introduction

_Ulysses_ was officially published on February 2, 1922, its author's fortieth birthday, when the first printed copy of the book was put into Joyce's hands by his publisher, Sylvia Beach. It was available in Paris very soon thereafter, and duly reported on in the press of the English-speaking countries. A review printed in a number of provincial British newspapers on April 6 said:

> Only a few have seen, but everyone is saying how wonderful it is. If a single sentence were quoted in the presence of these fashionable dilettante they would run in horror. I have seen a copy. It is inconceivable how any man outside a lunatic asylum could produce such unadulterated filth and claim that it was literature.¹

The legal and spiritual guardians of Anglo-Saxon society had expressed themselves a year earlier in New York, when they placed the two well-bred spinsters who printed the first chapters serially in the _Little Review_ under criminal indictment on a morals charge; and the book was soon banned in every country whose language was its own. The literary establishment passed judgment in October, when Alfred Noyes, England's "unofficial poet laureate," spoke on _Ulysses_ before the Royal Society of Literature. "There is no foulness conceivable to the mind of madman or ape that has not been poured into its imbecile pages," he said,² and asserted sarcastically that the _Sporting Times or the_
Pink 'Un, London's organ of bookmaking and burlesque, had "the only sound analysis of the book in this country."

The Pink 'Un had accompanied its issue of April 1 with a broadside announcing a special article, "The Scandal of Ulysses." Given a banner headline, but deferred to page four in favor of "Sportive Notes" and a poem, "The Kissers," the article had a subhead, "Europe's Most Notorious Book Disgustingly Dull," which reveals the essence of the Pink 'Un's criticism—the word "scandal" in the title is a clever ambiguity suggesting that Joyce is a fraud, that the real scandal of Ulysses is not its salaciousness, which the vehicle of "The Kissers" also deplores, but the fact that the salacious book is "sordid" and "dull" rather than erotically rewarding. In Finnegans Wake, in answer to the question "in Sam Hill, how?" Shem the Penman could have been boycotted by Anglo-Saxon society and forced to write in exile, the author explains:

Let manner and matter of this for these our sporting times be cloaked up in the language of blushfed por­porates that an Anglican ordinal, not reading his own rude dunsky tunga, may ever behold the brand of scarlet on the brow of her of Babylon and feel not the pink one in his own damned cheek. (p. 185)

The provocations to anger were not to cease, of course. The prohibitions, the destruction by the British customs of a whole edition (less one copy), the vice-squad raids, pulpit attacks, newspaper snickering, even the inaccurate and unjust obituary and "appreciation" in the London Times following Joyce's death on January 13, 1941, all are part of the cultural history of our century.

Practically speaking, however, the causes for anger were unimportant. Despite their power and zeal, all the bigoted enemies of Ulysses could affect little more than its accessibility. Once it became legally available, they may have deterred some prospective readers, but they could mislead none. And their effort was more than counterbalanced by sympathetic attention from the very beginning. Although Joyce's hope that his book would appeal to a large audience was quixotic (despite what was said about him, he very
much wanted to be read), and although such impressive literary artists and critics as Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, D. H. Lawrence, F. R. Leavis, Paul Elmer More, and Virginia Woolf found themselves unable to assimilate his radical innovation, *Ulysses* was reviewed seriously by most of the literary and liberal political journals in London and New York, favorably in many cases, and its author became the most famous and respected figure in English-speaking literary and expatriate circles in Paris. Within five years after its appearance, Joyce and his work, which consisted of only a slight volume of verse, a collection of short stories, and two longer narratives, had inspired three books and dozens of articles; they were the first items in a corpus that grew with the subject's fame until today more than a score of books and hundreds of articles have been written wholly or largely about *Ulysses* alone.

Nevertheless, while one student of Joyce declares in his recent book:

I do not propose at this late date to say anything general about *Ulysses*. Accounts of the book have been given by Mr. Stuart Gilbert, Mr. Frank Budgen, Mr. Louis Golding, and many others. It has been charted and mapped, and no reader nowadays need experience any difficulty with it . . . ;

another, in his more recent book, says:

The enigma of *Ulysses* continues to invite and repel, to tantalize by suggesting one interpretation only to ridicule it.4

There is a great deal of incidental fun in *Ulysses*, a great deal of ingenuity that is either impressive as tour de force or annoying, depending upon one's tolerance for gratuitous pyrotechnics and networks of correspondence, and some writing that is admirable simply in its own right (the portrait of Mr. Deasy, the representation of Shakespeare's environment, the depiction of Bloom beleaguered in the funeral car). A number of the critics who were gratified by the book's varied attractions and tantalized by their
meaning have helped its other readers, and the present study would have been impossible if their work had not been available for the guidance and instruction of its author. Even the line of criticism that has become progressively more ingenious in its articulation and defense of networks of correspondence—some esoteric and trivial, but proven to be intentional by the various caches of Joyce's papers, some integral and relevant, some trumped up—has been indirectly useful when it has not been directly so.

However, the "enigma" remains. And the difficulty is far more fundamental than the considerable amount of material written about Ulysses would suggest. From the beginning, books and articles have discussed stylistic singularities, patterns of allusion, and various complexes of symbolic meaning; but there exists no general agreement about that which would ordinarily be regarded as an antecedent, even a primary, consideration: what happens in the book. The book clearly has a protagonist, yet there has been no generally accepted account of what he experiences or of what he does. No one has demonstrated conclusively how Mr. Bloom's odyssey has ended, or even if it has ended. The development of his relations with the two other major characters is unclear; and thus, the fate the narrative indicates for all three principals is unclear. If there is a scandal connected with Ulysses, it relates to this striking fact.

