on a camera lens: Joyce’s style accommodates a multitude of historical periods, most especially in the ‘Oxen of the Sun’ episode which stages the evolution of the English language, from a comically literal translation of Latin to a barrage of disconnected modern regional variants, all over a scene of medical students drinking in a maternity hospital—the novel’s most

explicit staging of what Cheryl Temple Herr calls the novel's interest in 'multiple temporalities of being'.⁴⁹

Finnegans Wake stresses this contemporaneity, this plurality of temporalities, to even greater degrees, opening up the interpretation of the text to potentially incorporate defunct meanings and styles, in a jostling of time periods: 'what curios of signs [...] in this allaphbed [Hebrew letters aleph & beth; all laugh; Allah; alphabet; lap; ALP; bed]! Can you rede [...] its world?' (*FW* 18.18-19). In the strange style that typifies the book and cements its difficulty, the book uses the English language, warped by Joyce's intense multilingual multireferential worldplay,⁵⁰ to talk about itself. Here, as part of a sequence that describes the book itself, the word 'read' has been replaced with an older form, 'rede', which is found in medieval and early modern forms of English, and consequently brings into play older meanings of the word that, in a normal modern book with normal spelling, would not be implied. For example 'rede' could also mean here 'advise' or 'counsel', drastically changing the potential relationship of the reader to the text, should the reader choose to read mediievally. It is therefore the case that Joycean linguistic experiments enable a retheorisation of periodisation, a theorisation that constitutes an imaginative leap beyond given reality. In this case, the reader can be imagined to directly influence the world of the book, to give it counsel. In doing so, the medieval is resurrected, made to be present in modernity, complicating and enriching sense in the process.

This retheorisation is an endeavour of the imagination predicated first and foremost on the reader's relationship to the text, before opening out to reimagine the reader's relationship to

⁴⁹ Cheryl Temple Herr, "Difficulty: 'Oxen of the Sun' and 'Circe'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ulysses*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 160.

⁵⁰ In true Wakean style, I maintain this typographical error as an apt illustration of the book's method and effects.

the medieval: both these preliminary observations of the handling of history in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in the paragraphs above imply a special relationship to reading as an activity. In both, history's contemporaneity is stressed stylistically, on the level of experiments with the word itself. This means that the medievalisms these texts might be said to engage in will be ones that are concerned reflexively with the reading experience. Many readers note the multiplicity of reading strategies available to the readers of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. What I want to show here, and to affirm, is that there exists in these books a reading experience which is characterised by its medievalism, and this medievalism as a complex and positive aesthetic effect. Reflexive attention to the reading experience is here Joyce's way of priming a response to the medieval. Useful here is Derek Attridge's simple but not simplistic formulation of the creative act as response, as an act 'that brings [the thing responded to] into being anew by allowing it, in a performance of its singularity for me, for my place and time, to refigure the ways in which I, and my culture, think and feel.'⁵¹ These novels are unique in part because they bring the medieval into being anew by means of medieval reading, enabling in the process alternative strategies of reading mediievally that articulate different, difficult ways of interpreting.

It is necessary, in establishing the characteristics of these strategies, to address certain methodological questions this topic raises, which is the remaining purpose of this introduction. First these questions take the form of what and why: what is reading mediievally, and why should we look for it in Joyce, that is, what are the characteristics of reading mediievally that are special? The difficulties in describing what the medieval is depend on certain factors I will elaborate in the course of this chapter: the teleological perspective on history implied in the word 'medieval', the corollary of which is the difficulty

⁵¹ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 125.

of categorising periods of history, a practice known as periodisation. This involves summarising a period of history in terms that are not too vague to make it indistinguishable from other periods, but are not so specific that they exclude certain significant events during that period.

In defining my methodology, then, I hope to show that reading mediievally is a hermeneutically beneficial practice enabled by the text that declares affinity to medieval reading strategies, both in terms of the physical interaction with the text and more abstract interpretive methods. Its benefit can ultimately be described as a literary liberation. I also hope to address the concerns surrounding periodisation by pointing to a framework similar to those developed by post-structuralist feminist philosophers Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous that applies to Joyce in this instance, where the texts display a discursive tendency towards an anti-essentialist philosophy, that allows for characteristics to accrete as indicators of familial relation instead of being individually necessary or sufficient components for belonging in the category ‘medieval’.⁵² That is, Joyce constantly updates the list of characteristics of his category with more and more examples.

I will establish these points in this chapter by attempting to imagine how a reading experience might incorporate reading mediievally in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by way of analysing a key fragment from each. Both of these incorporations show how reading mediievally is a multifaceted literary practice primed by the texts with varying degrees of explicitness, and

⁵² Julia Kristeva, “Joyce ‘The Gracehoper’ or the Return of Orpheus” in *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth* ed. Bernard Benstock (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 167-180; Hélène Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce*, trans. Sally A.J. Purcell (New York: David Lewis, 1972). See also Jeri Johnson, “Joyce and Feminism” in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce 2nd edition*, ed. Derek Attridge, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 203, which shows how these theorists, despite disagreement, draw directly from Joyce for their comparable philosophical projects. Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) especially makes use of Kristeva and Cixous’s anti-essentialism, see e.g. pp 91-92.

also something to which the text is particularly receptive. That is, reading mediievally will be shown to involve both a text priming medievalist perspective and a text being receptive to a medieval and medievalist history behind its elements on the other. This openness in the text also enables an articulation of what the particular reading strategy, reading mediievally, might afford: that in being particular, it offers an alternative to the notion of a ‘universal’ reading strategy. This also has the advantage of showing how reading mediievally as I describe it is present across both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, again resisting the notion of linear development—only in this case in Joyce’s own career.

The first experience of reading mediievally concerns *Ulysses*: imagine a reader sitting down to read the third chapter or ‘episode’ of *Ulysses*, commonly named after its corresponding character in Homer’s *Odyssey*, ‘Proteus’. We must assume that they have made it through the first two chapters, following Stephen Dedalus’ morning on the outskirts of Dublin on 16 June 1904, and have become somewhat accustomed to its dense allusiveness and its tricky shifts between free indirect discourse, third-person narration and interior monologue. We must also assume that they will not be taken too aback by the sudden change of scene and that by this point they might be diligent enough to Google whatever they find interesting but unexplained. These are the sentences that confront them: ‘Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot.’ (*U* 3.1-3)

A popular website that offers anonymous, seemingly authoritative literary analysis in an easy-to-understand register is the first hit a Google search of this passage offers. After sagely counselling our hypothetical reader not to panic, it points them towards the Aristotelian origin of the words ‘Ineluctable modality of the visible’, and to the German mystic Jakob

Boehme from whom the words ‘Signatures of all things’ originate.⁵³ It is necessarily skimming the surface to provide an introductory, informal kind of reading, and so does not need to mention scholarly work like that of Dukes who explains Joyce’s interest in ‘signatures’ as being due to an interest in medieval philosophy, especially the work of Thomas Aquinas, whom he appears to have read in the original Latin.⁵⁴ In essence, Aquinas proposed that each object bears the *signatura* of the Creator, pointing to an all-encompassing unity. But Dukes’ account of the medieval philosophy behind this way of interpreting the world is even still limited: Stephen thinks of signature in the plural, suggesting perhaps not just Thomist philosophy but also that of Duns Scotus, who talked of the *haecceitas* of each object, that is the radical alterity of each object, each object’s relationality to each other, with individuation of things becoming a formal principle of the universe. Duns Scotus is, in contrast to Aquinas in this respect, a philosopher of difference and multiplicity, not fundamental unity.⁵⁵ Thinking back to the quotes from Power previously analysed, Stephen sees a world of jostling signatures, where individuation and differentiation creates a vibrant world full of artistic potential. But let us imagine that, as is likely, the information provided on the website is more than sufficient for our curious but time-strapped reader and that she wishes to continue reading *Ulysses* instead of switching to works of medieval philosophy. What has she most probably gleaned from those first two sentences of ‘Proteus’, if not that Stephen Dedalus is reading the world visually as if it is a gigantic book, with every individual

⁵³ <<https://www.shmoop.com/ulysses-joyce/proteus-analysis-summary.html>> [Accessed 13 July 2018].

⁵⁴ Hunter Dukes. “*Ulysses* and the Signature of Things” in *Humanities* 6:52 (2017), p. 5. This article is especially useful as a summary of the broad scope of philosophical and theological ideas behind this particular passage, that I am necessarily eliding in my brief overview, although Dukes does not mention Scotus.

⁵⁵ For a foundational summary of Joyce’s relationship to Thomist philosophy see Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas*. Noon for his part suggests that the character Stephen’s philosophy is ultimately more a Scotist than a Thomist one, though he suggests that this is because Joyce intends an ironic distance from this character (see p. 72). Udaya Kumar in ‘The Joycean Labyrinth: Repetition, Time, and Tradition in *Ulysses*’ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) adds subtlety: ‘I think that this need not necessarily be a matter of irony. It could be that in Joyce’s own thinking there was a tension or confusion if not a transition from an Aquinian to a Scotist notion of *quidditas*’ that is, the essential property or whatness of a thing (p. 143).

object having its own signature? In other words, has she not been thinking along these medieval lines regardless of what she herself knows about medieval philosophy?

The reason for this thought experiment is to show in detail something that most readers of Joyce intuit: that *Ulysses* encourages readers to inhabit Temple Herr's 'multiple temporalities of being' implied by a plurality of perspectives refracted through the text: 'In "Wandering Rocks", for example, history as narrative is exploded by the multiplicity of simultaneous unrelated events ... in "Circe" it is challenged by the uncertainty of the distinction between real and unreal'.⁵⁶ This observation itself is not new; the multiplicity of perspectives in the book is something all readers unavoidably confront and is a major contributor to its difficulty. Each episode of the book is written in a different way to the one before, moving through a variety of styles in a literary odyssey that necessarily feels decentered and lacking a unifying viewpoint. But what is interesting here is that in the passage discussed, the reader partially and temporarily contemplates an utterly different template for interpreting the world, one that seems to have travelled in time forward from the Middle Ages to 16 June 1904. But this medievalised perspective is an aesthetic effect of the text itself, rather than, say, the product of the reader's ingenuity. The text in that brief moment has primed a readerly behavior, it has given the reader insight into this phenomenon I would like to term reading mediinally.

There is another, different kind of reading mediinally that I would like to discuss that occurs in a passage in *Finnegans Wake*, James Joyce's next and last novel. I am not saying this other type of medieval reading is solely the province of this novel. Again, the novel is preoccupied with accommodating a multiplicity of perspectives and reading strategies, and also entails a vast display of many histories and periods. The first 'sentence' (or half of one, given the

⁵⁶ Attridge, *Joyce Effects*, p. 87.

aforementioned lack of final full stop) an intrepid enough reader might well be confronted with is the following: ‘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 Environs’ (3.1-3). This is one of the more lucid of the book’s sentences, but it is still difficult. This difficulty arises from its extreme readability, by which I mean the proliferation of seemingly-incongruous patterns and clusters of meaning that emerge from the contemplation of its mechanics. Such a design is constant across the book, which does not alter its style as radically as *Ulysses*, but which likewise encourages intense readerly scrutiny and mental effort to wrest any meaning from its oblique patterns. Part of achieving this intense complexity is through medieval language: *Finnegans Wake* often uses words containing a history that is normally not present in everyday speech, dead or archaic language, and so the text demands the input of a putative reader aware of the historical context of these words to begin fulfilling the text’s many meanings. However this demand for a historical reader is, I hope to show, by no means exclusive to the *Wake*: *Ulysses* will be shown to reward a reader who also aims to see ‘behind’ the material of the novel’s text to find new contexts. This idea of an openness to reading mediievally is something I would like to illustrate.

Let us imagine again how a reader might approach this first sentence, this time keeping aware of the divergent paths to go down, only then to plunge into the particular rabbit hole that is reading mediievally. Our reader might well find themselves landing on the fact that ‘Eve and Adam’s’ refers simultaneously to both the very origins of humanity in the biblical creation myth and two contemporary Dublin landmarks, a church and a tavern (just as ‘Howth Castle and Environs’ refers to the Dublin area). Corresponding with the word ‘back’, it is an example of *hysteron proteron*, or the reversal of two words usually in a given order; therefore even here we find a hint of the novel’s inventive and fantastical treatment of temporality. But

there are many more avenues of interpretation in this sentence alone: our reader might also realise ‘run’ is one of the words in the English language with the most definitions, making the neologism ‘riverrun’ intensely ambiguous, while perhaps at the same time, if she has French, connoting to her ‘*rêverons*’ (we will dream) or ‘*reverrons*’ (we will see again), or if she has Italian, ‘*riverranno*’, (they will come again).⁵⁷ They might notice that the seventh word, ‘swerve’, is six letters long, the next but one ‘shore’ is five letters long, the next but one ‘bend’ four, and so on until we reach ‘a commodius vicus’. These words are crucial at the level of reading experience: it is the first point in the novel where the reader will truly be baffled, halted in her progress rather than confronted with multiple irreconcilable interpretations; not a single interpretation is immediate to the vast majority of first-time readers, who will invariably ask themselves: what even is a commodius vicus of recirculation?

‘Vicus’ has often been taken as a reference to Giambattista Vico, the philosopher behind the eighteenth-century theoretical work ‘*Scienza Nuova*’ encompassing all human history, envisioned as cyclical.⁵⁸ It contains the germ of the name of the main male ‘character’, Earwicker, here referred to as HCE. *Vicus* also means a village or a part of a town in Latin, so a ‘commodius’ one is one that is conceivably spacious and pleasant (commodious), while also perhaps suggesting to our reader the medieval *Commedia* of Dante, the Roman emperor

⁵⁷ For most of these observations, I am indebted to the online resource <fweet.org>, which has been an invaluable starting point in my research into *Finnegans Wake*. Interpretations and glosses are submitted by readers across the globe, and gleaned from observations in academic studies of the book, held in a searchable database and displayed beneath the original text to provide a vivid sense of the expansiveness of this book. Another important online source for reading the *Wake* is the James Joyce Digital Archive at <jjda.ie>, edited by Danis Rose and John O’Hanlon, a particularly valuable resource for genetic criticism.

⁵⁸ This work has been regarded as structural by readers of *Finnegans Wake* since Beckett’s essay “Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce” in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (Paris: Shakespeare and Co., 1929), a full ten years before the book’s completed form in publication. Atherton in his seminal *Books at the Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), pp. 29-31, accords it prime position in his discussion of ‘structural books’, and therefore a supremely privileged position in his book of books in its entirety.

Commodus, a commode, or the Greek *kōmē* meaning, like *vicus*, ‘small community’. ‘By’ in ‘by a commodius vicus’ can even be made to work on multiple levels here, being the common suffix denoting a town of Norse, that is medieval, origin.

Lurking behind surface-level medievalist allusion, however, is the possibility for reading mediievally by exploring what this word ‘vicus’ *could* mean, the potential it draws from a wide-ranging contextual history. It is after all a word that to any reader connotes, before any other consideration, its own appearance of oldness, being Latin. But here I want to elucidate a second way Joyce’s texts invoke reading mediievally, by incorporating the medieval and medievalist history behind their elements. In the case of this sentence in *Finnegans Wake*, what was previously practically outmoded or defunct language, for example Latin words like ‘*vicus*’, are set into a revivifying context. To demonstrate this I will turn to an example drawn from this word’s history that is laden with medievalist and colonial significance, demonstrated by Ananya Jahanara Kabir in her piece talking about the uses of Tacitus’ *Germania* in justifying British colonial endeavours in India.⁵⁹ Tacitus is of course not a medieval source, but the Victorian racial conception of ‘Anglo-Saxons’ informed by his writings colours the interpretation of that people who migrated in late antiquity to create an ‘English race’, and subsequently informs histories of medieval legal developments in Anglo-Saxon law or even the later Magna Carta as a similarly ‘English’ phenomenon. This significance to ‘vicus’ arises because it is the word Tacitus uses in his *Germania* to describe Germanic settlements, enabling an imperial and medievalist British fantasy of free Saxon villages from which the race descended, ‘where [these settlements] contributed handsomely to the approval of Gothic or Saxon political institutions as constitutive of England’s innate

⁵⁹ Ananya Jahanara Kabir, “An Enchanted Mirror”, pp. 51-79.

love of liberty and self-government'.⁶⁰ And so while this conception comes from a classical writer, it is tied into the British understanding of national origin as founded upon a medieval context of 'Anglo-Saxon' ethnogenesis. In the imperial transformation of land ownership in British India, moving from older collective methods, this text became the basis for a view of Saxons as cultivating private interests in agriculture, a medievalism that portrays the English as basically having been always free-market capitalists.⁶¹ In this sense *vicus* contains, to people aware of this context, or willing to find it, a Joycean reappropriation of British medievalism to describe Dublin with a crucial ambivalence.

As far as I can gather, this further context behind 'vicus' has not been elucidated, although this has implications for how we read the 'commodius vicus' by 'Howth Castle and Environs'—that is, Dublin, a city newly independent of British rule at the time of writing. It has taken us a long time to arrive at this point, but surely we can also see this *commodius vicus* as potentially radically reformed by reading medievally. This *commodius vicus* can now be said to exist outside the imperial timeline that transitions inexorably towards a pre-determined modernity, and to settle instead in a different, fantastical temporality that dares the readers' imaginations to conjure it, choosing for themselves whether the colonial or the anti-colonial fantasy is more valid. We can finally posit that the text exists not merely on a horizontal level, imagining continuities between existing tongues separated by time and custom, but also on a vertical one, where, unlike practically any other text in the English language, defunct usage and dead language is able to be incorporated into its interpretation. Whereas in my example discussing a passage in *Ulysses*, I talked about how the text brings

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶¹ As Kabir argues, however, there is potential in this description of Germanic pre-modernity to allow, because of its orality, paganism and its ignoring the increase of capital through self-valorisation, for a 'shared space' that contains the Indian village and the *vicus* as 'outside capitalism, written history, even monotheism—the [Indian] village community in essence' (p. 65).

about a ‘medieval’ perspective, informing how we might read it, in this all-too-brief discussion of a passage from *Finnegans Wake*, I have introduced the idea that the text is so rich in potential meaning that reading mediievally ceases to be a niche concern, a hunt for allusions and similarities, but is in fact a viable strategy among many for imprinting upon a text that is, finally, malleable to the point of complete literary liberation of readerly choice. I am not theorising about a fundamental difference between the two books here. Rather, I am talking about the two techniques of reading mediievally both books will be seen to engender: the texts enabling and encouraging medieval reading strategies, and the texts’ productive receptiveness to strategies of reading the medieval.

Finnegans Wake, as well as *Ulysses*, exhibits the property of openness to multiple perspectives and reading strategies. A reading strategy, for those eager to limit the range of the word ‘reading’, might be said to have a medieval characteristic, but there are yet again many ways this adverb ‘mediievally’ is provoked. However, in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, these strategies read ‘mediievally’ mainly in the following overlapping ways: the strategy recalls something medieval, it declares an affinity to something medieval, it reproduces something medieval, or it searches for something medieval. In the case of Stephen’s ‘signatures’ his mode of interpreting the world both reproduced and declared an affinity toward something medieval, while in the case of ‘vicus’, the word recalled a usage that put in mind a way of interpreting the modern world that searched for the medieval. Therefore, it might seem initially that this definition is unwieldy and too broad, but this broadness provides an illuminating pattern. Reading mediievally means *a particular set of reading strategies primed by the text, creating readerly behaviours that point to the Middle Ages as a period, with positive effects on the general reading experience.* The main positive effect is one of supplementing the choices one could make in approaching the text; a liberation of

potential reading strategies, an opening of the reader's responsibility into asserting, with Joyce, her imaginatively retheorised understanding of the contemporary moment and thus a text infused with Marcuse's hopeful autonomy. So, finally, reading mediievally is also medievalism found in Joyce that is open to and accepting of absurdity, anachronism, difference and obscurity, putting forward an aesthetics of liberation.

This aesthetic effect of reading mediievally survives Joyce's constant injunctions to the reader to consider the very act of reading itself and attend to its material circumstances, to 'look what you have in your handself' (*FW* 20.21), and in fact flourishes because of it. Indeed, this materiality is central to the terms of medieval reading, which is constantly thought of as necessarily a physical process prior to any notion of intellectual activity: 'the medieval scholar's relationship to his texts is quite different from modern objectivity. Reading is to be digested, to be ruminated, like a cow chewing her cud'.⁶² Even modern phenomenological understandings of reading can limit their attendance to such material circumstances.⁶³ Poulet claims the centre of such a 'spider-web' as the reading experience is rather 'a certain power of organisation, inherent in the work itself, as if the latter showed itself to be an intentional consciousness determining its arrangements and solving its problems [...] speak[ing], by means of its structural elements, an authentic language'.⁶⁴ For Poulet, this 'certain power' is not worth emphasising as material in origin, and consequently the notion that this object is one with a history and one requiring a historiographical sensibility is overlooked. Sara Ahmed might call this very tendency in Poulet the 'fantasy of a "paperless" philosophy, a philosophy that is not dependent on the materials upon which it is written' which serves to

⁶² Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 205.

⁶³ Georges Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary History*, 1.1 (1969), pp. 53-68.

⁶⁴ Poulet, "Phenomenology", p. 67.

depoliticise and dehistoricise that same philosophical endeavor.⁶⁵ If the materiality of the word is emphasised, therefore, the appearance of a unified intention and coherent consciousness speaking an authentic language behind the text would be far less obvious. By attending to the materiality of the reading experience, I am bound to an historically inflected analysis, in the sense that I have to understand how the reading experience structures and is structured as a historical phenomenon—this is precisely how a subjective, reader-based aesthetics gains its political dimension for Marcuse: ‘Liberating subjectivity constitutes itself in the inner history of the individuals—their own history [...] art creates the realm in which the subversion of experience proper to art becomes possible’.⁶⁶ This assertion means in the current context a reading experience that is self-consciously of its time but for aesthetic and political reasons declaring affinity to, reproducing, searching for or recalling something of another, older time.

There are similarities in this understanding of reading mediievally as an effect of reading to that of Alexander Nagel, who in his book *Medieval Modern: Art Out Of Time* traced the medieval presence in modern art. It is also a historically inflected analysis on a modern phenomenon in aesthetics, declaring an affinity to the Middle Ages. On this topic he writes that, in this light ‘pre-Enlightenment modalities [come] back into operation ... The premodern element comes into the work without necessarily being widely recognized by viewers, or fully recognized by the artist’.⁶⁷ Medieval ideas in Nagel’s reading inhere within modern aesthetic thought and artistic practice, sometimes undetected. This inherence has also been noted by medievalists in other arenas: Bettina Bildhauer in one article makes the

⁶⁵ Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p.33. See also George Bornstein, *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 7-8, on the necessity of an historical perspective of literary production and consumption.

⁶⁶ Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Nagel, *Medieval Modern*, p. 10.

convincing case for the seminal importance of medievalism to film theory, that genre usually considered as totally modernist in outlook and origin.⁶⁸ One difference between this project and Nagel's and Bildhauer's work is that I will not be making a case for the importance of medievalism to the literary branch of modernism in general, but rather seeing its application and its potential in a phenomenon of the reading process witnessed in two works by one author of that moment. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* especially trouble us further, eschewing conventional periodisations by incorporating multiple historical discourses within their own idiosyncratic frameworks. Such frameworks are inseparable from a longer Irish history of invasion, bigotry and oppression, a history of colonial expansion that implicates that very historicism.⁶⁹

Because of this troubling of linear temporality, we should seek to be reading in a temporal middle if we seek to read mediievally. What I hope to show is that the texts *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* reimagine the medieval to enable this mode of reading without reigniting the problems with periodisation discussed above. *Finnegans Wake* itself acknowledges this notion of reading the middle in a sentence that could well describe its own reading experience, cryptically: 'In the buginning is the woid, in the muddle is the sounddance and thereinofter [therein/thereafter/oft] you're in the unbewised [Ger. *unbewusst* = unconscious] again' (*FW* 378.29-30). The process of reading has an indeterminate beginning and ending, and is all muddled 'middle'. This sentence could mean that we are not witnessing the birth or death of the words on the page, but rather a middle time where they have inherited a context, instead of creating it *ex nihilo*, and have bequeathed to us the tools for their prolongation in the future. This sentence reads as if it is granting readers an explicit license to wield

⁶⁸ Bettina Bildhauer, "Forward into the past: film theory's foundation in medievalism" in *Medieval Film*, ed. Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 40-59.

⁶⁹ Chakrabarty, "Historicism and its Supplements", p. 109.

interpretive power, and indeed it would be uncontroversial to say that *Finnegans Wake* especially grants the reader an extraordinary amount of power in deciding what it denotes even on a basic syntactical or narrative level. It is this precise sense of readerly empowerment that most easily lends itself to being described as ‘liberating’, but what is interesting here is that the sentence codes this liberation in medievalist terms. It is usually the case that the Middle Ages are envisioned as the final process of pre-modernity, the prologue to a renaissance of ‘true’ civilisation, embedded within an unavoidably teleological timeline inflected by colonial ideologies. But in this sentence, there is nothing perceptible, or worth perceiving, *except* a ‘middle’ age, flanked as it is on either side of the timeline by a ‘void’ or perhaps a word without readers, and a state of ‘unconsciousness’. This sentence understands the Middle Ages as characterising the adventure of the *Wake* itself: it opposes a teleological understanding of the medieval from its implication that reading *Finnegans Wake* is necessarily a middle age.

3. Routes of Reading Medievally

From this attitude we begin to sense the routes that reading medievally must trace to make an ethically substantial contribution to reading in general, the panoply of alternative modes of perceiving the external world it must develop. It is from these routes through reading medievally that I get my three thematically-inclined chapter divisions: the body as a book, the book as a philological object, and the book as full of variants. Each of these chapters entails a central imaginative theorisation reading medievally inculcates, although they are not extensive exhaustions of this concept; rather, they encompass that range of reading medievally that centres specifically on the object of the book, and contain in themselves thematic linkages.

My first chapter on the body emerges from a central question of how Joyce navigates a central dilemma: how, in constantly exhorting the reader to ‘look what you have in your handself’ (*FW* 20.21) and turn constantly to material reality, is it possible to imaginatively retheorise the process of reading? As I have already shown in this introduction, the medieval process of reading did likewise, and I move from this argument via analogy to an understanding where the medieval conception of somatic reading osmoses into the experience of reading Joyce. I begin the thesis with the object of the book itself: it is not just an attention to the somatic complex while reading, the ‘handself’, but also a reimagination of the book as a body, pregnant with meaning—more easily done with a medieval book, made as it is from animal and not plant matter. Reading is therefore a reciprocal sensory experience, and it is this reciprocity that proves especially germane to the argument in this chapter, drawing from the work of C.M. Woolgar in particular.⁷⁰ *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* amplify the significative properties of the senses to the extent that the book-as-body metaphor carried out in them creates a complex web of symbolic associations between biological and literary generation, the book being a somatic agent itself. The name I will provide to the nexus of these associations is the ecstasy of citation. This biological-literary complex leads to the unveiling of a feminist aspect to the Joycean reading experience: what I will call a gendered somatic textuality. Literary generation is matrilineal, and the reciprocal somatic experience reduces the book’s passivity. The link between bodily disgust and misogyny is documented in feminist philosophy, and Joyce works against such a link;⁷¹ this is further evidence of such work.

⁷⁰ C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006).

⁷¹ See for example Suzette A. Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 82-84.

My discussion then moves onto a discussion of philology. Having seen how the pattern of reading is modified along medievalist lines to re-evaluate the material conditions of reading, I begin to consider how this also entails a subsequent re-evaluation of the Middle Ages itself. Therefore I turn from the object of the book to the mediation of that book. This turn entails a discussion of how Joyce manipulates those who have mediated the Middle Ages before him, critiquing their ideological bents in the process. This manipulation will be seen to be achieved via a replication of what I will call the philological experience, which necessarily means I will be discussing how the difficulty of reading mediievally works and what it does. In looking askance at the philologists who precede his work, such as Joseph Bédier, George Saintsbury, and Edward Sullivan, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* prime the reader to reinterpret the Middle Ages in a way confounding conceptions of the period as a stable entity. For example, *Ulysses* perverts the philological work of Saintsbury and others in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ (the fourteenth episode), while *Finnegans Wake* explodes the notion of using Arthurian myths like Tristan and Isolde for stable national origins, as Bédier did. In doing so, the medieval serves as a complicating element to a philological hygiene. Where Bédier propounds a ‘best text’ method of editing, *Ulysses* and especially *Finnegans Wake* delight in muddying the waters with I will term a ‘worst text’ method. In short, thinking of the way imaginative retheorisation is involved, the texts present themselves as a philological challenge; they arrive to the reader as objects of philological study themselves, as if older than they are. The reader is forced to confront their sympathies, and to interrogate their own methods of analysis, once again to turn back onto the reading process.

My final chapter before the conclusion is then an outgrowth from the ‘muddle’ of the Middle Ages I diagnose in the philology chapter. In this I turn from the object of the book and its interpretative mediations, out to medieval literary culture more widely. Making initial use of

Bernard Cerquiglini's short but influential treatise *In Praise of the Variant*,⁷² I outline how Joyce pre-empts this attempt to realign the philological attitudes of medievalists by exhibiting overt scepticism towards the ideological predisposition for single, stable, 'authentic' texts. Using the genre of the miscellany, where it was common to loosely anthologise a variety of texts together in one volume, I outline how *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are particularly receptive to a mode of reading that predates the invention of intellectual property. Building on the observation of the 'worst text' in the previous chapter, and the explosion of philological hygiene, the novels are shown to exhibit a capacious accommodation of 'wrongness', seeing instead Cerquiglini-style 'variants'. This leads to a discussion of the medieval aesthetic of *varietas* that willingly juxtaposes elements, like a miscellany, together jarringly: the books contain multitudes, as it were, undermining a monological authority as a deliberate reversal of patriarchal, hegemonic power. However, the chapter then concludes by sketching the outer limits of reading mediievally—despite this avowed reversal, Joyce's presence as an author is still felt in a way that no anonymous, miscellanised medieval text can aspire to, despite the heterogeneity and fluidity of these magnificent books.

⁷² Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

Chapter 1 Pregnant With Meaning: Reading Medievally As Reading Somatically

1. *Introducing the Body*

In my methodological discussions, I have outlined the central idea that Joyce's works display an aesthetic investment in medievalism, which manifests as a modification of reading strategies. The reader here is allowed room in Joyce's hopeful, autonomous text to assert herself as a modernist subject of modernity. Joyce produces a medievalism that affords a realignment of modern aesthetic norms to include the medieval. I phrase this realignment as simultaneously a distancing technique from these norms, and a renewed emphasis on the decidedly non-normative non-modern: making the past present within the present. In this first of these chapters, a definition that provides the beginning of my analysis is as follows: to read medievally is to read somatically.

By this aphorism I mean that a reading strategy that incorporates an attention to the corporeal is the *sine qua non* of reading medievally. Although my further chapters will inspect other aspects of this phenomenon, all reading begins with the somatic experience I will interrogate. I will illustrate reading Joyce somatically as an imaginative, generative process, fundamentally difficult and weird to express, demanding a copious flourishing of literary style and an adventurous, roaming attention, both deeply Joycean characteristics in their own right.⁷³ Such a readerly attention to the somatic is of course not exclusive to the medieval.⁷⁴

⁷³ Among the first to delineate a 'sexual aesthetics' in Joyce is David Weir, "A Womb of His Own: Joyce's Sexual Aesthetics", *James Joyce Quarterly* 31.3 (1994), pp. 207-231.

⁷⁴ Much attention in modernist studies has been given to the place of the body in artistic representation. See for example Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), and Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), which both provide valuable theoretical underpinnings to any modernist excursion into the sensory realm. The body of Joycean scholarship also accounts for a considerable somatic presence, overlapping especially often with feminist scholarship: see e.g. Suzette Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire*, (London: Routledge, 1990), Ewa Ziarek, "The Female Body, Technology and Memory in 'Penelope'" in *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Casebook* ed. Derek Attridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 103-128. Joycean scholarship, building on these insights, has more recently paid more

However, as I will begin to show, this renewed somatic attention is still a defining characteristic of reading mediinally; in fact this chapter exists in part as a catalogue of the various permutations of a conjunction between ‘reading somatically’ and the medieval—a display of the presence of the medieval within an area of Joyce studies that has hitherto been much-visited, which can lead to the dangerous assumption there is little to uncover.

It has in fact been argued before that Joyce’s concept of thought and aesthetics comes from mostly medieval sources, deriving from these a mystical understanding of the reading experience.⁷⁵ I will make a more nuanced and simpler claim, unburdened by a need explicitly to link authorial intent and literary effect: any readerly attention to the somatic primed by the Joycean experience is often simultaneously an attention to the medieval. This somatic aspect to reading mediinally entails an imaginative theorisation of reading’s material conditions; after all, if a book made of plant matter can be reimagined as a body, it automatically invites being reimagined as modernity’s other, a medieval book, made as it is of animal matter instead. As Bruce Holsinger has provocatively phrased it: ‘Medieval literature is, in the most rigorously literal sense, nothing but millions of stains on animal parts.’⁷⁶ If one is to characterise Joyce’s debts to medieval literary sources, this bodily material must enter the conversation. The phenomenon I call reading mediinally therefore entails a materialist attention to the somatic complex that forms readerly experience, whether that is on the one hand the reader reading with the body, or on the other, as will prove crucial for this analysis,

attention to disability studies in e.g. Dominika Bednarska, “A Crippled Erotic: Gender and Disability in James Joyce’s ‘Nausicaa’”, *James Joyce Quarterly* 49.1 (2011), pp. 73-89. A common uniting thread between these is a renewed attention to Joyce’s attempt to modify the perception of our bodies; the last paper mentioned pays special attention to the sensory realm.

⁷⁵ Colleen Jaurrette, *The Sensual Philosophy: Joyce and the Aesthetics of Mysticism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 8. For other foundational works linking Joyce to medieval aesthetic philosophy, see Umberto Eco, *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos* trans. Ellen Esrock (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), and William T. Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

⁷⁶ Bruce Holsinger, “Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal”, *PMLA* 124.2 (2009), p. 619 (pp. 616-623).

the read thing being bodily itself. It is these two facets of reading somatically/medievally that will prove useful in reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and I will clarify what is meant by each of these in turn.

The principal aspect of this somatic reading, namely, the material conditions of medieval reading being themselves somatic in character, can be reconfigured into a more illuminating form that yields more easily an understanding of these two poles: reading a medieval book is said necessarily to be reading something bodily, i.e. reading a thing that could be thought of as the body itself (bodily understood as adjective) or with the body (bodily understood as adverb). We could reasonably call somatic reading a defining characteristic of medieval reading, something that is seen to set it apart from modern reading strategies, given how often it attaches itself to descriptions of medieval reading, as I will go on to show. However, the underpinning of this theory, as understood in more recent scholarship, is a tacit understanding that ‘somatic’ means here a holistic sensory experience, meaning there is in current scholarship a bias towards that second definition, where bodily is understood as an adverb.⁷⁷ This sensory account of reading is similarly to be found in the work of Marshall McLuhan, who makes the argument that medieval readers integrated their senses into a holistic experience that was lost in the ‘Western world’ after the Middle Ages, which he aligns with the dominance of print, and a new ‘species’ of reader he called typographic man.⁷⁸ Yet more convincingly, Mary Carruthers carefully details throughout her extensive study of memory’s use in medieval reading strategies that the intellectual endeavour of interpretation was very often thought to rest fundamentally on the bodily. Whether in glossing the section of Ezekiel

⁷⁷ For example, see Nicholas Howe, “The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England”, in *The Ethnography of Reading* ed. J. Boyarin (Berkeley, University of California Press: 1992), p 74 (pp. 58-79), and Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, (London, Routledge Classics: 2016), pp. 17-18.

⁷⁸ Interestingly, McLuhan argued that this integration would return. See Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out Of Time*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), pp. 156-157, and Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press: 1962), esp. p. 28 & pp. 91-92.

3. 2-5 where we find an injunction to ‘eat the book’ as a foundation for a meditative hermeneutics, or in the ‘highly mixed oral-literate nature of medieval cultures’ demanding the focused attention of multiple senses, medieval reading begins with a bodily engagement that fosters intellectual understanding.⁷⁹ It is near-impossible to understand medieval readers as dealing with a world of ethereal ideas transmitted magically into the mind: rather, as Carruthers emphasises, reading is understood as resting on a somatic foundation.⁸⁰

However, these versions of the claim seem to focus mostly on the idea of reading with the body, rather than also incorporating a notion of reading something that could be thought of as a body. This latter idea is where the idea of reading somatically as pertaining to the material conditions of medieval reading takes a more unusual but productive turn. One critic who is useful in this respect is Michael Camille, who focuses even more intently on the somatic nature of the medieval book experience, showing how ‘bodily’ can work as both adverb and adjective in ‘reading something bodily’. However, Camille veers from the previous examples in displaying how the book itself is an agent in a medieval reading experience that is characteristically somatic. While arguing for a modern ‘sensorial turn’, he describes the sensuality of the somatic medieval book itself in this evocative passage:

the act of reading for the literate person was a libidinal experience, of penetrating the bound volume, that dangerously ductile opening and shutting thing [...] attested in the way people handled books [...] the way medieval books were bound with thongs between stamped leather or wooden boards, held shut with metal studs [...] clunky and physically intimidating objects, attractive to modern fetishists [...] [with] corporeal,

⁷⁹ Mary Carruthers. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.53.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.153. See also p. 166 for the following, attributed to St. Jerome: ‘the cogitations of the inner man bring forth words, and from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.’ It is important to note, however, that there is no single medieval ‘mindset’ regarding the body, which is an attitude this chapter aims to avoid: a chapter briefly introducing and clarifying the range of ideas about the somatic is Bill Burgwinkle, “Medieval Somatics”, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, eds. David Hillman & Ulrika Maude, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 10-23.

communicative and erotic associations [...] the speaking, sucking mouth, the gesturing, probing hand, and the opening, closing body. Reading a text was a charged somatic experience.⁸¹

This passage makes the medieval book clear and fertile ground for metaphors that figure it as the body: Camille, in explaining such metaphors, easily imagines the book as an object of desire, both to the medieval and the modern person, a libidinal agent alive and liberated from a conception of the book less sensitive to the somatic. Barthes writes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, an abundant and diffuse set of definitions and redefinitions of the same central concept, that ‘[t]he pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas—for my body does not have the same ideas I do.’⁸² Barthes points to a somatic reading here, but also to an imaginative theorisation: a conception that aids reading but might not necessarily be held in a way we know to be rationally true. In this case, he advances the notion that our *body* might desire something out of a book that we cannot control, and this is a conception I will explore in the remainder of this chapter as I talk about a desire for the medieval book latent in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

There are other ways we can use a relation to the medieval to aid our recognition of this imaginative theorisation of the book as a body. It has been noted by scholars such as Katie L. Walter in her work on medieval encyclopedias’ taxonomies of the body that the stuff of the somatic, the flesh, is the point where the nonhuman is seen to be present within the human: ‘[flesh is] aligned with the corpse, the abject ... but this less-than-humanness paradoxically resides in the very thing that, in medieval theology, marks the human and that—through the

⁸¹ Michael Camille, “Sensations of the Page: Imaging Technologies and Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts” in *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, eds. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 38.

