

# Ulysses as an Intertextual Performance: Figuration, Travesty, and the Staging of Text

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**Abstract:** This article explores the figure of Ulysses as an intertextual performance rather than as a stable character or heroic archetype. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's and Tiphaine Samoyault's theories of *intertextuality*, as well as Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of *performance* as a transformative, autopoietic event and Richard Schechner's notion of *restored behaviour*, the study argues that Ulysses functions not as a subject but as a dynamic textual operator. This spectral, reactivable presence traverses literature as a mechanism of poetic and structural destabilisation. From Ulysses by James Joyce to Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* and Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*, the name of Ulysses is cited, fragmented, erased, or reconfigured through citation, travesty, repetition, and rhythmic transformation. Intertextuality is treated as a scenographic device—a performative space in which meaning is produced not by identity but by echo, rupture, and variation. In diasporic and postcolonial literatures, Ulysses becomes a spectral operator—no longer a returning hero, but a figural rhythm of loss and non-return. Ithaca is not a destination but a gap in the narrative field. Ulysses, as a performance of intertextuality, exemplifies a broader mode of literary existence: writing as affective deviation, as unfinished recurrence, and as poetic persistence in the absence of closure.

**Keywords:** *fragmentation, intertextuality, performance, restored behaviour, spectrality.*

## 1. Ulysses. From Character to Textual Function

In our era, Ulysses is no longer a character to be revered. He is neither a hero nor the agent of an initiatory narrative, nor a figure restoring order through pedagogical wandering. If Homer's *Odyssey* established him as an exemplary model of return, and Joyce fragmented and scattered him in a textual labyrinth saturated with memory and language, contemporary literature no longer seeks identity in Ulysses, but rather a function. He is no longer a subject but a textual operational mode. He is not a recognisable figure, but an act of textual appearance in a performative regime. To speak today of Ulysses is not to speak of a man, but instead of a form of thought that traverses, reformulates, and insinuates itself into networks of meaning without ever stabilising.

This shift from character to function occurs essentially within the field of intertextuality. In canonical readings, Ulysses guarantees epic coherence; in modern and postmodern literature, he becomes a poetic operator: not the one who returns, but the one who enables the re-emergence of meaning in hybrid, ambiguous, rhizomatic forms. As Roland Barthes explains,

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. [...] The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (Barthes 1977: 148).

In this regime, Ulysses is no longer a “who,” but a “how”: how meaning is activated when dislodged from the mythical centre. In this regard, his figure should be understood less in terms of narrative and more in terms of textual processuality. This presence does not signify, but instead produces a return that does not repair, but activates latent networks of memory, language, and alterity.

Kristeva and Barthes already opened this line of thought in the 1960s and 1970s: the character is neither an individual nor a psychological core, but an effect of language, a semiotic node, a convergence point of codes, voices, and discourses. A figure's recurrence becomes possible when it no longer guarantees coherence but can form a network. Thus, Ulysses becomes a vector, not a source.

In rethinking Ulysses not as a stable character but as a textual function, it becomes essential to draw on theoretical paradigms that understand identity, representation, and iteration as fundamentally performative. The move from figuration to function parallels what Erika Fischer-Lichte identifies as *the transformative power of performance*, where the event does not reflect a prior meaning but brings new meaning into being through embodiment and interaction. In such a framework, “the transformation of the performance's participants” (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 16) is not a secondary outcome but the very site of aesthetic and ontological production. Applied to Ulysses, this logic suggests that his figure survives not through referential continuity but through a performative oscillation between absence and invocation—a presence constituted in repetition, rupture, and the intersubjective loop between text and reader.

