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Ulysses In the Age of Digital Remediation

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ULYSSES IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL REMEDIATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an in-depth study of the implications of digital technologies and information literacy for the reading practices and scholarly work of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. Because the reading experience of *Ulysses* depends heavily on both the novel's physicality and the interaction of the reader with the text, changes in reading practices in digital environments can offer new modes of understanding and characterizing readers' relationships with text. The scholarly study brought about by digital adaptations and hypermediations of this novel can also tell us how the digital interactions of scholars with *Ulysses* might engender or inhibit potential interpretations.

Each of the three chapters in this study takes up a different episode of the novel in conjunction with a theoretical lens for examining the possibilities and pitfalls of a digital *Ulysses*. In the first chapter, I argue that the stylistic and structural attributes of *Wandering Rocks* foster a particular method of cognitive mapping that anticipates digital reading practices, and that the aura of the work of art defined as a unique relationship to that work of art, particularly that which is fostered in readers' experiences with *Ulysses*, does not fundamentally change in digital environments. In the second chapter, I take up Penelope, the question of the gender of texts and their readers, and the theoretical problems posed by texts' unique history of materiality, in order to argue that the readers' desire for the completion of *Ulysses* reveals the bond between materiality and meaning to be flimsy and arbitrary. In the final chapter, the philosophical views of Stephen Dedalus

and Mr. Deasy in Nestor serve as a model for the options available to scholars in pursuing the study of *Ulysses* with the use of currently available digital tools.

This thesis serves a means of developing an understanding of how the material and stylistic legacy of *Ulysses* itself can inform digital remediation and adaptations of the novel. The new reading practices and modes of scholarship fostered by these digital versions of *Ulysses* not only have the potential to lead to new modes of interpretation, but will also provide the means for reflecting on changing modes of textual engagement in the digital era through a novel that in part illustrates this very problem for the era of print.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TOWARD A DIGITAL *ULYSSES*

With *Ulysses*, James Joyce neither created nor intended to create a unified text. *Ulysses* functions rather, in the words of Roland Barthes, as a “methodological field” where many approaches, choices, outcomes and schemas are simultaneously available (Nadel 116). This field in which various paths are simultaneously possible has allowed, in the history of the novel’s publication, for an extremely rich and various community of readers and scholars to probe the interpretive limits of this text.

The act of reading itself is rapidly changing with the emergence of technologies and devices that allow for complex remediations of print texts, as well as the expansion of access to these technologies and of information literacy. Research on the potential benefits and shortcomings of digital technologies for reading and scholarship concedes that the process of digitization of texts it is not only inevitable but also necessary. Each text must become freely accessible, and although the motivations behind this open access are contested, there is no doubt that the digital readership is one that increasingly demands agency and individuation.

Ulysses, it seems to me, is a nearly perfect lens through which to study the possibilities and potentially limiting consequences of this movement toward digital remediation. I use a word with a positive connotation and one with a negative connotation because I believe that there are benefits as well as blind spots to be had with each conceptualization or approach to this novel. John Nash articulates this problem by

calling attention to “an unavoidable tension between the genuine sense of progress that exegetical and historical scholarship creates and the continuing frustrations of interpretation – which, it should be said, are sometimes only exacerbated by the expansion of critical and textual knowledge” (10). This tension between progress and frustration, so inherent to the reading and study of *Ulysses*, is manifested differently for print and digital media, and is also at the center of the debate about how and to what extent digital technologies can be employed both in everyday reading and in professional scholarship.

Readers of Joyce have been trying to identify the ideal reading experience or scholarly approach to *Ulysses* since its publication, but this study is not another attempt to elucidate what can only be answered by individual reading experiences. Through close examinations of three relevant chapters of the novel, Wandering Rocks, Penelope, and Nestor, I hope to illuminate the possible paths and roadblocks that face readers and scholars of *Ulysses* caught in the dizzying discourse about the roles of new technologies and traditional forms of texts. I will first discuss how these various new devices and online tools may alter the “aura” of the text, as defined by Walter Benjamin, and the ways that readers construct cognitive maps of texts, as conceptualized by Michel de Certeau. I will demonstrate that readers’ interactions with texts, specifically in the use of hypertext in digital reading practices, are altering in ways that Joyce’s novel itself sometimes seems to model. I will then turn to Penelope, which, as identified by the Linati schema as exemplary of the corporeal nature of the novel, offers insight into what is gained or lost when the physical nature of the text has disappeared. In the final section I will offer an interpretation of Stephen Dedalus’ thoughts and ideas in the Telemachiad, specifically in

Nestor, of how history and its nightmares may still haunt the future of digital scholarship, specifically in the possibilities and pitfalls suggested by database technology. The purpose of this study, then, is to understand the possibilities of digital environments as part of a “methodological field” that is at once various and limited. According to Barthes this field is, despite previous assumptions about who or what holds power over art, a field reigned over by readers themselves, who resurrect meaning not from the author but from the destinations that they constantly and variously re-create from the raw materials they are given (Barthes 6). So these possibilities are not something which speeds onward toward an ineluctable destination, but rather are a function of our own narratives and conceptions about the nature of artistic origin and the importance of the print legacy, and therefor can be guided and also limited by the weight of those narratives.

CHAPTER 2: WANDERING ROCKS AND THE READER AS FOUNDER

Information and art, to a large extent now, are free. Here I mean “free” in two senses: Firstly, that one need not pay for an encounter with at least some version of a particular piece of information or work of art, and secondly that information and art are less constrained by bindings, frames, buildings, and the gatekeepers of institutions. The reader, the viewer, and the critic, no matter their level of expertise, now have an unprecedented means of creating and producing their own meaning. Almost any text can be reproduced on any screen or format the consumer may have available, from a desktop computer at a library to a personal mobile device. Although original works of art may still be sequestered and protected in locations one must travel to in order to view them, variations on that original, or subsequent printings and publications, provide a chance for those without the means to move themselves to have the work of art move itself closer to them, albeit in a different format. The risk in this, as Benjamin, Joyce, and many other intellectuals of the twentieth century saw it, was that this barrage of reproduction might give rise to passive rather than active consumers. This concern, as anyone familiar with James Joyce’s work knows, is at the core of the project of *Ulysses*.

Joyce was an admirer of many modern entertainment and information technologies, specifically radio, film, and news print, although this admiration was not without its traces of skepticism. He recognized the potential of these media to revolutionize art, and this is why he sought to evoke striking visual, auditory, and print

media techniques in his stylistic variations. Yet his adoption of these stylistic methods reveals his anxiety about technology as well; he reveals this in his tendency to parody these modes of communication and entertainment as inferior, and sometimes buffoonish or distasteful. One thinks immediately of the textual imitation of Leopold Bloom's auditory release of gas at the end of the "Sirens" episode: "Pprrpffrrppffff" (*U* 11.1293), parodying the sounds of mass media such as radio, or the dramatic, reductive, and humorous headlines of the "Aeolus" episode that parody newspaper print. The novel itself often seems to be mocking the notion that these new and powerful technologies could ever successfully supplant the written word as art. Behind these techniques lies both Joyce's intention of re-affirming the power of the novel and his insistence on enforcing the reader's active and reflective engagement with all levels of the text, from the visual surface of the placement of words to the articulation of social, cultural, and political meaning.

Walter Benjamin and subsequently John Berger, who expanded on many of Benjamin's original ideas, conceived of reproduction as having the potential for many important political and social consequences. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin declares that mass-produced art creates a withering of the "aura," which he defines as the original "authority of the object" that resides in its "historical testimony" of authenticity (2-3). A work of art that is reproduced lacks presence in a particular time and place, and thus "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" (4). The consequence of this emancipation is that the work of art can serve or be served by the masses, the

consequences of which can awaken the proletariat to their own historical and social alienation.

So what does this conception of mechanical reproduction have to do with the novel *Ulysses*, other than to re-affirm the cultural and political tensions from which it springs? Focusing primarily on Benjamin's idea of the "aura" of the original work of art, I will argue that the aura has not withered and died, as Benjamin contends, but rather that the aura has simply evolved to fit its new conditions, and that in the digital age the aura continues to alter according to the conditions of art, production, and consumption. I believe that Benjamin was a bit too eager in pronouncing the death of the aura, perhaps due to his hopeful visions of a proletarian revolution. The aura did not simply take its leave to be replaced by its un-autonomous, fragmentary double; its vestiges are much stronger than this.

