Bloom's Hebrew counterpart to Stephen's snatch of verse is indicative of his future, also. Following Stephen's account of a romantic tryst and his "Parable of the Plums" (featuring the one-handed adulterer), Bloom meditates on his most preoccupying "domestic problem," which he prefers to generalize as "What to do with our wives" (670). And following that they recite their verses. From the Song of Solomon, Bloom's line occurs twice. The first occurrence (4:3) is in the famous rhapsody of the singer on the beauty which has "ravished my heart" of "my sister, my spouse," the passage drawn upon so heavily by Stephen's boyhood prayer book; the second (6:7) is followed directly by, "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one." Bloom's "domestic problem" is vitally important because his future holds undiminished love for Molly which no queen, concubine, or virgin can divert.

The pointed irony that Molly is not undefiled is also a reminder that although Bloom has acknowledged his responsibility for her adultery, and although he decided even as Boylan was setting out from the Ormond bar that the important thing was reconciliation (280), he has no basis for assuming that Molly will relinquish her defiler, that
she requites his desire and his devotion. Stephen shall make his way, with care, but with God's love. When Stephen rejects Bloom's invitation and "affirms" that he has been enabled to go forth, "proceed . . . from the known to the unknown," Bloom is "comforted" by the awareness "that as a competent keyless citizen he had proceeded energetically from the unknown to the known. . . ." In contrast to Stephen, his problem has been to effect a return, and he congratulates himself on having done so. However, he is still "keyless," has only gained an undignified entrance to his house, not effected a true return to Molly's side. He shall love and desire Molly always; but this fact can portend sterility, frustration, misery, and ultimately, in terms of the morality postulated in the novel, spiritual damnation, as readily as happiness and fulfilment.

Bloom's capacity for achieving the favorable alternative is a consequence of his manhood, restored in nighttown as the indirect result of desire for a son and the direct result of conscience, self-respect, and good sense. This capacity continues to express itself; for example, when Bridie Kelly attempted to solicit in the shelter, he not only avoided her but recalled that once in approaching him she "begged the chance of his washing," and reflected, "Still, candour compelled him to admit that he had washed his wife's undergarments . . . and women would and did too a man's similar garments . . . if they really loved him, that is to say," a conception of his distorted relationship with Molly that would have been impossible before nighttown. But he is unaware of the salutary change in his attitude and has refused to attempt to recover his family, first developing his thesis that true return is impossible, then formulating his scheme involving Stephen.

A mitigating fact about this scheme is that it is not like Bloom's former guilt-motivated inclination to pander. He wants, not to give Molly away, but to take her from Boylan, to effect "For the hostess, disintegration of obsession, acquisition of correct Italian pronunciation," and eventually to retrieve her himself. The outrageous last refinement he develops for the scheme shows clearly that he would not be satisfied merely to keep her content with him by
means of Stephen, and Stephen content with him by means of her:

Why might these several provisional contingencies between a guest and a hostess not necessarily preclude or be precluded by a permanent eventuality of reconciliatory union between a schoolfellow and a Jew's daughter?

Because the way to daughter led through mother, the way to mother through daughter. (679)

"Schoolfellow" and "Jew's daughter" derive from "Little Harry Hughes," and refer to Stephen the scholar and Milly. The reconciliation their union would effect is not between them, clearly, for they have never met; it is a reconciliation of Bloom and Molly. Bloom's sordid scheme is "provisional," directly leading to his "permanent" reunion with Molly and the acquisition of Stephen as a son-in-law, Stephen's way to Milly being through Molly, and his own way back to Molly, consequently, being through (Stephen's transfer of affections to) Milly.

It is after this final outrage is disclosed to the reader that Stephen rejects Bloom's invitation, and the "keyless citizen" takes comfort from having "proceeded energetically from the unknown to the known." As unwarranted as his comfort is, it nevertheless indicates that he has reacted well to the disappointment: finally required to face squarely his twofold problem of Molly's estrangement and his sonlessness, he makes a beginning with the thought that he did well, and acted with some resourcefulness besides, in entering his locked house. Any symbolic significance in his undignified but "energetic" action may be a bit out of his sublunary depth, but he is promptly given more overt encouragement to act like the man he has become. Immediately, Stephen intoning the psalm, the two men go into the garden, and he discourses on constellations for Stephen's edification and meditates on the cause and nature of the universe around him for his own. Following his "logical" conclusion that it is not divinely created and yet that it is unknowable, he turns back from the "Utopia" to consider the "affinities . . . between the moon and
woman,” all of which apply to Molly. The general similarity is represented and one element of it, “her isolated dominant implacable resplendent propinquity,” emphasized by the round projection (721) of the light of the lamp upon the windowshade of an upper window. He draws Stephen’s attention to it and speaks of Molly, they “contemplate” each other, and “at Stephen’s suggestion, at Bloom’s instigation both,” they urinate. Then, “their gazes, first Bloom’s, then Stephen’s” fasten on Molly’s window. It is disclosed that the “trajectory” of Bloom’s urination extends further, and Bloom’s boyhood superiority in urination contests is mentioned.

Their urination, preceded by Bloom’s drawing Stephen’s attention to Molly’s window, suggested by Stephen and instigated by Bloom, accompanied by their gazing at the window, reported by the narrator in competitive terms, is represented as a contest, much like the urination contest to win a woman in Pope’s *Dunciad* and the one in which Emer is said to have won the ancient Irish hero Cuchulain. Freud points out, with erudite allusion to Swift and Rabelais, the basis for the contests in Joyce, Pope, and Irish legend: a human tendency to associate urinary power with sexual potency.¹ Even if Bloom and Stephen are not aware of their contest, they have brought Molly into the situation, and the author suggests that if he is being whimsical about the contest in part, he is also partly serious. For while they urinate (and reflect in characteristic ways on questions of circumcision), they see:

A star precipitated with great apparent velocity across the firmament from Vega in the Lyre above the zenith beyond the stargroup of the Tress of Berenice towards the zodiacal sign of Leo. (688)

They see a falling star (a sign of good luck), caused to fall (“precipitated”) from the constellation Lyra, pointedly called the Lyre, which is “beyond” the constellation named for the hair dedicated in a temple by a faithful wife to the safe return of her husband, “towards the zodiacal sign of Leo.” With this “celestial sign,” Joyce is once again using
the same elements to suggest two different things. The instrumental element is the Berenice referred to. Berenice II, wife of Ptolemy III, not only made the gesture on behalf of her husband's return, but also killed her suitor, and finally was murdered by her son, Ptolemy IV. Exploiting this last aspect of his allusion, Joyce is saying that Stephen has been caused to go from self-centeredness (Lyra) and a "flop" (the etymology of "Vega" derives it from the Arabic for "falling"), past the condition precipitated by the death of his mother and in which we find him at the beginning of the novel, to his deliverance through the meeting with "Leo" Bloom.\(^2\) The application of the passage to Bloom is simpler. Vega is a star of the first magnitude; Molly, the light in the window, has during the urination contest been caused to go from the poet (the lyre), in the direction of the constellation celebrating a loving and loyal wife eager for her husband's return, "towards," although not fully to, Leo. Bloom has won the contest.

The novel has pointed out repeatedly and, at this point, demonstrated at length Bloom's adeptness at identifying stars and constellations; and his youthful participation in and winning of urination contests has just been mentioned. If Stephen has deduced nothing from the falling star, that is not necessarily the case with Bloom. After they clasp hands to the tolling bells and Stephen leaves, Bloom thinks of his ostensible friends (Simon Dedalus, Joe Hynes, John Henry Menton, et al.), hears the departing feet of the one man with whom he has truly had "interindividual relations" in eleven years (651)—since the death of Rudy—feels, "alone," "the cold of interstellar space, thousands of degrees below freezing point," and reflects on "companions now . . . defunct." What impresses itself on him now is the terrible state of isolation; once more he recognizes the necessity that he return to his family. And in view of this sentiment, and of the astronomical comment on his urinating farther than the young man whom he has considered a much more likely attraction for Molly than himself as they "gazed" at Molly's window, it is no surprise that to the question, "Did he remain?", the narrator replies, "with deep inspiration he returned. . . ."
Although it is accompanied by deep inspiration, Bloom’s “return” is still not the essential one that is necessary, and this is pointed out immediately. When he re-enters the house, he does not go again to the kitchen, which is in the basement and a servant’s room; he goes directly to the parlor, and there “his ingress” is “suddenly arrested”: he bumps his head against a corner of a sideboard which has been moved. There is no indication that Bloom understands the significance Joyce gives the rearranged furniture; but the Bello of his fancy had mentioned just such an alteration when she taunted him with being supplanted (530). The point is elaborated by the description of two chairs, re-disposed to face each other, one with an “amply upholstered seat,” the other with a “seat . . . of white plaited rush,” like Boylan’s hat. The symbolic play is then made explicit: the chairs are said to have “Significance of . . . circumstantial evidence, of testimonial supermanence.” And finally Joyce’s point about the nature of Bloom’s “return” is reinforced by the last exploitation of “Love’s Old Sweet Song” in the novel, mentioned in the discussion of “Style in Ulysses”: the score is on the piano, “open at the last page with the final indications [to the accompanist, Boylan] ad libitum, forte, pedal, animato, sustained, pedal, ritirando, close.” Bloom is painfully and rudely confronted with the fact that he cannot simply return because his home is no longer that; his own Bello had said, “all is changed by woman’s will since you slept . . . your night of twenty years. Return and see.”

The action of Ulysses now has only its principal subject, the story of Leopold Bloom. That story begins with Bloom’s condition in the morning. It includes certain singular events that occur as the action develops and that have a potential effect on his predicament: his following Boylan to the Ormond, opposing the citizen, pursuing Stephen to
nighttown, among others. And the novel as it nears its end reveals that these events have had certain significant consequences: his recovery of the manhood he began to lose with his sexual neglect of Molly following Rudy's death more than a decade before, and his friendly conversation with Stephen, the first such "communion" in the same period of time. The novel has presented Stephen's predicament as it was on Bloomsday morning and certain singular events of the day that led to the conclusion of his story; the conclusion of Bloom's similarly presented story will be, correspondingly, his ultimate success in escaping from his predicament by the end of Ulysses, or his failure to do so. Whichever alternative it be, Bloom's success or failure within the scope of the novel in effecting a reunion with Molly constitutes the resolution of the fully developed, singular (not "typical") action; and as such, that success or failure is the conclusion of the story of Leopold Bloom.

The present episode, the portion of the seventeenth chapter between Bloom's return from the garden and his falling asleep at the end of the chapter (690-722), presents his last thoughts and acts in the novel. These constitute his contribution to the resolution of the action, and their sequence is vitally significant; for that reason they must be examined closely in sequence. (Page references are reserved for major points.)

If not to the literal blow as well, Bloom explicitly (691) reacts to the figurative blow inflicted on his "return" by the rearranged furniture: "His next proceeding" is to burn incense. None of the many uses of incense in Church ritual with which his action has been associated enlightens it. The secular Bloom burns incense precisely at this point, not for some sort of consecration, but for the purpose for which he has it in the house, fumigation. He is attempting to erase the evidence of Boylan's presence.

But incense cannot rid Bloom's home of the usurper, or return his wife to him. Joyce is making an ironic contrast with the corresponding incident in the Odyssey. After his needlessly bloody but thoroughly effective restoration of authority over his home, Odysseus arranges for the killing of the household women and Melanthius, after which "all the adventure was over." Then Odysseus immediately
tells his faithful old nurse Eurycleia to bring him “sulphur . . . that cleanses all pollution and bring me fire, that I may purify the house,” and to summon Penelope to him. After he “thoroughly purged”3 the defiled rooms, Book XXII of the *Odyssey* ends. Book XXIII presents the return of Odysseus to the side of Penelope, their love, and their pillow talk. Bloom would effect the purging of the pollution, and the subsequent full repossession of his home and reunion with his wife without first undertaking the “adventure” of eliminating the defiler. His burning of incense signifies as much wish and as little accomplishment as his gaining entry to the house without a key.

