THE CULTURE OF JOYCE’S ULYSSES

R. Brandon Kershner
The Culture of Joyce’s *Ulysses*
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Joyce Citations

Joyce criticism traditionally uses (among others) the following parenthetical references to standard editions of Joycean work:

**CW**  

**D**  

**FW**  

**JJI**  

**JJII**  

**Letters I, II, III**  

**P**  

**SH**  

**U**  
Chapter One

Introduction: Dialogics and Popular Culture in Joyce’s Novel

I hope *The Culture of Joyce’s “Ulysses”* will evoke a variety of possible interpretations for the reader. In the first place, I mean it to suggest the culture, both “high” and “popular,” that surrounded Joyce’s novel at its publication in 1922 and formed the inescapable context for its reception. As a historical exercise in what has become known as “cultural studies,” this book claims that field as its purview. A second obvious meaning is the culture of Dublin in 1904, the date of the book’s setting—a material culture painstakingly documented, celebrated, and contested by Joyce, often in ways we no longer recognize. But a third interpretation, the broadest, would be to the culture of the figure Ulysses or Odysseus—which is to say, not so much the culture of Homeric times, but the pseudo-Enlightenment culture that Adorno and Horkheimer portray as the legacy of the Ulysses figure and whose contemporary forms they critique rigorously (see chapter two). In this sense, at least, the culture of both Ulysses and *Ulysses* is our culture, the culture of modernity. And one of my themes will be the forgotten aspects of that culture from the turn of the last century, figures and phenomena whose absence from popular memory is an effect of our contemporary mechanisms for disseminating cultural amnesia. Modernism, I believe, both resists and is complicit with this act of literary/historical forgetting. In several ways, then, I hope this project will be a contribution to the recent wave of historical work on modernism that is intended to refigure that concept (Rainey, Lewis, Mao, Matz, North, Latham, and Walkowitz; see also articles in *Modernism/Modernity*).

*Ulysses* is a historical novel in at least two senses: written mostly in the ’teens and early twenties of the twentieth century, it addresses 1904 and does so with a curious combination of scrupulous historical exactitude and minor anachronisms. But it is also a novel whose subject is history, specifically the history of the twentieth century, and here the gap between the book’s setting and the time of its composition gives Joyce some leverage. If he is able to see where, for
example, journalistic trends will take the relatively innocent publications for young ladies of 1904, he is also, remarkably, able to deduce that anti-Semitism would be a major theme of the century. Joyce has been critiqued for creating a rather nostalgic portrait of Dublin that concentrates on the moribund city center rather than the more vital, expanding suburbs (Mays), but in fact his unbalanced emphasis on the commercially hollow city center accurately portrays an economy that continued to decline until at least the 1930s.

*Ulysses* is clearly a novel that addresses the impact of modernity upon an urban backwater that had been unsystematically but effectively denuded of a productive economy and was suffering the vicissitudes of emphatically uneven development under modernism. Mary Daly comments, “The lack of dynamism from the rural Irish economy and the failure of Dublin businesses to manufacture and, in some cases, even to distribute the manufactured goods which rural Ireland needed, plus the apparent stagnation of the port in the third quarter of the nineteenth century¹ all meant that Dublin failed to provide adequate employment, either for the indigenous Dublin population or for even a small proportion of the surplus population of rural Ireland” (15). The only exceptions to the pattern of industrial decline were in “the comparative success of printing and metal and engineering, and the sharp increase in numbers employed in food and drink which was mainly attributable to the success of the brewing industry” (20). If the newspaper business seems to figure largely in *Ulysses* and if barrels of porter are a major contribution to Joyce’s evocation of urban circulation in “Aeolus,” those, after all, are the two healthy industries colonial occupation has left to the deposed capital. The Dublin of *Ulysses* simply does not have the atmosphere of a modern industrial city. Declan Kiberd points out that “Dublin in 1904…was already a rapidly expanding conurbation dominated by persons and values imported from the countryside. Sheep and cows were still commonly herded to the docks through the major thoroughfares of a city which Joyce liked to dub ‘the centre of paralysis’ ” (269). The artificially retarded industrialization combined with the city’s still noticeably rural culture produced a populace unusually susceptible to the attractions of the British popular culture industry.

