

OVER ASSEMBLAGE: *ULYSSES* AND THE *BOÎTE-EN-VALISE* FROM ABOVE

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Nothing is more necessary, in reading an imaginative writer, than to keep at the right distance above his page.

—Virginia Woolf, “The Novels of Thomas Hardy”

Such an amount of reading seems to be necessary before my old flying machine grumbles up into the air.

—James Joyce on *Finnegans Wake*, letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver,
16 February, 1931

Abstract: Taking its cue from Daedalus, who flew by collecting and ligating feathers, this essay adopts the aerial perspectives immanent in *Ulysses* in order to peer down into what the novel designates as its innards (its compartments, containers, zones, chapters, neighborhoods, organs), rethinking the text as conversant with its status as an assemblage. The essay enlists Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-Valise* not only for its reflexive museology, but for its kindred obsessions with scale, display, recession, the conflations of the body with the city, and the involutions that characterize both. Duchamp’s box exists in a relation of formal reciprocity with Joyce’s book that sheds light on conditions both works respond to: the vertiginous pleasure and necessity of self-reference in a culture of mechanical reproduction; the collapse of a stable sense of scale and singularity in the aggregate life of the city; the leavetaking of “home” for the diasporic construction of a virtual “back home.” The essay then considers the novel’s grief over what it destroys by commemorating—its invocations of catastrophe as its own precondition—and concludes with a fantasia on the hysterical culture of mourning that is Joyce criticism.

Without altitude, there can be no reading. In bringing a page into focus, we adopt an aerial view, hovering over furrows, canals, thoroughfares of text. Joyce reminds us, though, that we achieve our readerly altitude in some sense

by reading. The seen object is also what enables our seeing, as if we had climbed a part of the city—a high monument, say—in order to view the city. From that vantage we may imagine we have left the city, but we remain absolutely inside it, dependent on its structures to perceive its structures; we discover an “above” only available from inside. But we make reciprocal discoveries as well. What we perceive from the air as minima we already know from our ground-lives to be complex objects or habitats; being in the air teaches us, by extension, to regard the apparent minima of our ground-lives—strangers, stray thoughts, household objects, words on a page—with greater suspicion and curiosity, to recognize that what we had taken for an irreducible exterior might yet harbor an interior. And we enter the fantasy of airborne x-ray vision: like the three-dimensional viewer of a two-dimensional Flatland, we peer down into the innards of objects that know each other by exterior alone. We discover an “inside” only available from above.

But the “inside” we behold in gazing down upon text or city is recognizably “inner” only if it is organized into further interiors: subdivided, involuted, compartmentalized. Innards must be differentiated into organs and organ systems, text into words and lines, the cityscape into blocks and districts; otherwise the gaze glances off a featureless, exteriorized surface. The interior we view from above must not appear to have spread, but to have been assembled, gathered, in every sense *collected* (the root *legere* means to gather, choose, pluck, or read). In reading we look down, and find a collection: the writerly results of anterior acts of reading, choosing, gathering together.

In peering down at its two chosen, composite objects—Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-Valise*—this essay deploys an extensive vocabulary of assemblage: cento, collection, pastiche, inventory, gallery, catalogue, miscellany. My chief objective here, however, is not to provide an elaborate history or taxonomy of assemblages, but to see at what point—at what altitude—the differences between modes of assemblage vanish, to learn what determines and characterizes the elevation of that vanishing point, and to find what features remain visible. To achieve these aims, the essay attempts not only to display instances of assemblage in the hope of discerning some of their characteristic traits, but also to exhibit those traits itself as symptoms—to inhabit the assemblage’s immanent logic of miniaturization, juxtaposition, containment, conflation, and collapse. In doing so, it knowingly succumbs to a tendency exhibited by much collection-theory: the tendency to contract from its object of study a certain simultaneity and resistance to history, the habit of cauterizing constituent items from their sites of origin and grafting them into a more hermetic context, a transhistorical

and totalizing theory of “the” collection. Thus *Ulysses* and the *Boîte* are related here not through a model of causality, but through juxtaposition and reciprocity—each one played off against and routed through the circuits of the other.

My aim in taking such an approach, however, is not to exhaust these gestures of limiting and leveling from within, only to reintroduce a familiar historicism plumped up and spit-shined during its time offstage. Instead, I mean to perform a kind of theoretical cross-pollination, one that opens and repopulates rather than evacuates the ground of possible readings. Much of the singularity of Joyce’s book stems from its insistences (and its author’s) that it is more than a book—that it is a city, a body, a map, a museum, and thus a monster of conflation, simultaneity, and heterogeneity. Similarly, much of the enduring weirdness of Duchamp’s box arises from its refusal to be only a box in which the artist’s past masterworks are enshrined or interred—from its own monstrous tendencies toward body, and toward book (the *Boîte*, I will suggest, should in part be read as a leather-bound chronicle of image-reproduction techniques). By reading Joyce’s book as a sort of covert prescription for Duchamp’s *Boîte*, and the box in turn as a photonegative for the book, I hope to expose each assemblage’s yearning for conditions it *cannot* achieve: book tends toward box, box toward book, in a conflation made more necessary by the historical conditions of rupture and dislocation to which *Ulysses* and the *Boîte* respond: diasporic conditions in which the infinities limned by book and box need to become portable. At the same time, both assemblages display through their commemorative energies an unfulfilled nostalgia for the body and the city, even as they insist on the departure of the body and the destruction of the city as their precondition.

As an assemblage, this essay harbors its own ache to be more or other than what it is. The section on the “look-down view” in advertising makes assertions recognizably allied to cultural studies, suggesting that new views of the city proliferating through mass-cultural forms helped underwrite certain elite literary innovations. Other sections of the essay may seem serenely formalist in dwelling on literary forms like the cento and the portmanteau word. I take such literary forms seriously, however, not to insist on them as the ramparts of literariness or the autonomous aesthetic, but to suggest that form is where both *Ulysses* and the *Boîte* most legibly display their modes of production, reproduction, and consumption, and the vertiginous places they imagine for the historical body in all three processes. If the discussion does not culminate in an unveiling of discernible

causal relations between socio-material conditions and cultural texts and their reception, it owes to my sense that such formulations tend to replace the artwork's occultations of its multiple origins and conditions of production with an equally reductive narrative of base-to-superstructure, one whose notion of "history" as agent too often functions as an imported and unopenable black box. Cultural studies, I would offer, is less persuasive where it drives at stark but implausible causalities, than where it intelligently mourns the impossibility of making such necessary claims, while continuing to make them in shards.

To help the flying machine aloft, then, let me offer Exhibit One in a gallery of symptomatic assemblages, each a collation and ligation of anterior acts of reading from above. This first is a cento, exemplar of the airborne collection, stricken and clowning-through-form; it also serves as a schema for the essay as a whole. Looking down on the cento, we find we are already inside it:

Sentimental Valediction of a Lost Landscape

There is no explosion except in a book—	<i>Richards</i> ¹
Inside the paper, between the front and the back,	<i>Blanchot</i> ²
Center within center, within within within.	<i>Duchamp</i> ³
	<i>Stewart</i> ⁴
Bakelite radios; Victrolas; musical instruments—	<i>Tuchman</i> ⁵
All things float with equal specific gravity in	<i>Simmel</i> ⁶
The ecstasy of catastrophe. What future	<i>Joyce</i> ⁷

¹ Thomas Karr Richards, "Gerty MacDowell and the Irish Common Reader," *ELH* 52 (Fall 1985) 763.

² Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980) trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1986) 7, quoting Stéphane Mallarmé.

³ Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in Ecke Bonk, *Marcel Duchamp: The Box in a Valise de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy: Inventory of an Edition*, trans. David Britt (New York: Rizzoli, 1989) 169.

⁴ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) 61.

⁵ Mitch Tuchman, *Magnificent Obsessions: Twenty Remarkable Collectors in Pursuit of Their Dreams* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1994) 10.

⁶ Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1902–03), rpt. in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: The Free Press, 1950) 414.

⁷ James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler et al. (New York: Vintage Books, 1986) 565; (*U* 17.786–87).

Thus ceases to center around its absent term,	<i>Baudrillard</i> ⁸
Forced extravagantly upon the vision,	<i>Larned</i> ⁹
Word by word? Language is a city,	<i>Emerson</i> ¹⁰
Some diorama laid flat upon the ground	<i>Mayhew</i> ¹¹
Down below, at the receiving end of the bombs—	<i>Hudson</i> ¹²
An ancient city: a maze of little streets,	<i>Wittgenstein</i> ¹³
Of ghostly sequences in the city-skull.	<i>Roche</i> ¹⁴
How quickly grief becomes its own memorial,	<i>Suleri</i> ¹⁵
As stupid and as useless as the past itself.	<i>Borges</i> ¹⁶
A mile out of Dublin he stopped short:	<i>Young</i> ¹⁷
“I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am—	<i>Benjamin</i> ¹⁸
Its precious ashes, its black, unmalleable coal.”	<i>Foucault</i> ¹⁹

⁸ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (1968) trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996) 93.

⁹ W. Livingston Larned, *Illustration in Advertising* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1925) 115.

¹⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Quotation and Originality” (1876), rpt. in *Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Richard Poirier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 437.

¹¹ Henry Mayhew with John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (1862; rpt. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1968) 8.

¹² Kenneth Hudson, *Industrial History from the Air* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 2.

¹³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967) 8e (§18).

¹⁴ Maurice Roche, in David Hayman, “An Interview with Maurice Roche,” *TriQuarterly* 38 (Winter 1977) 73.

¹⁵ Sara Suleri, *Meatless Days* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 124.

¹⁶ Jorge Luis Borges, “The Wall and the Books,” trans. Irving Feldman, in *A Personal Anthology* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1967) 91.

¹⁷ Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition in a Letter to the Author of “Sir Charles Grandison”* (London: A. Millar, 1759) 60.

¹⁸ Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting” (1931), rpt. in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969) 59.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “Fantasia of the Library” (1967), rpt. in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 88.