Nevertheless, his situation is represented optimistically. He observes in the mirror the reflections of three “homo­thetic objects” on the mantelpiece below—three wedding gifts. He then looks at his reflection, described at length as:

The image of a solitary (ipsorelative) mutable (aliorelative) man.

Why solitary (ipsorelative)?
*Brothers and sisters had he none.*
*Yet that man’s father was his grandfather’s son.*

Why mutable (aliorelative)?
From infancy to maturity he had resembled his mat­ternal procreatrix. From maturity to senility he would increasingly resemble his paternal creator. (692)

The first proposition is simple: considered by himself, Bloom is alone, although he descended from a familial line. The second is more complex; it states a general per­ception about men as they develop to and beyond maturity. But it also relates to the one above it and to the action of the novel. The mirror has shown Bloom the wedding gifts. The final thing it reflects for him is his bookshelf, with the books inverted and “improperly arranged,” a testament of Molly. “Mutable,” he has been able to change from resembling his mother to resembling his father. In the context, “aliorelative” means not only “in comparison with others” but also “in his relationship to another.” The narrator is stating that Bloom’s behavior toward Molly shall change because he has recovered his manhood.
Bloom rearranges the books, seats himself, and is specifically afforded not aesthetic pleasure but "consolation" by the characteristics, including its "youth, grace, sex," of a small statue of Narcissus. The two immediate sources of need for consolation are the loss of Stephen and the usurpation of Molly by Boylan; these and the long-term disappointment to which they relate, his lack of a son, indicate what the consoling statue suggests to him. After contemplating it, he partially undresses; the interlocutor asks: "In what ultimate ambition had all concurrent and consecutive ambitions now coalesced?", and the long account of his material and social desires is presented. It is a brilliant document in social history, an accurate representation of the taste, social values, aspirations, economic activity, customs, and material trappings of the western European petit bourgeoisie at the beginning of the present century. His ivy-covered cottage, its furnishings, its grounds, his dress, and recreational activities are described in an ascending scale of affluence. He "would" become justice of the peace, register a coat of arms, and dispense justice principally "against . . . all perpetuators of international animosities, all . . . recalcitrant violators of domestic connubiality" like the citizen and Boylan. Following a discussion of his intellectual and political integrity, his schemes for providing the necessary lacking element are reviewed: discovering a precious postage stamp, being informed of hidden Spanish treasure, then more and more elaborate industrial development projects until he decides that he needs a large bequest to undertake any moneymaking project and, coming full circle, concludes that he "would" succeed otherwise by "The independent discovery of a goldseam of inexhaustible ore." Whereupon the seven-page revery collapses from the weight of its vanity, and the interlocutor asks, "For what reason did he meditate on schemes so difficult of realisation?", and is told that it is because: "similar meditations . . . when practised habitually before retiring for the night alleviated fatigue and produced as a result sound repose and renovated vitality." The passage illustrates not only Bloom's thoroughly secular and bourgeois Weltanschauung but also his great resource, his rare good sense.
After the characterization of Bloom is further amplified, the interlocutor proposes a hypothetical reversal of the process of self-aggrandizement that characterized his “ambition”; this describes a “reduction” through the “mendicancy” of “nocturnal vagrant [Corley], insinuating sycophant [Lenehan], maimed sailor, blind stripling,” to a “nadir of misery.” However, in making his proposal, the interlocutor states that Bloom’s financial assets protect him from such “reverses of fortune,” and that in addition, certain “positive values” would keep him from ever emulating Lenehan or Corley. While Bloom’s “ambition” is an extreme standard against which to measure his social and material success, the “reduction” is also extreme. And just as he has a reason for the former, he has a reason for thinking of himself as reduced to an “aged impotent disfranchised ratesupported moribund lunatic pauper.” It is the principal “attendant indignities” of that condition: “the unsympathetic indifference of previously amiable females, the contempt of muscular males.” This and the next two items in the catechism reveal the true nature of Bloom’s concern for the future: “such a situation” could “be precluded,” “By decease (change of state), by departure (change of place)”; and “The latter, by the line of least resistance” is “preferable.” His fear of attempting to return to Molly is reasserting itself against both his “inspiration” and his understanding of the necessity that he do so. His economic decline is as irrelevant as it is unlikely; Molly’s “unsympathetic indifference” and Boylan’s “contempt” he sees as accompanying not a far-fetched future destitution but a present “situation.”

In this way Bloom comes to consider “departure”—the abandonment of his responsibility—and the question of return and its alternative is broached for the final time in the novel. The “siren” lure wins out at first, as the sequence of questions indicates: “What considerations rendered it not entirely undesirable?”; “What considerations rendered it not irrational?”; “What considerations rendered it desirable?” The answer to the first question is that domicile with Molly has impeded “mutual toleration of personal defects” and that a temporary “sojourn” would at least end the present situation. The answer to the second is more
important. Bloom considers “departure” “not irrational” because of the demands of that present situation, which are both “absurd” and “impossible.” He and Molly had united, “increased and multiplied,” and their child has matured; yet they

if now disunited were obliged to reunite for increase and multiplication, which was absurd, to form by reunion the original couple of uniting parties, which was impossible. (711)

Bloom’s truly rational argument against return is twofold: reunion to effect “that proliferant continuance” would be “absurd,” and, as he said in the last chapter, absolute return to a past condition is “impossible.” Thus he considers the “desirable” aspects of “departure”—the advantages of travel.

This discouraging rationalism does not long prevail in Bloom’s irregular internal debate. He soon imagines that Molly would miss him and advertise in an effort to find him, and then decides that after a time he would “return an estranged avenger, a wrecker of justice on malefactors . . . a sleeper awakened, with financial resources (by supposition) surpassing those of Rothschild.” No longer sleeping his “night of twenty years,” and with the wealth to realize his “ambitions,” he would return, despatch Boylan, and win back Molly. Outlandish as this is, it signifies a healthy change of direction. And the very next question and answer present the basis on which Bloom dismisses his plan to conquer the world before conquering his predicament. The plan is “irrational” because, while the “space” through which the “exodus and return” would occur is “reversible,” the “time” is “irreversible” (713); the plan would cost time, and as he has come to realize, “Soon I am old,” and he may already have “slept” too long. Thus, he considers different “forces, inducing inertia,” beginning with trivialities but finally mentioning as reasons for his wish to remain where he is: “the anticipation of warmth (human) tempered with coolness (linen), obviating desire and rendering desirable” (Molly’s presence, in company with bedsheets, which will dissipate any unrequited desire); and “the statue
of Narcissus, sound without echo, [which] desired desire” (the image of a quasi-son which “wanted to be wanted”). And after considering the “advantages . . . possessed by an occupied . . . bed” and reviewing his day, he prepares “to rise in order to go so as to conclude, lest he should not conclude”: he decisively puts an end to his equivocating deliberation. The judgment is against departure and a possible later triumphant return and for persevering in an immediate return of some kind.

However, his conclusion is very limited in scope. While he is walking to his room to complete the change to his nightgown and to go to bed, he “enumerates” the “imperfections” in what is actually called “a perfect day”; and, as this phrase suggests, he completely passes over Molly’s adultery. This limitation is challenged immediately when he enters his bed: he encounters “the imprint of a human form, male, not his.” His reaction is to “reflect” that Boylan and every other man, including himself, is one of “a series originating in and repeated to infinity.” His amusement belittles Boylan and Boylan’s exploit, but it is hardly conducive to reconciliation. And he cannot persist in his attempt to ignore what has happened: he begins an inquiry into the nature, and the significance for any future reunion between Molly and himself, of her infidelity.

The starting point is a naming of the “series” of Molly’s lovers; the list enumerates a farmer, a Lord Mayor, an organ grinder, a priest, and others, to Boylan, for a total (to date) of twenty-five men. Only Boylan concerns him, however; and after thinking about the rake, he develops “antagonistic sentiments” of “Envy, jealousy, abnegation, equanimity.” His “envy” is of Boylan’s sexual vigor and “jealousy” of his relations with Molly. The opposing two “sentiments” are less forthrightly explained. His “abnegation” is ascribed to previous pleasantries between Boylan and himself, Boylan’s “comparative youth,” and similar insufficient causes. He bases his “equanimity” on the proposition that what Molly and Boylan have done is “natural” (“nature” and “natural” are repeated eight times in one sentence), on the irrelevant observation that it is “not as calamitous as” collision with the sun, and then on the absurd claim that it is “less reprehensible than” crimes
ranging from murder to malingering and contempt of court. Only after these rationalizations does he disclose the true reasons why he is not irate about the adultery. He considers it “As not more abnormal than all other altered processes of adaptation to altered condition of existence. . . . As more than inevitable, irreparable”: Molly adapted herself to his neglect of her—it is his fault; it is done, and cannot be undone by any amount of distress or anger. And for the first of these two reasons he decides that he feels “more abnegation than jealousy, less envy than equanimity”; he “the matrimonial violator of the matrimonially violated had not been outraged by [Molly] the adulterous violator of the adulterously violated.” As a result he rejects conventional “retribution.” “If any,” his can properly be no more than taking Molly away from Boylan. That must be done, he decides, by direct competition with her lover and manager, “emulation” (718). And since he can no longer count on Stephen, he must do it, if at all, by himself: the “separator” must become the “successful rival agent of ['moral'] intimacy” as well as rival impresario.

Having definitely decided in the garden that he wants to return to Molly and in the parlor that he shall attempt to do so in some way immediately, Bloom has now, in Molly’s very bed, established his attitude toward her and her adultery: he has no right to blame her, nothing is to be accomplished by dwelling on what is irrevocably done, the only proper course of action is to take her back from the usurper.

However, his lack of vindictiveness against his wife and her lover disturbs him. And with respect to Boylan, it disturbs some critics even more, for it constitutes a pointed contrast to Odysseus’ slaying of the suitors who established themselves in his home. The situations are not directly analogous. While Homer’s Odysseus was blamelessly wronged by the suitors, Joyce has both confirmed in the action of the novel and explicitly endorsed, “by way of” Junius, Bloom’s repeated declarations that his behavior toward Molly is fully to blame for her conduct. Furthermore, Boylan is not a suitor but a lover; the returning husband’s efforts must be directed to actually winning back his wife, for to kill the lover and the adulteress, or even
just the lover, is to leave his problem fundamentally unsolved. And, of course, as well as for these two reasons, because he is no bronze-age warrior but a modern Dubliner and a notably pacific and humanitarian one, there is no question about his exacting any "retribution" from Molly, or any from Boylan other than that he has a right to exact, the recovery of Molly. The critics Bloom disappoints force an analogy, and also ignore his eminently sound thinking on the matter.

His own disturbance over the "equanimity" and "abnegation" he has achieved is more understandable. It is apparent only because directly following his decision about "retribution" the interlocutor asks, "By what reflections did he, a conscious reactor against the void of incertitude, justify to himself his sentiments?" The long list of those "reflections" ranges from "the preordained frangibility of the hymen," through "the variations of ethical codes," to "the apathy of the stars." With less justice, this paragraph rather than the preceding one is sometimes linked to Odysseus' slaughter of the suitors, either as pointed irony at Bloom's expense or directly, with Bloom achieving the bloody homicide through a cosmic indifference that consigns Boylan, Molly, and necessarily himself as well to meaninglessness. Far from having such vital importance, it is a jumble of superfluous rationalizations. It is a list of the "reflections" with which Bloom, explicitly "a conscious reactor against the void of incertitude," tries to "justify to himself his [tractable] sentiments" about Molly's affair. It is artificial and useless.