⁸² Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p.17.

Incarnation—mediates salvation.⁸³ In this paradox, the supposedly understandable or ‘legible’ human is given its form through the fundamentally unknowable, or ‘illegible’, nonhuman: flesh. Earlier in the same book Walter uses this medieval relationship to problematise modern theorisations where the flesh is the antithesis of skin, interpreted as the ‘truth’ of the human subject by such philosophers as Jean-Luc Nancy and Didier Anzieu.⁸⁴ I use this scholarship here as an example of the intimacy of the human, with its connotations of agency, conscience and so on, with the nonhuman in medieval thought—which we should, in our imaginative theorisations, avoid considering as merely inert matter.

My reason for pursuing the somatic metaphorisation of the book is therefore that describing the book in a particular way has implications for the reading process. If the book has bodily aspects, that implies it demands certain considerations in our reader response and that it is itself an agent. I also therefore want to highlight the corporeal aspects in our reading: the book in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is therefore something we can not just read but sense, not just maintain interest in but desire. This idea of figuring the book as a body is something Camille traces in other pieces. Elsewhere Camille outlines how medieval book collectors themselves might understand the medieval book as a fetish object, in his analysis of Richard de Bury’s fourteenth-century *Philobiblon*.⁸⁵ This fetish is problematised by Camille, as he traces where the metaphor of the medieval book as a body might go, into a conception of the book as a passive receptacle of information, a vessel into which ink is poured, a feminised

⁸³ Katie L. Walter, “The Form of the Formless: Medieval Taxonomies of Skin, Flesh, and the Human” in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture* ed. Katie L. Walter, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 121 (pp. 119-139).

⁸⁴ Katie L. Walter, “Medieval Taxonomies of Skin”, p. 119.

⁸⁵ Michael Camille, “The Book as Flesh and Fetish in Richard de Bury’s *Philobiblon*” in *The Book and the Body*, eds. Dolores Frese and Katherine O’ Keeffe (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 34-77.

body stripped of agency in the generative process of literature and only granted significance in relation to a masculine Author.

However, surely this conception of the medieval book as body does not need to be along such worrying lines; Joyce, I will show, productively avoids such thinking (above all else, his Authors are far more likely to appear as ‘errthors’ (*FW* 36.35), a preference I will discuss in my chapter on variants). We can open our conception of this metaphor: if we can think of the book as a body, we can imagine a certain reciprocity in our sensory relationship with it. The book being a body grants it agency, if the metaphor is to be fleshed out. It is this very non-inertness of the book that will connect the medieval to the somatic, and will connect my analysis to feminist interpretations of Joyce. The medieval is active within our present and is not merely an object of our contemplation, and the book is an active maker of meaning and not merely a passive receptacle. If we touch a medieval book, the medieval book also touches us. This reciprocity to sensory experience is indeed an interesting quirk of many medieval European conceptions of the sensory, and needs to be understood to distinguish these conceptions from the somewhat flatter modern physiological conception of the senses as merely receiving data.⁸⁶ For example, because of this notion of the senses as giving out as well as receiving in, speech becomes, in some accounts, a sense in and of itself.⁸⁷ This notion of speech as a sense is something that cannot make sense in the modern physiological definition of the senses—but this chapter will explore how a Joycean artwork modifies conventional definitions, and precisely this notion of reciprocity in the sensory world, a conjunction between the somatic and the literary, will emerge.

⁸⁶ C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 2

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5

As we shall see, Joyce engages with these same metaphors of the medieval book as body, and avoids both limited conceptions of the sensory and passive ones of the text. He offers instead an imaginative retheorisation of his books, using medieval interpretive practices in a way that is attuned to the semantic potential of a somatic reading process. For example, if senses have these transferring properties, surely their significative potential is even greater: a medieval touch differs from modern touch partly in that its ethical ramifications are intensified. That is, a holy touch, a blessing, would only be holier, whereas an unvirtuous touch would only be more condemnable. This amplification of the significative properties of all possible somatic experience is also what we find in Joyce's 'modernist' engagements with the body, with wide-ranging implications for reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

As a way of explaining these effects, I will trace how the book-as-body metaphor is carried out in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, alongside an exploration of reading mediievally as reading somatically. First I will show briefly something of how the books exhibit an amplification of the somatic, both the influences on and influences of the body. Then certain metaphors using the body (the hand, the skin, the belly) will be employed to examine a reading experience that is consistently framed as inherently somatic. Following this, I will show that these bodily focal points imaginatively retheorise the reciprocity of the medieval sensory world, as I explain Joyce's framing of the book as a somatic agent itself, creating a two-way process of generation imitating this medieval sensory experience. This chapter will then show, as a means of discussing the effects of this somatic approach, how the reconsideration of these characteristics of reading outlines a significant feminist aspect of Joyce's works: a gendered somatic textuality, and the rethinking of bodies, especially maternal bodies, via the imaginative theorisation of medieval books; literary and biological

generation in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* will be shown as matrilineal, not patrilineal.⁸⁸

But, before we begin to answer the question of what these texts do to these conceptions of the reading experience, we must first establish their presence within those texts.

Reading somatically is one of the most fertile points of contact reading mediatively makes with Joyce's work, which is somatically inclined itself, to put it mildly. For example, Christine van Boheemen-Saaf, in her psychoanalytical exploration of Joyce's understanding of Irish history and its readerly effects, calls this fusion of the book with the body in Joyce 'the all-pervasive and increasingly obsessive somatization of his texts.'⁸⁹ There are many whose interest in the body pervades their literary work, but Joyce carries this interest to dizzying levels of integration (for van Boheemen-Saaf, that bodily incorporation is an attempt to express a specifically colonial trauma, hence her use of the psychoanalytic term somatisation). However, in attempting to describe reading experience I will limit the development of such interpretations: there are numerous ways this incorporation of the body is done in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, whether in terms of having Bloom in *Ulysses* have various texts on papers folded about his person, reminiscent of the Jewish use of phylacteries,⁹⁰ or imagining the ink of Shem the Penman in the latter to be made, like medieval scribes' might be, out of effluent (*FW* 184.36-185.02). Joyce even suggested, cryptically, that each episode of *Ulysses* might correspond to an organ of the body,

⁸⁸ For more on this idea of the text as patrilineal see Marie-Helene Huet, "Living Images: Monstrosity and Representation" in *Representations* 4 (1983), pp.76-77 (73-87), and Camille, "The Book as Flesh and Fetish", p. 35. Vicki Mahaffey explores the patriarchal dynamics at work in many literary histories of *Ulysses*, including the famous Gabler edition, contrasting them with the actual literary effect of the text itself in "Intentional Error: The Paradox of Editing Joyce's *Ulysses*" in *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Casebook* ed. Derek Attridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 241-243.

⁸⁹ Christine van Boheemen-Saaf. *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan and the Trauma of History: Reading, Narrative and Postcolonialism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 111.

⁹⁰ See for example the books he has in his pocket for a substantial portion of the novel (*U* 4.382, 10.639), or that the items he buys and keeps on his person are emphasised as wrapped in paper: the kidney he buys for his breakfast comes in paper, and Joyce describes it as a page he slips into his pocket (*U* 4.230). Bloom also keeps a shriveled potato on him at all times as a talisman, suggesting a real semantic potential to his pockets.

suggesting the book is itself an image of the human organism under the anatomist's gaze.⁹¹ Even outstripping this incorporation, in *Finnegans Wake*, an oblique reference to human anatomy in some form or another is never particularly far away, from the word 'back' in the first sentence (*FW* 1.2) to the cryptic 'Lps' (*FW* 628.15) (meaning, among other things, laps and lips) right at the end of the book. The books continually, by means of at least constant reference, tether the reader's experience to the body. Going further than this, however, the texts suggest a correspondence between books and bodies, between the physical matter of the text and our physical position as bodies engaged in the act of reading. One could say in fact that this 'all-pervasive somatization' entails an encouragement to read somatically, a priming of somatic readerly behaviour.

We must now begin to understand what this somatic reading can be said to constitute in Joyce, and understand how to interrogate it. There has already been some work into the multiple connections between reading and bodies, the physical matter of the text and the physical body reading it. John Nash is an example, who in his own study of how Joyce's texts imagine or attempt to prime the reception of his works, looks especially at the somatic effects of reading. This is one of his ways of approaching the observation that the 'question, "What does it mean to read?"' has long been recognized as an important one in Joyce studies, but the social significance of this question, as Joyce engages it, has rarely been extensively pursued'.⁹² In outlining a kind of somatic reception as it pertains to *Ulysses* and *Work in*

⁹¹ See for example the schemata that Joyce provided to Stuart Gilbert and Carlo Linati (to be found in Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.44). However, a reader does have reason not to adhere too strictly to these schemata. Not only are they often frustratingly vague, they do not provide a stable rubric for our somatic inquiries. For example, no organs are given in correspondence to the first three chapters, even though a reader would do well to understand how they relate to the body ('thought through my eyes' (*U* 3.01)). The two schemata also do not align: episode 5 (Lotus Eaters) is said to correspond either to skin in the Linati and the genitals in the Gilbert, episode 18 (Penelope) gives fat in the Linati and flesh in the Gilbert.

⁹² John Nash, *James Joyce and the Act of Reception: Reading, Ireland, Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 21.

Progress (which would eventually become *Finnegans Wake* upon publication in 1939), Nash deals especially with exhaustion and time constraints on readers, while also referencing a perceived pornographic aspect to the books. However, as the book points out, these somatic effects are a common observation of readers ever since they appeared, as Henry Miller once notoriously opined that parts of *Ulysses* can only be best appreciated on the toilet.⁹³ One revealing anecdote shows that certain enquiries into purchasing the first edition of *Ulysses*, sent to the Parisian publisher Shakespeare & Company when it was banned in England and the US, were done in the name of psychological and medical research.⁹⁴ Nash even suggests that Joyce responds to some of the criticisms of *Ulysses*, namely that it made no room for hurried or ‘less adept’ readers, with his *Work In Progress*, which ‘is itself formulated to allow for the bad or “hurried” reader [...] Joyce’s last work allows for both [slow and “hurried”] strategies’.⁹⁵ But I would argue this interpretation underplays how the *Work In Progress*, later *Finnegans Wake*, primes a way of reading. It is certainly noble to suggest that the *Wake* is open to all kinds of readers and therefore all kinds of somatic engagement, and to an extent it is, but it is hard to ignore the attention we pay to our discomfort when reading one of the *Wake*’s notorious long, digressive sentences, composed in intensely patterned English, often in paragraphs that take up multiple pages.

Further to this advancement of somatic awareness in *Work In Progress*, however, Nash notes its blocks of text are inherently somatic, a ‘self-reflexive materiality ... displayed in its stodgy form, exhausting the spaces of the page [...] There does seem to be an uneasily close relationship between the somatic reader and the tortuous writing. Reading has physical

⁹³ Quoted in Alberto Manguel, *The History of Reading* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1996) p. 152.

⁹⁴ Nash, *Act of Reception*, 101.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 121. I noted in my methodological discussion that *Finnegans Wake* even seems to explicitly encourages modes of reading that are incompatible with reading methods in the modern academy: one is the *sortes Virgilianae*. In this sense the *Wake* is unique in potentially rewarding even those readers most ignorant of a basic synopsis of the work.

consequences.⁹⁶ I would suggest this view also applies to *Ulysses*' own investment in physically daunting visuals, especially regarding the immense blocks of text that comprise Molly Bloom's final soliloquy. That is, the visual nature of the text primes a readerly awareness of the somatic, and itself brings about changes in the reader's body. Indeed, as noted above, the final episode of *Ulysses* at the very least is considered to correspond to the very stuff of the body itself, its stodginess, either its fat or flesh depending on which schema one uses. It is written out in eight long 'sentences' that appear not to divide into sub-clauses with punctuation, creating a first impression of endless flow as, diegetically, Molly lies in bed thinking over the day: 'Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness[...]' (*U* 18.1-3). The overwhelming nature of the body of text seems to correspond to a desire of Joyce's, as delineated in a letter to Frank Budgen, to produce an episode that provided a somatic counterpoint to Goethe's Mephistopheles famous proclamation '*Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint*' [I am the spirit that always negates]: '*Ich bin das Fleisch das stets bejaht*' [I am the flesh that always affirms], as he wrote in a revealing letter to his friend.⁹⁷ The episode is designed as a textual counterpoint to the novel's established mode of presentation, in that it sits outside the drama of the novel, contrasting men wandering the city with the perspective of a woman who stays at home. It also visually separates itself from the *mise en page* of the rest of the novel by copiously filling up blank space—far more present even in such typographically adventurous episodes as 'Aeolus', 'Circe', and 'Ithaca'—with ink, and subverts grammatical expectations with its refusal to punctuate. After all, her husband Leopold's thoughts are certainly more punctuated, more divided up: 'Cup of tea soon. Good.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 516-17. Translation mine.

Mouth dry' (*U* 4.14). In this sense we can begin to understand that Nash's 'stodgy' materiality leads us to discuss a gendered somatic textuality.

This understanding of reading something bodily as corresponding to a vision of material womanhood is a thread I would particularly like to pursue while understanding the somatic medieval book in Joyce. It seems consistent with Joyce's corpus to find womanhood broadly aligned with the material, maternal, domestic and the mundane around which male writer figures (Stephen Dedalus and arguably Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*; Shem and Shaun the clashing twin brothers in *Finnegans Wake*) circulate. I do not want to suggest such an alignment is without its problems, though I do want to suggest Joyce encourages the reader to consider this strategy of materially-concerned, feminised, somatic reading as one of multiple potential reading strategies. Furthermore, Joyce's affirmation of fleshly femininity and maternal materiality helps to undermine the tendency that feminist philosophy has diagnosed, that revulsion of the flesh reflects an embedded symbolic association between women as a group and a disdained corporeality.⁹⁸ Therefore, this somatic vein of reading is inherently politicized: it reflects an ethical concern, as part of work against that revulsion in exposing, interrogating and undermining it. It is precisely that same revulsion that was noted in the obscenity trial of 1933, where the properties of *Ulysses* were evaluated like a drug (it was decided to be more an emetic than an aphrodisiac).⁹⁹ Arguably that revulsion continues to fascinate readers today who might avoid *Ulysses* and yet know of Joyce's love letters to his wife, given fresh notoriety having gone viral.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ For more on this, especially regarding the ironisation of Stephen Dedalus' intellectual misogyny in *Portrait*, see Suzette A. Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 82-84.

⁹⁹ See 'Court Lifts Ban On "Ulysses" Here', *New York Times*, 7 December 1933, <<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/00/01/09/specials/joyce-court.html>> [Accessed 24 September 2018] and Ellmann, *Joyce*, pp. 502-504. There is also Kevin Birmingham, *The Most Dangerous Book: The Battle for James Joyce's Ulysses* (New York: Penguin, 2014), and Katherine Mullin, *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁰ The most famous is also one of the most personal, infamously describing in detail a variety of sexual acts with his life-long partner Nora Barnacle. Such is the new-found notoriety of this letter that it can even be found

Joyce's description to Frank Budgen of Molly and her episode in the book offers an accretion of adjectival keywords to understanding this precise reading strategy I have begun to delineate and implies the benefits of its presence: 'Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib*'.¹⁰¹ Each of these adjectives is immensely suggestive regarding Joyce's attitude to the text that was in the process of development, although it cannot therefore be taken as a key to interpretation. However, this idea of the text as fertilisable, as if it is biological, contains in miniature all the ideas I would like to pursue. This sentence is itself fertilisable with a medieval perspective. Indeed, with that final word this alignment of womanhood with the material finds a medieval intertext with the Chaucerian Wife of Bath,¹⁰² Alisoun, whose soliloquized life-story takes priority over her eventual tale. This 'prologue' abounds in metaphors of the domestic and explicitly argues for the wisdom of women's experience over patriarchal literatures.¹⁰³ As Molly Bloom says, in a way Alisoun might approvingly re-use to rebuke the Church Fathers: 'he came out with some jawbreakers about the incarnation he can never explain a thing simply the way a body can understand' (*U* 18.567-68).

on a website that is mostly known for allowing users to annotate rap lyrics, and it has been viewed by 16,135 unique visitors and annotated with great sensitivity by ten separate anonymous users at <<https://genius.com/James-joyce-erotic-love-letter-dec-8-1909-annotated>> [Accessed 26 September, 2018]. This letter is one of several such letters to his wife that, on the box of the three-volume collected Letters published by Viking in 1966, were explicitly used as a selling point.

¹⁰¹ Ellmann, *Joyce*, pp. 516-17.

¹⁰² 'Weib' means 'woman' and not strictly 'wife', however this is a similarity it shares with Chaucer's Middle English 'wif' and earlier medieval usages.

¹⁰³ Helen Cooper has argued on several occasions, for example in her articles "Chaucer and Joyce" in *The Chaucer Review* 21.2 (1986), 142-154, and her chapter "Joyce's Other Father: The Case For Chaucer" in *Medieval Joyce*, ed. Lucia Boldrini (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V. Editions, 2002), pp. 143-163, that Chaucer's work represents an understudied intertext in Joycean studies, and might even be a 'father' to Joyce's work just as he is dubbed the 'father' of English literature. However, this chapter is not particularly interested in establishing lines of *patrilineal* descent. "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" is found in *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) pp. 105-122. Important introductions to feminist readings of this Prologue and Tale include Priscilla Martin, *Chaucer's Women: Nuns, Wives and Amazons* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996), pp. 30-39, and Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002).

But insofar as Joyce exhorts us to read somatically, by integrating the body into the text and by encouraging an awareness of a more all-encompassing somatic textuality, how this newly fertilisable text might be understood and interrogated in relation to medieval modes of reading somatically, and the possible aesthetic benefits of this relation, are yet to be explored. It is my hope that by analysing the texts' deployment of various body parts in this chapter, a more general picture of the relationship between reading mediinally and reading somatically in Joyce surfaces.

I will start with the hand. Arguably one of the most crucial body parts for somatic reading, the hand is a useful starting point as it writes a medieval book, meaning we often identify a medieval book by its hand. By analysing Joyce's use of hands, I attend to the various ways the hand labours in a way that is explicitly medieval and gendered. The hand is also an object of textual desire, along gendered lines, and a way of denoting a kind of authenticity, despite this labour. This desire for the hand provides a sexual dimension to medieval books that reimagines the book becoming figuratively a body: especially, in this metaphor, a body that can become pregnant with readings. The idea of a textual modelling of motherhood enters the fray, via the pregnancy of the text. By making use of a line in Joyce, I will then trace the development of a literary model of generation, in the materials of books being substituted for parts of the body, especially the belly and the skin. This understanding of biological/literary transmission maintains a sexual aspect as I consider what I will term the ecstasy of citation: the sexual pleasure necessary to continue generating the line of reference that keeps a literary text relevant. From this nexus of the biological and the literary I end by providing a sense of the aesthetic benefits such a maternal materiality of medieval books births in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, with the books' encouragements for a reading mode that is generative and

somatic, a way of reading that in turning to the medieval opens itself to a radical alterity within modernity. In this way reading mediinally emerges as an affective complex that queers the traditional understanding of reading and understanding Joyce as submitting to a regime of patrilineal descent.

2. *Hand*

The hand is so semantically dense that it appears to be impossible to provide a summary of its important meanings.¹⁰⁴ For those who have them, it is the conduit for a person's agency; for those people to be robbed of the use of the hand creates a profound metaphor for the loss of that agency. This is because it seems to do the vast majority of things on our behalf, all kinds of deeds: we are immediately reminded of the infamous anecdote where a woman in Zürich approached Joyce, asking to kiss the 'hand that wrote *Ulysses*' only to be reminded it did many other things as well.¹⁰⁵ Its semiotic potential is simply vast. It would be better therefore to limit the scope of this focus on the hand simply to seeing how it emerges in relation to discourses surrounding the medieval book specifically: to do with desire and somatisation, and therefore gender, and in a way not yet elucidated, that is, to the labour of the scribal hand. Indeed, Isidore of Seville, the etymologist extraordinaire of the medieval period, grants the Latin 'manus' an origin in the word 'munus', meaning service, by means of a typically Wakean understanding of 'soundsense' (*FW* 121.15). Here the hand (*manus*) is 'in the service (*munus*) of the whole body, ... with its help we receive and we give'.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Although an example of one recent attempt is Darian Leader, *Hands: What We Do With Them And Why* (London: Penguin, 2016). This is a wide-ranging study aimed beyond the academy. Luce Irigaray points out that feminine sexuality's configuration along masculine parameters finds a crux in psychoanalytic conceptions of the 'forbidden hand', "This Sex Which Is Not One" in *The Feminist Philosophy Reader*, eds. Alison Bailey & Chris Cuomo (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), pp. 183-188.

¹⁰⁵ Ellmann, *Joyce*, 114.

¹⁰⁶ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof, Muriel Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XI.i.66.

The hand is therefore linked to the medieval book in its scribal role, by its labour (a way of identifying a non-modern book is by its ‘hand’) but also by its role in reading; the hand gives and receives in a relation with the book. But the labour of hands is also used in Joyce for a further dimension to medieval art: unsurprisingly, given Joyce’s abiding interest in music, it also plucks medieval harpstrings. When the medieval hand is inserted into *Ulysses*, it takes on not just a literary but a musical connotation: Vincent Cheng notices the medieval nature of the prose style of *Ulysses*, for example, in that it recalls Anglo-Saxon poetic form (two half-lines with alliteration across both on the stresses) by making use of pairs of alliterative nouns on a stressed line of prose.¹⁰⁷ In the crucial passage cementing his argument, he sees Old English prosody as a model for the aesthetic project *Ulysses* undertakes to yoke together the seemingly unrelated: ‘Inshore and farther out the mirror of water whitened, spurned by lightshod hurrying feet. White breast of the dim sea. The twining stresses, two by two. A hand plucking the harpstrings, merging their twining chords’ (*U* 1.243-6).¹⁰⁸ Alongside the metacommentary on literary technique and deployment of medieval poetics Cheng diagnoses in this passage, we can also bring the hand into focus as the element that is crucial for the entwining process of conjunction to take place, i.e. a metaphor for the labour of a hand, either in writing or in reading. The context also enhances our understanding of the associations at work in this passage. At the opening of the novel, Stephen Dedalus, whose thoughts are represented here, is constantly reminded of his late mother and turns to look at the sea, which the reader has already encountered as ‘our great sweet mother’ (*U* 1.80). In this sense we first

¹⁰⁷ Vincent Cheng, “‘The Twining Stresses, Two by Two’: The Prosody of Joyce’s Prose”, *Modernism/modernity*, 16.2 (2009), p. 392. Laura Jok, “Sounds and Impostures: James Joyce’s Poetic Prose”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 56.3-4 (2019), pp. 311-332, expands on Cheng via an analysis of *Dubliners*.

¹⁰⁸ Old English prosody works with ‘two by two’ stresses: a line is made of two hemistichs (or half-lines) with two stresses in each, and alliteration occurs on at least two stresses across the two hemistichs, often in the pattern a-a-a-x. For further induction into this, see Donald G. Scragg, “The Nature of Old English Verse” in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, 2nd edition, eds. Malcolm Godden & Michael Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 50-65.

encounter a series of associations with the scribal hand that we will encounter repeatedly: a sense of genealogy and reproduction (here, maternity), a sense of pleasure (here, literary pleasure) and a sense of labour (here, twining).

This scribal labour is a reoccurring pattern throughout *Ulysses*. The novel contains many scenes of writing, but most of them are by hand. Indeed, as I have noted previously in my introduction, the entire universe is conceived by Stephen Dedalus, via a remnant of his Thomist youth, as bearing the ‘signatures’ of a Creator, the world as a handwritten text: ‘Signatures of all things I am here to read’ (*U* 3.2). In this episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen’s deliberate attempts at interpreting these ‘signatures’ is a coterminous process with his literary endeavours; the episode ends with him composing lines of poetry. I have already discussed in my introduction some of the medieval philosophical elements at play here: but another element is the medievalised aesthetic appreciation of God’s handiwork implicit in the word ‘signature’. A young Umberto Eco showed in his study of medieval aesthetics (a study that led him to Joyce’s medievalism in a study usually published separately as ‘The Aesthetics of Chaosmos’) that everything somehow displaying God led to a ‘pancalistic’ tendency in medieval aesthetics.¹⁰⁹ He makes a major example of John Scotus Eriugena, a ninth-century Irish theologian who was to have influence on Thomas Aquinas, and who Joyce knew. Eriugena saw the universe as ‘combined together in a marvelous unity’, and as Eco puts it, in rather bold terms, ‘[t]here was not a single medieval writer who did not turn to this theme of the polyphony of the universe’, leading to an aesthetics of joyous ‘excess’ one might usually associate with the Renaissance or even the works of James Joyce.¹¹⁰ A sense of his

¹⁰⁹ Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 18. However, more up-to-date studies of medieval ideas of aesthetics include Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁰ Eco, *Art and Beauty*, p. 18. I will turn to this excess later on in discussions of literary generation and the belly.

absorption of Eriugena's ideas is found most prominently however in *Finnegans Wake*, which is where I briefly turn to explain this Irish philosophical connection.

The creations of 'Bygmester [Nor. = Master-Builder; big mister; big mess] Finnegan', 'erigenating from next to nothing' (*FW* 4.36-5.01), stems from an understanding of God's non-being through his transcendence of being, a 'nothing on account of excellence' (*nihil per excellentiam*) as opposed to 'nothing through privation' (*nihil per privationem*), which would be heresy. However, the quote here, from the very beginning of the novel, builds on and twists the philosophy: by saying creation was *not* purely *ex nihilo*, this places Finnegan-as-God on the lowest rung of the hierarchy of being, namely unformed matter which is 'almost nothing'. Furthermore, like Giambattista Vico, who is most commonly linked to Joyce's scheme for the *Wake's* cyclic nature, Eriugena also espoused a circular vision of history, with all being returning to God.¹¹¹ Just as the novel returns to this 'next-to-nothing' state, with the ending running into the beginning, then Eriugena's philosophy is being exposed to a Joycean atheistic swerve, depriving it of its most important component.

The general sense of this observation is that the idea of musical correspondence, a hand plucking the harpstrings, or signing all things, is in the Christian God's medieval hands. However, Joyce is not a medieval theologian. Marilyn French already posited this idea of non-modern correspondence as central to Joyce's aesthetics in *Finnegans Wake*, but elegantly described the atheistic swerve his works take: 'The medieval principle of similitude as a form of the interconnection that demonstrates God's plan is a major principle in the *Wake* —

¹¹¹ For a more detailed introduction to these complex ideas I have discussed only briefly please see Dermot Moran, 'John Scottus Eriugena' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL= <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/scottus-eriukena/>>. [Accessed 7 Jun 2018].

without God or the plan'.¹¹² In short, Joyce can be said to take what he might want out of a particular medieval understanding of the world, only to remove the keystone, namely the all-encompassing God of Christianity, at the last stage.

However, the edifice does not seem to me to collapse: this rejection of authority is an essential strategy in Joyce and allows for fruitful discussion of, among other things, gender and its relationship to the scribal hand. While he is having his palm read in a brothel, Stephen claims that he, meanwhile, 'never could read His handwriting except His criminal thumbprint on the haddock' (*U* 15.3680-81).¹¹³ He seems to be referencing his earlier abovementioned desire to read the 'signatures of all things', and at this point of profound drunkenness he seems to have concluded that he has failed to read, to interpret (all while speaking in a likewise baffling and oblique manner). This failure is framed as an absence of handiwork, perhaps a lightness of touch from the creator that entails itself a failure—but then Stephen's atheistic swerve is a Miltonic rebellion, the one instance of the creator's heavy-handedness being a 'criminal thumbprint'. The artist-creator's handiwork has been subjected to a critic, not just a reader, in Stephen Dedalus.

Zoe, the palmist, however, deduces that he has a 'woman's hand' (*U* 15.3678). Stephen's intellectual sphere is constructed so that in the novel he seems not to interact directly with any women who are neither family or sex workers, and yet his relationship to labour is such that he is seen to have a feminised body.¹¹⁴ To put it more bluntly, literary creation is

¹¹² Marilyn French, 'Silences: Where Joyce's Language Stops' in *The Languages of Joyce: Selected Papers from the 11th International James Joyce Symposium*, ed. R.M. Bollettieri Bosinelli, C. Marengo Vaglio and Christine van Boheemen, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1992), p. 47.

¹¹³ Gifford glosses this typically baffling Dedalian utterance as referring to a common ascription of the "black spots behind a haddock's pectoral fin to the imprint of the finger and thumb of St. Peter" (Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 511). Once again the somatic nature of writing is emphasised.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Valente, "Thrilled by His Touch: Homosexual Panic and the Will to Artistry in 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 31.3 (1994), p. 172 (pp. 167-188), suggests such a

gendered as feminine. It is interesting to note that Stephen's scribal hand is gendered, therefore, in a way that marginalises him in the strictures of the same patriarchal authority that scribal hand might be thought to figure. Indeed, in the earlier *Portrait*, Stephen's nascent conception of effortless patriarchal authority in art leads to a certain removal of manual labour, alongside complicating connotations like a deflation of authority and perhaps a feminised softness in the hands: an 'artist, like the God of the creation, [who] remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails' (*P* 215). The lightness of touch Stephen perceives in the world, or rather fails to perceive, is for this character also a model of the artist effacing the self. This provocative authorial aesthetics is tempting to the Joycean reader. Indeed, it will later be the case that I discuss Joyce's 'abdication of authority'—however, I will also argue there that Joyce's heavy-handed criminal thumbprints are all over the book.

Importantly, however, this confluence of gender with the scribal hand links Stephen Dedalus with medieval readers, in that literary production has a feminised dimension to both.

Furthermore, this gendering of the scribal hand underlies a desire for the handwritten, and an attempt to satisfy the desire for medieval books and to fulfil more generally a genealogy that is both biological and literary. Medieval readers, like many modern ones, desired medieval books, some to a particularly intense degree. As discussed above, Michael Camille discerns that the book becomes almost a Freudian fetish object in medieval metaphors that centre on its fleshly nature.¹¹⁵ However, in his study of Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon*, he makes note of a certain problem in the metaphor that I have alluded to previously:

Just as astrology focused upon the moment of the conception
of the fetus, de Bury is obsessed with the founding moment

feminisation is found in *Portrait* as well, in the formative homoerotic context of Clongowes that Stephen comes both to be allured and repulsed by, and which is crucial to his artistic development.

¹¹⁵ Camille, 'Book as Flesh', p. 37.

of writing as a sexual act. [...] Such metaphors were common, as in Nature's famous call for clerics to get down and 'plough' the page with the pens in *Roman de la Rose*. Standard Aristotelian theories of generation [...] saw the male providing the form and the female the matter of the fetus. This would make the author's inscription, his word, his seed planted on the female flesh of the parchment. So in chapter 16 books are copied and *men* beget sons [...] [But] de Bury argues for textual immortality without the necessity for maternal materiality.¹¹⁶

There is plenty to say about this quote and how it links to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. The maternal materiality that closes the quotation is something I would like to return to when I discuss skin and the belly. However, it is clear from this quotation that one does not need to go particularly far to find an association between medieval reading, sexual desire, and a (rejected) femininity inherent in textual production. Especially prominent is the conception of sexual desire as 'for' the act of procreation. This sexual aspect specific to medieval reading arises from the intimacy of the body, human or nonhuman, to medieval reading. But as I have outlined, reading is not merely a bodily act but an intimate encounter with an agent that can itself figure as a body. This intimate encounter with bodily texts is found in Joyce, especially by means of handwritten texts. It is through this that the link between reading and sex is most solidly established, and so becomes a major thread I would like to follow now before turning to the maternal metaphors this passage contained.

This intimacy arises partly because of the epistolary nature of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*: both in some sense heavily feature and are 'about' handwritten letters throughout. In *Ulysses* a letter appears in some guise in every episode, typographically rendered for the benefit of the reader to give it prominence in comparison to the usual text. *Finnegans Wake* obsesses repeatedly over the contents of a letter (which I will call The Letter) both exonerating and

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp 53-54. Camille's italics.

implicating the HCE character, a comical patriarch who falls from grace through an ambiguous sexual infraction in Dublin's Phoenix Park, written by the ALP character (typically called Anna Livia Plurabelle or Anna Livia for short), often taken to be the feminised other of that 'archetype', being flux or change. While aspects of this letter (such as a tea-stain, its four closing kisses and so on) are rehearsed throughout the book, it is never presented explicitly but rather woven into the long paragraphs and sentences of the text.

Even the letters in *Ulysses* tend to have a prominent sexual theme. For example, Molly, in her soliloquy closing *Ulysses*, mixes her sexual desires with desires for the handwritten. Here she thinks of her extramarital relationship with Blazes Boylan: 'I hope hell write me a longer letter the next time if its a thing he really likes me [...] I wish somebody would write me a loveletter his wasnt much and I told him he could write what he liked [...] I could write the answer in bed to let him imagine me' (*U* 18.731-740). A little further on in the sentence, she remembers decoding and embracing the materiality of her first love-letters, especially the pleasure of keeping the handwriting proximate to her body: 'an admirer he signed [...] I had it inside my petticoat bodice all day reading it up in every hole and corner [...] to find out by the handwriting or the language of stamps singing' (*U* 18.762-67). This idea of having text on the body, or even in the body, as suggested by 'reading it up in every hole and corner', explicitly mirrors the previously mentioned use of texts and writing materials kept on her husband Leopold's body. But further to this, the intimacy of the letter is part of its sexual appeal, provided by its significant metaphorical proximity to that essential vehicle of touch, the hand. The phrasing of the quotation implies a reciprocity of sexual agency, depending on whether it's the letter's holes or the body's holes that are referred to. The letter 'in every hole' stands in for her former admirer's hand, but also Molly uses these hands to explore stomata of the text, reading up in every hole, to know in full the letter, to use the scribal hand

as a sensory conduit to an epiphany of sexual discovery and the letter's presence in the bodily world.

But it is in *Finnegans Wake* that the connection between desire, handwritten letters and the medieval book is made most explicit. Moving beyond a turn towards the material and the somatic ('look what you have in your handself' (*FW* 20.21)), *Finnegans Wake* propagates a biological account of citation, where reading begets more reading, where citation is embedded in a circular process of generation, similar to the larger circular narratives that mark the book's extreme difficulty and idiosyncrasy. This biological turn relies on a fantastical retheorisation of the book where it is itself an agent in this generative process, a body that feels sexual desire and that elicits what I will term for the purposes of this chapter the ecstasy of citation. In turning to what I have in 'my handself', I am reading somatically, I am reading *Finnegans Wake* as if it is a book with a body.

Finnegans Wake turns its unique discourse on itself on many occasions, sometimes at length. However, chapter I.5 is the most fulsome self-description, structured as a description of ALP's letter or 'Her untitled mamafesta memorialising the Mosthighest' (*FW* 104.4). The chapter opens, after a Quranic opening 'In the name of Annah the Allmaziful' (*FW* 104.1), with the idea of the letter as a festive maternal manifesto (mamafesta) that encourages us to consider its 'many names at disjointed times' (*FW* 104.5),¹¹⁷ despite or because of its being untitled. There follows a list of such names that contain in a nutshell various events, themes and absurdities you can find within the book. Like many other moments in *Finnegans Wake*,

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Hamlet* I.V.211. This *Hamlet* reference also is reminiscent of the medievalist Carolyn Dinshaw's interrogation of 'queer asynchrony', 'particular engagements with time' that look askance at the homogeneous empty time that is imposed by the dominant 'narrowly sequential' view of history in *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 4.

this encompasses, in shortened form, a primer for the rest of the text, although they are more comprehensible as individual units, and the relations between these juxtaposed elements are much harder to describe. It is because these names cement the medievalist nature of the letter that a small selection of these ‘many names at disjointed times’ deserve to be enumerated, in a manner that also demonstrates this resistance to a totalising, summarising impulse for coherence:

- ‘*Amoury Treestam and Icy Siseule*’ (FW 104.10) (which, among other things, calls to mind the frequent allusions to the Tristan and Isolde story to be found in the rest of the book);
- ‘*Rebus de Hibernicis*’ (FW 104.14) (which translates to On Irish Matters, suggesting an archaic book, most plausibly medieval or early modern);
- ‘*My Skin Appeals to Three Senses and My Curly Lips Demand Columbkisses*’ (FW 105.32) (alludes variously to the sensory effects of the parchment on which the letter is written, the nexus between sexual desire and medieval books, and Colum Cille, also known as St. Columba (from the Latin meaning ‘dove’), who founded the monastery on Iona and is associated with the ninth-century Book of Kells, which is also known as the Book of Columba);
- and ‘*Allolasha Popofetts and Howke Cotchme Eye*’ (FW 106.23-24) (Alyosha Popovich is a (male) medieval hero of the East Slavic federation of Kievan Rus,¹¹⁸ here fitting into the supposedly feminine ALP pattern).

¹¹⁸ Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p.106.

There are many more specifically medievalist examples I could give from this list. The abundance of information of even this one category might well provoke the exhaustion that Nash diagnosed is the primary somatic effect of reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Nevertheless, the book goes on to palaeographically analyse the letter, as its handwriting itself defies description: ‘The proteiform graph itself is a polyhedron of scripture. There was a time when naif alphabetters [gamblers, writers] would have written it down the tracing of a purely deliquescent recidivist, possibly ambidextrous, snubnosed probably’ (*FW* 107.8-11). These absurd guesses at authorship stage a quasi-philological history that suggests such scholarly attempts verged on the futile, a notion which I will explore more in the next chapter. However, these philologists are characterised as somatic readers, using their hands to analyse the hand of the letter, deriving a certain pleasure from reading, reference, citation. This ‘deft hand of an expert’ is sexual, however, and it is in accounting for the presence of this desire that we begin to leave the realm of the hand (*FW* 109.29-30).

Citation and reference becomes a hunt for butterflies later on page 107, with explicitly sexual connotations, saying of the letter/book itself in a mock-academic register that

To the [...] entomophilust [...] it has shown a very sexmosaic of nymphosis in which the eternal chimerahunter [...] the sensory crowd in his belly coupled with an eye for the goods trooth bewilderblissed by their night effluvia with [...] fondlers like forceps persequstellates his vanessas from flore to flore. (*FW* 107.12-18).

