The Satanic Verses controversy of 1989 provoked an unusual literary interest in contemporary religious belief. Scholars and writers, like the Western popular press, understood the conflict as an allegory of freedom and repression, waged by the figures of art and religion. In using these terms to characterize the dispute, critics resumed an argument little changed since the scandalous debut of Ulysses in 1922, when religious and aesthetic epistemologies were similarly cast as absolute adversaries. Both debates associated modernity with the individual, defined as a sovereign agent who absolutely resists traditional or institutional authority—constraints that religion, the premodern arbiter of universal dogma, neatly epitomized. In fact, like all binaries, this one remains lively to the extent that its terms remain monolithic. In both controversies “art” and “religion” acted as frozen signifiers, emblems that condense and arrest complex movements of meaning. Ultimately the binary hid the challenge that Ulysses and The Satanic Verses posed to dominant Western understandings of subject formation. At issue were modes of agency in relation to embodiment. In each of the controversies, bodies depicted as externally regulated productions were set against “the” body as an autonomous, self-governed space. Regulated agency, connected primarily to the somatic and psychic disciplines of “archaic” religion, threatened to dissolve the representational integrity of sovereign individualism. Archaic religion functioned as the frozen signifier of repressive authority, whose display elicited panic over the loss of personhood.
The controversies provoked by *Ulysses* and *The Satanic Verses* catapulted each author from literary fame to popular celebrity, based on the transgression of a minority religious body before a cosmopolitan audience. While they could not have foreseen the scope—or in Rushdie’s case the severity—of the reaction to the provocation of their work, the authors anticipated this culmination in their earlier careers. As I have said, Joyce and Rushdie pushed toward fuller investigation and exposure of the spiritually disciplined bodies that they identified as fundamental to their aesthetic practice and provincial identity. At the same time the writers denied that the knowledge generated by these representations was grounded in the productive capacities of belief. Their insistence on theological-aesthetic readings of bodily epistemes forwarded an entirely external and repressive understanding of orthopraxy. This depiction reinforced an anthropological and metropolitan framework, which associated minority belief with intellectual deficit and physical confinement, and contrasted it with imaginative and physical freedom. Close examination of the novels’ early reception, along with attention to modes and histories of belief, reveals quite different issues are at stake. The binary of art and religion has occluded them for over a century.

The debates over *Ulysses* and *The Satanic Verses* highlight the persistent defense of a somatopsychic model of the person that is entirely conflated with the possibility of agency, as I establish in the preceding chapters. This paradigm, which refuses any significant distinction among the terms “person,” “agent,” and “individual,” lies at the center of the modernist conflict between “religion” and “art.” In fact, each of the literary disputes involves two conceptions of agency and two modes of spiritual belief, their alliances determined by differing formulations of corporeality as agency. “The” body as a particular organization of affective, cognitive, and physical “space”—related to the model that Geertz describes—contrasts with bodies in regulated practice, understood to be constituted by programs extrinsic to the imagined territory of personal government.

Revisiting the early response to *Ulysses* allows us access to the panic over somatic agency that the novel evoked, and, I am contending, that operated less obviously in *The Satanic Verses* affair. *Ulysses*’ early admirers as well as its detractors persistently complain about the book’s “obscenity,” conveying dismay at its vulgarity and sexual frankness, but also encoding its more threatening dissolution of the somatopsychic organization of the individual that Geertz outlines, and which I discuss in chapter two. Whether or not they defend “religious” values, Joyce’s readers often register alarm at his intrusion into a somatic interior that is equated with a psychic one: their panic does not arise from *Ulysses*’ violation of a conventionally codified moral position, but
rather from its instrumental treatment of bodies as agents. Reviewers align Joyce’s approach with archaic religious ideas about the body’s degraded status as well as with the modern machinery of surveillance. In these reactions, the ability to exert disciplinary authority links the historically disparate techniques of medieval Catholicism and technological modernity. Ultimately both primitive religion and contemporary machines subject readers to their own bodies and environments, robbing them of the autonomy that their normal boundaries ensure. In dominating his readers, Joyce acts as a punitive deity who abases his subjects to demonstrate his own mastery. He is free to reduce them to excrement and protoplasm, grotesque and reactive organic stuff.

This physically disturbing *Ulysses*, like the physically disturbing elements of the earlier fiction, had disappeared from view by the 1950s, a testament to the eventual triumph of the public-relations campaign that I describe in chapter one. Joyce and his coterie eventually transformed *Ulysses*’ obscenely disorganized bodies into the raw material of Kantian sublation. The novel no longer posed a disciplinary threat to the body; instead it signified an intellectual challenge and an artistic triumph, “embodied” in the formal refinement of the material book, much as the author himself—first received as a cosmopolitan writer—came to signify a refinement of coarse and backward provincial bodies. While his early detractors portrayed Joyce as a sovereign individual who used his aesthetic power to subordinate his readers, later critics emphasized the human universality of his accomplishment. *Ulysses* realized the free exercise of an individuality that Joyce shared with his readers. Discourses of the body largely dropped out of the commentary, except to register the narrative’s mimetic fidelity to life. It is this Poundian-New Critical *Ulysses* that continues to reign in the popular imagination, and the critical moves made to recuperate Joyce were readily mobilized in defense of Rushdie. Bodily regulation and disciplinary control, dispelled from the realm of “art” in the later reception of *Ulysses*, now belonged entirely to “religion.” Thus in the reaction engendered by *The Satanic Verses*, Islam alone represented a disciplinary force that might violently eradicate the embodied individual—linked successively to the burned book, the endangered author, and the bounded, autonomous entity of the secular nation-state. Reference to bodily representations, evident in British Muslims’ objections to the novel, appeared nowhere in British Christian defense of it. Instead this concern surfaced in fears of Muslim violence against the Anglo-British body politic. In May 1989, three months after Khomeini’s decree, the London *Sunday Times* declared, “[I]t is now impossible to wish away or assimilate or suppress the potent living organism in the body of Britain itself.” The panic that ensued
over sovereign national boundaries reprised the panic over sovereign individual boundaries so prominent in the earlier controversy.