Luke Gibbons, surveying the social and economic conditions of post-famine Ireland, notes that in addition to the Irish handicap of a crippled economy, Dubliners suffered from the failure of the Catholic Church in Ireland to inspire or support any agenda
of social reform, either for dealing with the massive poverty of the working class or the susceptibility of women and children to domestic violence (168). But in so doing, it should be noted, it was following the English laissez-faire approach to colonial territories. Joseph Lee explains,

the fact that England industrialized primarily on the basis of private enterprise decisively influenced English concepts of the proper role of the state in economic development. If the state maintained the sanctity of contracts and the rights of property, it could safely leave individuals to their own enterprise, secure in the conviction that the invisible hand would maximise economic growth. (20–21)

The English reluctance to intervene in progressive or even pragmatic ways, rather than in blindly legalistic ones, was exemplified most lethally in government’s halting and inadequate response to the famine of the 1840s. Joyce’s famous diagnosis of paralysis, which critics have long approached as if it were a mysterious spiritual failing of his countrymen, had a solid economic basis.

The culture Joyce’s writing reflected and in which he matured was, of course, Irish, with all the internal divisions that implies, but it was hardly Irish in the cultural-nationalist sense of the word. At all cultural levels, as F. S. L. Lyons insists, we must bear in mind

the extent to which nineteenth-century Ireland existed within the English cultural context. When we come to review the different cultures that collided within Irish society, we shall have to bear in mind always that these cultures are principally to be defined not so much by their relations with each other, critical as these were, but by their relations with the English culture under whose shadow they existed and to which they had always to respond. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that for most of the nineteenth century English culture was the most effective unifying force in Ireland. (6–7)

That this cultural hegemony came to be imposed most thoroughly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was, of course, no coincidence: the rapid industrialization of England in production and transportation allowed for the dissemination of English material culture throughout the smaller island. And the effect of this shared culture in enforcing a sense of shared nationhood with England, despite the obvious injustices of colonization, should not be underestimated: “nationalism and patriotism had become almost the new religion of modern industrial society, as mass education carried the heady brew
of patriotic idealism onto the meanest slum classroom or the remotest village school. Modern mass communications, railways, delivery vans, the telegraph, wireless and the newspapers also fostered a greater sense of nationhood” (Stevenson, 48). The nationalist fever that possessed much of Europe in the years leading up to the Great War was shared by many in Ireland who valued their identity as members of the British Empire, and this included not only members of the Protestant Ascendancy. Redmond’s National Volunteers, founded to support the war effort, decimated the ranks of the republican Irish Volunteers (Lee, 153).

Because of our distance from the ephemeral writings that Joyce cites, we often have no idea how pervasive such imperial cultural pressure could be. When the boys in “An Encounter” rebel against their assigned Roman history by reading *The Apache Chief*, we might imagine they have found access to a vision of anarchic freedom in these “chronicles of disorder” (D 21; see Kershner 1989, 31–45). In fact, *The Apache Chief* has only a small part for Cochise, who is not particularly rebellious in this tale; the hero is an upper-class British gentleman who visits the American West and demonstrates his natural superiority in riding, shooting, and such skills (Winston). Like most of Harmsworth’s publications for boys, it bore no trace of Harmsworth’s Chapelizod origins, but demonstrated his complete identification with the British Empire and its values. In his lecture on “The Necessity for de-Anglicising Ireland” in 1892, Douglas Hyde saw the greatest danger to a culturally Irish identity—whatever that might consist of—as coming from the popularity of English publications aimed at the masses. He insisted on “the necessity for encouraging the use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books, especially English periodicals. We must set our face sternly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and still more the garbage of vulgar English weeklies like *Bow Bells* and the *Police Intelligence*” (Lee, 138).

By 1904 it was clear that in most respects Hyde was fighting a losing battle. Where Hyde imagined that the “natural” fare of Irish men and women would be an elevated, spiritual kind of writing and blamed the English for the obvious fact that this was not so, English critics tended to blame the Education Act of 1870 for extending literacy to a class and gender that might not make the best use of it. By 1900 the literacy rate in England was over 90 percent for both sexes and was even higher in London (Bloom, 32). In Ireland about 41 percent of the populace was literate in 1861; in 1901, the figure was 79 percent and, of course, was higher in the cities. The Irish Education Act of 1892 provided for compulsory school attendance for children
between the ages of six and fourteen, if they lived in cities, towns, or townships, and allowed for a full or partial abolishment of fees (Thom's, 633). Matthew Arnold in 1869 had warned against people who, seeing a new group of consumers and assuming that they would never ask for “the best that has been thought and said,” “will try to give the masses…an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses” (Arnold, 1150).