But it is unnecessary in the first place—that fact about Bloom's whole "conscious reaction" is indicated by the next question and answer in this significant passage which begins with his entering his and Molly's bed and extends to the end of the chapter and of his role in the novel (716-22). Furthermore the question and answer suggest that even his sound thinking on the matter is not terribly important:

In what final satisfaction did these antagonistic sentiments and reflections . . . converge?
Satisfaction at the ubiquity . . . of adipose posterior female hemispheres . . . expressive of mute immutable mature animality. (719)

It is immediately made clear that the general "ubiquity" satisfies him because Molly's particular behind is there, that the sole fact of Molly's presence at his side eclipses all deliberation and rationalization: he kisses each "hemisphere" in turn as a tribute to the essential animal woman-ness of which they are "expressive," something he is in the habit of doing, her soliloquy reveals, possibly because he is unable to render the more appropriate one. His tribute is presented in neat parallelism suggestive of an elaborate ritual, from "antesatisfaction" to the kiss of tribute to "postsatisfaction." In the first stage he has an incipient erection, turns to Molly, raises himself, uncovers her, and contemplates her "adipose . . . hemispheres." The result is the abstract "satisfaction at the ubiquity" of those expressions of femaleness which the narrator has already mentioned, which in the sequence is represented by his kiss of tribute. Then, in the third stage ("postsatisfaction"), he exactly reverses the procedure: contemplation, recovering, and so on.

The significance of the symmetrical little pattern lies in the insubstantial nature of Bloom's "satisfaction," which in its concrete form is not the action that should follow the procedures of "antesatisfaction" and be followed by those of "postsatisfaction," but instead a mere kiss, of recognition of the possibility of love and adoration of the object of love. In this case, nothing in the situation in Ulysses restricts comparison with the Odyssey. Odysseus and the chaste Penelope went to bed together as man and wife after twenty years; Molly lies asleep in bed sated by her lover, and Bloom, no less devoted or desiring than Odysseus, does as he does.

Thereafter the contrast becomes correspondence. After the consummation of their reunion, Penelope and Odysseus talk in bed. Bloom's pointed failure to consummate his return nevertheless wakens Molly. She experiences "incipient excitation," but only questions him about his day. His "modifications" of his experiences with the citizen
and Gerty and of Stephen’s fight with Carr are motivated by prudence. If his accounts of his “promptitude of decision and gymnastic flexibility” in entering the house and the “eldest surviving son of Simon Dedalus” (who “emerged as the salient point of his narration”) are for the purpose of impressing Molly with his intrepidity in returning home and preoccupying her with Stephen, whether as lover or son-figure, they have no immediate effect. Molly reflects on them in the next chapter along with his escapade with Gerty, which she has apprehended, although in a form distorted in his favor.

While Bloom talks, each of them thinks of a major defect in their present relationship. Molly is troubled by the eleven-year-old “limitation of fertility” (since November 27, 1893, “carnal intercourse had been incomplete . . . ”); she craves a child, as Bloom has been shown to do throughout the novel, and that is at least part of her reason for resenting his sexual neglect of her. Bloom is troubled by the complete breakdown of “mental intercourse between himself and the listener,” the final degeneration of their relationship, since Milly’s reaching puberty almost a year ago; as the narrator said earlier in the chapter, “offspring produced and educated to maturity,” they have nothing to hold them together, neither children nor the promise of children. Thus at this point in the novel Bloom and Molly are concerned about the breakdown of their family, both in the relationship between them and in the “proliferant continuance.”

Nevertheless they maintain their habitual positions, Bloom with his head at the foot of the bed, curled up, much as Stephen was at the end of the nighttown chapter. After asking Molly to serve him eggs for breakfast in bed (a fact not fully revealed until the beginning of the next chapter), he falls asleep. Molly, who craves a child and has just had sexual intercourse, lies awake “in the attitude of Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with seed,” to conclude the novel.

In the sixteenth chapter Stephen recognized Bloom as the deliverer of his dream and then accepted Bloom’s shab-
bily motivated invitation to his home; the chapter’s significant action was the basis for the resolution of Stephen’s story, his deliverance, which actually occurred in the first part of the seventeenth chapter. The part of the seventeenth chapter under discussion has a corresponding place in the structure of the novel. The resolution of Bloom’s story, his success or failure in reuniting with Molly, occurs in the final, eighteenth, chapter; and it is based on the developed and unresolved significant action of the latter part of the seventeenth.

The episode begins with Bloom alone in the garden, desiring reunion but ignoring the change in his home with which he must contend if he is to achieve it; in the parlor he is painfully confronted by that change and cannot fully refute the proposition that reunion is “impossible,” yet recognizes the need to come to a decision and decides to go to his wife’s bed; there, he is obliged to deal with the situation squarely, resolves his feelings about it in a reaffirmation of his love, tries to impress Molly, and finally asks her to reverse their normal routine by serving him breakfast. But although he has made a decision and has acted on it in certain ways, he has not reunited with Molly. On the other hand, although he has not made love to her and is not aware that he is no longer “unmanned” (perhaps the reason for the first fact), he has not failed to achieve the saving reunion, for the resolution of his story has not occurred when he leaves the novel.

The preparation for that resolution, his coping with the problem of reunion, which is the central action of this second of the chapter’s two episodes, occurs in the context of certain significant prior developments. One of the unique events of the day of the novel, one which, as in Stephen’s case, occurred before he awoke in the morning, Bloom’s dream, is strikingly like Stephen’s dream of deliverance. The ambiguous treatment of Stephen’s “commentary” on his ballad of “the victim predestined,” just before Stephen left the novel and the preceding episode ended, suggested that Bloom’s dream was also prophetic of the salvation he craves even if it is not to be similarly instrumental. And although when Bloom first remembered it on the beach (364), he guilty regarded the Turkish costume in which Molly had been dressed as signifying that she “wore the
breeches” (374), the author later indicated that she simply wore Near Eastern dress as Bloom himself did in Stephen's dream and, furthermore, that her "Turkey trunks . . . is thought by those in ken to be for a change” (391).

Also significant are the manifestations of Bloom's metamorphosis. A number of times during the day he abandoned his formerly characteristic cowardice, began to act like the “unconquered hero” hailed by the author; and finally he recovered his dissipated manliness. His request for breakfast is the last manifestation of that promising development in the novel. It is in direct line with his firm dealing with Bella Cohen in nighttown, his opinion expressed in the shelter that a wife properly did domestic chores for her husband, his decision to take Stephen home despite Molly's possible objection, and his use in the cocoa of “her cream” as he called it in the morning (63), the cream which she drank while the maid and he drank milk, which he habitually purchased (174) for the breakfast that is her normal daily prerogative. His request for breakfast is a reaction against the normal situation and an unconscious declaration of the change in himself that would make possible a change in it.

The basis for the resolution of Leopold Bloom's story comprises, on the one side, all the reasons for optimism, such as those discussed above, which are the context of Bloom's final episode (for example, the falling star just before the episode begins), his ultimate decision and actions in that episode itself, and the mutual concern of husband and wife about their broken family; and, on the other side, it comprises the sordid devices implicating Stephen and even Milly, the lack of decisive manly action, and the possibility that Molly is pregnant by Boylan, that she is like "Gea-Tellus” in more than “attitude.” That resolution itself is the business of the last chapter, of Molly's thoughts.

In addition to preparing for the resolution of Stephen's story, the sixteenth chapter presented, at its end, an intimation of what that resolution should be. The latter part of the seventeenth chapter is like the sixteenth in this respect as well. And the intimation is that Bloom shall succeed, that he has achieved what he himself called “impossible.”
It begins a half-page before the end of the episode and chapter, with the paragraph describing Bloom's curled position, symbolic of the ultimate return. The last words in that paragraph are "the childman weary, the manchild in the womb," and they are followed by:

Womb? Weary?
He rests. He has travelled. (722)

He rests in his ultimate home, is weary because he has travelled: again return is intimated. And it is intimated in the next question and response also:

With?
Sinbad the Sailor and Tinbad the Tailor and Jinbad the Jailer. . . .

The series of plays on "Sinbad the Sailor" seems to be a list of Bloom's companions in his "travels": the sailor, W. B. Murphy; the tailor, his friend George Mesias, in whose shop he met Boylan (717); the jailer, Alf Bergan the court clerk; the nailer, Corny Kelleher, the undertaker; the failer, Simon Dedalus; the bailer, Martin Cunningham, who twice during the day saved him from predicaments; the hailer, Lenehan; the raider, the citizen; the "phthailer," a friend who died of "phthisis" (689). But the most important name is the initial one. Both literally and figuratively it reiterates the motif of return: Sinbad returned, and Murphy is about to do so. Furthermore, Sinbad is a mythical and literary figure analogous to Odysseus, who even has similar adventures, including a narrow escape from a Cyclops; and Murphy is explicitly called "friend Sinbad" by Bloom (620) and is thought by him to "draw the long bow" of Odysseus. Above all else, the fundamental similarity among the three is that they return from extended travels. And Bloom—Odysseus' analogue, who has "travelled" with "Sinbad-Murphy," who has "travelled" for almost eleven years as "Sin-bad," who was to have written a song about the return of an Irish hero ("If Brian Boru could but come back and see old Dublin now") for a per-
formance of the Christmas pantomime, *Sinbad the Sailor* (662)—is linked to them by a web of associations. The link to his Homeric analogue could not be much stronger, since his narration of his day’s “odyssey” to Molly and subsequent falling asleep directly parallel Odysseus’ actions in Book XXIII.

The next, and last, two sets of question and answer complete the pattern intimating Bloom’s return. He rests, for, the childman weary, he has travelled; he has travelled “With” Sinbad and the others; furthermore, the manchild in the womb, he rests, returned to the womb-bed from his travels; he rests:

When?
Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor roc’s auk’s egg in the night of the bed of all the auks of the rocs of Darkinbad the Brightdayler.

Where?


Bloom is said to rest, returned, explicitly when the “roc’s auk’s egg” of Sinbad is in his bed; and that time has come, for the large black dot, which is the last statement in the chapter, represents the egg. The roc’s egg, which figures twice in the tale of Sinbad, is the manifestation of the miraculous giant bird which unknowingly rescues Sinbad with his first fortune from the Valley of the Diamonds. And containing the embryo of another roc, the egg is itself miraculous. The nineteenth-century English expression, “a roc’s egg,” meaning something marvelous or unattainable, reinforces the point of the allusion. Joyce is saying that Sinbad-Bloom in fact has the unattainable roc’s egg, for it is in the bed (Molly’s and his bed) that Bloom has achieved what he himself regarded as “impossible” minutes earlier. Thus the egg is called “square-round”: he has squared a circle, the impossible feat mentioned during the chapter as one means he might employ to realize his “ambition” (703).

In a pattern of symbols, allusions, and word-plays similar to, but more intricate than, that at the end of the six-
teenth chapter, Joyce has intimated the outcome of Bloom's story. And the intimation is not of success for one party and failure for the other, as it was in that case, but of success for both.

The final chapter of *Ulysses* is a representation of Molly Bloom's thoughts for a period of about a half-hour, the uninterrupted ultimate form of inner monologue properly designated "stream of consciousness." It seems to be a naturalistic slice of life, lacking real beginning and end; and it seems to have no more argument than form, to fail to advance the narrative of the novel or even to relate more than incidentally to it. Critical descriptions of the chapter make both these points and liken it (admiringly) to the flowing river of life and the endless gyrations of the earth. Joyce himself asserted that the chapter has four "cardinal points" of meaning and that this argument is "expressed" in a form based on four recurring words, one for each "point." But the two critics of the novel to whom he apparently made his disclosure were not given identical lists of words; and when he made it to the first of them, he wrote to his patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver, "Penelope has no beginning, middle or end." Furthermore, not content with contradicting the assertion to the others that it has a coherent form and argument (achieved by means that are suspiciously both mechanical and ineffectual), he also denied in the letter to Miss Weaver that the chapter functions in the action and called the seventeenth chapter "in reality the end" of the novel.

Although statements Joyce made about *Ulysses* have been quoted a number of times in this study, they were selected because they confirm conclusions based on the text itself
and were selected from among countless others. It is well known by now that he not only received invaluable help from friends and admirers who served as readers and scribes when his eyes were failing, but also shrewdly promoted publicity about himself and his works as soon as he had a following willing to be exploited toward those ends. The assistance provided by his friend Claud W. Sykes (who typed the completed parts of the manuscript of *Ulysses* when a professional English-language typist could not be found in wartime Zurich), his unstinting patron Miss Weaver, and the selfless friend and aide of his last ten years, Paul Léon, was in every case vital to his work and career. But the reviewers, critics, memoirists, and biographers whom he encouraged and in some cases induced to serve his reputation were not in this category, although some of them were close companions. And it seems that he reacted occasionally to their humorless adulation of his art, and to the constant soliciting of "clues" and "hints" by some of them, by making misleading, even outlandish, assertions. This situation is mentioned here because he made a number of such assertions—which have become much too well known—about the present chapter of *Ulysses*, and simultaneously made some truly revealing remarks, sometimes to the same persons.