The critical interpretations of the book reflect the situation: they are numerous and extend over the whole range of possibilities. One, and it is argued well only by Edmund Wilson, is that Ulysses ends happily, and therefore expresses an affirmative philosophy of life; another is that the author holds out hope for his protagonists although their condition is miserable, and therefore shows the human condition to be potentially positive; a third is that he presents with deep sympathy a pathetic world. In addition to affirmation, optimism, and commiseration, the book is thought to assert pessimism—a simple despair about life—and even nihilism—the author's attempt to discredit or destroy all traditional values of life and art.

These are the interpretations of critics who regard the book as fundamentally serious. Those who think it quite
the opposite differ from one another in a corresponding way, with the determining consideration whether Joyce is seen to be: (a) involved with the characters and world of his comedy; or (b) outside that world ("the indifferent artist" "paring his fingernails") and mocking it. The more substantial interpretation in the first category is that the book is essentially positive because its heroic and mythic allusions ennoble rather than denigrate its commonplace modern world. The other considers it to be simply "genial and comic," the work of a "humorous writer of the traditional English school—in temper, at his best, very like Sterne." One interpretation in the second category represents the book as comic pessimism—pessimistic and not nihilistic because it asserts spiritual and moral values which its characters fail to live up to, comic because "To be able to laugh with others at the recognized absurdity of a common tangential position ["all men's sundering"] may be a first step in the direction of a reconciliation." Mostly, however, critics of this persuasion are among the many who find it nihilistic, even when they do not draw the conclusion themselves. Its essence "is God laughing at the world from which (as the Cabala tells us) he has withdrawn," its comic principle, "the hard cerebral ridicule of the ironist who has smashed through all the paper-walls of his environment and, turning suddenly, observed the essential filth of life. . . ." Thus, the lack of general agreement about what happens in *Ulysses* is naturally reflected in a lack of general agreement about the nature and ultimate meaning of the book: it is called both comic and serious, both affirmative and negatory. Ironically, however, the disagreements on both levels are largely the result of a subtle consensus—a cluster of untested critical suppositions about characters, literary devices, tone, and action; a few critics accept all of those suppositions, every critic seems to accept some of them, and each supposition alone is a serious obstacle to reading the book.

The general acceptance of them has obscured the relationship, but those prior conclusions all in their turn derive directly and logically from one basic presumption about the philosophy of the author and the meaning of his book.
The influential presumption is itself unimportant except as literary history, but exposing it will implicate the corollary judgments which have so dominated treatment of *Ulysses*; and the exposition can be done without reviewing forty years of criticism, for an almost complete descriptive bibliography already exists. In the recent book, *Joyce: The Man, the Work, the Reputation*, Richard M. Kain describes chronologically: the comments (including letters to the editor) on the installments published in *The Little Review* beginning March, 1918; the scores of reviews of the first edition; the early books and articles on *Ulysses*; and "Three Decades of Interpretation, 1925-1955." 

Professor Kain says of the hostile reviewers, "It was the alleged obscenity that most enraged these reviewers, together with what they felt to be the nihilistic tendencies of the work." But while they ranted against the "nihilism" in Joyce's "queer new" "imbecile pages" of "literary Bolshevism," responsible reviewers calmly or exultantly found in *Ulysses* precisely that same treatment of traditional artistic and human values. What J. Middleton Murry's laudatory review said of Joyce:

> He is the man with the bomb who would blow what is left of Europe into the sky,

and of *Ulysses* itself:

> For just as Mr. Joyce is in rebellion against the social morality of civilization, he is in rebellion against the lucidity and comprehensibility of civilized art.

was generally either declared or implied by the serious reviewers. And the subsequent canonization of Joyce as "the grand archetype of literary genius" by the young writers and readers of one of the most experimental periods in English literature reinforced an unfortunate initial impression. The extremist Paris magazine *transition*, "after the excitement of the publication of *Ulysses*, declared 'The Revolution of the Word' and implicated the innocent Joyce in outlandish literary excesses." This magazine published
the early work of many of the now distinguished figures of American literature and European painting. But it began and ended its twelve-point “Proclamation” with “The revolution in the English language is an accomplished fact” and “The plain reader be damned”; it made Joyce its household god; it was attempting the destruction that so many considered Joyce’s aim; and it had among its editors and contributors a number of people who wrote influential criticism of *Ulysses*.

The prior assumption that it is the first great expression of nihilism in literature has been the dominant direct and indirect influence on the criticism of *Ulysses* during its forty-year history. Professor Kain’s bibliography will confirm that, although the range of interpretations of the book is as broad as possible, the actual number of critics who consider its outcome or viewpoint positive is relatively small. A more important fact (for short studies can be neither so thorough nor so influential) is that while his own book *Fabulous Voyager* treats *Ulysses* as pessimistic but compassionate (see note 7), almost every other whole book devoted to it or to the corpus of Joyce’s work gives the ultimate impression of either grim (see note 9) or mocking (see notes 13 and 14) nihilism.

Some of the specific corollaries to this assumption about *Ulysses* that have made the assumption important for readers of the novel were derived by earlier critics, but the first extrapolation of them all accompanied the first full statement of the nihilism thesis itself. There is no way of assessing the influence of “*Ulysses*,” the essay published by Carl Jung in 1932, although almost every book about *Ulysses* or Joyce’s work which was published after that date mentions it explicitly; but whatever its influence, Jung appropriately created the archetype.

The essay begins with a description:

*Ulysses* is a book which pours along for seven hundred and thirty-five pages, a stream of time of seven hundred and thirty-five days which all consist in one single and senseless every day of Everyman, the completely irrelevant 16th day of June, 1904, in Dublin—a day on which, in all truth, nothing happens
and then links it to the general view of *Ulysses* from which it derives:

It thus gives cruelest [sic] expression to that emptiness which is both breath-taking and stifling, which is under such tension, or is so filled to bursting, as to grow unbearable. This thoroughly hopeless emptiness is the dominant note of the whole book. It not only begins and ends in nothingness, but it consists of nothing but nothingness.

