

## ULYSSES GRAMOPHONE

### HEAR SAY YES IN JOYCE

☛ When Derrida was invited to deliver the opening address at the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium in Frankfurt in 1984, he had already on a number of occasions made clear the importance of Joyce's writing to his own work, and in the one essay on Joyce he had published at that time, "Two Words for Joyce" (which devotes most attention to *Finnegans Wake*), he had given some account of this continuing importance. But few people in the audience could have been prepared for the long, detailed, circuitous, always unpredictable, frequently comic exploration of *Ulysses* that developed out of the apparently innocuous opening, "Oui, oui, vous m'entendez bien, ce sont des mots français."

The essay's wandering path, as it weaves together the story of its own composition, fragments of the text of *Ulysses*, and a number of the issues which Derrida has addressed at length elsewhere, mimes both Joyce's novel (together with its Homeric predecessor) and a crucial aspect of its argument: the necessary connection between chance and necessity. What must have seemed to most of its first audience a haphazard trajectory becomes, with greater familiarity, an intricately plotted itinerary, a series of circular movements that keep returning to themselves and at the same time opening themselves beyond previously established limits. And one of Derrida's points—broached also in "Aphorism Countertime"—is that what we call "chance events" are made possible only by the pre-existence of a network of codes and connections; hence one of his deployments of the figure of Elijah in *Ulysses*, as the megaswitchboard operator. But the emphasis runs the other way as well; Elijah is *also* a figure for the unexpected, the unpredictability built into any

highly complex program (and Derrida associates himself, the outsider to the Joyce establishment, with this figure).

Joyce's oeuvre, in the thematics of this lecture, stands for the most comprehensive synthesis of the modern university's fields of knowledge, containing within itself all that can be written about itself. Approached in this light, the laughter it evokes is a derisive mockery of the efforts of those who analyze and systematize, who try to say something *new*. Yet it is precisely the overdetermined complexity of this textual program that makes *possible* the new, the advent of the completely other, the chance collocation that results in a new invention. And so the laughter of Joyce's writings has another modality, a positive, if fleeting, affirmation, which we might compare with the fleeting appearance of "literature" suggested by Mallarmé's "Mimique" (see p. 177 above). Both of these responses are necessary, and both are evident in Derrida's dealings with *Ulysses*: his painstaking counting of the *y*eses in the text, and his relishing of the coincidences that stud the history of his writing on the text, during an odyssey that takes him from Ohio to Tokyo, from Tokyo to Paris.

It is the *yes* in *Ulysses* that provides the connection between many of the diverse sequences of the lecture. The apparent simplicity of the word quickly gives way to a sense of its capacity to upset all the conventional, "philosophical" categorizations of linguistics. In Derrida's hands it starts to show its affinity with a number of other terms—*différance*, supplement, trace, re-mark, hymen, etc.—that open onto the unnameable preconditions of all naming and categorizing. Every utterance involves a kind of minimal "yes," an "I am here" (Derrida finds a number of telephones in *Ulysses* that help him to make this point); an affirmation that "precedes" (not temporally or logically) even the utterance "I," whether vocalized or silent. But the other crucial feature of "yes" is that it is always a *response*, strikingly dramatized in the words of Molly Bloom that bring *Ulysses* to a close, and this remains true even if it is a response to oneself; that is to say, it always involves a relay through an other. (*Oui dire*—saying yes—is always *oui dire*—hearsay.) "Yes" breaches time as well as space, as it always involves a commitment, a willingness to say "yes" again. With this relay, this differing and deferring, this necessary failure of total self-identity, comes spacing (space *and* time), gramophonizing (writing *and* speech), memory, recording, computers, and ultimately the whole Joyce mega-machine. In other words, the very possibility of a Joyce industry—the acme and splendid caricature of contemporary humanistic studies—stems from the distance established within the apparently

simple “yes”; it is this that provides it with its tools (which are essentially those of the Western philosophical tradition) and its materials. At the same time, because its projects—totalization, theorization, formalization, explication, archeology, instrumentalization—all demand the abolition of that self-difference and spacing, it is the “yes” that renders its task uncompletable, and the notion of a “competent” scholar in Joyce studies impossible. It is this ultimate impossibility that gives Joyce studies its chance, if it will take the risk (for instance, by inviting outsiders to its symposia); since if it were not for the incalculable self-difference of the “yes,” the answers would already, in principle, be known, and the mocking modality of Joycean laughter would be the only one.

As always, Derrida is responding to what seems to him at a given moment to be the singularity of Joyce’s text: its encyclopedic ambitions (one might even say that Derrida *imagines* a text that fulfills these ambitions more totally than Joyce was able to do), its simultaneous foregrounding of complex connectedness and chance collocations, its double-edged comedy (we might recall how the tradition of *Ulysses* criticism has frequently divided between those who see it as essentially satiric and those who see it as life-enhancingly affirmative), its involvement with communications networks (in both technological and more general senses), its concern with the relation of the self to itself (notably in interior monologues), and its extraordinary capacity to generate an international industry, of which the biennial James Joyce Symposia are the most remarkable manifestation. (We might note, however, that the “play of the signifier”—often taken to be the major affinity between Joyce and Derrida—is not of great importance here.) In order to sketch some kind of response to this singularity, to countersign Joyce’s signature with his own (both signatures being, like all signatures, at once unique and programmable; and, like all signatures, involving a “yes,” just as all *yeses* involve a signature), Derrida exploits an assortment of examples from *Ulysses*, often examples which thematize the issues under discussion—though he makes it clear that the requirements of exposition always necessitate a certain violence in excerpting from a text. Most notable, of course, are the occurrences of “yes”: it becomes clear that even if *Ulysses* did not contain a single actualized “yes,” the argument would be no different—but the number and variety of instances of the word, and in particular its function in the last chapter, allow Derrida to focus very precisely his powerful response to Joyce’s achievement.

✿ Derrida’s two essays on Joyce have been published together in French under the title *Ulysse gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce*

(Paris: Galilée, 1987); the English translation of the first version of "Ulysse gramophone: Ouï-dire de Joyce" was published in the Proceedings of the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium, *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1988). The text was translated by Tina Kendall and revised by Shari Benstock; translator's notes are by Shari Benstock. The translation has been editorially modified in the light of the published French text. The text of *Ulysses* to which Derrida refers is that of the Penguin edition (Harmondsworth, 1968).

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*Oui, oui*, you are receiving me, these are French words.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, and I do not even need to reinforce my message with another phrase, all you need is to have heard the first word, *oui*, to know, that is if you understand enough French, that, thanks to the authorization graciously bestowed on me by the organizers of this James Joyce Symposium, I shall address you, more or less, in the language presumed to be mine [*ma langue supposée*], though the last expression can be almost seen as an anglicism.

But can *oui* be quoted or translated? This is one of the questions I intend to pose during this talk. How can the sentences that I have just thrown out at you be translated? The one I began with, just as Molly begins and ends what is too lightly referred to as her monologue, that is, the repetition of a *oui*, is not content just to *mention*, it *uses* in its own way these two-*ouis*, the ones that I now quote. In my opening, you could not decide, and you are still incapable of deciding, if I was saying *oui* to you or if I was quoting, or shall we say more generally, if I was mentioning the word *oui* twice, as a reminder, and I quote, that these are indeed French words.

In the first case, I affirm, acquiesce, subscribe to, approve, reply, or make a promise; at any rate, I commit myself and I sign: to take up

1. TN The French verb *entendre* includes in its range of meanings "to hear" and "to understand," both of which are implied in the translation "receiving."

again the old speech act theory distinction, which is useful up to a certain point, between *use* and *mention*, the use of *oui* is always implicated in the moment of a signature.

In the second case, I would, rather, have quoted or mentioned the *oui, oui*. Now if the act of quoting or mentioning also undoubtedly presupposes some signature, some confirmation of the act of mentioning, this remains implicit and the implicit *oui* is not to be confused with the quoted or mentioned *oui*.

So you still do not know what I wanted to *say* or *do* when I began with this sentence, "*Oui, oui*, you are receiving me, these are French words." In fact you are not receiving me loud and clear at all.

I repeat the question: how will the sentences that I have just thrown out at you be translated? Insofar as they mention or quote *oui*, they repeat the French word, and translation is, in principle, absurd or illegitimate: *yes, yes*, these are not French words. When at the end of the *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes explains why he had decided to write in the language of his country, the Latin translation of the *Discours* simply omits this paragraph. What is the sense of writing a sentence in Latin, the gist of which is: the following reasons illustrate why I am now writing in French? It is true that the Latin translation was the only one violently to erase this affirmation of the French language. For it was not just one translation among many; it claimed, according to the laws of the philosophical society of the time, to bring the *Discours de la méthode* back to what should have been the true original in its true language. But we'll leave that for another lecture.<sup>2</sup> I simply wanted to mark that the affirmation of a language through itself is untranslatable. An act which in one language *remarks* the language itself, and which in this way affirms doubly, once by speaking it and once by saying that it has thus been spoken, opens up the space for a *re-marking*, which, at the same time and in the same double way, defies and calls for translation. According to a distinction I have hazarded elsewhere concerning history and the name of Babel,<sup>3</sup> what remains *untranslatable* is at bottom the only thing *to translate*, the

2. See "Languages and Institutions of Philosophy," lectures I and II.

3. EN See "Des tours de Babel" and "Two Words for Joyce."

only thing *translatable*. What must be translated of that which is translatable can only be the untranslatable.

You have already realized that I have been preparing the ground to speak to you about the *oui*, the *yes*, or at the very least, about some of the modalities of *oui*, and I shall now be more explicit, in the form of an initial sketch focusing on some of the sequences in *Ulysses*.

To put an end, without further ado, to circulation or to an interminable circumnavigation, to avoid the aporia with a view to a better beginning, I threw myself in the water, as we say in French, and I decided to open myself, together with you, to a chance encounter. With Joyce, luck is always taken in hand by the law, by meaning, by the program, according to the overdetermination of figures and ruses. And yet the chance nature of meetings, the randomness of coincidences lends itself to being affirmed, accepted, yes, even approved in all their fallings-out.<sup>4</sup> In all their fallings-out, that is to say, in all the genealogical chances that set adrift the notion of legitimate filiation in *Ulysses* and no doubt elsewhere. This is all too clear in the encounter between Bloom and Stephen, to which I shall return shortly.

To throw oneself in the water, I was saying. I was, to be specific, thinking of the water of a lake. But, knowing Joyce's word, you may have thought that I was referring to the bottle in the sea. But lakes were not so foreign to him, as I shall presently demonstrate.

The throw of the dice to which I said *oui*, deciding in the same gesture to subject *you* to it too: I give it the proper name—Tokyo.

Tokyo: does this city lie on the western circle that leads back to Dublin or to Ithaca?

An aimless wandering, a random trek, led me one day to the passage ("Eumaeus," The Shelter, 1 a.m.) in the course of which Bloom names "the coincidence of meeting, discussion, dance, row, old salt, of the here today and gone tomorrow type, night loafers, the whole galaxy of events, all went to make up a miniature cameo of the world we live in" (*U*, 567). The "galaxy of events" was translated into French by

4. EN "Fallings-out" here does duty for *échéances*, which combines the sense of necessity (*l'échéance* is the falling due of a bill) and chance (*le cas échéant* means "if it should happen"). With regard to the next sentence, it is worth citing part of the etymology of *échéance* given in *Robert*: "17th cent.: inheritance by collateral line."

“gerbe [‘sheaf’] *des événements*,” which omits the milk and therefore the milky tea that runs through *Ulysses*, turning it into a milky way or “galaxy.” Allow me one more slight detour, a parenthesis: we were wondering what happens to the *yes* when it is repeated in a “mention” or in a quotation. But what happens when it becomes a trademark, a kind of nontransferable commercial license? And since we are spinning in the milk here, what happens when *yes* becomes, yes, a brand, or a brandname, of yoghurt? I shall come back to Ohio, this place marked in *Ulysses*. Now in Ohio there exists a type of Dannon yoghurt which is simply called YES. Underneath the YES to be read on the lid, we find the slogan: “Bet You Can’t Say No to Yes.”

“Coincidence of meeting” declares the passage I was in the middle of quoting. A little later the name *Tokyo* crops up: suddenly, like a telegram or the heading of a page in a newspaper, *The Telegraph*, which is to be found under Bloom’s elbow, “as luck would have it”—as it says at the beginning of the paragraph.

The name *Tokyo* is associated with a battle. “Great battle Tokio.” It is not Troy, but Tokyo, in 1904; the battle with Russia. Now, I was in Tokyo just over a month ago, and that is where I began writing this lecture—or rather, I began to dictate the main ideas into a pocket cassette recorder.

I decided to date it like this—and dating is signing—on the morning of 11 May when I was looking for postcards in a sort of news agency in the basement of the Okura Hotel. I was looking for postcards that would show Japanese lakes, or let’s call them inland seas. It had crossed my mind to follow the edges of lakes in *Ulysses*, to venture out on a grand lakeside tour between the lake of life which is the Mediterranean Sea and the *Lacus Mortis* referred to in the hospital scene, as it happens, and dominated by the symbol of the mother: “. . . they came trooping to the sunken sea, *Lacus Mortis*. . . Onward to the dead sea they tramp to drink . . .” (*U*, 411). This is, in fact, what I had initially thought of for this lecture on *Ulysses*, to *address*, as you say in English, the postcard scene, to some extent the inverse of what I did in *La carte postale*, where I tried to restage the babelization of the postal system in *Finnegans Wake*. You will no doubt know better than I that the whole pack of postcards perhaps hints at the hypothesis that the geog-

raphy of 'Ulysses' trips around the Mediterranean lake could have the structure of a postcard or a cartography of postal dispatches. This will gradually be illustrated, but for the moment I should like to take up a remark made by J. J. in which he speaks of the equivalence of a postcard and a publication. Any public piece of writing, any open text, is also offered like the exhibited surface, in no way private, of an open letter, and therefore of a postcard with its address incorporated in the message and hereafter open to doubt, and with its coded and at the same time stereotyped language, trivialized by the very code and number. Conversely, any postcard is a public document, deprived of all privacy and, moreover, in this way laying itself open to the law. This is indeed what J. J. says: "—And moreover, says J. J. [they are not just any initials], a postcard is publication. It was held to be sufficient evidence of malice in the testcase *Sadgrove v Hole*. In my opinion an action might lie" (*U*, 320). Translated: there would be cause for a certain action to be pursued before the law, to sue, but also that the action itself might tell an untruth. In the beginning, the speech act...

