

RECEPTION ANXIETY AND THE JOYCEAN ALLUSION

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**RECEPTION ANXIETY AND THE JOYCEAN ALLUSION**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project identifies and critically explores the significance of allusions to author James Joyce found across a wide range of cultural products, from Jacques Derrida's published philosophical works to popular culture artefacts such as Hollywood films and late twentieth-century literature. Allusive depth is multiplied as allusions to Joyce's work connect to the multiple allusions already at work within his own text; this connectivity functionally reverses the referential chain and carries it outside of the text to innumerable other alluded to texts. This project will elaborate on how alluding to Joyce opens up a multilayered intertextual dialogue that has the potential to enrich and complicate the alluding text, as well as all of the texts that get pulled into such intertextual dialogues. This process of recognition and reintegration generates a dialogue between texts, as the alluding text opens up an allusive space that encourages further signification, culminating in an interpretive interplay.

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## **The Arguments**

This project identifies and critically explores the significance of allusions to author James Joyce found across a wide range of cultural products, from Jacques Derrida's published philosophical works to popular culture artefacts such as Hollywood films and late twentieth-century literature. By closely analyzing allusions to Joyce and Joyce's works in various forms of media, I will investigate three ways in which these specific rhetorical evocations function. First, Joyce's name and his works have gained a celebrity status within literary history that associates him with high culture by default; his name signifies literary genius even for those that have never read Joyce but are still culturally aware of his reputation. Second, a working knowledge of the complexities in Joyce's formal practices adds another level to the allusion. His reputation for difficult poetics, innovative experimentation with literary form and style, and use of techniques such as defamiliarization within his texts solidifies his standing as an intimidating and difficult author to read—an author that Jacques Derrida posits as the exemplar of linguistic equivocity. Third, the institutionalized recognition of Joyce as an author of early twentieth-century modernist literature who practices extensive allusion making in his own fiction opens up another dimension of referentiality and intertextuality, as Joyce embedded multiple supplementary texts within his own work that function in a dialogic way. As a result, allusive depth is multiplied as allusions to Joyce's work connect to the multiple allusions already at work within his own text; this connectivity functionally reverses the referential chain and carries it outside of the text to innumerable other alluded to texts. This project will elaborate on how alluding to Joyce opens up a multilayered intertextual dialogue that has the potential to enrich

and complicate the alluding text, as well as all of the texts that get pulled into such intertextual dialogues.

There is, however, both a promise and a danger that accompanies such allusion making, since by definition an allusion is a passing reference within one text, the alluding text, to another text or texts. It is a loosely oriented series of intertextual connections, and as a passing reference, it activates correspondences between texts that are non-specific and interpretively flexible. More to the point, very few fictional allusions and their recognition are necessary to advance the plots of the texts in which they are found—indeed, character development and narrative cohesion rarely rely on the recognition of a specific allusion. Instead allusions operate within texts as intertextual suggestions, or hints; they are supplemental in that their dialogical textual correspondences are external to the alluding text, and yet they offer the potential to increase the interpretive depth of the texts in which they occur. This process of recognition and reintegration generates a dialogue between texts, as the alluding text opens up an allusive space, a structural gap that permits (and encourages) further signification, culminating in an interpretive interplay. These strategic allusive suggestions of intertextual correspondence are only restricted by the reader's decision to stop probing.

Early-twentieth-century literary modernism represents a notable shift in textual form, as it foregrounds complicating and defamiliarizing narrative techniques like allusion. Joyce's texts, such as *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, exemplify the fractured style championed by practitioners of literary modernism, who refused to specify how specific allusions and texts are to interact in meaningful ways. Literary modernism embraces the interpretive weight

carried by a literary technique like allusion, as indirect referential rhetorics deny absolute or definitive textual closure in terms of specific meanings. Instead of adhering to conventional expectations of coherence and closed resolution, many experimental modernist offerings demand of the reader a heightened exegetical relationship with the text, as allusions are often esoteric and multilayered. Obscurity, difficulty, ambiguity—these are terms often associated with the stylistic and formal practices of literary modernism, epitomized in Joyce’s textual strategies and allusive manipulations. Thus the signifying space opened up in a text by an allusion, a reference that invites a reader to actively seek meaningful associations between texts, allows for interpretive flexibility and assures textual openendedness; Joyce’s use of innumerable enigmatic allusions exposes the potential for inexhaustible interpretive yield. There is an entire industry devoted to documenting such passing references in books like *Ulysses*, indicative of both the overwhelming number of allusions therein and their interpretive potential, including Don Gifford’s *Ulysses Annotated*, Weldon Thornton’s *Allusions in Ulysses*, Harry Blamires’ *The New Bloomsday Book*, and the numerous annotated editions of the novel itself. Joyce claimed to have placed enough riddles in his books to keep scholars guessing for centuries and his use of multilayered allusions pushed him toward such immortalizing interpretive inexhaustibility: “I’ve placed so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality” (qtd. in Ellmann 521).

The allusion is also an apt literary device for a philosophical writer such as Jacques Derrida as it exposes the layers of interpretive depth, the undecidability of language, and the interconnectivity of systems of meaning that his work champions. Once posited within a text,

an allusion to another work invites the reader to manage and probe interpretive depths. Allusion is a point of entry, a device that draws attention to openings in the textual structure, and for the purposes of this paper, allusions to Joyce serve as prime examples of such interpretive permeability. The recognition of allusions invites readers to make further connections beyond the surface of the text, and beyond the specificity of the allusion, drawing attention to the expansive referential potential of all systems and the ongoing chain of referentiality that is activated upon recognition of a specific allusion. Allusion complicates occasions of reading by introducing supplemental textual systems that the author has oriented in such a way to signal connectivity; the onus is then on the reader to determine how those two texts signify simultaneously, how they correlate, and how they produce new levels of meaning once intertextually intertwined. But even this binary system of textual relations is a simplification, as the allusion is not restricted to the interplay between only two texts. The introduction of a new system of meaning introduces further potential to extend to more and more texts, via allusion. There is nothing outside the text for Derrida, and allusion reinforces the interconnectivity of all texts and systems of signification; allusion calls on texts outside of the current narrative structure, gathers their referential potential, and allows for an inexhaustible signifying chain to continue deferring meaning outside the alluding text.

Not coincidentally then, from the earliest of Derrida's published philosophical works, there has been an ongoing relationship of allusive reverential antagonism with the figure of Joyce. Derrida alludes to the Joyce signifier within multiple texts and exemplifies the way in which allusion opens up endless possible readings; his subsequent struggle in later works to contain and control the already established Joyce allusion represents the struggle that

accompanies allusion, the impossibility of mastery, and the negotiations of referentiality that always accompany such a necessarily dynamic rhetorical device. In Derrida's very first publication, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (1962), he exploits Joyce's name as an exemplar of linguistic equivocity; as such, Joyce is inserted into Derrida's linguistic philosophy as an allusive rhetorical figure oriented as a pole against Husserl's univocality. From here, Joyce reappears in Derrida's oeuvre, as he struggles to position Joyce comfortably within his subsequent writings. Joyce is credited with deconstruction's insemination and is successively reappropriated within Derrida's deconstructive texts, a testament to the interconnectivity of *all* texts, and the way in which allusions gesture beyond textual systems to external systems of meaning. Literary modernism's extensive use of allusion, specifically exemplified by Joyce, exposes the ways in which alluding defies specific limits of correspondence as a multiplicity of textual systems are always already potentially integrated; Derrida's proclivity for limitless play within textual systems, especially when conflated with these already established modernist tendencies, draws further attention to the complex undecidability of allusion and the vast interpretive potential that is occasioned by its rhetorical use.

Exploring Derrida's textual relationship to Joyce through the three functions of allusion outlined earlier will allow me to highlight the ways in which allusions are oriented to enrich philosophical argumentation, but also the ways in which allusions enact the very textual deferring that is a cornerstone of the functioning poetics of deconstruction. Allusion triggers, by association, subsequent signifiers, and draws attention to the combinatory process of the text of one signifier leading to another in an irreducible, self-replicating, self-

referencing progressive chain. Joyce presents such a rupture in Derrida's texts, an emergence that lures the reader outside of the alluding text at hand. Allusion highlights the performance of Derrida's own practice and serves as an apt choice of device for his writing, as allusion's definition prevents any absolute meaning from occurring.

This project will examine the ways in which allusion functions specifically by focusing on allusions to the metonymic figure of James Joyce, whom I have selected, in part, because of his own celebrated style of allusive poetics. The first chapter of my essay will review existing scholarship on allusion to outline a working definition of the term. The second chapter will explore the shifting intertextual relationship between Derrida and Joyce through Derrida's extensive allusions to the author, allowing me to examine a single author's struggle to contain an allusion throughout the course of his writing history (Here, I will focus on Derrida's texts *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction*, *Dissemination*, *Of Grammatology*, and *The Post Card*, as well as his essays "Two Words for Joyce" and "Ulysses Gramophone"). From here, I will critically examine an allusion in accordance with the three categories of allusive potential noted earlier (author as recognized figure, knowledge of author's works, the complicated signifying chain of reference opened up by allusion in one text activating other allusions posited within an author's work), through an allusion made to the Renaissance artist Michelangelo in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." As Joyce also alludes to Michelangelo in *Ulysses*, this allows for a comparative exploration of modernist allusions by following the recirculation of significances as they flow between and include other textualities. The next two chapters will examine specific allusions to Joyce: firstly, I will focus my analysis on Philip Roth's

*Sabbath's Theater* and how it manipulates allusions to Joyce and his work in an attempt to rhetorically generate pathos for the novel's protagonist. However, a critical examination of these allusions highlights how they deconstruct under scrutiny to reveal a manipulative protagonist by ironic contrast; the final section will comparatively explore allusions to Joyce in the films *Slacker* and *Back to School*. Both films interrogate the pitfalls and potentials of allusion through their onscreen portrayal of reception anxiety; Joycean references in these films function as unexamined rhetorical devices in their performance but deconstruct under scrutiny to reveal an ironic depth that dovetails with and triggers other thematic parallels.

### **A Scholarship Review: Grappling with Scholars Grappling with Their Pensums**

Scholars who investigate the nature of allusion often begin by invoking M.H. Abrams' definition from *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, the widely accepted resource text for defining literary terms, movements, and figures. Before exploring examples of specific literary allusions, Abrams situates the literary device and stresses the flexibility and opportunistic nature of intertextual correspondences: "Allusion is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event, or to another literary work or passage" (*Glossary* 11). The definition of allusion posited by Abrams is carefully articulated to orient the term as a *type* of reference without restricting its potential; his definition of the term remains broad enough to allow interpretive leeway. "Passing," the qualifying term in this definition, means vague or indefinite, as Abrams is quick to explain that the technique is "without explicit identification," and as such, no limitations are placed on the expansive potential of allusion. "Passing" also implies that the allusive reference can be passed over without detracting from the text. Although an allusion offers an expansive

interpretive yield that can potentially enrich a reading experience, it is not essential to the development of the plot, which often does not necessarily rely on recognition and understanding of the reference. There is a fitting semiotic binary present in the definition of “passing,” as it refers both to brevity (incidentally mentioned in *passing*) and preeminence (*surpassing* the text that contains the allusion) that is revealed when interrogated with a Derridean sensibility; I suggest that it is through similar deconstruction that allusions reveal their potential as they invite the lateral interpretation of multiple texts that are united by a single reference.

Vague definitions like Abrams’ that avoid establishing strict rules that govern the intertextual depths of association reflect the interpretive potential of allusion by leaving undefined the limits of correspondence. Attempts to define allusion offer insightful explorations of the technique, but have either done so through strict interpretive limitation (e.g., limiting the intertextual dialogue to only two texts) or through attempts to identify authorial intentionality. As many scholars have suggested, if a technique like literary allusion is to be properly located, analyzed, discussed, or even employed within further literary offerings, then it should have a clear set of identifiable rules (e.g., Michael Leddy, Carmella Perri, Angela Frattarola, etc.). Existing scholarship can be divided into primarily two camps: those who aim to define allusion by defining its limitations and those who focus on authorial intent to qualify the device and as such, aim to highlight its rhetorical effectiveness through intentionality.