As Benjamin predicted, mechanical reproduction and the proliferation of art for and by the masses has done nothing but accelerate. What I hold in my hand is the fifteenth, and not nearly the latest, printing of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, known as the 1984 Gabler edition. The novel's dizzying and much debated publication history attests to the fact that the absence of the original does not necessarily preclude the desire to achieve the authority of the original. While every edition of *Ulysses* can quite easily be considered flawed in some way, considering that initial errors Joyce corrected were only replaced by newer errata, every dedicated reader of Joyce and *Ulysses* has what they might call "my edition." But none can really claim to have *the* definitive edition. It is impossible to read the novel without developing a special attachment to the indications of struggle and

achievement apparent on every page of text, no matter how cheaply the copy might have been obtained.

For example, in the Wandering Rocks episode alone, whose short flashes represent Joyce's efforts to re-imagine filmic techniques in textual terms, various colors of pencil and pen mark my many readings in a visually striking way. One might re-trace the depth of my reading from simple comprehension to increasingly nuanced interpretation through the color and complexity of these notes. The very first observations, often written into the large margin on the first page of each episode, are most often notes derived from either the professor's lecture in the introductory course I took on *Ulysses* or from *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study* by Stuart Gilbert, and these sort of notes were meant to ease the process of basic orientation and often are not even necessary to look over in a second or third reading. The next stage of my reading and study are the lists of problems, questions, and observations that are scrawled in at the end of each chapter. These represent the ideas that have resulted from each successive reading; they mark where translation ends and the process of interpretation began. I've briefly described these stages of reading to make the point that whoever seriously takes upon herself the task of reading *Ulysses* must develop some sort of system that not only helps to develop comprehension but also eventually personalizes the text, altering its very nature and the nature of each subsequent reading. Others have borrowed my copy of the novel and found that my marginal notes, while successfully slowing down the reading process, did not greatly aid in their own understanding of the novel. Each individual system a reader cultivates confers on her text a rich and complex aura held together by the reader's personal creative act in bringing the novel into its unique physical being. The

aura of the text is only be held together by the reader or the viewer, and not the artist. The novel becomes its own original through the very process of reproduction and re-viewing that Benjamin termed as “a tremendous shattering of tradition” (Benjamin 3).

Benjamin contends that an aura is destroyed by separating a work of art from the authenticity of the original and the authority of the duration of its historical testimony. Thus it is removed, he says, from some vast progression we might call “tradition” (2-3). While one might gaze upon a mural in a cathedral or a Greek fresco and have the sense that one is encountering a rich cultural tradition of which one is a part, a personal encounter with a familial keepsake or a much-thumbed-through novel can produce similar effects. While it is accurate that the contemporary masses strive to “bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly,” their “bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of everyday reality” is shown its limits in the form that *Ulysses* assumes for its reader (3). The personalized text is by its nature always new and arresting. Bringing it closer to the reader serves to intensify (rather than nullify) the twentieth-century historical tradition of an object reflecting openly upon its own existence as both fleeting object and art. In order for the aura to revive in the age of mechanical reproduction, the text’s margins must be penetrated by interpretive scrawling that simultaneously destroys the author’s text and constructs an aura that is wholly situated in a rich personal relation with the reader.

However, this aura that exists and grows stronger through every encounter with *Ulysses* is bound to change again, as the mediums through which students and common readers approach their texts change rapidly in a new “digital age” of the twenty-first century. E-readers, online journals, blogs, criticism, and the possibilities presented by links, hypertext, and countless forms of generic remediation all demand the inevitable

redefinition of not only what is read but also *how* it is read. Just as in Benjamin's day, a shift in the way that people view art is bound to drastically alter the nature of that work's aura and interpretation. While many books can be read without a reader's commentary, even the experience of reading popular fiction and nonfiction is bound by the crowding of online reviews by both editorial professionals and lay readers, as well as statistically generated recommendations that seek to shape the reading choices of the public. Once a reader chooses a text, even the experience of reading it on a screen can be quite different since most digital remediation seeks to imitate the experience of reading print but fails to account for many of its physical attributes other than the visual. The reader scrolls through pages rather than flipping through them, and the size of font often altogether alters where events and passages can be found in the text. If readers wish to engage more actively with their text (as they might well wish to, with *Ulysses*), they can purchase an application that allows them to type in marginal notes. This application is designed to imitate the intimate interaction a reader might have with a physical text. Thus while the work of art is brought another step closer (one needn't venture to the bookstore or vendor any longer), it is simultaneously removed another step from the idea of the authority of a strictly situated original. While film and photography represent for the twentieth century the many ways that power might be given back to the viewer, and movement dominates over the inert silence of text and painting, these possibilities converge on the digital text and declare its power anew, although as I have asserted, this renewal occurs at the cost of Benjamin's ideas about what art is meant to *do*. Yet its aura as defined by its adherence to the notions held during a particular time about the role of authority and history, and the roles of the producers and consumers, retains its influence.

The digital text, it may serve to eradicate the intimacy and immediacy of the physical print text (and the bookshelf), frees up the inert words to engage in movement that extends beyond what the eye can scan. While the implications of this potential movement for traditional novels published before the digital age lie mainly in the arena of professional scholarship (which will be discussed in greater detail in the third chapter), the contemporary novel has already seen increased experimentation with the use of links, hypertexts, and the concurrence of moving pictures and sounds with words as a part of an arsenal of new techniques for literary style. Whether or not these techniques will increase the passivity of the reader is difficult to determine, but they have already shown several ways in which they may increase readers' agency by providing a variety of individual procedures for producing meaning.

At the center of concern for readers in digital environments is a re-imagination of what it will look like to cognitively map the world of Stephen Dedalus, Bloom, and Dublin. For Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, reading is one of the most important material means through which one constructs a sense of the world and a sense of reality. He argues that individuals thought by those in power to be largely passive subjects of societal rules and norms are in fact constantly engaged in cognitively mapping and manipulating the world around them. Although these individuals may not have a choice over the cultural norms that are handed down to them, "tactics" offer individuals a position of subversive power, small opportunities to fulfill their role as "unrecognized producers" and "poets of their own acts" (de Certeau 169). Michel de Certeau cites reading as being one of these tactical acts. In a useful analogy, he argues that the text is:

Habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories; as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the message of their native tongue and, through their accent, through their own 'turns of phrase,' etc., their own history; as do pedestrians, in the streets they fill with the forests of their desires and goals.

(xxi)

Readers' navigation of *Ulysses* is defined by the information, memories, and experiences that they bring to the text. For example, readers' ability to maneuver successfully through the continuous changes in voice and suggested changes in accent depends upon their familiarity with Irish and various other dialects and languages. Readers unfamiliar with Italian may choose to skim over Almidano Artifoni's scene in favor of the more linguistically mundane Miss Dunne. The presence of "quick cuts" within many of the scenes, where excerpts of previous or subsequent scenes are inserted into the text without warning in order to represent simultaneous occurrences, allows readers either to slow down and find the excerpt's origin or to skip over it in favor of discerning the larger geographical and mechanical scheme of the episode. Of course, if one does speed through some of the more difficult language in the Artifoni scene, one is bound to miss the fact that there are no "quick cuts" in this scene and that it occurs in an altogether different place and time than June 16, 1904, Dublin.¹ Because *Wandering Rocks* represents a labyrinth of the various lives and characters that populate the novel on

¹ Artifoni was the manager of the Berlitz School in Trieste, and this cut is meant to represent the sort of conversation that might have occurred between him and Joyce many years after the 1904 setting of the novel. The entire passage, then, is a kind of "cut" from the episode.

this day, the introduction and recurrence of many motifs and themes throughout the novel makes this episode a veritable goldmine for readers' arrangement of this vast "rented space." The readers' navigation of Wandering Rocks – this condensed rendering of Ulysses as a whole – may mirror in miniature the particular and individual tactics put to use in becoming oriented to the entire novel.

