Against *Ulysses*

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LET US APPROACH *Ulysses* as naively as possible, while admitting that in the case of *Ulysses* this decision can hardly be anything but a ruse. The ruseful naiveté I have in mind will consist in our pretending not to have any extratextual information about the novel—in particular, information about Joyce's elaborate scheme of Holmeric correspondences and about the geography and history of Ireland's capital city. In saying this, I of course expose our naiveté as, precisely, a decision: it is only because we know how important Homer and Dublin are in *Ulysses* that we can refer to a reading ignorant of that importance as naive. I do not mean that it is natural to read any novel in a state of cultural ignorance. I do, however, want to suggest that it would not be naive to set about reading *La chartreuse de parme*, *War and Peace*, and *Moby Dick* without, in the cases of Stendhal and Tolstoy, more than a fairly general, nonspecialist's knowledge of Napoleon's campaigns in Belgium and Russia, and, for Melville's work, cetological expertise. This also means that the difficulties of these novels cannot in any way be resolved by consulting

sources external to them. Our ideally uninformed reader of *Ulysses*, on the other hand, may very well be overcome with embarrassment to discover, when he opens his first work of criticism on the novel, that what he had been thinking of quite simply as chapters 8 and 10 are universally referred to as "Lestrygonians" and "Wandering Rocks," or that wholly impenetrable passages have in fact the most satisfying transparence to cognoscenti, say, of nineteenth-century records of Gaelic legends or of theater programs and journalistic *faits divers* in turn-of-the-century Dublin.

Naiveté, then—when it is not the sophisticated and artificial luxury which I propose we briefly enjoy—perhaps inevitably becomes a retroactive judgment: how could I have read *Ulysses* without at least trying strenuously to exploit the cue provided by the novel's title, and—what is even more humiliating—how could I have mistaken cryptic or truncated allusions to the minutiae of Dublin life around 1900 for passages of textual ambiguity or complexity? The title itself, in addition to furnishing an important clue, was after all also a clear warning against the perils of innocence: the Latinized version of Odysseus obliquely alludes to one of literature's most resourceful and wily heroes, and—as if that were not enough—Buck Mulligan draws our attention on the novel's very first page to Stephen Dedalus's "absurd name, an ancient Greek" (*U* 1.34), the name, that is, of the cunning artificer who both constructed and escaped from Minos's labyrinth.

In short, we have only to glance at the title and read page one of *Ulysses* to be forewarned: trickery, cunning, and ruse are the novel's first connotations, and the possibility is thus raised from the very start that those qualities not only belong to certain characters within the novel but, much more significantly, that they define an authorial strategy. And in that case naiveté is tantamount to walking into a trap. We would therefore do well to take trickery, cunning, and ruse as hortative and not merely psychologically predictive connotations: they propose the ideal reader response for *Ulysses* as one of extreme—of extremely nervous, perhaps even somewhat paranoid—vigilance.

The tensest vigilance will, however, allow us safely to approach *Ulysses* with what may at first have seemed like a dangerous naiveté. For we may now go on to suspect that the connotative cluster of trickery may itself be part of a superior trickery. Might it after all be possible that Joyce wastes no time in encouraging us to find the novel more complicated, more devious, than it actually is, and that a comparatively simple and uninformed reading may not be that inappropriate after all? An intentionally *or* unintentionally naive reading of *Ulysses* can perhaps reveal things about the novel which our inevitable loss of readerly innocence will obscure. Since my emphasis will be mainly on the nature and consequences of the ideally informed reading of *Ulysses*, we should begin by doing justice to the insights of ignorance, the interpretive gains to be had from the naive assumption that *Ulysses* can be read as if it were a nineteenth-century realistic novel.

In fact, those gains are far from negligible. If we were unaware of the avant-gardist claims made for Joyce's novel, we would, I think, have little hesitation in speaking of it as a psychological work, as a novel of character. We might of course be bothered by what old-fashioned critical discourse would call—indeed, has called—a disproportion between the technical machinery and the psychological or "human" content, machinery which frequently obscures our view of what is happening. For it is undeniable that a certain type of story—or rather, a story *tout court*—has awakened in us certain desires by which the second half of the novel seems embarrassed and to which the most chic contemporary critics of Joyce implicitly claim to be immune. *Ulysses* is an exceptionally detailed study of character—especially of the character of Leopold Bloom, but also of Stephen Dedalus, Molly Bloom, and even of Gerty MacDowell, who appears in only one episode. We know these characters inside out, and both from the inside and from the outside. There is plenty of evidence of how they look to others, and long sections of internal monologue and free indirect style make us more than familiar with their most intimate habits of mind. There is even an entire episode—"Eumaeus"—written in the manner of Bloom, that is, in the style he would presumably use were he to try his hand at writing (a possibility he himself raises to himself in this very chapter). Since the style of "Eumaeus" also suggests—not unpainfully—why Bloom will always

prefer talking to writing, the episode can be considered as still another and quite novel characterizing technique: this very late section (it is episode 16) lets the reader know the character even more intimately than before by temporarily turning the narrator into the dummy-double of a ventriloquistic Bloom.

Has any fictional character ever been so completely known? Warm-hearted, commonsensical, and appealingly unfanatic in politics and religion; a loving son, father, and even husband, full of enterprising (if unrealized and impractical) commercial schemes; slightly but not unappealingly pretentious intellectually; horny and a bit guilty sexually; garrulous but a stylistic outsider in a city of besotted skilled rhetoricians; perhaps a bit tight by Dublin pub standards (where the one unpardonable sin is failing to pay one's round); something of a loner (but by no means a rebel or an outcast) with his daydreams of travel in exotic Eastern lands—Bloom is eminently appealing and eminently ordinary. In one of the exchanges which constitute the impersonal catechism of "Ithaca," Bloom is called "Everyman or Noman." Perhaps. In any case he is a sweet man, and if Joyce has inspired a kind of attachment and anecdotal curiosity (about him, about the streets of Dublin) curiously evocative of that affection for Jane Austen which was for so long an obstacle to her being thought of as a serious and important writer, it is largely due to his success in creating Bloom. The Joyceans are quite a bit raunchier than the "Janeites," but the extraordinarily prosperous Joyce industry (with organized visits to the holy spots in Dublin and Zurich) depends in large part, as in the case of Austen, on the by no means unfounded or inconsiderable pleasure of recognition. The Blooms are an identifiable couple, and it is an extraordinary tribute to Joyce's power of realistic evocation that all the fancy narrative techniques of *Ulysses* are unable to smother or even dim the vivid presence of Poldy and Molly. For hordes of aficionados, June sixteen will always be celebrated as Bloomsday, and it would be not only snobbish but critically wrong to suggest that the innovative power of Joyce's novel lies in a questioning or breakdown of traditional novelistic assumptions about personality.