Caveat Elector

The cento: a poetic patchwork cloak, a calibrated hodge-podge, a collage-by-algorithm. Ausonius, the fourth-century C.E. poet and rhetorician who compiled the *Nuptial Cento* for Emperor Valentinian from fragments of Virgil's poetry, set down rules for cento-making: lines may be taken from one writer or several, and may be taken whole or hybridized from two sites in a work, but lines adjacent in the source-text cannot be coupled in the cento: miscegenation made mandatory. As a writerly form that insists on the primacy of reading, the cento makes invention an effect of *inventio*, or "coming upon," rather than of conjuring novelty from nothing. Ausonius deemed cento-making "a task for memory only, which has to gather up scattered tags and fit these mangled scraps together into a whole, and so is more likely to provoke your laughter than your praise."²⁰ (The form of the cento is its own modesty topos—unless it attains the scale of *Ulysses*, whereupon it flaunts the immodest scale of its self-effacements.) Having come upon its component lines as found objects, the centonist effaces their original contexts in order to baste them into a new narrative, and thereby engages a certain logic of collecting.²¹ Yet, like many collections, the cento also insists on those forsaken contexts—depends, really, on their partial recoverability—to validate both its textual parts and the new whole they constitute. Thus a cento without an author-column loses the glamour (or stigma) of its sources, retaining only the jaggedness of its seams, and the stain of appropriation that discolors its recognizable lines. In one respect, though, the cento seems to depart altogether from the logic of collecting: whereas the collection seeks to quarantine objects from their everyday uses

²⁰ Tony Augarde, *The Oxford Guide to Word Games* (Oxford University Press, 1984) 138.

²¹ As Susan Stewart writes in *On Longing* (Durham, NC: Durham University Press, 1993), to which this essay owes a general debt, "the collection represents the total aestheticization of use value. The collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context. Like other forms of art, its function is not the restoration of context of origin but rather the creation of a new context, a context standing in a metaphorical, rather than a contiguous, relation to the world of everyday life" (Stewart, 151–52). The cento departs from (or perhaps complicates) the logic of the collection where it begs the question of the use-value of what it aestheticizes. Is a collection of objects that were always useless—or always aestheticized—still a collection?

within a purified context of resemblance or exemplification (the globe removed from the classroom and set within an exhibit hall of globes, or of strictly contemporary objects), the cento remains in a relation of continuity with its source texts, admiring or vying with them on the same heterogeneous plane of textual utterance. The lines of a cento have not been sundered from their use-value in the name of consecration or paradigm, but continue to do duty as load-bearing units of meaning. Yet at the same time, the form seems to long for the impossible status of a mini-canon of scarce but indispensable texts—impossible because the consecrating work of excerpting lines also desecrates the integrity of the source-text, even execrates the source by revealing it to be a mirage of anonymous-sounding fragments. A failed museum of poetry, the cento is the supergenre of ambivalence, suspended between trophyism and travesty, collection and eclecticism, the museum and the miscellany.

Logodaedaly

Daedalus was a mazebuilder and early aviator, yes, but he might also be dubbed the patron saint of centonists: an inventor who came upon the feathers of Cretan seabirds, he collected them with his son's help, and collated them into serviceable patchwork wings, securing the larger feathers with thread and the smaller ones with wax. If all human flight alludes loosely to birds, then Daedalus flew by direct quotation—by an aviation of the found object. His labor in wingmaking was the centonist's: the labor of seeing variant potentials in the found object—in other words, the work of *finding* the found object—followed by collection and ligation, the labors of glue and suture. But to the extent Daedalus's wings perform a tribute to avian flight, they also enact a theft from it: the flattery of imitation cannot be achieved without an act of appropriation. (Perhaps Icarus's death is caused not by his own youthful heedlessness—being too much in the sun—but by his father's Promethean gesture of flighttheft.) If the Daedalian flying machine is also a fullfledged museum of aviation, exhibiting the feathers of all indigenous seabirds in series, it commemorates its subjects as a museum must: by acquisitive acts of dotting aggression. This fundamental ambivalence is encoded in the tale's museological play with scale. A collection of small, synecdochic objects (feathers) sponsors the gigantism of human-sized wings. Airborne, the gigantic birds view a vast expanse of shrunken world—the clod-like islands in the archipelago, the patchwork of fields

with their antsized laborers—while a shepherd and ploughman see the tiny fliers from the ground and conclude (oddly) that they must be gods. If Icarus does precipitate his own fall, he does so by violating this stichomythia of scale, attempting to crown his own immensity by shrinking the landscape below to a mote, a nought, and merging with the sun. The truce between gigantic and miniature must persist, and more, it must be uneasy, as it staves off nothing less than mutual annihilation: to be recognizable as outsized, the gigantic must be witnessed by the miniature, just as the very small can know itself only as a special effect of the very large. A lesson from the Book of Gulliver: all perspective depends on this scalemate between birdseye and wormseye view, between the colossus and the homunculus. Only in the zone limned by these interdependent hallucinations (they are equally hallucinations of interdependency) can the cento and all that resembles it from the air—collection, miscellany, memory, desire—achieve lift.

Working for Scale

Like Daedalus's wings, the Joycean flying machine is also a museum of aviation, a device whose flightworthiness is largely a curatorial matter. *Ulysses* resembles the vexed collection of the centonist in a number of ways, the most obvious being its radical intertextuality, its care in accounting for its source-texts, and the mixture of homage and hostility with which it repays those sources. But the cento teaches us that extreme intertextuality of this kind raises further questions about scale, perspective, containment, and compartmentalization. For to look at a cento is to engage in a weirdly dual fantasy. In one view, the cento reader gazes down on the archive from the air, watching the demesne of each writer dwindle to a patch in the cramped checkerwork of literary relations. From another vantage, though, the cento presents those relations with an earthworm's myopia, daring to imply that a handful of excerpted words could meaningfully represent or conjure a particular writer's "essence." In both cases, the form creates the impression of plenitude by diminishing the apparent scope of its components toward their respective vanishing points: how minute can even a vast body of work look from a distance? And how small a sample of that corpus is required to evoke a personality, or to require attribution? How big, in other words, is the intertextual minimum—the citationeme, the plagiareme? *Ulysses* echoes the cento in its simultaneous reliance on these two gazes, these two gauges: a radically exterior view that shrinks Dublin to the size of a paramecium or fullstop, and a radically interior

view that tests the minimal size of the phonemes, morphemes, and ideologemes of fleeting individual consciousness. Like the exultant Icarus, this doubled optics of the vanishing point simply invites the dyad of gigantic/miniature to reassert itself with catastrophic violence. But something gets made in the crucible of that catastrophe: namely, a way of seeing beyond even the differential optics of parallax, the triangulated, three-dimensional gaze that Joyce's novel takes pains both to thematize and to embody. For where the parallax admits the radical alterity of the other, the catastrophe of scale completes both circuits, insisting that the self, too, is irreducibly alterior—if for no other reason than that the self cannot be rendered life size in the domain of writing.²²

Gigantics

The rhetoric of hugeness surrounding *Ulysses* is sponsored by the novel's apparent boast about itself: "this chaffering allincluding most farraginous chronicle. Astounding!" (*U* 14.1412). Joyce used the word "gigantism" in his schemata to describe the technique of the "Cyclops" chapter, and this, coupled with the various immensities of the text—its length, its inclusivity, its ambition, its reception, its reputation and status, the various academic, fiscal, legal, and devotional communities it helps sustain—tends to be taken as the last word on size in the novel. But to say *Ulysses* is gigantic is to understand scale naively as aggregate mass, taking no account of composition, resolution, texture, and the changeable gauges of size. Part of the "gigantism" of "Cyclops" inheres in its long inventories of heroes and heroines, delegates, priests, wedding guests, saints. Yet in what scale does inventory render the world? The vastness of those lists proves to be a context wherein humorous minutiae—punning names, questionable inclusions—fracture the expectation of featurelessness: gigantism becomes the occasion which detail disrupts, looming somehow large in the process. Even *Ulysses*'s vaunted encyclopedism complicates rather than solves the problem of

²² The concept of parallax attempts a kind of ambidexterity: a seeing or thinking through alterity to the point where two (or more) viewpoints can be adopted or compassed. I want to suggest that the problematics of scale in *Ulysses* trace a position that is not ambidextrous, but ambisinistrous: a position not of dual comfort, but of dual discomfort, twoleftfootedness, the alienation of the self from the self that is the true foundation of ethics.

scale: as anyone who has ever squinted at a Britannica or an OED knows, the pretense of “allinclusion” within the finite space of a book requires a commensurate shrinkage of print, a miracle of miniaturization. We need to stop accusing *Ulysses* of effluvial, jovial gigantism and look instead at what is small, sad, and scarce in the novel—at what the text mourns, and at what aspects of the text are routinely mourned by its readers. These needn’t be fatally impoverishing gestures. By reading *Ulysses* as mourned and mournful, we might begin to see why a novel so mindful of its own achievements remains steeped in a sense of irretrievable loss, and how that loss comprises the fallout from the novel’s idiosyncratic models of the sublime. Finally, by increasing *Ulysses*’s minute involutions, we might expand the surface area of its various active sites, and thereby arrive at a different order of gigantism—a vastness particular to the miniature, a vast accretion of detail rather than a waggish megalith—and thus at a better grasp of how writing can be said to have or lack a “size” or “scale” in the first place.