As ever, there is a baffling level of detail to unpack in this short passage. The abundance of entomological, especially lepidopteral images can distract from the fact that there is an elision of writer and reader here.¹¹⁹ They are both engaging in, according to this account, the

¹¹⁹ For example, sexual mosaic is a name for gynandromorphism, where an organism displays both male and female characteristics, a phenomenon that would be well-known to lepidopterists; nymphosis is the name given to the change from the larval stage to the nymph stage in insects; moths and butterflies emit sexually attractive

same hand-based activity, namely *fondling* literary devices, or the ‘flores of speech’ (*FW* 143.04) that the *Wake* creates anew, attracted to them like butterflies to flowers. That said, it is also worth noting this manual activity is aided by a holistic sensory experience, incorporating a range of somatic functions in the eye and, most usefully for our later purposes, the belly. The passage suggests a complex account of citation, where the desire for discovery is linked via soundsense to fantastical biological taxonomy: if we entertain the idea that John Bishop proposed, that the primary technique of the *Wake* is linguistic rediscovery via the navigation of *etymological* histories, Joyce suggests this via the delight in *entomological* discoveries.¹²⁰ This pun can also be found elsewhere in the book, e.g. ‘entymology’ (*FW* 417.04). This biological turn in an account of reading materials and the tools of interpretation is therefore an invitation to contemplate somatic reading strategies.

The metaphor of flowers for rhetorical devices is itself heavily laden with medieval significance: there was a method of compiling rhetorical devices from the twelfth century onwards in encyclopedic works known as ‘florilegia’, which means a bouquet of flowers.¹²¹ Joyce knew of this phenomenon as shown by his allusions to florilegia in the *Wake* (‘florilingua’ (*FW* 117.14); ‘florileague’ (*FW* 224.23)). These florilegia were so common that Christine de Pizan complained in the 15th century that they had ‘destroyed’ the classical texts they were meant to preserve.¹²² It seems therefore that Nash’s exhaustion can only be considered as part of a necessary process of readerly desire according to the *Wake*. After all, most readers of the *Wake* experience the same basic melancholy: the ecstasy of citing or

odours at night; and Vanessa is a genus of butterfly. McHugh, *Annotations*, p. 107 is especially useful here, and throughout, with entomological information.

¹²⁰ This readerly navigation of etymology is one of Bishop’s main theses in *Joyce’s Book of the Dark*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

¹²¹ For an introduction to this topic, and an insight into these compilations as themselves a form of medieval literary criticism and an exercise in value hierarchies, see Vincent Gillespie, ‘From the Twelfth Century to c.1450’, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 2: The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 178-181.

¹²² *Ibid*, 181.

annotating the *Wake* itself necessarily leads down distracted digressions, a rabbit warren in which it is far easier to get lost than achieve a joyous Joycean epiphany. However, it is part of the book's design to position this as a necessary component of the process of reading. As the *Wake* phrases it very soon after comparing literary activity to butterflies on flowers, 'our social something bowls along bumpily, experiencing a jolting series of prearranged disappointments, down the long lane of ... generations, more generations and still more generations' (*FW* 107.32-35).

This idea of citation as a sexually-charged somatic experience does not require the extraordinary literary experiments of *Finnegans Wake* to be suggested. The best example is 'touching', which means 'referencing' in certain contexts, including several moments in *Ulysses* where this sense is almost invariably used in a parodic mode.¹²³ Here, the narrative voice is itself the object of comic pleasure, as if all too unaware of these revealing sexual connotations.¹²⁴ Tellingly, this citational practice always retains an air of starchy archaism common to many of Joyce's parodies. One example, in the fourteenth episode 'Oxen of the Sun', explicitly makes use of medievalist prose: 'And he heard their aresouns gen each other as touching birth and righteousness' (*U* 14.202-3).¹²⁵ Other instances preserve this same quasi-medieval sense of stilted, awkward archaism: such as 'the rights of primogeniture and king's bounty touching twins and triplets' (*U* 14.960-1); 'touching the much vexed question of stimulants, he relished a glass of choice old wine' (*U* 16.89-90); and 'in the economic, not touching religion, domain the priest spells poverty' (*U* 16.1127).

¹²³ One book that traces a particularly modernist preoccupation with touch, including an illuminating chapter on Joyce, is Abbie Garrington, *Haptic Modernism: Touch and the Tactile in Modernist Writing* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), see esp. pp.73-114.

¹²⁴ Cf. *U* 6.80-81: 'Give us a touch, Poldy.'

¹²⁵ This episode of *Ulysses* is also famously concerned with maternity and the notion of the history of the English language as a long pregnancy, making it ideal for this chapter; however, in the interests of space I discuss it in more depth in the chapter on philology.

Joyce's interest in this haptic dimension to reference only intensifies in *Finnegans Wake*, often placed near revealing preoccupations with sexual desire. To indulge in another brief catalogue: the ambiguous sexual 'slander' in testimonies resting 'on minor points touching the intimate nature of this, a first offence in vert' (*FW* 34.24-25); 'touchin the case of Mr Adams' (*FW* 39.24); 'a decent sort ... who had just been touching the weekly insult' (*FW* 42.3-4), which also refers to paying wages; 'the fundamentalist explained ... touchin his wounded feelins' (*FW* 72.21-22) (which in this passage can be interpreted literally as a bruise); and incomplete evidence about HCE's ambiguous sexual infraction is given by someone who tellingly omits the sense of touch (*FW* 86.32-90.33), i.e. an 'eye, ear, nose and throat witness' (*FW* 86.32-33). These are examples taken only from within the first sections of the book; there are doubtless more.

Touch is important for reading Joyce. One bizarrely elaborate metaphor in the *Wake* elaborates on the need for interpretive techniques that incorporate a holistic sensory perspective, beyond the 'blinkhard' (blinker) perspective that eliminates 'sound sense', a crucial component of navigating the *Wake* with multiple meanings (*FW* 109.12-30). It is from this passage I drew the phrase 'deft hand of an expert' earlier. This once again incorporates the sexual into its metaphor, revealing the speaker's intimate associations between hermeneutic practice and sexual desire. The speaker in this passage, a dry but awed academic, makes a case against 'concentrat[ing] solely on the literal sense of even the psychological content of any document to the sore neglect of the enveloping facts themselves' (*FW* 109.13-14). That is, he himself is encouraging a turn to the 'envelope' of the 'letter', the paratext: one is asked again to re-examine the material, what 'you have in your handself' (*FW* 20.21). But in doing so, he constructs an elaborate scenario that

unwittingly reveals a sexual preoccupation with the ‘definite articles of evolutionary clothing’ of a female friend of a friend, to be charitably interpreted as

suddenly full of local colour and personal perfume and suggestive, too, of so very much more and capable of being stretched, filled out, if need or wish were, of having their surprisingly like coincidental parts separated [...] for better survey by the deft hand of an expert (*FW* 109.25-30).

In other words, this avatar of the feminine in the critic’s ‘vision’ is, for some reason, ‘plump and plain in her natural altogether’ (*FW* 109.20). Joyce here is extending and satirising the same tendency to chauvinistic metaphor by thinking of the book as a body; the ‘skin’ of the letter’s page becomes loaded with the same sensory complex as the critic’s fetishisation of female skin, totally subject to the distorting, stretching, ‘fulfilling’ will of a presumed-universal male reader. As I will show, the ecstasy of citation often uses a certain performance of familiarity; here the critic presents his own private fantasies as commonly shared, with an effect as comical as it is unsettling. It is here we begin to see how the ecstasy of citation leads us to a discussion of the medieval book’s skin page and its role in Joyce’s gendered somatic textuality.

Ulysses and *Finnegans Wake*’s necessitating of readerly scrutiny by means of their ambiguous play provides a scheme for imagining semantic connections between sounds, between different meanings of the same word: it is in this way that the texts are uniquely positioned to bring to our attention this essential bond between touching as reference and touching as sexual. In this way, the citational and sensory meanings of ‘touching’ in both these books have merged into one. Now there is no shame in stating the obvious: the books are touching themselves and other books. Garrington notes this uniquely masturbatory quality of *Ulysses*, the text of which abounds with ‘ejaculations’ of explicit sexual content which so

disgusted many contemporaries.¹²⁶ This desire for the book is also expressed in explicitly archaic terms, and it becomes obvious that in this sensory articulation of a desire for the book we must account for the most sensual of all books: the skin-book, the medieval book.

3. *Skin and Belly*

In the corporeal simile between the book and the body, a desire for books is rendered in terms that align the body specifically with medieval books because of their greater potential to be figured as bodily. The hand can conjoin the medieval book to a dynamic of gendered desire, but it is at this point in the discussion—where we begin to outline what I have termed the ecstasy of citation, the poetics of libidinal energy that suggests the desire for books—that the skin becomes a particularly important site for the discussion of this metaphor. As I describe how skin works to metaphorise the book as a body, turning to *Ulysses* I will also have to discuss the skin on the belly as a particularly significant site for the figuring of literary-biological generation.

In describing the stylistics of the ecstasy of citation, it is instructive to turn to Joyce first and then see how it might manifest in other literary works. I will first provide a clear example of citational ecstasy from *Finnegans Wake* I.5, the academic voice of which we have already encountered unwittingly revealing his sexual inclinations. In this case, Joyce is, by means of allusion, explicitly invoking the comparison between The Letter (a metonymic construction of the *Wake* itself) and the medieval Irish Book of Kells. By the time Joyce was writing *Finnegans Wake*, he was thinking in terms of his works' relationship to the Book of Kells,

¹²⁶ Garrington, *Haptic Modernisms*, p. 75.

comparing a chapter of *Ulysses* to one of its famed carpet-pages.¹²⁷ Because of this and other reasons, there is a lot to say about this passage, but for now the general gist of citational ecstasy (with awareness of the haptic element of ‘reminiscence’) might be enough:

[one might marvel] at those indignant whiplooplashes; those so prudently bolted or blocked rounds; the touching reminiscence of an incompletet trail or dropped final; a round thousand whirligig glorioles; prefaced by (alas!) now illegible airy plume flights, all tiberiously ambiembellishing the initials majuscule of Earwicker: [...] (*FW* 119.10-17)

As has been established since Atherton’s ‘Books at the Wake’ from 1959, this passage borrows heavily in style from Sir Edward Sullivan’s 1920 study of the Book of Kells, also known as the Book of Columba or the Book of Columcille.¹²⁸ Throughout the *Wake*, observations made in that study crop up, appearing to describe the book’s letter, for example that the black ink appears to be made from lamp-black or fishbone (see *FW* 114.10-11). This elision of the letter with the medieval book makes the medieval book itself an object of desire. It is not hard to see an ecstasy of citation in the laudatory list Sullivan gives as the lyrical, wheeling opening to the book, using the pronoun ‘its’ which the *Wake* will later substitute for a similarly citatory and familiar ‘those’:

Its weird and commanding beauty; its subdued and goldless colouring; the baffling intricacy of its fearless designs; the clean, unwavering sweep of the rounded spiral; the creeping undulations of serpentine forms, that writhe in artistic profusion throughout the mazes of its decorations; the strong and legible minuscule of its text [...] ¹²⁹

The object of such a profusion of joy is this medieval book, both its pages of skin and the handwriting, which Joyce plays on by referring to ‘majuscule’ instead of ‘minuscule’. Both

¹²⁷ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, pp. 558-559.

¹²⁸ James S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959), esp. pp. 64-67. For a more up-to-date scholarly perspective on the Book of Kells, see Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012).

¹²⁹ Edward Sullivan, *The Book of Kells* (London: The Studio, 1920), p. 1.

these handwriting styles are found in early medieval Ireland, and in fact the formal style of the Book of Kells is indeed Insular majuscule for its renowned carpet pages, something Joyce includes to supplement Sullivan's commentary.¹³⁰ A further Joycean augmentation is the word 'touching' which introduces a haptic element missing in Sullivan's original, and further cements the affective and sexual undercurrents we now recognise in Sullivan's introduction as the ecstasy of citation. That Sullivan is himself engaged in an act of 'touching reminiscence' here is the point; by citing The Book of Kells in such a familiar tone it takes on this exact quality, the 'incompletet trail' perhaps being the trail of thought confronting desire for what Sullivan terms the 'weird' and 'baffling' alterity of this medieval book. It seems here Joyce establishes in *Finnegans Wake*, in one of its more surprisingly legible moments, a diagnostic procedure for the ecstasy of citation.

An illuminating example of this stylistic tendency towards somatising the desire for books is Derrida's *Archive Fever*, which reproduces what I have displayed. He plays with the notion of the ecstasy of citation in his exploration of the archive, which for Derrida is both a place where citation happens and the institution of citation itself, that is, both the commencement of citation and the commandment to cite. He refers to the sexual ecstasy necessary for the archive by talking, for example, of its desire to 'engross itself' to gain '*auctoritas*', a profoundly medieval word for books whose reputation precedes them and are very difficult to question.¹³¹ But his main type-scene for this exploration is a Bible on display in the Freud Museum that was rebound in leather and re-gifted to Sigmund Freud by his father. His prelude to discussing this artefact is eerily reminiscent of both Joyce and Sullivan, in how his style of citation invokes familiarity, and in the microscopic, list-like nature of attention to

¹³⁰ Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells*, p. 189.

¹³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 68.

handwriting, and in the similarity of the inscrutable book to Joyce's 'incompleter trail' or Sullivan's 'bafflement', and in the ecstasy of talking about a book made from skin:

The foliaceous stratification, the pellicular superimposition of these cutaneous marks seems to defy analysis. It accumulates so many sedimented archives, some of which are written right on the epidermis of a body proper, others on the substrate of an 'exterior' body. Each layer here seems to gape slightly, as the lips of a wound, permitting glimpses of the abyssal possibility of another depth destined for archaeological excavation.¹³²

But here Derrida makes explicit the somatic connection between the book and the body Joyce had only hinted at in the passage I discussed. In this case the somatic discourse accompanies the analysis of the archive as a genealogical link of parent to child—here, however, a masculine scene of father and son. The quotation even has similarities to my quotation of Camille above and his ecstatic, list-like invocation of the sensory experience of the somatic medieval book, both in style and in attention to its bodily potential. This object has stomata for both Camille and Derrida, and recalling the medieval book in this way shows it up to be an object modernity lacks; accordingly, it seems feminised and Other to Derrida in *Archive Fever*, despite his avowed critique of patriarchal logics. Later, Derrida recalls the Torah's grammatical femininity in Hebrew, and midrashic interpretations of it as a bride in contemplating Freud's regifted and rebound Bible as the type scene for his theories of the archive.¹³³ The reason for this link between the genealogical and the desire for the somatic or even stomatic medieval book is the nature of Derrida's type-scene, the gift from father to son: a homosocial passing of the baton, so to speak, lending the metaphor another layer of patriarchal logic. The desire for the medieval book seems inescapably bound with metaphors of genealogy and gender.

¹³² Ibid., p. 20

¹³³ Ibid., p. 49.

It is with this awareness of the genealogical and gendered dimensions of the ecstasy of citation that I would like to proceed in my discussion of it as a necessary component of Joyce's medieval aesthetic. Especially when we consider it alongside such somatic elements as the hand, we can show the responsiveness of that haptic organ, the skin, to the themes I have been discussing so far. The skin in the Middle Ages was the main window for doctors into internal medical problems, but was not merely a surface, but rather a meshwork of different responsibilities and characteristics, combining both sensitivity and resistance.¹³⁴ The skin material used in a medieval book, vellum, is responsive, more so than those accustomed to fibrous paper or the e-reader's screen will realise. To touch a vellum page is odd for modern readers, in the sense that it is rare for one to get a chance to do so, but also because of its haptic qualities: its slight springiness, its softness, its lightness, its seemingly inherent demand for delicate handling. Similarly, were one to write on a vellum page, this lightness to vellum, this quality of springing back, would become clear: held at right-angles to the page and using motions of the arm and not the wrist, a feather-quill and a vellum page seem perfect companions in how well they work together, as the pen bounces off the page.¹³⁵ It is this spirit that is preserved in Joyce.

The skin has already been suggested as an important vector for reframing Joyce's work: Garrington posits that '[u]ltimately, Joyce's multi-faceted engagement with issues of touch and the tactile poses questions regarding the importance of the skin as a metaphor for the *Ulysses* project as a whole'.¹³⁶ Two years before he started *Ulysses*, in 1912, at an exam for the University of Padua, Joyce wrote on '*L'influenza letteraria universale del rinascimento*'

¹³⁴ Jack Hartnell, *Medieval Bodies: Life, Death and Art in the Middle Ages* (London: Wellcome Collection, 2018), pp. 88-90.

¹³⁵ See esp. Christopher de Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), for an evocative, scholarly description of this.

¹³⁶ Garrington, *Haptic Modernisms*, p. 74.

(‘The Universal Literary Influence of the Renaissance’), in which he would proclaim that ‘one might say of modern man that he has an epidermis rather than a soul’, that modernity is materialistic opposed to an idealistic Middle Ages, that skin is little more than covering (*OCPW* 188-89).¹³⁷ By the time he wrote *Ulysses*, however, the skin is a thin border that is easily undone under speculation, a boundary to the body that is liable not to perform that function. It is an object of eroticised contemplation but is also described as having a role in a reciprocal relationship.

In the hallucinatory fifteenth episode (‘Circe’), written as a script to an impossible play, Leopold Bloom imagines the picture of the nymph that hangs above his bed has sprung to life, Pygmalion-style. After a long, erotically-charged conversation, she attacks him in explicitly medievalist terms: ‘*she draws a poniard and, clad in the sheathmail of an elected knight of nine, strikes at his loins*’ (*U* 15.3460-61). A ‘knight of nine’ is one of the Knights Templar.¹³⁸ Bloom’s erotic fantasy gives way to a further nightmare: as Garrington puts it, the ‘sculptural beauty of the Nymph is shown to be sepulchral’.¹³⁹ The Nymph’s Greek-statue skin is the site of this ghoulish transfiguration: ‘*with a cry [she] flees from him unveiled, her plaster cast cracking, a cloud of stench escaping from the cracks*’ (*U* 15.3469-470).

Garrington is surely right to interpret this as the fragile limit of Bloom’s consistent pondering on the dermal limit of women’s bodies, but the analysis yields even more from attention to the juxtaposition of the skin description with the medieval. We begin to glimpse here that agentic power is bestowed upon the feminised object of contemplation in *Ulysses*, that Joyce describes here a reciprocal reading process, which is drawn in distinctly medieval terms: in

¹³⁷ Ellmann notes that the relatively low mark he received for this essay ‘was offensive to Joyce’s vanity’, and that an essay on ‘The Good Parson of Chaucer’, delivered orally six months later, received full marks (*Joyce*, p. 332).

¹³⁸ Gifford and Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 509 points out that Bloom is often theorised by more paranoid characters to be a Freemason, and the Freemasons consider themselves ‘heirs apparent’ of the Knights Templar.

¹³⁹ *Haptic Modernisms*, p. 79.

striking back at Bloom, the Nymph makes clear he is ‘not fit to touch the garment of a pure woman’ (*U* 15.3458). In the camp logic of the episode, Bloom’s prior interpretations of his bedside picture have been hallucinatorily literalised as a lustful infraction that the Nymph is free to reject in the strongest terms. By taking on the mantle (indeed the episode often concerns itself with such impossible and eccentric costume changes) of a knight, however, the Nymph embodies this combined desire to imaginatively retheorise objects from the medieval past as present in the present, and simultaneously to resituate feminised objects as not merely passive benefactors of male interpretations.

This desire generates a range of symbolic associations in *Ulysses*, and this chain of association allows us to articulate the ties between skin and books in the novel. The dead skin of the Nymph becomes the dead skin of books via the lens of Stephen Dedalus, but the feminised object of contemplation is now, appropriately for this character in mourning, a mother. As we will see, Stephen is a character with a set of curious fixations, as if, as described in Joyce’s early short story ‘An Encounter’, ‘his mind was slowly circling round and round in the same orbit’ (*D* 18). This orbiting functions as a major mode of characterisation in *Ulysses*, conveniently enabling the reader to build a series of symbolic associations, useful for elaborating the skin’s role in defining a somatic integration of the literary process. For example, in the ninth episode ‘Scylla and Charybdis’, which takes place in a library, partway through delivering an analysis of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* that is at once heavily reliant on (spurious) biographical detail and a warping of the genealogical timeline (‘he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson...’ (*U* 9.868-69)), he considers the aptness of his setting. Turning his thoughts to the books around him sparks in him an association with antiquity and death, especially the connotation of his mother’s recent death: ‘Coffined thoughts around me,

in mummycases, embalmed in spice of words' (U 9.352-53). Envisioning the book as an Egyptian mummy leads to other discussions in the following sentences, such as the continued use of the Israelite exodus from Egypt as a potential symbol for Ireland's eventual liberation from a nightmarish history from which it cannot awaken. However, the 'mummy' also retains a morbid association with Stephen's mother.

Importantly for our purposes, she does not stay dead, but rather continues to exert an influence on Stephen from beyond the grave, to haunt his thoughts. The past is at least present in the present: 'In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood [...] No, mother! Let me be and let me live!' (U 1.270-279). Stephen's mother reappears in a hallucination in 'Circe', yet more grimly, providing us a range of further symbolic connections on this theme, again in the so-called stage directions: '*Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen*' (U 15.4157-161). There is a lot to say about this passage, but I will focus on how to link this description of the mother back to the books of 'Scylla and Charybdis' by a chain of Stephen's symbolic associations.

Here the green colour of her skin in death has manifested two previous observations about the sea right at the opening of the book: that it is both 'snotgreen' and 'our great sweet mother' (punning on the French *mer* and *mère*) (U 1.78-80). This prompts Stephen to think of the 'bowl of bitter waters', linking Dublin bay to the internal bodily fluids of his dying mother (U 1.249). The body of Stephen's dead mother is itself a potent, still living, text that creatively synthesises Stephen's disparate thoughts from earlier in the day, giving proper form to a

network of symbolic associations. This is a technique of reading familiar to any medieval Christian; the hallucination is ‘true’ in a typological sense; it has fulfilled the earlier observations of the mother-figure and given them form. The earlier promise has been made flesh, which is exactly the kind of relationship between literal events in *Ulysses* translated to the symbolic sphere that accords with medieval Christian typological approaches to the relationship between the Old and New Testament.¹⁴⁰ The book can connect to this network of symbolic associations (i.e., in this case, mother-dead-decomposition-green-sea) via the inherent ‘pastness’ of the dead, and the inherent ‘pastness’ of any writing, ‘coffined’ as it may be to Stephen. As such books are to him a short trail of thought away from the body of his dead mother, yet again we encounter a metaphor between the book and the body, granted specific connotations of the maternal and the morbid.

This presentness of the past, especially of the supposedly lost or ‘coffined’, is not solely found here. Stephen is a particularly haunted, guilt-ridden character, and he gives a medieval name to this haunting: ‘Agenbite of Inwit’ (*U* 1.481-2). These frequently-occurring words, cryptic to any reader not reasonably well-versed in Middle English, mean literally the ‘biting again of inner wit’, or more simply the remorse of conscience.¹⁴¹ It stems ultimately from the title given to an English translation of the popular 13th-century encyclopedia of ethics *Somme*

¹⁴⁰ As is argued in Stephen Sicari, ‘Rereading Ulysses: “Ithaca” and Modernist Allegory’, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 43.3 (1997), pp. 264-90, this medieval reading strategy can be framed as a generally applicable structuring principle to *Ulysses* as a whole. For example, a bar of soap bought in the fifth episode ‘Lotus Eaters’ becomes, in this analysis, fulfilled as ‘the secret of the race, graven in the language of prediction’ in ‘Ithaca’ (*U* 17.340-1). I am skeptical that any such principle is possible; *Ulysses*, like *Finnegans Wake*, continually evades such attempts at total unifying coherence as many critics attest. A good summary of that critical tendency is found in Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 120. As I have mentioned in my methodological discussions, by describing reading mediievally I am similarly not offering a generally applicable key to unlock the hidden meaning of these texts, but rather a voluntary process that yields aesthetic understanding.

¹⁴¹ In fact, Joyce has intentionally made an error in reproducing the title of this work; the title’s work is more often spelt Azenbite of Inwit, but to make the etymological connection to ‘again’ more obvious, the Middle English letter yogh is rendered a ‘g’.

des Vices et Vertus.¹⁴² The reason for choosing these words could do with clarifying; after all, it seems unlikely Joyce would pass up the chance to use ‘prick of conscience’. However, to understand the choice of this medieval title to represent the influences on Stephen’s emotional state, one might approach it from the perspective of one who has *not* heard of the original book. That reader would discern three things: first, at the very least that the words are strange, second, that they are old, and possibly medieval, and third, that they imply biting. Any further steps that reader might make to solve this ‘puzzle’ would not negate these foundational readings, which show us that in *Ulysses* the past, though unfamiliar, is emphasised as operating on the somatic level. The content of the *Agenbite of Inwit* is not necessary to understand its place within the textual framework of *Ulysses*; in reading it, the language of the Middle Ages in its adjacency and strangeness, its peculiar resonance, bites back.

Stephen Dedalus therefore is a character haunted not just by his mother but by a general past that continues to make its presence known. He declares, famously, that ‘[h]istory [...] is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake’ (*U* 2.377), and then wonders, recalling this ‘Agenbite’, once again turning history into a physical, living body (in this case a mare), ‘what if that nightmare gave you a back kick?’ (*U* 2.379). The violence of the past inheres in the present for Stephen’s pessimistic and distinctly medievalist worldview, laden as it is with images of jousting as a metaphor for physical and intellectual conflict.¹⁴³ However, this is a further illustration of the generative potential of the historical for Stephen, not as a mere object of contemplation, but rather something with agentic power that engages with us in a

¹⁴² Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 22.

¹⁴³ See especially *U* 2.314-18 and *U* 15.4631-665 for examples of this.

reciprocal relationship. For all his musing on the deadness of the words in the library, he nevertheless seems to believe that reading is simultaneously an act of generation.

When attempting to compose lines of poetry strolling down Sandymount strand in episode three, 'Proteus', his writing process is understandably quite protean. In a densely allusive passage he muses on Adam and Eve, and the skin on her belly pregnant with the entire human race and creates an image that he decides to reject: 'She had no navel. Gaze. Belly without blemish, bulging big, a buckler of taut vellum, no [...]' (*U* 3.42-4). This image shows that Stephen's thoughts when confronting genealogy, especially motherhood, inevitably tend towards both his propensity for medievalised violence (a buckler is a medieval shield), but also, more importantly for our purposes here, the medieval book. His focus on the medieval book yokes together the realms of literary and biological reproduction in ways that I have similarly shown occurring in *Finnegans Wake* when we discussed the hand. Here the skin allows us to imagine a medieval Eve, who as mother of everyone is the terminus of textuality itself. But Stephen rejects the image: firstly, perhaps because a buckler would have a boss, and the boss suggests the navel that Eve cannot have, and secondly because, as we read later, he currently associates books with death and mummies. Instead he opts for an image not so period-specific and not so laden with personal symbolic associations, yet still suggesting his mother's skin and fertility: 'whiteheaped corn' (*U* 3.44).

Nevertheless, the sense of the belly 'bulging big' as the somatic (and seemingly, therefore, medieval) seat of both literary and biological generation is retained. Notably the only other instance of a belly in that chapter is shortly after this moment when Stephen muses on the sin of 'morose delectation', which is akin to *schadenfreude*, and refers to Thomas Aquinas. Part of the reason morose delectation is even a sin is because it is the continued contemplation or

musings upon sinful thoughts, a charge the blasphemous *Ulysses* surely invites to itself, and which Stephen is guilty of several times in ‘Proteus’.¹⁴⁴ However, in a rare moment where Stephen cites his sources, he calls him here ‘Aquinas tunbelly’, referring to his famously large build (*U* 3.385). This ‘bulging big’ belly is here associated with literary generation: the largeness of his belly is also the largeness of the belly of his massive books, such as the *Summa Theologiae*, as in ‘Saint Thomas, Stephen smiling said, whose gorbellied works I enjoy reading in the original ...’ (*U* 9.778-79). In locating the belly as the site of a simultaneous biological and literary production (regardless of gender) Joyce alters only slightly a long-standing medieval tradition of using the ‘stomach of memory’ as a figurative model for hermeneutic guidance.¹⁴⁵

There are many similar instances of the belly as the site of both literary and biological reproduction in *Ulysses*, where they retain either this sense of being full with food or children, contributing to a sense of flourishing, proliferation, productivity, and also waste, pain, regulation. Leopold and Molly Bloom seem to exhibit two opposing models of how the belly might yield these senses, as their contrasting appetites correspond to two aesthetic modes. Leopold Bloom repeatedly turns to the image of Mina Purefoy’s belly when contemplating her protracted three-day labour, ‘her belly swollen out. Phew! Dreadful simply!’ (*U* 8.374-5, 8.479), disgusted as he is by images of excess—later in that very episode he walks into a restaurant of ‘[m]en, men, men’ eating gluttonously, ‘wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food’, preferring instead a cheese sandwich in a quieter pub, cut into ‘slender strips’ (*U* 8.653; 8.776). The literary imitates the appetite in this case: his thoughts are

¹⁴⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 74.6, ed. Kevin Knight, *New Advent*, <<https://www.newadvent.org/summa/2074.htm#article6>> [Accessed 1 Feb 2021].

¹⁴⁵ For an explanation of medieval digestive metaphors of interpretation see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 207. Ingold, *Lines*, p. 18 memorably claims, seeing this evidence: ‘The mind is a stomach’.

represented usually by equally short, fragmentary sentences, as I have noted above: ‘Nice wine it is. Taste it better because I’m not thirsty’ (*U* 8.851).

Molly, on the other hand, seems to acknowledge the ‘stodgy’, fleshy materiality and fullness of her own soliloquy, and feels the need to regulate the size of her body in terms that explicitly reference the belly: ‘to reduce flesh my belly is a bit too big Ill have to knock off the stout at dinner or am I getting too fond of it’ (*U* 18.449-451). Her words are, here in both form and content, associated with a kind of ‘excess’, as part of the novel’s sustained celebration of literature regarded as ‘waste’ or ‘surplus’ — a stodgy textual materiality that would itself be the stuff which *Finnegans Wake* itself would indulge in copiously, even ‘*ad nauseam*’.¹⁴⁶ Maud Ellmann, considering Bloom’s fart at the end of the musical eleventh episode ‘Sirens’, reads somatic excess as concealing the ‘lack implicit in the voice itself’, ‘the bodily remainder of the voice that cannot be assimilated into speech or song’ which Bloom himself understands in defensive, sexist terms of feminine lack.¹⁴⁷ In its enthusiastic portrayal of this somatic excess, *Ulysses*, contra Bloom, posits that the lack is on the part of the reader’s understanding, that these corporeal moments are in fact rich with potential, that the excessive belly can be a joyous and significant thing.

The belly becomes the basic focal point for the generation of a surplus, a proliferation of possibilities; *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* surely also deserve to be described as bodily books, and along with the *Summa Theologiae*, as gorbellied. The ‘disdained corporeality’, noted in my introduction to this chapter as what one might typically find, has been avoided in

¹⁴⁶ For further reading on this late-career Joycean aesthetics of waste, see Patrick W. Moran, ‘An Obsession with Plenitude: The Aesthetics of Hoarding in *Finnegans Wake*’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 46.2 (2009), p. 285. See also, regarding *Ulysses*, Evan Horowitz, ‘*Ulysses*: Mired in the Universal,’ *Modernism/modernity*, 13 (2006), 869-87, and Valérie Bénéjam, ‘The Reprocessing of Trash in *Ulysses* and (Post)Creation’, *Hypermedia Joyce Studies* 5 (2004), <<http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v3/benejam.html>>.

¹⁴⁷ Maud Ellmann, ‘Joyce’s Noises’, *Modernism/modernity*, 16 (2009), p. 384.

favour of a totally embraced corporeality, evinced in the book's celebration of the somatic, the book's identification with the somatic, and thus with a reading process that is implicated in the somatic. Thomas Aquinas' medieval books have been reimagined as gorbellied, and in the process a gendered somatic textuality emerges. As bodies, gorbellied *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are pregnant with meaning. And if as Barthes intimated the death of the author might lead us to consider the birth of the reader, the mother, so often ignored in this formulation, is someone else entirely.¹⁴⁸

4. Sensing Conclusions

Even though a matrilineal metaphor might be thought more obviously to lend itself to literary generation (after all, books have a gestation period and can be difficult to deliver), more commonly the patrilineal metaphor has held sway, as I noted in the introduction to this chapter. Yet, for Stephen, and I would argue for *Ulysses*, maternity seems a more solid grounding for existence. Musing on themes of literary and biological genealogy in analysing Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, he concludes: 'Fatherhood [...] is unknown to man. [...] *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction' (*U* 9.838-844). In this sense, a book does not need a masculinised author figure in order to function; in a later chapter, I would like to explore this question further when I consider Joycean fiction's productive openness to discussions that usually surround the anonymity of medieval literature. Further to this, because of concerted imaginative retheorisation of the medieval book, a queered matrilineal metaphor of literary generation is clear in rendering the belly the site of literary production, as is a digestive one. Both inhere in

¹⁴⁸ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *Image–Music–Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 147-148.

one of *Finnegans Wake*'s most inspired moments, in one of its most early stages, which synthesises these disparate ideas once again:

A bone, a pebble, a ramskin; chip them, chap them, cut them up allways; leave them to terracook in the muttheringpot: and Gutenmorg with his cromagnom charter, tintingfast and great primer must once for omniboss step rubrickredd out of the wordpress else is there no virtue more in alcohoran. (*FW* 20.5-10).

There are, as ever in *Finnegans Wake*, multiple disparate patterns in this passage, some of which are harder to yoke together than others. For our purposes, this stages the dawn of history as something is both eaten and given birth to, retrieved from deep in the earth and from the history of writing itself (especially medieval writing, what with the accreted references to Gutenberg, Magna Carta, rubrics and the Qur'an), with the centre of the sentence being a 'muttheringpot'. This object combines both the matrilineal and digestive metaphors of literary generation which had cohered in the belly, offering it as the ultimate terminus for literature itself. This is thus the *Wake*'s equivalent of Stephen's 'buckler of taut vellum' line, which imagined a matrilineal line of descent through linked umbilical cords back to a medievalised Eve, yet this image is not rejected. Here the 'muttheringpot' sends medieval literatures in their variety 'step[ping] rubrickredd out' into the world, collected in a passage that conjoins the domestic rhythms of a cookbook to the sonority of a sacred text. The image seems reminiscent of Ursula K. le Guin's 'carrier bag theory of fiction', based off her own speculations on the origins of humanity, where she argues for a feminist ecocritical re-evaluation of the acquisition of things of value, and consequently argues for a theory of fiction based on a flexible material framework, seeing more value in communality, nurturing and difference:

I would go so far as to say that the natural, proper, fitting shape of the novel might be that of a sack, a bag. A book holds words. Words hold things. They bear meanings. A novel is a medicine

bundle, holding things in a particular, powerful relation to one another and to us.¹⁴⁹

There is no doubt that Joyce similarly views novels as containers, sacks, or bags, evinced by his dedication to the motif of Noah's Ark in *Finnegans Wake* as a model for the book's own preservation of seemingly dead languages, curiosities, disparate species together in one archival package, on the 'arky paper' (*FW* 606.26). A book holds words, and so can also be thought of as pregnant with more books. This seems to apply more to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* than many other books, with their ecstatically dense thicket of allusive references, their infectious desire for new literary generation. But so long as a book is a body, it is more medieval than it is modern. So long as it is a body, and so long as it medieval, when we read it we are engaging in a reciprocal sensory relationship. I would like to close by considering this aspect.

Following the conclusion that the belly especially is the bodily locus for biological/literary generation in Joyce, a priming of reading somatically also emerges in *Ulysses*. Concerned as it is with the prime importance of the digestive system, close to the end of the eighth episode 'Lestrygonians', Bloom encounters a disgusting but potent street scene:

At Duke lane a ravenous terrier choked up a sick knuckly cud
on the cobblestones and lapped it with new zest. Surfeit.
Returned with thanks having fully digested the contents. First
sweet then savoury [...] Ruminants. (*U* 8.1031-34).

The process of rumination, of course, holds a double meaning as the chewing of the cud and the internal meditation on things that have been read, interpretation as a digestive transformation. I have already indicated that the belly is the site of a vital interpretative process in the Middle Ages, as the functioning of the stomach became a metaphor for a

¹⁴⁹ Ursula K. Le Guin, 'The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction' in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty & Harold Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 149-154.

different kind of ruminative process. The passage indicates an excess, it links with typical Bloomish frugality to the exact kind of ‘surfeit’ and ‘waste’ identified earlier as an essential characteristic of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*’s gendered somatic textuality. It calls for an embracing of those same emetic qualities the US judge used to dismiss the novel. This startling image, like so many others, occurs seemingly at random in the events of ‘Lestrygonians’, requiring the very same process of slow rumination to understand. Carruthers points out that medieval reading was—contrary to a modern stance that she characterises as disembodied ‘objectivity’—in the best possible hermeneutic scenario, somatic, and precisely this process of slow understanding and gradual rumination:

Reading is to be digested, to be ruminated, like a cow chewing her cud, or like a bee making honey from the nectar of flowers. Reading is memorized with the aid of *murmur*; [...] [i]t is this movement of the mouth that established rumination as a basic metaphor for memorial activities. The process familiarizes a text to a medieval scholar, in a way like that by which human beings may be said to familiarize their food.¹⁵⁰

The text, then, becomes subsumed almost physically into the self, eaten; as a result, the text is not deferred to, but rather transformed in the act of reading mediinally. In metaphorising the book as a body to engender the sense of an act of literary production, Joyce was surely also talking about reading, and surely also not offering his texts up to be deferred to, but rather transformed. A book can only be pregnant with more books if there are readers—authors are not as important. As the obscurities of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* gradually become familiar to their readers in the future, who knows what other things will become all too present. As a line in *Finnegans Wake* goes: ‘the past has made us this present of a rheadarhod’ (*FW* 81.8). This is like travelling (‘rhaeda’ = Latin for carriage) along a road of reading, a path with no defined destination, constituted by the gifts of the past. But this path

¹⁵⁰ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 205. Emphasis has not been added.

is specifically on parchment: 'Lederhaut' is German for a layer of the skin, literally meaning 'leather skin'. The path is along lines in the skin. The line of a quill is like a wrinkle: both come bearing history like a gift.

Chapter Two

The Philological Experience in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*

1. *Introduction: Everyday Philology*

Thus far this thesis has outlined interrelations between the character of Joyce's medievalism and the aesthetic experience of reading his works. In this sense, the books find important sources beyond modernity, in the Middle Ages, for alternative modes of reading. I have already discussed how, for example, reading mediievally enables a re-evaluation of the material conditions of reading, and does this by being an artistic conduit for an imaginative theorisation of the book as a body. It follows that this process the books encourage entails not just a modified approach to the content of the books, but also a modified approach to the Middle Ages itself. In short, reading mediievally also reads the medieval. This chapter will aim to show how *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* prime the reader to examine, re-evaluate and modify their perceptions of and approach to the Middle Ages: the way Joyce uses his sources turns a scrutinising attention back onto them.