Frozen in the binary of religion and art, the Joyce and Rushdie debates actually disclose a defense of "the" body as a particular organization of affective, cognitive, and physical space. The centrality of this formulation is underscored by its actual migration between the poles of opposition in the two controversies. Moral concerns about bodily depictions drove the protest against *Ulysses*, we have been given to understand; yet both explicitly religious and decisively secular readers objected to the novel's disruption of the somatic structure of the "individual." In *The Satanic Verses* debate, the claim on this structure—typically understood to be a "religious" one in the Joyce affair—now characterized the defense of secular and artistic freedom against repressive religion. Allied with both "religion" and "art," the somatic structure of the individual emerges as the contested territory of these disputes. Certeau's "strategic" body, a central, bounded somatic space that empowers agents against a distinct outside, informs this formulation.⁴ The strategy of embodied agency, set in both literary controversies against the power of external discipline, easily accommodates the religious mode of "secular" societies by assigning belief to a subordinate realm of choice, sentiment, and "free expression." In contrast, both nineteenth-century Irish Catholicism and twentieth-century Indian Islam to varying degrees challenge or even disorganize strategic embodiment through performative worship, as I have shown. With a critical emphasis on regulated bodily practice, this mode of worship significantly shapes agency, producing embodied knowledge that is ultimately public and communal. Hence Anglo-Muslims detractors experienced Rushdie's expressive, privately imagined representation of Muhammad as a severing of the communal body of Islam, while Anglo-Christians reacted to this complaint as an absolutist intrusion into a given, private space of individual choice.

The dominant Western religious formation accords fairly readily with most contemporary modes of Western Christianity, capitalism, and nationalism, as I have established. Religions that achieve belief through regulation contest the public and private split crucial to the current "secular" formation of Western nation-states, a difference that has triggered panic over the dispersal of Certeau's strategic power. The endless exchange of the frozen signifiers "art" and "religion," made synonymous with (metropolitan) freedom and (minority) repression, evades the more profound questions that these debates pose to Western methods of organizing and producing knowledge. Here I attempt to describe the aporia disclosed by the literary controversies, to linger at the moment of thought that such panic has effectively avoided.
Chapter 5

The Disciplinary *Ulysses*

*Ulysses* disturbed a space of sovereign individuality that fit with the dominant Christian mode and formation of its day. Popular and literary periodicals reviewed *Ulysses* at its February 1922 publication as a book—even though it was legally banned in the United States and Britain as obscene and effectively, though not legally, censored in Ireland—and again after Judge John Woolsey’s 1933 repeal of the ban in America. In their comments, the novel’s detractors echo the legal response, calling the book obscene or pornographic; comparatively few label it blasphemous. Yet even reviews in Catholic publications, which do employ the term, slide easily from spiritual and moral to social evaluation of the novel. Blasphemy violates sensibility rather than doctrine, manners rather than specific points of conviction. The emphasis on personal and social affront suggests a particular, and somewhat peculiar, orientation of belief, in which the sensibilities of the “self” override traditional concerns with epistemological error or with offense against God. In contrast, Muslim detractors of *The Satanic Verses* highlight precisely the issues of correct knowledge and divine injury, as I will discuss later. Joyce’s early critics speak instead from a personal sensibility presumed to be socially normative and invoke this general standard to castigate blasphemy, obscenity, poor hygiene, and bad taste as synonymous violations. Additionally, whether or not they defend religious values or Irish nationalism, negative reviewers consistently focus on Joyce’s somatic representations as the primary source of his offense. By subjecting readers to their bodies as their inescapable episteme, *Ulysses* enjoins a repulsive and disturbingly disorganized physicality. Brooker describes this response as a reaction to “the sheer indigestible materiality” of the novel, often experienced as an “ill-formed excess of matter.” Such complaints against Joyce’s prose merely magnified comments about *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, which were also criticized for their excessive interest in the physical realm, their partial view of life, and their shapelessness. As in the reception of these works, even admiring reviews of *Ulysses* may regret Joyce’s investigation of bodies, particularly their smells and exudations. For example, Sisley Huddleston, a friend of Joyce’s who published an influential comment in the March 1922 *Observer*, “becomes tired of the beastliness always breaking in.”

Reviewers often register disapproval through their own graphic characterizations, figuring *Ulysses* as bodily waste, especially as fluids, as dirt, or as receptacles for them, such as sinks, latrines, and sewers—tropes that began with reviews of *A Portrait*. Catholic commentators share the general tendency to couch moral complaints in physical terms. Hygiene, for instance, gauges
spiritual rectitude, national purity, and aesthetic merit. In the Irish context, as Mullin shows, these metaphors pertained to a particular strain of reaction to English filth, though “the need to protect ‘home’ from the corruptions of ‘abroad’ was far from an exclusively Irish strategy.” This strain is evident in the two, nearly simultaneous reviews that Shane Leslie published in 1922: most significantly for my argument, Nash observes that “in the Dublin Review the offensiveness of Ulysses is specifically against Catholicism, but in the [English] Quarterly Review it is generally against ‘all ideas of good taste and morality.’” Leslie grounds his complaint more decidedly in a grotesque and proximate body in the Irish publication, where he asserts that “the spiritually offensive and the physically unclean are united” in the novel. As concerned with the book’s threat to literary nationalism as he is with its religious transgressions, Leslie recommends that the novel be placed on the Index Expurgatorius, for left to their own devices, the curious might be tempted to sample Ulysses “like so much rotten caviare.” Bad taste finally results in regurgitation: the essay concludes with an image of Joyce himself as “a frustrated Titan . . . revolv[ing] and splutter[ing] hopelessly under the flood of his own vomit.” Also in a sectarian vein, Camille McCole, writing in the American Catholic World in 1934, makes a perfunctory nod to spiritual scruple when she observes that “[b]lasphemy and the most outrageous ribaldry both run riot through Ulysses.” She complains at much greater length about the dominance of naturalistic, grotesque bodies, citing as examples the bile that May Dedalus vomits, the blood of squashed lice that reddens her fingernails, and the “relish” that Bloom displays in “eating the inner organs of beasts and fowls.” McCole concludes that “[i]n every instance the preoccupations of the author are most decidedly physical.”