Arnold’s objection here was based on his sanguine assumption that the masses needed no special fare. Culture, by which he meant “high culture,” would automatically recommend itself to everyone, regardless of social class, through a force that, like gravity, was invisible and pervasive. H. G. Wells, on the other hand, writing in 1896, suggested that a natural degradation in taste followed the Education Act: “And while the male of the species has chiefly exerted its influence in the degradation of journalism, the debasing influence of the female, reinforced by the free libraries, has been chiefly felt in the character of fiction. ‘Arry reads Ally Sloper and Tit-Bits, ‘Arriet reads Trilby and The Sorrows of Satan” (74).\(^2\) It is no coincidence that Ally Sloper appears at \(U\ 9.607\) and \(U\ 15.2152\), Tit-Bits makes its first appearance at \(U\ 4.467\) and recurs regularly, Trilby is alluded to at \(U\ 15.2721\) and \(U\ 18.1041\), Corelli’s Sorrows of Satan at \(U\ 9.19\). In popular novels, as in newspapers, magazines, plays, and music hall entertainment, Joyce’s characters read and see what everyone read and saw at the time, throughout the British Isles and, to some extent, throughout the substantial area of Anglophone cultural hegemony.

**Popular Reading and Popular Fiction; Dialogism and Genre**

In the mid-nineteenth century popular fiction was for the most part viewed askance by the upper and upper-middle classes. It was attacked on many familiar grounds, but also on the rather surprising one that it was a distraction from the proper concern with empire. An 1874 review in Temple Bar argues,

> indeed we have been, since the Romans, the only truly imperial people. We have embraced the globe with the arms of our ambition; we have scoured every sea; we have colonized every sphere. But the insularity with which we were once unfairly rebuked is at last becoming…our
characteristic and opprobrium… We are determinedly insular, and we find even the island too big… ‘our neighborhood’ is the most delightful and absorbing thing in life…. It is this quality of narrow curiosity which is the paralysis of all wide and noble interest, which the novel stimulated and feeds…. these are the concerns of a once imperial people. (cited in Gilbert, 72)

Here the concerns Mr. Deasy announces as proper to a great people in “Nestor,” and which Stephen epitomizes as “those big words… which make us so unhappy” (U 2.264), are diametrically opposed to the private concerns of the popular novel. And yet by late in the century the popular novel had become “almost respectable.” William Gladstone, one of the more intellectual and scholarly Prime Ministers, late in the century was observed at a political club engrossed in reading not the Iliad—which he was at the time engaged in translating—but Rhoda Broughton’s 1870 best seller Red as a Rose is She (Bloom, 1). The anecdote not only illuminates the greater degree of acceptance gained by popular novels, but helps explain why in “Eumaeus” the sailor Murphy, professing himself to have been a great reader at one time, claims Broughton’s book along with Arabian Nights as his favorites (U 16.1680).

The expansion of the popular readership in the late nineteenth century was evidenced in a huge increase in publication of both books and serial publications, such as newspapers and magazines. While in the first half of the nineteenth century roughly 600 books appeared annually, in the latter half the number grew to 2,600; by 1901 it was over 6,000 and by 1913 over 12,000 (Orel, 14). John Gross’s examination of census figures for Great Britain finds the number of people claiming the professions of author, editor, or journalist to have grown from 3,400 in 1881 to around 6,000 in 1891, 11,000 in 1901, and 14,000 in 1911 (199–200). Most observers experienced the burgeoning of popular fiction around the turn of the century as somewhat chaotic, and books were not marketed by category as they are in major bookstores today. Clive Bloom argues that it was only shortly before the 1920s that the popular novelistic genres began to sort themselves out into categories such as detective fiction, romance, adventures of empire, family sagas, and Christian morality tales (86–87). But he also asserts that “at the end of the twentieth century the two leading popular genres were the same as at its beginning and still commanded the greatest sales: detective fiction and women’s romance”; these two categories, broadly construed, represented at least 50 percent of genre fiction sales (13, 85).
If we take detective fiction to include the “masculine” genres of thriller, espionage, and certain types of action and adventure novels, in addition to the hugely popular works of Conan Doyle, and the romance to include the varieties of “feminine” domestic narratives that could range from the salacious to the insistently Christian, then we can see how these meta-genres dominated popular writing. We can also recognize how Joyce used these two as the basis for his pair of major parodic narratives, the matched chapters “Cyclops” and “Nausicaa.” While “Cyclops” mimics the oral delivery of an anonymous barfly, it also has characteristics of “hard-boiled” American-style mystery fiction and of several of the paranoid conspiracy subgenres of the time, such as those about the invasion of England or a Jewish plot to discredit Christ and thus wreck Western civilization. Of course the “mystery” sedulously investigated in the “Cyclops” episode concerns who is responsible for the fallen state of the Irish, and the answer—foreigners and Jews—is a foregone conclusion. The chapter is no more satisfying when seen as an adventure story, climaxing as it does with an escape by horse-drawn cart and a flung biscuit tin, but Joyce’s final parodic touches make it clear that he would view the overblown action climaxes typical of the genre with an equally jaundiced eye. Aside from the “Cyclops” parody, *Ulysses* as a whole shares much with the detective story. It demands of both its characters and its readers scrupulous attention to detail and active interpretation (“Signatures of all things I am here to read”; *U* 3.31). As Hugh Kenner pointed out, it presents a kind of civilian allegory of Conan Doyle’s creation, juxtaposing “the insolent amorality of the clue-reader with the trepident admiration of the decent but muddled citizen: Holmes, Watson; Stephen, Bloom” (161).