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, from the very beginning, certain knots, or certain gnats, in the narrative which disturb our relaxed reading and easy appreciation of *Ulysses'* fairly rounded characters. Much of the novel's difficulty, especially in the early sections, is the result not of our having to learn to think about novelistic names (such as Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom) in nonpsychological terms, but rather of the uncompromising nature of the mimetic techniques. An "accurate" rendering of a character's consciousness presumably requires that the narrator do nothing to help us understand or follow the moves of that consciousness. Confronted with characters at once vivid and obscure, the reader may be inspired to take on the exegetical task of reducing the obscurity, of getting to know Bloom, Molly, or Stephen even better by completing their sentences and explaining their allusions. Far from destroying a mimetic effect which may seem to depend on a certain degree of maintained obscurity in the recorded consciousness, exegesis in this case is itself a secondary mimetic technique: a certain type of textual research is experienced as an investigation into real lives. Thus we are required to complete the portraits of Bloom and of Stephen, an activity which includes but which is very little threatened by the perception of their absorption into a variety of alien styles and nonrepresentational techniques. Indeed, in Joycean criticism the most sophisticated technical analysis comfortably cohabits with the most naive reading. John Paul Riquelme's intelligent and thorough study of mimetically disruptive techniques in *Ulysses* apparently intensified his affection for Bloom. In the midst of the most trenchant, no-nonsense type of point-of-view analyses, Riquelme frequently praises Bloom as a man who avoids extremes, one who "perceives what Boylan is blind to: a basis for human action in concern for others rather than primarily in self-interest."[1] Is there no relation between elaborate analyses of *Ulysses* as pure linguistic effects and a type of psychological and moral appreciation already made obsolete by the New Criticism of half a century ago? My point is, of course, that the relation is only too clear, and that Joyce's avant-gardism largely consists in his forcing his readers to com-

plete the rearguard action which the novel itself simultaneously performs and elaborately disguises.

Filling in the blanks of consciousness is, however, only part of the game, although none of the more sophisticated moves into which Joyce maneuvers us will seriously undermine the traditional view of human identity which *Ulysses* implicitly defends. The novel is full of what has rather curiously been called stylistic intrusions, as if literature were ever anything but just that. Most frequently, these "intrusions" take the form of discontinuities or inconsistencies in point of view. I have in mind passages in which Bloom abruptly begins to think with stylistic resources obviously not his, as well as those other moments when, as Hugh Kenner puts it, "The normally neutral narrative vocabulary [is pervaded by] a little cloud of idioms which a character might use if he were managing the narrative,"[2] or, finally, when different characters' points of view are briefly merged. The celebrated perspectival jolts and mergers of *Ulysses* include the paragraph in "Nausikaa" that abandons Bloom's limited angle of vision and takes us on a panoramic tour of the entire Howth neighborhood, the name distortions in "Scylla and Charybdis" (which may be Stephen's mental horseplay with his companions' names or the fooling around of a lexically ebullient narrator), and, in "Sirens," the subtle invasion of Bloom's consciousness by the "musicalizing" tics of the dominant narrative style (alliterations, verbal echoes, staccato rhythms).

All of this has quite appropriately made of Joyce one of the darlings of that branch of narratology obsessed with narrative origins, with determining where narrators are located, over whose shoulder they may be speaking, from what temporal perspective and in whose voice they address us. In its more ambitious manifestations, this school of literary analysis moves from particular literary works to the drawing up of a master plan of possible narrative points of view—a model which can of course then serve in future readings. With a writer as perspectivally shifty as Joyce, we can easily imagine how handy, and how comforting, such pocket codes of narrative perspective can be. Now he's there and now he's not; point-of-view analysis is the literary-criticism version of hide-and-seek. It is the paranoid response to what might be called the ontological irreducibility of voice in literature to locations and identities.

Joyce both provokes and soothes our critical paranoia (he provides it with exorcising exercises); the difficulty, or even impossibility, of attribution in *Ulysses* is almost always a local affair, one which takes place against a background of firmly identified and differentiated personalities. Since, for example, we could no more confuse Bloom's voice with Stephen's than we could mistake Gibbon's style for Malory's in the pastiches of "Oxen of the Sun," the intrusions, confusions, and discontinuities of point of view in *Ulysses* must, I think, be read as an important element in the strategic centering of the narrator's authority. That is, they should be read as part of his aggressively demonstrated superiority to the patterns and models of representation which he insists that we recognize and analytically elaborate while he himself partially neglects them.

I do not mean by this that the perspectival agitations of *Ulysses* are insignificant. The question of point of view is essentially a question of citation: whose voice is the narrative quoting? And citation is crucial to the intra- and intertextual authority of Joyce's novel as a masterwork. Indeed, Joyce's occasionally grand indifference to consistency of point of view should perhaps be read as a way to redirect our attention from the comparatively trivial quotations of consciousness to what I will call the quotation of essential being. And in this he brings to the mimetic tradition in literature what may be its most refined technique. Consider the first sentence of *Ulysses*: "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed" (*U* 1.1–2). "Bearing" instead of "carrying" is part of the "novelese" characteristic, as Kenner reminds us, of the first episode;[3] both it and the two adjectives used to describe Buck also reflect his particular rhetorical pomposity. But it is not exactly as if Buck had written that sentence; nor do we have an otherwise "neutral" narrative vocabulary pervaded by "a little cloud of idioms which a character might use if he were managing the narrative."[4] Rather, Buck's verbal mannerisms are

a necessary part of a *wholly objective* presentation of him. "Plump" somewhat deflates "stately"; it helps us to visualize the character in a way which does not exactly support the vaguer connotations of "stately." The sentence is at once seduced by Mulligan's rhetoric and coolly observant of his person. I do not mean that Buck would have been incapable of writing that sentence (which is a rather silly issue for criticism to address at any rate), but in writing it he would already, so to speak, have stepped out of himself; he would have performed himself with irony. And we could say that a complete or objective view of Buck can be given neither by a direct quote nor by an analytical description, but only by a self-performance at a certain distance from the performing self. In other terms, the sentence objectifies the point of view which it takes.