The interpretation is reasserted on the next page:

Every sentence raises an expectation which is not fulfilled; finally, out of sheer resignation, you come to expect nothing any longer. Then bit by bit, again to your horror, it dawns upon you that in all truth you have hit the nail on the head. It is actual fact that nothing happens and nothing comes of it . . .

and again and again thereafter.

The observations that *Ulysses* “pours along,” that it is about the “irrelevant” and “senseless every day of Everyman,” that “nothing happens” in it, can be found even in the early reviews, and are ubiquitous in the criticism, but Jung anchors them firmly in the general assumption which is their source. And he praises Joyce, not only for his social and moral nihilism:

Strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless true that the world of *Ulysses* is undeniably better than the world of those who are hopelessly bound to the darkness of their spiritual birthplaces. Even though the evil and destructive elements predominate, still they thrive . . . at the cost of . . . that “good” which has come down from the past and which shows itself actually to be a ruthless tyrant . . . ,

but also for having realized—as distinguished from merely asserting—that philosophy in his art:
We can ascribe a positive, creative value and meaning not only to \textit{Ulysses}, but also to that art in general to which it is spiritually related. In its attempt to destroy the criteria of beauty and meaning that have held until today, \textit{Ulysses} accomplishes wonders. It . . . brutally disappoints one's expectation of sense and content, it turns all synthesis to ridicule. . . . Everything abusive we can say about \textit{Ulysses} bears testimony to its peculiar quality, for our abusiveness springs from the resentment of the unmodern man. . . .

The passage just above provides the key to the critical suppositions about the characters, literary devices, action, and form of \textit{Ulysses} which derive from the assumption of nihilism because it explicates the bridge between a general interpretation of a difficult literary work and a conception of or way of dealing with that work's specific refractory elements. To the fundamental question, "What happens in \textit{Ulysses}?", an early critic faced with the apparently narrative work which was uniquely difficult to read (in the simplest sense, as a construct of literal sentences) was disposed by a presumption based on the cultural conditions of a transition era, personal sympathies, precedent, or any combination of the three to say, "Nothing happens, that's the point." And to questions about form, patterns of allusion, stylistic devices, to the whole question of the place of function in the aesthetic of \textit{Ulysses} ("Why newspaper headlines, style parodies, correspondences to Homer, intricate allusions to a bourgeois opera?")], the same assumption indicated the answer: "In its attempt to destroy the criteria of beauty and meaning that have held until today, \textit{Ulysses} accomplishes wonders."

Jung himself say nothing more concrete than what has been quoted about the nature and function of the book's style and various literary devices (beyond blandly remarking "a way of presenting thing which takes no account of the reader"), although other critics have made extensive defenses and scholastic studies of these elements of it on the grounds that they are the work of the high priest of the experimental -ism. His analysis of the action as actionless has been noted. His conception of the one character he mentions as a type ("Everyman") is qualified only by the
observation that Bloom is “inactive,” “in strongest contrast to his Greek namesake”; and Stephen is presented implicitly as the direct projection of the author. Finally, Jung says of form: “Ulysses is the roaring, chaotic, nonsensical cataract of psychic or physical happenings . . . ,” and, “The book can be read from the end, for it has no forwards and backwards, no top and no bottom.”

The reader acquainted with criticism of Ulysses will recognize that the most familiar critical observation about each of the respective elements of the book is that which Jung derives from its supposed nihilistic nature. Even critics who disagree with the basic assumption say that the book has no significant action (“this indecisive day,” “the day is hardly even a normal day”), or that Bloom is unchanging (“static,” “passive,” “frozen,” “merely revealed”) and an allegorical type (“Bloom or mankind,” “Bloom, or Everyman”), or that Stephen is the author’s alter ego, or that the tone is derisive when it seems sympathetic and caustic when it seems chaffing, or that any question about the function of a device or allusive pattern is irrelevant (a claim for indulgence which no work deserves and Ulysses does not need).

As one concrete example of the popularity of these products of the nihilism thesis, the comments on the form of Ulysses in the books written about it or Joyce’s work as a whole include: two citations of Jung’s “The book can be read from the end, for it has no forwards and backwards, no top and no bottom”; the derivation, “Tomorrow will be another day and, for Bloom, a similar Odyssey”; a repetition of both these points and the suggestion that it is by the isolation and segregation of eighteen hours of human history in one small locality that Joyce imposes an arbitrary unity upon his investigation . . . ; a slight variation of this with the observation that “all epic narratives” are “episodic”; and ultimately:

The final s of Mrs. Bloom’s acceptance [“Yes.”], meeting the initial S of the first chapter [“Stately”] leads us in a circle to Stephen and back to Mr. Bloom.
Equally important, no meaningful formal pattern is suggested to challenge this prevailing representation of *Ulysses* as a large naturalistic slice of life (with symbols), oozing "flux" at both sides. The critical situation does not signify a failure to see any lineal progression in the narrative, of course, but it does suggest that there has been insufficient recognition of the validity of that progression. The dominant assumption that nothing of importance "happens" in the book quite naturally inhibits the perception of the organic form, chapter upon chapter, in which the development, climax, and resolution of that which in fact does happen is realized.

The prejudgment of theme and tone inherent in the nihilism thesis itself, and the preconceptions of action, characters, literary devices, and form that derive from it, all are implemented by the difficulties of reading *Ulysses*, a book whose discourse has no simple surface which the reader may once skim lightly over before plunging. They are also implemented by the touch of special pleading which the nihilism thesis rationalizes; for special pleading appears not only in the treatment of the book's allusive patterns and other devices but in an equivocation, which is occasionally even expressed, about the very need for comprehending what is read. Thus, again in the book-length studies, while one author speaks only of Joyce's "hope that this man-made chaos would synthesize in the reader's mind," another himself hopes that Joyce will make sense of the book for the reader:

No amount of talk about expressionism, dadaism, or the subconscious mind, can reconcile ["the average reader"] to the unintelligibility of Joyce's unpunctuated pages. . . . And I am afraid that he cannot be touched by the plea that Joyce has achieved a masterpiece of modern subjective fiction. . . .