Soma & Schema

This problem of the scale of the written self and its bodily receptacle seems to have preoccupied Joyce while he was preparing the Linati schema, the first map to the novel that he allowed to circulate. In a letter accompanying the schema, Joyce oscillated between the gargantuan and the miniscule, complaining to Carlo Linati of “the enormous bulk and the more than enormous complexity of my damned monster-novel,” which he identified as “the epic of two races (Israel-Ireland) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life). . . . It is also a kind of encyclopedia” (*SL* 271). The schema itself, however, makes *Ulysses* out to be less an encyclopedia than a museum, whose chapter-galleries each bring together a color, an art or science, a technic, and an organ—all of them, as Joyce wrote, “interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole” (*SL* 271).²³ With the first three categories, the question of scale seems moot: what is the dimension of a color, the gauge of an art or science, the scale of a technic? Size, then, centers in the anatomical conceit of the novel, seemingly the master-category of the Linati schema with its

²³ The Gilbert and Linati schemata claim to delineate principles of construction, but are equally principles of classification, applied retrospectively in a descriptive mode.

avowedly “somatic” ground of interconnectedness. This seems right: given the somatogenic nature of perspective, the viewer’s body must always be the Avoirdupois of scale (witness Gulliver), with the relative size of the object world deriving from the fixed standard of the body. Yet *Ulysses* is an environment where that somatic standard does not precede reading, but must be collected through reading, since the rubric of chapter-as-organ makes reading synonymous with collecting the body. By the time that body gets assembled, it must be someone else’s body, some golem, some female Frankenstein (Joyce designated “Oxen of the Sun” the book’s womb)—the body of the Other, for what other body could one collect a piece at a time? The insinuation of the body’s piecemeal status can be borne, so long as it is the body of the Other—but only up to the point where scale itself, the birthright of the viewing self, is relativized. “Each adventure,” Joyce told Linati, “is so to speak one person although it is composed of persons.” Where each chapter is a person both comprised of homunculi and comprising a colossus, we quickly arrive at an infinite regress from which the life sized body—the True North of scale—cannot be recovered. The ragged golem on the slab turns out to be the self, and the somatic fixity of scale a hallucination. The sorrow of this discovery is not only that of failing to locate the body in the infinite regress of scale particular to writing, but a foreshuddering of infinite *egress*—the wholesale destruction of the soma, the dispersal of the collected organs, and a leavetaking from the domain of scale altogether.

The Look-Down View

Daedalus in time would make the Cretan maze, map it, and peer down on it from the air, and these three operations—fabricating, mapping, and aerial viewing—are closely bound in *Ulysses*. The text asks its readers to repeat its own obsession with mapping urban space, situating characters within a reticulated plane of districts, streets, tramlines, buildings, monuments, public and private spaces, interlocking narratives. For much of *Ulysses*, the principal scale is not that of the city but that of the city map, which locates the viewer at a Daedalian remove—the labyrinth as seen from above by its winged, departing maker. Who, for instance, could be the narrator of “Wandering Rocks” if not an airborne, hundred-eyed Argos Panoptes? To the extent it implies an aerial vantage, Joyce’s technique in “Wandering Rocks” and elsewhere in *Ulysses* adopts not only the imaginary God’s eye

of the cartographer, but its modern technological cognate, the airborne camera. Pioneered in the 1850's by balloonist-photographer Félix Nadar, aerial photography had, by the 1920's, been adapted to uses in cartography, archaeology, ethnography, military and civil reconnaissance, and even pictorial advertising. W. Livingston Larned's primer, *Illustration in Advertising* (1925) describes how a perspective relatively new to the ad industry, the "look-down view," could credibly display the complexities of urban street-life in cross-section, preserving both multiplicity and minutiae:

An advertiser's story for an entire campaign had to do with multitudes of people, hurrying along crowded routes of traffic. Four out of five of these people suffered from a common ailment. A perspective from the angle of the soaring bird helped to make this advertisement differ from the usual study.

A series of ingenious illustrations for another advertiser selected a their basic theme vistas of the street life of various communities. As many as two or three hundred persons and numerous buildings, animals, and motor cars had to be included. They were cross-sections from city life. That the artist employed as his station point the view which might be had from the window of a four-story building allowed him to picture objects in full detail with no overlapping of subjects. . . . In another generation, perhaps, when the airplane becomes demonstrably practical for the masses, the look-down view may lose its present novelty and attraction. (Larned 118–19; see Figure 1)

The breadth of the social totality coupled with a high resolution of detail on the urban diorama: this is *Ulysses* in an eyedropper. Still, even the remote, mobile perspective of "Wandering Rocks" comes repeatedly to earth with internal monologue vignettes that give one the impression of being within, rather than above, the grid of social relations and their individual constituents. Yet according to Larned, even these apparently conflicted perspectives—radical interiority and radical exteriority—can dovetail through the dual magic of the look-down view:

Photographs and original drawings of a certain electric washing machine proved of passive advertising value, because the exterior of the device counted for less than the inside mechanism. But to picture sectional views and strip off the outer frame meant to run the risk of presenting illustrations which were mechanical and complex and therefore not particularly interesting to women. Accordingly, several models were photographed from above, their tops put back. Enough of the exterior features of the washer remained in the picture to identify the machine, and the mechanism, which was novel, was shown admirably. (Larned 118; see Figure 1)



Figure 1 Examples of the "Look-down" perspective in advertising, printed in W. Livingston Larned, *Illustration in Advertising* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1925) 110.

While Stephen, Poldy, and Molly are hardly Maytags, Larned's primer does make clear that the exteriority and distance of the aerial view can sometimes lead toward, rather than away from, the impression of proximity and interiority—the very impression interior monologue creates—by enabling the airborne viewer to peer down into the occulted innards of the machine. Thus the fresh intimacy of esoteric data compensates for the physical distance required by data-gathering; as Kenneth Hudson writes of aerial photography, “secrets have been uncovered, proportions changed, unsuspected beauties revealed” (Hudson 2).²⁴ Virginia Woolf's extraordinary late essay, “Flying over London,” traces a similar itinerary, arriving at the fantasy of a visible inside by way of an aerial view of the metropolis. Staged as a flight from both the ground and the body, since “vertebrae, ribs, entrails, and red blood belong to the earth,” the essay reveals first the unsuspected beauties of landscape, cloud, and urban grid, and then of the social body: “Through a pair of Zeiss glasses one could indeed now see the tops of the heads of separate men and could distinguish a bowler from a cap, and could thus be certain of social grades—which was an employer, which was a working man.” Finally surfeiting on the exteriority of the look-down view after flying over “the poor quarters,” Woolf imagines following a woman inside a room with such amplified powers of perception that personality, the heart, even “the power that buys a mat” become transparent:

And then it was odd how one became resentful of all the flags and surfaces and of the innumerable windows symmetrical as avenues, symmetrical as forest groves, and wished for some opening, and to push indoors and be rid of surfaces. Up in Bayswater a door did open, and instantly, of course, there

²⁴ Joyce's interior monologue is often described as an auditory proximity, as if the narrator(s) and reader were engaging in a specialized form of eavesdropping. But there is an effect of visual proximity as well to the technique, a sense that the increased powers of narrative resolution must result from a telescopic or microscopic process of “irising in.” Locke's 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* anticipates both kinds of nearness and increased resolution, and foresees that such augmentations can give the perceiver a sense of singularity and isolation: “If our sense of hearing were but a thousand times quicker than it is, how would a perpetual noise distract us. And we should in the quietest retirement be less able to sleep or meditate than in the middle of a sea-fight. Nay, if that most instructive of senses, seeing, were in any man a thousand, or a hundred thousand times more acute than it is by the best microscope, things several millions of times less than the smallest object of his sight now would then be visible to his naked eyes, and so he would come nearer to the discovery of the texture and motion of the minute parts of corporeal things: and in many of them, probably get ideas of their internal constitutions; but then he would be in a quite

appeared a room, incredibly small, of course, and ridiculous in its attempt to be separate and itself, and then—it was a woman’s face, young, perhaps, at any rate with a black cloak and a red hat that made the furniture—here a bowl, there a sideboard with apples on it, cease to be interesting because the power that buys a mat, or sets two colours together, became perceptible, as one may say that the haze over an electric fire becomes perceptible. Everything had changed its values seen from the air. Personality was outside the body, abstract. And one wished to be able to animate the heart, the legs, the arms with it, to do which it would be necessary to be there, so as to collect; so as to give up this arduous game, as one flies through the air, of assembling things that lie on the surface.²⁵

Though the essay ends in an apparent rejection of the aerial view as exterior to the individual consciousness Woolf wants to perceive and “animate,” aeriality is also what gives Woolf the tip, compelling her, by its power to vivisection the urban body, to penetrate even further. In a sense, the airborne view is to the street-level view what internal monologue is to third-person narration: a crucial shift of vantage that reveals internal structures, simultaneities, secrets, and embarrassments (the personal embarrassment of piles; the metropolitan embarrassment of quarantined slums) kept curtained by more horizontal views.

Birdseye Sublime

The aerial *Ulysses* installs the reader in the viewing-position of two particular figures: Anne Kearns and Florence MacCabe, the “vestal virgins” of Stephen’s “Pisgah Sight of Palestine or The Parable of the Plums” who climb a Dublin monument with a bag of plums, bread, and brawn. Dismembered and dispersed in the “Aeolus” chapter among other conversations and textual games, the parable can only be recovered through the consolidations and recontextualizations of a cento-form:

They want to see the views of Dublin from the top of Nelson’s pillar. They save up three and tenpence in a red tin letterbox moneybox. . . . They give two threepenny bits to the gentleman at the turnstile and begin to waddle

different world from other people: nothing would appear the same to him and others.” (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser [New York: Dover Books, 1959] 1:403.)