By meditating on the medieval, Joyce is not merely generating medieval material *ex nihilo*, as Buck Mulligan pretends when he bids 'Pallas Athena' allow him to 'parturiate', 'clasp[ing] his paunchbrow with both birthaiding hands' in mockery of Stephen's dubious but engrossing lecture on Shakespeare, which is conspicuously lacking in named sources (*U* 9.877-79). It would be more accurate to characterise Joyce instead as paying a rigorous, practically

academic attention to his sources, and as concerned with the medieval's mediation through the work of modern philologists with their own ideological commitments.¹⁵¹

There has already been some attention paid to modernists' encounters with philological work in the university, such as for example T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.¹⁵² Pound especially would bemoan the survival of 'nineteenth-century philology, relegating everything to separate compartments, creating specialists capable of writing monographs or articles for encyclopedias without the least understanding of their import or relation to the total problem.'¹⁵³ With this 'total problem' being the question of lasting aesthetic value, discarded in the name of objective linguistic features such as morphology, Pound would deliberately provoke philological ire in, for example, his "Homage to Sextus Propertius" (1917), which anachronistically introduces an 'eraser' into the translation. Sean Pryor characterises this modernist antiphilological anachronism as a reverence within irreverence, a prioritisation of

¹⁵¹ Nadia Altschul, "What is Philology? Cultural Studies and Ecdotics" in *Philology and its Histories*, ed. Sean Gurl (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), pp. 148-163, is useful for thinking about the definition of philology across linguistic divides. Books that examine the relation of philology as a discipline to wider ideological commitments, especially national ones, are James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), and Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007). See also Erich Auerbach, "Introduction: Purpose and Method" in *Literary Language & Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages* trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 5-7 for an earlier account of this history as viewed in the wake of World War II. Nadia Altschul, "Introduction: Creole Medievalism and Settler Postcolonial Studies" in *Geographies of Philological Knowledge: Postcoloniality and the Transatlantic National Epic*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2012) pp. 1-30, a monograph examining in particular scholarship of medieval Spain from the New World, is essential as an examination of how imperial attitudes are embedded within the field's methodologies. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 123-148, is also useful in this regard and can be regarded as a precursor to such work. Said, for his part, returns to philology consistently throughout his career, e.g. in "Introduction to the Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition", *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, by Erich Auerbach (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) pp. ix-xxxii, and in Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), esp. p. 54, where he advocates to a return to philology as a 'science of reading', but incorporating medieval Arabic alongside Latin as of 'paramount' importance. One case study I will use in particular later on is Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier's Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), which, like Altschul's work, also usefully illustrates this phenomenon.

¹⁵² See for example Gail McDonald, *Learning to be Modern: Pound, Eliot, and the American University* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) and Anne Birien, "Pound and the Reform of Philology," in *Ezra Pound and Education*, ed. Steven G. Yao and Michael Coyle (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 2012), pp. 23-45.

¹⁵³ Ezra Pound, "A Visiting Card," in *Selected Prose: 1909-1965*, ed. William Cookson (New York: Faber & Faber, 1973), pp. 276-305 (p. 297).

‘the complete human being, rather than translating his Latin with scholarly propriety.’¹⁵⁴ Pryor later defines this poetics as an ‘inphilology out of philology’—an antithesis producing, in a dialectical understanding, a truer philology of the Western canon.¹⁵⁵ This chapter will propose that, on similar lines, Joyce cultivates a similar aesthetics of anachronism and philological irreverence on a large, novelistic scale. However, his understanding of the ‘total problem’ for aesthetic comprehension, which philology, as then constituted, was incapable of adequately depicting, takes on a different political bent to Pound. Joyce’s project, which I outlined in my introduction as being undertaken with the reader, is not content with educating readers: rather, the reader is automatically inducted into the world of the philologist through the text, given a philological experience and the capability to articulate a critique of philology.

The close attention paid to language in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* therefore takes a political turn. I have already provided one example of the books’ capacity to make political pronouncements via reading mediievally: as my chapter on ‘reading somatically’ detailed, the books engender the pervasive sense of a gendered somatic textuality, that refigures the gendered metaphors of literary production and enables a reimagined account of the book beyond the author function. Because the books encourage a reflexive evaluation of the act of reading itself just as the reader engages in it, to ‘look what you have in your handself’ (*FW* 20.20-21), an analytical description of these books, in large part dominated by their densely allusive and source-reliant texts, must demonstrate an understanding of how they reflect back onto their sources’ processes of production.

¹⁵⁴ Sean Pryor, ‘Inhuman Words: Modernism, Philology, Poetry’, *Modernism/modernity*, 23.6 (2016), p. 562.

¹⁵⁵ Pryor, ‘Inhuman Words’, p. 563

In this chapter I will consider how *Ulysses* and especially *Finnegans Wake* react to the guiding principles of those philologists who helped to shape the sources the books draw on. They (especially the latter) do this by replicating the experience of the philologist: they make something of a scholar out of readers, and in doing so broaden the scope of the political sympathies philological insights engender. Where the philologists Joyce uses subordinated their research to nationalist prerogatives, the reverse is engendered by the sheer difficulty of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, which position themselves as objects of philological inquiry. I therefore aim to discuss how, and why, the reader is made to demonstrate a degree of analytical rigour not demanded by most novels: a radical expectation that might be the source of what Thomas Hofheinz diagnosed as the critics' commonplace that is 'the ethical anxiety that the novel account for itself, that it open its linguistic ledgers and give the world something of use'.¹⁵⁶ However, I hope to show that this philological reading, this rigour fostered by the books, is one that does not reproduce the chauvinistic ideologies of individual philologists uncritically as a simple or even simplistic act of 'encoding', but rather encourages a more skeptical, extra-academic viewpoint that looks askance at such traditions. Where philologists would attempt to regulate texts in line with these nationalist values and traditions, such as for example Joseph Bédier's 'best text method', Joyce would construct deliberately unregulated texts that invert or pervert such attempts: a technique I will term a 'worst text method'. Where philologists would professionalise to the point of exclusivity, Joyce's text makes an amateur out of the professional and a professional out of the amateur.¹⁵⁷ Because of their immense difficulty, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* operate on what I will term a mechanics of ignorance, creating a democratic shared difficulty that is only

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Hofheinz, *Joyce and the Invention of Irish History: Finnegans Wake in Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012) makes the argument that medieval studies has depended upon the figure of the amateur whose affective identification with the period (implied by the name amateur, meaning 'lover' in French) operates in a 'queer asynchrony'.

bridged in collective, non-exclusive reading across multiple strategic lines: an alternative methodological vision for a different kind of philological practice. In particular, this chapter will focus on the books' philological readers as necessarily intervening in a discussion of nationalism, where the medieval serves as a disruptive rebuke to a kind of philological hygiene that underpins a sanitised interpretation of the nations of the imperial core in Europe.¹⁵⁸

The texts themselves are situated at a crucial moment in the history of this process of interpreting the nation. For example, Ireland, the nation whose nationalism is the most prominent in all of Joyce's works, underwent a transformative period of self-redefinition throughout the quarter-century encompassed by Joyce's writing of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* (1914-1939).¹⁵⁹ This is a period that contains such major national reckonings as the Great War, the Easter Rising of 1916 and its fallout, the War of Independence, the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 that brought partition into being, the subsequent Civil War, a trade war with the UK, the establishment of a constitution in 1937, and, more broadly, the shocks to the global economy after the Wall Street Crash and the entrance of fascism as a major European political force. As Len Platt argues in *Joyce, Race and Finnegans Wake*, although Joyce often seems to avoid using his works for directly didactic political messaging, it would be more

¹⁵⁸ The body of work on Joyce and nationalism is already massive. Several important studies to consider are: Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1995) which successfully argues against the notion that Joyce the pacifist internationalist was not concerned with Irish liberation; further useful materials are Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx: History and Desire in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001), Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics* (London: Routledge, 1980), and *Joyce, Ireland, Britain* ed. Andrew Gibson and Len Platt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006). From Joyce himself, much of his nonfiction is illuminating in this regard, especially "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages," trans. Conor Deane, in *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing* ed. Kevin Barry, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) pp. 108-127, and "Ireland at the Bar", trans. Conor Deane, pp.145-148.

¹⁵⁹ One article that deals especially well with this historical bent in Joyce's work, especially *Ulysses*, is Susan de Sola Rodstein, "Back to 1904: Joyce, Ireland, and Nationalism" in *Joyce: Feminism/Post/Colonialism* ed. Ellen Carol Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998) pp. 145-186, which argues for Joyce arguing and contesting whether the events mentioned reflect a new rebellion against tradition or a transhistorical pattern. Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp.185-219 and 278-289 considers *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in regard to developments in imperialism and fascism over this period, as does Len Platt, *Joyce, Race and Finnegans Wake* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) esp. pp. 51-56.

odd to assume Joyce would still not pass comment on such developments through the medium in which he felt he could express himself best.¹⁶⁰ The irreverent anachronisms of the ‘worst text method’ not only buck philological hygiene but provide a direct rebuke to historical developments in this period towards a reinvigorated scientific racism in the name of nationalism—developments that would manifest in devastating, world-historical events by the time of Joyce’s death in 1941.

In fact, the majority of all ‘Celtic’ scholarship of historical bent in Joyce’s lifetime focused on pre-modern, especially medieval, Ireland.¹⁶¹ This scholarship had a legitimising ideological role in contemporary politics, as Platt has revealed: two scholars familiar to Joyce, the comparative philologists Heinrich Zimmer and Julius Pokorny, were invested in the attempt to prove a continuous Aryan racial identity across the Indo-European language family in their studies of ‘Celtic’ literature—an attempt to legitimise racial nationalism in Germany, before the Nazis, by way of Ireland.¹⁶² In a specifically Irish context, this authorising link between medieval scholarship and contemporary politics was even more pronounced: several of these medievalists were also major figures in the historical development of the country, and as a result would have their work intimately connected with their political persona. One example is Eoin MacNeill, a Sinn Féin politician who would become Minister for Education and was instrumental in the celebration of the Irish language.¹⁶³ Such a recuperation of national culture in the face of the decline presided over by the British colonisers also stressed Irish cultural difference from the British, at times using philological arguments to achieve this: while MacNeill would argue against translating the

¹⁶⁰ Platt, *Joyce, Race*, p. 147

¹⁶¹ Hofheinz, *Joyce and the Invention of Irish History*, p. 60.

¹⁶² Platt, *Joyce, Race*, p. 56. Cf. U 10.1082 for an instance of Joyce’s incorporation of these figures. Platt notes that Pokorny himself was a victim of the race theories of the Nazis, losing his position as Professor of Celtic at the University of Berlin in 1933, even though he himself was an Aryanist.

¹⁶³ D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 237-240.

beauty of medieval Irish literature into ‘third-rate English poetry’, this could also translate into disdain of even so prominent a figure as Yeats, who turned English to an exploration of Irish themes.¹⁶⁴ Arguably the most salient example of such a figurehead of philological hygiene is Douglas Hyde, medievalist, philologist and first President of Ireland, who famously proclaimed in 1892 the ‘Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland’: ‘we must strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil [...] because [...] this island *is* and will *ever* remain Celtic at the core’.¹⁶⁵ Hyde’s understanding of authentic Irishness as necessarily Celtic itself stemmed from a common academic understanding of the ‘Celts’ as the name designating the original (and thus authentic) inhabitants of Western Europe, an attitude partly responsible, by way of its spuriousness, for Joyce’s fundamental skepticism about racial identity.¹⁶⁶

Among many prominent Irish nationalists, this way of thinking inculcated a racial understanding of the Irish as true Aryans that enabled such highly idiosyncratic yet well-known perspectives as those of some Irish theosophists (such as Æ or George Russell who appears prominently in *Ulysses*).¹⁶⁷ These writers used insights from philology to inform a theory of Ireland as, along with India, a remnant of an ancient Indo-European civilisation untouched by the de-authenticating influence of *lex romana*.¹⁶⁸ Overall, the academics and the theosophists therefore shared a tendency to infer a certain cultural unity from the linguistic connections that enabled scholars to map the Indo-European family; genuine

¹⁶⁴ Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁵ Douglas Hyde, “The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland,” in *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures by Douglas Hyde*, ed. Breandán Ó Conaire (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1986), p. 169 (pp. 153-170).

¹⁶⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the origins of the term ‘Celt’ and its use in Joyce’s fiction, see Platt, *Race and Finnegans Wake*, p. 42. Cheng also discusses the racist logics behind the term in *Joyce, Race and Empire* pp. 49-51.

¹⁶⁷ Mark Williams, *Ireland’s Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 323; p. 417. See also Len Platt, *Race and Finnegans Wake*, pp. 50-51. Platt, *Race and Finnegans Wake*, p. 51 sees Aryanism and Irish nationalist myth-making as comparable projects.

¹⁶⁸ For an explicit example of Joyce tying this absence of Roman power to the impetus for a specifically Irish medievalism, see Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999), p. 116.

philological insight was welded to nationalist myth and sentiment. In this way, not just for the theosophists but also, I would suggest, for many nationalist academics, medieval Irish texts were gateways to authentic eternal truths. This conjunction of philological insight with nationalist ideology leads to a curious situation where, despite its being a national culture saturated in the remnants of medieval writings, the word ‘medieval’ can be hard to find as it is often replaced with more imprecise terms like ‘ancient’. I would suggest this lack is fundamental, and due to a desire at this time to see Irishness and Irish history as special in its claims to authenticity; to be ‘medieval’ is to muddy the waters, and suggest unwanted lines of connection with other nations in Europe and beyond.

This allegiance between philology and nationalism is opposed in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by an aesthetic method of deliberate difficulty and purposeful ‘error’ that means the books simulate the experience of an object of philological contemplation, specifically an unhygienic one. In doing so, they repudiate the limited desires of nationalism by aligning themselves with readers whose sympathies must be more international to derive enjoyment from the book. The difficulty of the texts is constructed such that no individual reading is equivalent to the text at hand; a variety of perspectives, a community of readers is necessary to make sense of their polysemic networks, a Dantean multiplicity that has been consistently noted since early Joyce criticism.¹⁶⁹ This difficulty, which I will show is necessary to replicate the philological experience, is also necessary to adopt a confrontational stance towards the language of the coloniser Joyce adopted, a deliberate ‘bastardisation’ of English.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in Finnegans Wake*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) pp. 35-36.

¹⁷⁰ McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, pp. 159-161, is especially good in setting out how Joyce slots prematurely into debates in postcolonial fiction about how to depict the nation in adopting this method.

This confrontational stance has historically been reciprocated by a certain class of readers. It is useful to consider Joyce's approach to the reader by bearing in mind how uncomfortable critics such as F.R. Leavis and Gilbert Highet (men who were themselves in the process of defining literary study in the disciplines of English and Classics respectively) were with the developing 'Work in Progress', as Nash documents.¹⁷¹ These influential readers averred that 'Work in Progress' was less a book to be read than one to be *studied*, and that potentially without benefit. *Finnegans Wake* adopts and adapts this language of study, of discipline: figuring itself in a reflexive moment as a 'cosy little brown study all to oneself' (*FW* 114.29-31). In echoing Woolf's famous feminist consideration of the material constraints on women's creativity, *A Room of One's Own*, this language displays Joyce's awareness of the demands, often material, on the reader, while also perhaps hoping for the book to carve out a niche for a kind of study. This spatial metaphor implies a certain generosity of spirit within the book, and yet, as Nash writes, a sequestering of the *Wake* away from standard literary critical practice, which under the auspices of Leavis in Britain was becoming more and more professionalised: a 'rewriting of English [that] implies a different conception of what literature and 'English studies' might be'.¹⁷² This rewriting therefore conjoins both an interest in the discipline of academic literary studies and also Joyce's desire to undermine the hegemony of 'standard English' with his own bastardisation, both a pre-empting and reaction to this inevitable hostility. *Finnegans Wake* proudly stands as a bastardised object of philological study. Yet philology did not tend to concern itself with bastards and instead preferred simplified, sanitised genealogical lines of textual heritage. By being difficult, as it were, Joyce therefore stokes rebellion against both the imperialism of the British state and also the political-philological imaginary in Ireland.

¹⁷¹ John Nash, *James Joyce and the Act of Reception: Reading, Ireland, Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 116. Gilbert Highet was to publish his most influential works later, in the 1950s.

¹⁷² Nash, *Joyce and the Act of Reception*, p. 116

Because this replication of philological experience is bound up with the broader political ‘point’ of the novels, ignorance is not a barrier to ‘disciplined’ reading, to philology, despite the avowed difficulty of these books: the ignorance becomes the point. In fact, this point is why the books operate on what I will term a ‘mechanics of ignorance’. The discipline was otherwise the fundamental route to reading medieval texts in the period, and in the early twentieth century the single legitimate avenue to the activity of literary scholarship, as Said notes.¹⁷³ In this sense the books are, despite the immense difficulty and labour attached to reading them, very much more democratic than their reputation might lead one to assume, as Declan Kiberd has intimated.¹⁷⁴ It is still difficult for anyone, professional or amateur, to read *Ulysses*. This democratic element is perhaps even a testament to Raymond Williams’ assertion that culture is ordinary, found in an essay which begins with Williams observing the effect of visiting the medieval Hereford *mappa mundi* after a bus ride through rural and industrial Wales.¹⁷⁵ The basic meaning of Williams’ assertion is that physical access to culture is not necessarily the obstacle for most people’s enjoyment of it, but rather the class-stratification in culture which stems from a pervasive ideological assumption about the capabilities of the ‘ordinary’ person. It has never been easier to ‘access’ *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*—both texts are available in the public domain, with an extensive range of free online resources that might help a reader, and a large community of fellow readers: so ‘accessibility’ isn’t the issue, but rather an ideological approach to class and literary difficulty.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta, 1998), p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ Kiberd takes the view that this democracy within *Ulysses* springs from a link between a more democratic politics and a heightened focus on the significance of the quotidian, ‘to restore the dignity of the middle range of human experience’ after the cynicism that compelled the Great War. See especially *Ulysses and Us: The Art of Everyday Living* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010).

¹⁷⁵ For Williams’ assertion see Raymond Williams, “Culture is Ordinary” in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 3-14.

¹⁷⁶ Some insight into the character of this approach is provided in Tom Allen, “Corbyn, Joyce and Ulysses” in *New Socialist*, September 15, 2019 <<https://newsocialist.org.uk/corbyn-joyce-and-ulysses/>> [Accessed

A major caveat to this democratic quality must be observed in the form of material pressures such as time and access to the archive limiting a reader's capability, something which as Nash observes, Joyce was all too aware of. In the wake of his exhausted readers he designed a book that could remould the conception of 'ordinary' reading practices.¹⁷⁷ For example, the *Wake* constructs ordinary readers itself, in a list of twelve professions, an auspicious number used throughout the novel for representations of the 'ordinary' public: e.g. twelve apostles, twelve members of a jury. These professions are deliberately archaic, reminiscent of the late medieval period in England that produced Chaucer's class-spanning *Canterbury Tales*, confirmed by the word 'ye', a product of the Middle English thorn looking like a lowercase Y: 'Lorimers and leathersellers, skimmers and salters, pewterers and paperstainers, parishclerks, fletcherbowyers, girdlers, mercers, cordwainers and first, and not last, the weavers. Our library is hoping to ye public.' (*FW* 312.35-313.2).¹⁷⁸ This passage constructs the democratic quality of the text at hand more modestly as an aspiration (the 'openness' of the library is merely a hope) and not an inevitable product of the text's position in the world.

This aspiration is however crucial to an understanding of the philological experience as manifested in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, that a given reader hopes to situate this professionalised philological experience in the amateur everyday, to situate the medieval in the modern: that culture be ordinary. In the course of this chapter, I will outline two strands of rebuke to nationalist philology: this democratic dimension to the philological reading (that

September 1, 2021]. This piece, sympathetic to Corbyn's politics, was particularly invigorated by the context of a dispiriting recent episode where multiple journalists doubted the very capability of Jeremy Corbyn, former leader of the Labour Party, to have read and enjoyed *Ulysses* given his educational record. It was as if he intruded on a secret club.

¹⁷⁷ Nash, *Act of Reception*, p. 113

¹⁷⁸ This last profession refers, as Nash rightly points out (*Act of Reception* p. 113), to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce's long-term benefactor, who lays claim to being his most devoted and frustrated reader.

the difficulty makes amateurs of us all, that reading the books requires ignorance, that they can accommodate many potential points of ignorance of the reader) and the repudiation of philological hygiene. Both these strands entail the re-evaluation of the object of philological inquiry as productively open to new reading strategies and as showing up the inadequacy of approaches implicated in myopic nationalism. During the chapter the two strands will intertwine as I discuss the applications of Joycean reaction to philological sources and the texts' play-acting at being philological objects themselves. First I will do this by surveying the use of Joseph Bédier's scholarship and adaptation of the Tristan and Isolde myth in *Finnegans Wake*, to outline an ideological preoccupation within philology for nationalism, and to demonstrate how Joyce contrasts his philological experience with Bédier's. Then I will analyse the semi-medieval language of the 'Oxen of the Sun' chapter in *Ulysses* to further elucidate the role of difficulty as enabling the philological experience. Finally I will focus on objects of Irish philological inquiry in the 'Cyclops' chapter of *Ulysses* and chapter I.5 of *Finnegans Wake*, to illustrate how the didactic, politicised element of Joyce's work uses difficulty to its advantage to circumvent his ideological disagreements with the philological industry.

2. Reappropriating Bédier: Philology Meets Nationalism

It is my argument in this chapter that Joyce takes the philological work done to establish nationalistic narratives and reappropriates it for his own ends. From this claim it follows that to understand *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*'s treatment of philological scholarship is to approach an understanding of the political demands the texts make of their readers, via a conjunction between political and philological hygiene.

Joyce's own attitude to a hygienic understanding of national history is borne out in his writing on early medieval Ireland, even early in his career. This early medieval period saw Ireland as a bastion of learning and Christian activity, producing for example elaborate and *sui generis* manuscript books in the Books of Durrow and, later, Kells (although evidence points to a very possible origin for the latter outside Ireland, on Iona), a time of 'saints and sages'. This is a commonplace phrase that Joyce returns to in his 1907 Trieste lecture on Irishness, '*Irlanda, isola di santi e saggi*'.¹⁷⁹ His basic opposition to the notion of a return to a period prior to colonisation, and to the logic of racial purity and appeals to ethereal essences that underpinned much of nationalist ideology at the time, informs this lecture.¹⁸⁰ While he notes, generalising, that work on and in the Irish language had until only recently been dominated by philological 'works by Germans' (*OCPW* 109) he credits the work of these philologists with outlining a truth about Ireland in the Middle Ages analogous to the cultural situation faced by contemporary Ireland:

It may seem strange that an island such as Ireland, so remote from the centre of culture, should have become a school for apostles. However, [...] the Irish nation's desire to create its own civilisation is not so much the desire of a young nation wishing to link itself to Europe's concert, but the desire by an ancient nation to renew in a modern form the glories of a past civilisation. (*OCPW* 111)

This is a narrative of renewal as itself an assertion of Irish particularity, and therefore at this point not hugely different from the cultural nationalism of MacNeill and Hyde, which Joyce would eventually repudiate. However, his notion of 'renovation' is explicitly set against a simplistic notion of revival or racial purity. In his account of Irish history, struggles against

¹⁷⁹ James Joyce, "Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages" in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.108-126.

¹⁸⁰ Joyce called himself an Irish nationalist with reservations, arising out of fundamental opposition to British colonisation, though as I have suggested he also opposed many of the (socially-conservative, 'ethereal') forms Irish nationalism took in practice: for more on this aspect of Joyce's nationalism, Dominic Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics* (London: Routledge, 1980), collates compelling evidence in support of this, esp. pp. 37-38 & 170.

British colonisation were only possible because ‘various elements intermingled and renovated the ancient body’: ‘The descendants of the Danes, the Normans and the Anglo-Saxon colonisers championed the cause of the *new* Irish nation against British tyranny’ (*OCPW* 115, my emphasis). This lecture sets out the notion that a nation is not characterised by a single point of origin but rather an accretion of history, incorporated into a form constantly engaged in the process of renewing itself. This protean form is itself a product of the constant accrual of new information, but also the simultaneous forgetting of certain details (e.g. once the Normans had been oppressors, but now through successive generations their descendants might well have disavowed their ancestors’ principles and become Irish nationalists).¹⁸¹ Platt explains how *Finnegans Wake*’s emphasis on circularity operates in part as an ‘absolute refutation’ of the linear narratives central to social Darwinism and racial nationalism.¹⁸² Yet even at this point for Joyce, the nation is significantly constituted by successive acts of reinterpretation.

The early Irish history that drives this 1907 lecture is revisited in *Finnegans Wake* especially, a book overtly concerned as well with the intermingling of elements and with renewal, and with its litany of medieval Irish saints (the three patron saints, Sts. Patrick, Brigid and Colum Cille feature extensively) and references to early medieval Irish literature.¹⁸³ However, if there is an analogy to be drawn between interpreting the text and interpreting the nation, if there is validity to the notion that there is such a hermeneutic strategy that encompasses the political and the philological at the same time, it should contend with the idea that in Joyce’s

¹⁸¹ I talk more about this forgetting in my discussion of Renan below.

¹⁸² Platt, *Joyce, Race*, p. 76

¹⁸³ For a starting point of reference on Joyce’s use of saints, see R.J. Schork, *Joyce and Hagiography: Saints Above!* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000). Joyce’s engagement with medieval Ireland has been explored previously by Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), however, Anne Marie D’Arcy has a forthcoming book on the topic, which promises to supplement the work of both these scholars.

unhygienic project both nation and text undergo a process of change as they are interpreted and reinterpreted.

Finnegans Wake imagines philologists undergoing a process analogous to a larger social entity, determined by change and an anti-essentialism: ‘under the closed eyes of the inspectors the traits featuring the *chiaroscuro* coalesce [...] in one stable somebody similarly as [...] our social something bowls along bumpily’ (*FW* 107.28-33). Traits merge in reading the Letter, and essence seems fundamentally unstable (until generalisable as ‘one stable’), just as change manifests in society ‘down the long land of [...] generations, more generations and still more generations’ (*FW* 107.34-35). This description denotes successive societies in history and also the proliferations of meaning from reading; both are merged in Joyce’s figuration.

To first begin to elucidate this notion of an analogy between philology and nationalism, considering in particular how the medieval is used for the purposes of this analogy, the chapter will examine a major source for one of *Finnegans Wake*’s most sustained meditations on the medieval, Joseph Bédier’s versions of the Tristan and Isolde stories. The purpose, in part, is to consider how Bédier is modified through the *Wake*’s unique lens. To do this I am first going to consider how Bédier enters the conversation, and then use the observations of Michelle Warren in *Creole Medievalism*, that Bédier is a figure shaped by conflicting desires for French colonialism and for his homeland of Réunion.¹⁸⁴ We can see Bédier as a figure that *Finnegans Wake* uses to its advantage. In this analogy between philology and nationhood, an analogy Bédier himself made having read Ernest Renan, I want to describe

¹⁸⁴ Michelle Warren, *Creole Medievalism: Colonial France and Joseph Bédier’s Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

the *Wake* as reconfiguring how we might interpret the Middle Ages, in a way that confounds this desire to see the Middle Ages as the foundation or origin of authentic national characters.

Bédier himself had modified the practice of philology considerably by the time Joyce was using him as a source. He was admitted into the *Académie Française* in 1921, on the strength of his critical work on philology and the wide fame of his reworking of the Tristan and Isolde legend, the *Roman de Tristan et Iseut*, which was reprinted in 1924, and accompanied by an ill-advised dramatic adaptation later in the decade.¹⁸⁵ Briefly, the philological method associated with Bédier was the so-called ‘best text’ method. This was a uniquely French idea, in opposition to the supposedly ‘German’ recensionist notion of identifying families of manuscripts of the same text via shared ‘errors’ where one might find a common melting pot of traditions, often along binaristic lines that there was a ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’ ancestor of a given text. Instead, Bédier averred that rather than being purely objective, this choice of superior/inferior textual ancestor was merely an excuse for the editor’s taste to intervene. In attempting a more reliable method, his response was to acknowledge this intervention of personal taste and choose a best text that represented most authentically the nature of the text being edited, emending it as little as possible.¹⁸⁶

It is immediately obvious that this best text method is not an objective science, but for Bédier there was a rigid logic that underpins it; he maintained that certain individuals are more attuned to certain traditions. He articulated it this way, in an interview from 1922, as quoted and translated by Warren: ‘I believe that old texts have a soul and that it’s useless to waste

¹⁸⁵ Alain Corbellari, “Joseph Bédier, Philologist and Writer” in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 280-281.

¹⁸⁶ For this account of currents in textual criticism I am indebted to Jacqueline Klooster, “New Philology and Ancient Editors: Some Dynamics of Textual Criticism” in *The Making of the Humanities: Vol. III: The Modern Humanities*, ed. Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014), p. 253. The ‘best-text’ method is an apt name applied to Bédier’s technique and not used by him.

one's time deciphering them if one does not feel one's soul in sympathy with them [. . .] there should not be any difference between the work of the scholar and that of the novelist.'¹⁸⁷ This sympathy, however, was a racialised concept, as Corbellari also demonstrates in his discussion of his work, with Bédier saying to Gustave Cohen: 'You do not know, my friend, what to be born on the Ile de la Réunion and to be, like me, a blond with blue eyes, means in terms of unbroken tradition and racial purity without any misalliance.'¹⁸⁸ To Bédier, as Warren points out, being 'creole' means being white while also distanced from the imperial core, and therefore being able to articulate especially well what he considered the 'truth' of French imperialism, by virtue of that identity.¹⁸⁹

This notion of 'misalliance' is particularly crucial to this concept of the philologist's sympathy for Bédier, and also lends it racist connotations. His notion of sympathy was a guiding principle that could even lead to him ignoring the evidence of his own documents; as Warren points out, he replaced a short passage in the *Tristan et Iseut* he had translated with an extensive dialogue of his own invention because 'to my mind, it's the original form of the episode.'¹⁹⁰ Part of the reasoning behind Bédier's best text method is also explained by this notion of 'sympathy'. Because the sympathy directs the philologist to choose the superior source, instead of amalgamating several, the method is a direct refutation of the idea that modern cultures are a blend of different cultures from Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as the German recensionist method tended to imply. Instead, the 'best text' method in fact imposes a particularly strict regime of philological hygiene.

¹⁸⁷ Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 135.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Corbellari, "Joseph Bédier", p. 271.

¹⁸⁹ Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 135.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

As Per Nykrog describes, eliminating the notion of a ‘gradual process of collective creation over several centuries’ requires ‘emphasizing instead the importance of a single and relatively recent [...] genius’.¹⁹¹ In the case of the Tristan legend, Bédier chose the Anglo-Norman version by a writer named Thomas of Britain in the 12th century, whose work only exists in fragments; Bédier imaginatively attempted to reconstruct this text from later versions. That way, the Tristan myth would supposedly have a complete French entry (and therefore, to Bédier, a definitive version) to stand alongside versions in Middle High German and Old Norse. This ‘sympathy’ therefore imposes a contemporary value of Frenchness onto history and works as a kind of ‘transhistorical telepathy’, to use Michelle Warren’s words.¹⁹² This strange contemporaneity of the medieval within the modern was noted at the time: in the preface to Bédier’s *Roman*, Gaston Paris writes that ‘M. Bédier’s work then is a twelfth century French poem, composed in our own times.’¹⁹³ It is this exact, weird contemporaneity of the medieval and the modern that I will suggest becomes particularly useful for Joyce when adapting the material, and a major lesson he incorporates into *Finnegans Wake*’s inimitably hybrid style.

However, hybridity was not a priority of Bédier, compromising as it would for him the academic integrity of his work. He had to dismiss the fact that Anglo-Norman was an offshoot of French found in the British Isles for his assertions that the 12th-century ‘Tristan’ and, later, the *Song of Roland* were themselves *echt* French. This also involved discrediting the widely held idea that the extant Tristan materials derived ultimately from what were

¹⁹¹ Per Nykrog, “A Warrior Scholar at the Collège de France: Joseph Bédier” in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 288. I will discuss how Joyce also adopts the variance, communality and anonymity of medieval texts in the next chapter.

¹⁹² Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 135. She quotes here his somewhat spooky parting address to the reader of the *Roman*: ‘They [the medieval poets of ‘yesteryear’] send you, *through me*, their greetings.’

¹⁹³ Gaston Paris, “Preface” in *The Romance of Tristram and Iseult*, by Joseph Bédier, trans. Florence Simmonds, (London: William Heinemann, 1910), p. vi.

thought of as ‘Celtic’ sources, arguing for example that passionate love did not exist in ‘Celtic’ culture: all this ornate mental architecture seemingly erected to justify his belief that ‘The legend of Tristan and Iseult is essentially French’.¹⁹⁴ This kind of bizarre pronouncement about ‘Celtic’ culture is something Joyce diagnoses as endemic to philology as practiced in the early twentieth century. The satirical English figure of Haines uses the work of racially-preoccupied Julius Pokorny to justify the false notion that there are ‘no traces of hell in Irish myth’, and therefore that Irish culture lacks a precedent for ‘the moral idea’ of ‘retribution’ (*U* 10.1082-84).¹⁹⁵ That Joyce uses Bédier to ground his use of Tristan and Isolde, despite its subject matter being ‘Celtic’, is therefore worth comment. As Paris notes in his preface, the ‘type’ of hero Tristan embodies is made ‘complete’ or ‘fulfilled’ by this supposed French addition.¹⁹⁶ In short, Bédier aimed to realign readings of Tristan and Isolde stories towards a French centre, where they had previously been thought of along other lines, in a supposed misalliance to other European literatures. However, with the ‘best text’ as an explicit reaction to the hybridity of the German method, Tristan as a story marks the very limits of Bédier’s textual philosophy—a text that feels French but eludes that confirmatory quality of Frenchness he desires, remaining unassimilable into a definitive and authentic vision.

So the question remains where such a figure and his philological hygiene comes in for Joyce; he after all did not merely use Bédier as a source, but owned both the beautifully illustrated translation of the *Roman* by Florence Simmonds and the original French in his Trieste

¹⁹⁴ Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 132.

¹⁹⁵ See Don Gifford & Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 281 and Platt, *Joyce, Race*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁶ Paris, “Preface”, p. vii.

library.¹⁹⁷ However, as Rabaté points out, Joyce interrogated Bédier's choices himself with the rigour of a comparative philologist by making notes on the variants in the manuscripts: his notebooks refer to Bédier's scholarly two-volume book on *Le Roman de Tristan par Thomas*. Rabaté refers especially to notebook VI.A.302, where Joyce noted the variations between this twelfth-century version and thirteenth-century versions in prose, and he would have understood that Bédier's subsequent choice of a fifteenth-century manuscript as the best might seem questionable, as it is to specialists.¹⁹⁸ This activity displays that Joyce engaged here in the practice of philology itself, questioning the methods of Bédier. However, it leaves open the question of why Bédier was nevertheless useful to Joyce. I want to suggest that this usefulness might be articulated via a figure read by both Joyce and Bédier: Ernest Renan.¹⁹⁹ In his work *L'avenir de la science*, 'The Future of Science', the middle section of which is effusive in its praise of the discipline, Renan wrote that philology was the future of modernity, being as it was, as Warren paraphrases, "a critical approach not beholden to morality, positivism, or any pre-determined system".²⁰⁰ Adopting this approach of Renan's wholesale, Bédier wrote in his *Études Critiques* that there is no philosophical enterprise without philology, that philology is the single most important discipline.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ See <<http://www.jjon.org/joyce-s-library>>, or alternatively the appendix of Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 97-134. Both these, unlike the inventory of Bloom's books in *Ulysses*, are helpfully arranged alphabetically by author.

¹⁹⁸ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 203-204.

¹⁹⁹ For Joyce's relationship with Renan, see Christopher Butler, "Joyce the Modernist" in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.68, and Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.298 n.3. See also Paul Kintzele, "The Urb it Orbs: James Joyce and Internationalism", *Intertexts*, 16.2 (2012), p. 55-78, for a more developed reading of Joyce reading Renan.

²⁰⁰ Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 119.

²⁰¹ Joseph Bédier, *Études Critiques* (Paris: Armands Colin, 1903), pp. x-xi. See also Ernest Renan, *L'avenir de la science: pensées de 1848* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1900), p. 135, Said, *Orientalism*, p. 132 and also Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 119.

However, Renan's more famous theorisations, as found in '*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*' (What Is A Nation?) also influenced Bédier's philological approach. In this text, Renan outlines how the forgetting of salient details bolsters an alternative conception of national memory; in the case of Frenchness, certain inconvenient medieval details are brushed aside.²⁰² For example, Renan writes of medieval France: 'The idea, which had seemed so obvious to Gregory of Tours, that the population of France was composed of different races, was in no way apparent to French writers and poets after Hugh Capet', and from this precise example comes the central formulation that '[f]orgetting ... is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation'.²⁰³ As a result of this formulation, remembrance and forgetting are simultaneously important in national identity formation for Renan, who also talks of a similar process in *L'avenir de la Science*, according to Warren:

This process of 'national' construction resembles closely the ways in which philology constructs 'unified' texts out of disparate and often contradictory fragments—'forgetting' differences among sources in favor of a single coherent version. [...] For both philology and the nation, amnesia goes hand in hand with memory.²⁰⁴

We can supplement this understanding of Warren's—that the methodologies of philology, its reading strategies, themselves had political import—with the view of Edward Said, who sees Ernest Renan as a consolidator of Orientalism. This now-famous notion is an epistemic complex Said diagnoses as the typical mode of interaction between the colonial West and colonised East within humanistic disciplines.²⁰⁵ Said emphasises Renan's individual contribution not for his originality but for his emblematic status, analysing in particular his accession to the Chair of Hebrew at the Collège de France, saying 'it was his task to solidify

²⁰² Ernest Renan, "What is a nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, trans. Martin Thom, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 8-22.

²⁰³ Renan, "What is a Nation?", pp. 10-11.

²⁰⁴ Warren, *Creole Medievalism*, p. 120.

²⁰⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 130.

the official discourse of Orientalism, to systematize its insights, and to establish its intellectual and worldly institutions', central to which was the discipline of philology.²⁰⁶ In this case, the discipline of philology aids a post-Christian Renan in categorising 'Semitic' cultural productions into a preordained racial hierarchy, a 'transformation of the human into the specimen'.²⁰⁷ For Said, the processes of philology objectify textual artefacts, in effect creating an image of 'Oriental' culture as irrational, un-modern, and un-Western, demanding a professional class of rational, modern, Western experts who alone hold the keys to understanding the apparently inscrutable other. This understanding supplements Warren's analysis with an understanding that racialisation is crucial to the process of selective amnesia she outlined: the nation as constructed by standing in relation to other nations via a mechanics of selective ignorance.