Richard Schechner's theory of *restored behaviour* (Schechner 1985: 35) further clarifies this conceptual shift. For Marvin Carlson, who discusses Schechner's theory, performance is constantly haunted by repetition; it is never original but always a re-enactment of previously coded behaviours, culturally sedimented acts that are brought to life through citation, imitation, and reactivation. In his words, performance is marked by a “consciousness of doubleness” (Marvin 2018: 15) wherein every enactment bears the ghost of its prior iteration. Ulysses, when reframed through this lens, ceases to be a discrete figure or psychological entity and instead becomes a performed structure of meaning—a layered matrix of myth, voice, and textual return. Joyce's Bloom, Walcott's Achille, Rankine's unspoken lyric subject: each is not a reinterpretation but a restored behaviour, a performed gesture in a shifting scenography of cultural memory.

These theories enable us to reevaluate intertextuality itself, not merely as citation or influence, but as a form of performance. If the intertextual space is theatrical—structured by repetition, gesture, timing, and affect—then Ulysses functions less as a character and more as a performative dispositive. In Fischer-Lichte's terms, the reader does not *decode* Ulysses, but *encounters* him as a

perceptual transformation: what returns is not the exact figure but the affective trace of an event that reconstitutes its conditions with every reappearance.

Thus, to claim that Ulysses today is a “how” and not a “who” is also to recognise that the staging of Ulysses is no longer governed by narrative logic or heroic consistency. Instead, it is governed by the dynamic interplay of presence and deferral, citation and distortion, echo and disappearance. In this sense, the intertextual Ulysses is a performance—a recursive, ghosted act that destabilises its authority even as it insists on recurrence. As Carlson writes, “performance is always performance *for* someone” (Marvin 2017: 15), but that *someone* is also part of the loop, implicated in the act of meaning-making through recognition, memory, and re-figuration. Ulysses, too, performs for us—not as a hero returning home, but as the figural energy that makes return itself impossible and necessary.

From this perspective, Ulysses becomes an intertextual performance—a form of textual appearance generating meaning precisely through repetition, travesty, parody, duplication, citation, and reactivation. He is a scenic device, a textual presence defined not by narrative consistency but by the capacity to mobilise other texts, other epochs, other discourses. When Ulysses appears in the works of James Joyce, Derek Walcott, Claudia Rankine, or Édouard Glissant, he is not (re)presented but performatively triggered. He is no longer “him,” but what happens when “he” is uttered, quoted, insinuated, or doubled?

This transformation is radical: from an epic character, Ulysses becomes a textual device of memory and deviation. He no longer brings meaning home but reveals the absence of a centre. Ithaca, in this reading, is not a place but a structural fiction of return, an empty point enabling route multiplication. Therefore, in Joyce’s work, Bloom does not reach a destination but a *relative station*; in Glissant, return is replaced by relation; in Rankine, Ithaca no longer exists. Ulysses does not guarantee closure but a form of decentred continuity, a rhythm of becoming without an endpoint. He no longer brings meaning home but reveals the absence of a centre. Ithaca, in this reading, is not a place but a structural fiction of return, an empty point enabling route multiplication. In this sense, his figuration parallels Glissant’s conception of *identity* not as a fixed root but as a dynamic interplay of trajectories: “Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.” (Glissant 2010: 11) Ulysses, like Glissant’s errant subject, does not enact return to origin but becomes motion itself—a node in a network that displaces totality and privileges traversal over closure.

In this logic, Ulysses resembles a spectral figuration more than a concrete presence. He is not on stage but in the decor, in resonance, in the echo between one text and another. He appears through citation, allusion, and deformation. He does not assert himself but insinuates. He becomes the ghost-subject of intertextuality, an operative shadow of literature about return without re-establishment. This is, in fact, the postmodern condition of the mythical figure: no longer closing meaning but triggering it, no longer ordering the narrative but destabilising it poetically.

It means that Ulysses is no longer about himself but about the writing in which he can appear without being named. This structure can be activated by

the memory of the route rather than the consistency of the character. In this sense, intertextual performance is not merely a simple effect of citation, but a mode of textual operation that serves as a stage for repetition, displacement, and reconfiguration. Thus, Ulysses becomes the node of a performative network of meaning, a point of textual intensity replacing the hero's function with the dynamics of deviation.