²⁵ Virginia Woolf, “Flying over London,” in *The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950) 203, 208, 209–10.

slowly up the winding staircase, grunting, encouraging each other, afraid of the dark, panting, one asking the other have you the brawn, praising God and the Blessed Virgin, threatening to come down, peeping at the airslits. Glory be to God. They had no idea it was that high. . . . When they have eaten the brawn and the bread and wiped their twenty fingers in the paper the bread was wrapped in they go nearer the railings. . . . But they are afraid the pillar will fall. . . . They see the roofs and argue about where the different churches are: Rathmines' blue dome, Adam and Eve's, saint Laurence O'Toole's. But it makes them giddy to look so they pull up their skirts. . . . And settle down on their striped petticoats, peering up at the statue of the onehanded adulterer. . . . It gives them a crick in their necks . . . and they are too tired to look up or down or to speak. They put the bag of plums between them and eat the plums out of it, one after another, wiping off with their handkerchiefs the plumjuice that dribbles out of their mouths and spitting the plumstones slowly out between the railings. (*U* 7.931–1027)

The parable sets up a subtle resonance between the aerial view and interior modes of representation. Stephen's narratorial sentence "Glory be to God" may be an unmarked piece of dialogue, but it may also be free indirect discourse or even interior monologue. If the latter, it establishes a regression (Joyce represents Stephen through internal monologue, Stephen represents the vestals through the same), a textual vertigo that simulates the vertigo of physical height. But perhaps most striking in the passage is the careful interplay between the look-down view and the uneasy up-close bodies of Kearns and MacCabe, as gingerly in their approach to the vista as they are sensual in their snacking. The pleasures of eating seem compensatory, though, for the sense of physical imperilment that pervades the parable, as if the body were reasserting itself against the disorientation and queasiness—even the threat of annihilation—caused by the birdseye view. The parable implies that all aerial views are Pisgah sights whose high vista is purchased by distance from the seen: the vestals can only touch the urban grid by proxy, through their falling plum-pits. Yet oddly, even while it allegorizes Dublin bathos and paralysis, Stephen's set-piece is haunted by the lineaments of the sublime, characterized by its eighteenth-century theorists as the imagination's "aspiration to grasp the object, the preordained failure, and the consequent feeling of bafflement, and the sense of awe and wonder."²⁶ The "Pisgah Sight of

²⁶ Samuel Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960) 58; qtd. in Neil Hertz, "The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime," in *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University

Palestine” apparently retailers this model of the sublime for a latter-day vantage: the expressly urban look-down vista.

While most eighteenth-century models of the sublime enumerate the viewer’s sensations (desire, blockage, the recuperated and expanded satisfaction of “awe and wonder”), they identify the colossal object perceived by the viewer as the principal cause of those sensations. The urban birdseye sublime differs from its eighteenth-century precursor in making the disposal of the viewer’s body not just receptive, but generative of the sublime experience: in order to see the incommensurable vista you are seeing, you must have first come unstuck from the metropolitan grid. The aerial viewer’s “awe and wonder” take the shape of a seemingly impossible synthesis of expanse and high-resolution: while the distance generative of the vista would seem to eradicate detail, a different order of detail stands revealed, sustaining an illusion of proximity and palpability belied by high-elevation. But by regarding this impossible object, the downlooker enters a circuit where the sense of scale results not from the size of the perceived, but from the dialectic between a sizeable perceived and a sizeless perceiver (how *big* do we have to be to see what we are seeing?). No longer simply dwarfed, the overviewer is dislocated, relativized, trapped in a nauseating oscillation of scale that upsets any sense of somatic well-being, even of being-in-the-body at all. In this revision of Deuteronomy 34, the Mosaic viewer pays a dual price for his elevated

Press, 1985) 44–45. Hertz cites another eighteenth-century theory of the sublime, Alexander Gerard’s 1764 *Essay on Taste*, as anticipating these problematic oscillations of scale in its account of the mind’s salutary fantasy of becoming commensurate, even coterminous, with a perceived vastness: “We always contemplate objects and ideas with a disposition similar to their nature. When a large object is presented, the mind expands itself to the extent of that object, and is filled with one grand sensation, which totally possessing it, composes it into a solemn sedateness, and strikes it with deep silent wonder and admiration: it finds such a difficulty in spreading itself to the dimensions of its object, as enlivens and invigorates its frame: and having overcome the opposition which this occasions, it sometimes imagines itself present in every part of the scene which it contemplates; and from the sense of this immensity, feels a noble pride, and entertains a lofty conception of its own capacity” (Hertz 48). Where Gerard’s “mind” expands to the scale of the perceived, however, Joyce’s aerial viewers shrink in the face of vastness and retreat, imperiled, behind their plums, unequal to the sublime experience their vantage offers them. For scale and the sublime, see also Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially “The Colossal” section of the chapter on “Parergon.”

view of Palestine: not only his remoteness from the perceived object (“I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there”), but the destruction of his body, dead in Moab and buried in an unmarked grave. Elevation betokens this threat of annihilation, even outside the possibility of falling to one’s death, because the viewer’s sense of scale is not only somatogenic (“born of the body”) but somagenic (“giving birth to the body,” or at least to a sense of the body); the shattering of scale also shatters the integrity and plenitude of the body. In this respect, the aerial view of the city exhibits a certain affinity with cubism, which trades the conventions of realist holism—palpability, continuity, mensurability—for an impalpable angularity (or the subsumption of the organic by the angular, as in aerial photography), radical simultaneity, and the cataclysm of scale. Both cubism and the urban look-down view partake in what we are calling the birdseye sublime: the rupture of the real implied by the aerial viewer’s now-immensurable body, which must be both huge enough to peer down on the urban grid and minute enough to have lived within it—a curvilinear body both implied and engulfed by its rectilinear environment.²⁷ A variant of this sublime structures an extraordinary ad in Larned’s advertising primer [Figure 2], given as an example of both the “look-down view” and the “product in heroic size,” in which a borough-sized bottle of mayonnaise looms over a miniature Manhattan. Like Stephen’s vestals, the viewer experiences the extreme vertigo of looking both down *and* up from a great height: the implied body of the viewer is titanic enough to dwarf New York, yet occupies a more uncertain relation to the mayonnaise jar, a hand-held household object bloating up in sudden elephantiasis. A viewer on the scale of the city is an airborne speck compared to the jar; a viewer closer to the scale of the jar is either a colossus straddling New York harbor, or something larger still—a titan child gazing out over a toy layout at its one incongruous, still-monstrous

²⁷ Rosalind Krauss has tied the semiological turn in Picasso’s work of the teens to the visual disappearance or attenuation of carnality, palpability, and depth: “this sense of a withdrawal of touch from the field of the visual was experienced by Picasso as a passionate relation to loss ... For it to have gotten to the point that the carnal dimension—depth—is so unavailable to one of the most accomplished figure painters of his age that he must render his passion for a woman by writing it on his pictures is certainly one of the great ironies in the history of illusionist painting. / But it is also one of the great watersheds.” “The Motivation of the Sign,” in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. Lynn Zelevansky (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992) 271.



Figure 2 The product as “Gulliver-in-Lilliput,” printed in W. Livingston Larned, *Illustration in Advertising* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1925) 127. Larned’s caption reads: “A jar of salad dressing is made to seem as large as the island of Manhattan by a comparatively simple perspective expedient.”

object. Cubism: between the homunculism of the metropolis and the gigantism of the commodity, a vertiginous abyss of scale where that old gizmo, the body, cannot stably dwell.

Compartmental

The textual body of Stephen’s “Parable of the Plums” is dismembered and strewn among six sections of “Aeolus,” which mimics a newspaper with its bite-sized blocks of text and the cryptic headlines or captions which divide them. Even a quick flip through *Ulysses* reveals its obsession with subdivision: “Wandering Rocks” is partitioned into scenes by asterisks, “Cyclops” divided according to discursive zones, “Circe” is broken into dramatic dialogue form, “Oxen of the Sun” into stylistic regions, and “Ithaca” into Q&A catechisms. For a novel often dubbed heteroglossic, carnivalesque, polyvocal, conflationary, and anti-hierarchical, this one seems incredibly chary of its internal divisions and what they keep, conserve, contain. The same

holds for the novel's chapters: though Joyce withheld the Homeric chapter titles from the printed book, *Ulysses* repeatedly thematizes the nontrivial nature of its own compartmentalization. In a meta-fictive moment in "Circe," Bloom says, "It has been an unusually fatiguing day, a chapter of accidents" (*U* 15.2380; "chapter" here may refer to an assembly of church canons). The book's chapters may describe accidents (mishaps, misprisions of noise for signal, random or contingent or inessential events), but they are themselves neither accidental nor incidental. As the patient enumerations of "Ithaca" show, this crux of fatigue and chapters—perhaps the fatigue of chapters, taxonomy's anomie—is not trivial but ritual:

What past consecutive causes, before rising preapprehended, of accumulated fatigue did Bloom, before rising, silently recapitulate?

The preparation of breakfast (burnt offering): intestinal congestion and premeditative defecation (holy of holies): the bath (rite of John): the funeral (rite of Samuel): the advertisement of Alexander Keyes (Urim and Thummim): the unsubstantial lunch (rite of Melchisedek): the visit to museum and national library (holy place): the bookhunt along Bedford row, Merchants Arch, Wellington Quay (Simchath Torah): the music in the Ormond Hotel (Shira Shirim): the altercation with a truculent troglodyte in Bernard Kiernan's premises (holocaust): a blank period of time including a cardrive, a visit to a house of mourning, a leavetaking (wilderness): the eroticism produced by feminine exhibitionism (rite of Onan): the prolonged delivery of Mrs. Mina Purefoy (heave offering): the visit to the disorderly house of Mrs Bella Cohen, 82 Tyrone street (Armageddon): nocturnal perambulation to and from the cabman's shelter, Butt Bridge (atonement). (*U* 17.2042–2051)

By affiliating each remembered incident (most of them chapter-defining) with a Jewish ritual or historical event, "Ithaca" insists that the novel is not an undifferentiated receptacle, but a paradise of order, forethought, correspondence, reticulation, and compartmentalization.²⁸ Shrinking whole episodes to a phrase and an epic to a paragraph, the list also

²⁸ The list makes clear that it is keyed less to Bloom's memory than to the book itself: the item "a blank period of time including a cardrive, a visit to a house of mourning, a leavetaking (wilderness)" corresponds to events that take place after "Cyclops" and before "Nausicaa"—a "blank period of time" for the reader, but not for Bloom, who was presumably present for the visit to the Dignam household. (One could also read this inclusion as evidence of Bloom's purely textual status: those events unrepresented in the text go unremembered by him. If so, the fabric of the fictive has frayed here, exposing the meta-fictive.)

miniaturizes the novel, sharpening the sense of its discrete compartments by demonstrating their crisp visibility from the remove of self-recollection. (The paragraph hints at its affinity with the aerial view by anchoring its recapitulation of events to their Dublin addresses, affirming that a pocket synopsis of the text is necessarily a map of the city.) Yet any reader of *Ulysses* knows that its chapter divisions are not impermeable—that they contain without quarantining, allowing matter, technique, discursive zones, even verbatim pieces of text to seep inexplicably from one chapter to another. Less airtight than “compartments,” the novel’s chapters are more like involutions, invaginations, cristae, permeable membranes—that is, more reminiscent of bodily tissue formations. Both comedy and heteroglossia thrive in the disjunction between the supposed continence and the actual incontinence of these spaces, but not without pining for the higher comedy of the body, with its more elaborate subdivisions and its less deliberate incontinence. The well-wrought heterocosm of *Ulysses* is an embodied nostalgia for the body: a sarcophogeal effigy, finally, for its Moses dead in Moab.