It is via Renan, then, that the analogy between philology and the nation begins to be articulated, first, as the text and the nation are reinterpreted by a process of slippages in memory, until the medieval and the modern coalesce into a supposed unity, or second, as the text stands in for an inscrutable, un-modern culture demanding professional exegesis. Both these tendencies will be satirised in the following analysis. We have already discussed how Joyce describes this process in *Irlanda, isola di santi e saggi*, proclaiming the nation as, in large part, a creatively reinterpreted text. We can find this same process of interpretation articulated in Joyce's other works, this same analogy between philology and the 'authentic' nation. Amnesia and memory has already been elaborated on as relevant to *Ulysses*' own anticolonial work in detailing the individual's relation to the 'nightmare' of history.²⁰⁸ Here I

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Vincent Cheng, "Amnesia, Forgetting, and the Nation in James Joyce's *Ulysses*" in *Memory Ireland Vol. 4* ed. Oona Frawley & Katherine O'Callaghan (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), pp. 10-26, esp. pp. 15-20.

will attempt to show how these ideas of Renan's are useful to Joyce's artistic project beyond this. There are for example passages in the *Wake* I.5 that analyse the many facets of the Letter in the pedantic language of an academic voice, where we find sentences that make sense from both a philological perspective and a perspective reconstructing the history of a nation. The Letter so far, on the syntagmatic level of *Finnegans Wake*, such as it is, has proven to be crucial to the exoneration/indictment of the HCE character, whose sexual infraction in Dublin's Phoenix Park is discussed and supposedly defended in its contents. We are promised an encounter with this letter via an academic/sacerdotal voice deeming it an 'untitled mamafesta memorialising the Mosthighest' (*FW* 104.04) written by a goddess-like 'Bringer of Plurabilities' (*FW* 104.02), inviting a certain degree of bathos.

My first passage is: 'Closer inspection of the *bordereau* [Fr. 'slip of paper'; the crucial document in the Dreyfus affair; also a 'border' of '*eau*' (=Fr. 'water')] would reveal a multiplicity of personalities inflicted on the documents or document' (*FW* 107.23-25). Here Joyce conflates marginalia with the suggestion of marginal identities that help to construct the 'borders' of a nation. As Joyce charted the variations in the Tristan story in notebook VI.A.302, he detailed the existence of a story that in its modern Bédierist incarnation (single, stable, authored) is deprived of an essential component: its variety, the multiplicity of personalities. But the academic voice of the chapter views this as an act of violence via the word 'inflicted', caving to a certain philological impulse, preferring that the ambiguous status of the document (or documents) be erased and made more coherent. For Bédier, even in the French tradition a single manuscript was selected and variation shut out in precisely this way: a kind of philological hygiene. The academic voice of the narrator performs this professionalised perspective while also inviting readerly scrutiny, both of the 'borders' of the text but also the narrator's analysis as itself an incriminating document.

This academic voice also links philological hygiene to Renan's theories on nationhood and forgetting. In the incredibly long list of the Letter's attributes, parodying, among other things, Edward Sullivan's 1920 study of the Book of Kells, we find this property: 'the aphasia of that heroic agony of recalling a once loved number leading slip by slip to a general amnesia of misnaming one's own' (*FW* 122.4-6). One interpretation of this passage is that in old age, forgetting someone's name leads to applying the wrong one even to members of one's own family. However, 'one's own' is of course very ambiguous; in this context it could mean one's nation and race. As Len Platt points out, the family drama of *Finnegans Wake* also stages a discussion of racial politics, for example by deploying biblically derived ethnological theories of racial descent from Noah's sons Ham, Shem and Japhet.²⁰⁹ Renan's process of memory and forgetting being mutually dependent on one another is invoked here in this passage, 'lead' by a concatenation of slips or errors towards a product that is beyond the reach of the authentic original. Attempting to recuperate this original is, according to the narrator, a heroic agon that will end in a defeat for that 'hero', just as agonising as it is inevitable.

While Joyce is portraying Bédier's ideas, he is ironising them. The philological impulse for an original or best text is compromised just as the desire for racial purity is a fundamentally unrealisable one, and the narrator's anxious and futile displeasure with the text's ambiguity is something that easily mimics the reader's experience of *Finnegans Wake*. But more than simply ironising Bédier, Joyce also 'foreignises' his material. Just as Bédier desired to render the difficulties of medieval language comprehensible by means of a modern vernacular, Joyce distorts that vernacular into a language that could be perhaps described as adjacent to

²⁰⁹ Len Platt, *Joyce, Race*, pp. 29-30.

English, just as Anglo-Norman is adjacent to modern French. ‘*La falaise de Penmarch*’, for example, the cliffs where Tristan dies in Bédier’s *Roman*, is transformed into ‘Penmark’ suggesting both Denmark and the act of writing itself, multiple times in *Finnegans Wake* (*FW* 301.F06, 189.06, 238.01, and 606.26). The medieval story, far from being an example of French originality, is remade at the end of the novel as a literary re-enactment of the failure to assign stable identities, either to nations or to readings: ‘arky paper, anticidingly [antecedingly; undecidedly; -cide = murder, anti- = against] inked with penmark’ (*FW* 606.26). Here Joyce is clearly drawing on Bédier to instill his foreignised, adjacent, new English with a sense that, in existing, it is an ambiguous act *against* that which precedes it, perhaps even killing off what might be thought of as its very essence, a sort of Oedipal struggle against his own sources via imaginative retheorisation. As an example of this cavalier attitude to what-came-before, it is worth noting that in this sentence, the sequence of events could be that the pen-marks exist before the paper. Whether Tristan has died here, in *Finnegans Wake*, is undecided however: perhaps it is more worthwhile to say that an older conception of Tristan has died with the pen-mark, but a newer one is recast into a story of unstable identities and an imaginatively retheorised Middle Ages.

We are therefore presented with the notion that Joyce and Bédier have disrupted a ‘simple’ flow of historical time, in this act of retheorisation: they have both sought to make the medieval contemporaneous with the modern at the very heart of the European canon (and in Joyce’s case *Finnegans Wake* even allows for dead languages to be given new lease of life). This is significant: as Chakrabarty notes, the medieval is often only interpreted as contemporaneous with the modern when historians of medieval Europe turn to modern anthropological findings outside the West to account for inexplicable differences in medieval

European society.²¹⁰ However, where Joyce and Bédier differ is in method, and this is instructive in thinking about the character of Joyce's medievalism. If Bédier is known for a 'best text' approach to a lineage of texts, I would suggest Joyce adopts a 'worst text' method: where Bédier seeks to bring the medieval, unstable, various texts closer to the stable, authorial, singular text of modernity, *Finnegans Wake* is a singular text dedicated to an aesthetic of instability and variance. Where Bédier rejects hybridity, imposing a logic of philological hygiene, *Finnegans Wake* revels in a text that from a Bédierist perspective is totally corrupted, mashing together time periods and languages in seeming incoherence. Where Bédier updates the medieval, *Finnegans Wake* primes us for an adjacent language, medieval in its disregard for spelling conventions or regulated pronunciation.

3. Re-examining the Medievalism of George Saintsbury in 'Oxen of the Sun'

The adjacency of language encountered in the previous section is not as evident in *Ulysses*: while its language is doubtless strange, in comparison to *Finnegans Wake* it experiments less with the orthography of English and is a less difficult read, at least from sentence to sentence. There are comparatively few instances, therefore, in this book, where *Ulysses* directly simulates for the reader the philologist's experience with adjacent language. However, a major exception is the fourteenth episode, 'Oxen of the Sun', just past the halfway point of the novel but the beginning of its long literary experiment with Dublin's nightlife. Bloom visits his friend Mina Purefoy in the maternity hospital in Holles St, who is in her third day of labour. Bloom is waylaid by drinking medical students, among whom is Stephen Dedalus. The language of the chapter comprises a potted history of English prose, mapping roughly

²¹⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference (New Edition)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 109. See also Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

onto the stages in the development of the foetus in the womb. As such, it can be described as an episode that presents, stylistically, a timeline of development, beginning with cryptic incantations and ending with a modern cacophony, mixing registers and dialects in anticipation of the *Wake*'s 'once current puns, messes of mottage [...] [and] seedy ejaculations' (*FW* 183.22-23). Its presentation is daunting: starting with incantations like 'Deshil Holles Eamus!' (*U* 14.1; [Ir. *deisiol* = turning clockwise; to Holles St.; Lat. *eamus* = 'we go'])²¹¹ followed by multiple sentences over ten lines long of literally-translated Latin, eschewing the typical word order of English to bewildering effect, the text moves onto less tangled prose in the style of Old and Middle English. It is not hard to see the relative simplicity of the plodding 'Before born babe bliss had. Within womb won he worship' (*U* 14.60) as compared to the tangled preceding sentence:

O thing of prudent nation not merely in being seen but also
 even in being related worthy of being praised that they her by
 anticipation went seeing mother, that she by them suddenly to
 be about to be cherished had been begun she felt! (*U* 14.56-59)

In fact, the effect of the extreme juxtaposition of these two styles is a comic one. At this turn towards a more familiar grammatical form, a new difficulty emerges for the reader in terms of vocabulary, a difficulty of particularly philological character that is necessary to contend with when illuminating what I will term the mechanics of ignorance. However, I will discuss this difficulty when Joyce moves from Old English to Middle English, because at this point George Saintsbury's *A History of English Prose Rhythm* enters as a major source for Joyce's medievalist prose.²¹² Consequently, Joyce's medievalism in this instance must be understood first as informed by a response to the literary critical work of Saintsbury.

²¹¹ Gifford & Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 480.

²¹² George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1912). That this is a major source in the chapter is a commonly accepted fact among Joyce scholarship, but see especially J. S. Atherton, "The Oxen of the Sun", in *James Joyce's Ulysses: Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 313-39, and Michael Gooch, "Saintsbury's Anglo-Saxon in

Joyce here is not particularly interested in a faithful rendition of ‘authentic’ Old English prose as a way of engendering philological experience, but rather more like what Kathleen Wales has termed ‘Anglo-Oxen’.²¹³ In fact, as Gooch details, showing the progress a sentence of Ælfric’s prose makes before it ends up in *Ulysses*, its spelling modernised and sense altered to become a dirty joke, Joyce evidently views Saintsbury as a necessary refracting prism through which the text works:

Ælfric’s version is ‘Drihten, ne eom ic wyrþe þæt þu innfare under mine þecene.’ Saintsbury, mimicking the archaic diction and syntax of Ælfric, gives us ‘Lord, not am I worthy that thou infare under my thatch.’ Joyce, as one might expect, exploits Saintsbury’s essentially accurate but oddly worded version for comic purposes, with Bloom telling the nurse ‘that he would rathe infare under her thatch’.²¹⁴

This irreverence and deliberate casualness to the rendition of Anglo-Saxon not only comically paints Bloom as both a Christ and Casanova figure, but also shows *Ulysses* as part of a larger shift in post-World War English literature away from the likes of Saintsbury, who became something of a stand-in for waffling Victorian literary criticism. As Baldick records, Saintsbury was consistently named among others who had laid ‘hackneyed roads’ for the new postwar generation of English students, leaving space for critics such as I.A. Richards who ‘ask[ed] questions which the routine mysticism of [...] Saintsbury had all but entirely neglected.’²¹⁵ Similarly, and in a way reminding one of Bédier, his political position, to which his philological work once again stands in a mutually authorising relation, marks out once more a clear difference from Joyce. Prior to 1895 Saintsbury was a prominent

Joyce’s ‘Oxen of the Sun’”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 22.2 (1998), pp. 401-404. Another common source is William Peacock’s *English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903).

²¹³ Kathleen Wales, “The ‘Oxen of the Sun’ in *Ulysses*: Joyce and Anglo-Saxon”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26 (1989), p. 319.

²¹⁴ Gooch, “Saintsbury’s Anglo-Saxon”, p. 402.

²¹⁵ Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 134-35.

conservative voice in English journalism, opposing Gladstone's Irish policies vociferously, in later life turning his attention to literary scholarship.²¹⁶ As far as Saintsbury can even be called a philologist, with the rigour that term implies, he seemed essentially content to pass comment in the form of relatively vapid assertions of the quality of the literary example at hand with little justification. For example, contemporary reviews noted his compendious volumes were useful for their examples but usually not for their commentary, sometimes scathingly: 'Professor Saintsbury cannot write. He cannot write so as to make himself reasonably intelligible, and this is a nuisance.'²¹⁷

This explicitly anti-intellectual mode of belles-lettristic literary musing seems most aligned with nationalistic and conservative strains of English literary criticism, especially in academia. However, it must be seen as itself a product of ideological commitments rather than simply a kind of torpor. Renewed by the war, this bigoted tendency saw German philological tendencies as something of a culture-killer, a 'dead science' or even 'mere evil', as Sir Walter Raleigh (1861-1922), a prominent critic, essayist and poet, and first chair of English Literature at Oxford University, said: 'this lovely and living art, to them is, has been, must be for ever, a dead science—a *hortus siccus* [Lat. = arid garden]; to be tabulated, not to be planted or watered'.²¹⁸ Saintsbury, we might presume, even in his vagueness, stands against this German approach by attempting to capture the spirit or formless essence of literature (somewhat closely, perhaps, to Pound's formulation outlined above of the 'total

²¹⁶ Alan Bell, "Saintsbury, George Edward Bateman (1845-1933)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35908>> [Accessed 28 May 2019].

²¹⁷ "A History of English Prosody by George Saintsbury" in *The English Review*, London (Jan 1909), pp. 374-376. (Review by E.R.) This journal would itself not be unfamiliar to Joyce: a few years after this was published, Joyce would offer the yet-to-be-published *Dubliners* to its editors in London, in person (see: Bruce Stewart, 'Joyce, James Augustine Aloysius', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (October 2007), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34247>> [Accessed 1st March 2021].

²¹⁸ Quoted in Baldick, *Social Mission*, p.88, though pp. 86-90 are also of interest here—during the Great War his anti-German views intensified to the extent that he stated if a hundred German professors were suddenly to die, it would benefit English literature.

problem' which is obscured by pedantic philologists). It is therefore something of an irony that Joyce appears to use Saintsbury in such a dry way, as if Saintsbury's use here is as a tabulation of various examples, instead of as literary criticism. Nevertheless, Joyce did toy with the idea of sending a copy of *Ulysses* to Saintsbury, commenting archly in a letter to benefactor Harriet Shaw Weaver that 'I am oldfashioned enough to admire him though he may not return the compliment. He is however quite capable of flinging the tome back through your window, especially if the 1922 vintage has not matured to his liking.'²¹⁹ The terms of this admiration are not apparent, though it is clear that in Joyce's hands the work of Saintsbury has mutated beyond recognition, into a form that Joyce imagines would be hateful to the professor.

Joyce does not do much to make the adjacent language in these earlier parts of *Oxen* more comprehensible to the reader, unlike Saintsbury. This much is part and parcel of reading Joyce; however, compared to the relative readerly freedom of *Finnegans Wake*, where a reader who does not initially understand a word's meaning can feasibly invent one so long as it makes sense, the reader here has little aid in navigating the medieval. Its representation of Middle English in particular will be a sticking point to any reader not already conversant in that era's literature, exhibiting vocabulary not readily available unless consulting the multi-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* such as 'cautel', 'avis', or 'mandement' (*U* 14.134-166).²²⁰ I want to suggest the particular difficulty exhibited here is essential to the reading experience of this section, and that this difficulty presents a meta-difficulty that complicates the otherwise openly declared allegiances Joyce's writing presents to democracy and to Irish liberation.

²¹⁹ James Joyce, *Letters*, vol. 1. ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking, 1966), p. 195.

²²⁰ Better explication for the modern reader is, however, available online on the Middle English Dictionary (<<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary>>) or in Gifford & Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, pp. 410-414. Indeed, educated guesses may well suffice even in these cases.

McGee characterises this fundamental contradiction of the political elements of Joyce's writing:

Joyce wrote works that attack the class system and the political economy of imperialist capitalism, but he wrote them in a style that has made them relatively inaccessible to any but academic and other professional readers, who are often disinclined to witness these aspects of his work.²²¹

In this case I do not share McGee's assessment that this is a 'contradiction'. 'Accessibility' is not an easily defined *stylistic* quality, nor is it necessarily the issue with readers today, nor is difficulty as a formal component necessarily off-putting to the 'amateur' Joycean, even with material pressures such as unevenly distributed leisure time. Instead I would rather formulate this as a 'meta-difficulty' with Joyce's politics, and would suggest that while his books contain a didactic element they are not willing to be overt about it, preferring instead suggestion, as Manganiello argues from Joyce's own words on the topic.²²² I want to add to this assessment that the didactic element in Joyce's work can be accessed through play; after all the 'philological experience' I have been outlining allows the reader to indulge in imaginative, imitation-based play, an imitation of being a philologist, just as the works themselves enact the role of the ancient, archival, inaccessible object of philological inquiry. This element of play means there is a certain indirectness to Joyce, and this seeming inability to be rendered in simpler terms cannot be removed *post hoc* once meaning has been grasped, as if it is not intrinsic to the meaning itself that the reader undergo a process of reading.

In the case at hand, the events of June 16 1904 are refracted through the prism of medieval language, with everyday objects transformed into comically extraordinary objects: 'And in

²²¹ McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 7.

²²² Manganiello, *Joyce's Politics*, p. 95.

the castle was set a board that was of the birchwood of Finlandy and it was upheld by four dwarfmen of that country but they durst not move more for enchantment.’ (*U* 14.141-43). The mundane setting is itself enchanted by medievalist prose, one of many ways in which reality is refracted by the stylistic changes of the chapter. The chapter, obsessed as it is with biological models of development, seems preoccupied with the notion of a cellular part of a whole, as Fritz Senn observes in his description of the difficulty’s effect on the reader: ‘The chapter is in itself an illustrative series of singular, marked passages, stylistic sub-entelechies [i.e. a form-giving cause or drive behind something], each one a unique creation not unlike [...] what cellular organisms are’.²²³ Each stylistic turn deserves a different approach in reading, a different sensitivity to the one preceding it. The development in the English language through time is not, in this analogy of Senn’s, a refinement of the organism towards an ideal form, but rather more neutrally a series of genetic mutations. Attempts to pin down the essence of a given paragraph can therefore backfire, if it indeed ‘has a biostructural formula that is far more complex’ than simply cribbing a given referent.²²⁴ However, instructively, Senn acknowledges that this complexity and difficulty points to Joyce’s interest in ‘*bilden* and *Bildung* (formation, creation, development, education, the generation of forms)’: ‘If you were to recognize all the stylistic semblances that Joyce confects, you would be said to have *Bildung* (education, breeding, culture, often a wide-ranging knowledge in the humanistic tradition)’.²²⁵ However, as all readers will at some point fail at this act of recognition, a new *Bildung* emerges premised not on recognition but on ignorance, and not on success but on failure. These facets, ignorance and failure, are inherent in the act of reading *Ulysses*. The above passage in fact enacts this transformative mechanics of ignorance

²²³ Fritz Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies: Focus on Joyce* ed. Christine O’Neill (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995), p. 64.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

through play, imaginative theorisation, imitating an awed, and mistaken, medieval observer of the modern world.

This passage derives ultimately from a parody of John Mandeville's prose.²²⁶ Sir John Mandeville is the putative author of the enormously popular fourteenth-century *Travels of John Mandeville*, a supposed travel narrative consisting of tales of fantastical, invented places and peoples. It found itself popular once more in the nineteenth century; indeed, as Carolyn Dinshaw notes, there is pedigree to the Mandevillean parody before Joyce among British philologists, her examples being Andrew Lang in his 1886 'Letters to Dead Authors' and another the otherwise deadly serious M.R. James.²²⁷ The operation of these parodies relies on the fantastical nature of the Mandevillean observation functioning alongside their inescapably colonial perspective. That is, the parody of Middle English Lang adopts for his 'Letter' to Mandeville suits from this perspective because he has travelled to such faraway and fantastical lands as Burma and India, and therefore, seemingly, back to the Middle Ages. However, as Dinshaw notes, this works both ways, as the character Lang adopts is also medievalised, and affectively identifies with the medieval figure of Mandeville.²²⁸ Joyce would have been familiar with Andrew Lang's work, having had access to what Kenner called interestingly the 'stained-glass Homer' he put forward in his translation.²²⁹ Kenner characterises Lang as a consummate Victorian medievalist even when the topic of his philological work is Ancient Greece. At the very least, in adapting Mandeville, he shares the characteristics of many Victorian writers, creating a dynamic where the colonised are observed as medieval, a state of being the observer feels as a loss.

²²⁶ Gifford & Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 411.

²²⁷ Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 92-98

²²⁸ Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, p. 92.

²²⁹ Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) p. 66.

This same dynamic of the imperialist gaze making a Mandeville out of colonised places is imported into *Ulysses*, then, where it is the ‘magic of Mahound’ (a deliberately medievalist and offensive rendering of the Prophet Muhammad) which creates the glasses the medical students drink from: ‘And on this board [...] there were vessels that are wrought by magic of Mahound out of seasand and the air by a warlock with his breath that he blases in to them like to bubbles’ (*U* 14.143-148).²³⁰ These philologists’ desires for the colonial subjects show that embedded within the Joycean parody is not merely the medieval source, but the refractive power of the philological industry and its practitioners’ desires. By toying with the notion of this Irish scene as medieval and as Oriental, the burlesque of Oxen’s language, however, flips the traditional narrative of development; the glass is a technology not indigenous to Europe, but rather, by an invisible process of labour unimaginable to the awed narrator of the episode, brought from a land beyond Christendom with such technologies as seem like magic or enchantment. Consequently, Joyce works into the parody this sense of medievalist loss, this notion of the colonised place as medieval and oriental. The comic nature of the observation, however, rests on the theorisation this is not somehow a lost state of being but rather a state of potential inherent within the everyday, requiring a shift in the process of interpretation. It theorises a latent medievalness to European modernity and a latent non-Europeanness to that medievalness. Consequently, even here, in conjuring the philological experience, the text fundamentally undermines the chauvinistic logic of colonialism that might pervade other literary works that similarly aim to replicate this experience of reading medieval literature first-hand. Just as Renan’s philology professionalised the colonial gaze and rationalised the

²³⁰ Carol Loeb Shloss has previously suggested Joyce’s only verifiable understanding of Islam at this time came from Mandeville’s *Travels*. Carol Shloss, ‘Behind the Veil: James Joyce and the Colonial Harem’ in *Joyce: Feminism/Post/Colonialism*, ed. Ellen Carol Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), pp. 110-11. We certainly know at least that later, in *Finnegans Wake*, Islam and Arabic culture is covered in greater depth and is researched more thoroughly.

‘human’ into the ‘specimen’, as Said put it, Joyce reverses and defamiliarises this gaze by seemingly allowing the ‘specimen’ to analyse back.

In *Ulysses*, the colonising philological perspective is represented at the very beginning by the character of Haines, the English man who stays overnight in Stephen’s tower and usurps his position in it. His nationalism is racist and conspiratorial (‘I don’t want to see my country fall into the hands of German jews either. That’s our national problem, I’m afraid, just now’ (*U* 1.676-78)), while his interest in Ireland is one that deliberately maintains a veneer of dispassion, lending his social interactions an alienating academic quality. The reader is only ever ironically distanced from his conversations, as Buck Mulligan provides mocking summaries of his work and positions that substitute for his actual output: ‘Five lines of text and ten pages of notes about the folk and the fishgods of Dundrum’ (*U* 1.365-66); ‘He’s English [...] and he thinks we ought to speak Irish in Ireland’ (*U* 1.431-32). Emer Nolan reads this scene opening the novel as an anxious one, unsure whether ‘modernistic parody’ is the way to ‘process the styles of Irishness [...] from the position of an engaged but critical insider’ given ‘the question of who will receive this discourse’.²³¹ However, the scene does not just work as an interrogation of Mulligan’s parodies, but also Haines’ own stylistic preoccupations as a ‘sympathetic outsider’, to use a description of him by Nolan that ironically accords with the Bédierist philological alignments I have described.²³²

This interrogation happens when scholarly expertise and the supposedly distant vantage point of the philologist are contrasted with the actual, living Irish people Haines encounters: he speaks in Irish to the old woman who delivers the milk; in turn she thinks it is French, and

²³¹ Emer Nolan, “*Ulysses*, Narrative, and History” in *James Joyce’s Ulysses: A Casebook* ed. Derek Attridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 161-165.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

then asks if he is from the West, where the Irish language was most alive (*U* 1.425-29). However, rather than blame English colonialism for the managed decline of the Irish language, or indeed rather than to blame the Empire directly for anything, Haines' response is to detach from the situation at hand and say, with this veneer of intellectual dispassion and reasonability: 'We feel in England that we have treated you rather unfairly. It seems history is to blame' (*U* 1.648-49). Buck, because of his jibing, seems basically complicit in this patronizing mode, hence Nolan's observations that the scene dramatizes colonialism.²³³ For example, Mulligan imposes a mocking distance between Haines and the milkwoman even while she is present, saying 'casually' after she says 'Glory be to God': 'The islanders [...] speak frequently of the collector of prepuces [i.e., foreskins]' (*U* 1.390-94). Here, Mulligan deliberately uses a 'difficult' form of a common word he presumes the woman will not understand, providing an early example in the novel of this mechanics of ignorance. What we have witnessed in this scene, then, is a philologist positioning himself as uniquely able to ethnographically interpret Ireland and its people, while simultaneously incapable of recognising the hybrid forms of Hiberno-English as marking the status of the language under British colonial rule, prescribing instead a return to an antediluvian state where everyone spoke Irish. He ignores, for example, that the old woman he encounters in fact speaks a particularly Irish form of English: 'Is it French you are talking, sir?' (*U* 1.425). *Ulysses* allows for readers to define themselves against such a character as Haines, when it eventually stages the philological experience for the reader, the aesthetic mode I have discussed regarding 'Oxen of the Sun'.

This philological experience is a mode the reader has already encountered in the twelfth episode, 'Cyclops', where an unnamed narrator and various Irish nationalists congregate in a

²³³ Ibid., p. 165.

pub and set themselves against Bloom. The episode contains several bizarre and parodic interpolations that disrupt the ‘I’ of the narrative just as the ‘eye’ of the Cyclops is pierced by Odysseus. Fritz Senn has suggested of similar passages (which he usefully calls ‘projections’, i.e. instances where the Joycean text gets ‘carried away’, from the Latin *provehere* ‘to carry along, to transport’), that in order to decipher them as pertaining to events in the reality of the story, the reader ignores the literal level of the sentence completely: that is, the reader subtracts what the text adds in excess.²³⁴ However, it is not merely the case that these sentences set up so much simply to be ignored; rather the occlusion of what is a simplistic representation of reality is the entire point. Instead of a mechanics of ignoring, it is preferable to encourage a mechanics of ignorance. For example, the verb ‘blases’ from the *Oxen* sentence above can be guessed at easily from context but if, upon looking it up, the reader finds her hunch confirmed that it means ‘to blow’, she may well discover the German verb *blasen* that means the same, thereby enabling our reader-turned-philologist to construct a brief sketch of linguistic history through shared etymological roots. This etymological excursion is itself encouraged by the special difficulty of Anglo-Oxen. The medieval language of ‘Oxen’ serves to highlight the basic foreignness of the English language once the reader is made aware of these roots and these meanings.

But in constructing this dense text and these projections Joyce sometimes leaves little that can be left to guesses or the mechanics of ignorance: as I have intimated, an ignorant reader is not given many tools to understand what specifically the ‘magic of Mahound’ refers to and as such the pleasure, the potential comedy of the sentence is restricted to whichever readers either already know it or can look it up with sufficient ease. This is a different kind of difficulty to the massively long sentences I mentioned earlier, where it is still possible to

²³⁴ Fritz Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies*, p. 52.

enjoy them in one's befuddlement; this referential humour relies on a separate apparatus of scholarly material, the pleasures of which are yet more elusive. As a result, this Joycean rebuke to orientalist parodies of Mandeville is also one that seems in danger of being too esoteric for most readers. However, this is standard operating procedure for *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*: the particular nature of these books is that it is manifestly impossible upon experiencing them to have a universal reading, a reading that accounts for the books in their entirety. Few first-time readers of *Ulysses* know about Irish history and *Hamlet* and *Don Giovanni* and Dublin's geography to the level the book asks of them; no reader of *Finnegans Wake* can possibly recognise all the languages the text makes puns in, no matter how expert. The books encourage as a baseline for all its readers that 'fast' reader, the ignorant reader with knowledge gaps: the gap in knowledge is therefore a major constitutive part of the experience of these books, as is the subsequent philological attempt at exegesis. That is the mechanics of ignorance.

Marilyn French understands that the form of *Ulysses* is such that it cannot be 'dominated' by anything: 'the form is not hierarchical, but something looser, freer, in which a host of hovering perspectives shift around something large and vague [...] absence itself'.²³⁵

Finnegans Wake, in a familiarly reflexive manner, considers its form via the reading process: it reimagines an ordinary reader as an 'ornery josser [Slang: chap]' 'faintly flatulent and given to ratiocination by syncopation in the elucidation of complications' (*FW* 109.3-5). As Senn observes, for Joyce, rhythm (in this case syncopation) is key to understanding the Aristotelian conception of 'entelechy', the form-giving cause behind things, as it enables us to feel an ordered process, the rhythm of structure: 'So that gesture [...] would be a universal

²³⁵ Marilyn French, "Silences: Where Joyce's Language Stops" in *The Languages of Joyce: Selected Papers from the 11th International James Joyce Symposium, Venice, 12-18 June 1988*, ed. R.M. Bollettieri Bosinelli, C. Marengo Vaglio and Christine van Boheemen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1988), p. 46.

language, the gift of tongues rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm' (*U* 15.105).²³⁶ If Saintsbury's book was a compilation of 'English prose rhythm', we could think of *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, in similar terms. However, its centre of gravity pulls the reader away from Saintsbury's belles-lettristic mode of criticism, applying it instead to the material of modernity, which creates a broken, 'syncopated' rhythm of understanding as engendered by the mechanics of ignorance.

This broken rhythm is one that typifies the thinking process of the reader of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and by extension their experience: a disassembled structure. This conception of a non-hierarchical, archipelagic form to *Ulysses* therefore finds intensified application in *Finnegans Wake*, a book so dedicated to this formal notion of interrupted rhythm that first-time readers find it helpful not to start reading at its physical beginning.²³⁷ In adopting this explicit type of difficulty as a formal principle undergirding the texts, in refusing to simplify or open themselves to universal readings, they demand a degree of philological investigation that makes *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* seem equivalent with the objects of philological study. However, this demand might well contribute to the perception of these texts as 'for' scholars, a mistaken reading confronted by anyone who has talked about Joyce outside the academy, and a mistaken reading other 'canonical' literature of the twentieth century can more easily evade. Instead, it is far less patronising and far more persuasive to say that Joyce, in writing this kind of difficulty into 'Oxen', evidently understood that readers outside of the academy can incorporate philological methods into their reading.

²³⁶ Fritz Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies*, p. 62.

²³⁷ Kimberly J. Devlin, "Attempting to Teach *Finnegans Wake*: Reading Strategies and Interpretive Arguments for Newcomers" in *Joyce Studies Annual*, (2009), p. 160. Her astute suggestion is page 104, the beginning of I.5, the 'mamafesta' chapter, with the long list of possible titles for the Letter. I talk more about the disassembled structure of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in my discussion of *varietas* in the following chapter.

4. Conclusion: Reading Medieval Irish Books in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*

In having these texts resemble the objects of philological study, with their ‘medieval abstrusities’ (*U* 3.320) and their inducements to the philological experience, Joyce invites the reader again to make the comparison I made in my chapter on the bodily book: that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* can be thought of as medieval books. If the books imitate the medieval, surely the reader also imitates a philologist. Both books toy with the notion of analysing medieval Irish equivalents in ways that parody an attempt at apprehending the philological object.²³⁸ *Finnegans Wake* parodies Sir Edward Sullivan’s seminal study of the Book of Kells in chapter I.5 in describing the Letter, which can be interpreted as symbolic of the book itself.²³⁹ In this passage, which I will describe in more detail towards the conclusion of this chapter, the Letter as *Wake* as Book of Kells is protean in nature, a ‘proteiform graph’ (*FW* 107.8) shifting status between modern and medieval depending on the interpretation of the reader.

Ulysses also features in the ‘Cyclops’ episode, set in a pub, a moment where the object of philological contemplation emerges from the material of the modern everyday; however this time a handkerchief transforms into a medieval book (*U* 12.1438-1441). The enthusiastic description of this handkerchief as a medieval book is heavily bathetic and encourages an intense scepticism of the interpolation: the notion of the handkerchief as a straightforward site for enthusiastic nationalist inscription is exploded (or as Senn would say, proected) into absurdity.

²³⁸ Arguably some medieval intertexts that are not Irish also function in this way: *Finnegans Wake* flags up its similarity with *The Thousand and One Nights*, for example.

²³⁹ Edmund Lloyd Epstein, *A Guide through Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), p. 55; James S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake* (New York: Viking, 1960), pp. 62-67. See also the previous chapter, especially the sections on the ‘ecstasy of citation’

—What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.
 —Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland.
 The citizen said nothing only cleared the spit out of his gullet
 and, gob, he spat a Red bank oyster out of him right in the
 corner.
 —After you with the push, Joe, says he, taking out his
 handkerchief to swab himself dry [...]
 The muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish
 facecloth attributed to Solomon of Droma and Manus
 Tomaltach og MacDonogh, authors of the Book of Ballymote,
 was then carefully produced and called forth prolonged
 admiration. No need to dwell on the legendary beauty of the
 cornerpieces, the acme of art, wherein one can distinctly
 discern each of the four evangelists [...] (U 12.1430-1464)²⁴⁰

The satirical effect of this passage is down to contrasting juxtapositions, between the acerbic colloquial segments parodied by the effusive academic prose, the open antisemitism faced by Bloom set against the mawkish vision of nationalist unity in ‘prolonged admiration’, the modern handkerchief against the medieval book (the Book of Ballymote; the four evangelists reminiscent of illustrations in the Book of Kells), corrosive disdain against effusive enthusiasm. This juxtaposition also suggests a further dimension to the philological transformations: the colloquial and academic prose are not separate but working in tandem—the open antisemitism of the Citizen and the sentimental enthusiasm of the interpolating narrator are polarities on the same nationalist continuum, dialectically linked. In this sense then, *Ulysses* encourages a readerly critique of the ideological utility of philology within Irish nationalism, just as it satirised the seemingly objective British philological gaze of Haines.

This same dynamic, of difficult reading defusing a myopic nationalist enthusiasm towards the object of philological inquiry, carries over and is put on a broader scale in *Finnegans Wake*. The Bédierist philological sympathy that provokes the effusive prose describing the

²⁴⁰ Gifford and Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 361, explains that Solomon O’Droma and Manus O’Duigenan, fourteenth-century scribes, have here been elevated into the status of authors.

handkerchief carries over into the academically inflected description of the Letter in I.5 of *Finnegans Wake*. The extent of the text's engagements with the Book of Kells and early medieval Irish palaeography is massive, ranging from its acknowledgment of the prevalence of uncial script (or 'septuncial lettertrumpets honorific' as they are in *FW* 179.22), to the 'turn in the path' motif common to Irish manuscripts (where the end of a line is provided in the space of the line above: a 'sinistrogyric return to one peculiar sore point in the past' (*FW* 120.28)) to the 'numerous stabs and foliated gashes' made by pricking the manuscript in scribal preparation (*FW* 124.02). Here my concern is restricted to how the Book of Kells is marshalled in simulating the philological experience, and readerly scepticism of the nationalistic mode of processing the medieval. I have already intimated in the chapter on somatic reading that in this passage part of the enthusiasm is sexual, that it is partly motivated by a libidinal energy I termed the 'ecstasy of citation'; I want to suggest in this chapter that there is a strong nationalist element to this mode being revealed and undermined as well.

Prior to its comparisons to the Book of Kells, the chapter 'constructs' its reader:

I am a worker, a tombstone mason, anxious to please
 averyburies [place/please everybody; Avebury stone circle]
 [...] You are a poorjoist [bourgeois; Joyce; wooden joist],
 unctuous to polise nopebobbies [nobody; bobbies = police] and
 tunnibelly soully [terribly sorry; 'Aquinas tunbelly' (*U* 3.385);
 soul; solely] when 'tis thime took o'er home [time to go home],
 gin. (*FW* 113.34-114.1).

In a basic, undeveloped reading, this passage could still be interpreted in multiple ways. First is a resentment that the writer is putting in all the work, while the reader is engaging in an act of leisure (a reworking of the ant and grasshopper fable that emerges later as the Ondt and the Gracehoper), then there is a binaristic relationship that typifies inorganic stone against organic trees (mason/joist) and a figuration that alludes to the novel's prevailing fraternal squabble: 'practical' Shaun against the writerly brother Shem, who does little of practical use.

However, there are further complicating factors that trouble these binaristic oppositions. The identification of the reader with the writer Joyce himself and with Aquinas in this passage positions the reader as uniquely able to navigate the academic voice the rest of the chapter is put in, in the advantageous position of not having to please anybody, and even able to put the book down and engage in an act of gluttony instead. This reading could equally also apply to Joyce's own aesthetic priorities.

The philologist begins to enter with more force at this point, making the first of many allusions to the Book of Kells in this chapter:

These ruled barriers along which the traced words, run, march, halt, walk, stumble at doubtful points, stumble up again in comparative safety seem to have been drawn first of all in a pretty checker with lampblack and blackthorn. (*FW* 114.7-11)

This passage first refers to the mostly invisible rulings that scribes used to create books like the Book of Kells,²⁴¹ but also refers to a difficulty inherent within the text; its rhythm is interrupted, as if writing it is itself difficult, an instance of 'ratiocination by syncopation'. A sense I would like in particular to explore here is the sense of rhythm as a general structural metaphor for aesthetic apprehension: the 'ruled barriers' are only perceptible from the trace of the words stumbling across them. In this way the immediately obvious aspect of the book's textuality—often being a huge block of text without paragraph breaks—is here itself conjured into a visual metaphor for the self-erected barriers in place while reading. These 'ruled barriers' are important to the remainder of this analysis. Joyce also takes from Sir Edward Sullivan's study of the Book of Kells the observation that 'The black is lamp black, or possibly fish-bone black'.²⁴² The book has therefore begun to identify itself with a medieval book, and appears to describe itself: the reader is given the tools to read the process

²⁴¹ Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), p. 191.

²⁴² Edward Sullivan, *The Book of Kells* (London: 'The Studio', 1920), p. 60.

of reading itself. However, the immediate connotation of ‘lampblack and blackthorn’ does not require this medieval exegesis in order to have its effect on the reader: it refers perhaps to a reversal of the usual process, perhaps painful and thorny, a kind of reversed illumination that undoes the metaphor of light being equated with truth. This reversal of interpretive procedure produces doubts in the narrator of I.5, who seemingly cannot conceive the sense of a text outside a (supposedly freeing) nationalist limitation; that is, a Bédierist sympathy, according to the narrative voice deployed here, demands that

while we in our wee free state [...] may have our irremovable doubts as to the whole sense of the lot, the interpretation of any phrase in the whole, the meaning of every word of a phrase so far deciphered out of it, however unfettered our Irish daily independence, we must vaunt no idle dubiousity as to its genuine authorship and holusbolus [archaism: “all at once”; hocus-pocus] authoritativeness. (*FW* 117.34-118.4)

This passage, first drafted in 1924 and responding to the Treaty that partitioned Ireland, speaks to a document both ‘duplicate and duplicitous’.²⁴³ Irretrievably, the philologist’s attempts to dam the potential readings of this artefact tend towards hocus-pocus; this signifies an attempt to secure the authenticity of the document not through a logical train of thought but rather via an appeal to nationalist sentiment. But it is at the point of this failed attempt to secure interpretation that the philologist commences my aforementioned ecstatic listing of the Letter’s components, unaware of its potential for inducing radical scepticism in his viewpoint:

and look at this [...] sentenced to be nuzzled over a full trillion times for ever and a night till his noddle sink or swim by that ideal reader suffering from an ideal insomnia: all those red raddled obeli cayennepeppercast over the text, calling unnecessary attention to errors, omissions, repetitions and misalignments (*FW* 120.9-16).