This metamorphosis does not imply the disappearance of Ulysses but his surplus: he is too present to remain stable, too cited to be possessed, too recognisable to revert to a single narrative formula. Ulysses is alive precisely. After all, he no longer has a single face, because he can be travestied, doubled, dispersed, and yet remains recognisable as a mechanism, as a textual tension scheme between departure and the impossibility of return.

## **2. Intertextual Scenography: Citation, Allusion, and Repetition as Performance**

If, in the previous section, we argued that Ulysses emerges more as a textual function than a stable character, we now examine how this function concretely manifests within the intertextual space through a scenography of repetition: citation, allusion, travesty, stylistic variation, and tonal doubling. This scenography is neither decorative nor secondary in terms of meaning, but foundational: citation becomes the mechanism through which a text is reactivated, its linearity disrupted, and its semantic density intensified. Thus, intertextuality is not merely a quoting procedure, but a form of performance—an act that produces meaning not through stability, but through actively repeating textual memory transformed into a poetic act.

Julia Kristeva, in her renowned essay on intertextuality, already argued that every text is a “mosaic of citations,” an “absorption and transformation of another text.” In this logic, a citation is not a passive signal but an act of traversal: the presence of another text within the current one does not equate to mere recognition. Still, it involves reconfiguring textual space, replaying the rhythm and tonality of previous discourse in a new, often foreign or distorted setting. Intertextuality thus becomes not just an aesthetics of echo, but a performance of difference. What is cited is no longer identical to itself but becomes other in the performative act of its distorted presence. Kristeva elaborates this shift by redefining the word not as an isolated unit but as a nodal point within a network of textual traces. As she writes,

[...] each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read. [...] Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*. (Kristeva 1980: 66).

In this formulation, the text becomes a multidimensional scene, a dialogic and ambivalent space where repetition signals not return but reframing, and citation constitutes a performative gesture.

In this key, Tiphaine Samoyault advances further in *Intertexte. Mémoire de la littérature* (2005), conceptualising intertextuality not merely as a formal mechanism but as a mode of operation of literary memory, as a device through

which the textual past is actualised in a regime of tension between fidelity and invention. Here, citation becomes a stage, an act played out, figuration within textual dramaturgy, where each repetition inevitably also represents an ethical, stylistic, and cultural repositioning. Within this logic, Ulysses himself is not merely cited in Joyce or Walcott, but performatively reactivated as a textual presence that destabilises, ironises, rewrites, and deepens contemporary fictional complexity (Samoyault 2005: 118-120).

The canonical example of this intertextual scenography is, of course, James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Here, Homer is neither reproduced nor reinterpreted, but transmuted: not a faithful rewriting, but a textual staging of myth where each sequence performs distorted repetition. Bloom is not Ulysses, yet he operates as his diffuse figuration; Dublin is not Ithaca, but theatrically plays the role of a shadow-space for return. In *Ulysses*, intertextuality orchestrates the entire narrative act, from the parodied epic structure to the shifting tones, the theatrical register of the Circe episode, and the final repetition in Molly's voice. Everything is constructed as a textual scene where myth is repeated, not to confirm but to dislocate.

This dislocation defines intertextual performativity. Repetition is not merely a recurrence, but an act of reconfiguration. In the Nausicaa episode, Joyce introduces stylistic travesty, overlaying the language of a cheap sentimental novel on gestures of a possible Ulyssean epiphany, simultaneously ironising and activating textual memory in intense ambiguity. Ulysses appears only structurally, in the mythical aura of encounter, but displaced through language, parodied tonally, performed in travesty. This technique is not merely ironic, but a literary performance of intertextuality—a serious rewriting game that destabilises all stable axes of tradition.