It is certainly no news that Joyce parodies the sentimental women’s domestic romance novel in “Nausicaa,” and at least since Suzette Henke’s essay “Gerty MacDowell: Joyce’s Sentimental Heroine,” it has been generally recognized that a major target of the parody was Maria Cummins’s *The Lamplighter*, which Gerty has read, and which features her namesake. But *The Lamplighter* is rather muted in its Christianity, while what Joyce termed “mariolatry” is a vivid thread in the tapestry of “Nausicaa.” Because the modern inheritors of this genre—the Mills and Boone publications in England or the Harlequin romances in America—tend to avoid overt religiosity, it is easy to forget that around the turn of the century a rather strenuous Christianity was often interwoven with the mild eroticism of the genre. Robert Hichens’ work is an example, and so, in a somewhat skewed fashion, is Marie Corelli’s. Another, published not long after
Bloomsday, was Florence L. Barclay’s *The Rosary* (1909). The book ends with a transport of wedded bliss such as Gerty imagines for herself, deeply infused with an aura of religiosity. The blinded husband seduces his wife thus:

> Come in, beloved, and I, who see as clearly in the dark as in the light, will sit and play *The Rosary* for you; and then, *Veni Creator Spiritus*; and I will sing you the verse which has been the secret source of peace, and the sustaining power of my whole inner life, through the long, hard years, apart.
> “Now,” whispered Jane. “Now, as we go.”
> So Garth drew her hand through his arm; and as they walked, sang softly:
> Enable with perpetual light,
The dullness of our blinded sight;
Anoint and cheer our soiled face. . . . (cited in Bloom, 88–89)

By 1924 this had sold over a million copies, with numerous translations. The message of spiritual consolation rather confusedly commingled with the erotic union of husband and wife certainly resonates with the major themes of Gerty’s inner monologue, so that, whatever may have been the specific generic target of Joyce’s satire in “Nausicaa,” it clearly combines the erotic and the spiritual in a style that Joyce’s modernist sensibility found comic.

If for purposes of the present argument we accept the idea of opposing “male” and “female” meta-genres of the popular novel, then we should recognize that, on the one hand, the distinction between popular and serious novels is similarly generic, and that, on the other, popular novels in the mid- to late nineteenth century fell into numerous subgenres, some publicly acknowledged, some apparent only in retrospect. There were “scare” stories warning of the imminent invasion of Great Britain by Germany or Japan, or playing on the pervasive fear of racial degeneration around the turn of the century. There were several varieties of religious or mystical novels, notably including Corelli’s religiously themed romances, perhaps reaching their popular apotheosis in Lew Wallace’s *Ben Hur*. There were the remnants of the spate of “silver fork” novels of high society that Bulwer-Lytton inaugurated. One of the best-known genres of the nineteenth century, generally termed the “novel of sensation” (and which today has been absorbed by more specialized forms, such as the “thriller”), was produced by well-known figures such as Dickens and Wilkie Collins, as well as by its most famous genre practitioner
at the time, M. E. Braddon. The novel Molly quizzes Bloom about in “Calypso,” *Ruby: The Pride of the Ring* (U 4.346), belongs to a tiny splinter genre, termed “circus novels,” that both exploited and protested the putative immorality of the conditions in which girls drafted to work in the circus were forced to live.