Mappamund (FW 253.05)

The last words of *Ulysses* record the (partial) itinerary of Joyce’s family during the years he was writing the novel: “Trieste-Zurich-Paris/1914–1921.” Five months after quitting Trieste finally for Paris, Joyce wrote to his friend Ettore Schmitz with a strangely-worded request:

I shall soon have used up the notes I brought with me here so as to write these two episodes. There is in Trieste in the quarter of my brother-in-law in the building bearing the political and registry number 2 of Via Sanità and located precisely on the third floor of the said building in the bedroom presently occupied by my brother, in the rear of the building in question, facing the brothels of public insecurity, an oilcloth briefcase fastened with a rubber band having the colour of a nun’s belly and with the approximate dimensions of 95 cm. by 70 cm. In this briefcase I have lodged the written symbols of the languid sparks which flashed at times across my soul.

The gross weight without tare is estimated at 4.78 kilograms. Having urgent need of these notes for the last incident in my literary work entitled *Ulysses* or “His Whore of a Mother,” I address this petition to you, most honourable colleague, begging you to let me know if any member of your family intends to come to Paris in the near future, in which case I should be most grateful if the above-mentioned person would have the kindness to bring me the briefcase specified on the back of this sheet. ... But be careful not to break the rubber band because then the papers will

fall into disorder. The best thing would be to take a suitcase which can be locked with a key so nobody can open it. There are many such traps on sale at Greinitz Neffen, next to the Piccolo, for [one of] which my brother the Professor at the Berlitz Cul will pay. ... Cordial greetings and excuse if my little worn-out brain amuses itself a little every so often. (*SL* 275–77)²⁹

The little self-amusements of the letter are numerous: an excessive attention to detail (anticipating the “Ithaca” chapter Joyce was preparing to write); translingual homophonic puns (the Berlitz School becomes the Berlitz “Cul,” French for “ass”); and pointed distortions (“publicca sicurezza,” or “police,” becomes “publicca insicurezza,” or “public insecurity”). Even stranger is the dialect itself: Joyce wrote the letter in mock-Austriacan, a patois of Austrian German (“Austriaco”) and Italian used by Austrian bureaucrats in Trieste. This hybrid dialect looks forward to the *Wake* in its multiple decryption protocols. In Italian, the briefcase in question would be “la cartella,” “la borsa d’avvocato,” or “la valigia diplomatica.” Joyce, however, gives it as “la mappa” (which in Italian means either a map or the bit of a key), expecting the reader to recognize an Austriacan misuse of the German “mappe,” a briefcase, portfolio, portmanteau, or valise. Joyce uses “mappa” both literally and figuratively as a portmanteau word, collapsing two lexical systems within a single linguistic space—or, if you prefer,

²⁹ Here is the Austriacan original: “Avrò presto esaurito gli appunti che portai qui con me per scriver questi due episodi. C’è a Trieste, nel quartiere di mio cognato, l’immobile segnato col numero politico e tavolare di via Sanità, e precisamente situato al terzo piano del suddetto immobile nella camera da letto attualmente occupata da mio fratello, a ridosso dell’immobile in parole e prospettante i prostrioboli di pubblica insicurezza, una mappa di tela cerata legata con un nastro elastico di colore addmoe di suora di carità, avente le dimensioni approssimative d’un 95 cm. per cm. 70. In codesta mappa riposi I sengi simbolici dei languidi lampi che talvolta balenarono nell’alma mia. ¶ Il peso lordo, senza tara, è stimato a chilogrammi 4.78. Avendo bisogno urgente di questi appunti per l’ultimazione del mio lavoro letterario intitolato ‘Ulisse’ ossia ‘Sua Mare Grega,’ rivolgo codesta istanza a Lei, colendissimo collega, pregandoLa di farmi sapere se qualcuno della Sua famiglia si propone di recarsi prossimamente a Parigi, nel quale caso sarei gratissimo se la persona di cui sopra vorrebbe avere la squisitezza di portarmi la mappa indicata a tergo ... Ma ocio a no sbregar el lastico, perchè allora nasserà confusion fra le carte. El meio saria de cior na valigia che si pol serar cola chiave che nissun pol verzer. Ne ghe xe tante di ste trappole da vender da Greinitz Neffen rente del Piccolo che paga mio fradel el professor della Berlitz Cul ... Saluti cordiali e scusi se il mio cervelletto esaurito si diverte un pochino ogni tanto.”

mapping the vocabulary of one language onto the syntactic domain of another. The letter, moreover, seems to thematize its own use of the portmanteau word—the linguistic supercontainer—in its obsession with concentric interiors, as if insisting on a spacialized model of signification: the notes are inside the briefcase, which is inside the brother’s room, which is in the rear of the third floor, which is in the building on Via Sanità, which is in a particular quarter in Trieste. Joyce even asks that Schmitz’s relatives encase the briefcased notes within another suitcase for further safekeeping—or consecration. In the innermost chamber of this shabby tabernacle dwells writing, in the form of Joyce’s notes for “Ithaca” and “Penelope.”

But Joyce’s difficult image—“the written symbols of the languid sparks which flashed at times across my soul”—raises questions about writing’s interior. Can writing only be contained because it is pure irreducible exteriority? Or does it play Host to some further guest, such as the soul or its inflammatory sparks, in its own sanctum sanctorum? Can writing exhibit, or can it only be exhibited? If the former, how does one characterize the interior or the innards of writing? If the latter, why do we speak such nonsense about writing’s “content”? Joyce’s books—portmanteaus within notes within briefcases within valises—repeat these questions by their own stupefying concentricisms.³⁰

The Trap Trap

We have seen the valise before in Joyce’s work, in a peripheral role that belies its importance as model of containment and interiority. Convalescing

³⁰ Kant’s Third Critique posits a sublime of the *mise-en-abîme* which depends on the compartmentalization and continence of the cosmos: “A tree, which we estimate with reference to the height of a man, at all events gives a standard for a mountain; and if this were a mile high, it would serve as unit for the number expressive of the earth’s diameter, so that the latter might be made intuitible. The earth’s diameter [would supply a unit] for the known planetary system; this again for the Milky Way; and the immeasurable number of Milky Way systems called nebulae, which presumably constitute a system of the same kind among themselves, lets us expect no bounds here. Now the sublime in the aesthetical judging of an immeasurable whole like this lies, not so much in the greatness of the number [of units], as in the fact that in our progress we ever arrive at yet greater units. To this the systematic division of the universe contributes, which represents every magnitude in nature as small in its turn, and represents our imagination with its entire freedom from bounds,

from his fall in “Grace,” Mr. Power is visited by a group of friends, among them the sycophantic M’Coy, who addresses him as “Jack”:

Mr Power did not relish the use of his Christian name. He was not straight-laced but he could not forget that Mr M’Coy had recently made a crusade in search of valises and portmanteaus to enable Mrs M’Coy to fulfil imaginary engagements in the country. More than he resented the fact that he had been victimised he resented such low playing of the game. (*D* 160)

This puzzling bit of surface texture does little more in its *Dubliners* context than establish M’Coy as a smalltime con-artist so poor in judgment that he dupes his own friends, borrowing their valises for some unspecified swindle. *Ulysses*, however, returns to M’Coy’s scam and elaborates it beyond the level of “local color.” Happening on M’Coy in Westland Row, Bloom scents the topic—“Valise tack again. By the way no harm. I’m off that, thanks”—and promptly changes the subject (*U* 5.149), later thinking with relief:

Didn’t catch me napping that wheeze. The quick touch. Soft mark. I’d like my job. Valise I have a particular fancy for. Leather. Capped corners, rivetted edges, double action lever lock. Bob Cowley lent him his for the Wicklow regatta concert last year and never heard tidings of it from that good day to this. (*U* 5.178–82)

As we learn later in “Eumaeus” (“lend me your valise and I’ll post you the ticket” [*U* 16.523–24]), M’Coy borrows the valises with promises of complimentary admission to his wife’s fictional singing tour, then presumably sells or pawns the luggage and walks off with the cash. An object putatively borrowed for its usevalue, the valise gets used only for its exchange value. Yet for all his luggagenapping, M’Coy is spied in an altruistic moment by the Argos-eyed narrator of “Wandering Rocks”: “While he waited in Temple bar M’Coy dodged a banana peel with gentle pushes of his toe from the path to the gutter. Fellow might damn easy get a nasty fall there coming along tight in the dark” (*U* 10.512–14). For his good deed of path-clearing, M’Coy is granted a single line of interior monologue, that earmark of interiority which spills lavishly from Stephen, Poldy, and Molly and is all but withheld from its villains (Boylan has three predatory words of it—“A young

and with it nature, as a mere nothing in comparison with the ideas of reason if it is sought to furnish a presentation which shall be adequate to them.” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951) 95.

pullet”—and Mulligan none [*U* 10.327]). The man who deals dishonestly in unopened valises is himself opened, valise-like, and given a self as if in thanks for a moment of selflessness.