The trace, the relay, of the postcard that we are following can be found in Mr. Reggy Wylie's postcard, "his silly postcard" that Gerty could tear "into a dozen pieces" (*U*, 360). Among others, there is also the "postcard to Flynn" on which Bloom remembers, furthermore, having forgotten to write the address, which underlies the nature of anonymous publicity: a postcard has no proper addressee, apart from the person who acknowledges having received it with some inimitable signature. *Ulysses*, an immense postcard. "Mrs. Marion. Did I forget to write the address on that letter like the postcard I sent to Flynn?" (*U*, 367). I lift these postcards from a discursive path, or more precisely, a narrative path, which I cannot reconstitute each time. Here there is an ineluctable problem of method to which I shall return in a moment. The postcard without an address does not let itself be forgotten; it recalls itself to Bloom's memory just when he is looking for a misplaced letter: "Where did I put the letter? Yes, all right" (*U*, 365). We can assume that the reassuring "yes" accompanies and confirms the return of memory: the letter's place has been found. A little further, after Reggy's "silly postcard," there is the "silly letter": "Damned glad I



didn't do it in the bath this morning over her silly ! will punish you letter" (U, 366). Let us leave enough time for the fragrance of this bath and the revenge of this letter to reach us. You could pursue the intensification of derision up to Molly's sarcastic remarks about Breen: "now [he's] going about in his slippers to look for £1000 for a postcard up up O Sweetheart May" (U, 665).

So I was in the middle of buying postcards in Tokyo, in an underground passage in the Hotel Okura. Now the sequence which, in telegraphic style, mentions the "Great battle Tokio," after having recalled the "coincidence of meeting," the illegitimate genealogy and erratic seed that links Stephen to Bloom, "the galaxy of events," and so on, is a passage from another postcard. Not this time a postcard without an address but a postcard without a message. So one could say a postcard without a text, which could be reduced to the mere association of a picture and an address. Now it so happens that here the address is fictitious too. The addressee of this messageless card is a sort of fictitious reader. Before returning to this question, let us complete a circle by way of the "Tokyo" sequence, which I must quote. It follows closely upon the extraordinary exchange between Bloom and Stephen on the subject of *belonging*: "You suspect, Stephen retorted with a sort of half laugh, that I may be important because I belong to the *Faubourg Saint Patrice* called Ireland for short" (U, 565).

"I would go a step farther, Mr. Bloom insinuated" (the French translation, which renders "a step farther" as *un peu plus loin*, and which met the approval of J. J., who cosigned it, lacks among other things the association "stepfather," which superimposes at the heart of all these genealogical fantasies, with their generic crossovers and chance disseminations, a dream of legitimation through adoption and the return of the son, or through marriage with the daughter. But we can never tell who belongs to whom, what to whom, what to what, who to what. There is no subject of belonging, no more than there is an owner of the postcard: it remains without any assigned addressee.)

—But I suspect, Stephen interrupted, that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me.

—What belongs? queried Bloom, bending, fancying he was perhaps under some misapprehension. Excuse me. Unfortunately I didn't catch the latter portion. What was it you?...

Stephen speeds things up: "We can't change the country. Let us change the subject" (*U*, 565–66).

But going to Tokyo is not enough to change the country, let alone the language.

A little later, then; the return of the messageless postcard made out to a fictitious addressee. Bloom thinks of the aleatory encounters, the galaxy of events, and he dreams of writing, as I am doing here, of what happens to him, his story, "my experiences," as he puts it, and he wants to keep some kind of chronicle of this, a diary within a newspaper, by making free associations without constraint. So here it is, we are drawing close to the postcard in the vicinity of Tokyo: "The coincidence of meeting . . . the whole galaxy of events. . . . To improve the shining hour he wondered whether he might meet with anything approaching the same *luck* [my italics] as Mr. Philip Beaufoy if taken down in writing. Supposing he were to pen something out of the common groove (as he fully intended doing) at the rate of one guinea per column, *My Experiences*, let us say, *in a Cabman's Shelter*" (*U*, 567).

*My Experiences* is both my "phenomenology of mind" in the Hegelian sense of a "science of the experience of consciousness" and the great circular return, the autobiographic-encyclopedic circumnavigation of Ulysses: there has often been talk of the Odyssey of the phenomenology of mind. Here the phenomenology of mind would have the form of a diary of the conscious and the unconscious in the chance form of letters, telegrams, newspapers called, for example, *The Telegraph* (long-distance writing), and also of postcards whose only text, sometimes, taken out of a sailor's pocket, exhibits nothing but a phantom address.

Bloom has just spoken of "My Experiences":

The pink edition, extra sporting, of the *Telegraph*, tell a graphic lie, lay, as luck would have it, beside his elbow and as he was just puzzling again, far from satisfied, over a country belonging to him and the preceding rebus the vessel came from Bridgwater and the postcard was addressed

to A. Boudin, find the captain's age, his eyes [my emphasis on the word *eyes*, to which we shall return] went aimlessly over the respective captions which came under his special province, the allembracing give us this day our daily press. First he got a bit of a start but it turned out to be only something about somebody named H. du Boyes, agent for typewriters or something like that. Great battle Tokio. Lovemaking in Irish £200 damages. (*U*, 567)

I am not going to analyze here the stratigraphy of this "battle Tokio" field: experts can do that ad infinitum; the limitations of a lecture permit me only to recount to you, like a postcard cast to sea, *my experiences in Tokyo*, and then to pose the question in passing of the yes, of chance, and of Joycean experience as expertise: what is an expert, a Ph.D. scholar in things Joycean? What of the Joycean institution and what should I think of the hospitality with which it honors me today in Frankfurt?

Bloom juxtaposes the allusion to the postcard and something that already offers a pure associative juxtaposition, the contiguity of which is apparently insignificant and yet this insignificance is underlined: it is the question of the captain's age, which we should guess rather than calculate, after the presentation of a series of facts, the figures of a *rebus*, with no evident connection to the question in hand. Nevertheless, always understood in the joke is the fact that the captain is the captain of a ship. Now the postcard is in fact the very same one the sailor spoke about, a sea-traveler, a captain who, like Ulysses, returns one day from a long circular voyage around the Mediterranean lake. A few pages earlier, same place, same time: "—Why, the sailor answered, upon reflection upon it, I've circumnavigated a bit since I first joined on. I was in the Red Sea. I was in China and North America and South America. I seen icebergs plenty, growlers. I was in Stockholm and the Black Sea, the Dardanelles, under Captain Dalton the best bloody man that ever scuttled a ship. I seen Russia. . . . I seen maneaters in Peru..." (*U*, 545–46).

He has been everywhere except Japan, I said to myself. And here he is taking a messageless postcard out of his pocket. As for the address, it is fictitious, as fictitious as *Ulysses*, and it is the only thing that this Ulysses has in his pocket:

He fumbled out a picture postcard from his inside pocket, which seemed to be in its way a species of repository, and pushed it along the table. The printed matter on it stated: *Choza de Indios. Beni, Bolivia.*

All focused their attention on the scene exhibited, at a group of savage women in striped loincloths. . . .

His postcard proved a centre of attraction for Messrs the greenhorns for several minutes, if not more. . . .

Mr. Bloom, without evincing surprise, unostentatiously turned over the card to peruse the partially obliterated address and postmark. It ran as follows: *Tarjeta Postal. Señor A. Boudin, Galeria Becche, Santiago, Chile.* There was no message evidently, as he took particular notice. Though not an implicit believer in the lurid story narrated . . . , having detected a discrepancy between his name (assuming he was the person he represented himself to be and not sailing under false colours after having boxed the compass on the strict q.t. somewhere) and the fictitious addressee of the missive which made him nourish some suspicions of our friend's *bona fides*, nevertheless . . . (U, 546-47)

So I am in the process of buying postcards in Tokyo, pictures of lakes, and apprehensive about the intimidating talk to be given before the "Joyce scholars" on the subject of *yes* in *Ulysses*, and on the institution of Joyce Studies when, in the shop in which I find myself quite by chance, in the basement of the Hotel Okura, I fall upon—"coincidence of meeting"—a book entitled *16 Ways to Avoid Saying No* by Massaki Imai. It was, I believe, a book of commercial diplomacy. It is said that out of courtesy the Japanese avoid, as far as possible, saying no, even when they mean no. How can you make *no* heard, when you mean it without saying it? How can *no* be translated by *yes*, and what does translation mean when dealing with the odd pair *yes/no*; this is, then, a question that awaits us.<sup>5</sup> Next to this book, on the

5. The way this question is dealt with would be heavily overdetermined by the Irish idiom which silently and broadly weighs over the whole text. In its own way, Irish also avoids "yes" and "no" in their direct form. To the question, "Are you ill?", it replies neither "yes" nor "no," using instead the form "I am" or "I am not." "Was he sick?" would elicit "He was" or "He was not," and so on. The manner in which the word *hoc* came to take on the meaning of "yes" is not at all alien to this process. *Oil* (*hoc illud*) and *oc* served then to designate languages by the way people said "yes" in them. [EN *Langue d'oil* was the language of northern France which became modern French; *langue d'oc* was the southern language.] Italian was sometimes called the *si* language. Yes, the name of a language.

same shelf and by the same author, there was another book, again in the English translation: *Never Take Yes for an Answer*. Now if it is difficult to say something very definite, and certainly metalinguistic, on this odd word, *yes*, which names nothing, describes nothing, whose grammatical and semantic status is most enigmatic, it seems at least possible to affirm the following: it must be taken for an answer. It is always in the form of an answer. It occurs after the other, to answer a request or a question, at least implicit, of the other, even if this is the other in me, the representation in me of another speech. *Yes* implies, as Bloom would say, an "implicit believer" in some summons of the other. *Yes* always has the meaning, the function, the mission of an *answer*, even if this answer, as we shall also see, sometimes has the force of an originary and unconditional commitment. Now our Japanese author advises us never to take "yes for an answer." Which may mean two things: *yes* can mean "no," or *yes* is not an answer. Outside the diplomatic-commercial context in which it is situated, such prudence could take us further.

But I am continuing the chronicle of *my experiences*. Just as I was jotting down these titles, an American tourist of the most typical variety leaned over my shoulder and sighed: "So many books! What is the definitive one? Is there any?" It was an extremely small bookshop, a news agency. I almost replied, "Yes, there are two of them, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*," but I kept this *yes* to myself and smiled inanely like someone who does not understand the language.

Up until now I have been speaking to you about letters in *Ulysses*, and postcards, about typewriters and telegraphs, but the telephone is missing, and I must relate to you a telephonic experience. For a long time, I have thought—and this is still true today—that I would never be ready to give a talk on Joyce to an audience of Joyce experts. But when it comes to Joyce, what is an expert? that's my question. Still just as intimidated and behind schedule, I felt highly embarrassed when, in March, my friend Jean-Michel Rabaté telephoned me to ask for a title. I didn't have one. I only knew that I wanted to discuss *yes* in *Ulysses*.

I had even tried casually counting them; more than 222 *yeses* in the so-called original version (and we know better than ever what precautions we must take when we use this expression). I came up with this no doubt approximate figure after an initial counting up, which took into consideration only the *yeses* in their explicit form.<sup>6</sup> I mean the word *yes*, since there are other examples of *yes* without the word *yes*, and indeed, the number of *yeses* is not the same in translation, which is a major problem; the French version adds quite a few. More than a quarter of these *yeses* are to be found in what is so ingenuously termed Molly's monologue: from the moment there is *yes*, a break will have been made in the monologue, the other is hooked up somewhere on the telephone.

When Jean-Michel Rabaté phoned me, I had, then, already decided to interrogate, if we can put it like that, the *yeses* of *Ulysses* as well as the institution of Joycean experts, and also to question what happens when the word *yes* is written, quoted, repeated, archived, recorded, gramophoned, or is the subject of translation or transfer. But I still had no title, only a statistic and a few notes on a single sheet. I asked Rabaté to wait a second, went up to my room, cast a glance at the page of

6. In the week following this lecture, a student and friend whom I met in Toronto was to draw my attention to another counting up of *yeses*. This calculation arrived at a far higher figure, having no doubt included all the *ayes*, which, I note in passing, are pronounced like the word *I* and pose a problem to which I shall return. Here is the other estimation, that of Noel Riley Fitch in *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation: A History of Literary Paris in the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Norton; London: Penguin, 1983). If I quote the whole paragraph, it is because it seems to me to go beyond the mere arithmeticality of the *yes*: "One consultation with Joyce concerned Benoist-Méchin's translation of the final words of *Ulysses*: 'and his heart was going like mad and yes I said Yes I will.' The young man wanted the novel to conclude with a final 'yes' following the 'I will.' Earlier Joyce had considered using 'yes' (which appears 354 times in the novel) as his final word, but had written 'I will' in the draft that Benoist-Méchin was translating. There followed a day of discussion in which they dragged in all the world's greatest philosophers. Benoist-Méchin, who argued that in French the '*oui*' is stronger and smoother, was more persuasive in the philosophical discussion. 'I will' sounds authoritative and Luciferian. 'Yes,' he argued, is optimistic, an affirmation to the world beyond oneself. Joyce, who may have changed his mind earlier in the discussion, conceded hours later, 'yes,' the young man was right, the book would end with 'the most positive word in the language' " (109-10). [EN The computer which controlled the typesetting of the 1984 critical edition of *Ulysses* prepared by Hans Walter Gabler, and unveiled at the Frankfurt Symposium, made its own count of the *yeses* in the text, and came up with the figure of 359 (not including any *ayes*); see Wolfhard Steppe with Hans Walter Gabler, *A Handlist to James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (New York: Garland, 1985). But this is clearly not the "nth generation computer" envisaged by Derrida later in this essay.]

notes and a title crossed my mind with a kind of irresistible brevity, the authority of a telegraphic order: *hear say yes in Joyce* [*l'oui dire de Joyce*.] So, you are receiving me, Joyce's saying *yes* but also the saying or the *yes* that is heard, the *saying yes* that travels round like a quotation or a rumor circulating, circumnavigating via the ear's labyrinth, that which we know only by hearsay [*oui-dire*]. The play on "hear say yes," *l'oui-dire* and *l'oui-dire*, can be fully effective only in French, which exploits the obscure, babelian homonymy of *oui* with just a dotted "i," and *oui* with a diaresis. The untranslatable homonymy can be heard (by hearsay, that is) rather than read *with the eyes*—the last word, *eyes*, let us note in passing, giving itself to a reading of the grapheme *yes* rather than a hearing of it. *Yes* in *Ulysses* can only be a mark at once written and spoken, vocalized as a grapheme and written as a phoneme, *yes, in a word, gramophoned*.