In her seminal essay, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” Ziva Ben-Porat confronts existing definitions, positing that ambiguity and lack of clarity have prevented the creation of

a definition of allusion as a device. She suggests that no existing explanation actually articulates what happens in the process of allusion making and the complex functions that take place therein. She focuses on the theoretical potential of literary allusion in an effort to establish the groundwork for a practical poetics, which must begin with a definition of the term specifically as a functional device for use in literature. What Ben-Porat achieves in this analysis is a working terminology that helps to show the complex process that is going on beneath an allusion, identifying the text that contains an allusion as “activating” and describing the reference itself as “activated.” For her, too much attention has been paid to the abundance of allusions located in literature and the productive work that accompanies exploring them without ever explicitly defining what it means to allude in literature generally, and the theoretical implications of employing such a referential technique. She argues that much of this deficiency is due to a continued reliance on “common linguistic intuition” to define allusion (the allusion “as expressed in dictionaries” [“Poetics” 106]):

Allusion in its protean manifestations is so common a feature of language—and consequently of literature—that it is often taken for granted. Literary critics refer to it, usually, basing their usage of the term on their linguistic intuition rather than on a clear notion of what “allusion” signifies as a technical term in literary studies. (105)

As a common feature of “linguistic intuition,” Ben-Porat explains that literary criticism has defined allusion as a sort of hint, a casual remark that insinuates or suggests. As such, the allusion lacks any distinguishing characteristics to differentiate it from a reference in general, a direction toward required information. As a result, Ben-Porat redefines allusion exclusively as a specific literary device and explores the theoretical implications of such redefinition:

If “literary allusion” had been theoretically defined rather than understood intuitively much of the confusion would have been cleared away. However, the paucity of theoretical discussions of literary allusion stands in strikingly inverse proportion to the abundance of both actual allusions in literary works and the focus on particular allusions in many critical writings. (105)

“Neither tacit nor necessarily brief” (107), the literary allusion is an activity of associative potential dependent on a textual marker within an alluding text, a recognizable element that points the reader toward another specific textual system, resulting “in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined” (108). Allusion is locatable and specific in that it points toward a specific text, and from here the relationship between the two texts creates intertextual patterns that augment both in turn, an unpredetermined relationship that unfolds in interpretation.

As a working definition, Ben-Porat simplifies literary allusion by defining it as “a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts,” and limits the reference to a relationship between two texts. But limiting allusion to the interaction between *only* two texts sets up a reductive binary that limits interpretive potential; the allusion, by definition, cannot be circumscribed. As is the case with many other scholarly reviews, Ben-Porat is caught between extolling allusion as a rich resource for generating literary meanings and trying to delimit that meaningfulness via definitional parameters. Her explanation of the intertextual relationship is one of signifier and signified, a marker within a text that activates a new text and invites the reader to bring it to bear on the source. But in referring to the allusion as a text “activated,” she implies that its interpretive productivity has ceased. Derrida locates a similar

deficiency in the Saussurean configuration of semiotics, and his position on the associative nature of systems of language can be applied to illuminate that an activated chain of signification cannot be predetermined, and as such, continues from text to text indefinitely. An allusive reference, once identified as a marker within a text, activates a chain of reference, not from signifier to signified, but from signifier to signifier. The result is a recognizable literary technique that begins in a text, is specifically locatable, but functions as an oriented textual gap that welcomes interpretive exploration through an ongoing chain of intertextual associations, from one alluding text to another, indefinitely. Allusion is locatable within the text and activated by the reader, but remains active until the reader stops pursuing the potential of an allusion's referential chain.

There is a governing trend in scholarly studies of allusion to point out that the term allusion is itself inadequately defined. Much attention has been paid to analyzing the abundance of specific allusions as they occur in specific literary works, but time and time again, scholars and academics point to the inadequacy of allusion's existing definitions. One of the points of contention with attempts at defining this elusive term is the apparent limitlessness of the act of reference, as is expressed in Michael Leddy's essay "Limits of Allusion." He examines what he labels the limitless terms of the concept, with the intention of refining and differentiating it. In an attempt to make the term manageable and mappable, Leddy posits that there are three specific parameters that outline an allusion:

I shall suggest three main limits, limits that mark allusion as (1) a reference to a kind of entity or event, (2) a reference that invokes one or more associations of such an

entity or event and brings them to bear upon a present context, and (3) a local, small-scale device. (110-11)

To explain this concept, Leddy points out what is too massive to be considered allusion material, like form, style, or convention. For example, Joyce's Homeric parallels are too broad to be considered an allusion, and instead Leddy classifies such a technique as an act of imitation or similarity. Leddy spends much of his essay explaining what an allusion cannot be, but never explains what it necessarily is. Leddy's problem with existing definitions, like M.H. Abrams', is the absence of focused restriction: "the definition that [Abrams] offers gives little help, for it offers no limits: by this definition allusion seems not to be a special case but the very stuff speech acts are made of" ("Limits" 110). What Leddy excises from his definition, the associative potential and unpredictable freeplay that Derrida celebrates in speech acts, is precisely the way in which allusions generate productive interpretations. The essay does not aim to define or redefine the technique, but circumscribe it within limitations in an effort to distinguish it as a type of reference that is oriented to evoke a one-to-one correspondence of specificity—not unlike the limiting textual binary Ben-Porat posits for allusive intertextuality.

The allusion as a rhetorical device cannot be prescribed because it is impossible to predict how it will be received once it emerges in a text. Leddy describes a paradox within his own efforts, stating, "allusion itself resists firm definition. If firm definition of the term is unfeasible, it is [still] possible to sketch a description of some limits implicit in the typical use of allusion" (110). Limits, by their definition, are firm and precise, and as such, Leddy is cautious about asserting the limits of allusion specifically. Leddy exposes the instability

inherent in allusion making and points to the only effective means of containment: the reader's decision to stop exploring intertextual associations.

On the other hand, Stephanie Ross celebrates the inclusion of allusion in all artistic mediums, not only literature, noting the enrichment that occurs when various mediums are intertextually linked. Removing allusion from the specific confines of literature, Ross still demands that allusion tow the line between intentionality and internalism; that is to say that in order for an allusion to in fact be an allusion, it must specifically refer to another specific source as per the design of the artist: not only must it be somewhat recognizable, it must be clear that this gesture to another artistic work is purposeful. Although Ross's speculation that all art may have allusively referential properties, her strict adherence to the intentionality principle is troublesome; again, one is faced with the impossible task of not only recognizing a specific sort of referential behavior, but also somehow tracing its inclusion as necessary and specific, a hint intentionally placed within the text for the reader to unpack in a specific way that completes the reading experience. A passing reference works against intention, as a reader is free to productively identify what was not intended: it is the tension between intention and engagement that generates reception anxiety, but it is also the source of allusion's referential potential.

William Irwin outlines a definition of allusion that struggles in just such a negotiation between authorial intent and interpretive engagement in "What Is an Allusion?" In his article, Irwin grants allusion vast potential, and yet he contends that an allusion is an essential function of the text intended and guided by the author. He qualifies that allusion is a specific type of reference that directs attention beyond the text, that it must be indirect but detectable,

and yet authorially controlled. Unsatisfied with labeling allusive literary activity as simply indirect, Irwin imposes a parameter by bringing up a familiar topic of contention in literary analysis: "the place of authorial intention" (287). He uses intent to anchor what is otherwise described as interpretive potential, that which is activated by the depth and breadth of the reader's educated imagination, his/her knowledge of and experience with the source of the allusion, and their willingness to explore associative potential. My point of contention with Irwin resides in his use of a single word "correct." This is the point where authorial intent anticipates interpretive response, as if an allusion, or any writing for that manner, can demand to be read in a certain way. "Additional associations are more than just typical; they are necessary for correct and complete understanding" (288). For Irwin, allusions indicate incompleteness in the text that relies on engagement to fix, not just supplement and enrich. The expansive reference deflates, however, as soon as the caveat of correctness is introduced.

When Irwin discusses allusion without mention of authorial intent, he celebrates engagement with the text and its playful multiplicity of meanings, referring to a reader's decision to complete an allusion within a text as opposed to completing a reading by correctly identifying an intended allusion:

The word "allusion" comes to us from the Latin *alludere*: "to jest, mock, play with," and there is indeed something ludic, gamelike, in the nature of allusion. We are asked to fill in the missing piece of a puzzle, to draw on some knowledge to complete the written or spoken word in our own minds. Perhaps allusions are by their very nature incomplete and the process of completing them is a productive one. (292)

Irwin's puzzle metaphor calls for a reader's imaginative and playful fulfillment of any text. The playful completion as a productive engagement with a text seems almost Derridean, recalling his introduction to "Plato's Pharmacy," wherein he states that the writing supplement must only be prescribed "by the necessities of a game, by the logic of play" (*Dissemination* 64). But Irwin ends with a warning that advises against such a playful design:

But still we must not get carried away, and we must be careful not to attribute to author allusions they did not intend. We must strike a mean between the deficiency of obsequious reliance upon the author and the excess of unchecked textual play, for as Stanley Rosen has said, "If reading is writing, then writing is scribbling." (296)

In the same introduction that Derrida speaks of playfulness in interpretation, he not only compares reading to writing, but that they are one and the same, a creative act that can never be "booked in the present" (*Dissemination* 63), an active process that is never complete. For Irwin, the reader is free to put the pieces together as long as they play by the rules laid out by the author for a specific type of interpretive reading, otherwise the writing itself loses its proper significance or correct meaning.

An essay that specifically engages allusion in a context of twentieth-century literary modernism is Angela Frattarola's ethically concerned essay, "Modernism and the Irresponsible Allusion." She explores the ways in which the modernists took advantage of the ambiguous technique to defamiliarize aspects of their work and problematize the concept of definitive meaning. Because of this potential to mystify and produce difficulty, Frattarola places an onus on the author to allude with caution, to incorporate a referencing style that caters to the capabilities of the general reader. She advises against "alluding to texts that the

general reader would not recognize or know, and [...] referencing texts which, once traced, fail to add signification to the alluding text or disregard the authority of the same text" (174). Moreover, Frattarola argues that modernism's experimentations with esoteric allusions detract from the reading experience, and alienate the reader. For her, not unlike Irwin's "correct" reading, the literary allusion must be both easily recognizable and anticipate a specific response that augments the narrative in a productive way. Contradictorily, Frattarola's essay goes on to examine and celebrate the effect of the modernist use of allusion, specifically James Joyce's use of innumerable layers of allusion in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. She even argues that the seeming impenetrability created by the onslaught of references in Joyce's work, both obscure and overt, contribute to an overall aesthetic that "mirrors our thinking process" (180). Frattarola sees merit in allowing such allusions to play, just as she recognizes that it is part of experiential reading: allusions are a pertinent exemplification of the interactivity required in the process of interpretation, the demand that all reading places on the reader—which is to prompt intertextual connections.

By way of contrast, Joseph Pucci—in his book-length study of the relationship between reference and reader—places the responsibility firmly on the *Full-Knowing Reader* to unlock the potential of any literary allusion. Pucci argues that literary meaning belongs to the reader and his/her relationship with a specific text: "allusion demands, and in demanding creates, a special kind of reader, who is empowered at the expense of the author to make a literary work mean" (x). Pucci empowers the reader as his work shifts focus from authorial creation to the reader's interaction with the incorporated allusion, an aesthetic experience that "demands" activity, "demands" creation, and "demands" that meaning not be merely located,

but “made.” To avoid setting allusion “afloat on a sea of endless potential meaning” (46), Pucci conflates authorial and interpretive control of the allusion, pointing to the difficult undecidability and imprecise nature of the term itself:

the allusion begins and ends written in a work written by an author; it is not some freefloating mass of literary potential, autotelically actualizing itself, but rather a discrete literary phenomenon that partakes of the intentionalities of both reader and author, a phenomenon that arises in the collusion of literary works, desires and intents—not despite them. (46)

Negotiating the author’s orientation of an allusion and the reader’s interpretive control of the discovered allusion within a text, Pucci struggles to harness the intense potential of such a textual rupture by reinserting the author into the equation of interpretive control. The danger of the allusive supplement supplanting the text is observed here, and with resort to the author, Pucci asserts his caveat. I agree that allusion begins in the written work, but its endpoint is solely determined by the reader’s full-knowing choice to disengage with interpretive textual collusion, returning to the alluding text when so desired. This process is similar to the definition of allusion I wish to employ in my analysis of allusions to Joyce: a referential process in which a suggestion or indication is made that opens up an allusive space of interpretive potential which is contextualized by the reader/viewer. The recognition of an allusion always potentially leads the reader to another text in which further associative allusive meaning can be activated. Through comparisons of intertextual patterns, an enriched experience is achieved with the primary, alluding text.

*A depth without bottom, an infinite allusion, and a perfectly superficial exteriority*

For Jacques Derrida, the name James Joyce functions rhetorically in his published texts as a privileged signifier; however, this initial privileging of Joyce in Derrida's earliest published work on deconstruction leads to an ongoing textual relationship of reverential antagonism between the two writers. In *Introduction to Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry* (1962), Derrida exploits Joyce's name as a metonym that stands for linguistic equivocity; as such, Joyce becomes an unchallenged rhetorical device in Derrida's deconstructionist argument—Joyce figures here as a signifier for the unavoidable and infinite play of multiplicitous meaning occasioned by language use. Put differently, Joyce's name functions as a transcendental signified within *Origin* that is—and must necessarily be—exempt from the subsequent rigors of the deconstruction program; the author's name signifies as an exemplar of practical deconstruction.

After *Origin*, Joyce's name appears only intermittently in Derrida's published works, as the French philosopher struggles to reposition Joyce's privileged status comfortably within his critical project. As a result, Derrida avoids Joyce's name in the 1970s and only mentions him passingly in epigrams or buried footnotes. With the return of this Joycean repressed in the 1980s, Joyce becomes the focal point of two published essays; in "Two Words for Joyce" and "*Ulysses* Gramophone." In these two works, Derrida's Oedipal struggle with the enigmatic Irish author comes full circle as he maintains Joyce's position of privilege, but contends with its privileged status as a transcendental signified. As Derrida posits in "Two Words," "every time I write, and even in the most academic pieces of work, Joyce's ghost is coming on board" (*Post-Structuralist* 149); it is this Joycean haunting that has been listed and

acknowledged in scholarly critiques of Joyce/Derrida intertextuality, but not adequately articulated and explored as a source of anxiety in Derrida's deconstruction program.

