

“It is hard to believe in typescript”: The typewriter and transmissional departure in Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

James Joyce’s epistolary pronouncement of January 1925, quoted in the title to this proposed paper, pivots on the authority imparted to the written word by letterpress printing. In company with an alignment of material states and degrees of credibility, Joyce as ably tickets the distinct practices of suspicious reading that were being developed by forensic science in the early decades of the twentieth century. The contention of my paper will be that such strategies of professional incredulity constitute an awareness of bibliographic codes *avant la lettre*, one centred on error-prone transmissional labour as a meaning-rich object of study.

In this paper I will provide a documentary cartography of the typescripting of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the late 1910s, applying the techniques and procedures that criminalistics laboratories were developing at the same time to the variants and key slips of the resultant dossier. Not simply deplorable lapses to be corrected, the mediation effects of typing serve to identify typewriters—in early usage the machines and their (usually female) operators alike—even as these agents of transmission made their own alterations to the work beyond standardization and graphic uniformity, beyond the imposition of publishers’ desiderata.

This paper commutes towards an articulation of the expressive potential of typewritten variance, locating in the tangled compositional history of *Ulysses* a signal instance of modernity’s vexed relationship with the technologies and gender formations of mechanical transmission.

A/V Requirements: Projector for PowerPoint.

Ronan Crowley

University at Buffalo

Department of English,
302 Clemens Hall,
University at Buffalo,
Buffalo, NY 14260.
rc65@buffalo.edu