All of James Joyce's fiction has the creative process itself as one of its central concerns. Of the three major image clusters that Joyce employs as analogues for this process, the first two, already clearly recognized and fully discussed by scholars, are the image of the artist as priest and the artist as alchemist.

The artist's role as priest is most memorably defined in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* where he is described as "a priest of eternal imagination transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life." Since ritual is the means whereby the priest performs transformative acts, Joyce's knowledge about, and use of, Catholic liturgical elements have been the subjects of a number of studies.

The second dominant image cluster involves Joyce's use of alchemical techniques and process. Alchemy is an especially useful analogue for creativity because, like the mass, it involves transformations of substances, the reconciliation of such oppositions as body and spirit, the relatedness of all things.

A third image cluster that pertains to the creative process involves body functions. Joyce himself was clear about the importance of the body in his work. To Frank Budgen he described *Ulysses* as, among other things, "The epic of the human body," and continued, "In my
book the body lives in and moves through space and is the home of a full human personality.” When Budgen protested, “But the minds, the thoughts of the characters,” Joyce replied, “If they had no body they would have no mind. . . . It’s all one.”

Nevertheless, whereas critics have been aware of Joyce’s interest in bodily processes, attention has usually focused on them as examples of naturalistic detail; beyond that, it has been the reproductive and sexual aspects rather than the digestive ones that have elicited the most comment. Certainly though, Stuart Gilbert’s early study made clear that Joyce relates body organs to the structure of Ulysses. However, no full study has been done on the function of the digestive processes as they relate to the creativity and language. Yet the relationship is there because Joyce uses both ritual and alchemy as sources for imagery when he speaks of the creative process, and both ritual and alchemy are grounded in alimentary functions. The hermetic maxim that all functions are reflections of one another and that the lowest is a paradigm of the highest is also an assumption that seems implicit in Joyce’s work.

Joyce’s attention to meals and the digestive process, as well as his careful delineating of the responses of Bloom and Stephen to functions of the body, are two ways in which he comments on the creative process, on aesthetic and kinetic types of creativity, and on the fertility and wholeness of the characters themselves. Furthermore, and perhaps more important, Joyce’s attention to the transformational properties of language, style, and narrative techniques derive from his awareness of the role played by the alimentary process in relation to the so-called higher activities of the mind.

Of course, any discussion involving body processes brings to the fore the question of whether some of Joyce’s material (and interests) are scatological. Certainly his letters to Nora Barnacle, composed during a prolonged absence during the months of August and December 1909, serve as compelling if distasteful testimony to such inclinations, for Joyce’s rather passionate declarations are punctuated by references to excremental matters as well. Indeed, it is often difficult to separate alimentary symbolism from its anal component, and the presence of anality in Joyce’s work has been a cause of both concern and comment among critics. Clive Hart, in his noted study of Finnegans Wake, feels called upon to say, “I think I must offer some explanation, if not an apology for the consistently scatological nature of
interpretations which follow,” and observes that Joyce’s fascination with the scatological borders on “an obsession”: “There can be no denying that Joyce found everything associated with evacuation unusually pleasurable.” Yet Hart also feels that although *Finnegans Wake* may be the dirtiest book in the language, “a curious and unaccustomed beauty radiates from the imagery contained in the descriptions of the genital and anal regions of the primal Mother and Father figures . . . a beauty which is distilled by verbal alchemy from obscene scrawls on the ‘oozing wall of a urinal.’” Hart’s important realization of the beauty created by “verbal alchemy” is perhaps the key to Joyce’s use of such images, and maybe exactly what lifts his interest beyond the merely scatological. *Finnegans Wake* is not the exception, and all his early works give evidence of this same concern, although in less extravagant ways.

Mark Shechner, in his psychoanalytic study of *Ulysses*, argues for the work as a self-analysis of its author and is very much aware of the importance of the body as both source and influence in the making of Joyce’s art. He makes this interesting statement: “If it is true that patterns of moral, psychological, and artistic behavior may be systematically modeled after primitive patterns of compromise around areas of body conflict, then we should be able to discover a stylistic paradigm in any artist’s life and work.” Suggesting that “we can construct a consistent and far-reaching theory of Joyce’s art around the dialectic of anal control,” Shechner uses dominance/subordination, shame/self-esteem, and most important, spatial modalities of open and closed to describe Stephen as essentially a closed character with a retentive temper, whose major use of control is via language. Bloom, he argues, is an open character with an “eliminative temper.” I think these categories are not only valid but helpful, and a close study of texts will show that these dynamics are frequently present.