Derrida's representation of Joyce in *Origin* is one of reverence, but this privileged signification is adjusted and renegotiated as it is redeployed in his subsequent works. In his second publication, *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida delineates the concept of equivocity put forward in *Origin*, but no longer ties it to Joyce. In exploring the metaphysics of presence, Derrida renegotiates the traditionally perceived concept of writing in the West as he evaluates the ways in which polysemous meaning is produced through language. But Joyce's name is notably absent, repressed in this publication, allowing Derrida argumentative room to develop a science of writing while avoiding the difficult paradox of Joyce's name functioning as an unassailable transcendental signified. The Joyce allusion plays a crucial role in the deconstruction project in that Joyce stands in as a practitioner of the method before Derrida had fully articulated his approach.

Derrida, and Derridean scholars, have not failed to mention the Joycean influence, but it is the original strategic deployment of the Joyce name as a static signifier—one that is never comfortably appropriated back into deconstruction—that requires further examination, as the trajectory speaks to a complex relationship that demanded constant reconfiguration on Derrida's behalf throughout his publishing career. In comparison, Joyce and Derrida are noted for sharing stylistic similarities and for possessing self-awareness in their writing. Joyce/Derrida comparisons and interpretations highlight the way in which the two have been examined together: not polarized like Husserl/Joyce in *Origin*, but as a parallel that sets up an Oedipal relation that Derrida acknowledges at various points in his publications. At no point in Derrida's career does Joyce fail to be a privileged signifier; however, the nature of this

privileged status undergoes a renegotiation to accommodate critical demands of deconstruction—from an unquestioned binary pole (equivocity) to a complex figure of difficult poetics—someone whose understanding of language’s multiplicity is fully exploited in the literary works produced. If Derrida’s presentation of Joyce foregrounds the impossibility of mastery, his own writing attained similar status among practitioners of deconstruction.

There have been numerous scholarly works published that trace the relationship between Derrida and Joyce, but none has adequately analyzed the important critical shifts in usage and the rhetorical strategies that constitute Derrida’s ongoing struggle with the Joyce allusion. Most scholars opt for a recitation of Derrida’s own version of the pair’s intertextuality and his confession that Joyce has been on board since deconstruction’s inception. For example, Murray McArthur’s essay, “The Example of Joyce: Derrida Reading Joyce,” recognizes the significance of Joyce within Derrida’s earliest work, as the title suggestively alludes to Derrida’s use of the Joyce signifier as well as the Joycean influence on deconstruction. Discussing Derrida’s *necessary* reliance on Joyce, McArthur reveals:

the purpose of this essay is to read how Derrida has figured that necessity, how he has read Joyce and, as he claims, been read by Joyce. This figuration involves, as we shall see, a vast network of imbricated rhetorics and emblematics of relation. The quickest way into, if not out of, this labyrinth is to follow Derrida's own directions.

(“Example” 228)

While McArthur indicates that he traces the ways in which Joyce figures into Derrida’s work, he defers authority to Derrida by explicitly stating that the best way to decipher this intricate relationship is to follow Derrida’s own lead. Instead of combing through the ways in which

Derrida struggles to appropriate Joyce within his own work, Derrida's styles are grafted (to borrow—again—a Derridean word) onto Joyce's own texts, reaffirming that Joyce had in fact presciently “read us all” (*Post Card* 161). If there is a rhetorical imbrication, it requires further exploration in order to explicate why Derrida's particular usage of Joyce was, as McArthur claims, necessary. By granting interpretative authority to Derrida, the allusion is curtailed—McArthur's claim is in line with allusion scholarship that configures intentionality as the sole determinant of allusory potential.

In their explorations of intertextuality, scholars have tended to lionize Derrida as an equal of Joyce's in terms of his innovation and complexity, while at the same time accrediting Joyce with inspiring Derrida's deconstruction project. Similar stylistic comparisons are made in *James Joyce and the Difference of Language*, as Laurent Milesi goes so far as to deploy phrases like “Joyce's Pharmacy,” inserting Joyce's name into Derrida's “Plato's Pharmacy” from *Dissemination*. Instead of examining what is at stake in utilizing the example of Joyce, what follows is an oversimplified comparison of his similarity to Derrida's argumentative style:

It hardly needs stating, of course, that in such a manoeuvre [sic] Derrida reduplicates the questions of distance and intimacy again: Joyce's distance from Derrida marked by the uncanny proximity of their thought, style, language. (*James Joyce* 113)

Milesi's explanation vaguely traces the connection between the two, but avoids the question of why Derrida constantly returns to Joyce in his work and what rhetorical leverage it creates within his writing. Instead, Milesi situates the two as obviously inextricable, going so far as to say that it no longer even needs to be stated: their thoughts are proximate to the point of reduplication. Moreover, Claudette Sartillot elevates this connection in *Citation and*

*Modernity*, stating, “indeed, both Joyce and Derrida have turned the punishment of God—dissemination—into a gift” (*Citation* 111). Sartilliot metaphorically expresses the similarities between the writers in their challenging of interpretive closure, here configured as “God,” the transcendental signified punished by these authors. She aligns the work of both authors with the same source of divine inspiration for their written works—and gives that source a Derridean name: dissemination.

Returning to Derrida’s own allusions to Joyce, *Origin* pits Husserl against Joyce, and consequently transforms the two names into static signifiers within the phenomenological debate: of transparency and indeterminacy, respectively. Despite the configuration of this binary, Derrida refutes a pure presence of meaning within language:

Husserl never ceased to appeal to the imperative of univocity. Equivocity is the path of all philosophical aberration. It is all the more imperative not to be hasty here, as the sense of equivocity in general is itself equivocal. There is a contingent plurivocity or multisignificance and an essential one. (*Origin* 100)

According to Derrida, Husserl pushed for a clarity in writing that does not allow for multiple significations to obscure the intended meaning of the written word. Derrida’s characterization of multisignificance as an essential contingency of language opposes the Husserlian demand for transparency. Aligning himself with this precarious endeavor, Derrida instates Joyce as his predecessor, as he structures his argument around Joyce’s name and what it signifies:

like Joyce, this endeavor would try to make the structural unity of all empirical culture appear in the generalized equivocation of a writing that, no longer translating one language into another on the basis of their common cores of sense, circulates through all languages at once, accumulates their energies, actualizes their most secret

consonances, discloses their furthestmost common horizons, cultivates their associative syntheses instead of avoiding them, and rediscovers the poetic value of passivity. (*Origin* 102)

Derrida's use of the Joyce name in his central argument is an example of strategic binarism (temporary polarization of oversimplified positions in order to provide argumentative contrast), for as Derrida admits, equivocity must "allot its share to univocity" in order to provide momentary static clarity. In Derrida's argument, Joyce ironically and paradoxically signifies the *purely* equivocal. Where Husserl strove for transparency, Derrida's example of Joycean stylistics symbolizes a linguistics of indeterminacy, and simultaneously, privileges the Irish author as a literary figure capable of harnessing the full potential of multiplicitous language. But it is significant to note that Derrida denies Joyce a place within his subsequent (and seminal) publication *Of Grammatology*, instead reconfiguring his use of the signifier as he stakes his own place within the philosophy of language—it is untenable to maintain a privileged signifier in a text that celebrates the dismantling and equivocity of signification systems, which speaks to the interpretive negotiations that must accompany allusion. Positioning Joyce as emblematic of the full potential of language immobilizes subsequent analysis, as represented by his repression in subsequent texts.

Derrida deconstructs Edmund Husserl's phenomenological position by exploiting the celebrity cachet of the name James Joyce. Derrida's argument profits from his characterization of Joyce as a genius author with a mastery over the complexities of language. In his preface to the *Origin*, John Leavy states that the exhaustive essay provides "an introduction to the work of Derrida in general and furnishes a basic part of the framework

for his later, present work. That basic framework [...] is phenomenology” (*Origin* 8), which is to say the framework, or origin of, deconstruction. Derrida supplements his central argument with the example of Joycean writing. Joyce’s style, instantly recognizable and put forward as the benchmark of experimental literary modernism, showcases the stylistic play and multiplicity of interpretive meaning, what Derrida labels as equivocity: “a language that could equalize the greatest possible synchrony with the greatest potential for buried, accumulated and interwoven intentions with each linguistic atom” (102).

Derrida’s discussion of “the example” fittingly showcases the way in which allusions can be deployed strategically, but that their orientation does not determine their interpretation. Initially introduced in Derrida’s work as exemplary of linguistic potential, Joyce, the author of two paradigmatic self-deconstructing texts, later gets marginalized into obscurity. In “Two Words for Joyce,” Derrida’s first work in which Joyce again becomes the central focus, he refers to his entire literary career as being haunted by the Irish author: “You’re not only overcome by him, whether you know it or not, but obliged by him, and constrained to measure yourself against this overcoming” (*Post-Structuralist* 147). Presented in this way, Derrida recommends that all of his works be reread with the understanding that Joyce has been “on board” since day one, haunting the margins. The way in which Derrida relegates Joyce’s name to the footnotes and epigrams of his texts from the 1970s speaks to a renegotiation, one in which Joyce as signifier begins to do work in different ways. In *Writing and Difference*, for example, Joyce’s name appears within a footnote between the names of Proust and Faulkner; in *Dissemination*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is quoted for its mention of Thoth, a thematic link to chapter three of “Plato’s Pharmacy”—notably not a stylistic claim or polysemous affinity. Joyce’s name appears in Derrida’s writing throughout

the 1970s, but never does it take the revered, privileged position it was allotted in *Origin*. Although Derrida would go on to say that the “Pharmacy” was itself “a reading-head or principle of decipherment for a possible understanding of *Finnegans Wake*,” it is undeniable that Joyce’s presence is curtailed—his privileged status requires that he does not enter into certain arguments where his status cannot be sustained. Whether a result of Derrida’s “resentment” for Joyce’s mastery or an indication that he was as yet unprepared to tackle Joyce head on, there is a noticeable shift in the way he treats the author’s name, and an anxiety about dealing with a figure that was deconstructing before deconstruction became articulated as a theoretical practice. Joyce is necessarily repressed as an untenable example (or again, as a privileged signifier) for texts critically committed to unpacking the privilege of presence.

Already positioned as the exemplary figure of linguistic equivocity—the very topic in discussion within *Grammatology*—it is necessary for Derrida to withhold Joyce as he explores deconstruction and lays the foundation for his project; the absence of Joyce in *Grammatology* appears to function strategically within Derrida’s literary career; where the name rhetorically oriented within *Origin* as a symbol of writing’s potentiality, its removal allows Derrida’s own voice to fill the argumentative space originally reserved by the work of Joyce and to avoid the necessary pitfalls of establishing Joyce as a polar signified that is not always already *just* a signifier leading to further signifying chains. The removal is illustrative of Derrida’s ongoing negotiation with the uncontrollable Joyce allusion. Derrida concedes that:

This is the moment, as it were, of *the example* [my emphasis], although strictly speaking, that notion is not acceptable within my argument. I have tried to defend,

patiently and at length, the choice of these examples (as I have called them for the sake of convenience) and the necessity for their presentation. (*Grammatology* lxxix)

Derrida initially suggests that *the* Joyce example is required here, but it is “not acceptable within [his] argument.” The difference is between what is referred to here as *the* example and the examples he employs in his argument, notably, the inability presently to contend with Joyce in his project. In the chapter entitled “The Turn of Writing,” Derrida discusses the necessary shifts in privileged signification within systems of language, and that all privileging, like his of Joyce, must be temporary:

Language is a structure—a system of oppositions of places and values—and an oriented structure. Let us rather say, only half in jest, that its orientation is a disorientation. One will be able to call it a polarization... language turns, so to speak, as the earth turns. Here neither the orient nor the occident is privileged.

(*Grammatology* 216)

It is this privileging within the polarity of language that Derrida locates and deconstructs within the text, but having already polarized language in *Origin*, and having privileged the Joyce signifier within that particular structure, it cannot yet be repositioned within this moment of deconstruction’s discourse: Derrida’s inability to control the signifying chain set in play in *Origin* is represented by the repression of Joyce allusions for almost a decade.