As de Certeau explains, in the act of reading these individual moments of appropriation and production are by definition "unrecognized," domestic, and spatially contained by our subjectivity. However, as notions of community and space shift due to new digital environments these private, tactical spaces of reading become part of a more public domain that bridges multiple cultures and interest groups that were previously geographically separated. Online forums now offer not only helpful notes and commentary for readers by both professionals and hobbyists, but also cultural resources and various audio renditions of the novel. It is not difficult to imagine a future digital text where songs, pictures, and audio clips are a mere hyperlink away, perhaps even smoothly integrated into the space of the text itself, so that one might listen to "My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl" at the same time as we read of Blazes Boylan's jaunt through the streets of Dublin, and later again in Bella Cohen's brothel:

<http://www.james-joyce-music.com/ulysses.html>

We might in the same manner be guided towards images of cultural items and period-specific photographs that help one to visualize the city and culture of Dublin at the birth of the twentieth century that is now quickly receding from living memory. For example one could quickly view how the conductor of a tramcar might appear as he salutes Father Conmee:

<http://www.joyceimages.com/chapter/10/?page=3>

Or, if one is daunted by a first-time reading of the Penelope episode, one might play a delightful audio rendition of the chapter, while reading along with the text, that captures the stirring movement of Molly Bloom's meditations:

<http://www.completeulysses.com/listen/ulysses/>

Most important though is that these hyperlinks might be an embedded part of the digital text a reader buys, eliminating any need to prowl the Internet for useful resources. Some of this information, such as the examples given, could be freely accessed, but of course scholarly and published material would probably come with a fee.

One very likely roadblock to this possible future of the novel, however, is the willingness of the Joyce family to allow a publication project of this sort. Michael Groden in fact has attempted a project much like the one just described, entitled "Digital *Ulysses*," which was thwarted by the Joyce estate. Although Joyce's descendants are notoriously protective of his works, scholars will undoubtedly explore the possibilities that digital texts have to offer as more of Joyce's materials enter the public domain.

While what is available to readers can affect the possibilities of their production, more importantly than what can be provided for the reader to experience is what readers can produce with the agency of their "tactics." As Margot Norris has recently declared in *Virgin and Veteran Readings of Ulysses*, a truly virgin reading of *Ulysses* has now become an "imaginary" prospect. It would be safe to argue that before readers even pick up *Ulysses* they already at least some awareness of its difficulty, its Homeric parallels, and the infidelity of the protagonist's wife. As Margot Norris notes, even if a new reader may not be aware of this last fact, practically any brief synopsis or guide that readers find

will clue them in to this critical plot point, thus becoming a premature revelation that “ruins” one of the most important moments for “potential *suspense*” (2).

While a digitally integrated text may offer up cultural, scholarly, and theoretical knowledge at every word, the novel certainly does not need our help in becoming more encyclopedic. The agency of the reader may be helped by the open-endedness of digital remediations, but the very public-ness of readers’ tactics and interpretations could dilute the originality and force of those tactics. A barrage of links, annotations, guides and comments is detrimental first of all because it may inhibit the creativity of the reader.

Norris rightly argues that:

Textual incompleteness and implicitness produce negative markers in the form of lacunae, and positive markers in the form of allusions, innuendos, and insinuations that require reader attention and supplementation. The degree of reader participation is inevitably much greater for a virgin than a veteran reader, thereby producing not only more extensive speculation, greater risk, but also a wider and more interesting range of interpretation. (10)

Here Norris expresses why it is so important to preserve the incomplete knowledge of a first reading. Yet there is also another layer to this problem of offering up too much information and putting creative readings in danger. With the extraordinary amount of information available about *Ulysses*, ranging the spectrum from wonderfully insightful to utter nonsense, having many interpretations and theories about the novel easily accessible might be ideal for the professional trying to conduct research, but virgin readers would undoubtedly be repulsed by the prospect of having to navigate such an overwhelming clutter of information.

Despite the risk of losing individuated tactical methods by the penetration of previously tested tactics into the public sphere of the digital remediation, a trend towards a multi-modal, individualized textual space is more likely to increase the agency of readers at the outset to envision and design their preferred text. This is because readers according to De Certeau are always one step ahead of the strategies that are being imposed onto them; tactics adjust to accommodate each new condition of a particular space. One may argue that this would endanger the authority of Joyce's original work of art, but in fact it fits precisely within his own image of the novel's project, to become a space for readers and thinkers alike to endlessly re-form and recombine new avenues and destinations of interpretation.

Indeed, there are already projects working towards these very aims of fostering new interpretive digital communities. For example, the Modernist Versions Project on June 16th, 2012 (Bloomsday), launched the Year of Ulysses (YoU), a project of both scholarship and public engagement that releases high-quality scans of three chapters of the original 1922 publication of *Ulysses* every three weeks, along with lectures by premier scholars in the field and live Twitter chats moderated by a guest host:

<http://web.uvic.ca/~mvp1922/you/>

This project mobilizes readers towards a deeper understanding of the cultural and scholarly influence of the text, but also connects an online community of geographically and socially diverse readers within a forum for the communication of ideas. Also, the lectures hosted by the site enact a diversification of the spaces that a scholar may act within. The addition of the Twitter chats allows consumers to have more agency and

interaction with their cultural capital, while the presence of a moderator provides structure to the conversations.

What this project signals is a public promulgation of those principles of everyday life that de Certeau originally marked as silent, private, and subversive. Already the reader is becoming less like Leopold Bloom, who finds pleasurable moments of rebellion and detour throughout his Dublin odyssey. Instead of citizens and readers working in silent opposition to institutions, a process of “social hierarchization that conceals the reality of the practice of reading or makes it unrecognizable,” these readers and institutions increasingly not only recognize each other’s existence and the differentiation between their modes of survival, but also recognize the symbiotic relationship that must result from a digitization of texts as well as other media. As a result, the acts and interpretations of individuals maintain their agency but become more recognized and less subversive by entering into a larger community that allows for shared experience as well as scrutiny. The readers and consumers no longer need to “maintain their reserve in private and without the knowledge of the ‘masters,’” because all must now answer to the open, digital tribunal where information is weighed more equally within a space in which power has become dispersed (de Certeau 172).

Joyce enacts this very measuring out of power in the recession of the individual and individualized spaces in *Wandering Rocks*, through a wider and more inclusive representation of the Dublin community than any of the previous episodes in *Ulysses*. The traditional preeminence of a dominant narrator, in this case centered on Leopold Bloom, is subverted by the emergence of multiple voices and quick cuts that penetrate into the space of the text with excerpts of events happening elsewhere in the city at the

same time. In this episode Bloom is only represented in one of the eighteen short scenes, in which he is searching a bookstall for sensational literature for his wife. The episode disrupts readers' expectations of Bloom as a protagonist as it represents him in the traditional role of the solitary reader amid the clutter of voices and narratives crowding the city of Dublin on this day. In the scene directly before readers encounter Bloom at the bookseller, Lenehan declares to M'Coy by way of saving face that, "There's a touch of the artist about old Bloom" (*U* 10.582-83). Later, Stephen Dedalus visits another of the booksellers in Dublin. In this fashion readers experience characters from both interior and exterior perspectives, as well as experience similar spaces from multiple perspectives, breaking down expectations about point of view and textual unity.

Yet even though voices from across the spectrum of the community dominate the Wandering Rocks episode, its structure is loosely held together by the chiasmic processions across the city of Reverend John Conmee S.J. and the viceregal cavalcade of Earl William and Lady Dudley, England's representatives to Ireland. These processions respectively represent the religious and governmental institutions of the city. Though these narratives frame the variegated movements of the episode, their semblance of order highlights the small transgressions and appropriations of space made by the community; for example, those who witness but neglect to salute the viceregal cavalcade. If Bloom enacts traditional and solitary reading practices, Wandering Rocks enables readers to subvert traditional reading practices by using fragmented movements and perceptions to build meaning, an act that for de Certeau empowers individuals to create new possibilities, with "unlimited diversity," out of the distortions created by this "sieve-

order” (99). The community of contradictory voices in this episode thus stylistically facilitates the reading practices required of the interaction with texts in digital spaces.

The “Year of Ulysses” project marks a watershed point among these new developments, where the traditional “protagonists” of meaning production work much more closely with the various-voiced desires and complexly mediated social practices of the everyday reader. These very new developments in digital media will no doubt submit *Ulysses* and its loyal adherents to a series of tests in the twenty-first century (unless the always already nascent course of history, as it is apt to do, changes) in which it will have to prove its ability to speak to a rapidly evolving stock of creative demands originating more and more from the consumer rather than the producer.

CHAPTER 3: PENELOPE AND THE TEXT AS BODY

In this chapter I will turn from practical concerns about Joyce's *Ulysses* toward more theoretical issues, focusing more specifically on Joyce's aesthetics of the novel in general and on his conception of *Ulysses* as a physical body that is generative and "fecund," in particular. Readers of a digital version of this very physical text, as participants in the process of remediation, must altogether reconceive of their own relationship to the words, and whether those ephemerally flashing words can reconstitute the physicality of the printed text. Every text in the most literal sense consists of a composite of physical attributes – spine and cover, pages and ink – yet Joyce's knowledge about and fascination with technologies that might supplant this materiality, and his aesthetic notions about the how a work of art is created, produced a novel that is aggressively reflective of its own material nature as well as its position in the process of consumer circulation.