Notably, readers who show little concern for sectarian or even conventional morality share the Catholics’ disgust at the narrative’s physicality. According to these reviews, Ulysses disorganizes even the obscene body. Arnold Bennett, in an influential 1922 piece that appeared in both the London Outlook and the New York Bookman, states that the novel blocks sexual excitement through its attention to the full range of bodily privacies. Ulysses is not pornographic, he asserts, but is “more indecent, obscene, scatological, and licentious than the majority of professedly pornographical books.” In an April 1922 comment in the British Sporting Times or “Pink ‘Un”—a disreputable racing sheet—Aramis notes that “Ulysses is not alone sordidly pornographic, but it is intensely dull” and hence paradoxically “dreary” even in its filthy passages. Bennett and Aramis imply that the erotically pleasurable body and the respectably bourgeois one assumed in other reviews share a single structure, to be upheld in the first instance and selectively violated in
the second. This organization reduces the role of smell and certain kinds of touch, favoring (dry) surfaces; it is a given, passive, and nonproductive space; and it depends on separation and exclusion over synthetic apprehension or expression. *Ulysses* destroys the economy of eros just as it does the hierarchies of everyday public embodiment, for the narrative embeds sex completely in the full range of senses and products, in both male and female bodies. In contrast, Bennett and Aramis imply, effective obscenity highlights female sexual characteristics as contained sites of scopic and tactile consumption. Not only should male and female bodies be segregated representationally, but the female body should be depicted according to certain sensory dictates if it is to be consumed pleasurably—indecency, too, has its protocols. Finally, Joyce compounds his offense by canceling the more abstract pleasure that the work of reading difficult literature ought to yield. Productive and unstable, his grotesque and intimately depicted bodies interfere with aesthetic as well as erotic enjoyment of *Ulysses*. The novel denies readers both textual and sexual *jouissance* in order to offer them pus and vomit, menstrual and louse blood, feces and tainted food, disgust and boredom.

Critics such as Rebecca Walkowitz and Joseph Valente have recently read such objections to Joyce’s vulgarity and excessive recording of detail as politically nuanced. Joyce’s “cancelled decorum” and “tactical discourtesy” signify a cosmopolitan strategy of trivialization that critiques nationalism through insubordination, in Walkowitz’s reading; Valente observes that *Ulysses*’ “promiscuous styles of attention” constitute a refusal to observe literary, social, and national hierarchies. I share their desire to imagine the categories of modernist analysis as more expansive and flexible and also want to emulate the scrupulous attention to Irish history displayed by Mullin and Nash. But Joyce’s more concrete and widespread disturbances of readers’ comfort do not fall neatly into the oppositions of Catholic and anti-Catholic, provincial and cosmopolitan, or progressive and bourgeois audiences. They do reveal a conception of embodiment connected to shared codes of decorum that Joyce’s method challenges and overwhelms. Most consistently, these comments reveal readers’ physical unease. The sovereign agency embodied in the individual gains power from its quasi detachment from a body to which it belongs and yet merely bears. Typically, the reviewers suggest, privileged government of “the” body appears to be diminished in certain specific circumstances in which subjects feel most closely intermingled with their physicality, such as during sex. The novel not only forces readers to remain in this state by emphasizing bodily materiality, but it also generalizes the specific instances and types of mingling with materiality. In its productive and performative practice, *Ulysses* dissolves the internal structure of agency by
totalizing functions or areas that should be distinguished, opening boundaries that should be closed, and rendering solid spaces fluid. The organization of the individual that *Ulysses* contests draws embodiment, agency, and subjectivity into a spatial autonomy that is the source of its potency. As I have noted, Certeau aligns the Cartesian locus recalled by this normative body with a “strategy,” a set of techniques practiced by those in control of the modes of production. He defines the term as “a calculus of force relationships that become possible when a subject of will and power can be isolated from the environment.” The “prope” of power constitutes “a victory of space over time” by articulating an outside over which agents exert control. The historically distinct moments of producing the modern subject as an embodiment, as a “self,” and as an autonomous agent that anchors them seems to be structured and melded through such a dynamic. It sediments “the” body as an expressive substance, suffused with a particular identity, at the same time that it allows for the body’s maintenance as a property owned and mastered by a governing agent.

The bodily disposition set in individualism denies not the flesh, but its fluid and plural relations; asserts not “selfhood,” which remains intact in either case, but rather autonomy. The normative corpus that emerges from this dynamic is a strictly demarcated homogeneity whose space remains stable only because its boundaries shift internally. That is, the “inside” and the “outside” of an autonomous body appear constant because its internal border shifts temporally. A suture as well as a perforation, this margin moves in accordance with situations that entail “being” as opposed to “having” a body. An inner agent uses the slight but crucial disjunction to choose a relationship to its own substance, to bracket or unite with the body as a space. Through this movement, then, “the” body becomes a given, natural structure, protected in some degree from the vagaries of time and place, from the flux and disparities of bodies.