It is, so to speak, this nonperspectival point of view which explains the peculiar and disturbing power of *Dubliners*, where Joyce characterizes not only individuals but also a kind of collective consciousness through such objectified subjectivity. This impressive achievement should, I think, be considered in the light of Stephen's definition of beauty in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, as well as his references, in *Ulysses*, to Aristotle's notion of entelechy and the "form of forms." In trying to understand what St. Thomas means by "radiance" (or *claritas*) in his enumeration of the "three things needed for beauty" (*integritas, consonantia, claritas*), Stephen comes to the following solution: "The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic *quidditas*, the whatness of a thing" (*P* 79). It is as if literature could quote being independently of any particular being's point of view. We would, that is, have the point of view of neither a narrator nor a character; rather, we would have the *quidditas* of Buck Mulligan, and even of Dublin. The individual's or the city's point of view has been purified or raised to their essence, to a "whatness" ontologically distinct from the phenomenality of having a point of view.

The somewhat comical side of this "realization" of Aquinas in some narrative techniques of realist fiction are evident in the following sentence from "The Boarding House," which describes Protestant Dubliners going to church on "a bright Sunday morning of early summer": "The belfry of George's church sent out constant peals and worshippers, singly or in groups, traversed the little circus before the church, revealing their purpose by their self-contained demeanour no less than by the little volumes in their gloved hands" (*D* 47–48). An essence of Dublin churchgoing receives expression here not as a result of either a dramatic or an analytic approach; instead, the most scrupulously impersonal description manages to raise the object of description to a kind of objectifyingly ironic self-description. The very neatness of that sentence, with its elegantly controlled but somewhat fancified syntax and its concluding succession of nouns each with a single modifier ("self-contained demeanor," "little volumes," "gloved hands") actually speaks the activity itself as a somewhat trivial manifestation of the human taste for ritualized order. But the language also demystifies the very idea of an essentialized self-expression by allowing us to *locate* its transcendental, its nonperspectival point of view. If Dublin speaks itself in *Dubliners*, the essentializing voice itself cannot escape having a social and psychological identity. The pitiless *quidditas* of realist fiction allows for the dephenomenalizing of character only as a phenomenon of point of view. Who can "repeat" Dublin with particular "radiance" without, however, being able to take *another* point of view (and another point of view would, precisely, however superior it might be, destroy the essentializing repetitions)—who, if not an educated Dubliner, or Dublin schoolteacher, for example, one who, like Stephen in the "Nestor" episode of *Ulysses*, fully assumes the continuity between his dull-witted student and himself, thereby perhaps plotting his escape from Dublin through his articulated recognition of his own Dublin-ness in art? The schoolteacher can speak only Dublinese (unless—and this is of course the difference between *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*—he borrows voices from other places): we can hear, in the second half of our sentence from "The Boarding House," those adeptly poised rhythmical designs, so receptive to hyperbole ("revealing their purpose by . . . no less than by") which, in *Ulysses*, animate the endless recitation of local news in public meeting places. The *quidditas* of a Dublin church group is, then, itself a kind of secondary or occasional form within

the superior, more general form of Dublin-ness. *Quidditas* here is manifested most profoundly as a kind of respiratory pattern in language, a pattern which then has the potential, associated by Aristotle with entelechy, to engender actualities (fictional characters and events) of the same kind, which repeat it. In Joyce, the Schoolman is reformulated as the schoolteacher; an educated but inescapable provincialism is the social precondition of an art content to give *claritas* to the artist's inherited consciousness.

Claritas is an effect of quotation, although, as I have been suggesting, the quote is at the ontological level of essence and not of existence. Of course in *Ulysses* Joyce does not merely cite Dublin; the novel is an encyclopedia of citational references. And this means that in *Ulysses* voices are always on loan. Several critics have noted the absence of what we would call a personal style in Joyce. Stephen Heath, writing—for the most part brilliantly—as a representative of poststructuralist (and mainly French) readings of Joyce, notes: "In place of style we have plagiarism," and then goes on, as might be expected in a critical essay printed in *Tel Quel* in 1972, to speak of Joyce's writing as "ceaselessly pushing the *signified* back into the *signifier* in order to refind at every moment the drama of language, its production."[5] I will not linger over the always satisfying spectacle of a professor praising plagiarism (high-class plagiarism, it is true); the notion of a plagiaristic wandering among signifiers—of the writer as a kind of open switchboard picking up voices from all over—does, however, deserve more attention. For it raises a question of major interest to us: that of the authority, possibly even mastery, of literature over the materials which it incorporates. The incorporating process is perhaps most visible in the encyclopedic novel, which tends toward a massive, ideally total, absorption of the real into a novelistic structure. And yet among encyclopedic novels there are significant differences in the ways in which this general project is carried out. At one extreme the citation can be presented as a redemptive substitute for its source; at the other the mode of encyclopedic quotation can suggest the irrelevance of literature to what might be called the work of civilization, to its techno-

logical, scientific, even philosophical development. These alternatives, and their importance for *Ulysses*, will be clearer if we put Joyce's novel alongside Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, another encyclopedic novel which also appears to indulge in massive quotation. . . .

In *Bouvard et Pécuchet* Flaubert makes a perhaps unexpectedly modest claim for the authority of art. *Bouvard et Pécuchet* does not imply—as *Ulysses* does—that its own performance can redemptively replace all the culture which it seeks to incorporate. At the price of a certain indifference to the beneficial effects of thought's mastery over nature (as well as over its own nature), art cultivates a deliberately fragmentary, unusable, even ignorant relational play with the entries of its culture's encyclopedia. . . . In *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, style caresses an encyclopedic culture out of its projects of mastery, into a liberalizing impotence.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce implicitly makes very different claims for art, claims mediated through the novel's encyclopedic intertextuality. The intertextuality of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is highly deceptive: the textual act of quotation is, as I have suggested, simultaneously a disqualification of the citational process. Flaubert erases our cultural memory at the very moment he awakens it. The mutations of epistemological discourses in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* plunge the novel into a kind of ontological isolation, removing it from the cultural history which it nonconnectedly absorbs. Nor does the work's intratextuality create connective designs or structures; each section repeats a process of solipsistic play which cuts it off from the other sections echoed in that repetition. Finally, not only does the work of art *know nothing*, but in its incommensurability with all cultural discourses of knowledge, it can only exist in a state of continuous anxiety about its capacity to sustain itself, perhaps even to begin itself.

