

Rewriting Empire and Nationhood: The Phantasmagorical Promise of James Joyce's *Ulysses*

*Daniel Hengel**

The Graduate Center, CUNY, USA

* Address correspondence to Daniel A. Hengel, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, English Department, 862 Union St., Apt 3F, Brooklyn NY 11215, USA. Email: dhengel@gradcenter.cuny.edu.

Abstract: In *Ulysses* (1922), Joyce employs the subterfuge of form and language to displace Empire and undermine England's ability to reify the colonial subject into a subjugated class as he rewrites the systems of power and distinction governing relations between the subject, nation, and Empire. Joyce's tacit confrontations with modalities of representation through the rejection of naturalist forms of language, symbol, subjecthood, and temporality caustically exposes inequalities of class difference as he advocates for the abnegation of British colonial rule.

Joyce's manipulation of time and space throughout *Ulysses* – perhaps, most potently articulated in 'Circe' – creates a field of protest that destabilizes historical Imperial authority and the limits of nationhood in what Enda Duffy calls 'the first major anti-Imperial novel [of the twentieth] century – the book of Irish postcolonial independence'.¹ This article rereads 'Circe' as a phantasmagorical call for resistance that generates new forms of postcolonial dissent. Bloom's fantastical revelries transgress spatial and temporary boundaries as Bloom's neo-narratives rewrite cultural models of distinction in the manic rise and fall of the utopic Bloomusalem. Bloom's playfully disruptive images subvert both England's rule over Ireland and Ireland's gross anti-Semitism.

Keywords: *Ulysses*, Benjamin, Bloomusalem, Protest, Empire