Joyce deliberately plays on the idea of the text as a body to emphasize his aesthetic notions about artistic creation and development as analogous to copulation and human embryonic growth, ideas reflected in Stephen Dedalus' aesthetic theories in *Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* and his discussion of Shakespeare in the Scylla and Charybdis episode of *Ulysses*. The text also often acts as an impermeable Other, coyly toying with readers who seek satisfaction through an analytical and aesthetic penetration of the text. One's sense of the novel as a corporeal entity, often with agency

of its own, is heightened by the Linati schema, which seeks to create a thematic structure for each episode and guide readers' interpretations. In the Linati schema each chapter is associated with a different body part, from circulatory system (Wandering Rocks) to inner organs such as kidneys (Calypso). So in addition to the text itself existing as a part of material reality, in a very real sense as one reads *Ulysses* the novel accumulates characteristics; as Michael Groden has remarked, it begins to assume a "personality." This accumulation of characteristics and quirks implies its seemingly human capabilities for intimacy and reproduction. It speaks to and teases readers, often directly, and through the process of making meaning breeds multiple and infinite readings. David Weir identifies the stylistic techniques that run through Scylla and Charybdis as Joyce's "androgynous art," in which two separate sexual halves of the reading process, the reader and the text, provide a structural division of the episode, while after the Wandering Rocks episode "the body provides the pattern for larger narrative designs" (109-10). These sexual divisions that make up stylistic and narrative patterns in the novel are for Weir deeply essential to Joyce's aesthetic theory, so that "aesthetics appears to be mediated by sexuality" (114). The artist himself is thus an androgyne, creatively self-copulating to produce the work of art from his mind, simultaneously both mother and father to the text, a full expression of the self as the agent of both fecundity and fertility in the creative process of writing that through the creative activity of readers engenders further generations of meaning production. Readers continue to enact this role as both mother and father to the text, seeking both "penetration" of the text, which in fact can only be partially fulfilled through "gestation."

This model of the aesthetics of *Ulysses* as creatively fecund, styled after sexual relations and then provoking the mediation of art through a reading experience that is markedly sexual in nature, has recently led to many critics approaching the novel with the question of mediation in mind. If the claim is valid that each reading of *Ulysses* is a necessarily unique experience between a reader and the text, then how might we properly conceive of the way that Joyce's words are cognitively and creatively mediated through our minds in the process of reading? And, is the physicality of the text essential to that mediation?

The approach of Thomas Jackson Rice to this problem of physicality and mediation is to propose that if *Ulysses* is preoccupied with the sexual processes of aesthetics, with gestation, then it is also clearly preoccupied with digestion because both sex and reading are figurative acts of consumption that often border on the literal. Not only does Joyce's novel engender a progeny of readings, but also the content and stylistic variety of the text itself demonstrates his "ingestion, digestion, and incorporation of the bodies of traditional and contemporary literature and culture into the living body of his own work" (Rice 162). If Joyce's writing of the novel is cannibalistic, then those than consume the text must also be cannibalistic. Amid the cultural milieu of the 1920s in Europe, in which many intellectuals expressed anxiety over the public's mass consumption of new media such as radio broadcasting and film, media that encourage greater passivity in the consumer, Joyce offered instead a novel in which one's mediation through it demands that readers become active consumers. Rice terms these active consumers "intellectual *cannibals*," who are the "most aggressive and active" consumers and who are "invested in the labor of their production" (161-62). The advantage of

conceptualizing Joyce's project and the readers' responses in this manner is that through their cannibalism both Joyce and his readers come to "resurrect" the text, shaken out of passivity in order to bring to life the "dismembered and inert" body parts of discourse and signification, thus reclaiming agency as both producer and consumer simultaneously (136). As a result of reading in this way, the text becomes again a corpus, in all senses of the word, through which readers receive not only information but also nourishment necessary for the active functions of a mind.

New media always raises questions of how the medium itself alters the nature of its content and changes as a result of its consumption, as well as how the consumers' minds are reconfigured through the allowances and demands of that particular medium. This seems to be an inevitable process as media become more ubiquitous and various; in other words, it's nothing that we haven't seen before. With the invention of moveable type and the printing press in the fifteenth century and the spread of printed texts, due not only to increased production but also to growing literacy, anxiety was rampant about the effects this new technology would have on the authority of the church and state, and whether a public's greater access to reading would give rise to mass criminality and licentiousness. Although the medium itself was not so very different, its new status as pervasive and universalizing – not to mention the fact that production was no longer necessarily in the hands of church authority– caused widespread uncertainty about what people were capable of if they could access information freely. Another related concern was whether a reading public would prove to be capable and responsible arbiters of that information. In other words, the anxiety was not so much centered on the medium of text itself, but whether *the minds* of the reading public would be sufficient enough mediums

in order to produce the “desired” or “proper” meaning from the text. In contrast to this, much of anxiety over new media in the twentieth-century arose from perceived deficiencies in the media itself.

What we are experiencing in the age of digital media is both the anxiety over the ability of consumers to manage new technologies and media, as well as concern about possible negative effects induced by the medium itself. As Henry Jenkins argues in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, rather than provoke fears about the public’s passive consumption of media, the digital environment for the most part remediates existing media in such a way that new technologies do not necessarily result in altogether new media, but in a convergence and reconfiguration of media already in existence onto a single platform. This massive technological remediation that saturates the consumer simultaneously and continuously has been termed by Nicholas G. Carr as hypermediation. Subjects that engage in digital media can hardly be said to be passive. In many ways, digitization encourages active involvement in navigating and creating a unique media experience, incorporating the activity of the consumer in shaping the product in ways that would have been impossible by using just a single technology. Not only are consumers of information and entertainment more active than ever before, but they are also engaging in a “*participatory culture*,” in which “convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others” (Jenkins 3). This allows participants in the digital space to process more information than one person would ever be able to make sense of individually.

However, digital media also creates a problem that is central to understanding the anxiety surrounding consumers’ reading practices. Rather than cause passivity, digital

media may exacerbate the distraction of consumers. Distraction is the fear in the information age that a reading and viewing public can no longer sustain attention long enough to remain critical and analytical consumers of the content they seek. The result of hypermediation and a distracted audience is, as Christian Vandendorpe asserts, a loss of the book as a totality “which readers should in principle read in its entirety in order to assimilate a subject or the mental configuration characteristic of an author or of a particular subject” (143). The consequence of distraction is a loss of full and unattenuated comprehension. What we get instead in a digital environment is a fragmentation and segmentation of many texts across a reading landscape – a very similar sort of scattered environment to that of *Ulysses*, what Thomas Jackson Rice calls “partial bodies littering the field” (131). However Joyce’s field of fragments is one carefully designed by a single artist while the fragments within a digital landscape are an often accidental coagulation of information and ideas from various sources. Pascal Quignard sees this parceling out of the text ambivalent: it is on one hand “a cancer that corrupts the unity of a body and breaks it down,” but on the other, it “enables the constant renewal of the narrator’s stance and [. . .] it addresses the reader in a sudden, striking way” (Vandendorpe 143).

James Joyce, then, appears in *Ulysses* not only to have responded to anticipated and future media anxieties, but also to have touched on an enduring and increasingly exigent trend in reading practices. If the digital landscape is by its very nature fragmentary, forcing readers to navigate through a complex of segmented parts, can it in any sense be “resurrected” by the reader as a unified body if its sources are multiple and ill-defined, or do our readings of its components remain inert and lifeless in their

collective provisionality? The form of the novel itself extends this hope, seeming unified through author and publisher by fashioning the barriers of first word and last, front cover and back cover, so that readers can still imagine *Ulysses* as a unified narrative. This tangible wholeness of the text serves to discourage the kind of distraction that fragmentation causes, and encourages the concentration necessary to resurrecting meaning. The boundaries of the digital text, however, are provisional at best and often by design even discouraged. Through organization and selection, however, arbiters of digital media can design and have erected boundaries to encourage sustained reading practices while not promoting any particular reading technique or scheme that may prevent the itinerancy necessary to any unique construction of the novel. The Modernist Versions Project's "Year of Ulysses" successfully creates this illusion of a semi-closed environment in that the majority of the links within the website function as feedback loops that lead one directly back to the scanned text itself. In fact, a wandering scholar can navigate to any page on the website, but the right sidebar always prominently displays a link to "digitized texts," so that the primary text becomes an anchor that prevents one from becoming lost in the wandering rocks of the Internet. In other words, distraction can be partially contained within a semi-closed digital community, minimizing a tendency towards detachment from a single primary text. If one wishes to maintain the traditional formal unity of a text when transferring it onto an online platform, one must necessarily privilege the author as much as possible by recreating the structure of the novel's reading environment. Yet since that original structure can never be exactly, faithfully translated, the formal unity at least appears to have been degraded in the process.