For Joyce, on the other hand, art is by definition the transcendence of any such anxiety. *Ulysses* is often hard to read, but, more than any other work of literature, it is also a guidebook to how it should be read. Actually, a guidebook was issued before the novel was published. Partly for reasons beyond Joyce's control (the delay of more than ten years between the publication of

Ulysses in Paris and its appearance in England and America) and partly because Joyce wanted it that way (he sent the first known schema for *Ulysses* to Carlo Linati in September 1920, more than a year before Shakespeare and Co. published the book, and a second schema to Valéry Larbaud in late 1921), *Ulysses* was an object not only of discussion but also of interpretation long before its major audiences had access to the complete text. Thousands of readers thus had lessons in reading before they had anything to read. In itself, this is sufficient evidence of this great modernist text's need for the reader, of its dependence on a community of comprehension. If the modernist artist refuses to make his work accessible to a mass audience, he is nevertheless, as Richard Poirier has argued, far from indifferent to being read and understood.[6] Joyce, like Eliot in his notes for *The Waste Land*, helps us on the road to all those recognitions and identifications necessary for the "right" reading of *Ulysses*: recognitions of the elaborate network of repetitions within the novel, identifications of all the other cultural styles and artifacts alluded to or imitated.

There is in *Ulysses* an intratextuality meant to guide us in our intertextual investigations, to teach us how to leave the novel and, above all, how to return to it in our exegeses. This training is given in a series of graduated lessons, ranging from single-word repetitions to structural analogies between entire episodes. As we read, and reread, more and more circuits are lighted up; the movement forward, from episode to episode, is simultaneously a spatialization of the text, which is transformed into a kind of electrical board with innumerable points of light connected to one another and having elaborate, crisscrossing patterns. "Circe" condenses the activity of textual remembrance ceaselessly taking place throughout the novel. *Ulysses* is itself the hallucinating subject of "Circe"; the episode is the book dreaming itself even before it is finished, with anticipatory echoes of things yet to come. To a certain extent, it is even Joyce's oeuvre both calling up moments from its past and, in certain wordplays, announcing the verbal textures of *Finnegans Wake*. Reading "Circe" also allows us to check our textual memory, to be tested on how well we have read, to find out to what extent *Ulysses* has occupied our mind. Even

more: it is a model dream for the ideally occupied, or possessed, reader of *Ulysses*. "Circe" implicitly defines an absolute limit of readerly absorption. Not only would Joyce's work provide all the terms of our critical activity, but it would also be the inexhaustible material of our dreams, in Freudian terms both the daytime residue and the unconscious drives. Before *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce already projects in *Ulysses* the literary textualization of the entire mind, of our day consciousness and our night consciousness. In so doing, he unwittingly exposes what may be the secret project behind all talk of the mind or of the world as text: the successful positing of the Book—or, more accurately, of books, that is, of a certain type of *professional* activity—as the ontological ground of history and of desire.

The "drives" of the Book are, however, drives without affects. "Circe" hallucinates the unconscious as wordplay. The unconscious, it is true, never is anything but wordplay in literature, and while this should probably be taken as the sign of an incommensurability between mental life and the instruments of literary expression, it has recently authorized interpretations of the unconscious as a structure "in some way" analogous to that of language. Thus a sublimating bookishness domesticates the unconscious, enacting the very repudiations which it purports to analyze as linguistic effects. The violations of logic and linearity, the displacements and the condensations of discourse in which we are inclined to read the operations of unconscious processes are themselves constitutive of the vast sublimating structure of human language. That structure—perhaps thought itself, as Freud suggested—may have evolved as the result of a primary displacement of a wish—a displacement from the untranslatable terms of a drive to so-called linguistic metaphors of desire, metaphors which "express" drives only on the ground of their self-constitutive negation of drives.

"Circe" is Joyce's most explicit and, we might say, most Flaubertian insistence on the nonreferential finality of the signifier in literature. To a certain extent it counters the mimetic effects which I began by emphasizing. It is the episode which most openly invites a psychoanalytic interpretation, at the same time

that it compels us to acknowledge impenetrable resistance to any such interpretation. As part of a book's hallucinatory play with its own elements, Bloom's presumed masochism, for example, can only be a joke. Bloom's psychology is elaborated in "Circe"—given the dimension of unconscious drives—as it is nowhere else in *Ulysses*, but the elaboration is a farce, and the suggestion is that in writing, psychology can never be anything but farce. A desire with nothing more than a textual past has the lightness and the unconstrained mobility of farce. In "Circe," Joyce exuberantly stages masochism with wild inventiveness, as if to insist on the profound difference between two kinds of masochism: the mysterious and monotonous repetition of a painful pleasure, which Freud obscurely posits as the essence of human sexuality in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, and masochism as an occasion for extravagantly varied scenic effects. In "Circe" the book "dreams" masochism without pain (or with an inconsequential pain, one that can be erased from one page to the next), and in so doing it appears to leave behind it not only the "burnt up field" of *Ulysses'* own mimetic seriousness, but also the devastated terrain of a more general cultural discourse. (In a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce spoke of the *scorching* effect of his writing: "each specific episode, dealing with some province of artistic culture . . . , leaves behind it a burnt up field" [*LI*, 129].) Toward the other texts which it quotes in various ways—especially Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and Flaubert's *Tentation de St. Antoine*, all textual elaborations of the "perverse" in human conduct—"Circe" engages in an extremely intricate operation of what we might call a resublimating desublimation. In his farcical treatment of other cultural discourses, Joyce could be understood as proposing, first of all, that the claim to truth of any cultural artifact is its primary mystification. The farcical here operates as the sign of a desublimated discourse—although it is not the sexual in this case which is revealed as the referent of an allegedly higher discourse. On the contrary: the works which "Circe" quotes claim in different ways to analyze or to represent sexual drives, but, Joyce suggests, the reality which those claims disguise is nothing more than the arbitrary play and productiveness of the signifier. The virtuosity of desire *as* linguistic effects is, I think, meant to lead us to conclude that language cannot represent desire.

This, however, does not necessarily diminish the authority of literary language. We will have to look more closely at the resublimating aspect of the operation I have just referred to. Let's begin by noting that the frequently marvelous comedy of "Circe" is much more ambiguous—I might even say suspect—than I have suggested so far. First of all, there is in Joyce, from *Stephen Hero* to *Ulysses*, a scrupulously serious use of techniques obviously meant to represent characters realistically, as well as the cultivation of a remarkable perspectival strategy which suggests, as we have seen, that we have the essence of a character independently of his or her point of view. Not only does Joyce work within formal conventions which we inescapably associate with a referential bias in fiction; his departure from more or less familiar techniques of novelistic "reporting" actually reinforces the illusion of referentiality. The quotation of characters in their essential being, while it violates a certain literalism in realistic point of view, actually suggests that characters exist outside their novelistic appearances. The narrator quotes them at a level of reality which they are themselves incapable of representing, and this means that the narrative frequently refers to, say, a Bloom or a Mulligan more real than the Bloom or the Mulligan whom it allows us to see and to hear. Thus the reduction of Bloom's depths to verbal farce in "Circe" is countered by the very passages to which "Circe" refers us. The novel has already committed itself to illusions of truth, that is, to a belief in novelistic language as epistemologically trustworthy, as almost nonproblematically capable of recreating the density of human experience, of referring to or carrying more than its own relational play.