But there are always a few who . . . are willing to give more serious effort to the understanding of way-breakers. . . . I cannot pretend to understand all of *Ulysses*; it is to Joyce himself that one must look for a complete guide, a sure key to unlock the mysteries of this unique volume.
and a third says,

The meaning of *Ulysses* . . . is not to be sought in any analysis of the acts of the protagonist or the mental make-up of the characters. . . .

In view of this attitude and of the subtly pervading influence of its inspiration, the statement made in 1949 that *Ulysses* "has been charted and mapped, and no reader nowadays need experience any difficulty with it," which was quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, is understandable.

The precise extent of that influence cannot be fixed; even some of the most fully committed adherents of the nihilism viewpoint speak of contradictory impulses in Joyce or contradictory qualities in the book. Furthermore, with the recession of the transition era, critics such as William Empson, Hugh Kenner, and Douglas Knight have openly challenged the characterizing of *Ulysses* by what Mr. Empson calls "the intensely snooty gloom that [critics] evidently thought smart." However, the recent objections confirm my point: that the assumption of its nihilism, a prior interpretation whose genesis coincides with the very publication of the book, has been more general than is commonly recognized, and is apparently the source, and certainly the common denominator, of all the most familiar and popular judgments made about the fundamental elements of *Ulysses*. While my own borrowings from a number of books and short studies testify to their value (and to my awareness of it), I have tried to suggest that a preconception of the philosophy, morality, or aesthetic of *Ulysses* can impede the reading of the book, and that a most important set of impediments already exists. The following pages should indicate the error of the popular critical judgments of formal qualities, plot, principal characters, and the rest, but my obvious disagreement with the nihilism view and all its works is secondary. This study is not concerned with refutation nor with premature counter-interpretation, but with that humbler and more vital job of criticism—providing a bridge to the book. And in order to clear the approaches, an existing closed circle must be broken and the proper sequence of specific perception and general conclusion restored.
In a sense this Introduction is a defense of a question about Ulysses which I have called fundamental—in its full form: “What happens in the novel?”—against the accusation that it begs two other questions. A pervasive influence in the criticism suggests that the familiar first part of this question begs the question of whether or not anything does happen; a sophisticated view of the book’s possibilities suggests that the second part, suppressed until now for that very reason, begs the question of what its genre actually is.

Of course, a belief that the events of Bloomsday are pointedly insignificant, or a conception of the form of Ulysses as pointedly formless, expands those possibilities spuriously. However, this is not the case with two of the book’s special qualities, at least. The first of them is the elaborate network of systems of reference and correspondence that Joyce implanted and insisted upon, not only literary, operatic, and historical allusions, but verbal symbolizations in successive chapters of (as his own notes list them) the organs of the human body, the arts of man, the colors of the spectrum, each chapter with its own “symbol,” “relations” (e.g. “incest compared with journalism”), and (!) hour of the day, to make the whole a kind of compound allegory of all things. The second is the different levels of discourse: natural occurrence, mythical analogy, symbolic, parodic and allusive effects, even metaphysical and theological statement. Qualities such as these not only make interpretation difficult but also suggest that a conception of Ulysses as narrative fiction, primarily concerned with a developing action and historically valid figures in their own social milieu, is a conception fixed by blinders to the book’s most superficial and uninteresting level:

Thus Ulysses is written on three main levels. . . . Bloom and Stephen and their Dublin environment constitute the particular; they are expanded into the universal by their being linked, first, to the story of Ulysses as told by Homer in the Odyssey . . . and, second, to various mystical motifs (both occidental and oriental). . . . The relating of each episode in the book to an organ of the body and to an art as well as to a separate incident in the Odyssey is a further means of adding universal implications to the particular. . . .
Dante’s influence on Joyce is now established, and a number of critics have remarked an affinity between the *Commedia* and *Ulysses* or Joyce’s work in general. The similarities between *Ulysses* and the *Commedia* (or, for example, Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*) are striking, and readily suggest that Dante’s description of the four levels of his work, corresponding to the four levels in medieval interpretation of the Bible, is also applicable to *Ulysses*. The levels—literal, allegorical (symbolical, what the letter represents), moral (didactical, what it teaches, “theme”), and anagogical (mystical, what it reveals that is, as Dante says in the *Convivio*[ii 1], “beyond sense”)—are discussed in Dante’s famous letter to his patron, Can Grande della Scala, with the specific illustration of an incident in the *Purgatorio*; and Joyce alludes to that same incident for his own purpose in the next to last chapter of *Ulysses*. Actually, he must have been long familiar with the letter to Can Grande simply as a student of Dante and almost undoubtedly knew of the fourfold interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, *Ulysses* works precisely by the interaction of naturalistic, symbolical, and philosophical meaning; and there may be, if not a mystical revelation, the assertion of a truth “beyond sense.”

Even if Dante could not be so nicely invoked for support, it would be both easy and prudent to take the apparently more sophisticated position that *Ulysses* is no one thing, that it is story and allegory, wisdom and revelation, and that where the lowest level—story—seems to contradict, for example, the highest—revelation—Joyce has represented the ultimate paradox at the center of existence, or the difference between appearance and reality. But as equivocal as the novel may be in method, it is, in my opinion, a novel; all the voices harmonize to one register—the story of what happens, to whom, how, and why. Its method is the fullest instance of “the spatialization of form in a novel,” that modern development in what was formerly a purely temporal art which so distinguishes the work of Woolf and Proust as well as *Ulysses* from earlier fiction, and which has now been fully assimilated by writers. In the novel which has spatial form, some elements relate to each other, indeed some can only be apprehended, reflex-
ively, by juxtaposition, no matter where they occur in temporal sequence; the method is that of the short poem. And all the devices of *Ulysses* which had previously been alien to fiction, and which make it appear other or more than fiction, are enabled by its "spatial" form to be, to a unique extent (even until today), *bent to the service of fiction*.