What complicates this story is that even a physical print text of *Ulysses* seems to subvert the expectation for formal unity, so that it cannot be argued that structure and unity have only begun to dissipate with newer media. Constructs such as these must always be forged through, and often despite, the medium, and are not inherent to the medium. With any consideration of *Ulysses* as a body or as a unified whole, scholars cannot elide the problems presented by the last chapter, Penelope, which represents a departure from the narrative proper at the end of Ithaca as Leopold Bloom falls asleep after his long odyssey. In Penelope, not only are readers denied a sense of time, but readers are also denied a sense of space.² The entirety of Penelope is an interior monologue of Molly Bloom, devoid of all punctuation and narrative interjection, and the only bearings that Joyce offers readers to make sense of the physical environment are mediated through the thoughts of Molly Bloom. At the very cusp of the moment of would-be resurrection upon the closing of Leopold Bloom's day, readers' expectations and amassed knowledge are brought into question by the wanderings, distractions, and relentless contradictions of Molly Bloom.

In this episode it appears that James Joyce intentionally threatens the stability and integrity of his body of text, flooding the barriers of the novel created by the more structured wanderings of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus with information that readers can never entirely reconcile with the perceptions of Molly Bloom in the whole of the preceding narrative. This is because Molly's interiority is more dynamic and contradictory than the previous commentary in the novel would have readers believe. For example, Molly directly contradicts herself when she suggests that women would be

² In the Linati schema, the time in this chapter is represented by the symbol for infinity ∞ rather than an hour of the day.

more suitable for governance than men. She asserts that “you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering,” yet several lines later she reasons that “its some women ready to stick her knife in you I hate that in women no wonder they treat us the way they do we are a dreadful lot of bitches” (18.1435-36, 1457-59). Even more puzzling than this example are Molly’s intermittent feelings of ambivalence, disgust, and warmth toward Leopold. Molly suggests that she would only want another child by Bloom when she states that “Poldy has more spunk in him yes thatd be awfully jolly,” and later contemplates leaving him altogether: “suppose I divorced him Mrs. Boylan” (18.168, 846). She even entertains the idea of seducing Stephen Dedalus at one point: “Im not too old for him” (18.1328). In addition, Molly’s final climactic remembrance of her acceptance of Bloom’s proposal is tempered by a remark of indifference that directly precedes it: “well as well him as another” (18.1604-05)

Not only do Molly Bloom’s contradictions at the end of the novel confuse the readers’ sense of meaning and stability, but they also upset these readers’ expectations of completion by suggesting that any number of future states of affairs are possible. The “Yes” that ends the novel then serves as a feedback loop into to the first word of the novel, “Stately[. . .],” suggesting that any reading of *Ulysses* is part of an infinite process, and completion is irrevocably withheld in a narrative equivalent to coitus interruptus.³ While creatively “virile” readers may hope to penetrate the text and engender meaning from the many disparate and contradictory segments of the novel, Penelope demonstrates this desire to be folly, as meaning remains provisional, mortal, and subject to the endless chain of signification offered by the text itself.

³ Several critics have seen the final “s” in “Yes” as a link to the initial “S” of “Stately,” effectively making the text of the novel itself a closed loop.

Christine van Boheemen interprets Molly Bloom as an “image of transcendent and invulnerable physicality” (268), suggesting that rather than representing an objective vision or truth about female sexuality, Penelope serves for Joyce as “the transferal of the *locus* of his vital selfhood from body onto text, the displacement of *cathexis* from the productivity of sperm to the activity of signifying, [. . .] from the mortality of the body to the immortality of the signifier” (278). For Boheemen, Penelope is a physical representation of Joyce’s own unconscious fears about death, through which the threat of completion is fully nullified. With no discernable beginning or end formally and stylistically, the chapter ensures the survival of endless signification, allowing Joyce “to move on from the feminine threat of death, which haunts all of *Ulysses*,” by usurping from the readers the knowledge that he claims for himself, the “mysterious,” “dark,” and “uncharted” femininity of the physical text (274, 269). Joyce’s Penelope, then, ensures the continual re-fragmentation and re-animation of the body of text, *at the same time as* this very process exalts the total authority and immortality of the author himself. Digital environments, however, can reveal what this exaltation of the author tells us about the relationship between consumer and medium. Even when somewhat restricted, digital media facilitates participatory and collective readings but also exacerbates the fundamental lack in human capacity that technology imagined as a bodily or organ extension seeks to cover over.

Penelope reveals that *Ulysses* as a closed system is only an illusion, just as any given digital environment can only create the pretense of unification. Through technology we extend our imagined selves, and the technologies themselves are traces of the inexorable desire for perfection and completion. In *Modernism, Technology, and the*

Body: A Cultural Study, Tim Armstrong delineates two major forms of technological extension, those of “positive” and of “negative” prosthesis. “Positive” prosthesis is a utopian drive through which “human capacities are extrapolated,” while “negative” prosthesis, covering over with compensatory technologies a fundamental lack, serves as a proxy that is meant to imply a “whole” but ultimately renders visible basic deficiencies of the human form and its capabilities (78). The digital environment of convergent media also, through its very techniques of extension and mass participation, magnifies the problems faced in reading *Ulysses* as a medium that both reveals and cures Joyce’s fear of mortality. As Tim Armstrong argues, technology offers “both mechanical extension and systematic subordination” (101). It multiplies capability and through this inorganic extension subjects natural faculties to those that are extrinsic. Yet by becoming more aware of the role that technology plays not only in producing readings but also in hiding our inadequacies as readers, we can become more conscious of how media acts as a mirror, reflecting our imagined selves, rather than just as a conduit between text and reader.

In order to better understand our relationship to technologies as prosthetics of capability and understanding, first recalling the history of readers’ responses to Penelope, or more specifically, the representations of Molly Bloom through Penelope, will elucidate how her reception actually covers over her essential significance rather than revealing it. Notions about and judgments of Molly Bloom have been a prolific area of criticism, scholarly study, and cultural concern since the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922. Controversy over the censorship and banning of the novel did not necessarily center on this episode, as the preceding seventeen can hardly be considered wholesome by popular

standards of the time, but Penelope was viewed by many to be downright pornographic. The actual number of suitors that Molly Bloom has had both before and during her marriage to Leopold Bloom is a question that concerns both Bloom and readers throughout the novel, yet in Penelope readers are confronted with the “unmediated” expression of the female appetite through Molly’s uninterrupted stream of consciousness, in which she recounts in detail her jaunt in bed with Blazes Boylan that afternoon (approximately at the same time as Leopold Bloom relieves himself on the beach in Nausicaa), and gives name to her various other sexual and psychosocial desires.

Many initial readings labeled Molly Bloom as a whore, or even more maliciously as a villain to be reviled in contradistinction to the sympathy offered to Leopold Bloom. Readings of Molly Bloom in the latter half of the twentieth century tended to reverse this characterization by focusing on her role as a mother and even exalting her as the ultimate muse. In their “Preface” to *Ulysses – En-Gendered Perspectives: Eighteen New Essays on the Episodes*, Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum acknowledge that the major problem with these apparently more enlightened readings is that they tend to position the figure of Molly as merely an “archetype” of prescribed feminine attributes (xvi). This process of humanization thus became “essentially unliterary,” viewing Molly solely in light of her femininity rather than as a part of the complex web of gendered traces throughout the novel (Devlin and Reizbaum xvi).

What is most important to understand about the critical history of Molly Bloom is not *how* critical and popular audiences have characterized her but rather what these characterizations actually signal. Readings of Penelope, and Molly Bloom in particular, can serve as a litmus test for understanding the cultural and critical atmosphere into

which scholars deploy these readings. The many permutations of Molly Bloom throughout the critical history of *Ulysses* offer a point of reflection on how the physical text of the novel can be conceived, as well as its remediation into a digital space. If shaping Molly Bloom to fit various archetypal readings signals to later scholars the necessity of understanding Molly in her multiplicity, as a screen of Mollies that reflect back the cultural ideals of femininity and female representation, then Molly's multiplicity also signals the fundamental desire to define her. In other words, the endless deployment of Molly for the purposes of constructing meaning actually *causes* a deeper desire for concreteness and definition. To put it another way, abstraction ultimately begs the question of the real.