This textual theatricality also appears in Glissant, where the figure of Ulysses is absorbed into a *poetics of relation*, not appearing by name but resonating in structural deviation, centre refusal, and rhythmic language flux. The Homeric citation dissolves here into creole rhythm, misalignment, and linguistic opacity. Repetition becomes a resistance strategy against foundation; allusion cannot be translated but must be felt and heard. Intertextuality is broadly scenic, occurring not just between two texts but between two perceptual worlds.

More recently, in Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014), Ulysses' figure is fragmented to near invisibility—yet present in themes of wandering through race, history, and micro-violence. The citations are genuine (drawn from contemporary media, visual arts, and biographical registers), yet they function as performative acts of impossible return. Ithaca no longer exists. Each citation is a textual wound. Ulysses is not explicitly mentioned, yet the entire volume is a fragmented, spectral Odyssey—a textual performance of survival where citation confirms nothing but declares the impossibility of foundation.

In these examples—Joyce, Glissant, Rankine—repetition never implies simple recurrence but active travesty, textual labour, meaning-staging. Citation is no longer a witness to the past but an agent of rewriting. Thus, intertextuality is not merely one strategy among others but the very stage where meaning is enacted. Ulysses, cited or not, becomes textual frequency, spectral rhythm, operator of travesty between registers, epochs, discourses.

This theatricality of intertextuality, this staging of otherwise “dead” presences (canonical texts, mythical figures, stylistic registers), makes intertextual performance fundamentally a form of textual life, an ecology of return without restoration, a way to inhabit tradition without closure. Writing with Ulysses today means performing the alterity of the past in an unstable textual scene, where each citation is a mask, each figure a delayed actor returning not as presence but as gesture.

Ulysses is not the one returning but the one lingering in language, reappearing through stylistic travesty, narrative scenography, and intertextual pulse. He is the ghost-actor of literature, no longer seeking mythic truth but poetic means to stage it without closure. As Tiago Tresoldi writes,

A myth is not a singular narrative in history, cohesive and coherent in the story it tells and in its transmission, but a system of overlapping narratives in a reticular relationship. [...] meaning only occurs in the dialectic game between work and public, without permanent meanings that would imply a timelessness judged as intolerable in face of the works’ condition of historical objects. (Tresoldi 2017: 232).<sup>1</sup>

This is, in fact, the postmodern condition of the mythical figure: no longer closing meaning but triggering it. In this performance, Ulysses continues to play. Precisely through this play, he remains alive.

### **3. Ulysses as Rhythm and Travesty: from Joyce to Glissant and Rankine**

If in Joyce the figure of Ulysses is unraveled, travestied, parodied, and regenerated through a network of citations, gestures, and stylistic transpositions, in Glissant and Rankine it dissolves almost completely into rhythm, repetition, voice, becoming a spectral presence, a poetic node of loss and relationship, an unstable form of appearance between language and history. We no longer deal with a recognisable character or even an identifiable epic structure, but with a textual frequency, a modulation of poetic consciousness marked by dislocation, absence, and the impossibility of return. Ulysses becomes, in these poetic spaces, a semantic travesty of survival, a textual body that no longer returns but persists in absence, rewriting, and gestures of drifting memory. As Patrice Rankine observes, this refiguration of Ulysses is central to the evolving relationship between classical myth and African American literature:

Ulysses is a predominant figure in the novelist’s classicism [...] Ellison’s heroes in *Invisible Man* and *Juneteenth* are, in a manner of speaking, black Ulysses, as is Toni Morrison’s *Milkman*. [...] If *Ulysses in Black* represents black classicism, similar to its namesake who traveled far from home and even to the Underworld, the book takes a *journey* through classical and American thought toward an emergence. (Rankine 2006: 16).

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translation of the article „O Ulysses dos muitos retornos: por uma história do clássico”, published in *Nuntius Antiquus* in 2017 (DOI: [10.17851/1983-3636.13.1.227-251](https://doi.org/10.17851/1983-3636.13.1.227-251)). Here is the original text: „Assim, o mito não é uma narrativa singular na história, coesa e coerente, mas um sistema de narrativas sobrepostas. [...] de que um significado apenas ocorre no jogo dialético entre obra e público, sem sentidos permanentes que implicariam uma atemporalidade intolerável à condição de objeto histórico das obras.”