So the *oui dire* seemed to me to be a good title, sufficiently untranslatable and potentially capable of captioning what I wanted to say about the *yeses* in Joyce. Rabaté said "yes" to me on the telephone, that this title was fine. A few days, less than a week, later, I received Rabaté's admirable book, *Joyce, portrait de l'auteur en autre lecteur* [*James Joyce, Authorized Reader*], whose fourth chapter is entitled *Molly: oui-dire* (with a diaresis). "Curious coincidence, Mr. Bloom confided to Stephen unobtrusively," just when the sailor admits that he already knows Simon Dedalus; "coincidence of meeting" says Bloom a little later when he bumps into Stephen. So I decided to keep this title as a subtitle to commemorate the coincidence, convinced as I was that the same title did not serve quite the same story.

But as Jean-Michel Rabaté can confirm, it was during another such chance meeting—I was driving along with my mother and I leapt out of my car in a Paris street at the sight of Jean-Michel Rabaté—that we later said, on my return from Japan, that this coincidence must have been "telephoned" in some way by some rigorous program for which the prerecorded necessity, like an answering service, even though it passed through a great number of wires, must have come together in some telephone exchange and worked on us, separately, the one with or on the other, the one before the other without any legitimate belonging being able to be assigned. But this tale of correspondence and tele-

phones does not stop here. Rabaté had to pass on by telephone the title of my talk to someone: this did not fail to produce some specifically Joycean and programmed deformations at the expert exchange, as I received one day from Klaus Reichert a letter on Ninth International James Joyce Symposium letterhead from which I shall just quote this paragraph: "I am very curious to know about your Lui/Oui's which could be spelt Louis as well I suppose. And the Louis' have not yet been detected in Joyce as far as I know. Thus it sounds promising from every angle."

There is at least one major difference between Rabaté, Reichert, and myself, as there is between all of you and myself, and that is the difference of competence. All of you are experts, you belong to one of the most remarkable of institutions. It bears the name of a man who did everything, and admitted it, to make this institution indispensable, to keep it busy for centuries, as though on some new Tower of Babel to "make a name" again. The institution can be seen as a powerful reading machine, a signature and countersignature machine in the service of his name, of his "patent." But as with God and the Tower of Babel, it is an institution which he did everything he could to make impossible and improbable in its very principle, to deconstruct it in advance, even going as far as to undermine the very concept of competence, upon which one day an institutional legitimacy might be founded, whether we are dealing with a competence of knowledge or know-how.

Before returning to this question, that is, of what you and I are doing here, as an exemplification of competence and incompetence, I shall hang on to the telephone for a little longer, before breaking off a more or less telepathic communication with Jean-Michel Rabaté. Up until now we have amassed letters, postcards, telegrams, typewriters, et cetera. We should remember that if *Finnegans Wake* is the sublime babelization of a *penman* and *postman*, the motif of postal difference, of remote control and telecommunication, is already powerfully at work in *Ulysses*. And this is *remarked*, as always, *en abyme*. For example, in "THE WEARER OF THE CROWN": "Under the porch of the general post office shoeblacks called and polished. Parked in North Prince's street, His Majesty's vermilion mailcars, bearing on their sides



the royal initials, E. R., received loudly flung sacks of letters, postcards, lettercards, parcels, insured and paid, for local, provincial, British and overseas delivery" (U, 118). This *remote control* technology, as we say of television, is not an external element of the context; it affects the inside of meaning in the most elementary sense, even so far as the statement or the inscription of practically the shortest word, the gramophone of yes. This is why the wandering circumnavigation of a postcard, letter, or a telegram shifts designations only in the perpetual buzzing of a telephonic obsession, or again, if you take into account a gramophone or answering machine, a telegramphonic obsession.

If I am not mistaken, the first phone call sounds with Bloom's words: "Better phone him up first" in the section entitled "AND IT WAS THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER" (U, 124). A little before, he had somewhat mechanically, like a record, repeated this prayer, the most serious of all prayers for a Jew, the one that should never be allowed to become mechanical, to be gramophoned: *Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu*. If, more or less legitimately (for everything and nothing is legitimate when we lift out some segment on the basis of narrative metonymy) we take out this element from the most manifest thread of the story, then we can speak of the telephonic *Shema Israel* between God, who is infinitely removed (a long-distance call, a collect call from or to the "collector of prepuces") and Israel. *Shema Israel* means, as you know, call to Israel, listen Israel, hello Israel, to the address of the name of Israel, a person-to-person call.<sup>7</sup> The "Better phone him up first" scene takes

7. Elsewhere, in the brothel, it is the circumcised who say the "Shema Israel," and there is also the *Lacus Mortis*, the Dead Sea: "THE CIRCUMCISED: (In a dark guttural chant as they cast dead sea fruit upon him, no flowers) *Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echad*" (U, 496).

And while we are speaking of Ulysses, the Dead Sea, the gramophone, and soon laughter, here is *Remembrance of Things Past*: "He stopped laughing; I should have liked to recognize my friend, but, like Ulysses in the *Odyssey* when he rushes forward to embrace his dead mother, like the spiritualist who tries in vain to elicit from a ghost an answer which will reveal its identity, like the visitor at an exhibition of electricity who cannot believe that the voice which the gramophone restores unaltered to life is not a voice spontaneously emitted by a human being, I was obliged to give up the attempt." A little higher up: "The familiar voice seemed to be emitted by a gramophone more perfect than any I had ever heard." *The Past Recaptured*, trans. Andreas Mayor (New York: Vintage, 1971), 188-89. Biographies: "Those of the earlier generation—Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, Marcel Proust, André Gide (all born around 1870)—were either indifferent to or hostile toward his work. Valéry and Proust were indifferent. . . . Joyce had only one brief meeting with Proust, who died within months after the publication

place in the offices of *The Telegraph* [*Le télégramme*] newspaper (and not *The Tetragram*) and Bloom has just paused to watch a kind of typewriter, or rather a typesetting machine, a typographic matrix: "He stayed in his walk to watch a typesetter neatly distributing type." And as he "reads it backwards first," composing the name of Patrick Dignam, the name of the father, Patrick, from right to left, he remembers his own father reading the hagadah in the same direction. In the same paragraph, around the name of Patrick, you can follow the whole series of fathers, the twelve sons of Jacob, et cetera, and the word "practice" crops up twice to scan this patristic and *perfectly* paternal litany ("Quickly he does it. Must require some practice that." And twelve lines lower, "How quickly he does that job. Practice makes perfect.") Almost immediately after this we read, "Better phone him up first": "*plutôt un coup de téléphone pour commencer*," the French translation says. Let's say: a phone call, rather, to begin with. In the beginning, there must indeed have been some phone call.<sup>8</sup>

Before the act or the word, the telephone. In the beginning was the telephone. We can hear the telephone constantly ringing, this *coup de téléphone* which plays on figures that are apparently random, but about which there is so much to say. And it sets going within itself this *yes* toward which, moving in circles around it, we are slowly returning. There are several modalities or tonalities of the telephonic *yes*, but one of them, without saying anything else, amounts to marking, simply, that we are *here*, present, listening, on the end of the line, ready to respond but not for the moment responding with anything other than the preparation to respond (hello, *yes*: I'm listening, I can hear that you are there, ready to speak just when I am ready to speak to you). In the beginning the telephone, *yes*, at the beginning of the telephone call, in the beginning, some telephone call [*au commencement du coup de téléphone*].

of *Ulysses*" (Fitch, *Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation*, 95). "... coincidence of meeting . . . galaxy of events . . ."

8. EN One might expect the plural *here*—"some phone calls" (*quelque coups de téléphone*)—but the singular is in line with Derrida's use elsewhere in the essay of *de* meaning, roughly, "some" with a singular count noun (e.g., *de la marque, de l'autre*; "some mark," "some other"), indicating that we have gone beyond the literal meaning of the noun (without, however, entering the metaphorical).

A few pages after "*Shema Israel*" and the first telephone call, just after the unforgettable Ohio scene entitled "MEMORABLE BATTLES RECALLED" (you understand that a voice moves quickly from Ohio to the Battle of Tokyo), a certain telephonic *yes* resounds with a "Bingbang" which recalls the origin of the universe. A competent professor has just passed by "—A perfect cretic! the professor said. Long, short and long," after the cry "In Ohio!" "My Ohio!" Then, at the beginning of "O HARP EOLIAN" (*U*, 129), there is the sound of teeth trembling as dental floss is applied (and if I were to tell you that this year, before going to Tokyo, I went to Oxford, Ohio, and that I even bought some dental floss—that is to say, an eolian harp—in a drugstore in Ithaca, you would not believe me. You would be wrong; it is true and can be verified). When "the resonant unwashed teeth" vibrate to the dental floss, we hear "—Bingbang, bangbang." Bloom then asks if he may ring: "I just want to phone about an ad." Then "the telephone whirred inside." This time the eolian harp is not dental floss but the telephone, the cables of which are elsewhere "the navel cords," which connect with Eden (*U*, 43). "—Twenty eight... No, twenty... Double four... Yes." We do not know if this *Yes* is part of a monologue, approving the other within (yes, that's the right number), or if he is already in communication with the other at the end of the line. And we cannot know. The context is cut, it's the end of the section.

But at the end of the following section ("SPOT THE WINNER") the telephonic "yes" rings again in the same offices of *The Telegraph*: "Yes... *Evening Telegraph* here, Mr. Bloom phoned from the inner office. Is the boss...? Yes, *Telegraph*... To where?... Aha! Which auction rooms?... Aha! I see... Right. I'll catch him" (*U*, 130).

It is repeatedly said that the phone call is *internal*. "Mr. Bloom . . . made for the *inner door*" when he wants to ring; then "the telephone whirred *inside*," and finally, "Mr. Bloom phoned from the *inner office*." So, a telephonic interiority: for before any appliance bearing the name "telephone" in modern times, the telephonic *technē* is at work within the voice, multiplying the writing of voices without any instruments, as Mallarmé would say, a mental telephony, which, inscribing remoteness, distance, *différance*, and spacing [*espacement*] in the *phonē*, at the same time institutes, forbids, and interferes with the so-

called monologue. At the same time, in the same way, from the first phone call and from the simplest vocalization, from the monosyllabic quasi-interjection of the word *oui*, "yes," "ay." A *fortiori* for those *yes, yeses* which speech act theorists use as an illustration of the performative and which Molly repeats at the end of her co-called monologue, the "Yes, Yes, I do" that consents to marriage. When I speak of mental telephony, or even of masturbation, I am implicitly quoting "THE SINS OF THE PAST": "(In a medley of voices) He went through a form of clandestine marriage with at least one woman in the shadow of the Black Church. Unspeakable messages he telephoned mentally to Miss Dunne at an address in d'Olier Street while he presented himself indecently to the instrument in the callbox" (U, 491-92).

Telephonic spacing is particularly superimprinted in the scene entitled "A DISTANT VOICE." The scene crosses all the lines in our network, the paradoxes of competence and institution, represented here in the shape of the professor, and, in every sense of the word, the *repetition* of *yes* between eyes and ears. All these telephonic lines can be drawn from one paragraph:

A DISTANT VOICE

—I'll answer it, the professor said going.

...

—Hello? *Evening Telegraph* here... Hello?... Who's there?... Yes... Yes... Yes...

...

The professor came to the inner door. [*inner again*]

—Bloom is at the telephone, he said. (U, 137-38)

Bloom is-at-the-telephone. In this way, the professor defines a particular situation at a certain moment in the novel, no doubt, but as is always the case in the stereophony of a text that gives several levels to each statement and always allows metonymic extracts—and I am not the only reader of Joyce to indulge in this pursuit, at once legitimate and abusive, authorized and improper—the professor is also naming the permanent essence of Bloom. It can be read in this particular paradigm: *he is at the telephone*, he is always there, he belongs to the

telephone, he is at once riveted and destined there. His being is a being-at-the-telephone. He is hooked up to a multiplicity of voices and answering machines. His being-there is a being-at-the-telephone, a being for the telephone, in the way that Heidegger speaks of the being for death of *Dasein*. And I am not playing with words when I say this: Heideggerian *Dasein* is also a being-called, it always is, as we are informed in *Sein und Zeit*, and as my friend Sam Weber has reminded me, a *Dasein* that accedes to itself only on the basis of the Call (*der Ruf*), a call which has come from afar, which does not necessarily use words, and which, in a certain way, does not say anything. To such an analysis, we could apply down to the last detail the whole of chapter 57 of *Sein und Zeit* on the subject of *der Ruf*, drawing, for example, on sentences like the following: *Der Angerufene ist eben dieses Dasein; aufgerufen zu seinem eigensten Seinkönnen (Sich-vorweg...). Und aufgerufen ist das Dasein durch den Anruf aus dem Verfallen in das Man. . .*: the called one is precisely this *Dasein*; summoned, provoked, challenged toward its ownmost possibility of being (ahead of itself). And in this way the *Dasein* is summoned by this call from or out of the fall into the "they." Unfortunately, we do not have the time to enter further into this analysis, within or beyond the jargon of authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*), of which this university [Frankfurt] keeps some memory.

—Bloom is at the telephone, he said.

—Tell him to go to hell, the editor said promptly. X is Burke's public house, see? (*U*, 138)

Bloom is at the telephone, hooked up to a powerful network to which I shall return in an instant. He belongs in his essence to a polytelephonic structure. But he is at the telephone in the sense that one also *waits* at the telephone. When the professor says, "Bloom is at the telephone," and I shall shortly say, "Joyce is at the telephone," he is saying: he is waiting for someone to respond to him, waiting for an answer, which the editor—who decides the future of the text, its safekeeping or its truth—does not want to give, and who at this point

sends him down to hell, into the *Verfallen*, into the hell of censored books.<sup>9</sup> Bloom is waiting for an answer, for someone to say, "hello, yes," that is, for someone to say, "Yes, yes," beginning with the telephonic *yes* indicating that there is indeed another voice, if not an answering machine, on the other end of the line. When, at the end of the book, Molly says, "yes, yes," she is answering a request, but a request that she requests. She is at the telephone, even when she is in bed, asking, and waiting to be asked, on the telephone (since she is alone) to say, "yes, yes." And the fact that she asks "with my eyes" does not prevent this demand being made by telephone; on the contrary: "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 and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes" (*U*, 704).