²⁴³ Nash, *Joyce and the Act of Reception*, p. 136

While of course modern readers often use red pens when approaching *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce himself used a red crayon in his notebooks), these ‘obeli’ refer to the specific uses of red in the Book of Kells. Obeli, dagger-like marks, denote scribal errors in the manuscript, drawing attention to them, as Sullivan pointed out for Joyce.²⁴⁴ It is also remarkable that red dots that violate the ordered geometric presentation of the page represent Christ’s blood at certain parts of the Gospel, for example the Agony in Gethsemane represented on folio 277r.²⁴⁵ Added to the ‘lampblack’ text in ‘ruled barriers’ above, we also have red supplementing it, ‘over the text’ like rubrics in a liturgical book that orders the administration of the Mass. But this text, whether rubric or annotation, sits outside the ‘ruled barriers’, connoting a freedom the initial text in black does not have: the joke here being, perhaps, that reading *Finnegans Wake* is inherently about ‘unnecessary attention to errors’. Annotation in *Finnegans Wake* works as a very common strategy for readers to unpack its words that look like mistakes, for things that seem particularly significant in ways that impose upon the original text. In this passage, the reader is pictured as someone pathologically attentive, after all. The word ‘misalignments’ here suggests a mistaken or unrecognisable form to *Finnegans Wake*: it places the voice of the chapter in chorus with the sentiments for racial purity voiced by Bédier. Yet it is also clear by now that the sympathy of *Finnegans Wake*, and that of any reader adopting a critical stance towards this voice, is not aligned in the way such a voice would wish.

As Joyceans are obliged to emphasise, errors are not necessarily errors but rather, in the gnomic words of Stephen Dedalus, ‘volitional and [...] the portals to discovery’ (U 9.229). *Finnegans Wake* appears built on such a principle at the level of the word, with its worst text

²⁴⁴ Sullivan, *Kells*, p. 24.

²⁴⁵ Meehan, *Book of Kells*, p. 170-171.

method. However, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* seem to have been equally as forceful with the ironised philologist. In presenting the wrong way to approach the philological object, the texts engage in a didacticism, teaching the reader via suggestion how to read the books themselves but also how to read a wider world beyond the objects of philological attention. The ability to do this is assumed to be latent among a reading public and not among a select class of institutional readers. This reading public is given the tools to construct, in defiance of the parodies that precede an 'objective' view of the matter at hand, a careful and more subtle reading of the matter at hand than that with which they are initially presented. They are asked to reject wholly regimes of philological hygiene, embracing instead a reading that seeks to breach ruled barriers and to become comrades in Joyce's modernist project to realign sympathies and thereby reading strategies.

Chapter Three

Reading in Praise of the Variant

1. *Introduction: Miscellaneity*

I have described the role of the physical dimensions of medieval reading in Joyce's works, where reading somatically enables an imaginative retheorisation of the object at hand, and I have elaborated how Joyce reimagines the work of those who read the medieval, the philologists. The reader of Joyce is primed to enact the role of the philologist and imaginatively retheorises the work of philology in so doing. The next stage is to build upon how this medievalist somatic mode of reading develops into a reading style that reflects on this attitude to philology; therefore I will now consider how medieval reading moves beyond the bodily into the intellectual. By focusing on reading strategies beyond the realm of sensory perceptions, my concern now shifts to reading mediievally as an intellectual practice. This notion of reading mediievally is arguably much vaster than the somatic reading I have outlined and potentially derails (or opens out) the project. For further discussions of potential facets of reading mediievally I refer the reader to my conclusion: here, the topic that lends itself especially to the discussion of Joyce before us is one tackling the notion of the variant as effusively praised by Bernard Cerquiglini in his short but influential treatise *In Praise of the Variant*.²⁴⁶ In this book-length essay, Cerquiglini attempts to reconfigure modern attitudes

²⁴⁶ Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Upon publication this book had the effect of generating widespread interest among scholars of medieval literature, including an edition of the journal *Speculum* in 1990 dedicated to the 'New Philology' which Cerquiglini was associated with. A medievalist introduction to this critical tendency can be found in this issue of *Speculum*, Stephen G. Nichols, 'Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), p. 1-10. Siân Echard in *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 202-6, uses Cerquiglini as a proto-digital humanities scholar and summarises some criticisms of Cerquiglini's approach: in emphasising a non-material aspect of the texts, he risks losing a more tangible link with the medieval book as an object. She also notes that he was overly optimistic that the tendency to facsimile would simply disappear as new technologies emerged. For an example of a less charitable and more vituperative critique, see Keith Busby, 'Variance and the Politics of Textual Criticism,' in *Towards a Synthesis? Essays on the New Philology*, ed. Keith Busby (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 29-48. A more rounded discussion of the sometimes acrimonious responses to the 'new philology' can be found in Sarah Kay, "Analytical Survey 3: The New Philology", *New Medieval Literatures*, 3 (1999), pp. 295-326.

towards variants in medieval manuscripts and other related properties of medieval literary culture, in order to inculcate a different philological practice emerging from an overt scepticism towards the ideological predisposition for single, stable, 'authentic' texts.

This mode of reading is not a universally applicable method or key to unlocking Joyce's texts, but rather I am motivated by its particularity (for example, Cerquiglini's work might not apply to many texts outside of vernacular lyrics and romances in the later Middle Ages).²⁴⁷ In this chapter I will be openly concerned with wrongness in reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, with variety and difference in reading them, with inconsistency, particularity, miscellaneity in the books and the approaches the books encourage, the fictions the reader must indulge or imagine in order to read. These characteristics sit in tension with another, contrasting element of the experience of reading these books, namely the philological rigour engendered by the texts I diagnosed in the last chapter. Contrasting with a modern discourse of authorial authenticity, however, this reading will be itself productive, enabling the relationship between reader and text to be reimagined in terms of medieval aesthetic preferences for collaboration, variety, and the miscellaneous, as exemplified by aspects of a literary culture that systematically produced variants, miscellanies and anonymous writings. These products are themselves to be found in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and my argument is that Joyce, like Cerquiglini, encourages a reading practice that undermines the authorising position of the author and its accustomed relation to the experience of reading in favour of imagining a collaborative mode of literary production. Such an experience of reading ties back into the idea posited in the introduction that the reader is a comrade in Joyce's aesthetic project. In this sense, then, such signal characteristics

²⁴⁷ That said, evidence of Cerquiglini's ideas penetrating outside of this subject area among philologists includes, for example, Gary D. Martin, *Multiple Originals: New Approaches to Hebrew Bible Textual Criticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), pp. 28-30.

of medieval literary culture as miscellaneity are made to stand in productive contrast with modern equivalents.

This miscellaneity, by which I mean the tendency towards a heterogeneity of content which is arranged for juxtaposition (in opposition to a book that primes a reading in traditional sequential order within a unity of content and theme), also exists in contrast to the approach most often used to describe the books, namely their ‘encyclopedism’.²⁴⁸ Encyclopedias developed out of compendious ancient and medieval works such as Pliny’s *Natural History* and Vincent of Beauvais’ thirteenth-century *Speculum Maius*.²⁴⁹ But, as Joyce knew them, they developed into a fundamentally different form, as Phelan argues extensively.²⁵⁰ As he points out, encyclopaedic form affords ‘fartoomanyness’ (*FW* 122.36); a totality of information that is beyond individual reading and instead is portioned out into sections, sub-sections and articles that can be read lightly. One does not have to take into account everything as a careful reader might desire: instead, a reader of an encyclopaedia only dips in for specific things. This attitude would also sit in tension with the philological rigour I suggest is engendered by Joyce, but Phelan points towards this tendency of encyclopaedic reading as applying to a defence of the Gilbert and Linati schemata distributed before Joyce had finished *Ulysses*. That said, I argue Phelan’s definition itself constricts its applicability to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, because the encyclopaedia’s claim to universality need not necessarily find itself a companion in these books. Rather, these books, while effusive,

²⁴⁸ For an exploration of the implications of this term’s usage by readers of Joyce, see the special issue of *James Joyce Quarterly* ed. James Blackwell Phelan and Kiron Ward (55.1-2, 2017-2018), esp. James Blackwell Phelan, “*Ulysses*, Annotation, and the Literature of Information Overload”, pp. 35-57.

²⁴⁹ For more see Ann M. Blair, *Too Much To Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), which emphasises the inheritance from Islamic scholarly traditions, and for more of a medievalist focus see Mary Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), and Emily Steiner & Lynn Ransom eds., *Taxonomies of Knowledge: Information and Order in Medieval Manuscripts* (Philadelphia: Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, 2015).

²⁵⁰ Phelan, “*Ulysses* and Information Overload”, p. 38.

exhaustive, and wide-ranging, cannot lay claim to universality; in fact their very prolixity implies a greater emphasis on the hyper-particular than the encyclopedic.

The term ‘miscellany’, however, a term which could accurately be applied to a far wider range of medieval books, will be a point from which I can productively swerve from the encyclopedic understanding of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. As Arthur Bahr argues, the term ‘miscellany’ ‘offers a practical way of designating a multi-text manuscript book whose contents exhibit a substantial degree of variety [...] and whose variety, in turn, creates some degree of unwieldiness for modern readers’.²⁵¹ Excepting perhaps the word ‘manuscript’, this sentence could arguably be applied to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. These are, after all, books which themselves often resemble collections of texts more than unified, single visions, ranging as they do in style and content to sometimes deeply comical effect. However, what gives the ‘miscellaneity’ of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* force is that such a book would tend to be a compendium of different texts literally bound together, as opposed to the modern understanding of intertextuality as metaphorically weaving texts within a new text. Although demonstrating principles of selection and arrangement, this emphasis on compendious

²⁵¹ Arthur Bahr, “Miscellaneity and Variance in the Medieval Book” in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* ed. Michael Johnston and Michael van Dussen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 182. See also Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), which argues that such selection and arrangement of texts within a book form is itself a kind of artistic production analogous to poetry. Broad treatments which are particularly helpful in enabling scholars to envision the miscellany as a medieval cultural phenomenon include such collections as Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, eds., *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), Siân Echard and Stephen Partridge, eds., *The Book Unbound: Editing and Reading Medieval Manuscripts and Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson, eds., *Imagining the Book* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005); and Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013). See also Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson, “Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts” in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, eds., *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 279-316. Miscellanies are also undoubtedly a salient feature of early modern book production in Europe. See for example Mary Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992), and H.R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996), for indications of the (lessened) extent of this tendency, where especially lyric poems are sometimes juxtaposed against material from other, sometimes printed, work.

miscellaneity, of binding disparate writings together in dialogue, is something that marks out a major difference from the principles of modern bookmaking. Books today are very often single texts, and if not are more likely ‘anthologies’ or ‘readers’ with stricter thematic delineations. As a result, a medieval reader is not liable to think of books in the same terms as a modern reader, who, because of this narrowed, non-miscellaneous focus, holds an altered relationship to the text at hand, where its content is relatively unchanged and unchangeable once published in printed form. To clarify: for this modern reader, it is difficult to conceive that splicing a text into a new miscellany, never mind the act of reading as I want to argue in this thesis, changes what the text at hand is.²⁵² Expanding this problematic miscellaneity, modern readers might well think in terms of author or genre, but medieval miscellanies often do not conform to this sort of categorisation, creating a problematic status for modern interpreters.²⁵³ Additionally, any modern account of reading in the Middle Ages must be prepared to question the aesthetic values that lead to this impression of what Bahr describes as ‘unwieldiness’ in order to imagine an experience of reading that sees such miscellaneity as a productive site of meaning.

This medieval aesthetic challenge to modernity is articulated by Cerquiglini, in his critical reflection on philological practice, as a structuring variety within medieval literary production:

In the Middle Ages the literary work was a variable. The effect of the vernacular’s joyful appropriation of the signifying nature

²⁵² John Dagenais asserts the importance of collaboration as a distinctly medieval ethos regarding the book, producing a mutable text which is itself constituted by handwritten marginalia in conversation with handwritten content, a process he understands as ‘ethical reading’. Medieval reading here thus unsettles the notion of ‘work’ and ‘text’ which are often conceived as unproblematic categories. John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de Buen Amor* (Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 16-17. See also Margaret J.M. Ezell, “Handwriting and the Book” in *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 90-106. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham eds., *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), is an essay collection that usefully refines our understanding of handwritten and printed—and medieval and early modern—material by traversing the definitional boundaries between these categories.

²⁵³ Bahr, ‘Miscellaneity’, p. 190.

suiting to the written word was the widespread and abundant enjoyment of the privilege of writing. Occasionally, the fact that one hand was the first was probably less important than this continual rewriting of a work that belonged to whoever prepared it and gave it form once again. This constant and multifaceted activity turned medieval literature into a writing workshop. Meaning was to be found everywhere, and its origin was nowhere. Usually an anonymous literature, its anonymous state is a modern fantasy ([...] the name Marie de France [twelfth century writer of Old French romances] was an invention of editors) or else an admirable medieval strategy.²⁵⁴

To facilitate a mode of reading that embraces this medieval sensibility, Cerquiglini anticipates later digital interventions in the field of philology: just as Joyce's seeming incoherence demands a certain readerly discipline, this 'abundant enjoyment' and 'continual rewriting' can suggest a chaotic, anarchic realm of pure play, when in fact the task facing philologists is a daunting rigour. It is in this respect that the Joycean rigour outlined in the previous chapter is nevertheless a condensed version of the type of rigour demanded of the kind of reading imagined by Cerquiglini if oriented around the variant.

Keith Busby emphasises this difficulty in his wholly negative response to Cerquiglini's ambitions for a new philological approach:

Consider what would be involved in Cerquiglini's ideal edition: not just transcription of the texts, but the coding of abbreviations, different types of letters [...] majuscules and minuscule, varieties of capitals and other forms of decoration, [and so on] [...] For anything other than a short text extant in a small number of copies, the difficulties involved and the amount of time that would be required are enormous.²⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Cerquiglini would emphasise the desirability of such labour along lines that connect the political, the aesthetic, and the historically accurate. As Cerquiglini articulated in

²⁵⁴ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, p. 33

²⁵⁵ Keith Busby, "Variance and the Politics of Textual Criticism," p. 42.

the above passage, medieval literature can pose a fundamental challenge to a modern paradigm of literary production that is determined by the relationship of the work to intellectual property law. The anonymity of a medieval work makes interpretation based on arguments of intentionality even more difficult than usual, meaning critics might well find it more productive to focus on aesthetic effects than form-giving causes. As Minnis points out, it was only after the thirteenth century that the question of the intentions of those authoritative writers who deserved naming, *auctores*, gave rise to a literary theory as we today might identify it; previously these *auctores* were believed to have been divinely inspired, and therefore reading their work was more a question of allegorical explication of effects.²⁵⁶ Bahr also argues that part of the intense difficulty with analysing collections of medieval literature lies in the difficulty in pinpointing the intentions influencing the selection and arrangement of texts in a given miscellany.²⁵⁷

The tendency to explain an aesthetic effect on a reader as the inevitable consequence of individual agency, whether the author's or editor's, emerges from particular modern circumstances (one that this thesis has not been capable of avoiding). It will be important for the analysis I make to show how interest in the literary effects engendered by variants and miscellaneity sits in productive friction with this modern paradigm of the authorial figure authorising these said literary effects. We can determine where this modern paradigm stems from by asking why it is that books stopped structurally resembling medieval manuscripts. In general terms, their form gradually shifted from the plural and miscellaneous to the singular and ordered, the arranged to the composed. As Mark Rose points out in his history of the law

²⁵⁶ Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 5. Minnis therefore uses this to suggest that reading became more literary after the thirteenth-century, because it was centred on these authoritative works being products of humanity.

²⁵⁷ Bahr, 'Miscellaneity', p. 187.

behind copyright, the ‘individualization of authorship, the transformation of the medieval *auctor* into the Renaissance *author*’ develops after a period that sees the conception of literary property, that oxymoronic notion, shift towards theoretically being held within the abstracted form of the text itself rather than the physical object of inky squiggles.²⁵⁸ Print demanded substantial capital investments for an object that was cheaper than a medieval manuscript, so return on that investment had to be assured somehow when distributing these multiple objects over time.²⁵⁹ Simultaneously, the class interests of booksellers and authors were analogous, with all these legal judgments made amidst a certain anxiety about the contamination of authorship by a marketplace of interlopers. A pertinent example of this alliance is the argument made by John Dalrymple (1648-1707) that securing authorship in legal terminology was nothing to do with money but rather about the ‘honor and reputation’ of individual authors.²⁶⁰

However, the notion of literary property that came to be enshrined in the figure of the author eventually created, in Rose’s terms, a ‘contrast [...] between the home-produced goods of the original author and the imported goods of the imitative writer’.²⁶¹ In order to sustain this commercialisation of literary production, lawyers drew upon a liberal philosophical tradition of property rights dating back to John Locke (1632-1704), where the text is configured as an original work, the property of an author, by means of its act of appropriating material from a state of nature by inculcating it with his (invariably his) labour.²⁶² But this axiom leads to

²⁵⁸ Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) pp. 9-18.

²⁵⁹ Rose, *Authors and Owners*, p. 9.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-107.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 114-121. See also John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and Adam Moore and Ken Himma, “Intellectual Property” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/intellectual-property/#LockJustInteProp>>, [Accessed 10/11/2019], especially section 3.3 on Lockean justifications of intellectual property, ripostes, rejoinders and counter-rejoinders.

problems of distinguishability, because in the current legal status the literary work is implied to be easily identifiable as the unique and original creation of one person. The labour is now not conceived as shared, and the focus now shifts from the work itself to this figure of the originary personality behind it. It is owing to this point in the history that certain famous anticapitalist critiques of unitary literary authority articulate their positions.²⁶³

In this context, this chapter asks what it means that Joyce, with his ‘worst text method’, fashions texts that formally align more with medieval miscellanies than the stable, singular transcriptions of genius imagined in the early modern law courts. The impulse to assign responsibility to Joyce for *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is unavoidable, and yet these same texts seem to repudiate anything one might consider ‘authordux’ [orthodox, Lat. *dux* = ‘leader’] (*FW* 425.20), something orthodox and led by this figure of the author. I want to argue that Joyce paradoxically engages in a medievalist aesthetic strategy of divestment from this legitimising author function, creating the impression of anachronistic miscellaneity and variance within the framework of a modern book, while simultaneously requiring the rigorous authorial control necessary to create this aesthetics during the authorial process. If medieval literature, for Cerquiglini, ‘is a literature that is in conflict with the authenticity and uniqueness that textuary thought connects with aesthetic production’,²⁶⁴ Joyce attempts to resolve this tension by making medieval literary effects such as variants the consequence of such a ‘unique’ aesthetic production. In short, Joyce enables the books to be imagined as products of a completely different literary culture and time, the work of anonymous authors existing in multiple variants.

²⁶³ Michel Foucault, “What is An Author?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 101-120; Roland Barthes, “Authors and Writers” in *A Roland Barthes Reader* ed. Susan Sontag, (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 185-193 and “The Death of the Author” in *Image–Music–Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 142-148. I also discuss these later in the chapter.

²⁶⁴ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, p. 33

Additional to this cluster of medieval reading preferences, I would also like to introduce a concept elucidated by Mary Carruthers in her analysis of medieval aesthetic preferences: *varietas*.²⁶⁵ This aesthetic virtue, as diagnosed by Carruthers, should help articulate not only the medieval taste for miscellaneity but also hold some further explanatory power for why reading mediievally is useful for Joyceans as an account of aesthetic experience. As she explains: ‘It is best to think of [variety] initially not as a concept so much as a word covering many degrees of experience [...] [the] imprecision of the measure is essential to its nature’.²⁶⁶ Carruthers highlights how the medieval understanding shifted once classical aesthetic norms, where *varietas* should only serve to ‘produce an experience of *dignitas*, “fittingness”’, gave way to a Christianised aesthetic sensibility that in fact prioritised *varietas* for its own sake.²⁶⁷ Joyce likewise identified this experience of variety, *varietas*, as an explicitly medieval aesthetic trait in talking about the ‘jostl[ing]’ of the sacred and obscene in Dublin’s medieval layout.²⁶⁸ This specifically medieval quality to *varietas*, in an ‘explicit departure’ from the norms established by rhetorical/aesthetic norms of antiquity, arises from the polyfocality, heteroglossia, multiplicity, even the successive contrasts of scripture, which is seen as representative of a paradoxical divine unity encompassing creation, and therefore itself desirable in one’s works, across multiple ‘chronologically separate movements’.²⁶⁹ In short, this *varietas* is an aesthetic prerogative that emerges specifically from reading mediievally.

²⁶⁵ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 135-164.

²⁶⁶ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, p. 136.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

²⁶⁸ Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999), p. 116. See also my introduction for a more in-depth discussion of this passage.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-7.

These specifically medieval reading preferences (anonymity, variants, *varietas*) will be shown to surface in readings of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, which lead to my third sense in which the books are imaginatively retheorised, as altering the relationship between reader and text. In this chapter then, I will continue to articulate how Joyce's political project of literary rebuke via medievalism continues in this precise mode of opposition to the authorial. First, the chapter will show how these readings surface, then examine the place these readings have in the wider medievalist scheme of the books. Then, in its final section, it will problematise the imaginative retheorisations thus far advanced by showing how Joyce's emplacement in modern authorial structures ensures the limits of reading mediievally.

2. *Anonymity, Variants and Varietas*

To begin to outline the strategy of divestment from the modern author figure in favour of medieval aesthetic preferences, I will concisely demonstrate here the various guises in which these preferences cluster: anonymity, literary variants, and *varietas*. It is not just the case that these are three discrete *topoi* that mark a medieval reading. Rather, they share a relation: the anonymity is antecedent to the variant on the level of the word and the *varietas* on a larger scale. In a medieval book, the aesthetic virtue of variants that transformed medieval literature into a 'writing workshop', to use Cerquiglini's term, requires anonymised literary production to be fruitful. Similarly, the *varietas* of a work, for example a miscellany, requires an anonymised arrangement of effects in relation to each other.

Anonymous authors—those who write with the absence of a single named identity—are present throughout *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. An anonymous character narrates most of 'Cyclops', for example. In one of the clearest examples of a literary network in *Ulysses*,

Leopold Bloom uses the cover of effective anonymity, in this case pseudonymity, to write sexually explicit letters to women he desires: for example, it is revealed during a psychic trial sequence that he apparently writes ‘anonymous letter[s] in prentice backhand’ (*U* 15.1016-17) to several unconsenting women of renown in Dublin, attempting to mask his identity by changing his style of handwriting. He also engages in an exchange of sexual letters with Martha Clifford under the name ‘Henry Flower’ (*U* 5.62), again deliberately changing his handwriting style: ‘Remember write Greek ees ... No, change that ee’ (*U* 11.860-65).²⁷⁰ Also notably, and in a related vein, he attempts to write a message in sand to Gerty MacDowell after masturbating on Sandymount Strand but erases it right on the verge of losing anonymity, creating a sentence that can be interpreted either way as finished or unfinished: ‘I AM A’ (*U* 13.1258-1266). This is a puzzling moment in an already puzzling episode that itself deliberately withholds confirmation of Bloom’s identity until roughly halfway through (*U* 13.743). Bloom is repeatedly presented as an anonymous author despite being one of modernist literature’s most recognisable individual entities: *Ulysses* thematises a constant questioning of identity and ‘seems to be saying [...] you only generate more questions’ by doing so.²⁷¹

The anonymous author is even personified at two memorable moments in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, in a figure we could call ‘Anonymous’. Included among the list of saints in the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses* we find the Byzantine-sounding ‘S. Anonymous’ alongside ‘S. Eponymous and S. Pseudonymous and S. Homonymous and S. Paronymous and S. Synonymous’ (*U* 12.1696-98). In *Finnegans Wake*, this nameless individual is accorded an importance with other literary giants as the possible author of the lauded ‘Ballad of Persse

²⁷⁰ It is notable once again that the minutiae of handwriting are linked to sex, this time facilitating a sexual activity. This is a topic I discussed in my chapter on somatic reading.

²⁷¹ Maria DiBattista, "Ulysses's Unanswered Questions," *Modernism/modernity*, 15.2 (2008), p. 269.

O'Reilly': 'Suffoclose! Shikespower! Seudodanto! Anonymoses!' (*FW* 47.19). In both of these lists, which have a comic immediacy within their contexts, Anonymous is given a special prominence: in *Ulysses*, as heading a noticeable onslaught of wordplay in a list of thus-far genuine saints, in *Finnegans Wake*, as ending the alliterative force of its own small list, and functioning as a punchline with sonorous religious connotations. The presence of Anonymous is seemingly implied by the lists of saints and canonical authors themselves, accorded an ironic authority within the Joycean joke that anonymity, by definition, cannot possibly bestow.

In *Finnegans Wake*, anonymity is a function of the presence of so many people alluded to within the 'characters' of the novel, consistently thematising once again a lack of coherent identity. As Adaline Glasheen memorably put it, the question one comes to is 'Who Is Who When Everyone Is Someone Else'?²⁷² Identity constantly shifts, and this is compounded when, for example, characters appear to ventriloquise others, as happens in the 'Yawn' chapter III.3, where the warring brother Shaun (now Yawn) adopts the personae of various other characters while under hypnosis or talking in his sleep. Otherwise the characters might adopt disguises. In one telling scene, a shift in identity through disguise is made possible by a moment of particularly medieval reading: a character called Festy King is being interrogated in a courtroom scene, where we attempt to find out the precise nature of the sexual infraction committed in the park by HCE.

This trial is a parodic recreation of that of Myles Joyce, a man from Galway who was wrongfully convicted and executed in 1882, the year of James Joyce's birth, unable to defend

²⁷² Adaline Glasheen, *The Third Census of Finnegans Wake* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. lxxii-lxxxiv. This excellent chapter title even inspired a novel: C.D. Rose, *Who's Who When Everyone Is Someone Else* (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2018).

himself in English for the murder of a family in Maamtrasna, County Mayo. Joyce considered this legal setting as typifying the Irish experience at the ‘bar of public opinion’, as he outlined in an essay in response to British coverage of the Belfast riots of 1907.²⁷³ Meanwhile, we learn that he is disguised ‘under the illassumed names of Tykingfest and Rabworc picked ... out of a tellafun book, ellegedly’ (*FW* 86.12-14). Not only does he not stick to one disguise, these pseudonyms arise out of his practice of *sortes Virgilianae*, the random selection of a book passage. Included in the words ‘tellafun’ and ‘ellegedly’ is the crucial divine command to St. Augustine to ‘take and read’ the Bible (in the Latin: ‘*tolle, lege*’) at any point. Doing so, he happened to read about the efficacy of the Apostle Paul’s preaching in altering the lives of believers, and was subsequently converted ‘as though the light of confidence [*lux securitatis*] flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled’.²⁷⁴ This idea of epiphany, a sudden moment of clarity, stemming from a book could be emblematic of the reading experience in *Finnegans Wake*. Yet, for Theodore Ziolkowski, this ‘epiphany of the book’ Augustine experiences stands ‘in contrast to the delicacy and evanescence that characterise Joyce’s epiphanies, [because] the insight is powerful and lasting and not restricted to the individual but exemplary for the more general transformation of an epoch’.²⁷⁵ For many subsequent readers of Augustine the epiphany ushers in a post-classical era, the Middle Ages through a conversion to the true faith, that is turning *to* authority. Here, *Finnegans Wake* reuses this emblem of medieval reading as if to turn *away* from authority, to establish false or alternative identities: instead of conversion, perversion.

²⁷³ James Joyce, “L’Irlanda alla Sbarra” in *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2000), pp.217-219. See also Anne Marie D’Arcy, ‘Piercing the Veil: *Der reine Tor*, the Grail Quest, and the Language Question in “Araby”’ in *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, 6 (2014), p. 35, for putting this legal travesty in context of Joyce’s work from *Dubliners* onwards and his medievalism. (pp. 20-43.)

²⁷⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin, (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 177-78.

²⁷⁵ Theodore Ziolkowski, “‘Tolle Lege’: Epiphanies of the Book”, *Modern Language Review*, 109.1 (2014), pp. 1-14 (5).

This punning is how Joyce connects medieval reading with the notion of anonymity, with Festy King operating as one of the standout examples of anonymous confessors and witnesses within the text. Given the courtroom setting, the lack of identity explicitly stages legal incoherence and an inability finally to decide—in the trial, HCE has already been judged guilty of his crimes at the ‘bar of public opinion’. However, just as anonymity is itself thematised in these texts, so too is an abdication of authority, by which I mean a scenario in reading where the intentional fallacy as described by Wimsatt and Beardsley (where the internal mechanics of literary work provide us with a sense of the external intentions applied prior to it) would appear not to apply, as an appeal to authorial intention would not even settle the manifest undecidability of the text.²⁷⁶ In the above trial passage, the abdication of personal choice in Festy King’s decidedly literary choice of names stands as one example of many where the lack of final, deciding intentionality is staged for the reader. The reader is caught, as they are throughout *Finnegans Wake*, between alternative versions of the same text—variants—one suggesting the ‘*tolle, lege*’ conversion story and others for all the different connotations presented by the above passage. This notion of conversion as contained within a single phrase, of a phrase inducing one to turn towards the truth, is particularly germane to our discussions of variants and medieval reading, which is partly why I have chosen to discuss it; later I will discuss another such conversion phrase. Notably, however, any conversion here must necessarily move away from the attempts of the legal authorities to determine once and for all the true identity of Festy King, and towards the inconsistent, a delight in the episode’s incomprehensibility, towards imaginative retheorisation.

²⁷⁶ William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy” in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2001), pp. 1374-1386.

Derek Attridge theorised such an abdication of authority in his response to Bishop's schematising study of *Finnegans Wake*, 'Joyce's Book of the Dark', which he criticised on the grounds of over-prescribing certain narrative interpretations:

It would seem unnecessary to spend time emphasizing something so obvious as the undecidable polysemic richness of the *Wake* were it not that so much commentary pays little more than lip-service to this property, before going on to press the claims of this or that particular and exclusive reading. We seldom think through the consequences of Joyce's having written, with great effort, a text whose meanings occur in the form of alternatives between which it is impossible to decide.²⁷⁷

There is nevertheless an irony that in such righteously emphasised undecidability Joyce nevertheless is the one charged with 'having written', of being the prime mover in the reader's universe. Paradoxically, the undecidability has already been decided by Joyce, or the discursive figure we as readers assign the name 'Joyce'. Such an irony is later acknowledged by Attridge:

[both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*] assert their own massive monumentality, their own pre-programming of every interpretative move. The unparalleled scholarly attention [...] attracted bears witness to their aura of achieved certainty: every detail is assumed to be worthy of the most scrupulous editorial consideration, the most minute genetic tracing, the most careful historical placing, the most ingenious hermeneutic activity—all in the name of greater fixity, permanence, and truth. Yet the particular manner in which Joyce [...] overdetermines interpretation [...] makes possible, and relishes, the random, the contingent and—emerging out of these as a necessary effect—the coincidental.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Derek Attridge, "Finnegans Awake: The Dream of Interpretation" in *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27.1 (1989), p. 17.

²⁷⁸ Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory, and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 120.

This emergence of literary effects that can only arise from the abdication of literary authority is itself dramatised in the books. In *Ulysses*, a book containing multiple coincidences and happy accidents, Stephen Dedalus contests to great controversy that the object of literary study is not necessarily designed but full of potential for readerly encounters with hidden truth: 'A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery' (*U* 9.228-229).²⁷⁹ For Maria DiBattista, *Ulysses* celebrates the 'errant soul' as the protagonist of the novel as a form since *Don Quixote*, because even in those moments where the form of the novel appears to 'foreclose all possibilities of error and improvisation', such as the question-and-answer form of 'Ithaca', nevertheless '*Ulysses* seems to be questioning itself'.²⁸⁰ Errors therefore provide the very material out of which opportunities for readerly discovery are made, and *Ulysses* dramatises this almost as an example to set before the reader.

In order to further demonstrate this deployment of the 'volitional error', I will show here briefly how a literary variant is dramatised within *Ulysses*. Bloom receives a letter from 'Martha Clifford' (which could be a pen-name) containing interesting errors, such as 'I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world' (*U* 5.245). Anticipating the punning form of *Finnegans Wake*, her letter here reveals different meanings in one word's condensed errancy of form: in an 'etymological' reading, the reader constructs a history of the word 'world' to find 'word' intended behind it, and supplies meaning there (the 'other word' here probably being 'man'). But the possibility of 'that other world' containing signifying potential, because of its place in Joyce's fictional rendering of a letter, still remains: as the

²⁷⁹ Considerable interest in coincidence in *Ulysses* has already been shown: Chris Ackerley, "'Well, of course, if we knew all the things': Coincidence and Design in *Ulysses* and *Under the Volcano*," in *Joyce/Lowry: Critical Perspectives*, eds. Patrick Richardson, A. McCarthy, and Paul Tiessen, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007) pp. 41–62; John Hannay, "What Joyce's *Ulysses* Can Teach Us about Coincidence," *University of Dayton Review*, 19.2 (1988), pp. 89–97.

²⁸⁰ DiBattista, "Ulysses's Unanswered Questions", pp. 268-9.

reader of *Finnegans Wake* soon realises, the corrupted ‘worst-text’ version is what we have, not the word(s) one might perceive behind it. It leaves something of a puzzle for the reader and also for Bloom, who, though he easily reads ‘word’ from ‘world’, finds himself rethinking the errant phrase, as does the reader. The imaginative retheorisation of this ‘error’ as concealing readerly discoveries is actively encouraged when Bloom later reminds himself of it while attending a funeral: ‘There is another world after death named hell. I do not like that other world she wrote’ (*U* 6.1001-2). The variant now has one suggested meaning: the afterlife. Later, Bloom himself makes an ‘error’ in his mental transcription when he reminds himself of the phrase again, in a different context: ‘Wanted, smart lady typist to aid gentleman in literary work. I called you naughty darling because I do not like that other world’ (*U* 8.326-8). Bloom has himself introduced a variant, just at the moment when he is presumably reminded of the possibility of errors in typing, and a female typist as sexual conquest for the ‘gentleman’: ‘boy’ in the original becomes ‘darling’.²⁸¹ It is now far less obvious what the sentence could mean, but the reader’s basic understanding of the sentence has shifted from a literal understanding of its words to its place and function within the discourse of Bloom’s internal monologue, and this is because of its variants.

Bloom continues to change the original sentence, merging the letter with a question Molly asks him earlier in the day (*U* 4.337), creating a new sentence that reveals his puzzled curiosity about the variant, while he himself is distracted by writing his aforementioned anonymous cryptic message in the sand: ‘Useless. Washed away. Tide comes here [...] All these rocks with lines and scars and letters [...] What is the meaning of that other world’ (*U*

²⁸¹ For further dissection and discussion of this important and documented phenomenon in modernist literature, the ‘lady typist’, given its overlap between the gendered labour of typing and its sexualisation, see the cluster organised by Megan Quigley et al., “Reading ‘The Waste Land’ in the #MeToo Generation” *Modernism/modernity* 4.1, <<https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0094>> [Accessed 2 July 2021]. See also Martin Lyons, *The Typewriter Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), pp. 67-85 for further contextual information.

13.1259-63). The words ‘she wrote’ no longer appearing, the variant, now established as a motif in the novel, increasingly unmoored from its original context, is now anchored both to writing and to the afterlife, writing as something that survives the writer after death. *Ulysses* encourages us with this recurring motif to view the book as a proliferation of such variants, like the rocks Bloom notices as he writes in sand, and like the ‘gorescarred book’ Stephen reads from while teaching (*U* 2.12).²⁸² For example, by the time Stephen says, in an entirely different context, ‘In the beginning was the word, in the end the world without end’ (*U* 15.2236), even though he has not seen the original letter, the reader nevertheless has long been converted to the religion of coincidence, and we can synthesise the reconstructed meaning of ‘word’ and the worst-text variant ‘world’ as inhering in the same divine plan. Stephen here appears to the reader of *Ulysses* to describe the metaphor of the variant via the cosmic vision of Christianity. According to this line, word becoming world is not a mistake but rather an incarnation; the variant is not a corruption but a salvation.

In fact, what *Ulysses* stages here, through a motif whose semantic development I have shown, is the potential of a kind of readerly creativity, and the variant is an essential mechanism in presenting this. Such metamorphoses unsettle the attribution of the *lapsus calami*, or ‘slip of the pen’, to an ‘automated’ scribe, someone merely mechanical in the process of scribal labour, by such tendencies as Lachmannian philology, as Cerquiglini notes.²⁸³ Bloom’s meditations on the variant remove it from the realm of error and help push it into the territory of the ‘portals of discovery’. This is also an instance where *Ulysses* proves Stephen’s chauvinism in his original quote, as ‘Martha Clifford’ is the genius here. There are further examples of women creating variants, anticipating the wordplays of *Finnegans Wake*.

²⁸² For some analysis of the ‘gorescarred book’ see my chapter on somatic reading.

²⁸³ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, p. 49.

Molly's closing monologue provides multiple examples of moments where the representation of written words, especially from letters, trouble the supposedly spoken quality of the text. One example is: 'with love yrs affly Hester x x x x x' (*U* 18.623). But it is when Molly muses on the mistakes she tends to make that the supposed soliloquy or aria cements its status not as an aural but a visual document: 'symp~~h~~athy I always make that mistake and new~~w~~p~~h~~ew with a double yous in' (*U* 18.730-1).²⁸⁴ This sudden focus on variants gives the lie to the idea that Molly's soliloquy is a formless excursion from the material world that *Ulysses* focuses on so relentlessly, as I have noted in my chapter on reading somatically. This moment is unique in the novel; there is no other moment of something being placed 'under erasure', to use Derrida's conception of the mark of deletion.²⁸⁵ Mahaffey affirms her as 'a woman of letters in all senses of the word', and her honest admission of 'errors' is here entirely in keeping with the confessional and frank mode of her dramatic monologue.²⁸⁶ In this act of preserving the linguistic precursor, Molly's internal monologue takes up the characteristic of the written word: by maintaining the error under erasure, the reader glimpses and can begin to guess at the structuring processes of Molly's character that might allow 'symphony' to be suggested by the word 'sympathy', or 'new' and 'p~~h~~ew' with 'nephew' even without the explanatory context of the letter. These variants do not signify as clearly as Martha's 'world' might: rather, what is suggested by these variants is the potential for difference always latent even in supposedly 'ordinary' language, the precursors that are often erased.