In *Poetics of Relation* (*Poétique de la Relation*, 1990), Édouard Glissant proposes an understanding of the poetic subject not as a fixed point but as a being in relation, a *rhizome-being*, originating not from a centre but unfolding in multiplicity, becoming, alterity without synthesis. The figure of Ulysses, though never directly invoked, traverses this space as a spectral form of thought about wandering, distance, and the impossibility of returning to oneself. Ithaca, from this perspective, is not a place but a genealogical illusion—a “home” that exists only as lost. Ulysses thus becomes the poetic symbol of a movement without ontological guarantees—a gesture that never concludes, a voice that never identifies itself.

For Glissant, writing cannot repeat the centre. It must move spirally, circumventing, relaunching meaning without closure. For this reason, the *Odyssey* is not rewritten but displaced, dissolved in rhythm, experienced in the poetry of relation as a poetic travesty of an impossible quest. Thus, Ulysses manifests not through an event but through voice—a voice emerging from nowhere, yet sustaining the rhythm of becoming in the absence of a centre. His figure becomes a poetic device for circulation, an element of collective memory reactivated in minor registers, a weak signal of refused narrativity.

This spectral dimension is further radicalised in *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine. Here, the *Odyssey* is neither cited nor reconstructed nor parodied. It is inscribed into the rhythm of disrupted discourse, into the affective architecture of wounded, racialised subjectivity, displaced from the right to narrate. She constructs a poetics of wandering without geography, where the narrative voice lacks a physical presence, and the physical presence lacks narrative. Ulysses appears here not as a hero but as the absent figure of an impossible return, a phantom of a journey that can no longer constitute itself.

In Claudia Rankine’s work, wandering is performed not through epic gestures but through enumerations of micro-violences, moments of invisibility, and voice breaks. The subject never returns because it was never permitted to depart truly. Ithaca is not lost—it never existed for those living in vulnerable bodies, marked by history, trauma, and unaccepted memory. She does not recover the myth but tensions it through absence: Ulysses is merely an echo of an inaccessible cultural promise.

In this poetics of no return, repetition becomes an act of survival. The feminine, unaligned voice, sometimes addressed in the second person (“you”), constructs a space of performative language where experience rejects closed narrativity and is reformulated through repetition, variation, and syncopation. Rankine thus proposes an unnamed Ulysses, present only in the gesture of moving forward without structure. Each fragment is an island of memory refusing the centre, not seeking Ithaca but registering the pain that no place can be entirely inhabited.

Joyce disassembled Ulysses through Bloom’s domestic voice, Stephen’s theatrical travesty, and the parodic replay of the Nausicaa episode. A similar dismantling of the epic heroic function takes place in Ellison’s narrative logic, where the mythic structure is reappropriated to address collective trauma. Rankine notes:

Ellison's classicism brought him to the "vital principle" present in his own African American abyss, the experience of violence against blacks evident in the lynching ritual. From an exploration of Ellison's use of classical myth, we journey into his use of these themes and narratives to represent an experience that he felt was part and parcel of a broader American one. (Rankine 2006: 20).

However, in Glissant and Rankine, Ulysses is no longer a figure at all, as he cannot exist within textual systems that reject hierarchies, foundations, or triumph. In its place remains a rhythm, a spiral, a tempo of voice that refuses closure. What reappears is not a name, but the gesture of becoming without guarantees, the poetic act of remaining in motion, memory's travesty, refusing stabilisation.

Thus, in both cases—Glissant and Rankine—we encounter radical textual travesty: not a reformulation of Ulysses but a displacement of myth into other poetic registers, where voice becomes the primary space of performance, and the reader no longer recovers the figure but its poetic tension. This tension is maintained not by narrative but by rhythmic intensity, relentless repetition without redemption, the politics of affective insistence, and the ethics of non-return.