The final "Yes," the last word, the eschatology of the book, yields itself only to *reading*, since it distinguishes itself from the others by an inaudible capital letter; what also remains inaudible, although visible, is the literal incorporation of the *yes* in the eye [*oeil*] of the language, of *yes* in *eyes*: *\*Langue d'oeil*.

We still do not know what *yes* means and how this small word, if it is one, operates in language and in what we calmly refer to as speech acts. We do not know whether this word shares anything at all with any other word in any language, even with the word *no*, which is most certainly not symmetrical to it. We do not know if a grammatical, semantic, linguistic, rhetorical, or philosophical concept exists capable of this event marked *yes*. Let us leave that aside for the moment. Let us, and this is not merely a fiction, act *as if* this does not prevent us, on the contrary, from hearing what the word *yes* governs. We will move on to the difficult questions later, if we have time.

*Yes* on the telephone can be crossed, in one and the same occurrence, by a variety of intonations whose differentiating qualities are potentialized on stereophonic long waves. They may appear only to go as

9. EN "Hell," "*l'enfer*," is the name given to the section of the Bibliothèque Nationale where questionable items are stored. For *Verfallen* see the quotation from Heidegger above.

far as interjection, the mechanical quasi-signal that indicates either the mere presence of the interlocutory *Dasein* at the other end of the line (Hello, yes?) or the passive docility of a secretary or a subordinate who, like some archiving machine, is ready to record orders (*yes sir*) or who is satisfied with purely informative answers (*yes, sir; no, sir*). Here is just one example among many. I have deliberately chosen the section where a typewriter and the trade name H. E. L. Y.'S lead us to the last piece of furniture in this vestibule or techno-telecommunicational preamble, to a certain gramophone, at the same time as they connect us to the network of the prophet Elijah. So here we are, though of course I have sectioned and selected, filtering out the noise on the line:

Miss Dunne hid the Capel street library copy of *The Woman in White* far back in her drawer and rolled a sheet of gaudy notepaper into her typewriter.

Too much mystery business in it. Is he in love with that one, Marion? Change it and get another by Mary Cecil Haye.

The disk shot down the groove, wobbled a while, ceased and ogled them: six.

Miss Dunne clicked at the keyboard:

—16 June 1904. [almost eighty years.]

Five tallwhitehatted sandwichmen between Monypeny's corner and the slab where Wolfe Tone's statue was not, eeled themselves turning H. E. L. Y.'S and plodded back as they had come. . . .

The telephone rang rudely by her ear.

—Hello. Yes, sir. No, sir. Yes, sir. I'll ring them up after five. Only those two, sir, for Belfast and Liverpool. All right, sir. Then I can go after six if you're not back. A quarter after. Yes, sir. Twentyseven and six. I'll tell him. Yes: one, seven, six.

She scribbled three figures on an envelope.

—Mr. Boylan! Hello! That gentleman from *Sport* was in looking for you. Mr. Lenehan, yes. He said he'll be in the Ormond at four. No, sir. Yes, sir. I'll ring them up after five. (*U*, 228–29)

It is not by accident that the repetition of *yes* can be seen to assume mechanical, servile forms, often bending the woman to her master,

even if any answer to the other as a singular other must, it seems, escape those forms. In order for the *yes* of affirmation, assent, consent, alliance, of engagement, signature, or gift to have the value it has, it must carry the repetition within itself. It must *a priori* and immediately confirm its promise and promise its confirmation. This essential repetition lets itself be haunted by an intrinsic threat, by an internal telephone which parasites it like its mimetic, mechanical double, like its incessant parody. We shall return to this fatality. But we can already hear a gramophony which records writing in the liveliest voice. *A priori* it reproduces it, in the absence of intentional presence on the part of the affirmer. Such gramophony responds, of course, to the dream of a reproduction which *preserves* as its truth the living *yes*, archived in the very quick of its voice. But by the same token it allows the possibility of parody, of a *yes* technique that persecutes the most spontaneous, the most giving desire of the *yes*. To meet [*répondre à*] its destination, this *yes* must reaffirm itself immediately. Such is the condition of a signed commitment. The *yes* can only state *itself* by promising itself its own memory. The affirmation of the *yes* is the affirmation of memory. *Yes* must preserve itself, and thus reiterate itself, archive its voice in order to allow it once again to be heard.

This is what I call the gramophone effect. *Yes* gramophones itself and telegramophones itself, *a priori*.

The desire for memory and the mourning of *yes* set in motion the anamnestic machine. And its hypermnestic overacceleration. The machine reproduces the living, it doubles it with its automaton. The example I have chosen offers the privilege of a double contiguity: from the word *yes* to the word *voice* and to the word *gramophone* in a sequence expressing the desire for memory, desire as memory of desire and desire for memory. It takes place in Hades, in the cemetery, at about 11 o'clock in the morning, the time reserved for the *heart* (that is, as Heidegger would put it again, the place of preserving memory and truth), here in the sense of the Sacred Heart:

The Sacred Heart that is: showing it. Heart on his sleeve. . . .

How many! All these here once walked round Dublin. Faithful departed. As you are now so once were we.



Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice, yes: gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseera-gain hellohello amarawf kophthst. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face. Otherwise you couldn't remember the face after fifteen years, say. For instance who? For instance some fellow that died when I was in Wisdom Hely's. (*U*, 115-16)<sup>10</sup>

What right do we have to select or interrupt a quotation from *Ulysses*? This is always legitimate and illegitimate, to be made legitimate like an illegitimate child. I could follow the sons of Hely (Bloom's old boss), threading them through all sorts of genealogies. Rightly or wrongly, I judge it more economical here to rely on the association with the name of the prophet Elijah, to whom a good many passages are devoted, or rather whose coming at regular intervals can be foretold. I pronounce *Elie* in the French way, but in the English name for Elijah, Molly's *Ja* can be heard echoing—if Molly gives voice to the flesh (*la chair*, hang on to this word) which always says *yes* (*stets bejaht*, Joyce reminds us, reversing Goethe's words). I shall not investigate further the part of the text where it is said, "And there came a voice out of heaven, calling: *Elijah! Elijah!* And he answered with a main cry: *Abba! Adonai!* And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels" (*U*, 343).

No, without transition, I give myself up to repetition, to that which is called "the second coming of Elijah" in the brothel. The Gramophone, the character and the voice, if I can put it like this, of the gramophone has just shouted:

Jerusalem!  
Open your gates and sing  
Hosanna... (*U*, 472)

In the second coming of Elijah after "the end of the world," Elijah's voice acts as a kind of telephone exchange or marshalling yard. All

10. I am told that James Joyce's grandson is here, now, in this room. This quotation is naturally dedicated to him.

communication, transport, transfer, and translation networks go through him. Polytelephony goes through Elijah's programphony. But do not forget, whatever you do, that Molly reminds us that Ben Bloom Elijah lost his job at Hely's. Bloom had thought at that time of prostituting Molly, of making her pose naked for a very rich man (U, 674).

Elijah is just a voice, a skein of voices. It says, "*C'est moi qui opère tous les téléphones de ce réseau-là*" in the French translation approved by Joyce for "Say, I am operating all this trunk line. Boys, do it now. God's time is 12.25. Tell mother you'll be there. Rush your order and you play a slick ace. Join on right here! Book through to eternity junction, the nonstop run" (U, 473). I want to insist (in French) on the fact that seats must be *booked* [*louer*], reserved with Elijah, Elijah must be *praised* [*louer*] and the *booking* [*location*] of this *praise* [*louange*] is none other than the *book* which stands in lieu of *eternity junction*, like a transferential and teleprogramphonic exchange.<sup>11</sup> "Just one word more," continues Elijah, who also evokes the second coming of Christ and asks us if we are ready, "Florry Christ, Stephen Christ, Zoe Christ, Bloom Christ," et cetera. "Are you all in this vibration? I say you are"—which is translated into French by "*Moi je dis que oui*," a problematic though not illicit translation about which we must speak again. And the voice of the one who says "yes," Elijah, saying to those who are in the *vibration* (a key word in my view) that they can call him any time, straightaway, instantaneously, without using any technique or postal system, but going by the sun, by solar cables and rays, by the voice of the sun—we could say photophone or heliophone. He says "by sunphone": "Got me? That's it. You call me up by sunphone any old time. Bumboosters, save your stamps" (U, 473). So do not write me any letters, save your stamps, you can collect them, like Molly's father.

We have arrived at this point because I was telling you about my travel experiences, my round trip, and about a few phone calls. If I am telling stories, it is to put off speaking about serious things and because

11. TN The French plays upon both meanings of *louer* ("to book" or "to rent" and "to praise"), upon *location* (a "hiring" or "renting") and *louange* ("praise" or "commendation"), as well as *livre* ("book" as a noun).

I am too intimidated. Nothing intimidates me more than a community of experts in Joycean matters. Why? I wanted first of all to speak to you about this, to speak to you about authority and intimidation. The page that I am going to read was written on the plane to Oxford, Ohio, a few days before my trip to Tokyo. I had decided at that time to put before you the question of competence, of legitimacy, and of the Joycean institution. Who has a recognized right to speak of Joyce, to write on Joyce, and who does this well? What do competence and performance consist of here? When I agreed to speak before you, before the most intimidating assembly in the world, before the greatest concentration of knowledge on such a polymathic work, I was primarily aware of the honor that was being paid me. I wondered by what claim I had managed to make people think I deserved it, however minimally. I do not intend to answer this question here. But I know, as you do, that I do not belong to your large, impressive family. I prefer the word *family* to that of *foundation* or *institute*. Someone answering, yes, in Joyce's name and to Joyce's name has succeeded in linking the future of an institution to the singular adventure of a proper name and a signature, a *signed* proper name, for writing out one's name is not yet signing. In a plane, if you write out your name on the identity card which you hand in on arrival in Tokyo, you have not yet signed. You sign when the gesture with which, in a certain place, preferably at the end of the card or the book, you inscribe your name again, takes on the sense of *yes*, this is my name, I certify this, and, yes, yes, I will be able to attest to this again. I will remember later, I promise, that it is really I who signed. A signature is always a *yes*, yes, the *synthetic* performative of a promise and a memory conditioning every commitment. We shall return to this obligatory departure point of all discourse, following a circle which is also that of the *yes*, of the "so be it," of the amen and the hymen.

I did not feel worthy of the honor that had been bestowed on me, far from it, but I must have been nourishing some obscure desire to be part of this mighty family which tends to sum up all others, including their hidden narratives of bastardy, legitimation, and illegitimacy. If I have accepted, it is mainly because I suspected some perverse challenge in a legitimation so generously offered. You know better than I the

disquiet regarding familial legitimation; it is this which makes *Ulysses*, as well as *Finnegans Wake*, vibrate. I was thinking, in the plane, of the challenge and the trap, because experts, I said to myself, with the lucidity and experience that a long acquaintance with Joyce confers on them, ought to know better than most to what extent, beneath the simulacrum of a few signs of complicity, of references or quotations in each of my books, Joyce remains a stranger to me, as if I did not know him. Incompetence, as they are aware, is the profound truth of my relationship to this work which I know after all only directly, through hearsay, through rumors, through what people say, second-hand exegeses, readings that are always partial. For these experts, I said to myself, the time has come for the deception to made evident, and how could it be demonstrated or denounced better than at the opening of a large symposium?

So, in order to defend myself against this hypothesis, which was almost a certainty, I asked myself: but in the end what does competence come down to in the case of Joyce? And what can a Joycean institution, a Joycean family, a Joycean international organization be? I do not know how far we can speak of the modernity of Joyce, but if this exists, beyond the apparatus for postal and programophonic technologies, it consists in the fact that the declared project of keeping generations of university scholars at work for centuries of babelian edification must itself have been drawn up using a technological model and the division of university labor that could not be that of former centuries. The scheme of bending vast communities of readers and writers to this law, of detaining them by means of an interminable transferential chain of translation and tradition, can equally well be attributed to Plato and Shakespeare, to Dante and Vico, without mentioning Hegel and other finite divinities. But none of these could calculate, as well as Joyce did, his feat, by modifying it in accordance with certain types of world research institutions prepared to use not only means of transport, of communication, of organizational programming allowing an accelerated capitalization, a crazy accumulation of interest in terms of knowledge blocked in Joyce's name, even as he lets you all sign in his name, as Molly would say ("I could often have written out a fine cheque for myself and write his name on it" [*U*, 702]), but also modes of

archivization and consultation of data unheard of [*inouïes*] for all the grandfathers whom I have just named, omitting Homer.

The intimidation amounts to this: Joyce experts are the representatives as well as the effects of the most powerful project for programming over the centuries the totality of research in the onto-logico-encyclopedic field, all the while commemorating his own, proper signature. A Joyce scholar has the right to dispose of the totality of competence in the encyclopedic field of the *universitas*. He has at his command the computer of all memory, he plays with the entire archive of culture—at least of what is called Western culture, and, in it, of that which returns to itself according to the Ulyssean circle of the encyclopedia; and this is why one can always at least dream of writing *on* Joyce and not *in* Joyce from the fantasy of some Far Eastern capital, without, in my case, having too many illusions about it. The effects of this preprogramming, you know better than I, are admirable and terrifying, and sometimes of intolerable violence. One of them has the following form: nothing can be invented *on the subject* of Joyce. Everything we can say about *Ulysses*, for example, has already been anticipated, including, as we have seen, the scene about academic competence and the ingenuity of metadiscourse. We are caught in this net. All the gestures made in the attempt to take the initiative of a movement are found to be already announced in an overpotentialized text that will remind you, at a given moment, that you are captive in a network of language, writing, knowledge, and *even narration*. This is one of the things I wanted to demonstrate earlier, in recounting all these stories, true ones moreover, about the postcard in Tokyo, the trip to Ohio, or the phone call from Rabaté. We have verified that all this had its narrative paradigm and was *already* recounted in *Ulysses*. Everything that happened to me, including the narrative that I would attempt to make of it, was already pre-dicted and pre-narrated, in its dated singularity, prescribed in a sequence of knowledge and narration: within *Ulysses*, to say nothing of *Finnegans Wake*, by a hypermnesic machine capable of storing in an immense epic work Western memory and virtually all the languages in the world *including traces of the future*. Yes, everything has already happened to us with *Ulysses* and has been signed in advance by Joyce.