Furthermore, if Joyce somewhat fitfully and ambivalently makes the points I have associated principally with "Circe," they are not exactly new points. In different ways, the works of Flaubert and of Henry James already make the case for knowledge as a matter of style, and for the self as a play of the signifier. What is original in Joyce is the use to which he puts this awareness.

James's *The Europeans*—and I realize the bizarreness of the comparison—could be read in terms not too different from those I have used for "Circe." The farce of "Circe" is a function of the melodramatic associations it evokes. Just at the point when Bloom is to be characterized in depth, he disappears as a self, and a cultural discourse on the perverse in human nature is comically replayed devoid of a referent, as part of the more general comedy of entertaining but epistemologically insignificant mutations in, precisely, the history of cultural discourse. And, at least in the immediate context in which this demonstration is made in *Ulysses*, there is, so to speak, no one around whom it might affect. What interests James, on the other hand, is the effect of something like the disappearance of a self on human relations. Rather than propose an extreme (and extremely theoretical) skepticism about our ability to report on anything at all, James in *The Europeans* stages a confrontation between characters who expect their inherited moral and psychological vocabulary to correspond to something real in human nature, and a woman (Eugenia) who may be nothing but a play of styles. James suggests, with great originality, that Eugenia's lack of a self may be the most morally interesting thing about her, while the Wentworths' need to know others severely limits them (they are finally compelled to label Eugenia as a liar).

I will make an even more incongruous juxtaposition by suggesting that Beckett is closer to James in this respect than to his friend and compatriot. From *Waiting for Godot to Company*, Beckett suggests that while there can no longer be "characters" in literature, that very deprivation throws into sharper relief than ever before the infinite geometry of relational play among human subjects. *Godot* demonstrates the inevitability of conversation at a cultural juncture when there may be nothing left to talk about; furthermore, the strategies for continuing talk survive the absence of psychological subjects. And *Company*, even after the elimination of a human other, performs a solipsistic sociability inherent in the grammar of language itself. (Sociability in Joyce is a function of realistically portrayed characters and not, as in Beckett, the fascinatingly anachronistic remnant of the disappearance of such

characters.) Beckett's authentic avant-gardism consists in a break not only with the myths fostered by cultural discourse, but more radically, with cultural discourse itself. The mystery of his work is how it is not only sustained but even begun, for intertextuality in Beckett (the echoes of Descartes and of Malebranche in the early works, for example) is not a principle of cultural continuity (as it is in Joyce, in spite of the parodic nature of the repetitions), but the occasion for a kind of psychotic raving. Cultural memories exist in the minds of Beckett's characters like fossils which belong to another age, like instruments which no one knows how to use any more. Beckett's work remembers culture as Lucky remembers the structure of a logical argument in *Godot*: they are played like the broken records of language and consciousness.

Joyce, for all his parodic intentions, modernizes and to a certain extent rejuvenates the Homeric myths which, somewhat above the characters' heads, give an epic dimension to a prosaic day in Dublin life. Thus *Ulysses*, however crookedly and mockingly, resuscitates and assimilates Odysseus, and Joyce's ambivalent argument against the mimetic seriousness of literature, unlike Beckett's or Flaubert's, actually works to increase literature's authority, to realize a dream of cultural artifacts as both unconstrained by and superior to life, superior by virtue of the intertextual designs which they silently invite us to disengage. The resublimation of cultural discourse in "Circe" is a function of the episode's intertextuality. Joyce ultimately "saves" the other texts which "Circe" parodistically quotes, and he does this simply by putting them into relation with "Circe." Joycean parody simultaneously "scorches" the other texts to which it refers and reconstitutes them as cultural artifacts within the intertextual designs woven by *Ulysses*. Intertextuality is, of course, not a phenomenon peculiar to *Ulysses*; what *is* peculiar to *Ulysses* is the novel's use of the intertext as a redemptive strategy. The Joycean intertext rescues Western literature from the deconstructive effects of the intertext itself. The parodistic replays of Homer, Shakespeare, and Flaubert—not to speak of all the authors "quoted" in "Oxen of the Sun"—are neither subversive of nor

indifferent to the fact of cultural inheritance; rather, Joyce relocates the items of that inheritance with *Ulysses* as both their center and belated origin.

This is very different from Flaubert's insistent demonstration, in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, of art's indifference to its sources. There is no pastiche in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which means that Flaubert never advertises his authority over other cultural texts. Flaubert's novel is deliberately monotonous and narrow, as if it could not do anything with the mass of human knowledge which it incorporates except to submit all of it to the same, tirelessly repeated stylistic operation. The originality of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* is identical to its epistemological and cultural incompetence. In a sense, the artist is even revealed (and this remark might not have displeased Flaubert) as somewhat stupid: no matter what is presented to him, he reacts with the same stylistic reflex, with, we might almost say, a cliché. And, as I argued earlier, the writer's limited authority, even his political effectiveness, depends on this stripping away of all authority, on the recognition of the work of art as an impotent discourse. The work's solipsistic existence in the margins of history undermines, or at least helps to delay, the eventual, inevitable complicity of all art with a civilization's discourse of power.

Beckett, and not Joyce, would be the most attentive reader of the Flaubert I have been discussing. The very variety of stylistic designs in *Ulysses* reveals Joyce's designs on culture. Far from transmuting all his cultural referents into a single, recognizably Joycean discourse, Joyce scrupulously maintains the distinctness of innumerable other styles in order to legitimize misquoting them. The accuracy is not merely a referential scruple, just as the inaccuracies are far from being mere sloppiness. We have to recognize the sources of *Ulysses* if we are to acknowledge its superiority to them. *Ulysses* indulges massively in quotation—quotation of individual characters, of social groups, of myths, of other writers—but quoting in Joyce is the opposite of self-effacement. It is an act of appropriation, one which can be performed without Joyce's voice even being heard. It is as if Joyce were quoting Western culture itself in its *quidditas*—except that the "whatness" of all

those cultural referents is implicitly designated not as the most essential property of the referents themselves, but rather as a consequence of their being (mis)quoted. Joyce miraculously reconciles uncompromising mimesis with a solipsistic structure. Western culture is saved, indeed glorified, through literary metempsychosis: it "dies" in the Joycean parody and pastiche, but, once removed from historical time, it is resurrected as a timeless design. Far from contesting the authority of culture, *Ulysses* reinvents and reanimates our relation to Western culture in terms of an exegetical devotion, that is, as the exegesis of *Ulysses* itself.