Through M’Coy, then, the valise comes to stand metonymically for a particular kind of inwardness: not interiority *tout court*, but interiority in transit, an inwardness achieved in the spacetime of a perpetual abroad. For the contents of that achieved inside are not only interior monologue, but anterior texts that point to a textual beyond and before: the M’Coy nexus is one of *Ulysses*’s many ostentatious references to an earlier Joyce text, a textual outside now brought inside, a textual “then” made “now.” Writing may be inside the briefcase, but the inside of writing is always more writing, and the book a valise that totes other books. The writing that writing contains can be micrographic, remote, sometimes infantilized by virtue of its containment: in the belly of *Ulysses*, *Dubliners* shrinks to the vanishing point of its own conception, with Stephen thinking simply, “*Dubliners*” (*U* 7.922). But these inclusions can also glamorize the source-text in hindsight, insofar as *Ulysses*’s references to *Dubliners* (and *Portrait*, and *Chamber Music*) make the earlier books seem like indispensable preparatory reading. We might think of the M’Coy nexus as the valise Joyce borrows from *Dubliners* on the pretext of its usefulness in making *Ulysses* a believably urban space (of coincidence, object-constancy, repetition, redundancy), only to deploy it as a sort of advertisement for his own back catalogue. We can discern a similar (if less self-reverential) swindle in Joyce’s single-word borrowings from other languages. “Mappe,” in Joyce’s letter to Schmitz, is not only a portmanteau word, but a loan-word, borrowed from German by Austriacan. *Finnegans Wake*, a literary “mappamund” (not only world-map but *monde-en-valise*), is the apotheosis not only of the portmanteau word, but of the loan-word as well, a text where both of these anomalies are promoted to the status of a generalized medium of exchange. As the orchestrator of these shady transformations, Joyce himself is the real M’Coy.

Mise-en-Valise

There is no wittier meditation on these problems of assemblage, self-reference, containment, and scale than Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-Valise* series [Figure 3], the so-called “portable museum” which began appearing in 1941. A *Boîte-en-Valise* consists of a locking leather briefcase containing a fold-out wooden endoskeleton, triptych-shaped, on which are mounted miniature



Figure 3 Marcel Duchamp, *Boîte-en-Valise* (*Box in a Valise*), 1941. Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Archives. © 2000 Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

reproductions of the majority of Duchamp's works—among them the *Large Glass*, the *Nude Descending a Staircase*, and several readymades replicated in dollhouse-scale—each accompanied by a curatorial label. Additional labeled facsimiles are mounted on both sides of thirteen loose panels piled inside the valise, and each *Boîte* rounds out its sixty-nine reproductions with a seventieth “original” artwork affixed to the inside of the case's lid. As often in Duchamp's work, however, the distinction between original and copy threatens to collapse: instead of using the latest duplicating technologies, Duchamp used the outdated collotype method, a photogelatin process that required labor-intensive hand-stencil coloring, giving each facsimile an artisanal uniqueness. Many of the “original” works so painstakingly reproduced were themselves found objects (e.g., *Fountain*, *50 cc air de Paris*) that already problematized the notion of original, authentic artworks; yet to reproduce them faithfully in miniature retrospectively consecrates the found objects as original and authentic insofar as they are deemed worthy of copying. The “original” inclusions, meanwhile, are often unique copies of extant works rather than unique “new” works. Since the *Boîte* exhibits all seventy of its constitutive objects as

“de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy,” it is less a cento than a meta-cento: a continuous gallery, not so much of quotations, but of kinds and instances of quotation, renegotiations of copying-versus-creation, varieties of reproduction and information-hierarchies—and thus, we might venture, a gallery of ideology.

Self Assembly Required

The fold-out space of the *Boîte* is not all that collapses when the valise is closed and clasped. As a one-man show curated by its subject, the *Boîte* also dismantles the institutional and formal distances between artist and curator, becoming a meticulous kind of self-reconstruction and self-commemoration, a museology of the self. (What could be more preposterous—or more inevitable—than the anti-artist’s self-museum?) The work of artistic production here has become identical with the work of collecting and cataloguing, and what has been collected but the collecting subject?³¹ The one-man show is now not only a show *by* (“par”) but also *of* (“de”) the man in question, combining exhibit with exhibitionism by collapsing the man and his work into a single category, what Amelia Jones has called “the man-as-his-work.”³² Two “originals” make the *Boîte*’s self-collection and display explicitly corporeal: *Paysage fautif* consists of (Duchamp’s?) seminal fluid spattered on satin-backed Astralon, and the untitled “original” in *Boîte-en-Valise XIII* displays tufts of (again, Duchamp’s?) head, chest, and pubic hair taped to a piece of plexiglass (see Bonk 282–85). The purchaser of a *Boîte*, then, has acquired not only “a Duchamp,” but possibly some “of Duchamp” as well.³³ The implication: that by acquiring all of the *Boîtes* one could re-collect and

³¹ Assembling the *Boîtes* occasionally put Duchamp in the literal position of collector of his own work. In 1919 he had paid his dentist, Dr. Daniel Tzanck, with a mockcheck drawn on the (nonexistent) “Teeth’s Loan & Trust Company, Consolidated” of 2 Wall Street, New York. Twenty years later, he had to buy the check back from Tzanck in order to reproduce it for the *Boîtes*.

³² Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) 88.

³³ The phrase borne by the *Boîtes*—“de ou par Marcel Duchamp ou Rose Sélavy” (of or by Marcel Duchamp or Rose Sélavy)—insists on the ambiguities of both attribution and production. “Of” suggests not only possession, but secretion—art as a residue or effluvium of the body. One thinks of the *Wake*’s recipe (in Latin) for an ink made of urine and feces.

reassemble the body of Duchamp, now dismembered and dispersed throughout the land in valise-shaped canopic jars. With the artist's body thus contained and commodified, what began as a collection turns out to have properties of the souvenir as well: miniaturization, rendering interior and private what was public, the commodification of experience, the distancing of the useful from its first use (as with hair that does not warm, semen that does not inseminate—the latter especially befitting a project so showy in its apparent onanism). The swarming-ground of the souvenir is not the museum or gallery but the gift shop, with its affordable miniature mock-ups of the art objects the viewer, now turned shopper, has (maybe) just seen. But the *Boîte* collapses gallery and gift shop into a single portmanteau-space where unique souvenirs of once-ubiquitous, now “original” found objects have been collected into an exhibit that is its own shrinkwrapped catalogue, its own accordion postcard folio and boxed notecard set. Here, neither viewing nor shopping attains primacy: just as the possibility of viewing bestows value on the facsimile, so does the possibility of purchasing the copy underwrite the value of the original, even the value of viewing itself. (This joke in Duchamp is now a global commonplace.) Yet the grief of the *Boîte* does not take as its object some idealized and bygone distinction between art and commerce, artist and entrepreneur, handmade and mass-produced, original and copy—or even between readymade and auratic museum-piece, found object and fond object, found object and founding object. Rather, the elision of these categories forms the basis of a conflated grammar—a grammar necessarily of and by conflation—in which a different grief is articulated.

Bouquin-en-Valise

Asked in an interview about his intentions in fabricating the *Boîte-en-Valise*, Duchamp replied, “I don’t really know, as a matter of fact. Maybe it was a regret of a kind—regret that I hadn’t made a Saint-Etienne [Sears & Roebuck] sort of catalogue—that made me make a collection of reproductions. I didn’t really have a reason, a special intention” (Bonk 184–85). Ecke Bonk’s fascinating book, *The Box in a Valise: Inventory of an Edition*, is really a catalogue of a catalogue, replicating its subject’s preoccupations with exhibition, containment, documentation, tabulation, and replication. But unlike Duchamp, Bonk denies the *Boîte*’s essential bookishness: “The *Boîte*, instead of presenting its contents in the linear sequence of a book, simulates the horizontals and verticals of a room, perfectly to scale” (Bonk 20).

Bonk is right, of course, that the *Boîte* limns the interior of a kind of petit-Louvre. But he omits to note that such a space, maximizing its display-capacity through the miniaturization of its exhibits and the invagination (or pagination) of its internal surfaces, is necessarily bookish—and, as a result, he ignores the reciprocal boxiness of books. Duchamp's observation is suggestive, despite its caveats: the *Boîte-en-Valise* is not a book, but an embodied regret at not being a book—a yearning for both the codex form and the condition of writing, and thus a spectacle less retrospective than autobiographical. The *Boîte* manifests this longing not only in its echoes of the codex (leather-bound and opening, an interior surface hinged on the inside of the spine, double-sided leaves of image/text), but in the textuality of a number of its inclusions (the punning aphorisms of *Written Wrotten/Morceaux moisis*, the scrawled algorithm of *Recette*, the typed postcards of *Rendezvous du Dimanche 6 Février 1916 à 1h 3/4 après midi*). Its reduced scale, too, makes the exhibit-cum-catalogue a meditation on writing, insofar as any miniature invokes a graphic disjunction between the size and significance of the sign. Susan Stewart's work on micrographia is crucial here:

Such experiments with the scale of writing as we find in micrographia and the miniature book exaggerate the divergent relation between the abstract and the material nature of the sign. A reduction in dimensions does not produce a corresponding reduction in significance; indeed, the gemlike properties of the miniature book and the feats of micrographia make these forms especially suitable “containers” of aphoristic and didactic thought. . . . These forms bring us to a further aspect of this divergent relation between meaning and materiality: the problem of describing the miniature. For the miniature, in its exaggeration of interiority and its relation to the space and time of the individual perceiving subject, threatens the infinity of description without hierarchization, a world whose anteriority is always absolute, and whose profound interiority is therefore always unrecoverable. Hence for us the miniature appears as a metaphor for all books and all bodies. (Stewart 43–44)

One might add that since most writing reduces its referents in dimension without producing a corresponding reduction in significance, nearly all writing is micrographic. (To write of the metropolis, as Joyce demonstrates, is simply to build a micropolis.) By contrast, the *Boîte* longs for a shrinking that does not diminish—longs, that is, for writing, for what Foucault calls “the non-place of language”—since its own microscopy cannot help reducing the significance of at least some of its objects: a tiny replica of a readymade (e.g. *Fountain*) infantilizes the object by restoring it

to the more conventional aesthetic domain of the artisanal, draining away the threatening significance of the full-scale, found “original.”³⁴ Nonetheless, if the *Boîte* is a book manqué, it takes revenge by insinuating that books are failed boxes, compromised interiors. For its power to preserve significance in small signs, the book sacrifices the ability to impose the scale of its referents directly on the reader, whose somatogenic sense of size is not recognized by the text. Oddly, the *Boîte* makes this same sacrifice by adhering to no single scale throughout: *Fountain* is a miniature, but the “Tzanck Cheque” is a full-scale copy of the (forged) original. The conflation-space of the *Boîte* betrays its divided loyalties to book and box by exhibiting the defining flaws of both. Its fragility betokens the usual fate of double agents, who are always in enemy territory.