What remains to be seen is what happens to this signature in these conditions, and this is one of my questions.

This situation is one of reversal, stemming from the paradox of the *yes*. Moreover, the question of the *yes* is always linked to that of the *doxa*, to what is opined in opinion. So this is the paradox: just when the work of such a signature gets going—some might say submits itself, at any rate restarts *for itself*, so that it might return to itself—the most competent and reliable production and reproduction machine, it simultaneously ruins the model. Or, at least, it threatens to ruin the model. 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. There can be no Joycean foundation, no Joycean family; there can be no Joycean legitimacy. What relationship is there between this situation and the paradoxes of the *yes*, or the structure of a signature?

The classical concept of competence supposes that one can rigorously dissociate knowledge (in its act or in its positing) from the event that one is dealing with, and especially from the ambiguity of written or oral marks—let's call them gramophonies. Competence implies that a metadiscourse is possible, neutral and univocal with regard to a field of objectivity, whether or not it possesses the structure of a text. Performances ruled by this competence must in principle lend themselves to a translation with nothing left over on the subject of the corpus that is itself translatable. Above all, they should not essentially be of a narrative type. In principle, one doesn't relate stories in a university; one does history, one recounts in order to know and to explain; one speaks about narrations or epic poems, but events and stories must not be produced in the name of institutionalizable knowledge. Now with the event signed by Joyce a double bind has become at least explicit (for we have been caught in it since Babel and Homer and everything else that follows): on the one hand, we must write, we must sign, we must bring about new events with untranslatable marks—and this is the frantic call, the distress of a signature that is

asking for a *yes* from the other, the pleading injunction for a counter-signature; but on the other hand, the singular novelty of any other *yes*, of any other signature, finds itself already programophonized in the Joycean corpus.

I do not notice the effects of the challenge of this double bind on myself alone, in the terrified desire I might have to belong to a family of Joycean representatives among whom I will always remain an illegitimate son; I also notice these effects on you.

On the one hand, you have the legitimate assurance of possessing, or of being in the process of constructing, a supercompetence, measuring up to a corpus that includes virtually all those bodies of knowledge treated in the university (sciences, technology, religion, philosophy, literature, and, co-extensive with all these, languages). With regard to this hyperbolic competence, nothing is transcendent. Everything is *internal*, mental telephony; everything can be integrated into the domesticity of this programotelephonic encyclopedia.

On the other hand, it must be realized at the same time, and *you realize this*, that the signature and the *yes* that occupy you, are capable—it is their destination—of destroying the very root of this competence, of this legitimacy, of its domestic interiority, capable of deconstructing the university institution, its internal or interdepartmental divisions, as well as its contract with the extra-university world.

Hence the mixture of assurance and distress that one can sense in “Joyce scholars.” From one point of view, they are as crafty as Ulysses, knowing, as did Joyce, that they know more, that they always have one more trick up their sleeve. Whether it is a question of totalizing summary or subatomistic micrology (what I call the “divisibility of the letter”), no-one does it better; everything is integratable in the “this is my body” of the corpus. But from another point of view, this hypermnesic interiorization can never be closed upon itself. For reasons connected with the structure of the corpus, the project and the signature, 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 an unforeseeable outside.

And you have guests.

!

You are awaiting the passing through or the second coming of Elijah. And, as in all good Jewish families, you always have a place set for him. Waiting for Elijah, even if his coming is already gramophoned in *Ulysses*, you are prepared to recognize, without too many illusions, I think, the external competence of writers, philosophers, psychoanalysts, linguists. You even ask them to open your colloquia. And, for example, to ask questions like the following: what is happening today here in Frankfurt, in this city where the Joyce international, the cosmopolitan, but very American James Joyce Foundation, established Bloomsday 1967, whose president, the representative of a very large American majority, is to be found in Ohio (Ohio again!), continues its edification in a modern Babel, which is also the capital of the book fair and of a famous philosophical school of modernity? When you call on incompetents, like me, or on allegedly external competences, knowing full well that these do not exist, is it not both to humiliate them, and because you expect from these guests not only news, good news come at last to deliver you from the hypermnesic interiority in which you go round in circles like hallucinators in a nightmare, but also, paradoxically, a legitimacy? For you are at once very sure and very unsure of your rights, and even of your community, of the homogeneity of your practices, your methods, your styles. You cannot rely on the least consensus, on the least axiomatic concordat among you. As a matter of fact, you do not exist, you are not founded to exist as a foundation, which is what Joyce's signature gives you to read. And you call on strangers to come and tell you, as I am doing in replying to your invitation: you exist, you intimidate me, I recognize you, I recognize your paternal and grandpaternal authority, recognize me and give me a diploma in Joycean studies.

Of course you do not believe a word of what I am saying to you at the moment. And even if it were true, and even if, yes, it is true, you would not believe me if I told you that I too am called Elijah: this name is not inscribed, no, on my official documents, but it was given me on my seventh day. Moreover, Elijah is the name of the prophet present at *all* circumcisions. He is the patron, if we can put it like this, of



circumcisions. The chair on which the new-born baby boy is held is called "Elijah's chair." This name should be given to all the "chairs" of Joycean studies, to the "panels" and "workshops" organized by your foundation. Rather than *Postcard from Tokyo*, I had thought of calling this lecture *Circumnavigation and Circumcision*. A Midrash tells how Elijah had complained about Israel's forgetting the alliance, that is, Israel's forgetting circumcision. God is then supposed to have given the order for him to be present at all circumcisions, perhaps as a punishment. This scene of signature could have been marked with blood connecting all the announced passages concerning the prophet Elijah to the event of circumcision, the moment of entry into the community, of alliance and legitimation. At least twice in *Ulysses* there are references to the "collector of prepuces" ("—The islanders, Mulligan said to Haines casually, speak frequently of the collector of prepuces" [U, 20]; "What's his name? Ikey Moses? Bloom./He rattled on./—Jehovah, collector of prepuces, is no more. I found him over in the museum when I went to hail the foamborn Aphrodite" [U, 201]). Each time, and often near the arrival of milk or foam, circumcision is associated with the name of Moses, as in this passage before "the name of Moses Herzog": "—Circumcised! says Joe./—Ay, says I. A bit off the top" (U, 290). "Ay, says I": yes, says I; or again I says I; or again I (says)I, yes(says)yes; I: I, yes: yes, yes, yes, I, I, etc. Tautology, monology, but surely synthetic judgment *a priori*. You might also have played on the fact that in Hebrew the word for stepfather (think back to Bloom when he declares himself in front of Stephen to be ready to go "a step farther") also refers to the circumciser. And if Bloom has a dream, it is of having Stephen as part of the family, and therefore, either by way of marriage or adoption, of circumcising the Greek.

So where are we going with the union [*alliance*] of this Joycean community? What will become of it at this pace of accumulation and commemoration in one or two centuries, taking into account new technologies for archiving and storing information? Finally, Elijah is not me, nor some stranger come to say this thing to you, the news from outside, even the apocalypse of Joycean studies, that is, the truth, the final revelation (and you know that Elijah was always associated with an apocalyptic discourse). No, Elijah is you: you are the Elijah of

*Ulysses*, who is presented as a large telephone exchange ("HELLO THERE, CENTRAL!" [U, 149]), the marshalling yard, the network through which all information must transit. We can imagine that there will soon be a giant computer of Joycean studies ("operating all this trunk line. . . . Book through to eternity junction" [U, 473]). It would capitalize all publications, coordinate and teleprogram all communication, colloquia, theses, papers, and would draw up an index in all languages. We would be able to consult it any time by satellite or by "sunphone," day and night, taking advantage of the "reliability" of an answering machine. "Hello, yes, yes, what are you asking for? Oh, for all the occurrences of the word *yes* in *Ulysses*? Yes." It would remain to be seen if the basic language of this computer would be English and if its patent would be American, given the overwhelming and significant majority of Americans among the trustees of the Joyce Foundation. It would also remain to be seen if we could consult this computer on the word *yes* in every language, and if the *yes*, in particular the one involved in the operations of consultation, can be counted, calculated, numbered. A circle will lead me in due course back to this question.

In any case, the figure of Elijah, whether it be that of the prophet or the circumciser, of polymathic competence or of telematic control, is only a synecdoche of Ulyssean narration, at once smaller and greater than the whole.

We should, then, get rid of a double illusion and a double intimidation. (1) No truth can come from outside the Joycean community, and without the experience, the cunning, and the knowledge amassed by trained readers. But (2) inversely, or symmetrically, there is no model for "Joycean" competence, no interiority and no closure possible for the concept of such a competence. There is no absolute criterion for measuring the relevance of a discourse on the subject of a text signed by "Joyce." Even the concept of competence finds itself shaken by this event. For we must write, write in one language and respond to the *yes* and countersign in another language. The very discourse of competence (that of neutral, metalinguistic knowledge immune from all untranslatable writing, etc.) is thus incompetent, the least pertinent there is on

the subject of Joyce, who, moreover, also finds himself in the same situation whenever he speaks of his "work."

Instead of pursuing these generalities, and bearing in mind time passing, I return to *yes* in *Ulysses*. For a very long time, the question of the *yes* has mobilized or traversed everything I have been trying to think, write, teach, or read. To limit myself to examples of readings, I had devoted seminars and texts to the *yes*, to the double *yes* in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* ("Thus spake Zarathustra," Mulligan moreover says [*U*, 29]), the *yes, yes* in the marriage ceremony [*hymen*], which is still the best example, the *yes* of the great midday affirmation, and then the ambiguity of the double *yes*: one of them comes down to the Christian assumption of one's burden, the *Ja, Ja* of the donkey overloaded as Christ was with memory and responsibility, and the other light, airy, dancing, solar *yes, yes* is also a *yes* of reaffirmation, of promise, of oath, a *yes* to eternal recurrence. The difference between the two *yeses*, or rather between the two repetitions of the *yes*, remains unstable, subtle, sublime. One repetition haunts the other. For Nietzsche, *yes* always finds its chance with a certain kind of woman, and he, like Joyce, anticipated that one day professorships would be set up to study his *Zarathustra*. In the same way, in Blanchot's *La folie du jour*, the quasi-narrator attributes the power to say *yes* to women, to the beauty of women, beautiful insofar as they say *yes*: "Yet I have met people who have never said to life, "Quiet!", who have never said to death, "Go away!" Almost always women, beautiful creatures."<sup>12</sup>

The *yes* would then be that of woman—and not just that of the mother, the flesh, the earth, as is so often said of Molly's *yeses* in the majority of readings devoted to her: "Penelope, bed, flesh, earth, monologue," said Gilbert,<sup>13</sup> and many others after him and even before him, and here Joyce is no more competent than anyone else. This is not false, it is even the truth of a certain truth, but it is not all, and it is not so simple. The law of gender [*genre*] seems to me to be strongly

<sup>12</sup>. EN Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, trans. Lydia Davis (Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1981), 7; see "The Law of Genre" above.

<sup>13</sup>. EN Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 328. Gilbert is quoting from the schema which Joyce gave him.

overdetermined and infinitely more complicated, whether we are dealing with sexual or grammatical gender, or again with rhetorical technique. To call this a monologue is to display a somnambulistic carelessness.

So I wanted to listen again to Molly's *yeses*. But can this be done without making them resonate with all the *yeses* that prepare the way for them, correspond to them, and keep them hanging on at the other end of the line throughout the whole book? Last summer in Nice I read *Ulysses* again, first in French, then in English, pencil in hand, counting the *oui's* and then the *yeses* and sketching out a typology. As you can imagine, I dreamt of hooking up to the Joyce Foundation computer, and the result was not the same from one language to the other.

Molly is not Elijah [*Elie*], is not *Moelie* (for you know that the Mohel is the circumciser), and she is not Joyce, but even so her *yes* circumnavigates and circumcises, encircling the last chapter of *Ulysses*, since it is at once her first and her last word, her send-off [*envoi*] and her closing fall: "Yes because he never did" and finally "and yes I said yes I will Yes" (*U*, 704). The eschatological final "Yes" occupies the place of the signature at the bottom right of the text. Even if one distinguishes, as one must, Molly's "yes" from that of *Ulysses*, of which she is but a figure and a moment, even if one distinguishes, as one must also do, these two signatures (that of Molly and that of *Ulysses*) from that of Joyce, they read each other and call out to each other. To be precise, they call to each other across a *yes*, which always inaugurates a scene of call and request: it confirms and countersigns. Affirmation demands *a priori* confirmation, repetition, safekeeping, and the memory of the *yes*. A certain narrativity is to be found at the simple core of the simplest *yes*: "I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes" (*U*, 704).

A *yes* never comes alone, and we never say this word alone. Nor do we laugh alone, as Freud says, and we shall come back to this. And Freud also stresses that the unconscious knows nothing of *no*. But in what way does the Joycean signature imply what we will curiously refer to here as the question of the *yes*? There is a question of the *yes*, a request of the *yes*, and perhaps, for it is never certain, an unconditional, inaugural affirmation of the *yes* that cannot necessarily be distinguished

from the question or the request. Joyce's signature, or at least the one that interests me here, though I in no way claim to exhaust the phenomenon, cannot be summarized by the affixation of his seal in the form of a surname and the play of signifiers, as they say, in which to reinscribe the name "Joyce." The inferences to which these games of association and society pastimes have for a long time been giving rise are facile, tedious, and naively jubilatory. And even if they are not entirely irrelevant, they begin by confusing a signature with a simple mention, apposition, or manipulation of the officially authorized name. For neither in its juridical capacity, as I have just suggested, nor in the essential complexity of its structure, does a signature amount to the mere mention of a proper name. The proper name itself, which a signature does not merely spell or mention, cannot be reduced to a legal surname. This runs the risk of setting up a screen or mirror toward which psychoanalysts, in a hurry to conclude, would rush headlong like dazzled larks. I have tried to show this for Genet, Ponge, and Blanchot.<sup>14</sup> As for the scene of the surname, the opening pages of *Ulysses* should suffice to educate the reader.