In Dante and Spenser, what happens to the poet or to Saint George, Sir Guyon, or Artegaill, what he sees, and even what he does, points to and serves in a context that is abstracted from the literal events themselves. In allegory, the literal is the vehicle, not only for the moral ("theme") as in most literature, but also for the symbolical, which in fact gives it its primary reason for being—the action is simply the conventional agent of a symbolic discourse. In *Moby-Dick*, *Nostromo*, or *Nana*, on the other hand, in symbolic fiction, the action is first fully important in itself and then important again in a new context abstracted from it. But *Ulysses* not only is unlike the former of these, it is in its method at least, and I think in its essence, unlike the latter as well, and is most akin to literal fiction. It is a story, with the important, novel, and confusing difference that its many refrains ("verbal motifs"), elaborate literary correspondences, bizarre stylistic devices, historical and mythical analogues, and all the rest work (symbolically for the most part) to implement its unfolding. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is a less flamboyant specimen of the same fictional method—the use of verbal motifs, allusion, symbolism, to tell the story.

One critic says of the upset in the Ascot Cup race on Bloomsday, an actual historical event that becomes significant in *Ulysses*: "Sceptre, the phallic favorite, loses to Throwaway, the outsider, who represents infertility." My thesis does not dispute his calling attention to the event, or his invoking symbolism to connect the two horses with Blazes Boylan and Bloom—the treatment of Boylan is as a stallion and nothing else, Bloom's onanism on the beach in the thirteenth chapter is very important in the novel, and in many other ways the race is symbolically related to the story of *Ulysses*; the question is one of the terms of that relationship. The answer I would give is clear. The
Ascot Cup race is a symbolic indication of a specific action, but it does not have the value of establishing anything about that action: it can neither contradict a "literal level" nor substitute for it. The action is a central one, if not the central one, of the novel—the outcome of Bloom's contention with Molly's lover for his wife—and although the race indicates a fact of the story, suggests the meaning of the fact even, it cannot of itself do more, for there are characters to think, move, and speak: to act or pointedly fail to act. The race tells us what is to happen, that service to the story is its reason for being, but Bloom beats Boylan himself.

That they exist to serve the story of Bloomsday as no other story in literature has ever been served does not diminish the value of the special elements of *Ulysses*, but is the source of their beauty. The novel has some baroque embellishment; for example, the sets of correspondence to the organs of the body and the rest, created probably as a gesture of belief in the ultimate order of the real and verbal worlds, do not prove that order; and where they accomplish nothing else, those critics who have attacked the prevailing assumption of the correspondence hunters that correspondences in *Ulysses* are good because they are in *Ulysses* have done readers a service. However, the details of such patterns of correspondence are so inconspicuous as to be almost unnoticed unless the attention is drawn to them—and indeed the author himself actually had to first do so. Those special elements of the novel that call attention to themselves, on the other hand—the Homeric correspondences; the allusions to other works: Shakespeare, the Bible, a grand opera, a bourgeois opera, a cheap novel, a perverted novel, ballads, popular songs; the changing styles of the chapters after a certain point; the symbolic effects; the many kinds of parody—are not embellishment but functional devices of fiction in the terms discussed above.

This book is not just a "reading" of *Ulysses* accompanied by an interpretation but a study of the way in which the novel works to unfold its story, chapter by chapter. My fundamental conception of *Ulysses* as a novel—of its action as rising to a climax and proceeding to a resolution, of its chief characters as constituting, like all proper principals...
in fiction, the Siamese twin to its developing plot, and of
the dedication of virtually all its special qualities to the
telling of the story—has been asserted in this Introduction
with no support beyond circumstantial evidence of a nega­
tive kind based on a historical survey of the work of
others, to many of whom I am indebted. The proof of the
conception depends not only on the validity of my particular
observations but also on the extent to which that con­
ception assimilates what is in *Ulysses*. Maurice Beebe speaks
of a traditional “Selective Fallacy” in dealing with Joyce,
of finding what one is looking for. My own principle of
selection has been confessed, but I try to show that almost
everything is implicated, all the Homeric, Biblical, and
other literary correspondences; all the different chapter
styles; all the parodies; almost all the allusions and
symbolism.

If my view of *Ulysses* is wrong and the action is only
the lowest and most trivial level of meaning in a *sui generis*
“book,” then understanding that action is not a primary
necessity; yet it is certainly a preliminary necessity, if
only for the negative reason that the action must be known
before it can be discounted. And so the following pages
can still contribute to the fuller appreciation of *Ulysses* in a
modest way.

While my discussion follows the sequence of *Ulysses*
itself, to do so slavishly would be more than pointless, for
it would violate the nature of the novel. Therefore, the
reader will find various important motifs and other cumu­
lative effects reviewed when the discussion concerns those
points in the novel where their import is felt; and the
general critical topics listed in the Table of Contents are
disposed at places in the book where they seem to me
relevant and helpful.