What this means when mapping a text onto a digital landscape is that the multiple and endlessly ephemeral deployment of text similarly calls attention to the question of physicality rather than eliding it. Tim Armstrong's theory of technology as prosthetics reveals that the proliferation of supplementary readings and new ways of reading makes visible our ultimate inability to complete the circle of meaning. Rather than making *Ulysses* more palatable, digital texts and digital communities of readers reflect back and even magnify the essential gap between reader and knowledge that these very digital environments seek to cover.

Never have reservations and contentions about the materiality of text seemed as important as now with the digital turn, when scholars work to define what is essential about the text now that it is ubiquitous and ephemeral. N. Katherine Hayles, in her essay "Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality," expresses how complex this process of remediation can be: "To undertake the *complete* bibliographic coding of a

book into digital media would be to imagine the digital equivalent of Borges' Library of Babel, for it would have to include an unimaginable number of codes accounting for the staggering multiplicity of ways in which we process books as sensory phenomena" (269-70). She goes on to argue that current translations of text into the digital medium "are heavily weighted toward the linguistic rather than the bibliographic," meaning that they favor the visual presentation of the text and tend to entirely ignore its material history and existence. However, in order to fully understand both print and digital media, we must come to terms with how the work itself is "imbricated in its physical form" (Hayles 271). If we take as a premise that print cannot be directly duplicated in a digital space, and that print has a definite physical construction and material nature, then we are left with the question, to which I will presently turn, of whether an electronic text may be material, and if so, what its physical components are, and if not, what are the implications of text that does not have space or place? What, then, are also the implications for our readings of *Ulysses*, which so highly depend upon the spatial orientation of readers as well as our recognition of the author's imminence in its design?

As N. Katherine Hayles underscores, other than the various devices that deliver any given message in text, there is obviously no actual physical presence of a digital text. It travels electronically as encoded data that forms before our eyes the image, or inexact recreation, of the familiar page with organized lines of text surrounded by margins. Digital "pages" only exist with this appearance to serve as a reference to modes of reading to which consumers are already accustomed. While Hayles calls for digital texts to more accurately and faithfully recreate the multisensory experience of a print text, I would question whether that end would ultimately enhance the readers' experience, and

whether it might in fact disrupt the readers' experience of the digital text. Firstly, while achieving a more bibliographic rendering of digital texts would allow consumers an immediate acquaintance with the conventions specified by that text, a more direct and exact rendering of print into digital also risks falling prey to the consequences of nostalgia. While consumers must actually be able to read the text, looking to the past only as a guide for how texts should be translated online may close as many doors as it hopes to open. The quality of sensory experiences with texts certainly cannot be ignored, but we would be remiss in privileging actual or known reading encounters over potential ones. Secondly, a more precise rendering of the sensory experience of print risks further distancing readers from a distinct awareness of their encounter with a medium, a consequence that has both practical advantages as well as theoretical disadvantages. While making a text more permeable by resorting to traditional conventions may help readers to navigate and comprehend the digital material they encounter, encouraging an awareness of key differences between media has the advantageous effect of promoting readers' awareness of how the text is working on them, or more precisely, how the medium actually influences the content and thus the way that we consume it. While it is difficult to imagine how a digital text could make its "digital-ness" invisible, an attempt to do so would elide the essential critical importance in mediation studies of elucidating the role of the medium in meaning production. We must devote as much attention to delineating the essential differences between print and digital texts, tracing their divergent characteristics even as we may applaud their convergent ones.

None of this is to say, however, that an experience with a digital text is non-sensory, but only that digital texts seem to privilege the visual rather than the

combination of senses used in encountering a print text: sight, smell, and touch. It is this last sense, the tactile, that most often seems to determine the character of and drive the nostalgia for print. In turn, having these attributes depends upon the determination of an object as unified and spatially situated. These are attributes that seem to be inherent to the print text and void in the digital text, but as I will argue, they are and have always been provisional categories that we must to some extent explode in favor of a more nuanced conception of a text's formal unity, whether it be print or digital.

Christian Vandendorpe, in *From Papyrus to Hypertext*, attempts to complicate the wedge of formal difference that is often pushed between digital and print texts by those that wish to highlight the deficiencies of the digital as compared to print, arguing that "escaping the control of its author, the text has left the closed, stable world of the book to move into the world of the ephemeral and episodic," but that all "text is extremely fluid and cannot be limited to a mere sequence of words" (52). It is only through the illusion of material containment and closure that the medium of print provides an impression of unity. This impression also relies heavily, as Vandendorpe notes, on the authority and autonomy of the author, who gives birth to the singular and distinct work of art.

According to Roland Barthes, this reification of the author was a result of English Empiricism, French rationalism, and the concept of personal faith that grew out of the Reformation. The concatenation of these movements resulted in the rising prestige of the individual, out of whom all achievement, invention, and production extend like a prosthesis that always refers back to "the empire of the author" (Barthes 3). In an attempt to "topple" this empire, Barthes counters this notion by asserting that the text "is a space

of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture, [. . . because] the book itself is only a tissue of signs, a lost, infinitely remote imitation” (4-5). For Barthes, the author and the medium in fact have no control over the unity of a work of art; rather, “the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination” (6). Barthes thus ascribes the power to create unity to readers themselves. Authors may only gather and arrange the many sources that makes up a text, but readers function to push the text into contestation, and thus into its potential meanings. If the reader is the true site of unification, then the question of the material unity of a text is moot because materiality has merely become a signifier for the unity that in fact does not have, nor has ever had, substance.

This conception of the open text that consists only of a “tissue of citations” that promotes multiplicity and resists closure describes exactly the tendency of new media and digital texts, and seems to accord with James Joyce’s intentions for *Ulysses*. Even in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce contemplates the full erasure of the artist from his own work, and in *Scylla and Charybdis* Stephen shows that Shakespeare’s importance lies not in his role as an artist but only in how he is constructed by readers, asserting that, “He is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all” (*U* 9.1018-19). In this way Joyce theorizes the end of the author, and by fighting against the physical limitations of the text renders visible the conditional nature of material unity.

Although Joyce continually plays with the notion of text as having an organic and embodied form, in the ways that readers seek to consume and penetrate it, to become its authority, this manipulation of readers’ strict dependency on the physical text and the

stylizing of its coy nature simply increases readers' awareness that the text is *not* in fact a body. Molly Bloom, who is characterized both by her polymorphous personalities and the desire to contain her within simple, archetypal boundaries, further signals this misappropriation of the importance of the material text. In designing a novel that depends heavily on its physical relation to readers Joyce exposes the arbitrary bond between material, authored text and meaning by revealing that bond to be constituted only by the breadth of our desire for closure. Our fear of digital texts represents our fear of disembodiment or dismemberment, our phobia of surrendering the figure of authority that binds ideas into chimerical unities. *Ulysses*, however, presciently acknowledges that such a body or material authority is always already an invention, an act of prosthetic creation that unveils our deepest sought desire to submit to textual and authorial unity rather than acknowledge our hand as the only hand in its creation.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION
THE NIGHTMARE OF HISTORY AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOLARSHIP

In Nestor, Stephen's meditations on the problems of history and memory offer a way to cultivate a nuanced perspective about the future of *Ulysses* criticism in the digital age. Stephen and Mr. Deasy offer two drastically different takes on the role of history for the present. Garry M. Leonard, using Lacan's theory that the history of a nation involves the selection and manipulation of actual events, succinctly describes these two views.

According to Deasy, says Leonard,

History as "what has been" uses "what is" as a fulcrum for elevating "what will be" [. . .] However, Joyce demonstrates in this chapter that "History" is not a record of "what happened," but rather a narrative of selected "actualities" arranged in a physical construct that masquerades as "Truth" [. . .] Individual experiences that challenge the myth of the "self" are repressed, as are those facts in a nation's history that cannot be read as "the symbols of a destiny on the march." (170-71)

For Deasy, then, a narrative of history is constructed by and for God, while for Stephen this mythical detachment of history from human consciousness makes individuals victims to that narrative. As often as scholars scrutinize narratives they are also in the business of constructing them, and the emergence of digital scholarship offers a new opportunity to examine the orientation of scholars towards the meaning they produce.