As the novel itself has been the corroboration for Joyce's statements already quoted in this study, the eighteenth chapter itself reveals which statements are sound and which facetious or insignificant (that anything this most self-conscious of writers said about what he was doing was simply mistaken is unlikely). And what the chapter reveals is that all the statements quoted above deserve to be disregarded as at best unimportant. There is no rendering of form and theme through four "cardinal points," each "expressed" by its own word. Furthermore, although Joyce was most revealing to Sykes and Miss Weaver about *Ulysses,* unless he simply misjudged his work both statements made in his letter to her are untrue. The chapter does have "beginning, middle [and] end," in argument and form both. It is no appendix but quite properly itself "in reality the end" of the novel. It is not a "stream" in the sense of formless psychological naturalism, although on that presumption the chapter has been praised for forty
years and on that presumption about the novel as a whole Wyndham Lewis denounced Ulysses in Time and Western Man; rather this very chapter triumphantly refutes Lewis' charge, for it embodies itself and completes for the novel precisely that articulation, that formal pattern, which Lewis justifiably insisted on in art.

My assertion that the chapter is both coherent and functional can be confirmed only by a full discussion of it. However, the latter is suggested by two circumstances. The first is the apparent similarity, so far borne out, between the relationship of the sixteenth chapter with the first part of the seventeenth, and that of the second part of the seventeenth with the eighteenth. The second circumstance is the unresolved state of the novel's major action when Bloom falls asleep—after he has raised certain issues which are directly related to the resolution, and which are about to be considered by Molly in its sole remaining passage.

This suggestion that the chapter is functional is reinforced by a more extensive consideration of the other assertion, that Molly's "unpunctuated monologue" is coherent in form and substance. The difference between stream of consciousness and the more common inner monologue which occurs in combination with dialogue and exposition is embodied in the word "stream": it is the verbal representation of the pure, uninterrupted thought of a single character. Molly's thoughts are rendered in simple language with the phrases tumbling after one another in apparent near chaos, and the chapter wholly lacks capitalization and punctuation of any kind (controversy over whether or not it has a period before the end is pointless, and those variously placed in various editions are typographical errors). The typographical innovations are not capricious but justified. A writer would only create an impediment to the literary representation of pure thought if he employed along with the words, which are unavoidable, the special symbolic characteristics of written language. And the near chaos of the discourse is only apparent. For example, the chapter begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. In addition, it has eight parts, each indicated by a break in the line (the erroneous periods in different editions occur at these points) followed by an indentation at the beginning of the next line, as with a paragraph of conventional prose.
Certainly, were Molly's thoughts truly haphazard, there would be little reason to divide them into clearly distinguished sections.

These facts, and Joyce's repeated mention of the chapter's eight "sentences" to friends as well, point to some sort of definite organization of material—and so signify that the chapter contains meaningful material to organize. The tumbling stream of phrases is very simple reading except for one characteristic. As unconcentrated thought late at night well might be, Molly's is easily deflected from a particular subject, to return to it only after having explored the diversionary tangent. Thus, the chapter begins:

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting to that old faggot Mrs Riordan that he thought he had a great leg of and she never left us a farthing . . .

(723)

And Stephen's "aunt" Dante continues to occupy Molly until, halfway down the page, she returns to Bloom's one-time pretensions of illness: "if ever he got anything really serious the matter with him. . . ." However, the fact that she does make such returns suggests that her thought has specific subjects, is not simply the mental wanderings of an insomniac. For example, Bloom's request for breakfast has clearly puzzled her, and she reverts to it a number of times. It is only one step from the plain fact that she is not thinking about nothing in particular to the proposition that those particular things about which she is thinking are meaningful related.

Molly's wakeful state is caused by, is her response to, her husband's tribute, which awakened her with a feeling of "incipient excitation"; his late arrival; and his account of the day's activities. Her wakeful thought is dominated by these happenings and by the fact that Bloom has, for the first time since their residence in the City Arms hotel, a period during which Rudy died and their estrangement began, asked her to bring him breakfast in bed. A verbal
representation of the thoughts with which Molly reacts to and reflects on her situation, the chapter is very properly called "Molly's soliloquy." And Molly's soliloquy is as functional in the novel as the stream of consciousness by which it is achieved, for the conclusion of Ulysses is whatever happens to be the estranged wife's attitude—positive, negative, or undecided and therefore negative by default—toward her husband's behavior and his attempted return.

The present chapter has structural integrity and a meaningful development because through it, from beginning to end, Molly arrives at her attitude—her stream of consciousness is not merely content but process. The content may be wandering and even contradictory, but the process of her uninterrupted thought endows it with relevance and meaning in the action. Actually, the chapter is a debate within her mind, between contending pro and contra elements. And much as the auto-debate that constitutes Hamlet's most famous soliloquy, with its conflict and resolution, is an action, so is Molly's.

Its popularity with people who regard the rest of the novel as too difficult—like the critical consensus that it is simple, chaotic, and, in any real sense, extrinsic—attests the subtle quality of the chapter's true nature. The historical result has been distortion of it into a highly spiced tour de force combining characterization of Molly with a vague affirmation of life, or sex, or womanhood, and into a source of emphatic statements by Molly's supporting almost any point of view on almost any subject, principally the subject of Leopold Bloom, with both fervent praise of him indicating that the novel ends happily and withering condemnation indicating that it ends unhappily—and with neither indication more than merely that. It has been distorted into a poor conclusion to a very long book.

Although less explicitly than "To be, or not to be, that is the question," Molly's deliberation begins, like Hamlet's, by a statement of the question being considered:

Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice . . .
Bloom "never did a thing like that" since their estrangement began; and, furthermore, he had not even before then simply (manfully) asked her outright, but had feigned illness as a pretext. Should she honor this unusual, unexplained, and, in view of their relationship and Bloom's responsibility for it, wholly unjustified request, foregoing in the process the same matutinal pleasure, which she enjoys daily as a result of his guilty subservience, or should she not; that is the question.

Can this truly be the central subject of a meaningful final chapter of *Ulysses*? As a number of critics have pointed out, the serving of breakfast in bed on one morning is not itself sufficiently significant to indicate a fundamental change in the relationship between a man and a woman. But Molly, far from certain that she will honor Bloom's request, is concerned about more than her next morning's pleasure, for her deliberation involves every fundamental aspect of her relationship with her husband. Furthermore, there is a close correspondence between the status of his request at any point in the soliloquy and his own standing in her eyes, an indication that the matter of his breakfast is at least related to her attitude toward him and toward his assault on their relationship (for he does not want simply to be released from servitude, he wants uxorial service from her).

In fact, not only the action in the novel motivated by Bloom's request, that of the present and final chapter, but also the action which motivated it, signifies that the breakfast matter cannot be considered in isolation. He decided to attempt to return to Molly, expressed the belief that wives properly do domestic chores for husbands they love, used Molly's breakfast cream, and gave his distorted narration of the day's events before he finally "did . . . that." He probably remembered that one of Bello's dire threats had been that she "shall sit on your ottomansaddleback every morning after my thumping good breakfast." And although apparently unaware that he had recovered his manhood, he was undoubtedly fully aware of the change he was asking his wife to submit to in his final action of the novel, from the habitual morning routine which is a direct expression of their blighted relationship and by which he is introduced to the novel.
The result of important developments in the story of Bloom on Bloomsday, the motivation for the concluding episode in his story, and a pointed contrast to his first action in the novel, Bloom's last action is shown to raise a significant issue by two other facts. The first of these is that before the present chapter, except for the brief episode in the tenth chapter (city) in which she extended her arm out the window and threw a penny to the crippled sailor, Molly has appeared in the novel only as a virago who reclines in bed while her breakfast is brought her, and who orders imperiously:

—Hurry up with that tea. . . . I'm parched.
—Poldy!
—What?
—Scald the teapot. (62)

The second is that the end of the last chapter both does not reveal Bloom's request and does intimate that he shall succeed in returning to Molly, using as the final element of that intimation the roc's egg, the big black dot. The withholding of knowledge of Bloom's action only to disclose it, by Molly's opening words about "breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs," as the subject of her deliberation links the unresolved matter in the novel—his return—to her soliloquy through the issue of his breakfast; furthermore, her words themselves link the breakfast to the roc's egg, symbol of his achievement of the impossible return. It would appear that Bloom, Molly, and the author all consider her decision vitally significant.

The request for breakfast in bed is both the principal manifestation of Bloom's attempt to win Molly back and the principal issue in the resolution of her attitude toward him and his attempt. But although the present chapter begins with the posing of the issue and ends soon after it is decided, it arises explicitly in only a few places; and although it is the most important element of the preceding action of the novel which is resolved in the chapter, there are many others. In other words, while it has been made a symbol and an index of the outcome of the story of
Leopold Bloom, it is quite properly not the sole meaningful subject of the deliberation that determines that outcome.

Molly’s deliberation discloses that she too craves a return to the Blooms’ former relationship and that she will honor his first essay in effecting that return. Before arriving at her conclusion, however, she deliberates vigorously, if unintentionally. Faring rather well at the beginning of the soliloquy, Bloom and his request are progressively eclipsed. Then certain of his positive characteristics occur to her, Stephen enters her thoughts in a significant way, and Bloom’s breakfast and his destiny are secured. As this brief outline indicates, the soliloquy develops, *mutatis mutandis*, along a parabolic line. In terms of the chapter’s eight divisions, Bloom’s fortunes are fairly secure through much of the first section but progressively falling in the second to reach their nadir during the third, fourth, and fifth, and then rising again. One of Joyce’s complaints about the seventeenth chapter occurs at the end of a letter to Sykes, in a passage which reads:

> Struggling with the aridities of Ithaca—a mathematico-astronomico-physico-mechanico-geometrico-chemico sublimation of Bloom and Stephen (devil take[?] ’em both) to prepare for the final amplitudinously curvilinear episode Penelope.\(^{12}\)

The passage is interesting for a number of reasons. Sublimation is the chemical process of turning a solid directly into a vapor, and Joyce is using the term in its primary, technical sense to say that Bloom and Stephen are both dispatched from the novel and etherealized; he reveals a measure of weariness with their story; and he describes the manner of the seventeenth chapter. But its major point of interest is the words “amplitudinously curvilinear,” which seem to allude to Molly but are explicitly applied to the “episode” itself: they indicate that he not only plotted a process of development for her thought, but plotted the parabolic development her chapter manifestly has.

This development of Molly’s attitude toward Bloom from mild favor, through total rejection, to a crystallized full acceptance of him can be discerned from the following brief
résumé of the content of her soliloquy. At the same time it presents in convenient form the larger contexts of specific important passages discussed later. The eight sections of the soliloquy are distinguished; their pages are indicated; and each page of the chapter is represented (approximately) by a full stop in the résumé, so that passages can be located easily.

First section (723-29). Her surprise at Bloom’s request for breakfast in bed; the perverse behavior of old women, and of men when they are ill; Bloom’s having had a sexual experience; his distorted account of his day’s activities. His extra-marital activities. Boylan’s overture to her; the pleasure of seducing a boy; Bloom’s perverted questioning of her “when I was knitting that woollen thing” (Rudy’s shroud); the joy of an intense kiss. Confession; Boylan and their lovemaking. The trials of motherhood; the pleasure of having another child; the reasons for Bloom’s apparent sexual ardor; a lovers’ quarrel occasioned by Bloom’s attention to Josie Powell (now Breen). Possible rivals for Bloom and the ease with which she could rout them; his attractiveness to women; his extreme good looks when young. His polite manner; the contrasting behavior of Josie’s husband, Denis Breen; the case of a woman who had poisoned her husband for another man;

Second section (729-38). The first time Boylan saw her. His admiration for her foot; Bloom’s similar attitude; a romantic incident involving Bartell d’Arcy, the tenor; her intention “some day not now” to tell Bloom of this. An incident, before they were married, in which Bloom had importuned her in the rain for sexual favors. An obscene letter he had sent her following the incident; the impending tour with Boylan. Bloom’s association with the Sinn Fein; Lieutenant Gardner, a former lover. Shopping with Boylan in Belfast; Boylan’s affluence and handsome clothes. Their own domestic indigence. Her meager wardrobe; prominent femmes fatales. Bloom’s poor job; a “rubbishy” dress she bought because of him; her experience when trying to get back for him a job he had lost.