Joyce himself prescribed quasi-Homeric tags for the
unnamed and unnumbered chapters of *Ulysses*, and the
critical convention has been to use them. However, they
seem to me both to misrepresent the chapters to which
they refer and to make the correspondences to the *Odyssey*
a bit grotesque. The Table of Contents reflects my alternative practice, which is slightly clumsy but more consistent with the nature of the novel: reference to the chapters by their place in the sequence ("the first chapter," "the second chapter," etc.), accompanied where necessary by a parenthetical indication of the principal locale of each. The chapters, with their usual Homeric tags, are:

(1) tower—Telemachus
(2) school—Nestor
(3) strand—Stephen—Proteus
(4) kitchen—Calypso
(5) post office—The Lotus-eaters
(6) cemetery—Hades
(7) newspaper—Aeolus
(8) Byrne’s—The Laestrygonians
(9) library—Scylla and Charybdis
(10) city—The Wandering Rocks
(11) Ormond—The Sirens
(12) Kiernan’s—The Cyclops
(13) strand—Bloom—Nausicaa
(14) hospital—The Oxen of the Sun
(15) nighttown—Circe
(16) shelter—Eumaeus
(17) house—Ithaca
(18) bed—Penelope

Most important, the Table of Contents indicates that this Introduction is followed by eleven chapters discussing the eighteen chapters of *Ulysses*, and one concluding chapter of a more general nature. I have not devoted a chapter to each chapter of the novel, have not even taken up the same number of chapters, or of pages, in each of my chapters, and have actually treated part of Joyce’s seventeenth (house) chapter in Chapter Ten and the rest in Chapter Eleven. The reason is that the chapters of *Ulysses* (like those of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) are shaped primarily to perform special narrative functions; Joyce totally ignores formal consideration in his chapter divisions only in the case of the seventeenth, but the true parts of the novel—the phases in the development
of its action—comprise varying numbers of its chapters. My eleven chapters reflect that essential form.

Any sketch of the form of *Ulysses* would have to reconcile, not only the eighteen chapters, but also its overt structural arrangement in three sections, labelled I, II, and III, with the divisions following the third (strand-Stephen) and fifteenth (nighttown) chapters. This roughly corresponds to the pattern of the *Odyssey*, but only roughly. The first four of the twenty-four books of the poem concern Telemachus, and the same proportion of the chapters of *Ulysses* (three of eighteen) parallel this “Telemachia”; however, the next section, in which Odysseus relates his wanderings to Alcinous’ court, occupies only eight books or one-third of the twenty-four, while II, the corresponding section of *Ulysses*, is the subject of twelve chapters, or two-thirds of the eighteen; and a more obvious indication of a different emphasis is the contrast between III, which nicely balances I with just three chapters, and the corresponding “Nostos” (literally “return home”) of the *Odyssey*, which occupies the last half of the poem.

Despite its loose quality, Joyce seems to have insisted on the structural correspondence strongly during the early years of composition. But his apparent attitude might really have been nothing more than another public effort to stress the parallel with the *Odyssey*, for the tripartite scheme is not a very rewarding index of the structure of *Ulysses*, even if the disproportions of the correspondence are allowed. In the first place, Stephen is involved in Bloom’s wanderings; he appears in six of the twelve chapters of II, and is the main figure in two of those chapters, so that the parallel with the “wanderings of Odysseus” part of the epic is not very close. Furthermore, the three initial chapters of II (devoted to Bloom) precisely correspond to I (Stephen’s three initial chapters) in the structure of the novel. Finally, as both these points suggest, Stephen is an independent protagonist, with an origin and destiny unrelated to those of Bloom and a prominence much greater than that of the son of Odysseus. The tri-partite scheme seems arbitrary at best for the first fifteen of the novel’s eighteen chapters; only III, Joyce’s abbreviated “Nostos,” has formal relevance.
Nevertheless, three is an important number in the structure of the novel. The first three chapters (I or the “Telemachia”) constitute a group because they are all devoted to the representation of Stephen: his character, his circumstances, and his problems. The next three form a similar group with respect to Bloom. There are no such trios between the first two and the final one (III), but the nine intervening chapters do have a pattern of climaxes at every third: the ninth (library), the twelfth (Kiernan’s), and the fifteenth (nighttown).\footnote{In the first two instances, the climax occurs at the very end of the chapter, as a sudden final dramatic heightening and revelation. The case in the fifteenth chapter is a special one.} Although it sounds schematic when described abstractly, the form of the novel is that of a dramatic action with exposition, development, climax, and conclusion. Past a certain point, June 16, 1904, becomes very different from the ordinary day it has been in the life of Leopold Bloom—with the eleventh chapter (Ormond) the diurnal nature of the action of *Ulysses* begins to change; and the form of the novel is directly related to this fact. The following sketch is offered with the knowledge that it must be tentative until the narrative itself has been discussed, but it discloses the general conception of the novel behind this study and the reason for the particular organization that the study has. A parenthetical reference indicates the chapter in this book in which each chapter of *Ulysses* is discussed.

In the opening chapter of the novel, Stephen Dedalus is introduced in what passes for his home. His alienation from Mulligan and the latter’s domination of their common residence share the chapter with a depiction of Stephen’s remorse and self-reproach in connection with his mother’s death. The two subsequent chapters elaborate in different respects the characterization of Stephen. (Chapter One.)

The fourth chapter of the novel (kitchen) introduces Leopold Bloom in what turns out to be his deteriorating home. His alienation from Molly is shown, and also its imminent intensification by an adulterous liaison she has arranged. Completing the situation, Bloom’s daughter is away, and his son is dead. The two subsequent chapters
function as do the corresponding chapters in the "Telemachia." (Chapter Two.)

The seventh chapter (newspaper) places Stephen and Bloom in the same public situation, and reveals certain things about the public attitude toward them both and about the Irish public in general. (Chapter Three.)

The eighth chapter (Byrne's) is devoted to Bloom's predicament respecting his wife and family. His preoccupation with it and suffering from it intensify in this chapter. (Chapter Four.)

The ninth chapter (library) presents Stephen's attempt to escape from his predicament, which ends in failure. At the very end of the chapter, however, Bloom and Stephen come face to face, and there is a symbolic foreshadowing of the outcome of Stephen's story. (Chapter Five.)