The acts that *Ulysses* enjoins upon readers eradicate the topography of the individual, a disorganization that elicits panic over the loss of ipseity. Later scholars, like Joyce’s early defenders, have interpreted such reactions as hostility to the novel’s modern techniques, displayed through *Ulysses’* affinities with psychoanalysis, cinema, and urbanization. But in fact, early detractors express much more ambivalence about technical modernity and their position in relation to it than these interpretations would suggest. The role of individual agency, rather than of modernity per se, is often the crucial determinant of such responses. When they represent *Ulysses’* somatic intrusiveness as visual inspection, most readers do imply that the novel enforces modern sensory regimes. Martin Jay, Jonathan Crary, and others describe the historical genesis of this sensory reorganization through accounts of the full embodying of
vision, as I discuss in chapter one. Contemporary reviews characterize *Ulysses* in similar terms when they describe its narrative “gaze”: sight possesses the subjective, concrete, and empowered qualities of the new vision. The novel captures or reveals the somatopsychic interior in formerly unavailable ways, for Joyce “can open up thought as a surgeon does a body,”23 “x-ray . . . the ordinary human consciousness,”24 record incident and speech with “photographic accuracy,”25 jerk the reader around with a “kinematographic” style,26 and examine “all the overworked scenes of realistic narrative like drops of water under a microscope.”27 Grounds for wonder and praise in positive reviews, this scrutiny may also induce panic. Detractors stress that the power of sight granted through the managed corpus, as well as the pleasure of sight yielded by male scopic mastery, belongs to the author alone. Thus positive and negative reactions do not especially differ in their descriptions of Joyce’s technical gaze; rather detractors assess it as an uninvited one, trained on a disoriented and immobilized victim. In this, *Ulysses*’ dissolution of somatic boundaries and perceptual hierarchies resembles the effect of the stereoscope, an optical device of the 1830s that, Crary explains, “derang[ed] . . . the conventional functioning of visual cues” by providing “a hallucinatory clarity of particulars that never coalesce[d].”28 Like the stereoscope—which quickly became allied with pornographic content—*Ulysses* seemed to “pin” the audience through a promiscuous barrage of sensation that would not itself be mapped by familiar signs. In a March 1922 review in the English *Daily Express*, for instance, S. P. B. Mais portrays *Ulysses* as a penetrating device. Mais first notes another reviewer’s opinion that “the modern novelist’s function [is] to ‘follow life to places and recesses in the human soul and heart inaccessible to the camera.’” Joyce similarly “follow[s] it in *Ulysses* . . . to recesses which few of us altogether care to probe.” Yet readers cannot avoid such mirrors, for “from his pages there leap out at us all our most secret and most unsavoury private thoughts.”29

At the same time that *Ulysses* represents new visual powers, then, it denies readers a locus of identification with its movement or mastery, instead subordinating them through a welter of confounding information. Yet detractors also complain about the novel’s insufficient segregation of sight. In *Ulysses* the proximity of other senses, particularly of smell, constantly narrows the separation of the senses from which the new power of vision had emerged historically and thus signifies readers’ desire for the abstracted powers of reorganized sight, which Joyce withholds from them.30 Wyndham Lewis’s famous association of *Ulysses* with time bears upon the novel’s ostensibly anti-visual impulse: he contends that Joyce “thought in words, not images,” and hence neglected the “entire organism” for “the multitude of little details.”31 Joyce grounds the
historically recent primacy of images by recurring to the alibi of the medieval sensorium, in which sight, smell, touch, and taste are more closely integrated, as I discuss in chapters one and three. *Ulysses* cancels out erotic titillation for readers such as Aramis and Bennett because the novel does not sufficiently privilege visual appropriation. Instead the narrative embeds sight in the realm of smell, the tactility of fluids, and the confusions of taste—in the “details” of materially productive bodies unmoored from their contemporary spatial hierarchies and domains.

As the site and producer of sensation, the form and object of knowledge, the normatively embodied individual feels endangered at the level of species and life form without control over visual fields, as over other sensory information. Whether this lack results from Joyce’s technological gaze into psychic interiors or his refusal to allow readers the full power of visual abstraction, their comments register a loss of spatial privilege over phenomena. Camille McCole’s alarm over the flow of bodily excrement in the novel, for example, migrates into equal dismay over the flux of dominating sensation, which eradicates human will. “No character in *Ulysses* ever does anything: every single one of them is merely the most passive of protoplasms actuated by no principle,” she asserts, echoing early reactions to *Dubliners.* Ultimately, *Ulysses* embodies consciousness too completely, rather than inaccurately, and does so by denying subjects any privileged platform of observation and direction, one linked to the capacities of reorganized, modern sight.

Joyce demonstrates absolute mastery of bodies through his revision of perception and subjectivity. In this, the author robs subjects of any transcendental power, epitomized in readers’ ability to bracket the body, or at least to select the times and spaces in which they will acknowledge or engage with it. Worse, Joyce *chooses* to inflict this condition on his audience. Perhaps most galling to reviewers is his refusal to exercise his gifts to less punishing ends, for through his literary talent Joyce himself proves the existence of the sovereign observer as a transcendent margin over materiality. He appropriates agency solely to himself, extracting strategic organization from the individual to increase his own authority. The true “scandal” of *Ulysses* is its denial of a transcendental subjectivity that clearly exists, on the evidence of the author’s genius. Joyce turns readers into the miserable subjects of an exacting God who annihilates the individual and hence human agency as such, leaving in its wake mere protoplasm.

*Ulysses* finally enjoins everyone to be a metaphorically united subject-body, removed from a sedimented autonomy and set loose among objects and forces without distinction from them. At the same time, this unity possesses none of the necessity that characterizes the metaphoric relation. Joyce’s
portrayals are experienced as radically contingent and yet endowed with the authority of metaphor, arbitrarily determined and yet absolutely enforced on readers. Some comments account for this disturbing combination through reference to Irish Catholicism, a lens that Joyce installed through his manipulation of commentary in the late teens, as I show in chapter one. Notably, Cecil Maitland and H. G. Wells understand Joyce’s somatopsychic representations as the product of Catholic training. Maitland, writing in *New Witness* on “Mr. Joyce and the Catholic Tradition,” attributes the author’s perversity to Catholic praxis, which encourages a morbid preoccupation with the flesh. Joyce has merely lost the faith that allows adherents to transcend this baseness:

This vision of human beings as walking drain pipes, this focussing of life exclusively round the excremental and sexual mechanism, appears on the surface inexplicable in so profoundly imaginative and observant a student of humanity as Mr. Joyce. . . . No one who is acquainted with Catholic education in Catholic countries could fail to recognize the source of Mr. Joyce’s ‘Weltanschauung.’ He sees the world as theologians showed it to him. His humour is the cloacal humour of the refectory; his contempt the priest’s denigration of the body, and his view of sex has the obscenity of a confessor’s manual, reinforced by the profound perception and consequent disgust of a great imaginative writer.