Third section (738-39). Boylan’s attentions to her breasts. Nursing Milly; Bloom’s manner and that of Boylan in con-
Fourth section (739-44). Bloom’s sloppiness. Gibraltar; the goring of “those poor horses” at the bullfights. The departure of a family friend; the subsequent loneliness; her shabby nightclothes. Her father and his friend; boredom then and now. Thanksgiving to God for Boylan.


Sixth section (748-55). Memories of childhood. Resentment of Bloom’s request for breakfast in bed; plans for a picnic with Boylan and Mrs. Fleming (the domestic). Bloom’s once swamping a rowboat; his grandiose promises before their marriage. Milly’s behavior and habits (751-52). Bloom’s bringing Stephen home unannounced. The advent of her menstrual period. Her removal from the bed and measures occasioned by her menstruation.

Seventh section (755-61). A pre-marital visit to the doctor indirectly caused by Bloom. Her first meeting with Bloom; his strange ways. Her return to the bed; their economic state; his vocational instability; his promiscuity and late return home. His request for breakfast in bed; the possible identity of his consort for the evening; his flirtatiousness; his social circle, and his superiority to the other members of it in familial responsibility. Ben Dollard’s borrowing his dress suit; Simon Dedalus’ singing; Stephen; Stephen as a child. Stephen’s approximate age; Stephen and Bloom compared. The young poet, Stephen, as her lover; the question of Boylan;

Eighth section (761-68). Criticism of Boylan’s crudeness and of his ignorance; partial amelioration of this criticism. Criticism of Bloom for neglecting to love her properly. Objection to his request for breakfast in bed; Rudy’s death; the subsequent deterioration of their relationship. Gibraltar; plans for entertaining Stephen. Plans for serving Bloom breakfast; plans for tempting him, then telling him that Boylan completely satisfied her desires. Plans for allowing him to engage in his habitual sexual behavior as a reward
for money and clothing; plans for marketing for breakfast and for flowers in anticipation of another visit by Stephen. The grandeur and beauty of nature; the contemptibleness of atheists; Bloom’s proposal to her, and the first consummation of their love, on the Hill of Howth; Gibraltar. Gibraltar; the first consummation of their love, on the Hill of Howth, and her acceptance of Bloom’s proposal.

Final confirmation rests with the chapter itself, but the evidence signifies that Molly’s soliloquy is complete in itself, and that by representing her ultimate accession to her husband’s attempt at reconciliation, it completes the novel. These facts were actually asserted by Joyce in a brief sentence in a letter to Frank Budgen: “[Molly’s soliloquy] is the indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport to eternity.” Budgen quotes Joyce in his book; and elaborating upon Joyce’s metaphor, he speaks of Molly as a passport officer who “retouches” Bloom’s portrait, enumerates negative judgments she makes during the contra phases of her deliberation, and says, “Marion’s visa on Leopold’s passport will bring trouble on him in all the countries and mandated territories of eternity.” However, the metaphor is to be apprehended as it stands. At the end of the seventeenth chapter, it declares, Bloom has secured a passport to eternity, has initiated a return to Molly and restoration of his family. But the passport is not valid as yet. A “countersign” (certification of authenticity) is “indispensable.” In other words, Molly’s endorsement of Bloom’s final actions is necessary for the story to be complete: the last chapter of the novel is the cap to the action. Furthermore the requisite “countersign” is simply that, a signature, an endorsement, not a deposition; nothing less than the whole of Molly’s numberless observations on Bloom and other thoughts—the coherent construct which is the chapter—is her “countersign.”

My procedure in validating what has been asserted above about the novel’s final chapter will be to discuss the significant developments in Molly’s deliberation as they occur. Line as well as page references are given because of the
crowded nature of the text; and because the meaning of individual passages is generally quite plain, where possible they are paraphrased and cited by page and line rather than quoted.

*Ulysses* is about the interinvolved stories of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. But Molly, so instrumental in Bloom’s—the major—story, dominating the conclusion of the novel, and elaborately portrayed through her soliloquy, is only slightly less important than the protagonists. Joyce uses much the same technique in portraying her as Chaucer does with such *Canterbury Tales* characters as the Prioress and the Wife of Bath. In the morning she is shown to be officious (“Poldy!”), vulgar (“having wiped her fingers smartly on the blanket, she began to search the text with the hairpin”) and stupid (“—It must have fell down, she said”). This portrayal, which is sketchy, is not later refuted but, as with Chaucer’s characters, is modified and augmented. Her officiousness is shown very soon to be a function of her relationship with Bloom and welcomed by him. At the end of the novel, her soliloquy reveals that although vulgar she is indeed, what has been taken for stupidity is a lack of education in a rather perceptive mind.

It also reveals that she is worthy of Bloom’s devotion and of the fulfilment of a husband and son. Joyce’s initial characterization of her is augmented significantly in his “portrait gallery” in the middle of the novel (city) in only one respect: he portrays her gesture of charity to the beggar refused by Father Conmee. Her kindness is revealed again and again in her soliloquy. Thinking about Gibraltar, for example, she is disgusted by the Spanish men and women who cheer as the bulls disembowel “those poor horses” at bullfights, and feels pity for a sentry, “poor devil halfroasted,” and for “the poor donkeys slipping half asleep.” This kindness, like her vulgarity and ignorance, is part of her dominant character trait, absolute naturalness, an almost ingenuous Weltanschauung that is nevertheless valid. She is thoroughly sensual, dwelling indiscriminately on details of Boylan’s sexual efficacy and a fondly remembered dinner. And yet she is thoroughly devout. She says of her confessor, “what did he want to know for when I already confessed it to God,” and recalls
how Bloom made her cry "when he said about Our Lord being a carpenter." But her piety is made most clear when, thinking about details of her tryst with Boylan, she recalls falling asleep after his departure to be awakened by the thunder:

God be merciful to us I thought the heavens were coming down about us to punish when I blessed myself and said a Hail Mary . . . and they come and tell you theres no God . . . (726:34-37)

In the fourteenth chapter (hospital) the thunderstorm was identified as:

the voice of the god that was in a very grievous rage that he would presently . . . spill their souls for their spillings . . . contrariwise to his word which forth to bring brenningly biddeth. (390)

The rage of God at the spillers was unrecognized by Bloom and defied by Stephen. Only Molly, who had then just committed adultery and joined the ranks of the spillers, both recognized it and was contrite.

It is Molly's total naturalness that accommodates both carnality and piety, or both ignorance, dwelt upon at great length by Bloom in his last episode, and the perceptiveness he grants her even in the midst of his criticism. She is never out of the house during the whole novel; she is almost never out of her bed. She knows nothing of the world of men and values it at less than nothing. Politics, learning, medicine, metaphysics—all are summarily dismissed during the course of her soliloquy. Her conviction regarding the intellectual vanities of men, the wonder of nature (which includes the human body, emotions, and appetites), and the glory of God is eloquently expressed near the end of the chapter:

all sorts of shapes and smells and colours springing up even out of the ditches primroses and violets nature it is as for them saying theres no God I wouldnt give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning why dont they go and create something . . . (767:5-9)
And the note of essential soundness that seems to persist in her ingenuous view of life indicates that Joyce holds her in high regard.

*Ulysses* concludes with Molly's "countersign" because it is "indispensable" to the completion of Bloom's story; that completion also depends upon a final disposition of both two general factors in his situation and the specific potentialities created in the latter part of the preceding chapter. The general factors are: his dream in which she is dressed in Turkish costume, invites his return, and announces a change; and the possibility that Boylan has impregnated her and reunion is therefore impossible. The unresolved elements of his final episode are: the indication in the urination contest that his attractiveness is superior to Stephen's and the accompanying astronomical representation of her gravitating from Stephen to him; the possibility, manifest in the list of lovers he draws up, that she cannot be monogamous, that he is one of "a series originating in and repeated to infinity" numbering twenty-five men besides himself to date; her apparent desire for a child (her reflection on the "limitation of fertility" imposed by him); the effects on her of his late return and distorted account of the day's events (which avoids mention of Gerty, exaggerates his "promptitude of decision and gymnastic flexibility" in entering the house, and focusses on Stephen and his invitation to him); finally, his request for breakfast in bed, the ultimate manifestation of his attempted return, representing all else that awaits final disposition in the novel.

Unless the sounding of the quarter-hours by the bells of Saint George's Church and the whistling of a passing train are so regarded, the only physical action of any kind in the chapter is the advent of Molly's menstrual period and its consequences: menstruation begins, she gets out of bed, she takes certain measures, and she returns to bed. By the very nature of Joyce's method in the chapter, some of her stream of thoughts must concern the church clock, the train whistle, and the menstruation. Some also touch on childhood, that is to say pre-pubertal, experiences. But all the rest, comprising a review she makes of aspects of her life as a nubile girl in Gibraltar, her life with Bloom and
the afternoon with Boylan, and her reflections on romantic and sexual experiences and on the people closest to her, father, daughter, husband—essentially the whole chapter—belongs to its subject: Bloom's request and Bloom himself.

It has been pointed out that Bloom fares well at the beginning of Molly's soliloquy. After her initial surprise at his request for breakfast, Molly praises his politeness and freedom from snobbery, and reveals that she is intensely jealous of him. She infers that part of his account of his day is "a pack of lies" fabricated to hide the fact that he has had a sexual experience (723:40-724:2). Her deductions fully establish her perceptiveness; but through them Bloom's concealment of his sordid experience with Gerty works in his favor, for she thinks that he has had normal sexual relations with a woman and her jealousy is aroused. She decides that he is not in love but has been with a "night wom[a]n" or (correctly) "little bitch," and her perception of "his appetite" for her (723:40-41) seems to reassure her (that she should recognize this desire for her in the present context is important); she recalls discovering him in the act of writing his last letter to Martha and also misconceives that sordid situation in his favor, saying "not that I care two straws who he does it with . . . though I'd like to find out" (724:12-22); then turning to his relations with Mary Driscoll, the oyster-pilfering former maid, she says, "I wouldn't lower myself to spy on them the garters I found in her room the Friday she was out that was enough for me" (724:38-40). These manifestations of jealousy, so positive in their significance, end temporarily with another encouraging sign: her opinion that he was attentive to the maid "because he couldn't possibly do without it that long so he must do it somewhere" (725:6-7), which reveals that she has been completely unaware of his sexual debilitation.

At this point Molly turns to thoughts of Boylan, of the possibility of seducing a boy, and of Bloom's perverted sexual behavior with her. Still there is affection for Bloom, because she wishes to spur his jealousy (725:39-40). After recalling her fear when awakened by the thunderstorm that it was God's judgment on her adultery, she reflects more minutely on Boylan, principally on the size of his penis and
the possibility that he has impregnated her. She thinks of the burdens of motherhood and then, having already observed that Boylan "hasn't such a tremendous amount of spunk in him" (727:14-15), speculates on having another child but "not off" him, assures herself that he "would have a fine strong child," but concludes significantly: "but I don't know Poldy has more spunk in him yes that'd be awfully jolly" (727:29-32).