Beckett, on the other hand, babbles culture, as if its cultural memories *afflicted* the work of art—afflicted it not because they stifle its originality, but because they infect it like foreign or prehistoric organisms. The difficulty of art in Beckett is in no way connected to the encyclopedic nature of the work's intertextual range; rather, it is the function of an art alienated from culture, the consequence of Beckett's extraordinary effort to stop remembering, to begin again, to protect writing from cultural inheritance. As his latest work suggests, the most refined stage of Beckett's artistic consciousness is identical to a moving back, to a return to that stage of difficulty which, he may feel, he left too early: the stage at which the writer is paralyzed by the inherently insurmountable problem of description, of saying what he sees. It is perhaps only at that stage that the writer discovers the nature of writing; "ill seen, ill said" defines nothing less than the essence of literature.

ULYSSES IS A NOVEL CURIOUSLY unaffected by its most radical propositions. Perhaps because the realistic psychology of its characters is barely affected by, to quote Heath again, Joyce's "ceaselessly pushing the signified back into the signifier in order to refind at every moment the drama of language, its productions," this "pushing" never engenders any oppositional pressures. To put this schematically, the finality of the signifier is at once posited and ignored. We have, however, learned from other writers that literature's greatest ruse may be to insist that language perform the function of knowledge which the writer's special intimacy

with language has taught him radically to doubt. This is the ruse of a reflexive "I" conscious of its aberrant consciousness of both its inner and outer worlds, and yet skeptical of that very consciousness of error. For the epistemological nihilism which may be the consequence of our sense of the human mind as a language-producing mechanism (linguistic signifiers can proliferate independently of what they signify and what they refer to) is of course itself the event of a linguistic consciousness, and the most daring move of all in this "prison house of language" may be to insist that language give us the truth which it falsely claims to be able to contain.

I will name three writers who make this insistence: Proust, D. H. Lawrence, and Georges Bataille. One could hardly imagine more different artists, and yet all three share a sense of the implausibility *and* the necessity of forging a correspondence between language and being. In his foreword to *Women in Love*, Lawrence writes that the "struggle for verbal consciousness should not be left out in art. It is a very great part of life. It is not superimposition of a theory. *It is the passionate struggle into conscious being*"—the sign, in art, of the writer's struggling "with his unborn needs and fulfilment," with the "new unfoldings" struggling up "in torment in him, as buds struggle forth from the midst of a plant."[7] The Lawrentian struggle—the word is repeated five times in the short paragraph from I have been quoting—is perhaps not too far from what Bataille calls, in his foreword to *Le bleu du ciel*, that "intolerable, impossible ordeal [which alone] can give an author the means of achieving that wide-ranging vision that readers weary of the narrow limitations imposed by convention are waiting for." "An anguish to which I was prey" was, Bataille remembers, at the origin of the "freakish anomalies" of *Le bleu du ciel*.[8] Thus Bataille obliquely announces his complicity with his frenetically restless narrator Troppmann, and in so doing he argues, from the very start, for an abdication of the novelist's mastery over his material. *Le bleu du ciel*—like *Women in Love* and, to a certain extent, *A la recherche du temps perdu*—has trouble settling on its own sense, and this is, in large part, how these works revolutionize the practice of writing novels. They have to be performed before

any technique for dominating their sense has been worked out. Most important, the struggles and ordeals of which Lawrence and Bataille speak are incorporated into, made visible in, the very work of their writing, with the result that their fiction is perhaps ultimately compelled to abdicate any authority for resolving the dilemmas it poses, any superior point of view that could justify a broader cultural claim for art as a vehicle of truth.

The "freakish anomalies" of *Ulysses*, far from threatening the author's control over his material, are the signs of that control. Consider "Oxen of the Sun," which may be the most difficult and the most accessible episode of the novel. Once we have identified all the referents in this virtuoso pastiche of prose styles from Sallust to modern slang, what else does the episode give us? How does its language enact—or refer to—its sense? While the narrator is engaging in this stylistic tour de force, several of the characters, including Bloom and Stephen, are sitting around drinking and talking in a maternity hospital, where Mrs. Purefoy is going through the final moments of a long and difficult labor. With some help from a letter Joyce wrote to Frank Budgen while he was working on "Oxen of the Sun" (*LI*, 139–40) critics have proposed a series of parallels between the evolution of English prose and (1) biological gestation and birth, (2) the development of the embryonic artist's prose style, (3) faunal evolution, and (4) Stephen's rebirth, or his birth as an artist. The episode is perhaps the most extraordinary example in the history of literature of meaning unrelated to the experience of reading and to the work of writing. What Joyce obviously worked on was a series of brief pastiches which he aligned in chronological order. The characters and plot of *Ulysses* provide the material for the pastiche, although Joyce wants to think of the relation between the stylistic exercise and its anecdotal context in more organic terms. And so we have a series of imitative fallacies. In what way is the historical transformation (which is of course *not* a "development" or the maturation of an organism) of English prose styles "parallel" or "analogous" to (and what do those words mean here?) the real biological development of an embryo in a womb? Also, the beginnings of a twentieth-century writer's work obviously in no way

resemble Anglo-Saxon; the transformation of an individual prose style reflects an experience of language wholly unrelated to the reasons for the difference between Dickens's style and that of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Finally, the idea of some significant connection between Mrs. Purefoy's gestation *or* the history of English prose styles to Stephen's development or emergence as an artist is so absurd that it is difficult even to find the terms in which to object to it.