Like Leslie and McCole, Maitland fears engulfment. Joyce “has reproduced the minds and imaginations of his characters so vividly that the reader finds difficulty in separating his consciousness from theirs; and thus his conception of humanity from the author’s,” he asserts. *Ulysses* challenges rational individualism by displaying its power to make fallen Catholics of all readers—that is, to enclose them in the degraded body “educated” by the morbidities of Catholicism. In a similar reading of the relation between archaic religion and bodily debasement, H. G. Wells neatly sketches the distinction between worldly and private belief. Wells wrote to Joyce in 1928: “Your training has been Catholic, Irish, insurrectionary; mine, such as it was, was scientific, constructive, and, I suppose, English.” In contrasting national minds, Wells portrays the Irish as equal parts Arnoldian Celt and Fenian ape, though the basis of their difference from the English is religious subjectivity:

You began Catholic, that is to say you began with a system of values in stark opposition to reality. Your mental existence is obsessed by a monstrous system of contradictions. You may believe in chastity, purity, and the personal
God and that is why you are always breaking out into cries of [cunt], shit and hell. As I don't believe in these things except as quite personal values my mind has never been shocked to outcries by the existence of waterclosets and menstrual badges—and undeserved misfortunes.34

Irish Catholicism, as a false worldly knowledge, confuses “reality” with belief and facts with values; consequently those trained in this system must act out a discrepancy that is first epistemological. Catholics learn to totalize knowledge and religious beliefs, importing them wholesale into the worldly realm. The failure to demarcate the private from the public produces disorganized bodies—“cunt” and “shit” in the mouth—and perverse, obsessive minds. Proper understanding of these distinctions allows menstrual badges and toilets to exist outside or underneath the ideal, public, and masculine individual, such as Wells is.

Not modernity but agency, as well as the production of the body as a space of agency, functions as the criterion for these readers. As modes of somatic discipline, both instrumental science and archaic belief endanger the strategy of individualism by dissolving its spatial organization and hence its metaphysics of substance. Joyce, whether he wields a machine or the religious episteme represented in bodily praxis, subtracts agency from subjectivity when he deprives readers of the possibility of foreclosure on their physicality. Though when they invoke religion explicitly, these readers often speak in defense of belief, they reject representations that subject them to spiritual-technical discipline as a primary feature of embodiment. In this they accord with Maitland and Wells, who complain most pointedly not of Joyce’s belief or lack of it, but rather of his fundamental formation by the wrong kind of religion, which leads to his need to display private matters. The wrong kind of Christianity causes Joyce’s obscenity by warping his experience of his body and hence of the world. At issue in all these comments, as I have shown, is the ability to govern the oscillation of relations between self and material, to elect the times and occasions when “having” devolves into “being” a body. Implicitly, such autonomy is not fully available to male cultural-racial others or to women in general. In fact, Ulysses seems to force the privileged subject to occupy the fully material bodies of others.

Cosmopolitan Genius and Disembodiment

In his 1939 biography James Joyce, friend Herbert Gorman records and responds to many of Ulysses’ early reviews, among them Cecil Maitland’s. “If
we consider Mr. Joyce’s work from this point of view, it becomes clear that while [Joyce's] study of humanity remains incomplete, the defect is not due to any inherent lack of imagination on his part." Rather, Gorman reasons, Joyce's “failure” is “that of the Catholic system, which has not had the strength to hold him to its transcendentalism, and from whose errors he has not been able to set himself free.” Gorman’s emphasis on Catholicism as an episteme turns Maitland’s equal emphasis on bodily practice into an “error,” continued by Joyce as a conception of the human being as “a specially cunning animal.” Maitland, in spite of his highly sectarian condemnation of bodily investigation, points to the disciplinary mode of Irish-Catholic practice that Joyce made efforts to stress in the late teens. But in the subsequent reception of Ulysses, as Gorman’s angle portends, religion detached from regulated training or physical production. Instead religion signified an abstracted theological knowledge or imaginative system. Accordingly, the novel came to stand for creative liberty rather than bodily license, and the material of the body shifted to that of book. Later commentary characterized Ulysses as a work of exalted consciousness rather than of physical subjection. The work became a source of knowledge about the universal human mind, a pure and human abstraction of the body. Ford Madox Ford anticipated this resolution in the December 1922 English Review, when he asserted that the “technical revolution” that Joyce initiated was a self-validating accomplishment. “In the matter of readers my indifference is the deepest,” Ford asserts. “It is sufficient that Ulysses, a book of profound knowledge and profound renderings of humanity, should exist.” The book’s inaccessibility, so resented in popular reviews, was supported through its transportation to a realm of texts that merit exegesis: the sacral-scholarly texts of Western culture.

Like Pound in his review of Dubliners, critics who applauded Ulysses frequently did so by contrasting it with the provincialism of the revival. The most influential early review of Ulysses—the review with which Ernest Boyd later took issue—took this tack. Valéry Larbaud, in the April 1922 Nouvelle Revue Française, called Ulysses the harbinger of an Irish cosmopolitanism and individualism: “[W]ith this Ulysses . . . Ireland is making a sensational re-entrance into high European literature.” Joyce has done as much as “all the heroes of Irish nationalism to attract the respect of intellectuals of every other country toward Ireland,” he famously contends. Joyce acts as a metonymy of the emerging nation, detached and reproduced through a modern and metropolitan aesthetic that transcends outmoded commitments such as nationalism and the Irish language. Accepting the view of Ulysses as an emblem of transcendence and freedom, but disagreeing with Larbaud’s provenance, Irish critics such as Joseph Hone were quick to claim Joyce’s origins
as Irish and Catholic. Joyce “may be detached from our local passions; but it is not a detachment born of English influences or of cosmopolitanism,” said Hone in a “Letter from Ireland” that appeared in the January 1923 London Mercury. “For us in Ireland,” he asserted, “Mr. Joyce’s significance lies in this, that he is the first man of literary genius, expressing himself in perfect freedom, that Catholic Ireland has produced in modern times. Mr. Joyce is as Irish as M. Anatole France . . . is French.”\textsuperscript{38} Walkowitz notes that both Larbaud and such critics write about Ireland as if it were a “valuable” and “coherent” object, aligned with nationalist politics against the artistic legacy of Europe; both parties contest the binary in that they want to broaden the nativist and “celebratory” character of Irish literary identity.\textsuperscript{39} Nash, Booker,\textsuperscript{40} and others highlight the particularly Catholic, and in this sense incoherent, element of Ulysses’ identity: they point to John Eglinton’s 1929 characterization of Ulysses as the first triumph of Catholic Ireland over “the Anglicism of the English language”\textsuperscript{41} by a writer “Roman in mind and soul” throughout his work.\textsuperscript{42}