Following directly this new and highly germane expression of appreciation of Bloom, Molly experiences an access of jealousy. He had told her during his distorted narrative of his meeting with Mrs. Breen, and she decides that the former Josie Powell helped stimulate his sexual appetite (727:32-34). After paying tribute to his knowledge (728:3-6), she asserts her ability to effect a reconciliation between them:

I could quite easily get him to make it up any time I know how . . . I know plenty of ways ask him to tuck down the collar of my blouse or touch him with my veil and gloves on going out I kiss then would send them all spinning . . . (728:11-16)

She is right, of course. And although there are no mistresses to send spinning, her knowledge that it is within her power to reunite them is a promising fact. She proceeds to thoughts about the possibility that his presumed affair is with Josie, and as she is insisting on her indifference states that she would searchingly inquire of Josie if she loved him (728:16-20). She then thinks of an occasion on which he almost, but not quite, proposed to her, expresses approval of his self-respecting restraint, and thinks of the attempts of other women, especially Josie, to win him from her (728:21-38). This train of thought leads her to a reflection on his youthful handsomeness and Josie's envy of her, and a comparison, which is to Bloom's complete advantage, with Josie's husband, Denis Breen (728:38–729:22).

It is plain that Molly's attitude toward Bloom in this first section of her soliloquy is distinctly positive. But this is a far less stable basis for optimism than the things she
reveals. Her total ignorance of his sexual debilitation is chief among these. Another concerns her romantic history and will be discussed below. Less reliable revelations, because like her attitude toward Bloom they are subject to change, are her expressed desire for a child, her jealousy, and the effect on her of his late return home.

Her attitude toward him is about to change. The section ends on an ominous note: reflections on a woman who poisoned her husband, she presumes, because of another man; she feels that the threat of hanging was no deterrent because "if that was her nature what could she do," and that the authorities would not be "brutes enough to go and hang a woman" (729:26-38). The omen is immediately fulfilled. The second section begins with a review of her first meeting with Boylan and proceeds promptly to thoughts of two other lovers, Bartell d'Arcy, the concert tenor (730:29-36), and a person not mentioned before in the novel named Gardner (731:34-35), later revealed to be a British army lieutenant (733:40-41) transferred during the Boer war from Ireland to South Africa, where he died of fever (734:4-8).

Paradoxically, Molly's revelation of an additional man in her life discredits the general critical conception of Leopold Bloom's wife as a woman "of prodigious sexual appetite, who has been continuously and indiscriminately unfaithful to him." That is based mainly on the catalogue of twenty-five former lovers which is one of the unresolved elements of Bloom's final episode (716); and the basis is a flimsy one, for the list was compiled not by Joyce but by Bloom. It is reasonable to simply accept the narrator's statement that in it he was presenting the "series" of lovers Bloom had in mind and that, as they did in so much of the chapter, his words communicated Bloom's thoughts. The reasonable assumption is confirmed by the existence of a lover not on the list, a lover of whom Bloom is ignorant but of whom an omniscient narrator, even a pedantic one, must be aware.

Bloom's list includes a bootblack, a farmer, two priests, and other unlikely paramours. It also includes people whose relationship to Molly is plainly disclosed during her soliloquy: Menton is a "babbyface" and a "big stupo" (724:4, 8), and he himself said earlier in the novel that he had danced
with her before her marriage (105); Pisser Burke is grouped with Nosey Flynn as “that other beauty” (750:8); Penrose is a medical student who boarded with a neighbor and, on one occasion, “nearly caught me washing through the window” (739:7-8); Mastiansky is a friend of Bloom whom she mocks for his sexual perversions, revealed to her by his wife (734:32-35); Lenehan, “that sponger,” had been “making free” with her (735:1-3) on various pretexts, as he himself boasted early in the novel (231), during a carriage ride; the occasion was the end of a dinner party at the house of Valentine Dillon, the Lord Mayor, who was “looking at me with his dirty eyes” (735:3-4); the “unknown gentleman in the Gaiety Theatre” had been looking down from the dress circle into her low-cut gown while Bloom discoursed to her on Spinoza, as Bloom recalled early in the novel (280). Molly’s soliloquy discloses various degrees of involvement with certain of the men listed. For example, she had only pretended attentiveness to her husband’s disquisition at the Gaiety Theatre; as fully aware as he of the stranger’s interest, she had been cultivating it (754:15-20). But most of them received an appreciative glance or less.

This is not the case with three men in addition to Boylan, the two who have entered her thoughts (d’Arcy and Gardner) and Harry Mulvey, the naval lieutenant whom she had known as a girl in Gibraltar and whose name heads Bloom’s list. D’Arcy comes up in connection with one incident; it is always possible that she had sexual relations with him, but the incident was isolated and spontaneous, she says of it only “he commenced kissing me,” and it occurred before Rudy and the deterioration of her marriage, in a church after a concert (730:29-36). If Molly had any real extramarital relationship in the past, it was with the one man absent from Bloom’s list and dates back from two to five years. Furthermore, that relationship seems never to have been consummated. She speaks of using the same method to control Gardner’s ardor that she had used with Bloom during their courtship (731:34-35); although she compares his ability to “embrace” favorably with that of Bloom (732:15), the term is used literally; and in contrast to her recollections of erotic experiences with Bloom, Boy-
lan, and Mulvey, she remembers nothing more intimate with him; she says of Boylan, "O thanks be to the great God I got somebody to give me what I badly wanted" (743:25-26); above all, she reveals on the third page of the chapter that that afternoon she committed adultery for the first time: reflecting on the frustration Bloom's perverse sexual activity with her engenders, she thinks, "anyhow its done now once and for all with all the talk of the world about it people make" (725:34-35).

Bloom's list of lovers is invalid, and one must turn to Molly's private thoughts for a true one. This would include Mulvey, d'Arcy, Gardner, and Boylan, if the word "lover" is used in the most inclusive possible sense. Of these her relationship with Mulvey antedates her marriage, that with d'Arcy was ephemeral and trivial, and those with Gardner and Boylan definitely occurred during the period of, and so were presumably the result of, Bloom's sexual neglect of her; finally, only with Boylan, a few hours before, did she commit herself to a full-fledged affair. To these facts, one more should be added: although her feelings for Mulvey had been intense, their love had never been consummated (746:5-7). Since she had married Bloom shortly after that girlhood romance and no man who might have entered her life during the brief intervening period is mentioned by her, it may reasonably be assumed that Bloom was the second man with whom she thought herself in love, and that the incident on the Hill of Howth during which he proposed and their love was consummated was a signal and unique experience in her young life.

Mulvey is gone, and Gardner dead, but Bloom is not therefore plagued by only one usurper. The point has been made that it is in Molly's mind that the suitors usurp his place and in her mind that they must be eliminated. However, the catalogue is much less extensive than it at first seemed, and Molly is by no means a promiscuous and insatiable whore but a robust woman "put away," as Malachi expressed it, by her husband. Bloom's "series" is invalid, and so is his belief that his wife cannot be faithful to one man.

At the end of the first section of her soliloquy, Molly thinks of the woman who poisoned her husband; and with
the beginning of the second section and her thoughts about d'Arcy, Gardner, and Boylan, Bloom's standing diminishes markedly. She considers his petty lecheries (731:3–732:2) and, although she praises his courtship of her, compares him unfavorably with Gardner (732:10–15). Then she thinks of the tryst with Boylan and indicates in two ways that her lover is successfully displacing her husband: first, she expresses satisfaction that Bloom will not be going to Belfast for her concert because, should Boylan be in an adjoining room and Bloom press his perverted attentions on her, Boylan would object (732:35–733:2); then she associates the trip with the idyllic visit to Howth during which Bloom proposed and their love was consummated (733:15–19). Thus she entertains the idea of eloping with Boylan (733:21–22). Bloom enjoys some compliments for his cleverness, but Gardner reappears (733:40–734:9), and is followed by a long train of thought about Boylan, her tryst with him, and the finery which she will get him to buy for her in Belfast (734:16–735:27).

During this passage devoted to Boylan, Molly remarks that at one point he left her to buy a "stoppress" edition of the Evening Telegraph announcing the upset in the Ascot Gold Cup race. Bloom had heard the hawking of this edition just before being declared "cuckoo" at the end of the thirteenth chapter (strand-Bloom); and as Molly reveals, he had indeed already been cuckolded by Boylan. However, Molly's lover returned to her "tearing up the tickets and swearing blazes because he lost 20 quid he said he lost over that outsider that won" (734:40–41). Identified early in the novel with both Elijah and the racehorse in question, running the race in Stephen's fantasy as man, messiah, and horse combined, harshly affected by its outcome, Bloom is closely linked to the Ascot Gold Cup race. In the shelter he had remarked on the bet Boylan made for himself "and a friend of mine" (261) and lost, "Different ways of bringing off a coup" (633), and his connection with both further associates the race with the affair between Molly and Boylan: Throwaway's competitor, on which Bloom's competitor had bet, the phallic Sceptre represents not only Boylan's interest but Boylan himself. This passage in Molly's soliloquy is the final disposition of the
Throwaway—"throwaway" matter in the novel. She is speaking of Throwaway, but the horse was called an "outsider" a number of times before and is identified with Bloom; the word fits Bloom, not only in Molly's special racing sense, but also in the general one; and his social isolation was most fully manifest when the "throwaway" (messianic) and Throwaway (race) elements combined in Barney Kiernan's. As the Introduction to this study suggested, the totally unexpected victory of Throwaway over the favorite, which so enraged Boylan, signifies the ultimate victory of Bloom despite the heavy odds against him.

Furthermore, Bloom will win because of Boylan. The race was run at four o'clock, as Boylan was keeping his rendezvous with Molly but just after Bloom began to act in a unique way in response to that impending rendezvous. Ironically, Boylan never had a chance with Molly, the race had already turned in Bloom's favor; the phallic favorite cuckolded the dark horse but that very action was the immediate cause of the other's endeavor to win back his wife.

However, Molly is ignorant of the significance of the upset. Following her thoughts about Boylan's affluence and the things he will buy her, she thinks of the necessity for constant economy as Bloom's wife (736:8-16) and then thinks of his general lack of aggressive masculinity and business success and his inadequacy as a provider (737:8-16). These thoughts lead her directly to the conclusion of this second section, an account of her attempt to recover for him a job he had lost (737:16–738:3).

The tone of Molly's thoughts about Bloom at this point prepares the way for the very brief third section. It begins with examination of her breasts and reflections on Boylan's attentions to them (738:4-8), contains various indications of her years of sexual frustration, and concludes with an impassioned expression of sexual desire (739:20-22) and a paean to Boylan (739:32-33). Her fervid counting of the days to Boylan's next visit ends the section, and Bloom has been completely eclipsed.

The fourth section of the soliloquy centers on her childhood and adolescence in Gibraltar, and its principal motif is her present loneliness. Beginning with an expression of sympathy for the crew of the passing train, away "from
their wives and families" (739:37-38), it promptly turns to a favorable comparison of Gibraltar with her subsequent and permanent home (740:6-8). She thinks about her father, a woman who mothered her (Mrs. Stanhope), the woman's husband ("Wogger"), with whom she carried on a childish flirtation, the bullfights, and stages in her physical growth. She observes sadly, "its like all through a mist makes you feel so old" (740:40-41), recalls the departure of the Stanhopes from Gibraltar, and reflects: "Lord how long ago it seems centuries of course they never come back" (741:31-32). As does Bloom, she associates happiness with the past and with the East, and her sense of isolation is similar to his. She complains of the lack of visitors and mail (743:5-6) and even objects to Boylan's (probably prudent) reticence in his letter of that morning. Nevertheless, she is able to forgive Boylan, and offers her thanks to God for having, at long last, "somebody to give me what I badly wanted" (743:25-26) just before the section ends.

Bloom is mentioned only twice in this section, first at the beginning when she complains of his habit of saving old periodicals, and then in connection with the lack of mail. Neither occasion shows her attitude toward him, but his absence from her thoughts and her vehement thanksgiving to God for Boylan do so eloquently. At this point, midway in the eight sections and almost the physical middle of the chapter (741), the prospects for Bloom's breakfast and destiny are at their nadir.

As the fifth section begins, Molly is still concerned with letters (744:3-4), but she is immediately diverted to the author of her first love letter, Mulvey. She reviews for pages almost without interruption her meeting with him, their romantic and sexual activities, his departure, and her subsequent sadness. Then she thinks of the ring he gave her as a keepsake, "that I gave Gardner going to South Africa where those Boers killed him" (747:19-20). Following this and another mention of Gardner (747:41), she thinks in rapid succession about her husband, who is "fit to be looked at" (748:5), Boylan (748:7), and d'Arcy (748:13-14). Where Bloom stands in this roster of the men in her life is indicated by one of the remarks with which the section almost immediately ends, "I wish hed sleep in some bed by
himself with his cold feet on me” (748:20-21). Her un­
witting pun on the “cold feet” with which his fantasy of
her mocked him in nighttown is directly relevant: he may
be presentable, but there is no point to his being in her bed.