It was Freud, of course, who focused on lower body functions as determining later social behavior. Although many of his conclusions have come to be considered too reductive, his basic postulates have been recognized as valid by many analysts, and their ideas about the relationship of alimentary functions to behavior should perhaps be summarized here. The infant’s earliest experience of the world outside is the via the mouth, through which he incorporates his experience, i.e., nursing. This mode of incorporation grows more complicated and involves breathing, biting, grasping, touching—all of which are based
on the primal need to breathe, drink, eat, and thus to grow. The anal zone, the second important zone at this age of consciousness, involves a more complicated set of responses because there are alternating and contradictory impulses present—namely, retention and elimination. The child’s response to this function and its conflicts is closely connected to its achievement of some sort of autonomy and self control.¹⁰

For Freudians, alimentary consciousness is presexual and superseded by the genital stage of development, but the Jungians seem to see both stages as coexistent. Erich Neumann, a Jungian whose insights on this subject have done much to shape my thinking in regard to the presence of alimentary images in *Ulysses*, says that the primary unity “remains the foundation of our existence even after our consciousness, grown independent with the separation of the systems, has begun to elaborate its scientifically objective view of the world,” and adds, furthermore: “It cannot be stressed enough that eating and food—as the symbolism of language, myth, dream and fairytale show time and time again—signify a manner of interpreting the world and integrating oneself with it.”¹¹

Important to this discussion is the concept of sin and evil in relation to the body. For early consciousness, before the separation of systems, the mouth and anus are not seen as higher and lower, but are of equal importance, and the anus is viewed in positive terms as creative.¹² However, as the individual assumes an erect posture, the lower body pole is reduced in importance; anal smells and functions are rejected as disgusting, then as evil. It is particularly a characteristic of Judeo-Christian culture that the upper-spirit-world is magnified and that the lower-body-world is rejected. And original sin is associated then in its most basic meaning with the inferiority of the individual, whose body functions, his elimination in particular, become identified with the elimination of evil. This negative evaluation establishes itself in the conscious mind as a division between body and self which causes anxiety. This anxiety in turn causes some individuals to see themselves as infected by evil, particularly their own evil. The result is a fragmentation of consciousness, the creation of a threatening death-hell-lower world.¹³ This summary seems to me to most aptly describe Stephen’s problems with sin and anality so memorably depicted in chapter 3 of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The psychoanalytic school views this conflict and repression of the anal stage as the cause of creativity. In other words, the creation of art
is the result of the sublimation of the anal stage. However, this theory
does not do justice to Bloom's essentially creative nature and to his
ability to accept the world. A Jungian interpretation would tend to
view art, not in a negative way, but as "one among many creative
continuations of the anal stage that has been preserved and integrated
with the individual's development as a whole." Furthermore,
Freudian approaches have developed, for the most part, from an ex­
tensive study of abnormal and pathological behaviors. A Jungian
approach allows us to interpret Bloom's so-called feminine aspects
and his fondness for excrementa as evidence of his receptive and ex­
pressive nature.

Happily, two new studies have used Freudian insights and analytical
techniques to more expansive ends. Sheldon R. Brivic's Joyce Between
Freud and Jung, uses, as the title suggests, both approaches. Brivic, in
stressing Joyce's uses of both Freud and Jung, argues that Freud is
useful when examining the developing mind of Joyce, or rather, its
unconscious content, and Jung is helpful in showing Joyce's more
rational or conscious purposes. Brivic suggests that Joyce's use of Jung
really comes into play as Joyce, in his own growth "from a world of
frustration to one of transcendence," finds Jung's mythic system help­
ful in the construction of his own. Valid as this argument may be, I
feel that Brivic still gets trapped in reductive and judgmental readings
of the characters, seeing Bloom, for example, as having three fun­
damental drives: "his masochism, his cuckoldry and an attraction to
inanimate matter and the tendency toward inanimate matter in life." In
The Transformation Process in Joyce's "Ulysses," Elliott B. Gose, Jr.,
deals more positively with Joyce's debt to Freud by focusing for the
first half of his book, on Joyce's fascination with the ideas of Giordano
Bruno. Bruno has long been recognized as an important influence
on Joyce's thought, but Gose's study is the most thorough to date.
Seeing nature as a divine substance that is possessed of both spiritual
and material components, Bruno offers Joyce a new mode of vision,
taking him beyond the doctrines of Catholicism and the equally in­
hibiting precepts of the Platonic system. Bruno turns mutability into a
positive feature, emphasizing it as a transformational process. By do­
ing so, Bruno, according to Gose, influences Joyce in three key areas:
"in his [Joyce's] ability to embody in his fiction a sense of the happen­
ings of nature as interconnected, of the everyday as containing the
eternal, of mind as microcosmos." In his section on Freud and
Joyce, Gose again liberates both Joyce and his characters from the narrower kind of Freudian interpretations. Bloom's behavior is thus explained in Brunian terms by Bloom's awareness of, and participation in, physical cycles—things becoming one another, birth, death, decay. In Freudian terms, Bloom escapes this "reality" through sexual fantasies, but undergoes a healthful purgation in "Circe."