In this textual ecology, Ulysses becomes an active remnant of Western culture. This dispersed poetic signal returns not to reclaim its position but to be reformulated through absence, rewritten by refusal, and reactivated through travesty. He becomes the name of a becoming whose finality is suspended, the figure of a question no longer demanding an answer, the rhythm of a voice locatable but persisting, in the background, as a pulse of wandering.

Thus, while Joyce desacralised Ulysses through textual proliferation, Glissant and Rankine absorb him into the logic of loss, the politics of non-foundation, and the poetics of spectrality. What remains is the rhythm of a figure no longer demanding to be seen but felt, no longer recognised but heard through diverted voice. Ithaca thus becomes an absent space, a stage emptied of narrative function yet filled with echoes. And within that echo, Ulysses still speaks—not as a hero but as a performance of non-return.

#### **4. Ulysses in Diasporic and Postcolonial Literatures: Dislocation and Rhizomatic Poetics**

In diasporic and postcolonial literatures, Ulysses ceases to function as a directly invoked mythical figure. Instead, he becomes a dislocated textual instance, a poetic matrix through which the tension between memory and the impossibility of return is articulated, between inherited colonial language and the desire to recover a space, not geographical, but affective, cultural, and ontological. While modernity placed Ulysses in play through stylistic travesty or parodic citation, in postcolonial writings, he is absorbed into the structure of a tense relationship with space, language, and the violent legacy of history.

This transformation involves a different type of intertextuality: not one that updates the myth but instead deactivates it to circulate as a form of resistance. Thus, Ulysses becomes a rhizomatic device in the Deleuzian sense: not an identity figure but a multiplicity of crossings, affects, and ruptures embedded in the text as forms of poetic survival in displaced spaces.

In *Omeros* (1990), Derek Walcott proposes one of the most complex reconfigurations of Ulysses within a postcolonial context. The poem not only reiterates the epic structure but also rewrites the myth in the dialect of an island marked by slavery, colonial ruins, and fractured memory. Characters such as Achilles, Philoctete, Hector, and Major Plunkett are not mere Homeric correspondences but poetic travesties of voices situated between amnesia and survival. Ithaca is no longer the place of return but an ever-receding horizon. In this formulation, Ulysses becomes a fractured rhythm, movement through languages and traumas, the figure of an impossible “home” within a history without restitution.

In *Omeros*, rewriting is performed not through citation but through topos, through the poetisation of space: the sea, wounds, trees, and the Creole language. Intertextuality here is not merely an intertextual mechanism, but a form that intensifies the stratification of memory. Ulysses is not spoken, yet reverberates through every stylistic choice, in each historical fragment melted into language. Here, wandering does not lead to founding but to a poetics of accepting rupture—a non-constructive identity knotted around the void left by violence, forgetfulness, and imposed language.

This tension between wandering and textual memory also appears in Afro-diasporic literature from the United States, notably among writers who combine poetry, essay, autobiography, and traumatic history. Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) is essential for understanding this shift: Ulysses is no longer a singular hero, but a chorus of those who never reached Ithaca, forced to navigate a fragmented history without a clear destination. Here, the ship symbolises not freedom or initiation but slavery, genealogical rupture, and normative non-return.

Within this context, Ulysses becomes a phantom of unfulfilled promise, a textual relic haunting contemporary writing without imposing direction. Instead, what remains is the poetic form of deviation, syncopation, and unlocatable voice. Postcolonial literature does not *negate* Ulysses but rewrites him negatively, as an impossible schema of return in a world where return itself is impossible.

This rewriting also critiques Western narrative linearity. Instead of narrative progress, we have fragmented, vocal, polyphonic repetitions. In place of a singular subject, we encounter multiple fragmented, rhizomatic subjects. Ulysses thus becomes an interface for numerous voices of rupture. He is not present as a character, but rather as a poetic structuring mode of an impossible trajectory, a continuous movement between the ruins of meaning and attempts at affective re-foundation.