Although Molly’s remarks about Bloom in the sixth sec­
tion are anything but complimentary, they are frequent—
he is returning to her thoughts—and they and a significant
occurrence signify together an upturn in his situation from
its depressed state in the past three sections. As soon as the
section begins, she complains about his nocturnal compan­
ions and exaggerates the lateness of his arrival home
(749:2-6). Then she comments sarcastically on his request
for breakfast and indicates the high regard which she has
for her matutinal privilege:

then he starts giving us his orders for eggs and tea
Findon haddy and hot buttered toast I suppose well have
him sitting up like the king of the country pumping the
wrong end of the spoon up and down in his egg wherever
he learned that from and I love to hear him falling up
the stairs of a morning with the cups rattling on the
tray . . . (749:8-13)

Apparently, she would have to rise early and market in
order to honor his “orders”; and she is unwilling not only
to do that but to allow him to assume the pose of “the king
of the country,” and forego her own privileges. She goes
on to plan a picnic for two couples, herself and Boylan and
her husband and Mrs. Fleming (749:28-29), and to think
of a relevant example of Bloom’s bumbling (749:37—
750:4), regarding which she regrets—complementing his
guilt-motivated masochism—that she did not “flagellate”
him (750:4-6). She reflects, apropos of his new practice of
nocturnal carousing, that although she does not like being
alone in the house at night, “I suppose 111 have to put up
with it” (750:23-25), presumably because she cannot re­
strict his freedom in view of her own behavior. She thinks
of the grandiose promises he made her (750:29-35) and
expresses twice more her objection to his leaving her alone
and unprotected at night, “not that hed be much use”
(750:37-39; 751:6-12). Then, after a period of maternal
preoccupation with Milly, she remarks on his invitation and visitor and on his entry to the house, the very subjects exaggerated in his account (753:25-34).

It is at this point that the significant event occurs—the advent of her menstruation (754:6-11). She decides that it probably ruins her arrangement to see Boylan on Monday, but the fact of the menstruation itself overshadows this consideration: Boylan has not impregnated her, and she can accept Bloom back. A few moments later she expresses relief that “anyhow he didn’t make me pregnant” (754:27-28), and although she turns to thoughts of her lovemaking with Boylan, the section significantly ends with her comments on the torrent of her menstruation.

As it has resolved the doubt about Molly’s ability to love one man raised by Bloom’s “series” in the last chapter, and as it has revealed the favorable effect (thus far) of his distorted narrative (suppression of his encounter with Gerty and extended discussion of Stephen and of his own “keyless” entrance) and late return in that chapter, Molly’s soliloquy now also settles one general element of Bloom’s situation, her possible impregnation by Boylan, again favorably. The other, his dream, has not yet come up in any way; nor have some of the unresolved specific elements of his final episode, which include, in addition to his late arrival and misrepresentations: his invitation to Stephen, the indication of the urination contest and the falling star that Molly shall prefer him to Stephen, her apparent desire for a child, and, of course, his request for breakfast.

But more important than either Molly’s menstruation or the upturn in Bloom’s status in this sixth section is the conjunction of these two facts. Molly says that Boylan’s vigorous lovemaking induced her menstrual period (754:7-8), and her thinking is physiologically sound. The causality is not only ironic but profoundly and significantly so. It was pointed out above, in the discussion of the association between the race at Ascot and the Blooms’ domestic triangle, that Boylan’s assignation with Molly precipitated the change in Bloom; now it has also precipitated Molly’s menstruation, which not only is a good thing in itself but marks the end of a cycle. The fact that it is the only thing that happens to her in this critical final chapter of the novel, its intrinsic
importance for Bloom’s story, the fact that it ends a cycle, and the event that precipitated it—all suggest an analogy between the advent of Molly’s menstrual period and the change in Bloom begun during the day by the same cause, and suggest that it symbolizes as well the end of a cycle of much greater duration. And that the symbolically significant occurrence coincides with renewed concern about Bloom confirms the suggestion.

The seventh section begins with Molly’s fear that she has a genital disorder, which in turn leads to recollection of such a disorder before her marriage because of stimulation by Bloom and his passionate love letters (756:5-11). Her thoughts of Bloom’s effective letters relate meaningfully to her reflections during the fourth section about the paucity of mail, her thoughts about Mulvey’s love letter (her first), and Boylan’s contrasting laconic note. She turns from his letters to Bloom himself, to the night of their meeting, recalled by him when Dedalus sang “M’appari” (“When first I saw thy form endearing”) at the Ormond (271). Just as Bloom did, she confesses to having been attracted by him, “I dont know how the first night ever we met” (756:13-14). And the fact that her memory of her meeting with Bloom near the beginning of this next-to-last section of the chapter corresponds to her memory of her meeting with Boylan at the beginning of the second section indicates strongly that the chapter’s “amplitudinously curvilinear” development is now an ascending one.

From these memories of her early love for Bloom, Molly returns to the jealous concern of the first section, his presumed amorous adventure of the evening (757:3-5). She follows this with a complaint like the extensive one in the second section—about their straitened circumstances and his lack of business success (757:12-26). However, there is a significant difference, another indication of a difference in the direction of his fortunes. Whereas in the second section she contrasted him to the affluent and commercially aggressive Boylan and thought of eloping with the usurper, here Boylan is not mentioned, and she again regards herself as Bloom’s (neglected) wife: “God here we are as bad as ever after 16 years” (757:12). The church bells marking two forty-five cause her to revert to his late arrival and his
method of entrance, and her attitude toward his new social habits undergoes a distinct change: she resolves to prevent his nocturnal absence in the future and, mistakenly making of Gerty and Martha one true mistress, to squelch his extra-marital adventure (757:31-37). Her jealous resolutions imply a willingness to adjust her own relationship with him, and perhaps they are the cause of her turning immediately to his request for breakfast:

then tucked up in bed . . . then tea and toast for him buttered on both sides and newlaid eggs I suppose Im nothing any more . . . (757:39–758:5)

The tone of this third reflection on the request is not surprised like that which began the soliloquy, or mocking like that in the last section, but almost plaintive.

Following it, she expresses further the jealousy prevalent at the beginning of the chapter and in the last few pages, wondering once again if Josie is her husband's paramour. She decides not and condemns his perennial skirtchasing (758:14-24). Then she compares him favorably to his circle of acquaintances, Kernan, M'Coy, Cunningham, Power, Dedalus, praising him for his sense of responsibility to his family in contrast to their sterile and alcoholic camaraderie (758:35–759:4); in the process she expresses a perceptive and tender concern for "my husband," vowing that the others will not get him "again into their clutches if I can help it making fun of him then behind his back." This train of thought soon focusses on Simon Dedalus, and moves from him to his son, the "salient point" of Bloom's "narration." She first thinks of Stephen as a possible lover (759:29-35), but then remembers that she last saw him as a boy when she was mourning for Rudy, and recalls his appearance in "his lord Fauntleroy suit" (759:35-42)—her thinking parallels Bloom's own view of him as both agent of "disintegration of obsession" for her and foster-son to himself. When Bloom "narrated" about Stephen at such length before falling asleep, he did not expect him to return, and he apparently had no other purpose than to displace Boylan in Molly's thoughts; but for her to be set thinking about a possible son can only, in view of her resentment of the
“limitation of fertility” he has imposed and of her belief that he possesses virility surpassing that of Boylan, work in his favor.

However, Molly then settles on the view of Stephen Bloom had in mind for her. Stephen immediately begins displacing Boylan in her plans for a lover (760:1-11) and soon even eclipses Bloom himself in the area in which Bloom’s standing with her was formerly secure, that of intellect (760:34-39). The section moves to its conclusion with excited speculation about an affair with Stephen, including plans to make herself deserving of him and reflections on their notoriety when he should become famous (761:14-22). Only with the very last words does she recall the virile lover who had been so prominent in the middle sections of her soliloquy: “O but then what am I going to do about him though” (761:22-23).

Bloom’s status has distinctly improved in this seventh section. Molly’s praise of his loyalty to his family, her jealousy, her memories of their early love, her plaintive comment on his request, the significant parallel to the second section—all indicate this. Stephen has become the focus of her thoughts, but this may be favorable too; the urination contest and falling star suggested that Bloom shall regain pre-eminence, and Stephen appears to be achieving the “disintegration of obsession” which Bloom had hoped to achieve with his sordid plot, and for which his extensive talking about Stephen was apparently a (not too promising) substitute.

The very beginning of the eighth and final section reveals that Stephen has indeed accomplished that disintegration, and one more element in Bloom’s attempt to return has been resolved favorably. First Molly decides, with Stephen as her obvious standard, that Boylan has “no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing” and is an “ignoramus that doesnt know poetry from a cabbage” (761:24-27); then, unconscious of the pun being made on Bloom’s name, she compares Boylan to a lion—facetiously (761:34-35); and after briefly tempering her condemnation on the grounds that his unrefined manner was caused in part by her own extreme desirableness, she dismisses consideration of the usurper completely from her thoughts.
At this point she launches an extended condemnation of Bloom, echoing the charge of "Junius" in the fourteenth chapter and Bloom's own acknowledgment of blame for their estrangement, and combines with it a declaration of her intention to have whatever relations she wishes with men (762:9-22); then she criticizes Bloom for his eccentric sexual behavior with her and speculates about approaching a sailor or a gypsy (762:22-42). Following these unfavorable developments, however, she once more mentions his request for breakfast. This time her attitude is neither surprise, nor scorn, nor plaintiveness, but a hollow-sounding bravado which also illuminates her talk of sexual license:

and Im to be slooching around down in the kitchen to get his lordship his breakfast while hes rolled up like a mummy will I indeed did you ever see me running Id just like to see myself at it show them attention and they treat you like dirt . . . (763:15-19)

In keeping with this weakening of the forces within her opposing reconciliation with him, Molly now grants Bloom the victory portended in the urination contest and falling star: she begins to look upon Stephen exclusively as a son-figure, to think of Rudy, and to actively desire a son. She comments on Stephen's degenerate habits and observes, "well its a poor case that those that have a fine son like that theyre not satisfied and I none was he not able to make one it wasnt my fault" (763:31-33). Then she thinks of the death of Rudy and echoes in almost the same words Bloom's observation of the morning, "we were never the same since" (763:35-39). She continues to entertain the possibility of Stephen's staying with them (not in her own bed but in Milly's room), and even decides that Bloom might as well make Stephen's breakfast along with hers (764:41–765:4); but at this point her ostentatious resistance breaks down, and she indicates that she will accept his return. She decides to get his breakfast in the morning!

Endowed with the significance delineated earlier, developed as it has been in her soliloquy, Bloom's breakfast, the central subject of the chapter, is now resolved in such a way that its meaning cannot be ignored—it is resolved in
conjunction with the remaining unresolved general factor in his attempted return, his dream:

Id have to get a nice pair of red slippers like those Turks with the fez used to sell ['he having dreamed tonight a strange fancy of his dame Mrs Moll with red slippers on in pair of Turkey trunks which is thought by those in ken to be for a change'] . . . Ill just give him one more chance Ill get up early in the morning . . . I might go over to the markets . . . who knows whod be the first man Id meet theyre out looking for it in the morning . . . then Ill throw him up his eggs and tea in the moustachecup . . . I suppose hed like my nice cream too . . . (765:7-21)

Molly’s talk of meeting men is only her pride tempering the fact of her compliance with Bloom’s request. The important thing is that she will rise early and purchase, prepare, and serve his breakfast in bed, including the cream which had been her exclusive privilege until he manfully used it in his and Stephen’s cocoa, and the moustache cup, the masculine utensil representing his “symposiarchal right” (666). Furthermore, she accepts the implications of her compliance, that getting his breakfast is giving him “one more chance” to be her proper husband, is extending her invitation to return and effect the “change” brought directly into the context by the author through her unwitting allusion to Bloom’s dream. With the concurrent disposition of the breakfast matter and Bloom’s auspicious dream all the elements of his attempted return have been resolved, and favorably in every case. The only possible improvement in the situation would be for Molly’s “countersign” to his “passport to eternity” to be less grudging, for her guarded acceptance of him to become enthusiastic.