*Who signs? Who signs what in Joyce's name?* The answer could not be in the form of a key or a clinical category that could be pulled out of a hat whenever a colloquium required. Nevertheless, as a modest foreword, though it might be of interest only to me, shall we say that I believed it possible to examine this question of the signature through that of the *yes* which it always implies and insofar as it here *marries* the question of knowing who is laughing and how laughter comes about *with* Joyce, *in* Joyce, in a singular way, since *Ulysses*.

Who is the man laughing? Is it a man? And that which laughs, how does it laugh? Does it laugh? For there is more than one modality, more than one tonality of laughter just as there is a whole gamut, a polygamy in the game and the gamble of the *yes*. Why gamut, game, and gamble? Because before the gramophone, just before, and before Elijah's tirade as the operator of the telephone exchange, the hobgoblin

14. EN For Ponge, see the extract from *Signsponge* below; for Blanchot see "Pas" in *Parages* (especially pp. 109–16); for Genet see *Glas*, right-hand column.

speaks the croupier's language in French: "*Il vient!* [Elijah, I suppose, or Christ] *C'est moi! L'homme qui rit! L'homme primigène!* (He whirls round and round with dervish howls.) *Sieurs et dames, faites vos jeux!* (He crouches juggling. Tiny roulette planets fly from his hands.) *Les jeux sont faits!* (The planets rush together, uttering crepitant cracks.) *Rien n'va plus*" (U, 472). "*Il vient!*", "*rien n'va plus,*" in French in the original. The French translation does not include this, the French effaces the French, then, at the risk of cancelling an essential connotation or reference in this self-presentation of the man laughing.

Since we are speaking of the translation, the tradition, and the transfer of *yes*, we should remember that the same problem exists for the French version of the *yes* when this is to be found, as they say, "*en français dans le texte,*" and even in italics. The effacing of these marks is even more serious in that the "*Mon père, oui*" presents the value of a quotation that shows up all the problems of the quoted *yes*. In I, 3 ("Proteus"), shortly after the evocation of the "ineluctable modality of the visible" and of the "ineluctable modality of the audible"—in other words, the ineluctable gramphony of the word *yes*—"sounds solid" enunciates the same transfer through the "navel cord" that interrogates the consubstantiality of father and son, and all of this occurs close to a scripturo-telephonic and Judaeo-Hellenic scene: "Hello. Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one" (U, 43). "Yes, sir. No, sir. Jesus wept: and no wonder by Christ" (U, 44). On the same page (and we must for essential reasons deal here with things in accordance with contiguity) what the French translation, co-signed by Joyce, translates by "*oui*" is not *yes*, but once "I am" and once "I will." We shall return to this in a circular way. Here, then, is the passage, closely followed by the mother's postal order that Stephen cannot cash in a French post office (counter "*fermé*") and by the allusion to the "blue French telegram; curiosity to show: / —Mother dying come home father":

—*C'est tordant, vous savez. Moi je suis socialiste. Je ne crois pas à l'existence de Dieu. Faut pas le dire à mon père.*

—Il croit?

—Mon père, oui. (U, 47) (In French in the original.)

Since the question of the signature remains in its entirety before us, the modest but indispensable preliminary dimension of its elaboration would situate itself, I believe, at the intersection of the *yes*, of the visible *yes* and the audible *yes*, of the *oui oui* ["heard yes"], without any etymological filiation between the two words *oui* and *oui*, of the *yes for the eyes* and the *yes for the ears*, and of laughter, at the intersection of the *yes* and *laughter*. In sum, across the telephonic lapsus that made me say or that caused to be heard "*oui dire*" ("hearing"), it is "*oui rire*" ("yes laughter")<sup>15</sup> that forced its way through, the consonantal difference between *dire* and *rire*, that is, *d* and *r* (which are, moreover, the only consonants in my name).

But why laugh? Why laughter? Everything has doubtless already been said on laughter in Joyce, on parody, satire, derision, humor, irony, raillery. And on his Homeric laughter and his Rabelaisian laughter. It remains perhaps to think of laughter, as, precisely, a remains. What does laughter want to say? What does laughter want? [*Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, le rire? Qu'est-ce que ça veut rire?*] Once one recognizes that, in principle, in *Ulysses* the virtual totality of experience—of meaning, of history, of the symbolic, of languages, and of writings, the great cycle and the great encyclopedia of cultures, scenes, and affects, in short, the sum total of all sum totals—tends to unfold itself and reconstitute itself by playing out all its possible combinations, with a writing that seeks to occupy virtually all the spaces, well, the totalizing hermeneutic that makes up the task of a worldwide and eternal institution of Joyce studies will find itself confronted with what I hesitatingly call a dominant affect, a *Stimmung* or a *pathos*, a tone which re-traverses all the others yet which does not participate in the series of the others since it *re-marks* all of them, adds itself to them without allowing itself to be added in or totalized, in the manner of a remainder that is both quasi-transcendental and supplementary. And it is this yes-

15. EN Derrida's coinage *oui-rire*, for which I have introduced the translation "yes-laughter," also means "to laugh yes" or "laughing yes," as *oui dire* means "saying yes."

laughter [*oui-rire*] that overmarks not only the totality of writing, but all the qualities, modalities, *genres* of laughter whose differences might be classified into some sort of typology.<sup>16</sup>

So why yes-laughter *before and after all*, for all that a signature is accountable for—or, rather, leaves on account? Why this remainder?

I have not the time to sketch out this work and this typology. Cutting across country, I shall say only two words on the double relationship, and therefore on the unstable relationship, which, with its double tonality, instructs my reading and my re-writing of Joyce, this time beyond even *Ulysses*, and my double relationship to this yes-laughter. My presumption is that I am not the only person to project this double relationship. It is instituted and requested, required, by the Joycean signature itself.<sup>17</sup>

With a certain ear, with a certain hearing [*ouïe*], I can hear a reactive, even negative, yes-laughter resonating. It takes joy in hypermnesic mastery and in spinning spiderwebs that defy all other possible mastery, as impregnable as an alpha and omegaprogramophone in which all the histories, stories, discourses, knowledges, all the signatures to come that Joycean and other institutions might address, would be prescribed, computed in advance outside the scope of any effective computer, precomprehended, captive, predicted, partialized, metonymized, exhausted, like the subjects, whether they know it or not. And science or consciousness can settle nothing—on the contrary, it merely allows its supplementary calculation to be put at the service of the master signature; it may laugh at Joyce, but it thereby indebts itself once again to him. As is said in *Ulysses*, “*Was Du verlachst wirst Du noch dienen*.”<sup>18</sup> / Brood of mockers” (*U*, 197).

There is a James Joyce who can be heard laughing at this omnipotence, at this great *tour joué*: a trick played and a grand tour completed. I am speaking of the tricks and tours [*tours*] of *Ulysses*, of his ruses, his cunning [*retors*], and of the great tour he completes when on his

16. EN Yes-laughter, *oui-rire*, functions, that is, in a manner which is related to the operation of terms like “arche-writing,” “the supplement,” and *différance*. See the Introduction.

17. EN See also Derrida’s “Two Words for Joyce.”

18. EN “What you laugh at you will still serve”; a German aphorism.



return [*retour*], he comes back from everything. A triumphal, jubilatory laughter, certainly, but also, since jubilation always betrays some kind of mourning, the laughter of resigned lucidity. For omnipotence remains phantasmatic, it opens and defines the dimensions of phantasm. Joyce cannot *not know this*. He cannot, for example, not know that the book of all books, *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*, is still a mere opusculum among the millions and millions of works in the Library of Congress, absent forever no doubt from the news agency in a Japanese hotel, and lost too in the non-book archives, the expansion of which has nothing to do with the library. Millions of tourists, American and otherwise, are less and less likely to come across this thing in some "curious meeting." And this crafty little book will be judged by some to be too ingenious, industrious, manipulatory, overloaded with knowledge impatient to reveal itself by hiding, by *adding itself on* to everything: *in sum*, poor literature, vulgar in that it never leaves its luck to the incalculable simplicity of a poem, grimacing from overcultivated and hyperscholastic technology, a doctor's literature, just a shade too subtle in other words, the literature of a Doctor Pangloss with his eyes newly opened (wasn't this Nora's opinion?), which would have had the calculated good fortune to be censored, and therefore launched, by the U.S. postal authorities.

Even in its resignation to phantasm, this yes-laughter reaffirms control of a subjectivity that draws everything together as it draws itself together, or as it delegates itself to the name, in what is merely a vast rehearsal, during the sun's movement for one day from the Orient to the Occident. It condemns and condemns itself, sometimes sadistically, sardonically, it is the cynicism of a rictus, of sarcasm, and of derision: *brood of mockers*. It overwhelms itself and loads itself down, it makes itself pregnant with the whole of memory, it takes on summary, exhaustion, the second coming. It is not contradictory to state, regarding this yes-laughter, that it is that of Nietzsche's Christian donkey, the one that cries *Ja, ja*, or even that of the Judaeo-Christian beast that wants to make the Greek laugh once he has been circumcised of his own laughter: absolute knowledge as truth of religion, shouldered memory, guilt, literature of burden [*littérature de somme*]*—as we say, "beast of burden"*—literature of summons [*littérature de sommation*], moment

of the debt: A. E. I. O. U, *I owe you*, with the *I* constituting itself in the very debt; it only comes into its own, there where it was, on the basis of the debt.<sup>19</sup> This relationship between the debt and the vowels, between “I owe you” and vocalization, might have led me—but I have not got the time—to link what I have tried to say elsewhere (in *The Post Card* and “Two Words for Joyce”) about “he war” and “Ha, he, hi, ho, hu” in *Finnegans Wake* with the “I, O, U” in *Ulysses*, which is a strange anagram of the French *oui*, badly and didactically translated by “*je vous dois*” in the version authorized by Joyce, the one to which he said *yes* and thus consented to.

But did he say it in French—that is, all in vowels—or in English? Laughter laughs at having got generations of heirs, readers, custodians, and Joyce scholars and writers for ever in its debt. This yes-laughter of encircling reappropriation, of omnipotent Odyssean recapitulation, accompanies the installation of a device virtually capable of impregnating in advance its patented signature, even that of Molly, with all the countersignatures to come, even after the death of the artist as an old man, who carries off only an empty shell, the accident of a substance. The machine of filiation—legitimate or illegitimate—functions well and is ready for anything, ready to domesticate, circumcise, circumvent everything; it lends itself to the encyclopedic reappropriation of absolute knowledge which gathers itself up close to itself, as Life of the Logos, that is, also in the truth of natural death. We are here, in Frankfurt, to bear witness to this in commemoration.

But the eschatological tone of this yes-laughter also seems to me to be worked or traversed—I prefer to say *haunted*—joyously ventriloquised by a completely different music, by the vowels of a completely different song. I can hear this too, very close to the other one, as the yes-laughter of a gift without debt, light affirmation, almost amnesic, of a gift or an abandoned event, which in classical language is called “the work,” a lost signature without a proper name that reveals and names the cycle of reappropriation and domestication of all the paraps only to delimit their phantasm, and does so in order to contrive the

19. EN Compare Freud's well-known slogan, “Where id was, there shall ego be.”

breach necessary for the coming of the other, whom one can always call Elijah, if Elijah is the name of the unforeseeable other for whom a place must be kept, and no longer Elijah, the great operator, Elijah, the head of the megaprogramotelephonic network, but the other Elijah: Elijah, the other. But there we are, this is a homonym, Elijah can always be one and the other at the same time, we cannot invite the one, without the risk of the other turning up. But this is a risk that must always be run. In this final movement, I return then to the risk or the chance of this contamination of one yes-laughter by the other, to the parasiting of an Elijah, that is to say of a me, by the other.

Why have I linked the question of laughter, of a laughter which *remains*, as a fundamental, quasi-transcendental tonality, to that of the "yes"?

In order to ask oneself what happens with *Ulysses*, or with the arrival of whatever, whoever—of Elijah for example—it is necessary to try to think the singularity of the event, and therefore the uniqueness of a signature, or rather of an irreplaceable mark that cannot necessarily be reduced to the phenomenon of copyright, legible across a patronym, after circumcision. It is necessary to try to think circumcision, if you like, from the possibility of a mark, of a feature, preceding and providing its figure. Now if laughter is a fundamental or abyssal tonality in *Ulysses*, if the analysis of this laughter is not exhausted by any of the available forms of knowledge precisely because it laughs at knowledge and from knowledge, then laughter bursts out in the event of signature itself. And there is no signature without *yes*. If the signature cannot be reduced to the manipulation or the mention of a name, it assumes the irreversible commitment of the person confirming, who *says* or *does* yes, the token of a mark left behind.

Before asking oneself who signs, if Joyce is or is not Molly, what is the status of the difference between the author's signature and that of a figure or a fiction signed by an author; before chattering about sexual difference as duality and expressing one's conviction as to the character of Molly as "onesidedly womanly woman" (and here I am quoting Frank Budgen and others after him)—Molly, the beautiful plant, the

herb or *pharmakon*<sup>20</sup>—or the “onesidedly masculine” character of James Joyce; before taking into consideration what Joyce says about the non-stop monologue as “the indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport to eternity” (and once again, the competence of Joyce in letters and conversations does not seem to me to enjoy any privilege); before manipulating clinical categories and a psychoanalytic knowledge that are largely derivative of the possibilities of which we are speaking here, one will ask oneself what a signature is: it requires a yes more “ancient” than the question “what is?” since this question presupposes it, a yes more ancient than knowledge. One will ask oneself for what reason the yes always appears as a yes, yes. I say the yes and not the word “yes,” because there can be a yes without a word.

One ought, then, to have preceded this entire discourse with a long, learned and thoughtful meditation on the meaning, the function, above all the presupposition of the yes: before language, in language, but also in an experience of the plurality of languages that perhaps no longer belongs to linguistics in the strict sense. The expansion toward a pragmatics seems to me to be necessary but inadequate as long as it does not open itself up to a thinking of the trace, of writing, in a sense that I have tried to explain elsewhere and which I cannot go into here.<sup>21</sup>

What is it that is said, is written, occurs with yes?

Yes can be implied without the word being said or written. This permits, for example the multiplication of yesses everywhere in the French version when it is assumed that a yes is marked in English sentences from which the word yes is in fact absent. But at the limit, given that yes is co-extensive with every statement, there is a great temptation, in French but first of all in English, to double up everything with a kind of continuous yes, even to double up the yesses that are

20. EN Moly was the plant given by Hermes to Odysseus to protect him from Circe (see Ellmann, *James Joyce* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1982], 496–97); *pharmakon* is the drug, beneficial or harmful, that Derrida exploits in “Plato’s Pharmacy.”