Tayeb Salih’s novel *Season of Migration to the North* (1997) provides another illustrative example. Here, wandering is inverted: not a journey from East to West but a tense postcolonial return, a dark *Odyssey* where Ulysses becomes an alter ego marked by the impossibility of integration. The narrator can return to his native village only as a stranger. Paradoxically, Ithaca becomes inaccessible from within—a space alienated precisely because it cannot contain a body displaced by history.

This poetics of dislocation ensures Ulysses’s figure is reactivated not by theme or motif but structurally. Writing itself becomes a form of wandering, a

textual figuration of unguaranteed paths, a poetic performance where voice serves as the vehicle of becoming. Ulysses dissolves into affect, body, language, and memory—yet remains recognisable as rhythm. He is not cited, but sensed in the tension between what is said and the unsayable, in the pauses between sentences, and the fissures between language and the world.

Therefore, in diasporic and postcolonial literatures, Ulysses no longer functions as a recoverable cultural archetype. Instead, he becomes a locus of tension, an active poetic schema, a rhizomatic operator that does not construct paths but opens fissures of meaning. Writing with Ulysses in these spaces neither honours nor contests him, but disperses him into networks of voices that no longer seek a foundation, but assert the right to loss, repetition, and destination-less becoming.

In this textual ecology, Ulysses lives precisely because he is no longer central but found in the margins, refusing unity, in fragments rejecting return, in irreparable memory. He persists not as presence but as a performance of rupture, remaining essential precisely through this perpetual instability.

In this sense, the diasporic Ulysses operates as a performative locus where disrupted genealogies and transoceanic poetics intersect, no longer guided by heroic logic but by the residue of fractured epistemologies. The *Black Atlantic*, as theorised by Gilroy, offers a conceptual framework in which identity is shaped not by originary coherence but by movement, loss, and recomposition. Ulysses, when transposed into this matrix, becomes less a character than a cypher—an absent referent whose mythic gravity is absorbed into the recursive rhythms of exile, revolt, and unfinalised becoming. As Gilroy notes, diasporic culture is marked by the “instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade.” (Gilroy 1993: XI) Ulysses thus persists not through retrieval, but through reverberation—a name echoed across cultural texts that neither fully recovers nor abandons its classical substrate.

This transformation is particularly evident in the work of Derek Walcott, whose *Omeros* rewrites Homeric trajectory through a Caribbean landscape saturated with colonial debris and ecological wound. Rachel D. Friedman reads Walcott’s poetics of simultaneity as a rejection of linear return. Walcott insists that “Joyce is a contemporary of Homer” (Walcott 1997: 240-241), collapsing temporal hierarchies into a horizontal field where ancestral time and historical trauma intersect. In this transhistorical montage, Ulysses becomes a metonym not for return but for the refusal of historical foreclosure. His figure is diffused through Achille, Philoctete, and the poet-narrator, none of whom are reducible to a stable subject position. The voyage, in *Omeros*, is not a quest for Ithaca but an interrogation of its absence: the homeland is displaced into language, and the sea becomes the medium through which voices cross, loop, and fragment.

This gesture of dislocation resonates in other postcolonial texts where Ulysses appears not as a mythic solution but as a problematised residue. In *Season of Migration to the North*, Salih inverts the *Odyssey* into a parodic spiral of colonial return, where the protagonist’s homecoming is contaminated by epistemic violence and sexual domination. Ithaca becomes a haunted interior, no longer capable of accommodating the returning subject. The return is not regenerative but corrosive, and Ulysses’s paradigm is refracted into an

unlivable temporality. The hybrid subject of the postcolony cannot reintegrate; instead, they drift between ruins and script their disintegration.