An example of this appears in *The Post Card*, where Derrida chooses to contrast Joyce’s image with his own, in an allusion that represents an attempt to rhetorically reconfigure his relationship with Joyce. The image is that of Derrida standing beneath Joyce’s funerary monument in Zurich, an image that blurs the lines of origin and influence, as Derrida monumentalizes himself at the foot of Joyce’s statue. The text is organized around

Derrida's analysis of another image, one of Socrates and Plato discovered on a postcard that inverts the positions of the teacher and disciple. In that image, the disciple Plato peers over his teacher's shoulder as he writes on a tablet. The physical relation is read as an achronological disruption—one that Derrida exploits to problematize and blur the expected distinctions between readers and writers, and which speaks to an underlying anxiety in his relationship with Joyce, as Derrida proceeds to establish an image in which Joyce peers over *his* shoulder. Structured similarly, it is his own image juxtaposed against Joyce's monumentalism, the way in which the colossal "funerary monument" peers down upon Derrida that parallels Plato and Socrates:

You accompany me everywhere. Hillis, who was waiting for me at the airport (the de Mans arrive only this afternoon) drove me to the cemetery, near to Joyce's tomb, I should say funerary monument. I didn't know that he was here. Above the tomb, in a museum of the most costly horrors, a life-size Joyce, in other words colossal in this place, seated with his cane, a cigarette in hand it seems to me, and a book in the other hand. He has read all of us—and plundered us, that one. I imagined him looking at himself posed there—by his zealous descendants I suppose. (*Post Card* 148)

Derrida physically positions himself alongside a life-size representation of Joyce, a colossal funerary monument peering down at him over a book. The image created echoes the Socrates/Plato reversal on the central postcard of the text, an image that finds the student (Plato) peering over his teacher's (Socrates) shoulder. Symbolically the Joyce/Derrida image represents an inversion, a reversal of the perceived order of hierarchy and chronology. The image suggests that Joyce has read Derrida, just as Derrida has read Joyce. If Joyce has read us all in advance, and Joyce was the original work of deconstruction, the image created on

this postcard suggests that Derrida must be read in the same fashion, a blurring of the logical chronology of their relationship. Derrida claims to have forgotten that Joyce's grave was nearby, but it is an inescapable repression—even in death, Joyce haunts his journeys. Murray McArthur puts it as such: "Now, clearly, it is Derrida himself, the philosopher writing philosophy as if it were literature, the writer implicated in all the rhetorics and emblematics of relation with this colossus, as grandson, son, brother, friend, lover, antagonist, legatee" (233), thus drawing from the image an inseparability of presence for both men, problematizing the concept of influence and the ways in which (allusively) interconnected authors are to be read.

Derrida's struggle with the Joyce signifier visibly manifests itself within his 1984 essay "*Ulysses* Gramophone," presented at the annual Joyce Symposium, where he performs his second essay-length close reading of Joyce. As he returns to his admiration of Joyce's "overpotentiality," Derrida positions Joyce as the unmasterable writer far beyond the grasp of expertise. Moreover, Derrida challenges the concept of expertise itself:

Joyce laid stakes on the modern university, but he challenges it to reconstitute itself after him. At any rate he marks the essential limits. Basically, there can be no Joycean competence, in the certain and strict sense of the concept of competence, with the criteria of evaluation and legitimation that are attached to it. ("Gramophone" 282)

Derrida attacks the idea of Joycean expertise within his reading of Joyce, which helps to explain the delay in returning to Joyce: Where "Two Words" is a deconstructive textual reading that articulates Derrida's own project, "Gramophone" finally addresses the signifier. He states that no one can claim to have mastered Joyce, for with him, "nothing is

transcendent” (283), which is to say that all significations must be subjected to the scrutinies of deconstruction, and Joyce has already anticipated every move in advance.

In articulating the relationship between Joycean criticism and Joyce’s work, Derrida also describes the nature of his critical relationship to Joyce, one in which there is an inescapable debt, an underlying resentment, and, due to the nature of the original untouchable position prescribed for Joyce, the impossibility of ever reintegrating the “reference.” The earlier “Two Words” explicitly states Derrida’s “resentment” for the “sadistic demiurge” that is Joyce, and speaks to his struggles with Joyce throughout his publishing history:

Paradoxical logic of this relationship between two texts, two programmes or two literary ‘softwares’: whatever the difference between them, even if, as in the present case, it is immense and even incommensurable, the ‘second’ text, the one which fatally refers to the other, quotes it, exploits it, parasites it and deciphers it, is no doubt the minute parcel detached from the other, the metonymic dwarf, the jester of the great anterior text which would have declared war on it in languages; and yet it is also another set, quite other, bigger and more powerful than the all-powerful which it drags off and reinscribes elsewhere in order to defy its ascendancy. (“Two Words” 148)

By way of confession, Derrida states that he never dared to write on Joyce before now because of the feeling of malaise generated when attempting to read the dynamic immensity that is Joyce’s works. The second text, as Derrida puts it, can be viewed as a text in which Joyce is alluded to or directly dealt with critically, as is the case in his own work. He suggests that any alluding text that relies on a predecessor like Joyce’s will be a minute representation of a much larger project, but Derrida concedes the potential for the secondary text to expand

upon the reaches of its predecessor, to overwhelm the limitations of Joycean originality through parasitic intrusion, incision, and extrapolation. He articulates a relationship of citationality with multiple dimensions and uses, like his relationship with the Joyce signifier that is constantly renegotiated and redeployed to serve multiple functions.

The problem with the Joyce signifier for Derrida manifests here, as he situates Joyce as an encyclopedic collection of ongoing signifying chains that defy closure within a single, structured interpretation:

this hypermnesic interiorization can never be closed upon itself [...] there can be no assurance of any principle of truth or legitimacy, so you also have the feeling, given that nothing new can take you by surprise from the inside, that something might eventually happen to you from the inside, that something might eventually happen to you from an unforeseeable outside. ("Gramophone" 283)

Deconstructing the Joyce signifier itself, Derrida argues that there is always room for new insight into Joyce's work; it is so overabundant with allusion and signification that nothing could ever "take you by surprise." This is the paradox present in Derrida's original situation of the Joycean signifier as transcendental: as a work that is representative of a complex dynamics of referentiality and intertextuality, it cannot be situated in a way that limits its potential; articulated as such, it encompasses deconstruction already deconstructing itself in advance. Reserved for this occasion of Joycean celebration, Derrida finally addresses the undisseminated signifier utilized in *Origin*, only to admit that it is unstable and completely uncontainable.

More significant than Derrida's specific references to and readings of Joyce is the trajectory in which the relationship between the two writers plays out over the span of

Derrida's prolific writing history. To summarize, Joyce consistently occupies a position of privilege, but the way in which this symbol shifts within Derrida's works varies in order to facilitate various arguments therein: as a transcendental signification of equivocity in *Origin*; repressed to the margins of his 1970s publications to allow deconstruction an opportunity to be articulated; reconfigured within *Post Card* in a way that exposes an Oedipal struggle with the author; further denied a full presence in "Two Words" as he takes advantage of the opportunity to showcase deconstruction itself; and, ultimately deconstructed in "Gramophone" as a representation of full linguistic multisignificance. First presented as a benchmark of unmasterability, Joyce is ultimately deconstructed to reveal that his signification cannot be contained. To list and describe Derrida's citations without critical attention to their rhetorical capacities is to ignore the intricate connections between Derrida and Joyce, and more importantly Derrida's manipulation of the Joyce allusion to further the development of deconstruction. If Derrida's original insertion of Joyce was merely out of "the desire to make for oneself a name" (*Acts* 1), then his subsequent texts were spent renegotiating a transcendental signification that was limited in its use in order to allow deconstruction time to catch up. Once reintroduced, Joyce is revealed as an allusion capable of equivocity in and of itself rather than a stable, fixed signified.

### **Talking of Michelangelo**

As a modernist author and practitioner of literary allusion, T. S. Eliot provides an apt parallel for exploring the dynamics of a literary allusion to someone other than James Joyce. Furthermore, Eliot's critical engagement with *Ulysses* and his own struggles to conceptually come to grips with allusion as a technique (as shown in his essays "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" and "Tradition and the Individual Talent," as well as his doctoral dissertation

*Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*) provide critical perspectives and practical representations of allusions. Eliot's allusions to the artist Michelangelo in "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" illustrate the productivity that can accompany extending an intertextual reference and in exploring the multiple referential chains it puts into play. The Michelangelo allusion is significant for primarily three reasons: Michelangelo's name mononymically carries an enormous referential cache, like Joyce's; Michelangelo's prolific works allow for Eliot's loosely oriented allusion to cover much surface area—like Joyce's allusion-heavy texts, Michelangelo's works are often grand in scale, complex artistic offerings that play with traditional forms and contain multiple layered allusions; what's more, Joyce twice alludes to Michelangelo in *Ulysses*. This allows for a comparative exploration of modernist allusions to the Renaissance artist, following the recirculation of significances as they flow between and include other textualities. Furthermore, Eliot's allusions in "Prufrock" to Michelangelo provide comparative insight for allusion made *to* Joyce.

An exploration of Eliot's use of the name Michelangelo in "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" gestures toward the sustainable layers of meaning that an allusion can produce and the dynamic relationships that are created. By repeating a single name that is both connotative and metonymic, "Prufrock" incorporates a wealth of elements and qualities that invite the reader to draw comparisons and investigate disparities, activities that can ultimately enrich the reading experience. In its brevity, Eliot's use of Michelangelo is a salient example of a recognizable, seemingly innocuous allusion that requires careful negotiation to expose the depth of its potential as a rhetorical device; the responsibility of literary allusion resides in the reader's decision to impose limits to avoid spiraling into the unending referential chain that it sets in motion. Eliot's allusion creates a relationship

between “Prufrock” and Michelangelo (and his work), it suggests a historical relationship with tradition, and it reverberates in *Ulysses* as well, through Joyce’s own allusions to Michelangelo. The allusion invites comparison between Eliot the practitioner and Eliot the theorist/analyst when the poet is connected with Joyce through textual allusion as well as his critical essays. As such, Eliot serves as a case study for the ways in which late twentieth-century cultural products use the Joyce allusion.

In his highly anticipated critical review of *Ulysses*, entitled “*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth,” Eliot venerates Joyce, saying “I hold this book to be the most important expression which the present age has found; it is a book to which we are all indebted, and from which none of us can escape” (“Myth” 1); Eliot presents the allusive mythical form that runs through Joyce’s novel as the most significant offering to literature, an organizational technique that gives shape to the immense and difficult novel. What Eliot refers to as Joyce’s mythical form, a form that is indicative of a mastery of and escape from precedent texts, is achieved through the use of extended allusion. The Homeric parallel of *Ulysses* is a lengthy allusion to the *Odyssey*, one that Eliot situates as its most significant feature, a feature which he takes advantage of to gain access to the novel itself. Allusion, as such, is presented as an organizing force that unites the daunting complexities and encyclopedic (and often obscure) referencing in the novel, creating an interpretive entry point for Eliot. He expounds on Joyce’s manipulation of the classical myth, and how this “mythical method” introduces a new structuralizing method that can finally account for a new era of literature.

In describing *Ulysses*’ relationship with the *Odyssey*, and how the extended textual echoes create a reverberant dialogue that shapes and reshapes both texts, Eliot is defining, without actually using the word, the literary allusion. In coming to grips with *Ulysses*, Eliot is

also coming to grips with the eruptive yet organizational force that is allusion, a prominent feature of his own modernist poetics.

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him [...]. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. ("Myth" 3)

The manipulations of parallels that constantly emerge in Joyce's novel (as well as Eliot's own poetry, as displayed by Dante's epigraph presiding over "Prufrock", for example) represent what Eliot foregrounds as the indispensable historical sense that a writer must employ. This historical sense emerges in the form of allusions. Eliot refers to the panoramic view that accompanies his approach to *Ulysses*, which suggests through visual allusion the grand scope that reading entails. The novel extends beyond the scene at hand into the margins which are filled with the revered and mastered texts that came before. Eliot's playful inclusions in the annotations of *The Waste Land* that arrive a few years after *Ulysses* elaborate on the author's relationship with and opinion of the text as a self-contained object: where his annotations often lead the reader to enriching or clarifying material, other times they were red herrings—but it stands that they became a part of the text merely via inclusion. What this points to is a problematization of the scope of a text at hand, where the textual surface actually ends, implying that the reader must place their own parameters on acts of reading. As Eliot shows in his annotations to *The Waste Land*, wherever the text leads you becomes part of the original alluding text—he anticipates Derrida's claim that there is, in fact, nothing outside of the text at all.

Eliot is also vocal about the relationship that texts share through history; he outlines that his praise for the mythical form is not simply due to its revelation of influences and its maintained implicit respect for the masters of antiquity. His description of literary history is a totalizing, and yet organic, structure, one that is complete and ideal, a structure that accommodates every new work that is introduced to the order by shaping it, and in turn, being shaped *by* it. Eliot articulates an indefinite relationship of exchange between literary artefacts that retroactively alters existing works just as much as they impact the texts to follow:

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. ("Tradition" 37)

Eliot's philosophical stance (that he later expands upon in his doctoral dissertation) is representative of the modernist dialectical relationship that exists in allusion—it is a flux and exchange that reshapes texts in an ongoing dialogue that does not end in synthesis, but a complementarity that is not predetermined, and continually eschews closure. As Jewel Brooker suggests in "Transcendence and Return," an allusion is not just a reference that sends one away from the text at hand, but a liberation effected by a return, after knowledge, to the place from which one started" (55). What Eliot praises *Ulysses* for is its ability to account for and reconfigure that which came before it, which in turn also invites the return and resignification of preceding texts into the newest text.