Immediately following her favorable decision, Molly experiences her bitterest resentment of Bloom’s past sexual behavior toward her. She thinks of making plain to him that she has found satisfaction with, and he has been cuckolded by, Boylan. This she would do by “gayly” singing significant snatches from “La ci darem”; the one she mentions, “mi fa pieta Masetto” (“I feel sorry for Masetto”), unlike the “Vorrei e non vorrei” of Bloom’s “Voglio” and
the other previous excerpt, “Mi trema un poco il cor,” occurs directly before Zerlina’s capitulation to the Don. Then she would “start dressing myself to go out presto non son piu forte 111 put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that” (765:21-25). At this point her righteous anger becomes vehement; she thinks of compelling Bloom to have intercourse with her (756:31) and declares bitterly, “its all his own fault if Im an adulteress” (765:33). Continuing her resentful planning for the morning, she determines to secure money for clothes from him and then gratify his customary perverse desires (756:38-766:11). When it occurs to her that she is menstruating, she decides that that is not unfortunate even though she will have to wear her old underwear, for he will be unable to know whether or not Boylan succeeded in cuckolding him (766:12-17), and concludes “so much the better itll be more pointed.” However, the reader can hardly agree, can only deduce that the point she has just been planning so carefully to drive home will be blunted and that she is aware of this.

Furthermore, this thought marks the end of the bitter (and fully justified) resentment that accompanies her decision to “just give him one more chance” and get Bloom’s breakfast. She decides that following his onanistic gratification, “Ill go out Ill have him eyeing up at the ceiling where is she gone now make him want me thats the only way” (766:19-20) : she will leave the house abruptly, without indicating her destination, in order to “make him want me,” because “thats the only way” to secure his complete return to her. And, as she has already decided, having mysteriously gone out and thereby begun to make him want her, she will return with the ingredients of his breakfast—will show him that he can have her.

She considers momentarily the possibility that Bloom may again bring Stephen home that day, makes her eloquent praise of nature and of God quoted from earlier, and begins the conclusion of her deliberation and the novel. That conclusion, about a page in length, first indicates what the precise agency of the Blooms’ reconciliation will be, and then proclaims the fact and nature of Molly’s desire for it.
The conclusion concerns Bloom's proposal of marriage to Molly and her response. It immediately follows her praise of nature and God:

they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me ... (767:15-19)

And it is made a distinct unity by its symmetrical form: it proceeds from the fact of his proposal to a description of its circumstances, the idyllic situation on Howth hill on a day in June, from that description to one of Gibraltar in the spring, from that back to the idyllic scene of the consummation of their love, and finally to the answer to his proposal.

The agency by which the reunion of Bloom and Molly will be effected has actually been revealed already. She avers in the first section (728:11-16) that she "could quite easily get him to make it up any time" and mentions ways in which she could do so with such ease. And the reader knows even at that point, from Bloom's adoration of her and the change in him, that she is right. Now she asserts that she "got him to propose to me" on Howth and, elucidating his proposal, discloses that she always was able to exert the characteristic influence of the woman over her man:

I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldn't answer first ... (767:25-27)

Furthermore, Joyce has shown us that she does not exaggerate her power by providing Bloom's account of the same incident:

O wonder! Coolsoft with ointments her hand touched me, caressed: her eyes upon me did not turn away. Ravished over her I lay. ... (173)
The conclusion indicates that the agency by which the Blooms' reunion will be effected is Molly's power over her adoring husband. It indicates this by focussing on the incident of the consummation of their love and by making plain that that significant event was caused by the same agency. Bloom has regarded the incident as the epitome of their past happiness, and his comparison of it and their present relationship has been an important source of his suffering. Now, having decided to effect a reunion with him, Molly thinks of it, concludes the novel with her thought of it and of how she brought it about. Finally, she reveals that it not only is associated with the idea of reunion with her husband, but for her, too, represents the ideal past.

That the incident on Howth is a symbol of a former happiness to which Molly as well as Bloom wishes to return is revealed by her association of it with that other ideal life in the past to which she has expressed a desire to return. Gibraltar, the East, has now become absorbed in her former happiness with Bloom, just as for him the Holy Land, the East, became so absorbed. Just as he does, she wishes:

to reunite for increase and multiplication, which was absurd, to form by reunion the original couple of uniting parties, which was impossible. (711)

The roc's egg suggests that their mutual wish is not absurd, the formation by reunion of the original couple not impossible. And since a possible vehicle of "return" to that original couple is their respective memories of the couple's origin, and Molly has already resolved to effect a reunion with Bloom, the essential nature of this unified concluding passage of the novel is plain. Having progressed from her thought of Bloom's proposal to the circumstances of that proposal to Gibraltar, the passage develops from Gibraltar to the incident on Howth to her answer:

and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain . . . and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then
I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (768:10-18)

The conclusion is a re-creation of Molly's original passionate acceptance of Bloom's love, a complete displacement of her former grudging "countersign." She is saying an enthusiastic "Yes" to Bloom now as she did then, only while then he was simply a desirable man ("and I thought well as well him as another"), now she has to consider his bid for reunion in the light of their long and mostly unsatisfactory relationship and of her life before him and with other men. Molly's soliloquy has resulted in the crystallization of her attitude toward Bloom, the arrival at "Yes" in answer to his invitation: it has been the process by which she realizes that she wants her husband back and decides, as she did that June so many years earlier, to secure him for herself. If Ulysses describes any cycle, the cycle is that of the return of Bloom and Molly to the married state that commenced almost precisely sixteen years before. And Bloom's story ends with the imminent reunion of his family, ends, like that of Stephen, with his salvation.

This most important single fact in the novel is confirmed in various ways, thoroughly removing any possibility of ambiguity. First, the conclusion is introduced with what turns out to be Molly's final observation on God and nature, "they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow," because that prompts her to remember a statement of Bloom's during the incident on Howth, "the sun shines for you he said the day" (which she reconstructs more fully a few lines down: "the sun shines for you today"); the youthful Bloom's statement is directly echoed in Molly's reverent declaration that the sun will surely rise on the morrow, and the suggestion is that the explicit "today," a day in June, 1888, of his proposal on Howth is associated with her "tomorrow" (which has already arrived), with June 17, 1904. The sun will shine in the morning as it shone upon their initial union.
Furthermore, having eliminated Stephen, whom he exploited to eliminate Boylan, Bloom combines with Molly’s first love, Mulvey. It is he, not Bloom, who “kissed me under the Moorish wall.” During the day, Bloom commented on the occasion and the effect on her of her first kiss: “Remember that till their dying day. Molly, lieutenant Mulvey that kissed her under the Moorish wall beside the gardens” (364). Now, as part of her revery of return which associates the two elements of the ideal past, Gibraltar and her early relationship with Bloom, Molly has confused her first love, at fifteen in May, with her second, that for her husband, only two years later in June. She both says that she was “a Flower of the mountain” in Gibraltar when actually Bloom had used the term on Howth and speaks of Bloom as the man whose kiss “under the Moorish wall” decided her “as well him as another.” It is an understandable confusion, in view of the Gibraltar-Howth association she makes and the fact that she is now twice as old, but a significant one. D’Arcy, Gardner, Boylan, and Stephen have been displaced. With his absorption of Mulvey in the intensity of her memory of their early love, Bloom stands alone in Molly’s thoughts at the conclusion of her soliloquy. Edmund Wilson says, “It is in the mind of his Penelope that this Ulysses has slain the suitors who have been disputing his place”; 15 and although there are fewer disputants than is generally thought, he is fundamentally correct. The point has been made that it is precisely in her mind that they had to be slain.

Finally, that Boylan, representing all future “suitors,” has actually been conclusively vanquished by Bloom is indicated in the last words of the novel: “yes I said yes I will Yes.” The repetition of “yes” has certain apparent significance: it is Molly’s enthusiastic response to her vivid recreation of Bloom’s proposal; it is, of course, expressive of affirmation, of a positive attitude toward life, although this point has been badly overstressed; it signifies sexual consent—the “yes” of a courted woman (in a fantasy in nighttown, the amorous apparition of Josie Powell leaves Bloom with a succession of yeses); her last word, Molly’s “Yes” contrasts with her first word in the book, significantly
pronounced in response to Bloom’s asking her if she wanted anything special for breakfast, a muffled “No” (56)—and the contrast recalls both the contrast between Bloom’s first and last actions and that between the mock Mass of Stephen’s opening scene and the true Communion at the end of his story, and is, like those contrasts, significant of a total change. What is less apparent, however, is that the last words of *Ulysses* signify precisely that Bloom has displaced Boylan as the Don Juan of “Zerlina.” The transposition Bloom enjoys from association with the betrayed to association with the beloved recalls his reading in *Sweets of Sin* in the tenth chapter; significantly, the end of that novel portrays an ambiguous “he” who complains to the adulterous heroine, so like Molly in appearance, “—You are late,” and its last words are, “An imperceptible smile played round her perfect lips as she turned to him calmly” (232-33).

At any rate, the beginning of the ubiquitous duet from *Don Giovanni* is:

*Là ci darem la mano,*

*Là mi dirai di si.*

“There,” in his home, Zerlina will “give her hand” to the Don, and there she “will say ‘yes’” to him. Bloom had been able to think of himself as Don Giovanni only in connection with Martha Clifford, had been obliged to fret Masetto-like about the “pronunciation” of “voglio” with respect to Molly. Now, however, Molly’s projected singing to him in the morning would seem to express not resentment but total capitulation to him as her Don: it is for the jilted Boylan that she will have “pieta.” The very last words of *Ulysses* are: “I will Yes.” Molly’s capitalized “Yes” is “si,” addressed to Bloom; and with “I will,” she discloses that she has learned to pronounce “voglio” correctly—to pronounce it to her husband. Although the race on Bloomsday was a close one, the dark horse has secured the victory.
1. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York, 1930), p. 50, n. 1. Emer is supposed to have won Cuchulain by making the largest hole in the snow.

2. Indebted to Tindall, p. 30.

3. Quotations from Butcher and Lang, p. 374.

4. The narrator says the pantomime was "written by Greenleaf Whittier," but the reference is probably to one by E.L. Blanshard which was part of the standard Christmas pantomime repertoire; neither John Greenleaf Whittier nor anyone else of that name wrote a pantomime about Sinbad. Perhaps Joyce's erudition has failed him again.

5. See, e.g., Thackeray's *The Newcomes*, chapter xlvii.

6. See, e.g., Duff, p. 59, and Golding, p. 139.

7. Frank Budgen and Stuart Gilbert. Budgen quotes from a letter of Joyce's on pp. 262-63 of his book, and the complete letter is printed in *Letters*, pp. 169-70; Gilbert does not mention the source of his delineation of four "wobbling points" in Molly's monologue (Gilbert, p. 387), but the general and specific similarities indicate that Joyce was his ultimate, if not immediate, source.

8. The letter, dated July 10, 1921, is in the Yale University Library. The letter to Budgen is dated August 16, 1921. They were written while he was working on the chapter.

9. This conclusion is based on a reading of much of his correspondence, both published and unpublished. His reasons for sincerity are obvious: Sykes was typing the manuscript during the period he wrote to Sykes about *Ulysses*; and he was greatly indebted to Miss Weaver.


11. He made the point in letters to Miss Weaver, Valery Larbaud, and Frank Budgen. See *Letters*, pp. 168, 169, 170; and Budgen, p. 262.

12. See Chapter Ten, note 6. The word that Gilbert has transcribed from Joyce's difficult hand as "take" seems to be the meaningless (or portmanteau?) "fuke."

13. Budgen, p. 264. Budgen's comment is from the same place. The whole letter is in *Letters*, pp. 159-60.