This abiding concern with linguistic precursors and difference was itself of interest to such a philosopher as Gilles Deleuze, who uses Joyce's work in 'Difference and Repetition' to

²⁸⁴ In the original 1922 printing the mistakes are not crossed out; in my edition by Hans Walter Gabler, the crossing-out is present at a very strange, almost vertical, angle.

²⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 23.

²⁸⁶ Vicki Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1995), p. 175.

illustrate the concept of the so-called ‘dark precursor’ (*précurseur sombre*).²⁸⁷ This is a concept that enables one to account for a series of total differences, which gives the appearance of total randomisation: a pseudo-identity that explains how such a series can be pre-determined. Deleuze gives the example of the path of a lightning bolt: something flowing between regions with a great deal of potential difference, determined by that dark precursor. This pre-determining factor is in fact a plurality forced into the singular by the strictures of grammatical sense and produces a system of diffuse relations without creating a totality. But what is especially of interest here is that the Joycean innovation Deleuze finds useful for thinking this concept is that of the portmanteau word in *Finnegans Wake*: ‘the linguistic precursor belongs to a kind of metalanguage and can be incarnated only within a word devoid of sense from the point of view of the series of first-degree verbal representations’.²⁸⁸ Deleuze then attaches great significance to Joyce’s use of variants: for *Finnegans Wake*, they are crucial for delineating the ‘chaosmos’ (*FW* 118.21) of its design, but we can argue *Ulysses* too has a place in this Deleuzian understanding. Udaya Kumar for example points out how ‘[m]emory does not represent here an organic whole with an unchanging meaning, but a series of repetitions that lead on to other series. An element that was combined with certain other elements in a previous episode brings with it traces of these combinations.’²⁸⁹ This series of repetitions and differences is why Molly’s ‘symp~~h~~athy’ is found alongside Martha’s ‘world’. This patterning is an unremarkable coincidence outside of Joyce’s artistic design, yet within *Ulysses* it enables the very idea of imaginatively retheorising errors as variants.

²⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* trans. Paul Patton (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), pp. 154-157. See also Udaya Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth: Repetition, Time, and Tradition in Ulysses* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 6-9 for a longer explanation of Deleuze’s process of thought beyond presenting his conclusions, as I have done.

²⁸⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 156.

²⁸⁹ Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth*, p. 79. His example of a dark precursor is the embryo chart Joyce used when writing ‘Oxen of the Sun’ (p. 12).

Readers of *Ulysses* might be tempted simply to concern themselves with variants in letters, were seeming errors simply restricted to those instances of writing that are dramatised for them, but the book is strewn with such small, jarring verbal details. Unlike the author of a letter in *Ulysses*, there is no discernible character responsible for the idiosyncracies of Joyce's style, and as a result they are far more easily, though just as wrongly, dismissed as simple errors: the reader is forced to reckon with variants as a product of anonymity. To provide one example, the word 'barbacans' appears instead of 'barbicans' three times (*U* 1.316, 3.272, 15.4690). This is a deliberate archaism, which would appear to be a mistake to most readers: 'barbican' in fact derives from the medieval Latin word 'barbacana', which became the Old French 'barbacane'.²⁹⁰ Used in description of Stephen's lodging at the Martello tower in Sandycove, a building that might perhaps give the impression of being medieval despite being built in the 19th century, the word is a medievalisation, a foreignisation of a seemingly innocuous word, a lapse into the adjacent language that would eventually so dominate *Finnegans Wake*, as I described in my chapter on philology.

By adopting this variant, the narrative voice adopts Stephen's consistently archaised, often medieval, sense of embattlement and conflict, a topic that itself deserves study separate to what little space I can devote it here. To provide a window into this topic: Stephen thinks of himself as aiming to 'pierce the polished mail' of Haines with his witty remarks (*U* 2.43). He also allegorises a children's hockey match as depicting a universal, specifically medievalised condition, thinking to himself: 'I am among them, among their battling bodies in a medley, the joust of life' (*U* 2.315). His later fracas with two British soldiers is rationalised by the medical student Lynch: 'He likes dialectic, the universal language' (*U* 15.4726). Stephen's

²⁹⁰ "barbican", *Middle English Dictionary*, (University of Michigan), <shorturl.at/jrvM3> [Accessed 2 July 2021].

conception of the universe and language is defined in this way by the friction of difference, by what he calls the joust of life; the word ‘barbacans’ ties the Martello tower into this network of medievalised symbols. The medievality of the variant’s spelling is itself the ‘barb’ that ensures its position as a motif within the novel. When such variants emerge from the ‘neutral’ narrative voice, the way is already paved for the extensive experimentation that defines *Finnegans Wake*.

Because variants are arguably the very substance of *Finnegans Wake*’s style, similar moments in *Ulysses* have been accorded what must necessarily be a disproportionate amount of attention in comparison. There is even a ‘mistake’ in the title of the book: one that, before one reads it, primes a kind of reading, as Mahaffey points out: ‘one of the functions of Joyce’s title is to inculcate an awareness that we are all editors, that reading is itself a transitory editorial practice’.²⁹¹ She even aptly describes the book as ‘composed entirely of misprints’.²⁹² However, in this book we do not see only an intensification of the tendency towards variants we found in *Ulysses*: instead, the design being so pervaded with variants induces the intense philological scrutiny I diagnosed in the previous chapter. The reader also becomes capable of finding all manner of coincidences in unlikely words, each one being a portal of discovery. Take the first sentence as an example: ‘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 Environs’ (*FW* 3.1-3). I have already noted in the introduction that there is a constellation of words resembling words for ‘settlement’ in different languages, especially in the phrase ‘by a commodius vicus’. Most importantly for our purposes, the word ‘by’ is plausibly a pun on the Old Norse ‘bý’ meaning estate or home, the basis for many words

²⁹¹ Vicki Mahaffey, ‘Intentional Error: The Paradox of Editing Joyce’s *Ulysses*’ in *James Joyce’s Ulysses: A Casebook* ed. Derek Attridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 248.

²⁹² Mahaffey, ‘Intentional Error’, p. 247.

including ‘býgð’ meaning town or settlement, and related to the suffix ‘-by’ still surviving in many English place names. Only because of the extensive punning of *Finnegans Wake* can this reading of the word ‘by’ be possible; the instances of the word ‘by’ in *Ulysses* are necessarily less charged with interpretative potential.²⁹³

In addition to this stylistic proliferation of variants, *Finnegans Wake* also dramatises the making of variants. The famous saying of St. Augustine, ‘*securus iudicat orbis terrarum*’ [L. = ‘the verdict of the world is conclusive’], which is transmuted throughout the book into various guises, is presented as corrupted at one point: ‘*sigarius (sic!) vindicat urbes terrorum (sicker!)*’ (*FW* 76.7-8). This quotation is significant as being the equivalent for Cardinal Newman, whose prose Joyce admired throughout his life, what ‘*Tolle, lege*’ was for Augustine, thereby marking out yet another moment in the book where variants are made from conversion phrases.²⁹⁴ In this pun, Joyce reveals just how extensively he allows a variant aesthetic to permeate his text. The phrase itself now means ‘the assassin liberates the cities of terror’, though the word for assassin is actually ‘*sicarius*’: the variant ‘*sigarius*’ appears to introduce cigars. The context of this sentence is:

It may be [...] [that he] bred with unfeigned charity that his wordwounder [...] might [...] unfold into the first of a distinguished dynasty [...] of a truly criminal stratum [...] thereby at last eliminating from all classes and masses with directly derivative casualisation: *sigarius (sic!) vindicat urbes terrorum (sicker!)* (*FW* 75.11-76.8)

²⁹³ Because of this potential, ‘bay’ and ‘by’ are linked in a way they would not normally be, by the absent referent of the sentence: Dublin.

²⁹⁴ For Joyce’s admiration of Cardinal Newman, see Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 40, who maintains that since the age of childhood Joyce consistently held him to be the finest prose writer in English. He later attended University College, Dublin, which was founded by Newman as the Catholic University in 1853. For the phrase’s importance to Newman, see John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, ed. Wilfrid Ward (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), p. 213.

In both a charitable gesture and a moment of paranoia, HCE here worries or prays ('bred' could read as 'prayed') that the accusations against him will breed criminal lies or lying criminals, a totality of a mass of people or things 'eliminating' (in the senses of erasing or defecating) as one a message about a cigar smoking(?) assassin liberating cities of terror. This basic 'narrative' behind the sentence also lends a larger drama to the sentence's internal tensions over variants revealed in the parentheticals in the above quote: '*sigarius*', being a supposed misspelling of *sicarius*, is marked '(sic!)'. The sonic repetition here brings a degree of ambiguity, as if the act of correction is itself merely an echo or a coincidence. The word '(sicker!)' further plays with this correction, suggesting that the rest of the sentence is worse than the initial misspelling, or contrastingly that it is in fact *sicher* [Ger. = secure, sure]. In keeping with the narrative of this long, paradoxical sentence, the parenthetical interjections appear to attempt to mark out the variants in the phrase as errors, imitating academic practice, only to then also take on the characteristics of charitable gestures, allowing the variants, the 'criminal stratum', to proliferate. The sentence then presents both an authoritative voice that corrects and an abdication of that same authority: an aesthetic enactment of a foundational conclusion, that the judgement of the world is no longer secure, and in fact some rogue, maybe the author, has set loose something criminal. Once again, instead of an epiphany of the book yielding a moment of conversion, *Finnegans Wake* presents a moment of perversion.

In this way, the original quote about a universal surety of judgment is thoroughly undermined in form and content. From this point the aesthetic of variants extends even further: on first glance, '*vindicat*' does not appear to be a variant of the original phrase's '*iudicat*' so much as a complete replacement in printed type, but knowledge of medieval Gothic scripts would allow the reader to understand that certain letters are produced simply by creating minims, a

simple downward stroke sometimes linked by the barest line; ‘i’ is one minim, ‘m’ three, but both ‘u’ and ‘n’ are composed of two minims, meaning that it is possible to confuse the two—‘u’ and ‘v’ are often conflated. This extends the visual aspect of the variant as evinced in *Ulysses* via Molly’s ‘symp~~h~~athy’; here the variant only makes sense as a variant within a specifically medieval framework of writing. This visual aspect to the variant only, therefore, makes sense in a non-modern world of non-print. It is also an extraordinary reach that Joyce asks the reader to make, but displays his commitment to the notion of depicting reading styles separated from modernity in time. The aesthetic of variance belongs more obviously to this sphere of handwritten text, which is why the books exhort us to imagine them not as printed matter, but as handwritten letters or medieval manuscripts.

As noted above, for Cerquiglini, the variants in medieval books turned the literature of the period ‘into a writing workshop’ because ‘[m]eaning was to be found everywhere, and its origin was nowhere’.²⁹⁵ He later defines the medieval work by its ‘variance [...] the concrete otherness of discursive mobility’.²⁹⁶ This notion of discursive mobility directly carries across to *Finnegans Wake*, which, in one of its many moments of self-description, exhorts us to ‘look what you have in your handself! The movibles are scrawling in motions, marching, all of them ago’ (*FW* 20.21-2). Once again I return to this as it is a moment when the text directly encourages a pattern of reading, of attending to the book as a material object, of imaginative retheorisation and of considering the process of interpretation as one of movement. We can also think of *Ulysses* in similar terms, when we consider how a motif or variant can drift in meaning away from its original context, as I demonstrated using the example of Martha Clifford’s ‘world’. This notion of process in interpretation is described by

²⁹⁵ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, p. 33

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Carruthers using the concept of *ductus*, from the Latin for ‘the led thing’, meaning the ‘model of journey [...] moving actively through a work among its internal paths to its goal’.²⁹⁷ In adopting this teleological understanding of the medieval artwork, where the goal is ultimately imitation of the divine, Carruthers diverges from Cerquiglini’s account of the origin of medieval literary meaning being everywhere and nowhere. In *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, at least, the sense of process and itinerary through an artwork is preserved while the *telos* is harder to perceive.

That said, Carruthers’ sense of *ductus* has direct utility for an understanding of reading mediinally in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* because, taking cues from early medieval diversions from classical writings on aesthetics, she articulates how ‘the variety of a work constitutes its *ductus*. The itineraries within any crafted work are marked out by the modes and colours of its style’.²⁹⁸ The medieval aesthetic conception of variety, or *varietas*, is therefore inseparable from an ongoing experiential process brought about by the artwork. *Varietas*, then, is tied inherently with mobility as a metaphor for the process of interpretation, it is an unfolding sensation, a process continuing for as long as possible: feeling ‘satiated’ by a text, for example, would remove the incentive to memorise it and thus to physically inscribe it within your body for further contemplation or rumination.²⁹⁹

The process of interpreting *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* as defined by a consistent encounter with the unfamiliar sounds true in principle to a Joycean but is harder to demonstrate than the presence of variants, because of the nature of the aesthetic phenomenon *varietas* defines. One can point to individual examples of variants easily, but *varietas*, being the relation between

²⁹⁷ Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, p. 13.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139. For an explanation of these somatic metaphors of memory, especially the process of interpretation as rumination or ‘chewing the cud’, see my chapter on reading somatically.

parts of the work, revolves around difference on a larger scale. The Gilbert and Linati schemata of *Ulysses*, handed to Joyce's respective friends shortly before he finished the novel in 1921 as tabular rubrics displaying the time and place of each episode and corresponding symbolic information such as each episode's 'colour', 'art' or 'technic', provide an example of this larger scale: this is why Phelan recommends them as an example of the encyclopedism of *Ulysses*.³⁰⁰ While the schemata often tend to be regarded with suspicion, not least because they differ from each other and do not seem easily to correspond with the episode they describe, nevertheless they will provide a window into the *varietas* of the novel's focal points. As an illustration of this effect, here are the supposed 'colours' typifying each episode of *Ulysses* in order, except Lotus Eaters (5), Lestrygonians (8), and Eumaeus (16), which do not have any: white/gold; brown/chestnut; green/blue; orange; white/black; red; 'blood color'; 'rainbow'; coral; green; grey/blue; white; violet; starry/milky; starry/milky 'then new dawn'. Immediately it is obvious that these are not all colours and that there is no obvious patterning underlying this sequence of colours. Any early reader of *Ulysses* such as Stuart Gilbert or Carlo Linati would no doubt find these schemata as pointing not necessarily to a coherent unity but variety for variety's sake, if they trusted them at all.

Conversely, no authorial and authorising table of places, times, colours, parts of the body and so on has ever accompanied *Finnegans Wake*. However, there is no doubt the text adopts an aesthetic of *varietas* as well, so a structural similarity to *Ulysses* can be adduced in how the text adopts various guises for each of its chapters. The first book of *Finnegans Wake* alone has, in order, a mythical retelling of a great 'fall' (*FW* 3.15); a folkloric history of a ballad ('The Ballad of Persse O'Reilly', presented in full); the series of rumours, slanders and

³⁰⁰ Phelan, 'Ulysses and Information Overload', pp. 35-38. For the schemata laid out in full, see *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Casebook*, ed. Derek Attridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 268-9.

insults levelled at HCE (listed in full); the posthumous trial of HCE, including the Festy King episode; a philological treatise on the Letter or the book itself or an ‘untitled mamafesta’ (*FW* 104.4); a quiz show about the book itself and its characters, including a long digressive answer that retells certain fables that recur throughout the book; a slanderous biography of the author Shem by his brother Shaun; and a dialogue between two washerwomen on either side of the Liffey about ALP, before they metamorphose into a tree and a stone as night falls. This all-too-brief summary of each of the eight chapters of the first book is itself an illustration of the miscellaneity that Bahr defines, in its ‘unwieldy’ variety, here intensely difficult to unify coherently or to envision syntagmatically as a sequence.³⁰¹

Joyce’s interest in lists is itself an integral feature of his formal excess, a signal of *varietas* in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and is further evidence of this ‘fartoomanyness’, the ‘unwieldy’ nature of the miscellany. Some superlative examples are the hilarious list of potential titles that opens *Finnegans Wake* I.5 (*FW* 104.5-107.7) or the beautiful list of water’s physical properties in ‘Ithaca’ (*U* 17.185-228). One medieval ancestor of this formal technique is *enumeratio*, which is designed to be a simultaneous demonstration of excess and semantic inadequacy, as it arose through the literary trope of attempting to define the properties of God.³⁰² As I have mentioned, this kind of *varietas* of ‘arrangement’, an itinerary of seeming randomness, relies on anonymity in medieval literature, because a lack of satiety is itself integral to *varietas* as an effect in the process of interpretation. A writer’s anonymity in modern literature is far harder to guarantee: it is all too easy for a reader to subordinate these varied lists I have made to the authorising figure of ‘Joyce’, as the answer to the inevitable question of what helps to make them coherent. The irony is that Joyce’s intention,

³⁰¹ Bahr, ‘Miscellaneity’, p. 182.

³⁰² For a poetic excursus on this topic, see Umberto Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli, 2009) p. 132.

with such a variety, is plain to see: that the reader use different avenues of inquiry from the author figure to answer this question, that he has abdicated his authority, which has been usurped by the work.

The books even stage, repeatedly, a reader's sense of bewilderment at the loss of this authority: in *Ulysses*, when the chapter 'Oxen of the Sun' has progressed in time through styles of English prose and lands on what Joyce himself described as a 'frightful jumble' of a variety of assorted dialects and slang,³⁰³ we encounter the phrase 'where's that bleeding awfur [awful; author]?' (*U* 14.1451). Errors and authors (and others) swap identities in the inspired portmanteau in *Finnegans Wake* 'errthors' (*FW* 36.35), and the book even mocks the reader's exasperation, failing to see the forest for the trees: 'You is feeling like you was lost in the bush, boy? You says: It is a puling sample jungle of woods [pure and simple jumble of words]. You most shouts out: Bethicket me for stump of a beech if I have the poultriest notions what the farest [forest] he all means' (*FW* 112.3-5). Because of this abundance of anonymised miscellaneity, of variants and *varietas*, there arises a critical tendency to account for a 'dark precursor', to reintroduce Deleuze's terminology, with a singular named entity that avoids the authority implied by authorship, hence the once popular critical idea of the narrator of *Ulysses* being an 'arranger', a term David Hayman first coined in this context.³⁰⁴

These books, then, actively encourage the readerly fiction that the form-giving cause prior to their existence is not James Joyce, but an anonymised figure. This imaginative theorisation entails the larger reconfiguration of the relation between reader and text that the books promise, one that eschews the modern author function in favour of a freer, medieval mode,

³⁰³ James Joyce, *Letters, vol. 1*, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1966) p. 140.

³⁰⁴ David Hayman, '*Ulysses*': *The Mechanics of Meaning* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 88-104 and 122-25.

that reads with variants always to the fore. In this case, the anonymous literary mode puts the reader in an imagined textual community more like Cerquiglini's writing workshop, the reader as in part creating the text, than anything more 'realistic'. As Eco points out about Joyce's use of the philosopher Giambattista Vico, 'We say "reading" and not "acceptance." [...] He did not find in Vico a philosophy in which "to believe" but an author who stimulated his imagination and opened new horizons'.³⁰⁵ In reading Joyce, we are likewise choosing a fiction, not a philosophy, which guides our imagination in interpreting and this fiction involves the idea that with abdicating authority Joyce has not continued to retain it. However, it is this precise paradoxical nature, that in order to maintain this illusion the reader must forget the salient fact of Joyce's authorial control, which I want to explore in this remaining section.

3. Where's That Bleeding Awful?

Now that Joyce has been seen to enable a reader's imaginatively retheorised mode of literary production through the extensive miscellaneity, *varietas* and aesthetics of variance in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, the actual mode of literary production behind these books must be evaluated. The issue of whether Joyce exerted artistic control over *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* is not at issue; these books are not accidents. There has been considerable nuancing of the way this control can be understood, all the same. The notion that Joyce represents a singular, monological authority out of which his genius is disseminated has faced scrutiny from genetic criticism: in fact, this field of scholarship has placed renewed emphasis on its collaborative aspect. One example is Hutton, who compares the lesser authorial control Joyce

³⁰⁵ Umberto Eco, *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos*, trans. Ellen Esrock (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1982), p. 63

exerted over the manuscripts that appeared in literary periodicals like the *Little Review* versus the proofs for the finished product.³⁰⁶ For example, the *Little Review* version of ‘Calypso’ shows significant interventions by Ezra Pound and eliminates, so to speak, details from Bloom’s visit to the toilet.³⁰⁷ Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* notebooks were often written in by different people, because at times he had need of an amanuensis due to his persistent iritis.³⁰⁸ But this collaboration is, perhaps surprisingly, dominated by the terse and ‘stern’ figure Joyce cut when writing, as Baron notes in reading his letters with collaborators: ‘The comments of critics attest to a certain unease about the terseness of Joyce’s regular impositions on others’.³⁰⁹ The historical record of these works’ compositions depicts a figure who had ultimate decisive power over his manuscripts, even adopting a tone of control, but nevertheless was open to collaboration and therefore did not envision his own authority as monological.

A greater difficulty arises after the ‘completion’ and publication of his texts, from the figure of the author which, as I have illustrated, does depend on such a conception of authority and which is not easily averted. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* may give off the impression of miscellaneity as an immanent literary effect, but they are nevertheless attributed to a single author, and always will be, which consigns the retheorisation of the novels as miscellanies ultimately to the imagination. Indeed, this discussion of authority has major bearing for demarcating the outer limits of this thesis, which has illustrated how the books engender a mode of reading that runs directly contrary to their nature, as seen in the imaginative

³⁰⁶ Clare Hutton, "The Development of *Ulysses* In Print, 1918–22" in *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, 6 (2014) p. 110.

³⁰⁷ Hutton, "The Development of *Ulysses*", p. 116.

³⁰⁸ See for example Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 645. Dipanjan Maitra also has submitted corroborating evidence in a paper titled "Collaborative Encyclopedism in the *Wake* Notebooks" delivered at the *Finnegans Wake* at 80 conference in Trinity College, Dublin in April 2019.

³⁰⁹ Scarlett Baron, "In Pursuit of Fact: Joyce and Flaubert’s Documentary Letter-Writing" in *Genetic Joyce Studies*, 16 (2016), <<http://www.geneticjoycestudies.org/static/issues/GJS16/>> [Accessed 16 January 2020].

retheorisations of the book made of plant matter as made of animal matter, or the modern book as a medieval philological artefact. By confronting the problem with authorship, ‘reading mediievally’ meets reality.

This problem with authorship has, as I noted above, been tackled before by the likes of Foucault and Barthes; for the former the author is figure of ‘a projection [...] of the operations that we force texts to undergo’, while the latter celebrates writing that substitutes a capitalist, quasi-theological conception of the Author for ‘the sriptor [who] no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt’.³¹⁰ However, among Joyce critics there has been a nuancing of such theory, for example from Christopher Butler who argues Barthes leaves an authoritative structure practically unchanged by heralding the Death of the Author with the Birth of the Reader.³¹¹ Vicki Mahaffey, on the other hand, writes that while the impulse of removing the authority of the author is basically laudable, arguing for ‘a reversal of “the traditional idea of the author” rather than an appreciation of its contradictory nature and potential’ involves itself ‘the same exclusivity that [Foucault and Barthes] associate with authors. Both writers urge us not to accept but to deny certain attributes of the authorial position’.³¹²

Mahaffey’s position particularly merits elucidation as her critique of Barthes and Foucault is directly influenced by considering Joyce’s position as the author:

The hidden ‘doubleness,’ or contradictory nature, of authority is apparent when we consider Joyce’s own authority [...] On the one hand, Joyce is a canonical writer who possesses

³¹⁰ Michel Foucault, ‘What Is An Author?’, p. 110; Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, p. 142.

³¹¹ Christopher Butler, ‘Joyce and the Displaced Author,’ in *James Joyce and Modern Literature*, ed. W.J. McCormack and Alistair Stead, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982) pp. 67-71.

³¹² Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce*, pp. 24-25.

immense authority within the academic institution; on the other, he is an iconoclastic rebel who eludes or spurns institutional authority at every opportunity. [...] Joyce demonstrates a serious respect for the repressive power of social institutions as well as an exceptional determination to distance himself from them.³¹³

This analysis seems to omit the defiant stance that appears to characterise the rhetoric of Barthes and Foucault in these essays, not to mention the fact that, especially in Barthes, this rhetoric comes with a productive awareness of the paradox involved in authoritatively calling for an end to authorial figures. Additionally, such criticisms surely also apply to Joyce's fiction, which often engages in such reversals of authority, such as the aesthetic tendency to ground itself in relations to maternal, rather than paternal, figures: '*Amor matris* [L. = love of the mother], subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction.' (*U* 9.843-44).³¹⁴ These words have themselves been modified from a similar speech given by Cranly to Stephen at the end of *Portrait* (*P* 263), emphasising the non-originality of the lecture.

However, Mahaffey theorises that the critical position towards authority in Joyce itself emerges out of that position of authority where masculine authority is synonymous with dissemination, having noted how 'authority' derives from the Latin *augere*, to increase or enrich:

As father, author, and intellectual, Joyce was able to respond sympathetically as well as critically to the patriarchal desire to control all cultural transmissions. He saw that the desire for control masked an anxious intimation of powerlessness, whether in establishing fatherhood or in reproducing straightforward authorial intent via the wayward medium of language.³¹⁵

³¹³ Ibid., p. 26.

³¹⁴ I have discussed this tendency in the chapter on somatic reading, where I discuss a 'gendered somatic textuality' of the medieval/modern book.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

In short, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* manifest a refutation of a monological authority as an explicit theoretical principle undergirding their structural variety, though this does not mean that a structure of authority has disappeared.³¹⁶ Because of such a refutation, there is a central structuring paradox in these books: the books necessarily attempt to avert the direct depiction of such a refutation. Therefore, as has been hinted at through my use of the term ‘imaginative theorisation’, the object of inquiry here is an epistemological potentiality brought about through reading these texts. Patrick McGee, noting the irony that a patriarchal figure like Joyce can nevertheless prove immensely germane to such discourses that depend upon or call for a fundamental epistemological break from patriarchal authority as feminist literary criticism, writes that ‘that potential, however, does not arise out of the language itself [...] The revolutionary effect of Joyce’s work is not immanent but institutional: it emerges from its dialectical relation to [these] discourses’.³¹⁷ When thinking of an abdication of authority, for example, this can only arise out of a somewhat magnanimous gesture where the authority to abdicate must already be in place.

This dynamic of authority is dramatized via the metaphor of keys, for example, which in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* both arguably substitute for this responsibility handed to the reader. Keys always signify potential itself, often especially the epistemological potential to solve a problem; in this regard, the books narratively use keys to explore authority as standing in tension with the epistemological potential that would undermine such authority. Both Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom leave their keys behind, at the behest of Buck Mulligan in the case of the former, and strategically forgotten in the house he deliberately avoids in the case of the latter. In either case, lack of easy access to their homes metaphorises

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

³¹⁷ Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx: History and Desire in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 70.

the narrative paralysis both characters find themselves in: the inability of Stephen to ‘fly by those nets’ (*P* 220) as promised at the end of *Portrait*, having returned penniless from the continent, and Bloom’s reluctance to end his marriage to Molly and yet also finding himself unable to be open with her about her infidelity.³¹⁸ However, this precise keylessness is what enables the narrative of the book, where their itinerancy brings about the itinerary the novel takes through Dublin, the day and the book’s array of literary styles. From this perspective, the novel narrates how a *ductus* relies upon a swerve away from singular, monological authority in order to facilitate an experience of *varietas*.

Finnegans Wake also provides this metaphor of the keys, but at a crucial juncture: it ends, like *Ulysses*, with a woman’s monologue, delivered by ALP, that runs into the beginning of the novel. Arguably this audacious ending reshapes our conception of the entire book’s narration. However, the final complete ‘sentences’ in the book are ‘The keys to. Given!’ (*FW* 628.15). This plays on the words of Jesus to St. Peter in Matthew 16. 19: ‘And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.’ The authority of binding and loosing is often glossed as an equivalent of the keys to heaven, pertaining to the interpretation of scripture and its direct bearing on daily life as means of salvation in Christian theology. The preceding verse, Matthew 16. 18, is where Jesus makes the famous wordplay on Peter’s name that in Roman Catholic interpretation gives Peter primacy among the disciples, calling him the ‘rock’ (*Tu es Petrus* in the Vulgate Latin), a moment that appears on the first page of *Finnegans Wake*, medievalised and hibernicised, as ‘thuartpeatrick’ (*FW* 3.10)—‘thu art Patrick’/peat. This moment in the gospel about the

³¹⁸ In a ‘hallucination’ in ‘Circe’ involving a fantasy of cuckoldry and sexual humiliation, Bloom is told by the usurping Blazes Boylan to ‘apply your eye to the keyhole and play with yourself while I just go through her [Molly] a few times’ (*U* 15.3788-89).

authority and responsibility of Jesus' followers, which in these verses appends such responsibility to explicitly literary interpretation, therefore bookends *Finnegans Wake*, but in Joyce's account the play of tenses in the gospel original disappears: the keys to heaven, here, have already been given to the reader.³¹⁹ With responsibility having already been ceded to the reader, the novel formally displays an unwillingness to give a final authorising word, epitomised by the ultimate lack of closure in the novel's final 'sentence' directly following after: 'A way a lone a last a loved a long the' (*FW* 628.15-16), closing ALP's monologue with a feminine-ending iambic pentameter line. This sentence is emblematic of an unfinalisability that, as Tamara Radak points out, ironically comes to define the aesthetic experience of reading *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.³²⁰

This notion of responsibility in reading is one that immediately has concerned Derek Attridge in his work,³²¹ but arguably most notably occurs in any discussion of editing. The editor is after all a figure of immense responsibility, positioned as a first reader who enables subsequent readings. I have already discussed how Joyce's works position themselves in antagonistic relation to contemporary editorial practices and philosophies by creating the impression of a 'worst-text' method in the previous chapter, but given how 'editorial theory is inextricably bound to our conception of what a work of literature is and how it is authorized',³²² it is worth for the moment considering the prevailing editorial assumptions that shape our reading experience of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

³¹⁹ This is not the only time the tenses in the original gospel are changed from their common translations in *Finnegans Wake*: I talk more about this play of tenses, the beginning and ending of the book and its overall effect on the temporality of reading in my concluding notes.

³²⁰ Tamara Radak, "'Poised on the Threshold": The Unfinalizability of Joycean Encyclopedism,' *James Joyce Quarterly*, 55.1 (2017), p. 87.

³²¹ See especially Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004) which is overtly concerned with the responsibility attached to a response.

³²² Vicki Mahaffey, 'Intentional Error', p. 232.

The edition I have used for *Ulysses* throughout this thesis draws from the reading text of the synoptic edition developed by Hans Walter Gabler in 1984. It is safe to say this is a controversial edition, presenting on the one hand text in the process of being amended (a ‘synoptic’ version of the text cataloguing all changes in composition), and on the other a text that appears to be a stable inference from this text (a so-called ‘reading text’), each juxtaposed with the other on opposite pages. John Kidd, in a titanic 170-page article supposedly refuting the worth of this edition, damned it on the grounds of shoddy theory and worse errors, and elsewhere labelled it a scandal.³²³ The ensuing argument has been well-rehearsed both in and outside academia.³²⁴ The basic theoretical gulf emerged, however, out of different methodological approaches to the ‘final intention’ of Joyce, as McGee summarises:

Kidd’s ability to distinguish between erroneous and correct readings depends on the hypothetical construct known as the author’s final intentions. Gabler’s purpose is to study ‘the instability of the text in process,’ which leads him to an understanding of the ‘process-nature of authorial intention.’ Because authorial intention *as a process* is the ‘constitutive base of the text,’ the principle that governs its composition, it cannot be the constitutive base of editorial performance. The editor cannot presume to know the will of the author with finality. Rather, authorial intention can only ‘be editorially set forth for critical analysis’ through a presentation of the ‘record of willed textual changes.’ For the editor, authorial intention is the ‘textual force to be studied’ and not the guarantee of definitive editions. This is why Gabler has always privileged the synoptic over the reading text in his edition. The reading text, of course, bears all the appearances of a stable text, but the

³²³ John Kidd, ‘The Scandal of *Ulysses*,’ *New York Review of Books* (June 30, 1988), pp. 32-39; John Kidd, ‘An Inquiry into *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*,’ *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82 (1988), pp. 411-584.

³²⁴ See John O’Hanlon, ‘The Continuing Scandal of *Ulysses: An Exchange*,’ *New York Review of Books*, (September 29 1988), pp. 80-81; Hans Walter Gabler, ‘Position Statement,’ *James Joyce Literary Supplement* 3, 1989; Michael Groden, ‘A Response to John Kidd’s “An Inquiry into *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*”,’ *James Joyce Quarterly* 28.1 (1990), pp. 81-110, & John Kidd, ‘Gabler’s Errors in Context: A Reply to Michael Groden on Editing *Ulysses*,’ *James Joyce Quarterly*, 28.1 (1990), pp. 111-151. A synopsis I have found useful, however, especially in summarising the disagreements of editorial principle, is McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, pp. 49-63.

juxtaposition of the reading text and the synoptic text shows that *the stability of the critically edited reading text is 'of editorial making.'* For that reason, such a text 'can never claim to be definitive['] [...]'³²⁵

In this single edition, Gabler therefore makes the process of composition open to critical interpretation to an extent that very few medieval texts could plausibly enjoy.³²⁶

Using many unique symbols and marks to designate moments of textual change and different types of change in the synoptic edition, the reading text therefore becomes a conjectured version with which the reader can theoretically take issue. Because of this ability to take issue with the editor, this empowerment of the reader, Gabler's edition comes close to realising Cerquiglini's vision of an edition that enables reading across the multiple variants of a medieval manuscript and realises a crucial component of the Joycean aesthetic. That said, as Mahaffey notes, this openness has not necessarily generated the same discussion that the reading text has—because it is prohibitively expensive for most readers without access to university libraries, spreading over three volumes, and because of this unique and difficult array of diacritical marks.³²⁷ The fact of its existence betrays, however, the way *Ulysses* reconfigures the position of the reader, makes persuasive the notion that the text is a fetishized, calcified end product of authorial genius and not itself a thing in process. In this regard Gabler's editorial innovations might seem primed by the nature of the text itself: though McGann even went as far as to suggest 'Gabler's [edition] is an imagination of Joyce's work,' what this thesis has ultimately described is that the process of imaginative

³²⁵ Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 58. Italics his. Quoting from Gabler, "The Text As Process and the Problem of Intentionality," *Text*, 3 (1987), pp. 107-16 (pp. 110-11).

³²⁶ An exception might be the similarly controversial George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, eds., *Piers Plowman: The B Version: Will's Visions of Piers Plowman, Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best* (London: Athlone Press, 1975). This work has been criticised by Ralph Hanna for 'flatten[ing] the variant-evidence into a single temporal plane', quoted in Thomas J. Farrell, "Eclecticism and its Discontents", *Textual Cultures* 9.2 (2015), p. 27.

³²⁷ Vicki Mahaffey, "Intentional Error", p. 239.

retheorisation is not inconsistent with *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake* but rather a predictable consequence of reading these texts.³²⁸ Gabler in essence refashioned these texts not using a theory of final intention but rather on his own authority, creating a complex methodological apparatus, and no doubt some errors, to ‘present the instability of the text in process [...] an interpretive act and not simply a reproduction of documents’.³²⁹

It is ironic that this interpretive act, the imaginative reconfiguration of *Ulysses* that entailed Gabler’s project, can seemingly be authorised by the imaginative retheorisations of the text engendered by that (finished) text itself. This circular logic also points to a central paradox: ultimately the editor’s final intentions must be declared so they can stand up to readerly scrutiny, even if the author’s final intentions do not appear to figure as an authority for the reader. Given that reading only ever continues from provisional editions and readings, building on a foundation of mere conjecture, made in the hope of being surpassed in the future by a better conjecture, it is remarkable that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* lace throughout their convoluted structures a love of that provisionality, that they enable a mode of reading so thoroughly antagonistic to finality. It is their achievement that even in these finished states (or as it might more properly be termed, *stopped* states) they seem both to be forever *Works in Progress*.

³²⁸ Jerome McGann, “*Ulysses* As A Postmodern Text: The Gabler Edition”, *Criticism* 27 (1985), pp. 290-91.

³²⁹ Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 61.

Conclusion: The Temporality of Reading Medievally

1. *Dimensions of Reading Medievally*

This thesis has considered the affordances of the medieval for a Joycean aesthetic experience. Certain characteristic elements of Joycean aesthetics—in the first chapter, a somatisation of the text; in the next chapter, an intense philological scrutiny of language; in the third chapter, an embrace of variance and an abdication of unitary literary authority—have shown a persistent relationship to reading methods located outside modernity, in the medieval. However, not only has there been a relationship, the precise nature of this relationship shows that Joycean aesthetics aims to modify reading experience *towards* the medieval, at least in part. It should by now be obvious that I say ‘at least in part’ because there is no such thing as a single Joycean reading experience. However, understanding the modifications to reading experience brought about by this medievalism does enhance understanding of Joyce’s wider aesthetic project. This conclusion will consider the implications of the readings generated by this project on an understanding of Joyce’s aesthetics. However, in order to do that, I will go over now my main examples and the process of my thought so that a significant synthesising element common to these different aspects of ‘reading medievally’—a queer temporality of reading—is more easily understood.

The thesis began with Joyce’s remarks to Arthur Power about the medieval, that it was the ‘true spirit of Western Europe’ and that Ireland was fundamentally ‘mediaeval’ in character.³³⁰ Joyce’s somewhat flippant attitude nevertheless concealed an important strain in his ideas about the medieval: that the Middle Ages enabled the imaginative theorisation of a European literature beyond capitalism and especially imperialism, bucking the notions of

³³⁰ Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1999), p. 107.

development and progress so central to those projects. This notion of an imaginative theorisation was taken from my reading of Herbert Marcuse's aesthetics of art as presenting a politicised autonomy and Marshall Berman's notion of modernism as an individual subjectivity's attempt to navigate through the dialectical maelstrom of modernity.³³¹ The imaginative theorisation that necessarily modifies the reading experience of Joyce's works—reading mediatively—operates in a queer temporal mode that entails making the past present within the present.

After some preliminary examples from *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, where I showed the texts' openness to a multiplicity of reading strategies, especially a mediatively inflected one, the thesis began with arguably the foundation of the reading experience: the material, the bodily. The text of *Finnegans Wake* itself exhorts the reader to 'look what you have in your handself' only then to imagine the impossible: 'the movibles are scrawling' (*FW* 20.21). In precisely the same way, both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* supplement this renewed attention to the bodily circumstance of reading with an imaginative retheorisation of that experience. In this chapter, both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* worked in tandem, eschewing usual ideas of chronological time, each informing a reading of the other. To begin, the gendered somatic textuality of Joyce's work was examined: its interest in the feminised labour behind the written word, the material stodginess of its prose as aligned symbolically with Molly in *Ulysses* and ALP in *Finnegans Wake*.

Drawing on examples of Stephen Dedalus' musings on literary work (the 'twining stresses' of a 'hand plucking the harpstrings' (*U* 1.243-6), or the 'woman's hand' he is said to have (*U*

³³¹ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. Herbert Marcuse & Erica Shorever (Boston: Beacon, 1978), p. 2; Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 5.