In fact, Eliot's critical engagement with literary modernism in his essays gives shape to an overriding philosophy of modernist dialectics that resembles Derrida's deconstruction of binaries, outlining a more complex relationship with language and text, as outlined by Brooker:

Eliot's intellectual comprehensiveness—more specifically, his rejection of synthesis and his insistence on a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” logic—illustrates a foundational pattern in modernist art and thought. [...] a play between opposites that moves forward by spiraling back (a return) and up (a transcendence). (55-56)

Allusive force captures the fundamental impetus to progress only after a return to that which was written before, as outlined by Eliot in his dissertation. He speaks to the need for a historical perspective, one that situates previous work alongside present texts in an ongoing interactive relationship that infinitely alters them all. Allusion is the vehicle for such historical mastery, change, and progress. Eliot praises Joyce's structural use of allusion and names *Ulysses* as the textual exemplar due to its ability to negotiate the tensions of contemporary history, giving form to an immensely complex web of signification. Richard Ellmann notes that “Eliot insisted that Joyce had killed the nineteenth century, exposed the futility of all styles, and destroyed his own future” (Ellmann 528). Destruction, in Eliot's sense, is not an implication that Joyce had rendered the fictions of the previous centuries useless, but had moved forward by returning to the past allowing them to resonate in his present work—Joyce was deconstructing via allusion.

Before articulating his praise for Joyce's massively allusive “mythical form,” Eliot demonstrates the potential of allusion through his own poetry. First published in June 1915, “Prufrock” demonstrates Eliot's own allusive abilities, his respect for the historical, and,

through his epigraphical use of Dante that introduces and informs the poem, displays an early example of what he later calls the “mythical form.” Presented as a dramatic interior monologue, “Prufrock” conveys an awareness of mortality through its imagery of decomposition as the titular character struggles to articulate his “overwhelming question” that ultimately goes unasked—this is a significant feature, as thematically the poem is driven by an unarticulated desire to know more, conveyed through a question that is not within the text itself. Prufrock’s song is cut off twice by a two-line refrain that interrupts the interiority of his thoughts, a refrain that is organized around an allusion to Renaissance artist Michelangelo. Prufrock’s unwillingness to engage with the women in the room suggests his timidity and frustration; his self-concept is further diminished as the poem juxtaposes the titular character with arguably the greatest artist of the sixteenth century, a man who does not need to speak at all to make an impression on the women that Prufrock desires:

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo. (*Collected Poems* 3)

The refrain stands as an abrupt intrusion; it is offset from the initial passage of weary contemplation and presents a dissimilar cadence to the poem thus far. The rhyming couplet interrupts Prufrock’s monologue of longing and casts the nameless women in a contemptuous light. Although these women speak of Michelangelo, who represents the pinnacles of artistic Renaissance achievement, he is mentioned by name only. This seemingly empty reference amounts to little more than name-dropping, especially when Eliot repeats the refrain further on, once again interrupting Prufrock’s internal psychological transitions. These interruptions resemble the way in which Michelangelo as topic of conversation continues to weigh on Prufrock’s mind; offset from the poem, attention is drawn to the couplet, reinforcing the

separation between the narrative voice and the discussions in the room that are exterior to Prufrock's thoughts and the initially established narrative form of free-verse imagery. The implicit judgment that Prufrock harbors for these women, conveyed through an *absence* of detail, suggests their pretentious bandying about of Michelangelo's name: the narrative restricts Michelangelo to his name only, implicitly suggesting a lack of depth in the conversation itself or a willed ignorance on behalf of the emasculated Prufrock. Robert McNamara outlines that the omission of the specifics of the dialogue that clearly has a major impact on Prufrock in his essay, "'Prufrock' and the Problem of Literary Narcissism." For McNamara, the narrative omission highlights the vapidness of the women's conversation, but furthermore, it serves as a narrative encouragement to pursue the imbedded loaded allusion:

The tone surrounds these aimless, ethereal women, speaking of an intensely physical artist, with an aura of seemingly undeserved grandeur [...]. "Prufrock"'s foregrounding of the authorial act plays against the mood of grandeur the voice creates, drawing attention to the constructed nature of the voice and allowing us to glimpse behind the grandeur the inappropriate objects to which the mood has been attached. (367)

McNamara similarly sees the couplets as intrusions that are situated in the poem as artificial and vacuous, a reference to Michelangelo that remains unqualified; he denounces this as a hypocritical limitation of the narrative as it condemns the women for their name-dropping. I argue that this extension of clarification is ironically accomplished through allusion; while McNamara states that although the poem effectively "analyze[s] romanticism, narcissism, and bourgeois evasiveness," he suggests that it offers no remedy to the evasiveness that it scathingly portrays: "it becomes one more form of paralysis, repeating the problem of the

Victorian discursivity it sought to replace” (McNamara 377). Though “Prufrock’s” narrative does not overtly amend the shallow banter of these nameless women, the narrative form gestures toward the Renaissance through allusion and activates a cycle of literary rebirth as it invites further exploration through the work of allusion. The form of narrative intrusion that organizes the repeated allusion refuses to ignore Michelangelo, as the allusion haunts both Prufrock himself and the poem en toto. The poem draws attention to the desires and dangers that accompany interpretation asking, “how should I presume?” and “how should I begin?”(5), and in an imagined line of dialogue, Prufrock expressively points toward the dread that is misinterpretation: “that is not it at all, That is not what I meant at all” (7).

Here the narrator asks how to begin, how to audaciously proceed. The lines suggest indecisiveness and fear and yet a desire to engage; these emotions elicited by the poem accompany the exploration of such an allusion as Michelangelo, the potential it contains and the necessary limitations that need to be applied in order to contain such a literary device. Prufrock’s envisioned instance of being misinterpreted point toward the impossibility of guiding any referential act perfectly, and the vast interpretive potential that is part of an act like allusion. The absent dialogue effectively says more through the suggestion of allusion than a scripted conversation could in the poem.

In “Prufrock,” the metonymic Michelangelo gives shape to the jealousy and emasculation that the poem forcefully conveys through its refrains. Attached to the allusive name are connotations of celebrated genius that diminish the formless Prufrock in comparison. Even a cursory knowledge of Michelangelo allows the allusion to operate on this level: to convey this, I have cited a Wikipedia entry, as it is a popular, accessible search engine tool that is also indicative of general knowledge levels, as it is open-source:

Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni (6 March 1475 – 18 February 1564), commonly known as Michelangelo, was an Italian Renaissance sculptor, painter, architect, poet, and engineer who exerted an unparalleled influence on the development of Western art. Despite making few forays beyond the arts, his versatility in the disciplines he took up was of such a high order that he is often considered a contender for the title of the archetypal Renaissance man, along with fellow Italian Leonardo da Vinci. (“Michelangelo” 2013)

The name suggests grand artistic achievement, and conjures images of famous pieces like the statue of *David* or the Sistine Chapel: one significant for its perfection of form and portrayal of masculine ideals, the other for its immense size and detail. The brevity of the allusive refrain is ambiguous, and by referring to Michelangelo in name alone, “Prufrock” places no restriction on the allusive potential: Michelangelo the painter, the sculptor, the architect, the engineer, and the poet are all called upon, invited to coningle with the present text.

Moreover, a great deal more is known of Michelangelo than the titular Prufrock—the Renaissance painter is well documented, having two biographies written about him while he was still alive. Michelangelo’s immense celebrity is condensed into a metonymic name that functions in “Prufrock” in sharp contrast as an affirmation of the narrator’s outsider status, strengthening the poem’s sense of alienation through juxtaposition to the allusion. The twice-iterated refrain evokes a sense of nagging and presents Prufrock as being haunted by the artistic prowess of a man whose works defined an era. The poem pits Prufrock and Michelangelo against one another—as the topic of conversation, Michelangelo becomes Prufrock’s competitor for the attention of “the women.” As such, the comparative orientation

of the allusion creates a tension between the reluctant, longing narrator and the revered Renaissance artist.

“Prufrock” succinctly alludes to Michelangelo in a way that Angela Frattarola would condemn as an example of modernism’s “irresponsible allusion[s]” in that it does not explicitly orient the reference or outline the significance of its inclusion; on the other hand, what “Prufrock” achieves via terse allusion is an ironic interplay between the concealed conversation of the unnamed women and the overwhelming artistic output of the prodigious archetype of the Renaissance man, and ironically, draws attention to the constructed nature of the narrative itself by gesturing toward a well-known artist. Eliot orients “Prufrock’s” allusion to Michelangelo as the sole identifier of an otherwise undocumented conversation in a way that criticizes “bourgeois evasiveness” and, on the surface, appears to participate in it by withholding further elaboration. Eliot’s allusion is demonstrative of what he later praises in *Ulysses* as “manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (“Myth” 2). The narrative forces comparison, especially since the narrative repeatedly returns to the topic. The suggested comparison creates a parallel that resonates throughout the poem and becomes the counterpoint to Prufrock’s indecisiveness and inability to make an impact on the women that occupy his thoughts. As an allusion, its potential is unbridled, and as such, functions like the anxieties of the emasculated Prufrock, ill-defined yet ever-present. The allusion is the “mythical form” that gives shape to the tone of anxiety that lingers within the narrative.

As an allusion, Michelangelo’s name functions like Joyce’s as his artistic output also contains numerous complexities and stylistic novelizations that solidified his vast influence and immortalization; though the majority of Michelangelo’s works are concerned with

religious and biblical themes, his obsession with pagan iconography and the author Dante exposes a grander scope to the allusive potential of his work, as he was concerned with literary themes beyond the Bible. Michelangelo included multiple visual allusions to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and his allusions to Dante in the *Sistine Chapel* are described by Paul Barolsky as an "indication of [Michelangelo's] visionary purposes, of his decision to create in his own 'visible speech,' the *alta fantasia* of the visionary experience to which Dante but alludes" (3). Michelangelo conflated Dante's literary vision of biblical characters with his own visualizations to add a greater signifying scope to his work, and another signifying layer of allusive potential to his inclusion in Eliot's poem. Alluding to Michelangelo incorporates the Dantesque allusions contained in many of his works; the two are referenced together frequently in art criticism, as "Michelangelo's visual allusions to Dante are so familiar, so glossed and re-glossed, that there seems little need for further reflection" (Barolsky 1). "Prufrock" appeals to Dante through epigraph with a verse from his *Divine Comedy* presiding over the poem. The cyclical nature of allusion displayed here reinforces the interconnectivity of texts and is emblematic of the *progress through return* philosophy that Eliot himself championed.

Interestingly, however, Michelangelo was famous for his unsociable behavior and reclusiveness, a biographical fact well documented by scholars, that, ironically, complicates the "Prufrock" allusion: the apparent Michelangelo/Prufrock binary that is set up in the poem is unraveled in the light of a striking similarity between the two men, a shared trait of social isolation. The two men are ironically inverted when the character of the revered artist is brought under analysis:

Michelangelo's "unsociableness" has been seen as the typical attitude of what was known in the Renaissance as the *vir melanchonicus*, or the absorbed and solitary contemplator, wholly wrapped up in his art, for whom involvement in creative activity was transformed into suffering. ([www.michelangelo.com/buon/bio-index2.html](http://www.michelangelo.com/buon/bio-index2.html))

*Vir Melanchonicus* translated from the Latin means the melancholic life, which is emblematic of the Renaissance attitude that artistic acts of genius arose from solitary suffering and steadfast patience. As the foremost artist of his era, Michelangelo is representative of the solitary artist that chooses self-imposed reclusive suffering in order to find creativity, choosing to work ceaselessly uninterrupted by social interaction. The doubly ironic unfolding of such a personality in Eliot's poem is apparent in Prufrock's unattained desire to simply interact with someone to ask his great question: Prufrock's only stated desire is based on a social interaction that does not come about in the narrative. As Prufrock's internal musings are interrupted by external conversation, the focal point of the women's diatribe is ironically a figure who achieved his celebrated status by *denying* himself the social interactions Prufrock so longs for. As Michelangelo also represents Prufrock's competition in the poem for the attention of the women, his solitude is significant: what Prufrock desires most, Michelangelo sacrificed, and yet Prufrock is portrayed as jealous and defeated in his inability to simply interact with these women.

Likewise, Joyce deploys the Michelangelo allusion to enrich two scenes in *Ulysses*, once specifically to Michelangelo's Moses sculpture during Aeolus—to comedic effect—and once in the midst of a Homeric catalogue of names in the Cyclops episode. J. J. O'Molloy cites Michelangelo as representative of Mosaic Law: he uses Michelangelo's Moses in

reference to the Ten Commandments that are portrayed in the sculpture. Of note, this allusion occurs in a scene indicative of midday idleness, as the men of the newsroom hyperbolically banter and gossip, not unlike the women of "Prufrock"; this episode also configures Stephen Dedalus as the center of attention while Leopold Bloom is forced to the periphery, a pragmatic man of advertising contrasted with the creativity of the paper writers. Commenting on the gathering of talent in the room, Crawford shifts the conversational focus to art, and it is then that Bloom is labeled as an artist of advertising (facetiously), which is a distinctly modern occupation in comparison to the other men's "talents" (literature, journalism, law, among others) and more importantly, held in less esteem by the newsmen. Bloom becomes the pariah, significantly apparent in the disrespectful and suggestive comments made by Lenehan with regards to Bloom's wife. Bloom was the narrative focus of the episode to this point, but as Bloom and Stephen Dedalus cross paths for the first time in the novel, attention shifts to the younger man, a representative of scholarly intellectual pursuits. Dedalus' treatment as an equal among the newsmen coupled with their disrespect toward Bloom alienate the ad-man in a comparison of intellectual positions established by the Freeman office, a hierarchy of pursuits that places Bloom in the lowest ranks and accepts Stephen based on his creative potential. With Bloom in absentia, the conversation is rife with allusions to art and oratory, which are esteemed in the chapter, and diminish Bloom's occupation in contrast—ironic, since he is the only man shown performing the actual duties his job entails; the Michelangelo reference made by O'Molloy functions similarly to the complex ways that it does in Prufrock, and also serves to fold the two modernist works onto one another intertextually:

## ITALIA, MAGISTRA ARTIUM

— He spoke on the law of evidence, J. J. O'Molloy said, of Roman justice as contrasted with the earlier Mosaic code, the *lex talionis*. And he cited the Moses of Michelangelo in the Vatican. (*Ulysses* 134)

The alienated Bloom is similarly ostracized from conversation, like Prufrock, and the conversation he is absent from finds its way to the topic of Michelangelo. O'Molloy mistakenly places the Moses of Michelangelo in the Vatican (it is located in San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome), which echoes the pretention of the nameless women in "Prufrock": the lack of content in their conversation is not unlike the misinformation doled out in *Ulysses* with regard to Michelangelo. The allusion reinforces similar thematic elements in both the modernist poetry of Eliot and the modernist prose of Joyce as their texts are connected here through a specific allusion to the same historical figure. The identification of the comparable use of the Michelangelo allusion in two self-aware modernist texts unites the web of allusive connectivity and enriches the reading of both: the relationships are intertwined and complicate the apparent simplicity of both texts' reserved nod to a metonymic name such as Michelangelo's in the presence of marginalized protagonists.