“Genius”—in both the classical sense of spirit and the more modern one of a mastering intelligence, comprehensive as well as creative—acted as the pivotal concept in the transmutation of Joyce’s dirty profanity into sacred artistry. This revision, enshrined in Eliot’s “Ulysses, Order, and Myth,” which appeared in the November 1923 Dial, is evidenced in much humbler and less laudatory quarters.\textsuperscript{43} While reviewers frequently questioned the ends to which Joyce applied his talent, they never challenged the intrinsic value or essential construction of this ideology. The most virulent critics of the novel, such as Maitland and Leslie, acknowledge Joyce as a “Titan” and a “great imaginative writer.” Rachel Bowlby observes that the successful 1960 trial of Lawrence’s Lady Chatterley’s Lover depended on a common acceptance of “clean and dirty, wholesome and unwholesome, moral and immoral” as the standards by which the novel should be judged. Defense of the book rested “on the grounds that [Lawrence’s] writing is not dirty at all—neither in the words he uses nor in the forms of life that he advocates.” Rather, she continues, Lawrence was presented as “more wholesome than his detractors, who ma[d]e of sex a ‘dirty secret,’” while Lawrence restored the sacred importance of sexuality to marriage.\textsuperscript{44} Joyce’s redefinition similarly depended on shared assumptions between his opponents and his allies, but stressed “genius” and “lunacy” rather than sincerity as the crucial avenue of negotiation and erased altogether the perception of Ulysses as a representation of knowledge produced by bodies. Both genius and madness signified a freedom from normal constraint, a capaciousness of individual perspective—indeed a compulsion to follow the dictates of that perspective at the expense of all other consider-
ations. As the secular analogue of godlike powers of creativity, located since the Romantics in the individual consciousness, artistic genius signified the unalienated labor of a sovereign individual able to fashion an objective correlative in language, animating mastery with spirit and shaping Irish material with European and classical form. In this sense Ulysses’ reception follows the logic of assimilation, as the threat of the archaic, foreign, or gothic dissolves into the mixture of universal humanity and its knowledge while retaining its interesting flavor or charm. Joyce’s purity resides in his devotion to depicting the truth of a degraded humanity and in his exercise of political and artistic freedom. For admirers, the novel is not chaotic, but encyclopedic; not obscene, but frank and detached, unsullied by its examination of the sordid aspects of existence; not coarsely mocking but scrupulously truthful. Ulysses was “comparable to the Bible,” “ineluctably . . . true” to life, and “dazzlingly original” in its creative accomplishment. The novel possessed “absolute validity” in spite of its “local and private” focus.\footnote{45}

The Satanic Verses controversy mobilized a starker opposition between the sovereign individual body, now equated with the book, and the totalized subject of orthopractic belief, aligned with arcaic (now non-Western and non-Christian) religion. The panic provoked by Joyce’s performance of metphoric relations among self, body, and context was in the later dispute elicited by the similar relations produced by the practice of Islam. In the Anglo-British imagination, a totalized Muslim agent sought to dissolve the boundaries between public and private knowledge that H. G. Wells had defended half a century before. Now, however, the arcaic religious body attempted violently to dissolve the civil space of freedom, the Anglo-British individual as one sovereign national territory. The individual as a legal entity played a much more prominent role in The Satanic Verses controversy than it had in the Ulysses scandal, as both critics and defenders of the novel used freedom of speech and other civil rights to defend their positions. Anglo-British, and later American, reaction to the Anglo-Muslim protest demonstrated the confluence of Western national-civil subjectivity and artistic theology. The privileging of aesthetic form merged seamlessly with the right to freedom of expression, as both were synonymous with the institutional shape of individualism.

Whether depicted as a person, a book, or as the nation-state itself, the metonymic individual of these binaries is structured as a fetish. In this, the conception of agency recalls Žižek’s equation of the transcendental subject with the commodity form. The subject, made of the same “sublime” material as money, possesses an “indestructible and immutable” body which outlasts physical embodiment.\footnote{46} But while Žižek describes the fetish structure of
human relations as repressed in bourgeois society—it is displaced onto relations between things so that “free subjects” may emerge—I am placing the fetish structure in the civil and social production of embodiment itself as a historical mode of enfleshing the relations between his “sublime” and material bodies. The metonymy that creates the individual from personal somatic matter also distinguishes the individual from the larger material world: that is, the positivist episteme that makes an exterior world of separate, inanimate objects also produces the subject as metaphysical substance rather than as mere stuff. In short, the individual is structured like a fetish not only “internally,” but also “externally.” Martin Krieger points toward this conclusion in his analysis of the experimental object of normal science: created through the pulling out of a part “still attached to the world,” the power of the “dumb object” resides precisely in its production as a metonymy. Similarly, when they imagine themselves as inextricably entangled with incoherent corporeality, Joyce’s readers lose the power to separate from other people as well as to dominate inanimate matter. In The Satanic Verses controversy, the panic over this loss becomes geopolitical.