Diasporic and postcolonial rewritings of Ulysses thus resist both epic closure and narrative redemption. They reactivate the Homeric trace only to unravel it. The intertextuality at work here is not citational but scenographic, to use your earlier term—a choreography of displacement where echo, absence, and spectral recursion perform meaning. Ulysses becomes legible only as a figural operator, a transhistorical vibration that marks the text without inhabiting it. To read Ulysses in these contexts is to read for his evanescence, for the imprint he leaves not as presence but as residue, as diffraction. The classical is neither restored nor disavowed, but carried forward in fragments, carried like a rhythm, toward no home, toward a language still forming.

### **5. Conclusions: Intertextual Performance as a Form of Literary Existence**

At the end of this exploration, we can affirm that Ulysses no longer returns. He does not return to Ithaca, does not regain his original function, and offers no promise of synthesis. Ulysses persists—as voice, rhythm, travesty, as a network of reconfigurable signs. He is not re-established but replayed in mobile forms, in registers that seek not identity but the effect of textual vibration. This persistence does not signify mythological survival but functional recalibration: Ulysses becomes an operator of literary thought, a performative figure of intertextuality, a living pretext for the poetic reorganisation of what can no longer be expressed in classical epic terms.

Intertextuality, therefore, is neither a simple citation strategy nor an architecture of influence. It is the scene where literature performs history, memory, and alterity, where canonical figures are not simply revisited but diverted, reconfigured, and hybridised. Each intertextual appearance is an act, a gesture of the text allowing itself to be traversed by other texts, not to confirm lineage but to destabilise itself poetically, to become something else. In this perspective, Ulysses represents a form of tension between voice and echo, between the original and travesty, between figure and spectre.

We have seen how, in Joyce, this tension is staged through irony, theatricality, and pastiche; in Glissant, through dissolution into rhythm and relation; in Rankine, through the affective rupture of a subject that can no longer access past or narrative. Ulysses does not oppose these processes; he enables them. He becomes the unstable configuration of meaning that no longer seeks closure but merely remains active within a network.

This, fundamentally, is one of contemporary literature's major shifts: from literature as a closed narrative system to literature as networked performance, an open scenography of meaning's becoming. When a text *invokes* Ulysses today, it does so not to reiterate myth but to sustain tension—an unstable presence that demands reconfiguration from readers, form, and history. Ithaca is no longer a place but a textual limit perpetually deferred, a possibility the text never attains but continuously moves toward.

Speaking of Ulysses in this context requires learning to think about literature differently: not as representation, but as an event; not as authority,

but as drift; not as the repetition of forms, but as the reflexive performance of literary memory. Just as the performative body is defined not by stability but by its capacity to be affected, so too the intertextual text is determined not by what it takes up but by what it produces when traversed by other texts.

From this perspective, Ulysses no longer offers lessons but maintains questions. What does it mean to return? What does it mean to no longer be able to return? What kind of text can encompass non-return? Each travesty of Ulysses provides a partial answer, a figure of controlled wandering—not chaotic disorientation but a poetic method of confronting instability, working with what cannot be fixed.

To write with Ulysses, thus, means no longer wanting to close meaning but performing its productive openness. It understands intertextuality not as a decorative but as an ontological phenomenon: a form of literary existence exposed, where meaning is never merely what is said, but how the voice reshapes itself concerning other voices.

Ulysses is, thus, more than a reiterated figure. He is a technique of suspension, a poetics of non-foundation, a line of flight that does not escape the text but reopens it, stretches it, destabilises it precisely with a voice demanding no origin. He is reactivated not because he is inherently relevant, but because he has been sufficiently emptied to be reactivatable, sufficiently alive to remain performable.

Hence, intertextual performance is not merely an aesthetic form but a form of literary existence, not in the sense of a writing mode but as a linguistic regime where every textual gesture is simultaneously ethical, poetic, and an act of traversing a history that can no longer be closed. In the contemporary textual economy, Ulysses signals that nothing concludes definitively; everything can be rewritten, reformulated, and reanimated in the absence.

Precisely through this non-return, he continues to play. To insist. To open the stage. To perform.

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