The digital landscape is a field littered with the symbolic “shells” of history, facts, accounts, and information waiting for professional and novice scholars alike to construct them into meaning. The open and participatory environment created by this vast scattering of history and memory promises, as scholars such as Mark C. Marino and others have noted, to promote a multivocal and productively contradictory academic community. Ideally, this community will be endlessly “reconfigurable, so that each user could develop an individual interface, more reflective of her or his own parallaxic encounters with the text” (491).

The move to presenting this information in the form of the database, which often sorts this information along with its accompanying annotation, illustration, commentary, and textual variation, is potentially overwhelming not only for readers but also for scholars. Marino insists that the ideal state of the digital community must be carefully approached and negotiated by readers and scholars alike, with a constant awareness of the dangers posed by digital access. Here “the challenge to the assemblers of hypermedia editions of *Ulysses* is to create a work that does not reduce Joyce’s stumbling blocks to manageable piles of trivia” (Marino 476). Although Marino warns against a “nightmarish” overflow of commentary and annotations, this sort of unfettered access provided by these digital networks promises to open new avenues of scholarship. Unsurprisingly in fact, it is a balanced and reflective approach toward research using digital tools that academics studying the nature of scholarship in a digital age unanimously promote, although scholars certainly disagree about what this balance would look like. As textual bibliographer Jerome McGann asserts, while the future of academic research in the humanities will certainly rely on digital instruments, “designing

those instruments means that we have to think clearly about our paper inheritance” (“The Future” 83). Such a reflection on our paper inheritance and an awareness of the differing effects of new media will undoubtedly guide the organization and structure of these technologies as we determine what is most important about this legacy.

What, then, does this skeptical celebration of the future of digital access tell us about the future of *Ulysses* criticism, and furthermore, what lessons do Stephen Dedalus and Mr. Deasy offer as reflection for our own inchoate narrative of a collaborative and democratized intellectual age? If scholars are to proceed headlong into hypertextual, digital edition, and database studies, how will our changing relationship with information affect what we inherit from scholarly history? This is a heady and complex question, quite beyond the scope of this project, but we can at least speculate now about how *Ulysses* seems at once to elicit and reject the current scholarly embrace of the database. This chapter will show how the current narrative surrounding studies of a digital *Ulysses* claims its legitimacy through the multivocality of the novel and its incessant balance between divisiveness and synthesis, and how Stephen’s own nightmare of history and memory resembles that narrative.

Scholars’ assertions about the potentialities and pitfalls of digital texts and communities tend to tell us more about our own practices and desires than they do anything profoundly new about *Ulysses* itself. Just as we must avoid reading *Ulysses* as detached from the historical circumstances and cultural narratives that it was written into, we must also seek to understand how this future of scholarship is constructed from the historical conditions that are bringing about change to scholars and texts in the milieu in which they exist. As John Nash argues, “In one sense, earlier readers are the text that

later ones read” (130). This is because “the act of reception as it is figured in Joyce’s work shows how later readers come from, and read through, contemporary readers [. . . .] Reception does not simply follow the text but is already part of it: Joyce’s writing was produced within circumstances that had already influenced its reading. The act of reception, then, should be seen as part of the context into which Joyce wrote” (170-71). This means that while the text of *Ulysses* can never be divorced from its conditions of reception, likewise scholarship can never be separated from the cultural narrative that surrounds it and the historical conditions that make such scholarship possible in the first place. The sort of collaborative study that digital spaces offer is directly associated with more ubiquitous changes in how people view processes of communication and intellectual inquiry. Not only are these changes made possible and triggered by new technologies, but also new modes of discourse and networks of communication open up pathways for new technologies and their uses that fulfill ever-evolving needs of that inquiry.

For example, the Modernist Versions Project’s Year of *Ulysses* has as its central aim to promote new areas of inquiry through the “open-endedness” of and “open access” to the various forms of a text throughout its publication history. Through the processes of search and comparison enabled by this site, the Modernist Versions Project hopes, in an open forum, to render visible the gaps, discontinuities, and erasures that largely define the history of a text and influence its historic and cultural meaning. In making the text the central focus of inquiry (through its previously discussed method of “anchoring” the site with links that always navigate readers back to the text), and in actively stating the goals and theoretical background that informs its work, The Modernist Versions Project

acknowledges its unique position in a complex literary history of inclusion and exclusion, and invites users to consider this fact as fodder for intellectual inquiry. The sort of scholarship promoted by the digitized versions of texts is one that makes use of the divisiveness that has characterized schools of thought and their approach to texts in recent literary history. In highlighting the differences of texts and the absences of inquiry created by their publication history, The Modernist Versions Project seems to provide raw materials for new modes of synthesis while also recognizing that such interpretations are always bound by the limitations posed by the medium and method through which those texts are presented.

While the collation of digitized texts certainly enables new ways of creating associations between variant texts, any organization and structure of a medium that directs certain modes of inquiry inevitably limits other paths of inquiry. Sean Latham's 2004 article, "'New Age' Scholarship: The Work of Criticism in the Age of Digital Reproduction," is an excellent statement of the potential for electronic archives of modernist works "to activate a latent critical energy" that is "capable of opening new kinds of discursive and historical networks while simultaneously revealing the fault lines running through them" (412-13). Although Latham's article focuses on modernism's "little magazines," the ideas that he proffers are easily translatable to the problems posed by digital studies of *Ulysses*. Latham argues in this article against the initial reaction against electronic archives of texts because of the way that they seemingly a printed text's "insistence upon linearity" (415). His most important argument is that the readers' loss of linearity and ritualistic consumption in digital texts allows these texts to "become available for a critical practice more fully attentive to the density and discontinuity of

culture.” The digital environment “requires a hybrid type of critical work, one which matches the ability to pursue connections across texts with a studied awareness of the historical specificity of the printed word” (Latham 419). What Sean Latham is proposing here is the potential of digital texts to make scholars simultaneously aware of historical and cultural contingencies of reading practices and more attuned to new methods of association and manipulation of the text through searches, hyperlinks, and more complex discursive networks.

Overall, rather than bemoan its possible shortcomings Latham lauds the positive potential of literary criticism through digital media by recasting the seemingly negative term, “frenetic reading,” into a positive attribute of today’s digital readers. He anticipates scholarship that reflects the complexity of this “synchronic and nonlinear reading”(424). An example that Latham offers in order to demonstrate a decisive advantage in this type of reading is its freedom from the “material impositions of print” (420). One can, for example, search for a very specific key word within a text or series of texts while also specifying either a very restricted or a very open time period or type of publication. The computer itself performs the task of finding the term and providing a visual layout, nullifying the significant restrictions placed on an individual’s access to the original, physical documents in a particular place and time. The ability to trace a certain term through a variety of discursive situations in little magazines, just as with the comparisons enabled by the Modernist Versions Project, clearly provides scholars with a quick and more comprehensive method of identifying and elaborating on complex differences, discontinuities, and contradictions. Rather than simply seeing isolated excerpts of text, database searches easily allow scholars to envision discourses of the modernist era across

cultural, temporal, and generic barriers. Scholars can thus more easily make connections between texts with very different readerships and statuses in literary history. Through tracing various discourses and their intricate intermingling with key terms, these databases thus allow for a more nuanced mode of understanding a text within the cultural and historical conditions of its composition.

Supporting this view, Johanna Drucker claims that the emergence of electronic texts represents a “shift from decisions based on limited access to small samples versus readings of all possible information relevant to a particular work.” She also notes that “The manipulations possible in electronic texts permit the visualization of patterns and structural features that might not have been available for consideration before” (687). Yet this notion of a collaborative relationship between scholar and machine, in which the machine juxtaposes materials associatively and the scholar uses those associations to generate new questions and interpretations, poses a problem when considering how one could apply these same methods to interpretive work on *Ulysses*. The novel undoubtedly has more than enough repeated terms and ideas, as well as vast permutations of such terms and ideas, but when applying Latham’s notion of “frenetic reading” to *Ulysses* by considering these terms as chartable by search engines, to the scholar the difficulties of Joyce’s novel can seem to favor the capacities of the creative human mind rather than new technologies.

First of all, it would be a mistake to consider the search engines that generate this vast information at the click of a button as being just as flexible as the mind, or of having capacities that exceed those of the human mind and introduce into our world entirely new narratives that are significant in their own right. Jerome McGann claims that in fact,

“The power of the database – of digital instruments in general – rests in its ability to draw sharp, disambiguated distinctions” (“Database” 1590). For this reason, among others, we must recognize that “these tools are prosthetic devices, and they function most effectively when they help to release the resources of the human mind” (1591). Here, McGann acknowledges that the major issue at hand is to design interfaces that enhance through their structure already existing human functions, in order to foster modes of thinking that accord more accurately to human experience, although it is impossible to imagine a structure that does not to some extent prescribe a particular method of organizing ideas.