Ulysses Redux: Satanic Terror

Like Ulysses, The Satanic Verses impelled a confrontation between a totalized agent, who is connected to archaic religion, and the autonomous space of the individual. Externally directed disciplinary power once again endangered sovereign agency. But in the Rushdie affair the book’s audience, rather than its representations or its author, posed the threat to individualism, and the civil space of privacy, rather than intimate bodily space, was felt to be vulnerable. If Anglo-Christian England understood the book’s burning as a literal conflagration of the individual’s authority, Anglo-Muslim protestors portrayed the novel’s representations as an equally violent severing of Muhammad from the body-knowledge of Islam. In their view, the “pulling out” of properties to create the metonymic object—which I have characterized as producing the individual—rendered the metaphoric unity of Islam as a “thing” rather than an “act.” Denny explains the distinction: “Orthodoxy is not the best term to use when characterizing Islam’s sense of right religion. A better term is orthopraxy, which comes much closer to the reality of Muslim devotion and obedience to God.” In comparison with Christianity, which “stresses doctrinal clarity and understanding by means of creeds, dogmas, and theologies,” he continues, “Islam and Judaism . . . view religion as a way of life and a ritual patterning of that life under God’s lordship.” The salat epitomizes the
communal nature of the habitus that arises from Islamic orthopraxis. Observed five times daily, the salat unites the umma in “an intense, highly regulated, formal observance that features cycles of bodily postures climaxing in complete prostration in orientation toward the Ka’ba in Mecca,” a center and focus of religious energy. (Salat is distinct from du’ā, or private devotion, suggested by the translation “prayer.”) One person may perform salat, but if he is joined by even one other worshipper, one of them must lead. This imam “acts as a pattern for the rest to follow, so as to preserve the required precision and order of the service.”\(^50\) The contrast between the metonymic and metaphoric modes of production also pertains to the distinction between performance and performativity that was central to the Muslim complaint against the novel. Detractors’ comments suggest a critical difference between an act staged as a representation for an audience and an act undertaken as a productive end in itself.\(^50\) As Asad argues about the anthropological reading of monastic practice: “[A]lthough the formation of moral sentiments is dependent on a signifying medium, we cannot read off the formation from the system of significations that may be authoritatively identified and isolated as a distinctive semiotic phenomenon.”\(^52\)

While not even Catholic commentators questioned the truth of Joyce’s depictions, instead deploiring their partiality, Anglo-Muslims stressed the factual inaccuracy of *The Satanic Verses*. The novel’s imitation of scripture and tradition directly challenged the divine word as knowledge, untranslatable both linguistically and performatively. *The Satanic Verses* not only appropriated what Bobby Sayyid calls the “master signifiers” that unify the various expressions of Muslim worship—the Qu’ran, the hadith, and the sunna—but also traduced the communal body made in worship.\(^53\) From this perspective Rushdie split Muslim subjectivity from agency, which is generated through collective praxis in relation to the sacred texts, and Islam from its multiple dispositional, textual, and moral frameworks. While Joyce’s Catholic reviewers diffused religious offense into social and cultural categories—blasphemy, when specifically mentioned, encoded a generalized insult to group sensibility or social decorum rather than a violation of doctrine or practice—Muslims affronted by *The Satanic Verses* foregrounded the novel as a source of public knowledge. Its offense was first epistemological. In this, British Muslims spoke from the episteme proper whose mimetic effect had so unsettled *Ulysses*’ readers.

In October 1988, according to Bhikhu Parekh, those who initiated the British protest asked that a notice be inserted in the book to inform readers that *The Satanic Verses* did not provide “an accurate history of Islam.”\(^54\) Rushdie “has intentionally and deliberately distorted the history of the Blessed
Prophet and his Companions,” Syed Ali Ashraf states in an October 28 review published in the Muslim London weekly Impact International. M. H. Faruqi, the paper’s editor, comments in the same issue: “Fact of the matter is that not having the courage or ability of a scholar, Rushdie has simply tried to hide behind the realm of dream and fiction.” Others similarly call the novel a lie, a disfigurement, and a falsification of the Prophet, his companions, and his wives. “Because of the importance Muslims themselves attach to the critical examination of the facts of the Prophet Muhammad’s way of life [contained in the sunna], . . . The Prophet Muhammad can never be seen as a figure of fiction: he is a fact who lived in real time,” contemporary scholars explain. This division pervades Islamic textual tradition, which “insistent[ly] emphasi[zes] . . . the separation of fact from fable so that the irreducible substance of faith can be known.” The Qu’ran manifests “the divine word inlibrate,” and the hadith convey the sunna, or the Prophet’s way of life, which have formed “the uniquely valid rule of conduct for Muslims” since classical times.

Most obviously, Muslims contested the auratic and nonideological premises of literary fiction. As in the Ulysses controversy, the audience often conflated blasphemy and obscenity. Unlike Joyce’s detractors, however, Rushdie’s stressed the profane content of the book even when they spoke of its physical and sexual representations. An ad that the Birmingham Central mosque placed in the Times compared Rushdie’s depictions of Muhammad’s companions to someone’s portraying “Matthew and Mark indulging in indecencies and molesting children.” The novel’s portrait of Islam’s holy personages were comparable to characterizing Jesus as a homosexual engaged in orgies with the apostles, or Mary as a prostitute and Jesus as her client. The sexuality of Muhammad per se was not at issue in such analogies; rather the obscene referred to the spiritual and cultural, as well as the epistemic, illegitimacy of their use.

Both the civil rhetoric and the Christian analogies that Anglo-Muslims deployed assume the separate, affective interior space of embodied individualism. Like the novel itself, these translations to some extent efface the public and performative dimensions of practical belief, even as they produced new forms of Anglo-Muslim identity in wake of the protest. Religion, “either relegated to the private sphere, or read as a form of false consciousness,” gained a new “national voice” for British Muslims. Above all, The Satanic Verses initiated this development by splitting a communal body from the palpable Muhammad that it generated, severing from the community of believers the knowledge of Muhammad “internalised in every Muslim heart,” in Ali Mazrui’s phrase. The physical and performative dimensions of Muslims’ analogies, rather than their doctrinal content, more effectively convey this
practical episteme. In Muslims’ use of Christian scripture, transgressive sexual acts pervert affective and often physically intimate bonds, such as those between parents and children or prophet and disciple. Comic display compounds the betrayal as the novel destroys intimacy and trust to create a trivial amusement. From this perspective, Rushdie stages the somatically produced and incorporated Muhammad as an expressive performance or spectacle, a minstrelsy, just as he claims the Qu’ran as personal property. *The Satanic Verses* distorts belief as a performance “of” to render it as a particular performance “for,” introducing the semiotic gap as an act of intimate physical aggression. Mazrui quotes Pakistani friends who compared the book to a “brilliant poem about the private parts of [one’s] parents,” read in the marketplace to the applause and laughter of strangers;66 Mushahid Hussain likens Rushdie to “a Jew who tries to justify the Holocaust . . . and dismisses his crime in light-hearted humour at the expense of the victims of Auschwitz.”67 Rushdie, who had been raised as a Muslim, employed the knowledge and power of praxis against itself, detaching the “act” from its episteme to make a metonymic “thing” with its own potency. Speaking from a totalized bodily habitus68 created through actions that sedimented believers’ orientation to one another, to Muhammad, and to God, objecting Muslims felt that Rushdie split Muhammad, the model of active being in the world, from this unity. Ultimately, their comments imply that the novel disrupts the production of Muhammad as the primary power of the umma. Just as totalization dissolves the structure of the individual, here splitting depotentiates the body of Islam.