Joyce revisits Michelangelo in Cyclops where he employs a massive list of names reminiscent of the Homeric catalogue which has the tradition of functioning in its magnitude as, conversely, both a representation of completion and a suggestion of the enumerable and the infinite; here the mythic form of *Ulysses* is in the forefront, as the extended Homeric allusion influences the stylistic representation of the Cyclops episode. Homer's Cyclops, named Polyphemus (literally "many voiced") informs the indeterminate narrative point of view which is rife with intrusions that take the shape of lists, parodies, translation, and

newspaper columns, to list a few—the many voices of Cyclops are infused in the structure of the episode. In contrast to Aeolus' specific allusion to Michelangelo's sculpture of Moses, Cyclops enumerates a lengthy inventory that begins with Irish heroes and extends to include the celebrated, the fictional, and the unknown: Joyce's list is a parody of the form in that its names lack an obvious unifying connectivity. The Joycean episode, through its experimental polyvalent style, is emblematic of the extremes of allusive potential in its noted absence of catalogued coherence: the form implies many speakers that are represented by the many shifts in style captured by various textual intrusions; the dominant intrusive form of the list is reminiscent of Homer, the architect of the text-length allusion that makes up Joyce's mythic form. The Homeric catalogue that contains the Michelangelo allusion is a gesture toward the infinite—its many varied references extend in innumerable directions of intertextual reference: "intrusive interruptions most resemble other texts [...] Cyclops is more intertextual than polyphonic" (Johnson 884). The catalogue of the tribal images carved into the seastones that adorn "the figure seated" is indicative of Joyce's parodic manipulations of the classical form which function as a self-aware multifaceted alluding cluster organized around a single allusion to the description of the Cyclops of the *Odyssey*. An allusion made up of allusions, the massive allusion embodies Umberto Eco's depiction of the *infinity* of lists, namely the inherent tension they reflect in their "swing between a poetics of 'everything included' and a poetics of the 'etcetera'" (*Infinity* 7):

graven with rude yet striking art the tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity, Cuchulin, Conn of hundred battles, Niall of nine hostages [...] The Man in the Gap, The Woman Who Didn't, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte, John L. Sullivan, Cleopatra, Savourneen Deelish, Julius Caesar, Paracelsus, sir Thomas

Lipton, William Tell, Michelangelo, Hayes, Muhammad, the Bride of Lammermoor  
[...] (*Ulysses* 285)

The volume of names introduces a cacophony of referential material, leaning towards what Eco calls the poetics of etcetera. Eco employs the phrase in his description of the tension present in lists, how their lengthy form negotiates between apparent all-inclusiveness and the inability to catalogue *everything*: in the Joycean example, the inability to perceive a clear connection between the names included is suggestive of Eco's etcetera, as there is no apparent conclusion to a list that defies harmonious completion. The conflation of known and unknown names and the pairing of heroic and the unknown suggests an inherent tension between a guided reference and a reference devoid of orientation. The disparity of allusions in the Cyclops catalogue are only given orientation in the overlaying allusion to Homer's description of the Cyclops Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, a stylistic structuring that expounds the allusion to Michelangelo by making it a part of a greater allusion, drawing attention to the rhetorical nature of allusion. The list is overwhelming, as it functions as a mass of allusions contained within an allusion in an episode whose dominant style is intertextual interruption. What Joyce showcases through the chaotic complexity of Cyclops is the interconnectivity that exists in chaos, the relationship that precludes definitive predictability and yet functions as an organized totality as a structure of resonating intertextualities which comprises the danger and potential of allusion—Michelangelo's allusive emergence in the Joycean catalogue illustrates this complex reshaping.

The significance of Michelangelo's name as it appears in the Cyclops episode of *Ulysses* is highlighted by the scholarly attention paid in appendices and reader's guides to its placement, particularly the name that follows: Hayes. The name William Tell that precedes

Michelangelo's is obvious enough to place—legends of William Tell date back to the fifteenth century and versions of his folklore appear in Frederick von Schiller's *Willhelm Tell*, P. G. Wodehouse's *William Tell Told Again*, and even parodied by Charlie Chaplin in the film *The Circus*. As a tale that has been passed down orally and survives as a legend in many cultures, William Tell overshadows the other name that bookends Michelangelo in the Joycean catalogue; Hayes is ambiguous and essentially untraceable. In *Allusions in Ulysses*, Weldon Thornton makes note of the reference, but figures it untraceable, saying that "there have been several people named Hayes who have been prominent in Irish history; I cannot say which specific one, if any, Joyce had in mind" (263). Thornton is correct in his assertion; the name could be a reference to any number of persons, none of which carry the mononymic weight of a Michelangelo or a Joyce. Phillip Gaskell suggests in his recommended alterations that the comma between Michelangelo and Hayes be removed, which then would offer some clarification for the mysterious Hayes: Michelangelo Hayes was an Irish artist and illustrator that worked in Dublin in the early to mid-nineteenth century. In his *Ulysses Annotated*, Don Gifford includes this amended, comma-less reference after a gloss of Michelangelo Buonarroti, eliciting both in an attempt to account for the allusive multisignificance:

Michelangelo Hayes - Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), the Florentine painter and sculptor, may seem obvious here, but Michelangelo Hayes (1820-77) was an Irish illustrator and caricaturist who became city marshal of Dublin. (324)

Gifford's explanation is notable for its inclusion of both artists here—whether or not a comma is inserted between the names, the Michelangelo allusion remains. Simultaneously, its juxtaposition with Hayes invites the speculation that it is also a reference to the Irish artist, especially since this catalogue contains many other Irish "heroes." An Irish artist that bears

the Renaissance painter's name is itself an allusion, one that arguably overshadows the nineteenth century bearer of the name. What the amendments, alterations, and attempts at justification prove is that allusions are difficult to orient, and the interpretive force is greater than the syntax that structures the reference. Despite the loaded signification that accompanies Michelangelo's name, a red herring like Hayes—which could just as easily be a reference to the Mrs. Hayes or Colonel Hayes of *Ulysses* itself—eschews apparent closure. As Gifford articulates, “it may seem obvious here,” but the allusion can always be furthered. The suspect comma and the critical attention paid to it illustrate the continuing critical attention that an allusion can inspire.

### **Opportunistic Manipulations: *Sabbath's Theater's* Puppetry of the Joyce Allusion**

As already noted, Eliot, in “Myth,” embraces *Ulysses*' Homeric allusions as they “manipulat[e] a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” as an organizational interpretive strategy that provides insight into the “immense panorama of futility” that is Joyce's complex and difficult novel. This approximate narrative mapping is representative of a manipulation of allusion that, through its parallels and incongruities, highlights the fluidity of allusions. As rhetorical devices, allusions are inexact, and approached with a Derridean sensibility reveal their potential in self-contained deconstructive moments. Like Joyce's use of *The Odyssey*, the narrative of Philip Roth's *Sabbath's Theater* opportunistically uses *Ulysses* in a rhetorical strategy that demonstrates how an allusion can be employed in multiple ways (stylistically, thematically, overtly, etc.) and how these orientations can both enrich and endanger interpretive meaning.

On the surface, allusions to Joyce and his work are situated in *Theater* to provide a default parallel for protagonist Mickey Sabbath as a rhetorical strategy to excuse his

misdeeds and to generate pathos. In addition, the depth of the allusion both enriches and complicates thematic elements of alienation, remorse, self-reflection, authority, and sexual liberty through irony, in what I categorize as three specific instances of allusion to Joyce: 1) an overt comparison made between Sabbath and James Joyce the artist demonstrates a narrative effort to elevate the loathsome protagonist, but ironically exposes him as a sordid manipulator by contrast; 2) a punning reference to Molly Bloom functions as a desperate argumentative attempt to reveal a double standard present in masculine and feminine sexualities, a move that instead points to Sabbath's self-absorbed hedonism and latent misogyny; and, 3) the formalism of *Ulysses* serves as a narrative filter for Sabbath's introspective walk downtown that introduces the chapter, reframing Sabbath's commiserations in the heightened style of literary modernism. Sabbath's manipulative actions reflect in the sudden shift in narrative style where the novel's narrative voice displays a familiarity with Joyce's experimental form in order to distract from the deplorable content. The *Ulysses* parallels and incongruities ironically derogate Sabbath's character when the narrative finally cites Joyce by name, as an alibi, as a partner in crime and controversy that, through his artistic prestige, superficially grants permission for the lecherous puppeteer to take advantage of young women. Instead of effectively casting Sabbath in a modernist light that by association elevates his actions, the allusions make him seem more narcissistic and manipulative through ironic contrast.

The narrative overtly compares Sabbath to James Joyce and various other canonical authors whose works had been accused at one time of containing obscenities in an effort to elevate Sabbath and exonerate him from his manipulation and seduction of a young student:

You besmirch yourself in increments of excrement—everyone knows that much about the inevitabilities (or used to)—but not even Sabbath understood how he could lose his job at a liberal arts college for teaching a twenty-year-old to talk dirty twenty-five years after Pauline Réage, fifty-five years after Henry Miller, sixty years after D. H. Lawrence, eighty years after James Joyce, two hundred years after John Cleland, three hundred years after John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester—not to mention four hundred after Rabelais, two thousand after Ovid, and twenty-two hundred after Aristophanes. (*Theater* 218)

The narrative uses a strategy of rhetorical distraction by introducing a catalogue of celebrated canonical authors whose works have been, at times, regarded as obscene. This chronology of authors of explicit literature is a specious supplement to Sabbath's disputation that draws heavily on what I have classified as the first function of textual evocation: like Joyce's, these names, and the works they are associated with, have gained a celebrity status within literary history that associates them with high culture by default, signifying literary genius even for readers who have never read them, but who still recognize their celebrated names. While Sabbath's charges are based on the overtly sexual content of a taped telephone conversation he had with a young student, the argumentative flourish highlights one commonality—sexualized themes and language. On the surface, the stylistic echo lends credence simply because the accused maintains a position as an instructor at a liberal arts college, and an academic setting provides an appropriate backdrop for an allusion to esteemed authors. The passage demonstrates allusion's argumentative plasticity, the common thread being that each of these texts could conceivably be used to teach "a twenty-year-old to talk dirty." Through juxtaposition, the narrative yokes the otherwise disparate grouping of author figures to

Sabbath-as-artist; although his crime revolves around the sexual content of his language, it is obviously unrelated to his artistic contributions as a puppeteer. In citing a group of authors whose books have been censored but eventually artistically vindicated, the narrative suggests that Sabbath's crimes will likewise come to be seen as respected artistic contributions.

The passage draws attention to its own manipulations through the destabilizing shift in point of view, from a second-person didactic to a third-person sympathetic tone.

The inconsistent narrative voice avoids narrating Sabbath's actions in the first-person and in doing so prevents him from taking responsibility. The inclusion of Joyce's name in this group of scandalous authors ignores the difficult poetics that must be overcome to get to these obscenities (my second level of allusive functionality). This leads into the third level of allusion discussed previously—Joyce is a recognized and adept manipulator of extended and layered allusions. Joyce's name signifies the ways in which allusions can be manipulated for specific argumentative leverage, but conversely it highlights the ways in which allusions are ultimately uncontrollable once activated in a text by a reader. Sabbath is not an author, but a puppeteer—he holds a position as adjunct professor of puppet-theater—and his artistry relies on his ability to adeptly manipulate figures and audience response; the Joyce allusion draws attention to the narrative strings that are being pulled to elevate Sabbath's character and obscure the details of his misconduct.