Now I may of course be taking all these analogies too seriously, and Joyce's letter to Budgen, characteristically, manages both to sound quite earnest and to strike a note which it is hard not to find comic: "Bloom is the spermatozoon, the hospital, the womb, the nurse, the ovum, Stephen the embryo." (Joyce even adds: "How's that for high?" [*LI*, 140] Joyce's shifty tone suggests a wager: let us see how much I can be credited for, and, in the worst of cases (if my critics are uncomfortable with these analogies), it can always be argued that I proposed them with tongue in cheek. It is true that the "Oxen of the Sun" analogies are not the sort of thing looked at too closely by the most sophisticated of Joyce's admirers, but they have, for example, led Richard Ellmann to suggest that "Mrs. Purefoy has laboured and brought forth a Purefoykin, English has laboured [?] and brought forth Stephen," and even to speak of "Mrs. Purefoy's oncoming baby" as "paralleled by the outgoing Stephen" (he leaves the hospital before Bloom, who entered it first and who "is hospitably received by the nurse"—remember that the nurses are, according to Joyce, the "ovum"), Stephen who, with his friends, can also be thought of, as they rush from the hospital to a pub, as "the placental outpouring . . . (it is the afterbirth as well as an ejaculative spray)."[9]

Such criticism is of course itself a joke, but my point is that it is not unauthorized by the novel (not to speak of Joyce's suggestions for reading the novel), and that authorization is itself a moment of great significance in the story of how literature has been thought about. If the history of philosophy can no longer measure approximations to truth but must rather be satisfied with chronicling the mutations of fictions, and if hermeneutics can no longer provide a "science" of interpretation but rather becomes

itself a stage in the history of the forms of intelligibility, "Oxen of the Sun" might be thought of as one of the contributions to the literature section of such a history. Joyce initiates us to a radical separation of interpretation from the phenomenology of reading. The announced correspondences and meanings of *Ulysses'* episodes could be thought of as a way not of elucidating the novel's sense, but of forcing us to see that *sense is a series of ingenious jokes on the signifier*. It is the prose styles themselves of "Oxen of the Sun" which are parodied by their repetition in Mrs. Purefoy's womb. And the idea of Stephen's literary or spiritual birth in this chapter is a magnificently irresponsible way of "understanding" the insignificant role he plays in the episode, as well as of "interpreting" the possibility (suggested by Kenner)[10] of his having slugged Mulligan (and thus repudiated the sterile past connected with Mulligan) in the interval between episodes 9 and 14.

The Lawrentian (and, as I have shown elsewhere, the Mallarméan)[11] attempts to coerce language into an espousal of the moves of an individual consciousness—moves which an impersonal linguistic coherence necessarily "skips," to which that coherence is even ontologically alien—is implicitly rejected in "Oxen of the Sun" as an insidious fallacy. And yet a whole set of conventional psychological and moral significances coexist quite comfortably in Joyce with a radical skepticism concerning the validity of any move whatsoever beyond or behind the line of the signifier. (This cohabitation is of course familiar to us today. For example, the Lacanians' ritualistic repetition of the word *signifiant* as the key to the Master's radical rethinking of the Freudian unconscious has in no way affected the normative status, in their thought, of the psychologically and morally specific referent of a phallocentric heterosexuality.) The perception of human reality as a language-effect has generally had the curious consequence of forestalling, of leaving no terms available for, the criticism of psychological, moral, and social orders elaborated by the quite different view—now seen as epistemologically naive—of language as essentially descriptive of a preexistent real. The rhetorical criticism associated with Derrida and, more properly, de Man has, for example, much to say about the deconstructive effects of the

figural on politically or morally assertive statements, and very little to say about the strategic nature of its own analytic enterprise. The decision to treat history as rhetoric must itself be deconstructed—which is of course to say *reconstructed*—as a profoundly reactionary move: it deliberately ignores how independent networks of power can be of the subversive effect presumably inherent in their own discursive practices. The internal resistance of language to its own performance provides insufficient friction to curtail the operational efficiency of even the most "mystified" (but powerful) linguistic performances. Foucault, it seems to me, had the great merit of seeing that effects of power are indifferent to their rhetorical legitimacy, and that a predominantly rhetorical analysis of a society's discursive practices therefore runs the risk of collaborating with precisely those coercive intentions which it protects even while ceaselessly demonstrating their (inescapably but on the whole ineffectually) self-menacing nature.

Ulysses substitutes for the interpretive ordeals through which such writers as Lawrence, Mallarmé, and Bataille would put us a kind of affectless busyness, the comfortable if heavy work of finding all the connections in the light of which the novel can be made intelligible but cannot be interpreted. The experimentalism of *Ulysses* is far from the genuine avant-gardism of *Women in Love*, *Le bleu du ciel*, or almost any of Beckett's fictions. The intertextual criticism invited by *Ulysses* is the domestication of literature, a technique for *making familiar* the potentially traumatic seductions of reading. Even more: *Ulysses* eliminates reading as the ground of interpretation, or, to put this in other terms, it invites intertextual elucidations as a strategy to prohibit textual interpretations. In much contemporary criticism reading no longer provides a hermeneutical ground of interpretive constraint—by which I naturally do not mean that there should be or ever was one legitimate interpretation of each text. Rather, in what we might call the critical progeny of *Ulysses*, texts are made intelligible by the intra- and intertextual cues which they drop rather than by the work of reading. *Ulysses* is a text to be deciphered but not read. Joyce's schemas already provide a model of interpretive nihilism. They propose, with a kind of wild structural neatness, meanings so remote from our textual experience as to suggest that there is no other basis for sense than the "line" that can be drawn between two intratextual and intertextual points. The exegetical work to be done is enormous, but in a sense it has already been done by the author, and we simply have to catch up with him. *Ulysses* promises a critical utopia: the final elucidation of its sense, the day when all the connections will have been discovered and collected in a critical Book which would objectively repeat *Ulysses*, which, in being the exegetical double of its source, would express the *quidditas* of Joyce's novel, would be, finally, *Ulysses* replayed as the whole truth of *Ulysses*.

FINALLY—AND PERHAPS NOT SO strangely—the very nihilism I have referred to goes along with a promise of salvation. Not only does *Ulysses* keep its conservative ideology of the self distinct from its increasing emphasis on the finality of language's productiveness; not only does it display a perspectival technique which brings to psychological realism the prestige of a Thomistic confidence in art's ability to radiate with the essence of things; Joyce's novel also refers us to a mind purified of "impossible ordeals" or "struggles" and reduced—or elevated—to the serene and perhaps redemptive management of its cultural acquisitions. Where *Ulysses* really leads us is to Joyce's mind; it illuminates his cultural consciousness. At the end of the reader's exegetical travails lies the promise of an Assumption, of being raised up and identified with the idea of *culture* made *man*. Joyce incarnates the enormous authority of sublimation in our culture—of sublimation viewed not as a nonspecific eroticizing of cultural interests but as the appeasement and even transcendence of anxiety.