Valise-en-Abîme

Impending cataclysm is the generative condition of the *Boîte-en-Valise*, whose miniature innards assemble a fantasy of stopped time against the vandalism of historical time. Though Duchamp began to collect materials for the project in France as early as 1934, the first *Boîte* appeared in occupied France in 1941, while Duchamp was making arrangements to emigrate to the U.S. The valise adumbrates this flight: Europe has come apart at the seams, so a career must be packed up into a portable mini-compendium for ease of escape. Though Duchamp did not hand-carry a *Boîte* to New York in 1942, materials for the project did have to be smuggled out of France (with Duchamp posing as a cheese merchant). Like the Joycean book-*en-valise*, the *Boîte* is specially suited to the nomadic artist-in-exile, a reminder that one has had to leave “home” in order to begin constructing “back home.”³⁵ In a sense, the valise is that construction, the point-of-origin seen from the remote vantage of the exile: mourned-over, calcified, collapsible, shrunken, travelworn. The difference between the life-sized and the miniature marks the distance the exile has come from the epicenter of “home” to the portable mockup of “back home.” This is an autobiography of recession, with the original works receding toward the horizon and reduced accordingly in scale. En route now, the self has had to consolidate, insisting on its self-sufficiency

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; trans. New York: Random House, 1970) xvii.

³⁵ I am indebted to my colleague Valorie Thomas for this formulation.

by way of both a complex interiority and a dense intratextuality. Like *Ulysses*, the *Boîte* is a paradise of authorial self-reference, touting former works by inclusion.³⁶ But it also refers modestly to itself as simply the latest work in the very series it contains and exhibits, and thus equally susceptible to containment and exhibition. The *Boîte* implies, though it has the wit not to display, a mini-valise within the valise, and a micro inside the mini, and a nano inside the micro: valises all the way down—and up, through the closed universe of the mega-valise. Collapse becomes the precondition of this infinity: flattening the chronology of a career into the near-simultaneity of the exhibit, the *Boîte* drops the bottom out of space, creating a vertiginous *mise-en-abîme*. This abyss is temporal as well, at least in its sorrow: both Duchamp's box and Joyce's book thematize the temporal recession by which they will, themselves, come to be contained, reconstructed, commemorated by some future encyclopedic work (or *Wake*)—once-living, internally subdivided bodies shrinking and hardening to an agglomeration of salts, a kidney-stone in some other corpus. These infinities prove a congenial environment for two formulations: 1) the boxed collection and the collected text are at the same time *exhibits* (occasions and spaces of exhibition) and *exhibits* (objects being exhibited); 2) both works can announce the unrepeatability of their maker's earlier methods (e.g., painting for Duchamp, urban realism for Joyce) only by ostentatiously repeating them. Suspended between a repudiation of origins and a nostalgia for them, the self-exile can press forward only by peddling bad-faith elegies for the self.

Mots-en-Valise

Portmanteau: “a large leather suitcase that opens into two hinged compartments,” literally a “coat-carrier”—the Chinese box where I hang my patchwork cloak, an interior whose expanse is belied by its improbably compact

³⁶ As Dalia Judovitz points out, the confined, interlocking interior of the *Boîte* insists on a relational mode of viewing: “The process of unfolding creates a new way of experiencing these works, as a system where reference or meaning is generated through crossreference. The significance and value of these works are revealed by their relationships to each other; their position in the box generates transparencies, overlaps, or zones of opacity. The autonomy of these works as individual objects is undermined, since their meaning and value is determined not by some inherent quality but instead through their position in relation to each other.” *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 4–5.

exterior, a paradise of compartments. *Portmanteau word* (French: *mot-en-valise*)—an egg’s wishful coinage, the embodied yearning of a fragile, irreparable, unmodular body for the permanence of complexity, collapsibility, compactness, compartmentalization, closure, portability.³⁷ As both Duchamp and Joyce illustrate, the portmanteau is not only a space of comic conflation and fathomlessness, nor merely a swindler’s trap, but a relic of melancholia, or mourning for the self. This mourning orbits around two realizations of loss: first, that the self is dislocated, and must pack for exile; second, that the self is neither containable nor continent—because part of it has leaked into the absent soil of home, and because any receptacle that permits such leakage has lost its integrity. We need a self-reflexive portmanteau word to express this particular sorrow of the suitcase. *Valaise*: the *malaise-en-valise*, the malaise of the valise, the incurability of the curator who fashions a receptacle for the collected self, only to discover that the receptacle, and not the collection, was the self all along.

That the receptacle was itself collected we knew already—from the *Boîte-en-Valise*, the exhibition that exhibits itself; from *Ulysses*, with its handful of internal self-reduplications, and *Finnegans Wake*, with its warehouse of the same; and from the cento, which implies both its sources’ anterior status as collections and its own collectibility. *Valaise*: the now-familiar malady wherein the vertigo of infinite regress (Stewart’s “within within”) masks the deeper grief of infinite egress—not the regression of concentricisms in a moment, but the recession of moments into the past. The hilarity of Mary Poppins’s bottomless carpetbag—from which she extracts plants, lamps, hatracks—gets at this grief of the portmanteau, in that it unmasks capacity, interiority, and simultaneity as by-products of temporality. Mary’s bag stages the dark comedy of series: first the plant, then the lamp, then the hatrack, the humor mounting as the unforeseen vastness of the bag’s interior reveals itself by disgorging large objects, rather than by turning itself relentlessly inside out as the valise and the *mot-en-valise* do. Still, the *Boîte* partakes in this serial form of humor through a paradox in its construction: though it is the apotheosis of simultaneity, the *Boîte*’s numerous images can only be viewed in series, both because there are so many of them and because the loose folios contain images on both sides. Similarly, though the

³⁷ Humpty Dumpty in Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*: “Well, ‘slithy’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.” Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, ed. Martin Gardner (New York: Meridian, 1960) 271.

portmanteau word's uniqueness inheres in its radical simultaneity, it can only be unpacked in time—which, as readers of *Finnegans Wake* know, simultaneously darkens, ruins, and constitutes the joke. More broadly, both *Ulysses* and the *Wake* play tirelessly with simultaneity, only to yield, in their final pages, to the diachronic motions of passing out into sleep or the sea, or away into death—much as the valise that houses Duchamp's *Boîte* reminds the viewer that the pleasures of scrutiny can only occur between departures, in some sense even depend on them. For Joyce, too, the necessity of exiting is the precondition of seeing, and it lasts longer than a few pages of closing cadence: lasts a lifetime. Witness his career-long practice of covering his books, like steamer trunks, with the names of his various ports-of-call, outward-bound from Dublin: the portmanteau called *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is slapped with “Dublin-Trieste” tags, and the valise called *Ulysses* vividly stickered with “Trieste-Zurich-Paris.” Or the catalog of the Joyce family's Dublin addresses in the *Wake*, which makes even “home” an itinerant space, and thus generative of later, wider leavetakings. The writerly voyage out can dilate limitlessly because writing is in a sense always outward-bound from the body. Writing—in its scale, in its different order of permanence—locks the body out the moment it becomes writing, even as it records the body's elegy for its own passing away. The body written into *Ulysses*, then, is the “back home” of writing—the Dublin writing leaves so as to achieve itself by commemorating. *Ulysses* is a long goodbye not only because it bids a lengthy farewell (to Dublin, to nineteenth-century realism, to a particular phase of capitalism or Liberalism), but because, within its valise-like space, all length—lingering, delay, dilation, inventory, sequence, egress—is valedictory, waving from the steamer deck as the city becomes irretrievable without really seeming to recede. Let Joyce's epitaph be written: “In the act of going, he stayed” (*U* 4.308–09). The victims of *valaise* are fluent in this one tongue alone: *Valese*, the argot of valediction, the vernacular of goodbye-saying.