The rhetorical strategy of Joyce allusions culminates in an evocation of Molly Bloom, as it configures Sabbath and the lady of *Ulysses* as sexually liberated equals; however, the narrative juxtaposition reveals a double standard at work with regard to masculine and feminine sexualities. By employing the character most recognizably associated with *Ulysses'* themes of sexuality and sexual controversy, the narrative injects a feminine perspective into

Sabbath's claims of innocence, suggestive of his empathy for the female student he sexually harassed; conversely, the characterization illustrates that his inappropriate relationship with the young student should be perceived as part of her sexual education, whether she perceives it this way or not, as he once played the part of the sexually naïve student who excitedly anticipated such awakening experiences. The use of Molly Bloom manifestly inverts the victimization of Kathy Goolsbee—Sabbath's young accuser—and characterizes Sabbath as a misunderstood sexual mentor victimized by a hyper-puritanical "mollycoddling" that was absent in his formal education. Furthermore, Goolsbee's secret tapes of the affair that exposed Sabbath's inappropriate seduction instigate a role reversal for the manipulative deviant—he was the one being manipulated—and the Molly Bloom allusion ironically reinforces this as the Penelope episode is a feminine reevaluation of the *Ulysses* narrative that reserves the last words for the female voice.

The narrative creates a binary between sexual liberty and puritanical sheltering through its use of a pun on Molly Bloom's name. Relying on a familiarity with Molly's character, significantly her overt sexuality, the narrative manipulates the allusion to reverse the roles of victimized and victimizer:

Seventeen. Three years Kathy's junior and no ad hoc committee of mollycoddling professors to keep me from getting clap, getting rolled, or getting stabbed to death, let alone getting my little ears molested. I went there deliberately to get my self molly-bloomed! That's what sevenfuckinteen is *for!* (*Theater* 220-21)

Sabbath is already established as an indulgent hedonist at this point in the narrative, having spent more time attending to his sexual appetites than his artistic craft. In this particular excerpt, he starts at an extreme and proceeds to trace a descent of alarming dangers from

disease to murder until he introduces the idea of vulgar and suggestive language; by inverting the positions of student and teacher as he remembers his own educational experience, he claims to have intended to be seduced, willingly placed himself in a position where he would be exposed to the potentials of sexual awakening—to become “molly-bloomed.” Molly is called by name in a playful neologism that stands in for and is synonymous with sexuality and lustful desire, the image of blooming intertwined with a primal and yet natural sexual coming-of-age. The punning binary suggests that Goolsbee is allowing herself to be mollycoddled—or overprotected—at a time when she should be open to new, sexual experiences. Sabbath likens himself to the sexual openness and awareness of the uninhibited Molly Bloom, but he lacks her compassion, her jealousy, and her emotion; juxtaposed with Molly Bloom, Sabbath resembles a sociopathic sexual deviant. The passage is ironized by its reliance on Molly Bloom to instill a sense of sympathy for the manipulative puppeteer, as Molly’s soliloquy in *Ulysses* is a feminine reconfiguring in a narrative that is dominated by masculine protagonists. *Sabbath*’s narrative employs the allusion to Molly Bloom such that, on the surface, it exposes a double standard that occurs in the evaluation of the present situation in relation to his experience as a young male student. A familiarity with the Penelope episode reveals the inverted concept of the female voice reconfiguring a masculine dialogue, as Molly gets the final words of *Ulysses*, in an episode that exposes the dynamic thoughts and emotions of a character otherwise portrayed as the cuckolding source of the protagonist’s woes. In Roth’s novel, the Molly Bloom allusion attempts to generate pathos for Sabbath and present him as the victim; however, the allusion is ironically a representation of the feminine perspective the narrative is trying rhetorically to argue against.

I have chosen to analyze the narrative name dropping of James Joyce's proper name and the Molly Bloom comparison first because it retrospectively confirms an extended stylistic allusion to *Ulysses* thirty pages prior as a narrative manipulation to instill a sense of familiarity through stylistic cues; Sabbath's introspective walk in downtown New York illustrates the multiple ways in which an allusion can resonate within a text and it manifests here as a build-up to the argumentative strategy of manipulation. Chapter two in Roth's novel is stylistically organized around two familiar *Ulysses* episodes—Aeolus and Penelope—creating a cognitive dissonance between form and content. The manifest depravity of Sabbath's memories is, on the surface, elevated via a stylistic and thematic allusion to *Ulysses* that relies on a familiarity with Joyce's most recognizable stylistic experiments. Sabbath's maudlin thoughts and reflections on death and suicide are organized like the headline/article style of the Aeolus episode, while his ruminations on his sexual experiences and conquests are presented without punctuation in a stream-of-consciousness style that evokes Molly's soliloquy in the Penelope episode. Aligning Sabbath with Bloom through Aeolus and Molly through Penelope showcases the flexibility of allusion and foregrounds its deconstruction through dynamic and conflicting associations.

The Ulyssean organization of Sabbath's journey represents an opportunistic rhetorical use of allusion that foregrounds the ways in which comparisons can be drawn temporarily, evoking themes and associations strategically to benefit the narrative portrayal of Sabbath as a sympathetic figure. The first intertextual aping occurs as Sabbath envisions his obituary, which stylistically resembles the newspaper article filtration of Aeolus; the allusion provides argumentative weight by indirectly summoning Bloom, who is suffering from the loss of his father and son and exists as an alienated figure in Dublin society:

### **Did Nothing for Israel**

Not long after the alleged murder of his first wife, Mr. Sabbath made his way to the remote mountain village where he was supported until his death by a second wife, who dreamed for years of cutting off his cock and then taking sanctuary in her abused-women's group [...]. He is survived by the ghost of his mother, Yetta, of Beth Something-or-other Cemetery, Neptune, New Jersey, who haunted him unceasingly during the last year of his life. (*Theater* 194)

The organizing headlines and the article style of the narration are familiar cues that evoke one of the most recognizable stylistic manipulations from Joyce's text. However, the narrative shift from a stylistic mirroring of Aeolus to the Penelope episode illustrates the opportunistic way in which the narrative manipulates the *Ulysses* allusion to reinforce specific thematic parallels.

Previously, the narrative aligns Sabbath with Leopold Bloom, but as the thematic concern drifts from thoughts of death and regret to past love and sexual encounters, Molly becomes the unarticulated comparative figure summoned by the stylistic shift. The Joyce allusion configures the narrative of Sabbath's memories about his ex-wife in the guise of Molly's episode in *Ulysses*—the only section of the novel told from the perspective of a woman. It is Molly—not Leopold Bloom—who shares Sabbath's sexual appetite and is similarly culpable for stepping outside of marital vows, and the narrative exploits this similarity via recourse to stream-of-consciousness narrative techniques. That aside, the allusive feminine perspective is incongruent with the misogynistic content of Sabbath's reflections and undercuts the narrative's formal attempt at manipulation:

never a fuck without a rape tossed in no not there but only way she came was there  
god forgive those dont fuck in the ass hey gyro you know Nikki souvlaki you know  
Nikki St. Marks hotel \$25.60 and up room rent you know Nikki tattooed tubby you  
know Nikki garbage (*Theater* 195)

The elevated stream of consciousness style does not soften the misogyny of equating sex with “rape” and objectifying his former wife as “garbage.” Both Sabbath’s narrative and Joyce’s Penelope share sexualized content, but Molly’s soliloquy lacks the dehumanizing violence of Roth’s imagery.

Sabbath’s shift in stylistic organization illustrates the manipulative potential of allusion as a rhetorical device, its fluidity and flexibility; an exploration of the two organizing styles foregrounds the way in which these allusions deconstruct under critical scrutiny. The stylistic echoes conclude with a specific reference to Joyce’s name in a way that suggests a familiarity that justifies the manipulation of the textual allusion and simultaneously undercuts its authority:

So Sabbath passeth the time, pretending to think without punctuation, the way J.

Joyce pretended people thought, pretending to be both more and less unfixed than he  
felt [...] (*Theater* 198)

The shortening of Joyce’s given name implies a familiarity with Joyce’s formal techniques, but simultaneously undercuts the form by drawing attention to its artifice (“pretending... pretended... pretending”). Rhetorically, the allusion operates like a reversal of referent and antecedent, introducing Joyce’s work through stylistic echoes and recognizable formalisms prior to naming their author. Emphasizing the *pretending* of “J. Joyce” points to the constructed nature of the argumentative strategy, which ironically exposes the artificial

construction of the rhetorical elevation technique, and instead reinforces the concept of manipulation.

### **A Tale of Two Films: A Performance of Allusions**

The films *Slacker* (1991) and *Back to School* (1986) both allude to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, demonstrate ironic reception, and reveal anxieties around the use of allusions: *Slacker* foregrounds the unquestioned use of Joyce as an authoritative reference, but metafilmically interrogates the functioning of such allusions, and *Back to School* reveals a similar anxiety in that its protagonist is unfamiliar with Joyce's work, and yet references to Joyce in the film generate humour that depend on a working knowledge of the author. Both films explore the pitfalls and potentials of allusion through the portrayal of reception anxiety.

### ***Slacker's* Metafilmic Interrogation of the Joyce Allusion**

*Slacker's* emphasis on philosophical dialogue over physical action implies that the film's target audience is an intelligent elite, an implication reinforced by film's hyper-intellectual themes and deferral to academic sources; as such, the Joyce allusion that occurs mid-film as part of a closure ritual appears to have the same weight as the numerous deferrals to authoritative sources throughout the film as it leans on Joyce's status as a celebrated literary genius. The scene in question portrays three young men (credited only as "Jilted Boyfriend," "Guy Who Tosses Typewriter," and "Based on Authoritative Sources") as they gather on an overpass to perform a constructed ceremony intended to provide closure for the recently "Jilted Boyfriend." Each man is shown to be in possession of an object that has symbolic value with respect to the break-up; a tent and a typewriter, for example, are imbued with sentimental value. But the ritual's conductor ("Guy Who Tosses Typewriter") uses a third object, a hefty copy of the novel *Ulysses*, as the cuckold's manifesto, its size reinforcing

its symbolic use as the authoritative text for scorned lovers. The ritual presents a constructed effort to provide symbolic closure by casting out objects; "Guy Who Tosses Typewriter" outlines the symbolic dimension of the ceremony and maintains that the text justifies his actions. The ritual's onscreen participants and audience do not question the reference in spite of previously contesting the purposefulness of the ritual. The Ithaca recitation is met with a silence that suggests an unspoken respect for the celebrated and notoriously difficult text:

Based on Authoritative Sources: "Why in the hell is he throwing it in? It's a perfectly good typewriter."

Guy Who Tosses Typewriter: "Because! The typewriter isn't the point. The point is it symbolizes the bitch that just fucked him over. It symbolizes the bitch that fucked me over six months ago. And it symbolizes the bitch that's gonna fuck you over!"

Jilted Boyfriend: "Fuck you. I don't wanna read your book. Here. You read it. I'm not gonna read this fuckin' book."

Guy Who Tosses Typewriter: "It will make a lot more sense if you read it."

The scene illustrates the first level of the Joyce allusion in that "Guy Who Tosses Typewriter" asserts that the ritual is structured on the authority of the *Ulysses* text, and he presents it as an unquestionable resource in shaping the seemingly misunderstood ceremony. Although his peers are dismissive of the text's potential to organize the scenario prior to the recitation, the typewriter tosser commits unwaveringly to its authority. Presented as such, the allusion elevates an otherwise informal ritual in an effort to illustrate its significance and showcase its credibility by relying on Joyce's status as a literary genius.

A familiarity with *Ulysses*, specifically with the recited passage from Ithaca, ironically exposes the misuse of the text as an instrument of closure; literary history

celebrates the complexly structured novel as a text that repeatedly *eschews closure*, and the passage quoted in *Slacker* is pointedly misaligned as a representation of acceptance and finality. “Guy Who Tosses Typewriter”’s struggle to locate the passage and the misplacement of his bookmark symbolically represents the daunting impenetrability of the source material; his introduction of the quotation as the point “when Leopold discovered that he’s just been fucked over by his wife” reveals his own misguided understanding of the scene, or perhaps even a general unfamiliarity with the text, as Bloom has been aware of his wife’s affair for most of the day:

Guy Who Tosses Typewriter: “It all makes sense if you just read this passage here.

What did you do with the bookmark?”

Jilted Boyfriend: “I didn’t do anything with the bookmark. There wasn’t one in there.”

Guy Who Tosses Typewriter: “This is when Leopold discovers ... that he’s just been fucked over by his wife. He says, ‘If he had smiled, why would he have smiled? To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter. Whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series. Even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be first ... last, only, and alone. Whereas he is neither first, nor last, nor only, nor alone ... in a series originating in and repeated to infinity.’” (*Slacker*)

The film situates the passage as a revelatory moment for Bloom in which he is made aware of his wife’s adultery, and simultaneously comes to terms with his status as a cuckold; the misreading ironizes the passage’s presentation and creates a tension with the actual content of the passage—Ithaca is Bloom’s internalized end-of-day ritual, but it remains unfinished. The Ithaca episode is structured as a mathematical catechism, a performance of questions and

answers that attempts to apply logic to the day's events and as such, provide a sense of closure, but *Ithaca* ironically ends without all of its questions answered—Bloom falls asleep. The episode ends with a question unanswered and is representative of an open-endedness not articulated in *Slacker*'s closure ritual. An interrogation of the complexities of Joyce's text in relation to *Slacker*, justifies the dismissive behavior of the ritual's audience, and the perceived performance of symbolic finality is undermined, deconstructed by the text cited as authoritative influence.