21. EN See, especially, *Of Grammatology* and “Plato’s Pharmacy”; Derrida’s special use of “writing” is discussed in the Introduction, pp. 9–10 above.

articulated by the simple mark of a rhythm, intakes of breath in the form of pauses or murmured interjections, as sometimes happens in *Ulysses*: the *yes* comes from me to me, from me to the other in me, from the other to me, to confirm the primary telephonic "Hello": yes, that's right, that's what I'm saying, I am, in fact, speaking, yes, there we are, I'm speaking, yes, yes, you can hear me, I can hear you, yes, we are in the process of speaking, there is language, you are receiving me, it's like this, it takes place, it happens, it is written, it is marked, yes, yes.

But let's start out from the *yes phenomenon*, the manifest *yes* patently marked as a *word*, spoken, written or phonogramed. Such a word says but says nothing in itself, if by saying we mean designating, showing, describing some thing to be found outside language, outside marking. Its only references are other marks, which are also marks of the other. Given that *yes* does not say, show, name anything that is beyond marking, some would be tempted to conclude that *yes* says nothing: an empty word, barely an adverb, since all adverbs, in which grammatical category *yes* is situated in our languages, have a richer, more determined semantic charge than the *yes* they always presuppose. In short, *yes* would be transcendental adverbiality, the ineffaceable supplement to any verb: in the beginning was the adverb, *yes*, but as an interjection, still very close to the inarticulate cry, a preconceptual vocalization, the perfume of discourse. ? *First thing we sense, it precedes*

Can one sign with a perfume? Just as we cannot replace *yes* by a thing which it would be supposed to describe (it describes nothing, states nothing, even if it is a sort of performative implied in all statements: yes, I am stating, it is stated, etc.), nor even by the thing it is supposed to approve or affirm, so it would be impossible to replace the *yes* by the names of the concepts supposedly describing this act or operation, if indeed this is an act or operation. The concept of activity or of actuality does not seem to me to be enough to account for a *yes*. And this quasi-act cannot be replaced by "approval," "affirmation," "confirmation," "acquiescence," "consent." The word *affirmative* used by the military to avoid all kinds of technical risks, does not replace the *yes*; it still assumes it: yes, I am saying "affirmative."

What does this *yes* lead us to think, this *yes* which names, describes,

designates nothing, and which has no reference outside marking (which is not to say outside language, for the *yes* can do without words, or at least the word *yes*)? In its radically non-constative or non-descriptive dimension, even if it is saying “yes” to a description or a narration, *yes* is through and through and *par excellence* a performative. But this characterization seems to me inadequate. First because a performative must be a *sentence*, a sentence sufficiently endowed with meaning in itself, in a given conventional context, to bring about a determined event. Now I believe, yes, that—to put it in a classical philosophical code—*yes* is the transcendental condition of all performative dimensions. A promise, an oath, an order, a commitment always implies a *yes*, I sign. The *I* of *I sign* says *yes* and says *yes* to itself, even if it signs a simulacrum. Any event brought about by a performative mark, any writing in the widest sense of the word, involves a *yes*, whether this is phenomenalized or not, that is, verbalized or adverbialized as such. Molly says *yes*, she remembers *yes*, the *yes* that she spoke with her eyes to ask for *yes* with her eyes, et cetera.

We are in an area which is *not yet* the space where the large questions of the origin of negation, of affirmation or of denegation, can and must be unfolded. Nor are we even in the space in which Joyce was able to reverse “*Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint*” by saying that Molly is the flesh which always says *yes*. The *yes* to which we now refer is “anterior” to all these reversible alternatives, to all these dialectics. They assume it and envelop it. Before the *Ich* in *Ich bin* affirms or negates, it poses itself or pre-poses itself: not as *ego*, as the conscious or unconscious self, as masculine or feminine subject, spirit or flesh, but as a pre-performative force which, for example, in the form of the “I” [*je*] marks that “I” as addressing itself to the other, however undetermined he or she is: “Yes-I,” or “Yes-I-say-to-the-other,” even if *I* says *no* and even if *I* addresses itself without speaking. The minimal, primary *yes*, the telephonic “hello” or the tap through a prison wall, marks, before meaning or signifying: “I-here,” listen, answer, there is some mark, there is some other. Negatives may ensue, but even if they completely take over, this *yes* can no longer be erased.

I have had to yield to the rhetorical necessity of translating this minimal and undetermined, almost virgin, address into words, into

words such as "I," "I am," "language," at a point where the position of the *I*, of being, and of language still remains derivative with regard to this *yes*. This is the whole difficulty for anyone wishing to speak on the subject of the *yes*. A metalanguage will always be impossible here insofar as it will itself assume the event of a *yes* which it will fail to comprehend. It will be the same for all accountancy or computation, for any calculation aiming to arrange a series of *yesses* according to the principle of reason and its machines. *Yes* indicates that there is address to the other. This address is not necessarily a dialogue or an interlocution, since it assumes neither voice nor symmetry, but the haste, in advance, of a response that is already asking. For if there is some other, if there is some *yes*, then the other no longer lets itself be produced by the same or by the ego. *Yes*, the condition of any signature and of any performative, addresses itself to some other which it does not constitute, and it can only begin by *asking* the other, in response to a request that has always already been made, *to ask* it to say *yes*. Time appears only as a result of this singular anachrony. These commitments may remain fictitious, fallacious, and always reversible, and the address may remain invisible or undetermined; this does not change anything about the necessity of the structure. *A priori* it breaches all possible monologue. Nothing is less a monologue than Molly's "monologue," even if, within certain conventional limits, we have the right to view it as belonging to the genre or type known as the "monologue." But a discourse embraced by two *Yesses* of different qualities, two *Yesses* with capital letters, and therefore two gramphoned *Yesses*, could not be a monologue, but at the very most a soliloquy.

But we can see why the appearance of a monologue imposes itself here, precisely because of the *yes, yes*. The *yes* says nothing and asks only for another *yes*, the *yes* of an other, which, as we will shortly see, is analytically—or by *a priori* synthesis—implied in the first *yes*. The latter only situates itself, advances itself, marks itself in the call for its confirmation, in the *yes, yes*. It begins with the *yes, yes*, with the second *yes*, with the other *yes*, but as this is still only a *yes* that *recalls* (and Molly *remembers, recalls* to herself from the other *yes*), we might always be tempted to call this anamnesis monologic. And tautological. The *yes* says nothing but the *yes*: another *yes* that resembles the first

even if it says *yes* to the advent of a completely other *yes*. It appears monotautological or specular, or imaginary, because it opens up the position of the *I*, which is itself the condition for performativity. Austin reminds us that the performative grammar *par excellence* is that of a sentence in the first person of the present indicative: yes, I promise, I accept, I refuse, I order, I do, I will, and so on. "He promises" is not an explicit performative and cannot be so unless an *I* is understood, as, for example, in "I swear to you that he promises."

Think back to Bloom in the chemist's. Among other things, he speaks to himself about perfumes. And remember, too, that the *yeses* of Molly (moly), the herb, also belong to the element of perfume. I could (and I thought about it for a while) have turned this paper into a treatise on perfumes—that is, on the *pharmakon*—and I could have called it *On the perfumative in "Ulysses."* Remember that Molly remembers all these *yeses*, remembers herself through these *yeses*, as consenting to that which smells good, that is, to perfume: "He asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower [Bloom's name, Flower, in pseudonym form on the postcard in the poste restante, evaporates here] and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes" (U, 704). Right at the beginning of the book, the bed, the chair, and the *yes* are all perfume calls: "To smell the gentle smoke of tea, fume of the pan, sizzling butter. Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes" (U, 63). The "yes I will" seems tautological, opening out the repetition called for or presupposed by the so-called primary "yes" which, in short, is only saying "I will," and "I" as "I will." I asked you to think back to Bloom in the chemist's. He is talking to himself about perfumes: ". . . had only one skin. Leopold, yes. Three we have." A line later he says, "But you want a perfume too. What perfume does your? *Peau d'Espagne*. That orangeflower" (U, 86). From there, he passes to the baths, then to the massage: "Hammam. Turkish. Massage. Dirt gets rolled up in your navel. Nicer if a nice girl did it. Also I think I. Yes I. Do it in the bath" (U, 86). If we lift out this segment (*Also I think I. Yes I*), as we are always, and never, justified in doing, we have the minimal *proposition*, which, moreover, is equivalent to the "I will," illustrating the heterotautology of the *yes* implied in every *cogito* as thought, self-positing,



and will to self-positing. But despite the umbilical scene ("navelcord" again), despite the archi-narcissistic and auto-affective appearance of this "Yes-I" which dreams of massaging itself, of washing itself, of appropriating itself, of making itself clean, all alone even in the caress itself, the *yes* addresses itself to some other and can appeal only to the *yes* of some other; it begins by responding.

We have no more time, so I rush into an even more telegraphic style. The French translation for "I think I. Yes I" is extremely deficient, since it gives "*Je pense aussi à. Oui, je,*" instead of "*Je pense je,*" I think the *I* or the *I* thinks *I*, and so on; and the "Curious longing I" which immediately follows on becomes in French "*Drôle d'envie que j'ai là, moi.*" The response, the *yes* of the other, comes from elsewhere to bring him out of his dream, in the slightly mechanical form of a *yes* from the chemist. "Yes, sir, the chemist said," telling him twice that he must pay: "Yes, sir, the chemist said. You can pay altogether, sir, when you come back" (*U*, 86). The dream of a perfumed bath, a clean body, and an unguent massage continues as far as the Christly repetition of "this is my body," thanks to which he crosses himself in bliss, like the anointing of the Lord: "Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cool enamel, the gentle tepid stream. This is my body" (*U*, 88). The following scene refers to the anointing of Christ ("oiled by scented melting soap"), the navel, the flesh ("his navel, bud of flesh": the remains of the umbilical cord as the remains of the mother), and we're at the end of the chapter with, again, the word "flower," Bloom's other signature: "a languid floating flower."

The great dream of perfumes unfolds in the Nausicaa section. Beginning with "Yes. That's her perfume" (*U*, 372), it illustrates a move of fidelity to Molly, and sets itself forth as a grammar of perfumes.

The self-positing of the self with regard to the *yes* crops up each time, repeatedly, differently throughout the periplus. One place, among others (I quote it because it is near to one of the A. E. I. O. U. examples), is the one which refers to the "I" as "entelechy of forms." But "I" is here at once *mentioned* and *used*:

But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under ever-changing forms.

I that sinned and prayed and fasted.  
A child Conmee saved from pandies.  
I, I and I. I.  
A.E.I.O.U. (*U*, 190)

A little further: "Her ghost at least has been laid for ever. She died, for literature at least, before she was born" (*U*, 190). (This is the sequence about the ghost and the French Hamlet "*lisant au livre de lui-même*," in which John Eglinton says about French people "Yes. . . . Excellent people, no doubt, but distressingly shortsighted in some matters" [*U*, 187]). Elsewhere, at the end of Nausicaa, Bloom writes something in the sand and then rubs it out:

Write a message for her. Might remain. What?  
I. . . .  
AM. A. (*U*, 379)

The self-positing in the *yes* or the *Ay* is, however, neither tautological nor narcissistic; it is not egological even if it initiates the movement of circular reappropriation, the odyssey that can give rise to all these determined modalities. It holds open the circle that it institutes. In the same way, it is not yet performative, not yet transcendental, although it remains presupposed in any performativity, *a priori* in any constative theoricity, in any knowledge, in any transcendentality. For the same reason, it is preontological, if ontology expresses what is or the being of what is. The discourse on Being presupposes the responsibility of the *yes*, yes what is said is said, I am responding to the summons of Being, the summons of Being is being responded to, and so on. Still in telegraphic style, I will situate the possibility of the *yes* and of yes-laughter in the place where transcendental egology, the ontoencyclopedia, the great speculative logic, fundamental ontology and the thought of Being open onto a thought of the gift and sending [*envoi*] which they presuppose but cannot contain. I cannot develop this argument as I would like and as I have tried to do elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> I shall

22. EN See, for example, "Envois" in *The Post Card*, and, on the gift, "Women in the Beehive," 198–200, and "Two Words for Joyce," 146–47.

content myself with connecting these remarks to what, at the beginning of this trip, concerned the postal networks in *Ulysses*: a postcard, letter, check, telegramphone, telegram, et cetera.

The self-affirmation of the *yes* can address itself to the other only in recalling itself to itself, in saying to itself *yes, yes*. The circle of this universal presupposition, fairly comic in itself, is like a dispatch to oneself, a sending-back [*renvoi*] of self to self, which *both never leaves itself and never arrives at itself*. Molly says to herself (apparently speaking to herself alone), she reminds herself, that she says *yes* in asking the other to ask her to say *yes*, and she starts or finishes by saying *yes* to the other in herself, but she does so in order to say to the other that she will say *yes* if the other asks her, *yes*, to say *yes*. These dispatches and returned dispatches [*envois et renvois*] always mime the situation of the questions/answers in scholastics. And the scene of "sending oneself to oneself, having it off with oneself,"<sup>23</sup> is repeated many times in *Ulysses* in its literally postal form. And it is always marked with scorn, like the phantasm and failure themselves. The circle does not close upon itself. For want of time, I shall draw on only three examples. First is the one which mentions Milly, aged four or five, sending herself love letters, and in which, moreover, she is compared to a looking glass ("O Milly Bloom, . . . You are my looking glass" [U, 65]). To this end she left "pieces of folded brown paper in the letterbox." At least that is what the French version says ("*Elle s'envoyait*"). The English text is less clear, but let us continue. As for Molly, the philatelist's daughter, she sends herself everything, like Bloom and Joyce, but this is remarked *en abyme* in the literality of the following sequence, which recounts how she dispatches herself to herself [*s'envoyer*] through the post: "like years not a letter from a living soul except the odd few I posted to myself with bits of paper in them" (U, 678). Four lines earlier she is sent (away) or rejected [*envoyée ou renvoyée*] by him: "but he never forgot himself when I was there sending me out of the room on some blind excuse."