Ulysses is modernism's monument to that authority, although—in what I take to be the most authentic risk Joyce takes in producing this monument—it also includes, or at least alludes to, the anxiety from which we escape in our exegetical relocation of the work itself within the masterful authorial consciousness at its origin. I am referring to certain moments in the representation of Bloom's solitude—not to his social solitude as a Jew in Ireland,

or even to his estrangement from Molly, but rather to a kind of cosmic lack of linkage, a singleness that can be rendered only by images of his floating in interplanetary space. In one of the moral clichés to which this presumably revolutionary novel has given rise, Stephen's coldness and inability to love is often opposed to Bloom's warmth and frequent expressions of concern for others. But Stephen's solitude is psychological (it includes his estrangement from his father, and his unshakable sense of a crime against his mother); Bloom's aloneness is, we might say, metaphysical. Furthermore, Stephen is as sociable and loquacious a boozer as all the other characters we meet in the editorial offices of the *Freeman* or in Barney Kiernan's pub; like them, he spends his day in talk and even plots his oratorical effects (in "Scylla and Charybdis") and blushes with pleasure (in "Aeolus") as he listens to the rhetorical flourishes in J. J. O'Molloy's recitation of the lawyer Seymour Bushe's "polished period" describing "the Moses of Michelangelo in the Vatican." If, in "Ithaca," both Bloom and Stephen are said to be comforted by the spectacle of "the heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit" (*U* 17.1039) when they move from the house to the garden, it is Bloom who meditates on "the parallax or parallactic drift of so called fixed stars, in reality ever moving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures" (*U* 17.1052–54) and who, alone after Stephen leaves, feels "the cold of interstellar space, thousands of degrees below freezing point on the absolute zero of Fahrenheit, Centigrade or Reaumur. The incipient intimations of proximate dawn" (*U* 17.1246–48). And in the de Quincey passage from "Oxen of the Sun" which J. S. Atherton rightly sees as "a most remarkable example of Joyce's 'power of combination,' "[12] "Bloom gazes at the triangle on the label of the bottle of bass until it becomes a 'triangled sign upon the forehead of Taurus' (*U* 14.1108–9)—combining lingam and yoni in one symbol, which itself replicates the underlying symbol of the chapter, and placing it in the depths of space." It is the relentlessly tedious "Ithaca," with its nearly unreadable "scientific" expositions of such things as the many uses and virtues of water, and the recent restrictions on water consumption in Dublin (when Bloom turns on a faucet), which,

precisely because of the impersonality of its technique, becomes a kind of Pascalian meditation on the lack of connectedness not only between human beings but also between the human and the cosmos. We might of course also be tempted to see in the lostness of Bloom an image for the historical situation of Ireland itself: a country with no consensus about its past, little hope for its future, and cut off, both physically and culturally, from the rest of Europe. The anxiety which *Ulysses* massively, encyclopedically struggles to transcend—however we choose to understand its origins—is that of disconnectedness. It is perhaps here that Joyce's dependence on his readers is most pronounced, for it is *their* intra- and extratextual work which reconstitutes his mind as the serene repository of the resources of our language and our culture. From this perspective, it hardly matters if the Homeric correspondences are, to say the least, not always exact, or that the pastiches of "Oxen of the Sun" are not always very close to their originals. *Ulysses* is composed as a model of the cultural fragmentation which it represents in various ways. Furthermore, Joyce's authority depends on the idiosyncratic nature of the culture which he reconstructs; *Ulysses* gives us back our culture as *his* culture.

For authors, the anguish of paternity is experienced as an uncertainty about the property of their work, about who owns it and if it is indeed their own. "Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting," Stephen announces in "Scylla and Charybdis," "is unknown to man." It is "on that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void, upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood" (*U* 9.837–42). In our tireless elucidation of *Ulysses*, we certify Joyce's paternity, we bring his work back to him, we eliminate what Stephen describes as the natural enmity between father and son by showing how the book gives birth to its author. Exegesis reveals that *Ulysses* signifies Joyce's multitudinous stylistic and structural intentions; it demonstrates that the work glorifies its creator just as Christ—concentrating and purifying in His Person a universal human truth—

glorifies the Father. And for the worthy disciples of *Ulysses*, which we should now be able to recognize as modernism's most impressive tribute to the West's long and varied tribute to the authority of the Father, there are of course enormous rewards. *Ulysses* does not restore cultural continuities presumably broken by the modern age. Indeed, in a manner consistent with its nihilistic indifference to any relation between our experience of reading it and those concealed structures which it signifies, Joyce's novel asks only that we reconstruct the structurally coherent fragments of Joyce's own cultural consciousness. It is not Western culture that matters, but the coherence of a particular broken version of it. Joyce is faithful to our humanist tradition at a deeper level, in his reenactment of its assumptions and promise that the possession of culture will transcend anxiety and perhaps even redeem history.

Intertextual criticism is the practical activity which testifies to our espousal of a cultural ethos of the redemptive authority and mastery of art; it is, in the case of *Ulysses*, the *imitatio* which allows us to join Joyce in a community built on identifications and recognitions. Verbal consciousness in *Ulysses* is not—as it is in Lawrence or Bataille—a process of clarification repeatedly menaced by the personal and social pressures antagonistic to any clarifications whatsoever; rather, it is a conquest the multitudinous forms of which are disguised but never threatened by the novel's textures. The community of *Ulysses* and its exegetes is redemptive in its failure to acknowledge any operative relation between experience—of this text or of reality—and the forms of intelligibility which it proposes. It is the Vita Nuova in which Joyce thrillingly proposes that we spend our life with him. The call is very hard not to heed. Even in writing "against *Ulysses*," we can only feel a great sadness in leaving it; to stop working on *Ulysses* is like a fall from grace.

Notes

1. John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce's "Ulysses": Oscillating Perspectives* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 202.

2. Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 17.
3. Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*, 69–70.
4. Ibid.
5. Stephen Heath, "Ambiviolences: Notes for Reading Joyce," in *Post-structuralist Joyce: Essays from the French*, ed. Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 33, 57.
6. See Richard Poirier, "The Difficulties of Modernism and the Modernism of Difficulty," *Humanities in Society* 1 (spring, 1978).
7. D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, ed. David Farmer, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 485–86.
8. Georges Bataille, *Blue of Noon*, trans. Harry Matthews (New York: Urizen, 1978; reprint, Marion Boyars, 1985), 153–55; *Le Bleu du ciel*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 381–82.
9. Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (London: Faber, 1972), 136–39.
10. Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*, 40.
11. In Leo Bersani, *The Death of Stéphane Mallarmé* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
12. J. S. Atherton, "The Oxen of the Sun," in *James Joyce's "Ulysses": Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 331.