I have suggested earlier that ritual is a relevant ingredient in any discussion of alimentary symbolism. This is because it is through ritual, as practiced by primitive peoples, that we see the earliest knowledge of the world expressed in terms of body symbolism. Ritual is, of course, an objectification of psychic processes, but it imitates the functions of the body, too, and lends order and structure to all life processes. It is not, until later, an abstract set of concepts, but is instead a set of life-serving actions involving participation in natural rhythms, and it is the more elemental nature of ritual that Joyce seems to recognize.

In the fields of anthropology and comparative religion, much work has been done in this century on the universal patterns of religious practices, some of which Joyce was also familiar with. Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is perhaps the most influential and well-known study in this area. Although there is no explicit evidence that Joyce was acquainted with Frazer, John Vickery sees Joyce as using the Christ figure in anthropological contexts and argues that Joyce indeed saw Christian rituals as existing in a recognizable pattern in older religions, especially those patterns that involve the dying and reviving god, priest/kings, and scapegoat figures. Furthermore, Vickery notes that Joyce had in his personal library such works as Jane Harrison's *Mythology*, Ernst Renan's *Les Apôtres*, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *L'Âme primitive*, and *L'Experience mystique et les symboles chez les primitifs*, among others.

Other later work done on the nature of ritual is also pertinent to this discussion because it also stresses the essential quality of the alimentary component. Theodor Gaster, for example, breaks down ritual into two main divisions, rites of *kenosis* or emptying, and rites of *plerosis* or filling. The former involves rites of mortification, as exemplified in Lenten periods, fasts, a state of suspended animation, rites of purgation characterized by the expulsion of evil, both moral and physical, from the community. The latter involves rites of invigora-
tion, in which an attempt is made to reestablish fertility, and rites of jubilation, which include a communal feast.\textsuperscript{21}

Language is another major factor to be considered when discussing alimentary symbolism. That speaking is founded in the dynamics of the alimentary zone may be taken for granted more than understood, but Ernst Cassirer outlines the connection between eating and speaking in a helpful way:

It is above all in certain consonants and groups of consonants that a specific sensous tendency is manifested. In the very first babblings of children a sharp distinction is evident between sound groups of essentially “centripetal” and essentially “centrifugal” tendency. The m and n clearly reveal the inward direction, while the explosive sounds p and b, t and d reveal the opposite trend. In one case the sound indicates a striving back to the subject; in the other, a relation to the “outside world,” a pointing or rejection. The one corresponds to the gestures of grasping, of attempting to draw close, the other to the gestures of showing or thrusting away.\textsuperscript{22}

Out of the need to objectify the internal in terms of space, Cassirer argues, human consciousness reproduces analogically what it experiences internally; hence there is a metaphorical relationship between language and body.

This relationship was early discerned by Giambattista Vico, a seventeenth century Italian humanist whose work, \textit{The New Science}, was of particular interest to Joyce. (Numerous critical studies have been done on Joyce’s use of Viconian cycles of history, etymology, and language.)\textsuperscript{23} Discussing the origins of language, for example, Vico postulated that it evolved from gesture, that man then created interjections (passionate monosyllabic sounds). These sounds were followed by pronouns (since interjections were the venting of one’s own passions, pronouns were necessary).\textsuperscript{24}

Of particular importance here is Vico’s focus on all creative processes—intellectual and linguistic—as extensions of human consciousness and human corporeality. Not only does he view psychological cause as dominant over physical, but his argument for the existence of a common language was accompanied by a belief that “words are carried over from bodies and from the properties of bodies to signify the institutions of the mind and spirit.”\textsuperscript{25} He goes to say “in all languages the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human body and its parts and
from the human senses and passions.” In elaborating on what he calls his “imaginative metaphysics” that precedes so-called rational metaphysics, Vico, in the same passage, concludes that man “becomes all things by not understanding them . . . he makes the things out of himself and becomes them by transforming himself into them.”