15.3678)), the hand became a primary conduit for this discussion of a medievalised and gendered textuality and a desire for the handwritten. Reading became here an intimate somatic encounter dramatized in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by the persistent presence of the novels' sexually explicit handwritten letters. The book is imagined as a body of animal matter engaged in a reciprocal exchange with the reader, and therefore as an agent in a process of literary and biological generation I termed the 'ecstasy of citation'. Here especially the reflections of *Finnegans Wake* on itself, in chapter I.5, proved fruitful for an account of the Joycean aesthetic's mingling of biological and literary generation, such as for example the proliferation of the word 'touching' meaning referencing, a clear example of the ecstasy of citation, or the satirised idea of a passive female text examined by 'the deft hand of an expert' (*FW* 109.30). Here the more troubling associations of this gendered somatic textuality with femininity and sexual desire became clearer. This patriarchal understanding (the passive female book, the active male authorial understanding) was itself medieval, a 'seed planted on female flesh of the parchment', where somehow the status of the immortal text is problematized, even corrupted, by the materiality of the feminine element.³³² However, as the citational and sensory understanding of the word 'touching' merged in this interpretation of Joyce, this account of biological/literary generation and joyous excess (the 'ecstasy of citation') took shape: books beget books, they are pregnant with meaning.

This embodying of the book once again functions as an imaginative theorisation while also enabling a realignment of ethical priorities in reading, one that chimes with already discussed feminist readings of Joycean textuality, such as for example the presumed universality of male readers, or the supposedly passive femininity of the page, or the patriarchal notion of

³³² Michael Camille, "The Book as Flesh and Fetish in Richard de Bury's *Philobiblon*" in *The Book and the Body*, eds. Dolores Frese and Katherine O' Keeffe (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 53-54.

books as descending patrilineally from father to son. All of these notions are critiqued by way of this somatic reading. A matrilineal swerve in Joyce's work, emphasising the maternal book and not the paternal author figure, manifested in a discussion of the skin and the belly in Joyce's work, where the abundantly full belly (medievalised in Stephen's image of Eve's 'buckler of taut vellum' (*U* 3.44)) operated as a metaphor for a kind of queered pregnancy of the literary work. By taking away the emphasis on the paternal, this aspect of the Joycean aesthetic revelled in the notion of the maternal text as something that transforms and is transformed in the act of reading.

Just as Joyce delivers a rebuke to the patriarchal complexes in the history of the book via a somatic and medieval reading, the history itself receives critique. The object of the book now gave way to how that book has been mediated by the guardians of that history. Just as philologists had mediated and manipulated the medieval text before him, Joyce mediates and manipulates the philologists. In doing so, he perverts and reimagines philological work as latent within the amateur, everyday reading process. Here, as in the chapter following it, *Finnegans Wake* was an intensification of tendencies already present in *Ulysses*, making use of what I termed a 'worst-text method' as a counterpoint to Joseph Bédier's 'best-text method'. The ideological commitments of academic philology at the time—especially the doctrines of national-racial purity that informed philological hygiene—receive rebuke in both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, with the latter especially prominent in its status as a bastardisation of 'standard English', a messier, supposedly corrupted text. After surveying the use of Bédier's Tristan and Isolde myth in *Finnegans Wake*, where the Joycean internationalist aesthetic directly contrasts with Bédier's nationalist methodological commitments, the creation of a countering philological experience in the 'Anglo-Oxen' in 'Oxen of the Sun' was set in productive dialogue with the work of George Saintsbury.

Finally, the work of Edward Sullivan on the Book of Kells, adapted for chapter I.5 of *Finnegans Wake*, enabled a specifically Ireland-centred discussion of the philological object. Here the ecstasy of citation introduced in the previous chapter ('those indignant whiplooplashes') encountered a further politicisation of Joyce's aesthetic. The books aspire to use their difficulty as a didactic tool, enabling their readers to look outside the 'ruled barriers' (*FW* 114.7) to pay what the comically stuffy narrative voice of I.5 terms 'unnecessary attention to errors, omissions, repetitions and misalignments' (*FW* 120.15-16), which the reader experiences contrastingly as the very substance of her enjoyment. The books eschew professionalization because, in this way outlined above, they make amateurs of all readers in their difficulty, using what I termed the 'mechanics of ignorance'; in reviving adjacent medieval languages they make the past present within the present and mix together medieval and modern, colonised and coloniser. The imaginative theorisation at hand here is that these texts position themselves as philological objects in their own right, demanding intense readerly scrutiny, while also, again, introducing an ethical dimension to reading whereby the reader confronts her own guiding sympathies and assumptions behind the reading process.

The final chapter proceeded from this 'worst-text method' and combined it with the sensibility of the somatic reading outlined in the first chapter; it asked how reading mediievally, in the sense of interpreting mediievally, might be brought about by the difficulty in the texts. The aspect of reading mediievally here is one that emerges from medieval textual culture: an openness to anonymity, variants, and *varietas*. In particular the work of Mary Carruthers and Bernard Cerquiglini were important for outlining this set of medieval

aesthetic prerogatives that found themselves accommodated in Joyce's modernist project.³³³ Here the imaginative theorisation entailed that the texts of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were in fact anonymous and plural, and not singular texts derived from James Joyce, as a way of contravening the 'authorial' method of interpretation (*FW* 425.20). A prime example came from the trial of Festy King in *Finnegans Wake*, a character who takes his name 'out of a tellafun book, ellegedly' (*FW* 86.12-14), undermining the legitimacy of the court proceedings with his pseudonymity and polysemic incomprehensibility, an anonymity which is constructed as akin to a religious revelation like Augustine's '*tolle, lege*'. Undecidability and literary errors led to a discussion of how *Ulysses* dramatizes this process with its own varying motifs, based on a literary variant from the Martha Clifford letter: 'I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world' (*U* 5.425). This motif varies throughout the book, encouraging that philologist's sensibility outlined in the previous chapter. Similarly, another female writer, Molly, introduces interesting variety with her errors: 'symp~~h~~athy' and 'new~~p~~hew' (*U* 18.730-1), a variation on the aesthetic of *varietas* that seems most properly to belong to the sphere of the handwritten text, which the first chapter established the book as being imagined. It was here that I also discussed the authorial position of Joyce, as a writer who abdicated his authority but nevertheless exercised a significant degree of artistic control over his texts. Nevertheless, the miscellaneity of the texts and the emphasis placed on anonymous literary creativity spoke to what Cerquiglini described as the medieval penchant for the 'continual rewriting of a work', an aesthetic prioritisation of collaboration and variety.³³⁴ It was at this point that I drew in the example of Gabler's synoptic edition as an example of a prototype of editorial work that Cerquiglini envisioned as necessary for medieval literature. After all, the unfinalisability of interpretation of these books leaves the

³³³ Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

³³⁴ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*, p. 33.

reader with no other recourse than a kind of collaboration with other readers, given the author's abdicated authority. The ultimate readerly behaviour primed by these texts is not, finally, a retreat to a nostalgic Middle Ages, but rather the creation of a community of readers for the future.

Having recounted this thought process, we can see that there is a continuity of thought. At the same time, however, the topics examined by the chapters perhaps give off an impression of disparateness or unconnectedness, in the abstract—the body, philology, *varietas*. The criticism might hypothetically emerge that the only thing connecting them is that they are fairly well-treated aspects of Joyce's aesthetic. This seeming unconnectedness between these separate areas of the Joycean aesthetic makes the medievalist aspect running like a thread through them all the more vivid, however. Why is it the products of medieval textual culture, and not, say, classical textual culture that have been brought out here? One answer is that my focus has necessarily been a particular one, instead of an attempt to unify all potential readings of the text. But another, more compelling answer lies in the peculiar affordances of a medieval focus, which is what I will conclude with by discussing now, in the hope that I end this writing not with finality, to which Joyce's work seems so opposed, but rather by opening out to further discussions and collaborations with other readers.

2. *What Time Is It?*

With these imaginative theorisations encouraged by the books, these readerly behaviours primed by the self-reflexive attitude of these texts, this thesis has found a continual turning towards the Middle Ages. These are by no means the only senses of 'reading mediievally' that could have been explored. Multiple facets of medieval reading in the sense of 'interpreting

medievally' suggest themselves as potentially useful: one tempting avenue is using an understanding of medieval allegory and typology, which is a literary device that structures medieval thought through constant reinterpretation of narratives in Abrahamic religions;³³⁵ another fascinating discussion could be borne out of the aural reception of medieval books, given the mixed oral-literary culture that inevitably provides the malleable boundaries to any discussion about medieval reading. But instead of suggesting yet further dimensions of 'reading medievally', which would still be valuable to do in the future, I would like here to use my concluding pages to think through a synthesising element that suggests itself across the chapters of this thesis. I have articulated this at several points in the thesis as making the past present within the present, implying a specific temporal quality to this reading practice: a time in the middle of our usual time, only encountered in the reading process. This temporal middleness itself speaks to the conditions of a medieval time, definitionally a middle age, as I noted in the introduction to this thesis. I noted at the conclusion of the chapter on variants that Joyce's aesthetic is antagonistic to finality. Reading medievally perhaps, above all, must be reading within a queer temporality, a temporal middle.

³³⁵ For broader discussions of medieval allegory and typology, see Jon Whitman ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). One major figure important to Joyce here is Dante, whose *Epistle to Can Grande* famously sets out his fourfold method of allegorical interpretation. On this, see especially Erich Auerbach, "Figura" in *Scenes From the Drama of European Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), pp. 9-76 and Zygmunt G. Barański, "The *Epistle to Can Grande*" in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, ed. Alastair Minnis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 583-589. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As A Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 16-18 suggests we have underestimated the usefulness of such an allegorical framework for political, historicising interpretations of literature. For potential applications of 'reading typologically' to Joyce, see Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in Finnegans Wake*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which has provided some especially useful work in a Joycean/Dantean context on this very topic. Beyond this, Stephen Sicari, "Rereading Ulysses: 'Ithaca' and Modernist Allegory" in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 43.3 (1997), pp. 264-90 presents *Ulysses* as itself allegorical in structure, taking on the character of the Bible, where earlier episodes are 'reread' by later ones, without impacting on the veracity of those earlier episodes. However, such an intervention seems to emphasise an organising principle behind books such as *Ulysses*, whereas my concern is with medievalist literary effects.

Ulysses and *Finnegans Wake* notably are also defined by such middleness. Leopold Bloom is at the midpoint of his life like Dante's pilgrim *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, and by reading again and again about a single day in his and many other people's lives, we stay forever in his middle. The action of *Ulysses* ends on an unanswered question in 'Ithaca' ('Where?' (*U* 17.2332) followed by a massively enlarged, massively ambiguous period. Molly Bloom's subsequent aria in 'Penelope' begins and ends on the same word, 'Yes', creating an enclosed circular whole that offers crucial comment on what happened over the course of the novel, but not advancing its development beyond that ambiguous punctuation at the close of 'Ithaca'. It is a show-stopper in multiple senses, and not quite an ending. Another notable thing about the day of 16 June 1904 is that, being a 'half-day', by its close little work is depicted—not much gets done on this day, things are on hold. But this is not to suggest that *Ulysses* is somehow revelling in the atemporal, or prefers a mode somehow outside time: rather, it is the emergence of temporal middleness that explains this aversion to finality in the novel.

As Udaya Kumar notes, referring to *Ulysses* in his still under-read monograph on temporality and allusion in the novel, '[in Joyce's] works, the temporality of the text insistently comes to the surface'.³³⁶ Crucially this insistent temporality seems to have a quality of middling ambivalence: even a meditation on origins like 'Oxen of the Sun', seemingly structured around the fixed temporal model of foetal development, is, according to Kumar, 'only processes of differentiation.'³³⁷ This perspective has ramifications for how we might regard the presence of the past in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. For example, 'Oxen of the Sun' does not represent a strictly linear progression through the history of the English language,

³³⁶ Udaya Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth: Repetition, Time, and Tradition in Ulysses*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) pp. 11-12

³³⁷ Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth*, p. 12.

beginning as it does with a sentence that blends Irish, Latin, and English, and continues with translations of medieval Latin before moving to a modernised version of Old English—meaning our understanding of historical continuity as readers is challenged by the new level on which we comprehend Joyce’s text, which is necessarily a blend of these historical perspectives.³³⁸ This blend is partly why Temple Herr chose this episode as exemplifying the ‘multiple temporalities of being’ that are brought about by *Ulysses*.³³⁹ These ramifications extend beyond that episode to the whole novel: allusions such as ‘*Introibo ad altare Dei*’, the first utterance in the novel (*U* 1.5), become the ‘site of series of repetitions with different intentions and strategies’ leading to two conflicting interpretative impulses: an intelligibility deriving from context, and a dissonance emerging from the difference between former and latter usages.³⁴⁰ The allusions in ‘Oxen of the Sun’—which are so structurally pervasive as to become the very texture of the text—have the effect of goading a model of linear development (this notion of an embryonic development of language) that the text’s own heterogeneity thwarts. In a similar way, *Ulysses* simultaneously provokes and negates an attempt at a unifying reading experience, meaning that any account of the reading experience emerges somewhere between allusion’s intelligibility and dissonance. *Ulysses* is therefore a persistently dialectical book, in that the movement of thought itself, and not its final synthesis, is a major constituent part.³⁴¹ In this see-sawing ambivalence we find its most definitive expression of a temporal middleness to reading.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 86. Cf. *U* 14.1; 14.7-32; 14.71.

³³⁹ Cheryl Temple Herr, "Difficulty: 'Oxen of the Sun' and 'Circe'" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ulysses*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 160.

³⁴⁰ Kumar, *The Joycean Labyrinth*, p. 29.

³⁴¹ There have been philosophical attempts to link this oscillating, see-sawing middleness to modernity and the novel form itself. Gillian Rose has characterised a similar kind of middleness as the difficulty of modernity itself, which neither old (liberal) philosophical traditions or new (postmodern) ones can adequately address in *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). A summary can be found in Kate Schick, *Gillian Rose: A Good Enough Justice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 36-54. The resistance to finality implied by this constant oscillation is also complicated when we consider work by Mikhail M. Bakhtin, ‘Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel’, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3-41. Bakhtin opposes the

Ulysses thrives off a present in the middle. Because of this dedication to its ‘nowness’ I circle back once more to the topic I took up in the introduction: how we might define a middle, maybe even a medieval, modernity. The ‘between’ time of the reading experience could be extended to the novel’s own episode of ‘betweenness’, one that emerges like something of a manifesto in the structure of *Ulysses*, the episode ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ where Stephen propounds his simultaneously ambitious and parodic lecture on paternity, Shakespeare and Hamlet, while facing objections and interjections from mocking Revivalist listeners. This ostensibly Anglocentric episode does focus on Ireland—with Stephen musing on how his position as an Irish writer necessarily places him, with considerable reluctance, geographically and figuratively between two figures of global power and Anglophone imperialism, ‘[b]etween the Saxon smile and the yankee yawp. The devil and the deep sea’ (U9.139-140). This figuration is just one of the many ways the ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ motif works throughout the episode—poles such as Shakespeare’s Stratford and London, fatherhood and motherhood, lecture and conversation, Ireland and England, sincerity and irony, are made to operate as different but similarly productive dialectics. Gregory Castle however identifies the important overall strain in the episode as this interest of Stephen’s in ‘creat[ing] the “conscience of his race”’, echoing the words the character would use at the optimistic climax of *Portrait*.³⁴² Contra the paternalism of Irish Revivalists, exemplified by

novel to the epic because of its capacity for heteroglossia and its ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ force, representing counterbalancing ways of speaking to the prevailing sociolect. ‘[N]ot merely one genre among many others’, the novel has an inherently open form, continually developing in reading in contrast to the epic, the ‘antiquated’ form of which lies in its closed and thereby anti-modern nature. Similarly György Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: The Merlin Press, 1971), attempts a dialectic of literary genres that sees the novel opposed to the epic for similar reasons: the modern world cannot see a complete unity between content and form in the way that classical epics could. *Ulysses* arguably stages such dialectics by embedding the epic form into its profoundly modern structure, as implied by its title, provoking the question of what would emerge were we to read *Ulysses* Homerically—a question I do not have the capability to answer. The remainder of this conclusion, however, attempts to see temporal middleness as a condition for liberated reading.

³⁴² Gregory Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 220

John Eglinton and Richard Best, and what he terms their ‘anthropological modernism’, exemplified for Castle by J.M. Synge’s *The Aran Islands*, Stephen challenges the fetishisation of Shakespeare and the idea of him as a model for Irish art. Castle writes: ‘this confrontation is really an extended performance in which normative attitudes about Shakespeare and the cultural authority of the Revival are subjected to citation and parodic resignification.’³⁴³ However, this challenge does not seem to arise out of any specific aesthetic objection to Shakespeare, I observe.

In fact, the only explicit comment on Shakespeare’s aesthetics can read oddly in the light cast by Castle, because it is not so much an objection as it is revelling in that same aesthetic:

he drew a salary equal to that of the lord chancellor of Ireland.
His life was rich. His art, more than the art of feudalism as
Walt Whitman called it, is the art of surfeit. Hot herringpies,
green mugs of sack, honeysauces, sugar of roses, marchpane,
gooseberried pigeons, ringocandies. (*U* 9.623-28)

Embedding this comment about aesthetics as a digression within a mass of biographical material, Stephen thrillingly lines up objects of conspicuous consumption—an *enumeratio* of intoxicating, sugary foodstuffs—as somehow indicative of an entire aesthetics by themselves, one that reproduces this aesthetic in the reading experience. Also embedded within this dense comment are two linked references that situate the difficulty, as well as the enjoyment, that Shakespeare as *the* figure of English literature poses for Irish nationalism in the complex backward-feeling 1904/1922 ‘now’ of *Ulysses*.

The first, a seemingly throwaway reference to the ‘lord chancellor of Ireland’, gains relevance as part of an accrual of symbolically significant biographical details for

³⁴³ Castle, *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, p. 219.

Shakespeare as a man with a ‘long pocket’: ‘he was himself a cornjobber and moneylender, with ten tods of corn hoarded in the famine riots’ (*U* 9.742-4). The inevitable rhetorical gesture here is linking Shakespeare’s own extractive capitalism to that of the British during the Great Famine, which saw food still being exported out of Ireland even at its height. This equivalence between Shakespeare’s time and life and the Empire of 1904 occurs in many other places in even stronger terms: for example, ‘The bloodboltered shambles in act five [of *Hamlet*] is a forecast of the concentration camp sung by Mr Swinburne [Algernon, late Victorian poet]’ (*U* 9.133-5). Later, Stephen says that Shakespeare’s ‘pageants, the histories, sail fullbellied on a tide of Mafeking enthusiasm’ (*U* 9.754). Both allusions stress a continuity between Shakespeare’s day and, here, the Second Boer War—Mafeking was a siege that captured much British attention, its subsequent Relief lauded as a great military victory.³⁴⁴ This sentence also includes a detail suggesting imperial wealth and privilege (‘fullbellied’) that suggests the link between the belly and artistic generation that I talked about in my chapter on the body. All of these allusions and symbolic connections suggest a broad periodisation—modernity—that is characterised by twin forces of capitalism and imperialism, helping to explain what lies behind Stephen’s presentation of Shakespeare’s art as the ‘art of surfeit’. This temporal jumping and equivalence is, I would argue, as close to a single rigid definition of ‘the current period’ as Joyce gets in *Ulysses*.

But the second reference in that aesthetic evaluation, to the ‘art of feudalism’, is somewhat odd in that it is hard to say what it does in the sentence. Stephen claims that Shakespeare’s is the art of surfeit ‘more than the art of feudalism’ (*U* 9.625-6). The question of what exact development is being proposed here is important, as definitions of modernity very often rest

³⁴⁴ Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 235.

on a conception of the medieval, as we have seen. It is not a negation so much as an intensification of something inherent to ‘feudalism’, the concept of a social totality analogous to capitalism belonging to the Middle Ages. The very notion of such a term is often robustly challenged by medievalists today but it is also still used in the Marxist tradition.³⁴⁵ Crucially, also, the reference to Walt Whitman seems to suggest the use of the Middle Ages here at this point is an insertion of Joyce’s—Gifford and Seidman find plenty of reference to Whitman’s notion of ‘superfoetation’ in Shakespeare’s work but little explicitly to do with surpassing ‘feudalism’.³⁴⁶ In fact, Whitman’s conception of Shakespeare was that he *was* ‘feudal’, that is, belonging to the Old World.³⁴⁷ Stephen cannot finally share this sense of a pre- and post-Columbian conception of periods owing to the fact he comes himself from that Old World, but nevertheless he might have shared Joyce’s semi-ironic conception of Ireland as ‘fundamentally’ medieval, as I outlined in my introduction.³⁴⁸ The manifesto-like aspect of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ can be seen to emerge here, not only in its swerve away from literary paternity or its dialogic engagement with the Irish Revival: this ‘art of surfeit’ is surely not just Shakespeare’s but that of *Ulysses*. This notion of excess in artistry is not only symptomatic of (early) modernity but also something that emerges from the priorities of medieval aesthetics, as Eco writes: ‘With this dense plot of artifices, the author of *Ulysses* obtains all that the medieval poet would have hoped to achieve with the same methods. Joyce

³⁴⁵ A quick overview of the debate over the appropriateness of this terminology, responding to work by e.g. Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: Verso Books, 1978) and Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011) is Hugo Raine, “Marxism and the Middle Ages”, (*Verso Books Blog*, 30 Oct. 2018) <<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4105-marxism-and-the-middle-ages>>. [Accessed 6 August 2021]. Broadly, the cited Marxists place conceptual importance on bourgeois capitalistic ownership emerging from a prior stage of development, a class system reliant on a different mode of production. Therefore the job of the Marxist is to determine what about that prior stage, no matter where it is located or what that stage is called, led ultimately to capitalism. The objection is that ‘feudalism’, which is a term often used vaguely outside of explicitly Marxist contexts, is not globally totalisable in a manner *analogous* to capitalism, so ‘feudalism’ as a category is not viable in such an economic history.

³⁴⁶ Gifford and Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, p. 229.

³⁴⁷ Phyllis McBride, “Feudalism” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, eds. J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland, 1998), p. 223.

³⁴⁸ See Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, p. 104.

creates a story interwoven with symbols and ciphered allusions'.³⁴⁹ Joyce is demanding a modernism that is not so much anti-Shakespeare as post-medieval, one that acknowledges and works against the continuities of the period we call the 'modern', while also intensifying certain identified aspects of medieval aesthetics that are useful for such an acknowledgment. In this way, Shakespeare, himself chronologically between the Middle Ages and the modernity of *Ulysses*, becomes another figure of the ideal Dedalian artist.

The betweenness inherent to Scylla and Charybdis therefore emerges as a statement of the inherent invisibility of modernity as the now—just as Stephen is wedged 'between the Saxon smile and yankee yawp' (*U* 9.139-140), the reader finds herself positioned in the middle of the queered Irish experience of modernity. As Luke Gibbons points out, the notion of a specifically Irish time is important in *Ulysses*.³⁵⁰ Dunsink Time, the unique timezone that put Ireland twenty-five minutes behind England, becomes a major component of Bloom's musings (first instance in *U* 8.108-112). During the composition of *Ulysses*, because of the introduction of Daylight Saving Time in 1907 to facilitate early morning factory schedules, 'as many as four different time scales could have been operating in Ireland', namely Dunsink Time and Greenwich Mean Time, and their two variants for the summer.³⁵¹ In this sense, Ireland had a uniquely fragmented, overdetermined temporal experience imposed upon it as a condition of its colonial status and proximity to Britain.³⁵² Analysing the cinematic use of the word 'while' in 'Wandering Rocks', the episode immediately following 'Scylla and Charybdis', Gibbons comes to assert that different 'senses of time' are intercut between each

³⁴⁹ Umberto Eco, *The Middle Ages of James Joyce: The Aesthetics of Chaosmos*, trans. Ellen Esrock (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), p. 48.

³⁵⁰ Luke Gibbons, *Joyce's Ghosts: Ireland, Modernism, and Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 180.

³⁵¹ Luke Gibbons, *Joyce's Ghosts*, p. 181.

³⁵² This temporal disjunction is not unique to *Ulysses*, but extends of course to other Irish literature, as Emer Nolan points out in *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007), p. 113-4.

other, not necessarily creating an experience of synchronicity but nevertheless an awareness of difference ‘*within* these zones, as different temporalities and relationships to place cut across the routines of everyday life in Dublin, 16 June 1904’.³⁵³ In short, the reader is not above modern experience, but within it in *Ulysses*. It is in this middle, this contemporary Irish moment that the past emerges from within the present, Joyce’s aesthetic reproducing in the reading experience the struggle to wake from Stephen Dedalus’ ‘nightmare of history’.

Finnegans Wake extends this logic of the Joycean temporal middle by beginning and ending grammatically *in medias res*, mid-sentence, in the present tense as if we have not in fact begun reading, but have already been experiencing the text. He wrote in a now-famous letter, thirteen years before its eventual publication, to benefactor Harriet Shaw Weaver, ‘The book really has no beginning or end. (Trade secret, registered at Stationers’ Hall.)’³⁵⁴ In fact, its notorious ending—‘A way a lone a last a loved a long the’ (*FW* 628.24)—ends on what Joyce termed, according to a conversation with Louis Gillet, ‘most slippery, the least accented, the weakest word in English, a word which is not even a word, which is scarcely sounded between the teeth, a breath, a nothing, the article *the*’.³⁵⁵ If there is anything that has defined the Joycean aesthetic encountered across the pages of this thesis, it is this kind of drawing of attention to the seemingly insignificant, the passed-over details in the middle, definitionally a muddle. It is here, with this notion of a muddled middle, I re-use a sentence already encountered in the introduction: ‘In the buginning is the woid, in the muddle is the sounddance and thereinofter you’re in the unbewised again’ (*FW* 378.29-31). As explained in the introduction, flanking either side of the ‘muddle’ is a void/word, instead of the assured presence of God’s Word, and unconsciousness (Ger. *unbewusst* = unconscious) leaving

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 167. Emphasis his.

³⁵⁴ James Joyce, *Letters* vol. 1, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking, 1966), p. 246.

³⁵⁵ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 725.

instead a sentence: here less a syntactical unit and more a dance of sounds. Another thing to notice is that this sentence, like the beginning and ending of the novel itself, is in the present tense, making it an alteration to John's gospel ('In the beginning *was* the Word'). In context, this also refers to the incriminating utterance the pub patrons haranguing HCE are hoping for (a word voiding his life, 'guilty'), followed by a sentencing, and an ambiguous end. Yet the sound-dance—or the sentence where multiple words (or voids) synthesise together into a semantic unit—still emerges as a way of describing the reading experience of *Finnegans Wake* itself.

While *Ulysses* attempts to bring a historical moment—16 June 1904—to vivid life in the present day, *Finnegans Wake* could be said to present itself as an eternal present. This conflation of middleness with the present tense has also been encountered and complicated by other theories of temporality and its implications for the reading process. Kate Haffey, in her book *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies in Time* emphasises the inheritance of modernist literary experimentation in queer theories of temporality and its realignment of narrative structure.³⁵⁶ This work is based in part from a middleness to queer temporality as claimed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who writes: 'queer is a continuing moment'—I am especially drawn here to the idea that queer temporality calls into question the notion of a universal temporality.³⁵⁷ Derek Attridge, approaching from another angle, writes very lucidly about what we might call the queer temporality of reading:

Even if the purpose of reading a work is to reconstruct a historical meaning, such as the sense that the work's first readers were likely to draw from it, the words as we read them produce effects *in the present*. This present is unlike the present of the objects that I see around me, or of the words on the page as material entities; the very presentness of the words I read is

³⁵⁶ Kate Haffey, *Literary Modernism, Queer Temporality: Eddies In Time* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

³⁵⁷ Quoted in Kate Haffey, *Queer Temporality*, p. 1.

premised on their pastness, on their having been written by another person in a different present.³⁵⁸

This notion of making the past present within the present—an alternative temporality *in the middle of* the hegemonic one—is one I argue *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* uses profoundly. For example, the medievalised language of ‘Oxen of the Sun’ or the continual usage of Middle English in *Finnegans Wake* revives a dead, outdated form of English, making it present again. As we have seen, however, the presence of the medieval extends beyond explicit usage or a stylistic quirk: even the reading experience itself has drawn force from medieval understandings of the world, whether it be theories of beauty like *varietas*, or a conception of the somatic that invites a retheorisation of the artwork. Therefore when it comes to considering the medieval, for Joyce, the present moment has an undeniable aspect of the medieval to it, despite being also the present moment; medievalism represents not so much an intrusion on the text as a contemplation of the contemporary’s heterogeneity. Everything about the medieval—especially its name—connotes its ‘middling’ status; sometimes a bugbear for historians, being something of an empty descriptor, we might surmise that this middling nature is precisely what is appealing for Joyce.

In the introduction, I already discussed how a queer temporality of reading is involved in interpreting the Middle Ages.³⁵⁹ The understanding of such temporalities as queered especially derives from the affective charge involved in the time of reading, the desire to gravitate towards that alternative time within the present Attridge delineated above. Dinshaw, for example, talks about nowness as a heterogeneous tissue inflected by an abundant range of

³⁵⁸ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 104-5.

³⁵⁹ See my discussion of Anke Bernau and Bettina Bildhauer, “Introduction: The A-chronology of Medieval Film” in *Medieval Film*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 1-19 and Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

feelings and desires, a conception profoundly informed by her relationship with medieval material.³⁶⁰ The ‘now’ created by a reading of Joyce, likewise, is a queered time. Each reader, a potential comrade in Joyce’s aesthetic project should their desires lead her that way, follows her own particular desires and orbits around her own particular fixations, learning to be content with the partial experience over the singular, standard experience. Roland Barthes once likened the pleasure of the text to cruising:

If I read this sentence, this story, or this word with pleasure, it is because they were written in pleasure [...] But the opposite? Does writing in pleasure guarantee—guarantee me, the writer—my reader’s pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must “cruise” him) *without knowing where he is*. A site of bliss is then created. It is not the reader’s “person” that is necessary to me, it is this site [...]³⁶¹

In this passage about ‘Prattle [*Babil*]’, the writer is the one who seeks out the reader—though surely it takes two to cruise. Nevertheless, the desire to create a ‘site’ (or perhaps, we could now say, a ‘period’) for this activity is the point, and *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* act in this capacity bounteously. However, it would be a mistake to omit the reader’s role in this. The queer temporality of reading I have been outlining throughout this thesis could be restated as the reader cruising for the medieval. In searching as a reader for the desired thing—in this case, the medieval—*Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* enable the creation of a site (or period) of bliss, weighted with potential meaning and alterity, itself enabling the restatement and reevaluation of the contemporary. We have seen that this restatement has taken, for the remit of this thesis, the form of a gendered somatic textuality, a realignment of sympathies in philology towards the internationalist and anti-racist, and an expressed scepticism towards

³⁶⁰ Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now?*, p. 7.

³⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 4. Emphasis his.

the singular authority of the author figure. All of these interpretations emerge from a medievalised reading experience.

Finnegans Wake self-reflexively primes us to understand the characters as themselves synonymous with a medievalised reading experience: ‘Of the persins sin this Eyrawiggla saga (which, thorough readable to int from and, is from tubb to buttom all falsetissues, antilibellous [Lat. *libellus* = ‘little book’] and nonactionable and this applies to its whole wholume.) [...] no one end is known.’ (*FW* 48.16-24). Here *Finnegans Wake* postures as a salacious medieval document, playing off the name of the thirteenth century Eyrbyggja Saga, alluding perhaps to a muddle of peoples and nations, including Persians, or sinful/sin-embodiment persons. This text is described as simultaneously inconclusive by lacking a definitive end and yet somehow dangerous and sinful all the same—perhaps this unfinished state is itself the dangerous element, making it an ‘anti-*libellus*’, some kind of unruly outlaw text. It should also be noted that I have had to cut out a large section of digression in the middle in order to make this a relatively easy sentence to comprehend; itself instructive of the book’s enactment of the principles of its aesthetic of the muddled middle. The more I incorporate, the more I will have to explain to you, the more questions will be generated: we will be engaged forever in a process of understanding without reaching a satisfactory point of having understood. This process of cutting is something I have engaged in throughout this thesis for this reason, even though it admittedly obscures the passage’s fundamental difficulty as encountered by the reader. This cutting is one potential tactic a reader might employ—a constructed version of the text, a particular ‘nowness’ encouraged by the text, but by no means the only one. The only constant between all readers of this passage is this sense of being forever in the middle of the text, never fully having read or understood. The question of

what this medievalisation achieves is related to the question of what this aesthetic of temporal middleness achieves.

The persons in this Wakean saga are also medievalised and middle: Shem the Penman—arguably himself an avatar for Joyce in a similar way to Stephen Dedalus—is described in I.7 as ‘an outlex [Lat. *lex* = law; etymologically related to *legere* = to read] between the lines of Ragonar Blaubarb ant Horrild Hairwire [...] but every honest to goodness man in the land of the space of today know that his back life will not stand being written about in black and white’ (*FW* 169.1-8). Two names stand out here as providing a medieval lineage or setting a medieval boundary to the discussion: Ragnar is a hero of Old Norse literature, and Harald Fairhair (c. 850-932) was the first king of Norway. Being cast by the narrator, his brother Shaun, (at this particular point of the narrative) here as synonymous with this medievalness is part of the danger that he poses to ‘every honest to goodness man in the land of the space of today’. This general outlaw status that this character poses is a part of his marginalisation, and I would argue the medievalisation is crucial to this. After all, he is configured as a Viking here, descended from ‘barbaric’ outsiders. The space of today is formulated by Kathleen Davis in her analysis of the periodisation of medieval and modern as the question ‘where is the now’—the use of the definite article ‘*the* now’ universalising temporal experience from a particular vantage point. She writes:

Were we to supply a location for ‘the now,’ for a present already made strangely singular yet ubiquitous by the definite article, we would privilege a specific position—whether cultural, geographic, economic, political, or technological—as *the* perspective from which a ‘present’ is made apprehensible.³⁶²

³⁶² Kathleen Davis, “The Sense of an Epoch: Periodization, Sovereignty and the Limits of Secularization” in *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory* ed. Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 39.

This is the same dynamic that would lead to the ‘denial of coevalness’ that Johannes Fabian pointed out, for instance, where particularly colonised societies were seen as ‘undeveloped’ to the point of living in a different historical period.³⁶³ This image of him as an outlaw between the lines that have been ruled on the page—the character existing somehow outside his typographical boundaries or the ‘ruled barriers’ of the page I discussed in my philology chapter (*FW* 114.7)—persists in this name outlex. This twist on the English preserves the original Latin, makes the past present, and in doing so, as the late John Bishop describes at length in his work *Joyce’s Book of the Dark*, preserves the etymological connections to other words and other meanings. According to his reading, ‘outlex’ is a word that applies to the book itself as a description of what arises when the etymologically-linked rules of ‘legality’, ‘legibility’, and ‘logic’ collapse.³⁶⁴ Crucially for my purposes, however, the character Shem is an outlex between the lines—his position beyond the strictures of reason or reasonability is a quality of his betweenness.

I choose to see this as a metaphor for reading because Joyce often deploys these images of the words behaving in unruly ways, as seen in the passage reading ‘But look what you have in your handself! The movibles are scrawling in motions, marching, all of them ago’ (*FW* 20.20-22). It is worth noting here the use of the present tense, set in a queered temporality by the destabilising word ‘ago’, connoting both the pastness of the words and their continued movement. Even in the present tense, *Finnegans Wake* can never bring itself to be fully, unambiguously ‘now’; its unruliness dictates that it must occupy a more ambivalent temporality, not fully past, nor fully present.

³⁶³ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

³⁶⁴ John Bishop, *Joyce’s Book of the Dark: Finnegans Wake* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 47.

These images of the words in unruly process, beyond ruled barriers, scrawling in motions, an outlex between the lines, all create 1) a temporal middle which we inhabit and share with the words, in the sense that they have not finished their ‘sounddance’ and 2) buck the notion of development that sees a linear progression towards a state of enlightenment or understanding, a ‘universal’ now which constructs the past as ‘undeveloped’. This might be why ALP, the embodiment of the ‘riverrun’ of language that is both the substance and main concern of the book, is described as ‘between two ages’ (*FW* 207.36)—by being posited explicitly as a medieval entity, she enables a new kind of reading which we can bring to bear on our particular present.

With this sense of the applications of reading mediievally, I would like to close by gesturing at the ways a queer temporality inculcated by the Joycean aesthetic have applications. One work that seems to understand *Finnegans Wake* as an interstitial time in our waking lives is a novel by William Melvin Kelley, who is largely known for his realist novels about the Black experience in the USA in the 60s and 70s. Kelley made a significant departure for his final work *Dunfords Travels Everywheres*, his most experimental novel, which oscillates between dreamlike wandering rendered in relatively straightforward prose and sections of Wakean stylistic fireworks.³⁶⁵ Such chapters act as bridges between disparately connected segments of narrative, offering perhaps a dream-world in between the waking nightmare of history, a torrent of literary adventure wedged in the middle of the supposedly comprehensible. Kelley imbues his similarly self-reflexive Wakean art with increased emphasis on Black and indigenous American cultures, positioning it as a uniquely American Wake: ‘Maya we now go on wi yReconstruction, Mr. Chuggle? Awick now?’³⁶⁶ Kelley’s riff on Joyce therefore

³⁶⁵ Recently republished: William Melvin Kelley, *Dunfords Travels Everywheres* (New York: Anchor, 2020).

³⁶⁶ Kelley, *Dunfords*, p. 42.

applies his aesthetic to the racial politics of the USA. It is hard to avoid the feeling that he, too, is using intense difficulty in these passages as a remedying modification to reading practices, as an antagonistic gesture to literary acceptability, or even something as ambitious as a liberation of the mind.

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Annotated Erotic Letter — <https://genius.com/James-joyce-erotic-love-letter-dec-8-1909-annotated> — Possibly one of the more well-read Joycean artefacts in the digital age, of interest to many researching the reception of Joyce among most readers.

James Joyce Digital Archive — jjda.ie — Edited by Danis Rose and John O’Hanlon, an extensive, free scholarly resource incorporating material from Joyce’s notebooks, of especial interest to the genetic critic or the ‘unquiring one’ (*FW* 3.21).

Joyce’s Library — <http://www.jjon.org/joyce-s-library> — A freely available list of the books Joyce had in his Trieste and Paris libraries.

Omniscientific Joyce Call for Papers — <http://joyce2020.org/cfp/> — A demonstration of the all-embracing priorities of Joycean scholarship today.

Middle English Dictionary — <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary> — Free, searchable database of Middle English words, and a more reliable resource for etymologies than typical dictionaries.

Shmoop Analysis of Proteus — <https://www.shmoop.com/ulysses-joyce/proteus-analysis-summary.html> — Popular site for unattributed, student-level literary analysis, here tackling one of *Ulysses*’ most difficult moments.