The tenth chapter (city) in no way advances the action and is not even especially concerned with either of the protagonists. As a number of critics have pointed out, it is a kind of portrait gallery of Dubliners, flanked by representatives of the two "pillars" of the society, Church and State. Although Joyce's public comments on his work must generally be mistrusted, the notation "End of first part of Ulysses, New Year's Eve, 1918," which is at the end of the ninth chapter of the manuscript Joyce sold to the collector John Quinn, corroborates a statement he made to Frank Budgen in a letter written on October 24, 1920, while he was working on the fifteenth (nighttown) chapter:

P.S. Last night I thought of an Entr’acte for Ulysses in middle of book after 9th episode Scylla and Charybdis. Short with absolutely no relation to what precedes or follows like a pause in the action of a play. And the action confirms that the tenth chapter is an interlude between the true first part of the novel, which ends with the ninth chapter, and second part, which extends from the eleventh chapter (Ormond) through the eighteenth. (Chapter Six.)
It is in keeping with this scheme that the principal characters of the first nine chapters "Exeunt" in the dramatic sense at the end of the ninth:

A dark back went before them. Step of a pard, down, out by the gateway, under portcullis barbs.

They followed (215) *

and that the last word of the "overture" which opens the "musical" eleventh, the only word that is not an anticipation of a phrase in the chapter, is the imperative "Begin!" The eleventh chapter quite definitely begins a new part of the novel. The significant difference in the action is the change in Bloom's behavior from what it had been earlier in the day, and, obviously, on previous days. For example, the first time he saw Boylan, in the sixth chapter (cemetery), he intensely studied his fingernails. The second time the rake crossed his path, in the eighth chapter (Byrne's), he rushed into the museum. Near the beginning of the present chapter he sees Boylan in the distance:

He eyed and saw afar on Essex bridge a gay hat riding on a jauntingcar. It is. Third time. Coincidence.

Jingling on supple rubbers it jaunted from the bridge to Ormond quay. Follow. Risk it. Go quick. At four. Near now. Out. (259)

And this third time he proceeds to follow to the Ormond Hotel the man he had formerly so assiduously avoided. At the hotel he meets Richie Goulding, whom he accompanies into the dining room ("Diningroom. Sit tight there. See, not be seen," 261). From his vantage point he watches Boylan at the adjacent bar preen himself, flirt with Miss Douce, the barmaid, and depart for his assignation with Molly.

It is no coincidence that this same chapter is the first in which the narrative manner changes. Although the seventh chapter (newspaper) has interspersed boldface phrases simulating newspaper headlines, the narrative manner of that and all the other chapters preceding the present one

is the same. It does not differ too greatly, in fact, from that of the Portrait, although subjective revelation is made through "interior monologue" rather than in the author's voice. However, neither the present chapter nor any one following it is written like any other chapter in the book! In this, at least, the eleventh to eighteenth chapters are alike, and different from all that precede them.

They are also alike in the fact, suggested by Bloom's surprising audacity, that with the eleventh chapter a great difference in the rate with which things happen begins to manifest itself. The action is largely normal, diurnal, in nature, free of any new or unusual experience or situation, before it—throughout the first part of the novel and the interlude, "nothing happens." In this chapter Boylan makes his departure for the purpose of superseding Bloom; and Bloom's reaction is the beginning of the unique occurrences of the day which are the substance of what he thinks, does, and thus becomes, and which constitute the significant action of the novel.

The next chapter, the twelfth (Kiernan's), reveals a formerly unsuspected and crucial aspect of Bloom's nature and relationship to those about him which reinforces the intimation at the preceding minor climax, the end of the ninth chapter (library) and first part of the novel. (Chapter Seven.)

The thirteenth chapter (strand-Bloom) depicts Bloom committing an act symbolic of the complete denial of the wife and family he covets and recognizes as necessary to him. The fourteenth (hospital) is devoted to Bloom's recognition of this fact and to the reconfirming of his desire for reunion with Molly and for a son. The latter part of that desire causes him to decide to follow Stephen. (Chapter Eight.)

The fifteenth chapter (nighttown) contains the major climax of the novel. Both Stephen and Bloom undergo psychological experiences based on their respective predicaments. For each, the experience takes the form of a series of fantasies, and results in a definite change of character. (Chapter Nine.)

The sixteenth chapter (shelter) and the seventeenth (house) are concerned with both the relationship between
Bloom and Stephen and that between Bloom and Molly. In the sixteenth, the significance for Bloom of his relationship with Stephen is revealed to the reader; and Stephen himself, partly as a result of his experience in nighttown, understands what was intimated to the reader at the end of the first part of the novel—the significance of his meeting with Bloom. The seventeenth confirms Stephen in his understanding, with a result that completes the story of Stephen Dedalus. (Chapter Ten.)

The relationship between Bloom and Molly is more fully treated in the seventeenth chapter than in the sixteenth. As a result of his experience in nighttown, Bloom’s attitude toward Molly undergoes a significant change, and this is expressed in his behavior to her. The final chapter (bed) is concerned with Molly’s reaction to her brief exposure to Bloom’s new attitude. It depicts Molly’s attitude toward Bloom and indicates the nature of Bloom’s destiny. (Chapter Eleven.)

The above sketch is necessarily inadequate, but it does suggest a clear development to a climax and a resolution and a tentative conception of the essential form of the novel. The first part contains half the chapters and yet somewhat less than one-third of the pages. It contains half the chapters for the simple reason, apparently, that it is the first of two parts, the chapter which follows it being an “Entr’Acte.” It has a much smaller proportion of the actual text because its function prescribes this. Its function is to depict in a relatively conventional narrative manner relatively conventional conditions—not merely what Stephen and Bloom ordinarily do, but what they ordinarily think, whom they ordinarily see, how they ordinarily act with others, how they are regarded by them. The action of the first part is typical action; its function, the sheer presentation of these characters and of their situation (with all that this implies of “stasis” and “futility”). Thus, its pattern is one of parallel arrangement (three chapters for Stephen, three for Bloom, three in which both appear, and a joint “exit”) rather than lineal development. The action of the second part is far different. There is an organic development from Bloom’s surveillance of Boylan in the eleventh chapter to the very end of the book, with the
dramatic climax in the latter part of the fifteenth (night-town) chapter and the resolution of the action in III, the concluding trio of chapters.