That Vico’s imaginative approach to language was perhaps the cause of Joyce’s absorbing interest in him can hardly be disputed.

Jeanne McKnight, in another psychoanalytic study that focuses particularly on Stephen, sees him as threatened by madness and as using language for control because, she says, he is unable “to locate the boundaries of his own ego, his own self, and subsequently feels endangered by things which he perceives will swallow him up.”

Stephen’s fear of being “eaten” causes him to create words for the purpose of controlling his view of the world. She concludes: “Expression is Stephen’s way of bringing himself into the world, and in the metaphor of expression are linked the ideas of speaking (language), asserting one’s identity (being ‘born’), and pressing out (excreting) all the beauty which is inside.”

One final and most important ingredient that is present in language and is vital to the practice of ritual acts as well as the creation of art is memory. We know that memory is a vital element in ritual because the act of remembering a primal event, one involved with the creation of mankind, the creation of man’s fertility, is the moving force behind the ritual act. It is through memory that man and his cosmos are renewed and become vital organisms again.

Vico called memory “the Mother of the Muses” and saw it as having three functions. First, says Vico, memory remembers things; second, it alters and imitates these things; third, it invents; it gives those things a “new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship.”

This last creative aspect of memory, involving not merely retention, but the creation of a new form, is the determinant of the creative ability of both Bloom and Stephen. For example, Stephen’s view of life is re-created anew in each chapter of A Portrait, and Bloom’s most meaningful acts of creation operate not in terms of his linguistic ability so much as his memory of Molly and Howth.

What I want to emphasize here, however, is the association of memory and the digestive processes. Like digestion, memory involves the taking in of experience in the creation of a new form, and Cassirer explains the process in an interesting passage using body
references, usually reproductive it is true, as metaphors for consciousness and its acts:

In order to remember a content, consciousness must previously have possessed itself of that content in a way differing from mere sensation or perception. The mere repetition of the given at another time does not suffice; in this repetition a new kind of conception and formation must be manifested. For every "reproduction" of a content embodies a new level of reflection. By the mere fact that it no longer takes this content as something simply present, but confronts it in imagination as something past and yet not vanished, consciousness, by its changed relation to the content, gives both to itself and the content a changed ideal of meaning.30

Stephen's obsession with images of devouring is tied to the memory of his dead mother, and memory forces him to translate threatening alimental images into language that nonetheless retains traces of the alimental. Bloom's memory is not only activated by eating, but this activating is itself expressed in alimental terms. In "Oxen of the Sun," for example, the narrator speaks of Bloom's "cud of reminiscence. Bloom's most fertile and meaningful creation involves his and Molly's lovemaking on Howth where Molly feeds him an already-chewed seedcake. That this memory should invigorate Bloom throughout his day is neither sentimental nor ironic. Bloom's re-creation of the fertile and transformative act of eating is a fictional demonstration of the dynamic ritual.

It is the relationship among these elements—the alimentary process, language, ritual, and art—that will be discussed in the following chapters, and we shall see how Joyce creates both the form and content of Ulysses through a use of, and a recognition of, man's ingestive, transformative, and eliminative functions.

Since Ulysses seems to move from a naturalistic, stream-of-consciousness style that focuses on the minds of Stephen and Bloom to a more self-conscious, parodic one that includes them both and is dominated by other voices, I have chosen to discuss Stephen and Bloom separately and then jointly as they come together in the later episodes.

To that end, chapter 2 deals only with Stephen. To fully account for Stephen's negative reactions to food, his fear of being devoured, and his tendency to translate troublesome aspects of nature into language, I have found it necessary to include in chapter 2 some comments on A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
Chapter 3 deals with Bloom and his particularly assimilating nature. Chapter 4 treats episodes in which Stephen and Bloom are both present. Chapter 5 is a conclusion that uses the "Penelope" episode as a final statement on Joyce's attitude about the relationship of digestive processes to art.