Much as the Muslim protest encoded resistance to the fragmentation of a totality, the majoritarian reaction described an autonomous space subjected and physically tortured by an Oriental despot.69 The Bradford demonstration of January 14, 1989, brought the Muslim campaign domestic mass-media attention because participants burned a copy of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie, responding in an *Observer* article of January 22, made explicit the equation of book and body, art and theology. Here the author states that he possesses “the same God-shaped hole” that haunts Aadam Aziz in *Midnight’s Children*:

Unable to accept the inarguable absolutes of religion, I have tried to fill up the hole with literature. The art of the novel is something I cherish as dearly as the bookburners of Bradford value their brand of militant Islam. Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truths but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and the heart. So the battle over *The Satanic Verses* is a clash of faiths in a way. Or, more precisely, it’s a clash of languages.70
Like *Ulysses*’ advocates half a century before, *The Satanic Verses*’ defenders presented artistic production as the supreme expression of individual freedom. “Dangers of a Muslim Campaign,” an *Independent* editorial about the Bradford demonstration, states: “The Islamic campaign would be more understandable if Rushdie’s novel were in any way trashy. But its literary merits are not in doubt.” In the tradition of “the Inquisition and Hitler’s National Socialists,” the *auto-da-fé* was barbaric and uncivilized, the work of fanatics who refused to understand or respect British culture. The editorial neatly conflates books and bodies in order to condemn the violent intolerance of heresy and fascism, using medieval Spain and genocidal Germany as the archaic and the modern emblems of foreign religiosity. Shailja Sharma observes that “the novel which told the stories of Britain’s immigrants was proof that they could never become British.”

Thus Khomeini’s death threat of February 14 merely completed the already established narrative of foreign violence penetrating sovereign national boundaries and the trope of the literary book as the substance of the persecuted individual. Though the symbolic of the book as the epitome of Enlightenment played a more prominent role in the Rushdie controversy, these nuances did little to disturb the basic formulation of strategic individual space revealed in the *Ulysses* affair. In defense of the exemplary individual, Rushdie and his supporters called upon the totemic book that eventually emerged from the *Ulysses* controversy. Anglo-Christian culture in Britain resurrected this book as the icon of the national-textual body. Similarly, Western authors found occasion to claim their profession as both spiritual and worldly. Speaking at a PEN American Center reading held as the novel was being released in the United States, Norman Mailer, for instance, echoed the charges of depletion and decadence leveled against the West by some Muslim critics. Calling writers an “endangered species” who usually injured only “each other,” he asserted:

> But now the Ayatollah Khomeini has offered us an opportunity to regain our frail religion which happens to be faith in the power of words and our willingness to suffer for them. He awakens us to the great rage we feel when our liberty to say what we wish... is endangered. We discover that, yes, maybe we are willing to suffer for our idea. Maybe we are willing, ultimately, to die for the idea that serious literature, in a world of dwindling certainties and choked up ecologies, is the absolute we must defend.

The Imam’s threat had evangelically renewed writers’ sense of artistic mission, offering the possibility of martyrdom back to them. Such responses suggest
that metropolitan freedom had forgotten its vocation, only to be reminded by
the textual fanaticism of Islam.

Conclusion

In the controversies over both *Ulysses* and *The Satanic Verses*, metropolitan
modernist literature secured a phantasmal image of itself as worldly and pub-
lic by violating the construction of “religion” as a crucible of, rather than an
adjunct to, identity. The orthodox, secularist conception of religion, modelled
on the liberal Christian formation, in fact modelled the theology of art as a
semautonomous symbolic. Western literature and religion did not compete
as starkly opposite epistemologies, but rather as auratic sites of sensibility and
expression, for both “art” and “religion” offered styles of elaborating the indi-
vidual’s foundation through access to tradition and to transcendent emotion.
These acquisitions enriched rather than produced subjects, little affecting
dominant epistemic regimes or the bodily dispositions that they generated.

Half a century after the *Ulysses* controversy, Rushdie and his defenders
totalized genuinely epistemic differences in belief formations by casting Islam
as archaic and absolutist, an omnivorous consumer of rights and boundaries.
In attempting to elucidate the complexities of these disputes, I have aimed
to stress the need for historicization and critical examination of the frozen
signifiers that they mobilize. “What is missing from diasporic theory,” writes
Vijay Mishra in 2008, “is a theory of the sacred based not on the idea of the
sacred as a pathological instance of the secular, in itself defined along purely
modernist lines, but as a point from which interventions can take place.” 74
Such interventions must begin with a reexamination of “religion” as a practice
of reading cultural repression, productive only in the aesthetic recapture of
theological figures. 75 This ideology continues to mask individualism, a deeply
entrenched paradigm of Western spiritual, physical, and social identity for-
mation, as a significant arena of both the earlier and more recent dispute.
In both controversies, the challenge to this formulation of agency produced
panic over the dissolution of “personhood.” Minority literatures, as well as
our public discourse, call for more considered responses to other realizations
of the “person” and other productions of knowledge, for a genuine encounter
with the difficult and compelling issues of difference that they pose.