The novel, then, has the presentation or exposition of an everyday situation ending in the intimation of a future development; a short interlude; and that development, a unique action, to its dramatic climax and resolution. *Ulysses* is, as Joyce's brother described it, "a cathedral in prose, as simple in design as a cross."

1. Taken from the *Nottingham Journal and Express*. See also, e.g., *Liverpool Daily Courier*.

2. Taken from Noyes' article based on the lecture, published in the *Manchester Sunday Chronicle* on October 29.


5. In his excellent chapter on *Ulysses* in *Axel's Castle*. See *Axel's Castle* (New York, 1931), pp. 201-2. See also, e.g. William York Tindall, *James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World* (New York, 1950), pp. 36-37; A. J. A. Wallock, "Experiment in the Novel," in *Some Recent Developments in English Literature* (Sydney, 1935), pp. 8-17; and Richard Ellmann, "The Backgrounds of *Ulysses*," *Kenyon Review*, XVI (1954), 337-86, especially 377, 386; or *James Joyce* (New York, 1959), pp. 367-90, especially pp. 383, 390. These three critics and others regard Molly's soliloquy, largely because of its rhapsodic conclusion ("and yes I said yes I will Yes"), as a counterbalance to the apparently negative action of the preceding chapters. But David Daiches' comment on this proposition in *The Novel in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1939), p. 142 ([Rev. ed., 1960], pp. 119-20), which is the sharpest, is also the most just: "It is amazingly crude criticism to suppose that, in a work so elaborately organized as *Ulysses*, the last sentence of the last speaker represents the author's view of life."


10. Apparently first offered by Rudolph Von Abele in "Ulysses: The Myth of Myth," *PMLA,* LXIX (1954), 358-64. See also, *James Joyce,* pp. 3-5, and Denis Donoghue, "Joyce and the Finite Order," *Sewanee Review, LXVIII* (1960), 256-73. Mr. Donoghue speaks of "weighing the spurious of one kind against the spurious of another, related kind" (268).


13. Daiches, p. 105. Mr. Daiches also says (p. 80) (Rev. ed., p. 63): "There are many definitions of comedy, but the definition that is most relevant to a consideration of such a work as *Ulysses* as comedy is that which identifies the comic spirit with the author's renunciation of any share in the world he portrays."


17. The *London Daily Mail,* April 17, the April 6 review (see note 1), the Noyes article (see note 2), Shane Leslie, "Ulysses," *Quarterly Review,* CCXXXVIII (1922), 219-34, 225-26.


19. One notable exception was T.S. Eliot, in his famous *Dial* review, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," *Dial* LXXV (1923), 480-84, reprinted in *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism,* ed. Seon Givens (New York, 1948), pp. 198-202. Valery Larbaud's lecture introducing Joyce and his book, given at Adrienne Monnier's bookshop in Paris on December 7, 1921, two months before the first edition, also opposed the general opinion. It was printed as "James Joyce" in his magazine, *La Nouvelle revue française,* XXIV (1922), 385-409, and the portion dealing with *Ulysses* was reprinted in English by Eliot in *Criterion,* I (1922), 94-103.


22. E.g.: Malcolm Cowley, Hart Crane, E.E. Cummings, Ernest Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, Allen Tate, William Carlos Williams, Yvor Winters, Georges Braque, Paul Klee, Joan Miro, Pablo Picasso.

23. The “Proclamation” opens the important dual number 16-17 (1929).

24. Most important were Eugene Jolas (the chief editor), Stuart Gilbert, Philippe Soupault, Ernest Robert Curtius, Valery Larbaud, Frank Budgen, and Carl Jung.

25. The impression is sometimes qualified; for example, Harry Levin speaks on p. 124 of “ironic pathos” and Frank Budgen moves toward what he calls (p. 73) “humane skepticism.”


27. See note 9.

28. Four exceptions are: Rolf R. Loehrich, The Secret of Ulysses (McHenry, Ill., 1953); Schutte; Tindall; and Mr. Tindall’s A Reader’s Guide to James Joyce (New York, 1959). However, Doctor Loehrich is a practicing psychoanalyst, and Mr. Tindall’s two books reveal considerable familiarity with Jung’s writings.

29. The quotations are taken from the Nimbus translation (see note 9), principally pp. 7, 8, 12, and 14.

30. Strong, p. 36; Levin, p. 95.

31. Levin, p. 132.


33. Gilbert, p. 17.

34. Tindall, p. 37.

35. Levin, p. 95.


37. Gilbert, p. 22.


40. See references to Dante in James Joyce. Mr. Ellmann says, on p. 2, “Dante was perhaps Joyce’s favorite author.”

41. For some of these, see Joyce, pp. 210–11.

42. Mr. Goldberg makes precisely the same point in the “Introductory” to his book: “In short, it is not ‘Romance,’ not a joke, not a spiritual guide, not even an encyclopaedia of social disintegration or a re-creation of Myth or a symbolist poem; it is a
novel, and what is of permanent interest about it is what always interests us with the novel; its imaginative illumination of the moral—and ultimately, spiritual—experience of representative human beings” (p. 30).


44. Originally sections 2 and 3 of “Spatial Form in Modern Literature,” *Sewanee Review*, Spring, Summer and Autumn, 1945.


46. Chiefly Joseph Frank, Richard M. Kain, Harry Levin, Ezra Pound, and Edmund Wilson. Chapter VII of Goldberg, “Structure and Values,” is an extensive general examination of the narrative strategy of the novel. Mr. Goldberg does not recognize the function of some of its special elements; but he too insists on functional justification, and his critical standard helps him to achieve a highly rewarding discussion, especially of the limitations of the vision of life expressed in the novel and the reasons for them.


48. This conception is partly indebted to one offered three decades ago. See S. Foster Damon’s classic essay on *Ulysses*, “The Odyssey in Dublin,” *Hound & Horn*, III (1929–30), 7–44, n. 13.
