



Deciphering the Joycean Address: Elusive Authority and Reader Agency in *Ulysses*

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The novels of James Joyce echo with the voices of authority. From Father Arnall's sermon overwhelming the narration in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to the exhaustive catechism in the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses*, rhetoric and narrative devices direct the reader's attention, framing scenes and questions which they seem to answer unflinchingly. This has led some critics to construe a Joycean author-figure, like Lee Oser's "mature Stephen", directly interpellating the reader. However, upon closer inspection, this model reveals its permeability. Though they seem omniscient, the narrative voices leave parts of the world of *Ulysses* outside of their ken: for instance, when they depict Bloom standing in front of his door, having forgotten his key, he uses a "subterfuge" to enter, passing through a hitherto unmentioned window. Likewise, intertexts, wordplays and untold emotions teem at the margins, multiplying the possibilities for new interpretations, and highlighting the limits of explicit narrative directions. Within the Daedalian maze of *Ulysses*, authorial figures reveal the ambivalence of their interpellations. In the turmoil of Dublin's night-town, Elijah's prophecies dissolve in the laughter of a casino-croupier calling "*faites vos jeux*", which resounds as an invitation to play with summons and authorities. Rather than accepting the addresses, I will argue that Joycean narratives, through laughter, ambivalence and undecidability, invite us to "counter-interpellate" them, in the words of Jean-Jacques Lecercle: to adopt other roles than that of addressee, and reshape their meaning. Following Jean-Michel Rabaté, I will focus on one such potential role for the readers: that of post-boys, deciphering addresses as we roam through the text. Instead of being caught in the web of authoritative discourses, we can re-contextualize them, uncover their origins and subvert their trajectory. As such, though the rhetoric of the novel may be already written, we may choose how – and where! – to take it.