The Ecstasy of Catastrophe

Joyce told his friend Frank Budgen that with *Ulysses* he aimed “to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.”³⁸ The remark has

³⁸ Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960) 67–68.

tended to trigger debates about the nature and extent of Joyce's urban documentarism—whether the novel's Dublin, for instance, is the painstaking domain of the surveyor or the more casually observed space of the average citizen. In dwelling on Joyce's claims of exhaustive documentation, however, critics have passed over the imagined "disappearance" of the city that would occasion its reconstruction. Preserving Dublin's blueprints against destruction was not only a writerly display of research and recollection, but a hedge against what seemed, in the years immediately surrounding Easter 1916, a real possibility. Shortly before the Rising, Padraic Pearse himself had imagined erasure as a favorable alternative to continued British occupation: "My God, rather than go on living as we are, I would prefer to see Dublin in ruins."³⁹ And as Enda Duffy has pointed out, the earthquake damage described in "Cyclops" reads like a simple ekphrasis of the Easter 1916 photo record, whose images of bombed-out Dublin buildings in turn anticipate the metropolices soon to be made possible by massive aerial bombing.⁴⁰ Eerily, though, the astral quiet of "Ithaca" seems to constellate a sublime of the disaster, looping back to fantasies of survival and rebuilding, yes, but dwelling primarily on "the deluge" (*U* 17.749) "a submerged, petrified city" (17.1975), "the annihilation of the world and the consequent extermination of the human species" (17.464–65), "decimating epidemics: catastrophic cataclysms which make terror the basis of human mentality" (17.1003–04), "sublunary disasters" (17.1152), "holocaust" (17.2051), "Armageddon" (17.2056), "a cataclysmic annihilation of the planet in consequence of a collision with a dark sun" (17.2181–82). The precondition of *Ulysses's* writing is the destruction of its objects—whether by engulfment, erosion, expansion, or explosion. But if the "ecstasy of catastrophe" is not rapture at the sort of historical destruction Joyce deplored, what kind of destruction does it enshrine? The answer seems fittingly circular: Joyce was transported by transport. To leave home is to have destroyed it already, in order that the simulacrum of "back home" (which is necessarily "back then") may be built on its ashes. To immortalize a gone city in a text is to destroy both the past city and the present one—the past one through representation, the present one through denial. In mimesis at least, the drive to preserve cannot part from the drive to destroy. Joyce as city-destroyer is the

³⁹ Max Caulfield, *The Easter Rebellion* (London: Frederick Mueller, 1963) 47.

⁴⁰ Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) 123–24.

zippered Godzilla reducing a trainset Tokyo to a smouldering tangle of sprue—combining somehow the spasmodic zest of the sandcastle-wrecker with the dollhouse-builder’s mournful patience. In a double gesture of self-commemoration, he says: if the gone city is to go, it will be enshrined in the reliquary of my books; if the coming city is to come, it will come pocked with relics of my past. By a spectacular substitution, the self is installed as curator of the urban musoleum, rather than as a celebrated denizen of the city crypt. (Interred in the more neutral ground of Zurich’s Fluntern, *that* body is missing from Glasnevin.)

Terminal

T. S. Eliot announced in 1923 that Joyce’s “mythical method” in *Ulysses* had “the importance of a scientific discovery ... Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him.”⁴¹ Eight years later, Ezra Pound wrote in *The New Review* that “no man could write two *Ulysses*, one after the other ... Any popular entertainer would have woke Leopold Bloom the next morning and continued in a sequel. I should myself have been the first to enjoy such a sequel. I should give thanks for the various gods had he done it.”⁴² Both views—that the book demands one kind of revisitation, and that it forestalls another—are true, and speak to the novel’s ambivalence about its own uniqueness.⁴³ In its radical intertextuality, its Homeric subtext, its apparent post-heroism, *Ulysses* seems bred of repetition, recycling, the commonplace, even the anonymous. But if the novel consecrates the quotidian, it does so by disabling rather than ennobling the concept of ordinariness: instead of releasing its readers into the abundance and redundancy of the everyday, it overdetermines a single day with the accumulated significance

⁴¹ T. S. Eliot, “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,” in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) 177.

⁴² Ezra Pound, “After Election,” *The New Review* 1 (January–February 1931); qtd. in *Pound/Joyce: the Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce with Pound’s Critical Essays and Articles about Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (New York: New Directions, 1967) 239.

⁴³ A similar ambivalence structures the two critical remarks: Eliot looks to future iterations to confirm the uniqueness of Joyce’s backward-looking mythical method, while Pound’s insistence on the novel’s singularity gets drowned out by his longing for a sequel.

of all days, crushing the very category of the everyday into a dense singularity. And it repeats this gesture in its stylistic inclusions. Lacking the brevity of simple stylistic specimens, the long later chapters of *Ulysses* achieve not a sampling of styles but the exhaustion of style by overextension, and thus an evacuation, rather than an expansion, of the possible. The inclusivity that usually gets read as jocular encyclopedism could be something more moribund: *Ulysses* is the mausoleum of its own methods, the tomb of itself. This vaunted obsolescence points not toward an endless series of sequels, but toward the text's singularity, a sense that this "portable infinity" has no possible sequel but itself.⁴⁴ Weirdly, the text's ostentatious gestures of self-extinguishment are precisely what turn its readers into re-readers—by turning them into mourners. For as vast as *Ulysses* is, the particular qualities of its vastness—its expanse of detailed interiors and organized subsystems, its vertiginous interpolations of the body within perspective, its systematic bankrupting of style through overexpenditure—compel a readerly hallucination of extinction, scarcity, stillness, and diminution that can only be mourned through repetition. This returns us to Pound's quandary, which pivots on the inherent circularity of grief: in mourning the singularity of *Ulysses*, the reader deplores the very quality that makes the text worthy to be mourned in the first place. But again, the repetitions involved in this mourning reinforce, rather than erode, the evident uniqueness and scarcity of the text, since part of what gets repeated is the mourners' mantra-like testimony that they preside over the death of the one thing they have ever loved—could ever love. Two hysterical displays of grief testify: the Modern Library's recent anointing of *Ulysses* as the best English-language novel of its century, and the bitter ongoing debate about which edition of the book best approaches Joyce's intentions (in a scarce text of only 260,000 words, every syllable is sacred).⁴⁵ In the Joycean theater of grief, crêpe-clad readers the world round grow

⁴⁴ David Hayman's phrase "portable infinity" aptly describes *Ulysses* by making infinitude an effect of limits and closure (the precondition of portability): this text is infinite not in extent, but in its congeniality to—really, its insistence on—endless repetition. "Some writers in the wake of the *Wake*," *TriQuarterly* 38 (Winter 1977) 35.

⁴⁵ Not that grief is bad for commerce: to mourn the scarcity and singularity of an object is also to make it available to a market-logic that affiliates scarcity with value. The International James Joyce Foundation, in its *James Joyce Newsletter* 85 (October 1998) reports of the Modern Library list that "The results in sales were immediate: the Modern Library sold out a year's supply of its copies, and

more inconsolable with time, and no one can predict the next hair-tearing paroxysm of lamentation. The yearly culmination of this mass-mourning (for the text, not for its writer) is called Bloomsday, an obsessively commemorative event that is celebratory only in the way that a wake is. On that day above all others, the bereaved ask one another to repeat the commemorative and self-commemorative practices that intimately structure the body of the late text.⁴⁶ *Ulysses*: both the corpse in the coffin and the mass being said for its soul.

Fantasia of the Diorama

The sentimental valediction to *Ulysses* will consummate its mourners' drive to collect, collate, catalogue, complicate, celebrate, and lament Joyce's work. We will behold, sprawled across the floor of a transparent showcart, a perfect scale model of Dublin in 1904, complete with Martello Tower, Pigeonhouse, Ballast Office clock, plumseller, bookseller, cabman's shelter, 7 Eccles area

Amazon.com reported that *Ulysses* soon became its second-best paperback seller. (You know, that's *Ulysses*, as in 'Deshil Holles Eamus,' and 'Ineluctable modality of the visible.')

⁴⁶ I remain convinced that Harold Ramis's 1992 film *Groundhog Day* is crypto-Joycean (perhaps an indication of my own inconsolable grief at *Ulysses*'s singularity, and guilty desire to see it cloning itself across the landscape). In the film, the protagonist, a surly TV news anchorman played by Bill Murray, is sent to Punxsutawney, PA to cover the annual emergence of the town's groundhog. Murray's character soon finds that he is hellishly trapped in a perennial Groundhog Day, forced not only to relive the same day repeatedly, but to be alone in remembering all the previous iterations. This nightmare of Bloomsday-like repetition, however, becomes a fantasy of perfectibility when the protagonist realizes he can use the repetition to his advantage, gradually improving his performance (as co-worker, citizen, lover) to the point where he finally "gets it right" and breaks out of the cycle of repetition. By repeating Bloomsday, readers and Joyce-tourists alike parlay the putative scarcity of a one-day text into a weird plenitude of eternal repetition, one driven by the fantasy that we might "perfect" an act of reading or retracing and thereby drop out of the cycle into an afterlife of the text. The circularity of the *Wake* builds the same fantasy into the text's deep structure. Both *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were first published on Joyce's birthday, February 2: Groundhog Day.

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railings, pedestal where Wolfe Tone's statue is not—all the landmarks, all the anonymous dwellings, the essentials, the periphery, the ephemera, the ejecta. Tiny automata representing every citizen listed in the 1904 *Thom's Directory* will sally forth, circulate, and return at last to their proper addresses. The trams will run on time to collect Father Conmee and to mask a miniature Bloom's postprandial gaspassing. In a Sandymount rowhouse the size of a biscuit tin, a mechanized Widow Dignam will weep tiny tears of sewing machine oil from jewelled eyes as a matchbox coffin is jostled round an awkward corner. To the south, a concealed wave-generator will supply a buck-naked mini-Mulligan with scale-waves at the 40-foot-drop swimming hole, and a meteorological simulator will cause a small cloud to cover the sun at precisely the right moment. High above the layout, a miniature mechanical orrery will accurately simulate the motions of the stars and planets. To one side of the diorama, a valise with the approximate dimensions of 95 cm. by 70 cm., will open hinged gatefold panels to reveal a retro-futuristic terminal where users can access a vast Joyce database—a micrographic infinity—containing facsimiles of letters, wills, bills, jottings, notebooks, drafts, schemata, errata, varia, urtexts, intertexts, avant-texts and hyper-texts, all extensively annotated and translated into every known language, from Albanian to Eskimo to Uighur to Welsh. Another electronic archive will provide an exhaustive hyperlinked calendar of Joyce's life, detailing what he read, wrote, ate, drank, sang, excreted, earned, and spent on any given day. Back on the diorama, every object in the cityscape will be palplinked to corresponding phrases in the books, keyed in turn to all monographs, memoirs, biographies, photographs, paintings, films, recordings, reviews, retrospectives, spoofs, spinoffs, inventories, invectives, homages, collages. Only then will Joyce's works have become completely inscrutable.

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