It is a question, then, of self-sending [*s'envoyer*]. And in the end,

23. EN The French expression *s'envoyer* (literally "to send oneself" something) is used colloquially with a sexual meaning: *s'envoyer quelqu'un*, to have it off with someone; *s'envoyer en l'air*, to have it off.

sending oneself someone who says *yes* without needing, in order to say it, what the French idiom or *argot* babelizes under the terms of *s'envoyer*: to "have it off" with oneself or someone else. Self-sending barely allows itself a detour via the virgin mother when the father imagines himself sending himself, getting off on, the seed of a consubstantial son: "a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten" (*U*, 207). It is one of the passages on "*Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive," which "may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction" (*U*, 207).

My third example precedes it slightly and comes immediately after "*Was Du verlachst wirst Du noch dienen*": "He Who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others, Who . . ." (*U*, 197). Two pages later:

—Telegram! he said. Wonderful inspiration! Telegram! A papal bull!  
He sat on a corner of the unlit desk, reading aloud joyfully:

—*The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done.* Signed: Dedalus. (*U*, 199)

To be more and more aphoristic and telegraphic, I will say in conclusion that the Ulyssean circle of *self-sending* commands a reactive yes-laughter, the manipulatory operation of hypermnestic reappropriation, whenever the phantasm of a signature wins out, a signature gathering together the sending in order to gather itself together near itself. But when, and it is only a question of rhythm, the circle opens, reappropriation is renounced, the specular gathering together of the sending lets itself be joyfully dispersed in a multiplicity of unique yet numberless sendings, then the other *yes* laughs, the other, *yes*, laughs.

For here the relationship of a *yes* to the Other, of a *yes* to the other and of one *yes* to the other *yes*, must be such that the contamination of the two *yesses* remains inevitable. And not only as a threat: but also as an opportunity. With or without a word, taken as a minimal event, a *yes* demands *a priori* its own repetition, its own memorizing, demands that a *yes* to the *yes* inhabit the arrival of the "first" *yes*, which is never therefore simply originary. We cannot say *yes* without promising to confirm it and to remember it, to keep it safe, countersigned in another

yes, without promise and memory, without the promise of memory. Molly remembers (and recalls herself). The memory of a promise initiates the circle of appropriation, with all the risks of technical repetition, of automatized archives, of gramophony, of simulacrum, of wandering deprived of an address and destination. A yes must entrust itself to memory. Having come already from the other, in the dissymmetry of the request, and from the other of whom it is requested to request a yes, the yes entrusts itself to the memory of the other, of the yes of the other and of the other yes. All the risks already crowd around from the first breath of yes. And the first breath is suspended in the breath of the other, it is already and always a second breath. It remains there out of sound and out of sight, linked up in advance to some "gramophone in the grave."

We cannot separate the twin *yesses*, and yet they remain completely other. Like Shem and Shaun, like writing and the post. Such a coupling seems to me to ensure not so much the signature of *Ulysses* but the *vibration* of an event which *succeeds only in asking*. A differential vibration of several tonalities, several qualities of yes-laughters which do not allow themselves to be stabilized in the indivisible simplicity of one sole sending, of self to self, or of one sole consigning, but which call for the counter-signature of the other, for a yes which would resound in a completely other writing, an other language, an other idiosyncrasy, with an other stamp.

I return to you, to the community of Joycean studies. Supposing a department of Joycean studies decides, under authority of an Elijah Professor, Chairman or Chairperson, to put my reading to the test and to institute a "program," the first phase of which would consist of putting in table form a typology of all the *yesses* in *Ulysses*, before moving on to the *yesses* in *Finnegans Wake*. The chairperson agrees (the chair, like the flesh, always says yes)<sup>24</sup> to buy an *n*th generation computer that would be up to the task. The operation agreed to could go very far. I could keep you for hours describing what I myself computed, a pencil in my hand: the mechanical figure of *yesses* legible

24. TN *La chair dit toujours oui*: "The flesh always says yes"; "The chair always says yes."

in the original gives more than 222 in all, of which more than a quarter, at least 79, are in Molly's so-called monologue (!), with an even greater number in French, since certain types of words or phrases or rhythmic pauses are in fact translated by "*oui*" ("ay," "well," "he nodded," for example), sometimes in the absence of the word *yes*.<sup>25</sup> Another count would be necessary in every language, with a special fate for those used in *Ulysses*. What would we do, for example, with "*mon père, oui*," which is written in French in the original, or with "*O si certo*" where *yes* stands as near as possible to Satanic temptation, that of the spirit saying no ("You prayed to the devil. . . . *O si, certo!* Sell your soul for that" [*U*, 46]). Beyond this perilous counting of explicit *yeses*, the chairperson would decide on or promise two tasks which would be impossible for any computer of which we possess the concept and control today. These are two impossible tasks for all the reasons I have listed and which I reduce to two main types.

1. By hypothesis, we would have to organize the different categories of *yes* according to a large number of criteria. I found at least ten

25. Here are some examples; French and then English page references are given (the French edition is that published by Gallimard in 1948). 13/16 *oui* purely and simply added; 39/42 *oui* for "I am"; 39/43 *oui* for "I will"; 43/46 *oui* for "ay"; 90/93 *oui mais* for "well but"; 93/96 *Oh mais oui* for "O, he did"; 100/103 *Je crois que oui* for "I believe so"; 104/108 *Oh mais oui* for "O, to be sure"; 118/121 *fit oui de la tête* for "nodded"; 120/123 *oui* for "Ay"; 125/128 *pardi oui* for "So it was"; 164/167 *Je crois que oui* for "I believe there is"; 169/172 *oui merci* for "thank you"; *oui* for "ay"; 171/174 *oui* for "ay"; 186/189 *oui-da, il me la fallait* for "marry, I wanted it"; 191/194 *Oui. Un oui juvénile de M. Bon* for "—Yes, Mr. Best said youngly"; 195/199 *oui-da* for "Yea"; 199–203 *oh si* for "o yes"; 210/214 *Oui da* for "Ay"; 214/218 *Oh Oui* for "very well indeed"; 220/224 *Dame oui* for "Ay"; 237/242 *Elle fit oui* for "she nodded"; 238/243 *Oui, essayez voir* for "Hold him now"; 250/256 *Oui, oui* for "Ay, ay"; 261/266 *oui, essayez voir* for "hold him now"; 262/268 *Mais oui, mais oui* for "Ay, ay, Mr. Dedalus nodded"; 266/271 *Oui, mais for "But . . ."*; 272/277 *Oui, certainement for "o, certainly is"*; 277/281 *Oui, chantez . . .* for "Ay do"; 285/289 *oui, oui* for "Ay, ay"; 294/299 *oui* for "ay"; *oui* for "ay"; 305/309 *Ben oui pour sûr* for "So I would" (complicated syntax); 309/313 *Ah oui* for "Ay"; 323/328 *oui* for "ay"; *oui* for "ay"; 330/335 *oui* for "That's so"; 331/336 *oui* for "well"; 346/351 *oui* for "so I would"; 347/352 *oui* for "nay"; 363/367 *oui* for "what!"; 365/370 *Sapristi oui* for "devil you are"; *oui!* for "see!"; 374/377 *Elle regardait la mer le jour où elle m'a dit oui* for "Looking out over the sea she told me"; 394/397 *oui da* for "ay"; 429/431 *Je crois que oui* for "I suppose so"; 475/473 *je dis que oui* for "I say you are"; 522/518 *oui, je sais* for "O, I know"; 550/546 *Ben oui* for "Why"; 554/550 *Oui* for "Ay"; 557/552 *si, si* for "ay, ay"; *si, si* for "ay, ay"; 669/666 *oui* for "well"; *oui bien sûr* for "but of course"; 687/684 *oui* for "ay"; 699/694 *bien oui* for "of course"; 706/701 *le disait oui* for "say they are." There are more than fifty shifts of diverse kinds. A systematic typology would be tempting.

categories or modalities.<sup>26</sup> This list cannot be closed, since each category can be divided into two depending on whether *yes* appears in a manifest *monologue* in response to the other *in itself* or in manifest *dialogue*.<sup>27</sup> We would have to take into consideration the different tonalities attributed to the alleged modalities of *yes* in English and in every language. Now supposing that we could give the computer reading-head relevant instructions to pick up subtle changes in tone, a thing which is doubtful in itself, the over-marking of every *yes* with the remains of a quasi-transcendental, *yes-laughter* can no longer give rise to a diacritical detection ruled by binary logic. The two *yes-laughters* of differing quality call one to the other, call for and imply each other irresistibly; consequently they risk, as much as they request, the signed pledge. One doubles the other, not as a countable presence, but as a

26. For example: (1) The "yes" in question form: *oui? Allo?* as in "Yes? Buck Mulligan said. What did I say?" (14); (2) the "yes" of rhythmic breathing in the form of monologic self-approbation, as in "Two in the back bench whispered. Yes. They knew . . ." (30), or "yes, I must" (44); (3) the "yes" of obedience, as in "Yes, sir" (44); (4) the "yes" marking agreement on a fact, as in "O yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful" (46); (5) the "yes" of the passionate breathing of desire, as in "Be near her ample bedwarmed flesh. Yes, yes" (63); (6) the "yes" of calculatedly and precisely determined breathing, as in "yes, exactly" (81); (7) the "yes" of absentminded politeness, as in "Yes, yes" (88); (8) the "yes" of emphatic confirmation, as in "Indeed yes, Mr. Bloom agreed" (103); (9) the "yes" of open approval, as in "Yes, Red Murray agreed" (119); (10) the "yes" of insistent confidence, as in "Yes, yes. They went under" (135). This list is in its essence open, and the distinction between explicit monologue and dialogue can also lend itself to all those parasitings and grafts which are the most difficult to systematize.

27. Closure is impossible, then. It opens up new and destabilizing questions for the institution of Joyce studies. There are a number of reasons for this. First, those to which we have just referred with regard to the structure of a "yes." Then those connected with the new relationship which Joyce deliberately, maliciously instituted from a certain date between the pre-text and the so-called completed or published work. He watched over his archive. We now know that from a certain moment, conscious of the treatment to which the archive of the "work in progress" would give rise, he carried out a part of the work himself and began to save rough notes, sketches, drafts, corrections, variations and studio works (we might think here of Ponge, of *La fabrique du pré* or of the manuscripts of *La table*). In this way he deferred his signature up to the moment of readiness for the press. He has given generations of university students and professors, custodians of his "open work," a new task, a task which in principle is infinite. Rather than giving himself up by accident and posthumously to the "genetic criticism" industry, one could say that he constructed the concept and programmed the routes and the dead ends. The diachronic dimension, the incorporation or rather the addition of variants, the manuscript form of the work, the play of the proofs, even the printer's errors, point to moments which are essential in the work and not just the accident of a "This is my body."

"I am exhausted, abandoned, no more young. I stand, so to speak, with an unposted letter bearing the extra regulation fee before the too late box of the general postoffice of human life" (U, 486).

ghost. The *yes* of memory, with its recapitulating control and reactive repetition, immediately doubles the light, dancing *yes* of affirmation, the open affirmation of the gift. Reciprocally, two responses or two responsibilities refer to each other without having any relationship between them. The two sign yet prevent the signature from gathering itself together. They can only call up another *yes*, another signature. And, on the other hand, one cannot decide between two *yeses* that *must* gather together like twins, to the point of simulacrum, the one being the gramophony of the other.

I hear this vibration as the very music of *Ulysses*. A computer cannot today enumerate these interlacings, in spite of all the many ways it can help us out. Only an as yet unheard-of computer could, by attempting to integrate with it, and therefore by adding to it its own score, its other language and its other writing, *respond* to that in *Ulysses*. What I say or write here is merely putting forward a proposition, a small piece in regard to that other text which would be the unheard-of computer.

2. Hence the second part of the argument. The program of the operation to be carried out on the computer or in the institute, ordered by the chairperson, in fact presupposes a *yes*—others would call it a speech act—which, responding in some way to the event of the *yeses* in *Ulysses* and to their call, to whatever in their structure is or utters a call, is *part of and not part of* the analyzed corpus. The chairperson's *yes*, like that of the program of whoever writes on *Ulysses*, responding and countersigning in some way, does not let itself be counted or discounted, no more than does the *yes* which it calls for in turn. It is not just binarity which proves to be impossible, it is, for the same reason, totalization, and the closing of the circle, and the return of *Ulysses*, and *Ulysses* himself, and the self-sending of some indivisible signature.

Yes, yes, this is what arouses laughter, and we never laugh alone, as Freud rightly said, never without sharing something of the same repression. Or, rather, this is what leads to laughter, just as it, and the id, lead to thought. And just as it, and the id, give quite simply, beyond laughter and beyond the *yes*, beyond the *yes/no/yes* of the *me/not-me*, *ego/not-ego* which can always turn toward the dialectic.



But can we sign with a perfume?

Only another event can sign, can countersign to bring it about that an event has already happened. This event, that we naively call the first event, can only affirm itself in the confirmation of the other: a completely other event.

The other signs. And the *yes* keeps restarting itself, an infinite number of times, even more than, and quite differently from, Mrs. Breen's week of seven *yeses* when she hears Bloom recount to her the story of Marcus Tertius Moses and Dancer Moses (*U*, 437): "MRS. BREEN (*eagerly*) Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes."

I decided to stop here because I almost had an accident just as I was jotting down this last sentence, when, on leaving the airport, I was driving home after the trip to Tokyo.

**JACQUES DERRIDA**

**ACTS**  
**OF**

**LITERATURE**

**EDITED BY DEREK ATTRIDGE**

**ROUTLEDGE**  
**NEW YORK • LONDON**

Published in 1992 by

Routledge

An imprint of Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

29 West 35 Street

New York, NY 10001

Published in Great Britain in 1992 by

Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane

London EC4P 4EE

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Printed in the United States of America

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**Library of Congress cataloging in publication data**

Derrida, Jacques.

Acts of literature / Jacques Derrida : edited by Derek Attridge.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-415-90056-5 ISBN 0-415-90057-3 (pb)

1. Derrida, Jacques—Contributions in criticism.

2. Deconstruction. 3. Literature—Philosophy. 4. Literature—History and criticism. I. Attridge, Derek. II. Title.

PN98.D43D44 1991

801.95—dc20

91-30342

CIP

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Derrida, Jacques, 1930—

Acts of literature.

I. Title

194

ISBN 0-415-90056-5

ISBN 0-415-90057-3 pbk

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