A digital database has the ability to anticipate suggested words based upon words that are spatially and linguistically in proximity to a searchable term. The associations that a database is able to create from its pool of information are based upon complex algorithmic programming, but digital databases do not have the capacity to register the sort of complexity posed by associations of the human mind, which are often less logical and more experiential. For this reason, a database’s hits for a particular search term are likely to be always very much the same, especially if one confines the search each time to the same individual text. Yet a reader’s encounter with this same term may trigger new and different associations with *every single* given encounter with the text. For example, if one reading the Nestor episode wished to catalog every instance in the novel of a letter, a database search might quickly provide links to Mr. Deasy’s letter on foot and mouth disease, Milly’s letter home, Martha Clifford’s letter to “Henry Flower,” or Father Conmee’s passing off of Mr. Cunningham’s letter, just to name a few. A database might also include alternate meanings of the word “letter,” other terms that are associated with it by proximity in the text, or references that refer to but do not actually include the word

“letter.” Though it would be difficult to deny the usefulness of these databases for drawing initial connections and for easily navigating complex thematic threads, a database’s power of association is limited by its initial schema of organization. For example, a reader who wishes to trace each letter’s geographic origin and destination would have to create an entirely new kind of database. A reader who is struck by the connections between Mr. Deasy’s opinion of and the novel’s treatment of foot and mouth disease to the shortcomings of a local official in the reader’s hometown would be making an associative leap completely outside of the conditions imposed by the structure of the database.

Thus, while an electronic database of James Joyce’s works enables one to trace textual gaps and create thematic threads that are less easily traversed in the spaces of physical text, by no means can we declare that the database compensates for human shortcomings. Because the nature of the database and the nature of the mind are of such separate associative varieties, they can hardly be compared other than to say that the database enhances certain functions of the mind by speeding them up, while essentially disengaging other important interpretive functions. A critical approach to the potentiality of the database to provide new interpretations must be measured by the knowledge that it inhibits certain kinds of creative leaps, thwarting some degree of original thinking and some potentially important scholarly discoveries. The database’s inability to process creative and “illogical” modes of thought prevents it from making the very associative leaps that are often the invisible mortar for Joyce’s fragmented text.

The recent skepticism about the deployment of the database for scholarly work is very similar to Stephen Dedalus’s own preoccupation with the problem of how history is

perceived and manipulated by those that inherit it. In Nestor, Stephen is concerned with the ways in which individuals deploy and pass down the facts of history, since this personal appropriation of history serves as a self-fulfilling prophesy for these individuals own beliefs and social structures. In a similar fashion, the history of scholarship is very much haunting as well as informing the steps that scholars take into the digital forums of the present.

The Nestor episode provides a vision of the two available means that readers may view the legacy of history for the present. For Mr. Deasy, the shells and records of time are easily collectible and describable, allowing information to be easily manipulated and commodified by people and by the present. He often completely misunderstands or even falsifies history, even though he thinks of himself as an intellectual and an important voice in the community. Thinking himself qualified to give wise council to Stephen, Deasy appropriates Shakespeare alongside his noxious platitude that “Money is power,” demonstrating his tendency to adapt the information of history to fit the circumstances he favors, and thus justify his own means of existence (*U* 2.237). Stephen, however, struggles against Mr. Deasy’s careless deployment of history, because for him the past is irreducible and inescapably fragmented. It cannot be separated from our own fallible readings. His duty as a teacher to instill the facts of history in his students’ minds leads him to recognize that this sort of blind grasping at history through personal memory or for service to a higher power serves only to exert and maintain authority. Thus students become detached from the important lesson for Stephen that all people are responsible for and implicated in the formation of historical meaning and the legacy of history. Although throughout the episode Stephen is quite distracted from his surroundings, and

wanders often into abstruse formulations such as “Thought is the thought of thought,” his scattered mind reveals that he is capable of entertaining alternatives and risking failed ideas in order to come to a more meaningful understanding of himself in relation to the world that came before him (*U* 2.74). For the sake of a useful analogy, I propose that *Ulysses* scholarship can either seek to become more like Stephen or more like Mr. Deasy, and really should not seek to be entirely one or the other.

These two portraits of what can be made of the information that we inherit from the past are important for taking a longer view of the discourses that surround digital scholarship as it becomes an increasingly inevitable mode of production and communication in the humanities professions. In seeking to create a narrative around the rise of digital scholarship, to define its purpose and objectives, we risk overlooking the lesson offered in Nestor about our obligations to the past. A rejuvenation of the humanities in general and Joyce studies in particular through hyper-remediation should be tempered by a recognition that these media not only invite but are also always structured by our desire to rearrange “shells” – to create new patterns and narratives based upon the materials given. We can see these shells of history, easily appropriated, as an analogy as well for the dense annotations of texts in the digital age. While this sort of arrangement is always true of the process of making meaning, for readers as well as scholars, scholars should have an obligation to recognize and openly reflect on the influence of the medium throughout this process of meaning production

Yet I do not assert that scholars should wholeheartedly assume the vision of Stephen Dedalus. In Nestor, as throughout *Ulysses*, Stephen’s intellectual and emotional burdens often render him ineffectual. Although he has an acute awareness of his

shortcomings as a teacher and the ideological problems with rote learning, he has troubling translating his knowledge into a way of managing the classroom. When Stephen declares to Deasy, “History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake,” he is signaling more than his dissatisfaction with the production of historical “wisdom” (*U* 2.377). History for Stephen, like a nightmare, is also a personal source of fear that reveals his inability but innate desire to control outcomes. Thus, even though he renounces the appropriation of history by memory, his own declarations about history are infused with the emotions brought on by his own haunting experiences and the nightmarish recollections he is trying to manage. Neither Stephen nor Deasy offers a clear prescription for a mode of teaching and learning that leads outside of the circle of appropriation and control. Although digital humanities scholars and textual bibliographers argue even now, for example, about whether theory should precede practice or practice proceed theory in innovations for electronic textuality, we must understand that one particular ideal is unlikely, and that we may always find ourselves along a spectrum from the poles of manipulation and ineffectiveness that Deasy and Stephen represent.

To complicate matters further, Stephen’s remorse over his mother’s death can be seen as similar to scholars’ response to the digital text and the relationship to its print inheritance. Whereas Deasy appropriates history in order to absolve himself of implication, for example dismissing his anti-Semitism by denying the persecution of Jews in Ireland, for Stephen history creates a sense of crippling guilt that is related to the memory of his mother. Throughout *Ulysses*, Stephen experiences a deep remorse of conscience, his “agenbite of inwit,” over his own neglect to pray for his mother at her

deathbed. Even though Stephen's intellectual skepticism convinces him that a prayer would have been insincere, the aura of her bodily movements and scents remains with him and haunts him with "an odour of rosewood and wetted ashes" (*U* 2.145-46).

Remorse is backward looking, and also concentrates on particular sensory attributes that can no longer be retrieved. As Sean Latham explains, it is only at the threshold of death for the printed text that scholars begin to recognize the aura of ritual that resides in it, and the material text begins to take on a "haunting physical existence" that "has become visible at the moment of its extinction" (Latham 414-15). These distinct characteristics that constitute the aura of the printed text that scholars now mourn are linearity, materiality, and specificity, among others. Like Stephen's "agenbite of inwit" that is primarily directed toward the loss of his mother and cycles through various distinct characteristics of her body at the moments before death, scholars' nostalgia for the material text recognizes the inevitability of the demise of print yet still seeks out those features of its unique physicality that can no longer be experienced after its passing.

To what use, then, can this remorse be put, other than to highlight the passage from the age of print into the age of the digital? If the shortcomings of digital text and digital remediation intensify their regret at the passing of print, might scholars eventually come to regard the digital as simply another disappointed bridge, as a passage only from one set of shortcomings to another? This is not a question that can be answered with any certainty, but the remorse of Stephen should surely give us pause. What digital texts and digital remediations of *Ulysses* should function as is a means for readers and scholars alike to understand that the medium is itself subject to the ephemeral status of our beliefs about art, and like James Joyce's text it prepares, through its structural and organizational

demands, for a particular encounter or relationship with the those that approach it. Any remorse registered by the passing of print should not be brushed aside, but should be an integral factor in understanding our interactions with the medium and how that interaction inflects the production of meaning at the outset.

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