The scene that immediately follows the overpass episode of *Slacker* reveals a metafilmic awareness of the potential pitfalls associated with the use of allusion; the narrative follows the aptly named "Based on Authoritative Sources" while on a date, and the discussion that ensues demonstrates the third level of the potentiality of a Joyce allusion. Joyce was an adept practitioner of allusions himself, and the film's uninterrogated use of the intertextual reference invites scrutiny, significantly when it is coupled with the film's own questioning of the use of any unexamined sources that are wielded without awareness of in-depth critical contexts:

Has Faith in Groups: "You know, that's what I hate: when you start talking like this, like you just pull in these things from the shit you read, and you haven't thought it out for yourself, no bearing on the world around us, and totally unoriginal."

Based on Authoritative Sources: "Okay, great. Personal attacks now, is that it? I thought we were beyond that."

Has Faith in Groups: "It's like you just pasted together these bits and pieces from your 'authoritative sources.' I don't know. I'm beginning to suspect there's nothing really in there."

Based on Authoritative Sources: “Suspect? You’re beginning to suspect? Oh, that’s rich, that’s really rich. So what? At least what is there is based on good sources.” “Faith” calls out “Authoritative Sources” for relying on the weight of celebrated texts without questioning their content, a characterization that exposes the pretention of employing *Ulysses* as an uninterrogated representation of closure. The claim that “good sources” are sufficient material for an argumentative stance instills a sense of pretention in the film, a characteristic of the slacker mentality, the overeducated, underemployed youth that comprise the cast of this film. “Faith” ironically exposes the tension that exists between the Joyce allusion’s apparent argumentative utility and its incongruent content that suggests an open-endedness in lieu of the desired closure. The scene draws attention to the act of alluding, the interrogation it demands from its audience, and the uncontrollable semantics that accompanies it. Out of context, the Ithaca passage superficially represents the sense of closure that the “Jilted Boyfriend” desires, but the suspicion that is brought about by the critical “Faith” retroactively confirms the earlier dismissiveness of the ritual’s participants. The allusion deconstructs the guiding theme of the ceremony, and draws attention to the way in which “Guy Who Tosses Typewriter” manipulates a text through eisegesis and relies on the reputation of its author to achieve its effect without scrutiny.

Linklater arranges *Slacker* as a series of episodes that each focus around a new character in a style reminiscent of the Wandering Rocks episode of *Ulysses*, where small scenes overlap temporally—an extended parallel that highlights the way in which a specifically positioned allusion can resonate beyond its initial orientation. “Guy Who Tosses Typewriter” wields *Ulysses* as an organizing text on the overpass episode, but characterizes it as a vehicle for achieving closure; the irony of the Joyce allusion resides in its deconstruction

because a familiarity with the text inverts the unexamined allusion. Moreover, the Ithaca passage the character recites on the overpass can be read allegorically where each new sexual partner alters the sense of being first or last much the same way allusions function, as an apparently singular allusion can be intertextually extended indefinitely and modified by each new textual relationship. *Slacker* orients *Ulysses* as a precise representation of closure, but as a signifier it is part of an ongoing referential chain: it is neither first, nor last, nor only, nor alone, as it represents a single text in an alluding series originating in and repeated to infinity. The film achieves self-awareness as it draws attention to the structuring of allusions, the way in which there is a depth of information beyond the pretense of citation. “Faith”’s suspicion is the metafilmic moment in which the film’s own sources are put under analysis, as the idea of critical reception is introduced *by* the film, and as such, invites viewers to do the same *with* the film.

### **Joyce, She’s my Favorite Writer: Why *Back to School* Deserves Some Respect**

*Back to School* is pointedly a parodic comedy that employs one-liners and slapstick, and in comparison to the hyper-intellectual cultic pontifications of *Slacker*, it is comparatively low-brow as it showcases an overarching anti-intellectual motif; but, similar to *Slacker*, the film presents a performance of allusion that showcases reception irony, exposing a tension between Joyce’s reception in the film and the way the allusions ironically inform humorous instances. Rodney Dangerfield’s Thornton Melon is uneducated and the film explicitly reveals his unfamiliarity with Joyce—but the Joyce allusions employed in the film resonate beyond their superficial reception and require a working knowledge of Joyce to generate humour. The film illustrates an uncritical reception of a specific reference to *Ulysses*, but an interrogation of the allusion ironically reveals a depth of thematic enrichment

expressed through thematic parallels to Joyce's novel: adultery, father/son relationships, and anti-intellectualism.

*Back to School* draws on a tension between elitist intellectualism and real-world experience to inform much of its humour: Melon's questionable enrollment into the university is permissible because of a considerable financial donation he makes to the school's business faculty; he outsources his homework assignments to various intellectual experts as he plays the role of experienced task manager instead of ambitious student; and one telling example of anti-intellectualism presents itself in Melon's fly-by-night examination process: his semester's oral evaluation consists of only three questions, and his literature exam amounts to a recitation of Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night." When asked what the poem means he offers the clichéd platitude, "I don't take shit from no one!" His desire for a succinct (and sometimes vulgar) understanding of complex language aligns him with Molly Bloom, the anti-intellectual force of *Ulysses*: "O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words" (62).

Melon's relationship with the academic world plays out in the microcosm of the literature classroom when he is introduced to Professor Turner; her introduction to the screen and to Melon is through her recitation of Molly Bloom's soliloquy from Joyce's *Ulysses*, an allusion that legitimizes her as an academic and sexualizes her character, foreshadowing her eventual role as love interest for Melon. Without any contextualization, Turner proceeds to the lectern and begins her introductory ritual, reciting Molly's concluding remarks from the Penelope episode of *Ulysses*—Melon, transfixed by her appearance, drifts into a daydream in which he imagines himself as Leopold Bloom in the recited scene and Turner plays the role

of the smitten Molly. The camera fades from the classroom to an outdoor, heavily backlit scene that conveys a highly romanticized fantasy:

and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose  
in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed  
me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked  
him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my  
mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so  
he could feel my breasts all perfume yes his heart was going like mad and yes I said  
yes I will yes. (*Ulysses* 732)

Arguably one of the most famous passages from the novel, Turner's recitation of the concluding Penelope passage emphasizes the sexualized content of *Ulysses* in its narrow focus. The performance of the allusion portrays Melon as uncritically receiving the passage in its truncated form as an overly sexualized moment as he fixates on the orgasmic yeses and envisions himself with Turner on a blanket under the Moorish wall.

The allusion coupled with the portrayal of its reception suggests a limited understanding of *Ulysses*, affirmed by Melon's flirtatious assertion after class that exposes his unfamiliarity with Joyce's work: "we could talk about Joyce, she's my favourite writer!" The allusion serves to situate Turner as an intellectual because of her deferral to a celebrated literary genius, further elevated by the hyperbolic inclusion of *Finnegans Wake* on the reading list to the introductory literature class. Melon's fixation on the sexual overtones reinforces Turner's introduction as the object of Melon's desire, and his interaction with the passage suggests a reductive interpretation: Joyce's intellectually charged complexities appear foreign to Melon's uneducated sensibilities, reinforced by a film that, on the surface,

configures the intellectually elite in a negative light. That said, Melon's subsequent error of assuming that Joyce was a woman is a funny joke if and only if you actually know that Joyce is the surname of a man which requires a *familiarity* with the Irish author. The legitimizing and sexualizing force of the Joyce allusion comprises the first layer of allusion that, when put under scrutiny, deconstructs to expose a greater interpretive depth that enriches the themes of a seemingly shallow film.

Joyce's function as an allusion in what on the surface may be classified as a low-brow comedy is (at least) two-fold: Turner's introduction to her new class of freshmen via a difficult Joycean passage establishes the professor as an intellectual elite, leaning on *Ulysses'* formal complexities to establish her role in the classroom; the passage is formally complex; the stream of consciousness technique rushes the scene with a pacing that is also akin to sexual arousal, sexualizing Turner's character and highlighting Melon's unfamiliarity with Joyce's work. Beyond the pretentious implications of Turner's actions, the excerpt from Molly's soliloquy foreshadows her affair with Melon, and ironically enriches the apparent flat characterizations of both he and Turner through the allusion. Melon's reaction to Turner as she makes her entrance is one of infatuation; his widened stare and rapt attention, conflated with the whistles of the men in the room, expose his instant attraction to the woman. The passage she recites, with its underlying theme of passion and sexuality, furthers the general sense of attraction, and Melon joins the eroticized frenzy by adding his own yeses. The allusion, on the surface, sets up the contrast between student and professor: he is the uneducated, unrefined, jovial oaf to her highbrow, well-read, effete academic, and Joyce provides the comparative fulcrum.

Joyce allusions in *Back to School* function like inside jokes that expose the anxieties that exist between the three reception levels of allusion I delineated throughout this essay. For example, the reading list written on the chalkboard in the English literature classroom names *Finnegans Wake* as required reading; aside from the humour generated by its inappropriate inclusion in an introductory course due to its reputation as an impenetrable text, it is also cited incorrectly: "*Finnegan's*" is written with an apostrophe. The minute oversight is representative of a rarefied humour that requires a specific familiarity with Joyce that exceeds Melon's own pedestrian understanding, and ironically points to the tension between levels of reception as the source of much of the film's intellectual humour. Similarly, Melon greets Turner at the swim meet using Molly's famous "Yes, yes!" in front of a crowd of students and her significant other. The irony of the situation resides in Melon's use of a sexualized phrase with orgasmic overtones as a greeting toward his professor in front of his peers and her partner; the appropriation indicates Melon's limited comprehension of the Joycean passage, and yet generates humour through its ironic misuse, representative of a metafilmic engagement with an allusion that requires a familiarity with Joyce to inform the joke.

Where *Slacker* metafilmically demands that its sources be critically examined, *Back to School* ironically advises against it at the same time that it depends on it for its humour. During a first tutoring session, Turner asks Melon if he has read any of the books on the reading list, but he continually responds by saying he opts to see the film adaptations instead: "Who has time? I see the movie. In and out in two hours" (*Back to School*). In the context of the higher education environment of a university, Thornton's approach suggests an anti-intellectual preference for passive viewing instead of active reading. Moreover, the film is critical in its portrayal of institutional approaches to literature, as showcased by the reception

of Melon's plagiarized paper on Kurt Vonnegut. Turner explains that, "whoever did write it doesn't know the first thing about Vonnegut," though it was Kurt Vonnegut himself that Melon had hired to craft the paper in question. Melon's desire to avoid critical engagement works against the wealth of thematic parallels with *Ulysses* that exist in the film: Melon's decision to enroll in the university is spurred on by his wife cheating on him, reminiscent of Bloom's day-long journey to avoid home while his wife has an affair; Melon's impetus for attending the university is a desire to reconnect with his son, and *Ulysses* mirrors this relationship through Bloom's and Dedalus' father-son issues; and Turner's recitation from Penelope anticipates her own affair with Melon as she betrays her current relationship with another professor. The *Ulysses* parallels the narrative ironically attempts to understate in its anti-intellectualism enrich Melon's trip back to school as he attempts to overcome his initial alienation and gain some respect.

### **But then the Allusion is Lost**

There is an interesting moment in *Ulysses* when the word allusion is actually used, and it represents the type of anxiety this paper has explored. *Ulysses* self-reflexively engages with the anxieties of allusion as Leopold Bloom introspectively deconstructs his attempt at a poignant remark inspired by the ill-mannered eating habits of one of the patrons of the Burton Pub in Lestrygonians. The self-reflexive moment reveals the construction of an allusion as the source of anxiety for Bloom, as he anticipates the potential receptions of a remark; he is concerned with how much of the allusion is required to guarantee an intended reaction:

Tear it limb from limb. Second nature to him. Born with a silver knife in his mouth.

That's witty, I think. Or no. Silver means born rich. Born with a knife. But then the allusion is lost. (*Ulysses* 162)

Bloom envisions an opportunity to make a clever comment by punning on the phrase “born with a silver spoon in your mouth,” an idiom that connotes being born into wealth and privilege. Inspired by the uncouth eating habits of the bar patrons, he twists the phrase to incorporate the idea of savagery and gracelessness by replacing spoon with knife. Thinking that silver is the key term in the idiom for implying high-status, Bloom retracts the allusion and reconsiders the effectiveness of the idiom once it has been reduced to simply a knife: Bloom decides that the connotation has been lost, and that his idiomatic manipulation obscures the allusion beyond recognition. The narrative draws attention to the constructed nature of allusion, the way a subtle reference is oriented, or manipulated, to potentially inspire a particular reading, and in doing so, reveals the difficulty in containing any allusion, the way in which the interpretative negotiations deconstruct and reconfigure a reference.

This project traces the anxieties that exist between any allusion’s potential interpretive intertextual layers. As Derrida says, “il n’y a pas de hors-texte” and allusions are representative of the intricate intertextualities that exist between all texts. As an adept practitioner of allusion, it is fitting that Joyce himself has become a complex allusion, full of the depths and dangers of enriched signification. This essay has attempted to demonstrate some of this complexity as it occurs in the metafilmic interrogations of an outwardly pretentious film like *Slacker*, through the ironic reception anxieties of *Back to School*, through the multiple rhetorical manipulations of *Sabbath’s Theater*, and as the career-spanning source of anxiety for Derrida.

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