In discussing popular literary genres of the nineteenth century, there is simply no consensus as to a list of mutually exclusive types. Genres overlap; they rise and fall in popularity and often look very different in historical perspective than they did to contemporaries. Once we realize that, for instance, science fiction will become an important genre in the twentieth century, it no longer suffices to term some of the works of Conan Doyle or Wells “romances.” The very concept of novelistic genre includes the novel itself, which was a synthetic genre among the inherited classical ones, and which Bakhtin chooses to regard as a meta-genre, potentially incorporating all the others. At the opposite extreme, we could regard the works of a single distinctive author as a genre. This is, of course, a grouping we do not usually treat as generic, but is a logical extension of the term. Indeed, Bakhtin pushes the idea of genre even further, to embrace splintered fragments of individual novelistic texts, through his concept of “speech genres.” While “any utterance...is individual and therefore can reflect the individuality of the speaker (or writer): that is, it possesses individual style,” Bakhtin points out that this kind of style is mostly possible in artistic writing, whereas a stylization that is more directly socially determined may “obtain in speech forms that require a standard form” (Bakhtin, 1986, 63). So genre represents a cross section of linguistic and social usage that can be taken at virtually any level of generalization or particularity.

It is equally difficult to decide on the category occupied by genre itself. Following Bakhtin and others, Pamela Gilbert critiques formalist notions of genre as an egregious example of ahistoricizing texts, and instead offers a social and dialogical understanding of it:

Genre acts both as a topographical feature of the terrain of the marketplace and as a set of reading instructions anterior to the text itself. It is produced discursively as a social category and is aligned with other social categories such as gender and class.... Thus, once an author/text is established within a certain generic domain, that is, coming from a certain “location” within the marketplace and appealing to a certain consumership, critics, publishers, authors, and readers will enforce, through master-readings (reviews), packaging, textual references, and reading assumptions, a reading of that text which is congruent with its assigned generic pedigree. (Gilbert, 59)
By invoking something like Fish’s reading protocols here, Gilbert usefully stresses the involvement of the popular genres with the marketplace and the implied dialogical interchange with readers that was a characteristic feature of popular publishing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her definition of genre here does flirt with tautology, in the implication that a genre is anything the marketplace (wherever that may be) decides to call a genre. Instead, I would suggest that, as Todorov puts it in a summary of Bakhtin’s thought, “genre is a sociohistorical as well as a formal entity” (Todorov, 80). According to Todorov, Bakhtin finds genre more important than individual stylistics or groupings, such as literary schools, because it is quasi-independent of individual decisions, and “the privileged position of genre is linked to this mediating function” (81). Still, Gilbert is correct in suggesting that there is nothing either inevitable or intrinsic about genre, and popular texts can in fact be read “against the grain,” so as to bring out features that would be obscured when the same text is approached with generic expectations. Indeed, much of the branch of cultural studies concerned with popular literature is the result of reading generic works in some non-generic perspective. In the present study, popular works will sometimes be interrogated from a generic perspective, sometimes against the grain of their apparent genre: for example, I will both consider the turn-of-the-century newspaper as a genre and also examine the newspaper’s novelistic qualities.

Problems of Allusion

Joyce is a notoriously allusive writer, and the current study, like many others, relies on this aspect of his writing. More traditional studies, and most of the work from the early, “heroic” phase of Joyce studies, focused on the relationship of his writing to the “greats” whose names, works, or lives cropped up in Dubliners, Portrait, Ulysses, or the Wake—Shakespeare, the Bible, Dante, Bruno, Vico, and of course, preeminent in the case of Ulysses, Homer’s Odyssey. The first serious, extended critical work on Joyce, Stuart Gilbert’s James Joyce’s “Ulysses,” is in great part an explanation of the ways in which the book alludes continuously to Homer’s Odyssey. The first serious, extended critical work on Joyce, Stuart Gilbert’s James Joyce’s “Ulysses,” is in great part an explanation of the ways in which the book alludes continuously to Homer’s Odyssey. Simply because he discusses the book’s episodes by their Homeric names as he runs through the novel, Gilbert implies that this allusion constitutes a fundamental level of meaning, and this assumption has been maintained in much of the later criticism. Of course Gilbert, who was something of a spiritualist, probably saw the motif of “metempsychosis” in more
literal terms than Joyce may have intended, and this would lend the Homeric allusions an added significance. Joyce himself apparently laid great stress on the Homeric allusions while working with Gilbert, who seldom questioned whether Joyce was always being either sincere or accurate with him. But Gilbert’s stress on the Homeric parallels was also motivated by the Anglo-American literary-cultural situation. During the early years of Joyce criticism, from the 1930s up through the 1960s, at least part of the trajectory of literary criticism was determined by the New Critical campaign to lend legitimacy to High Modernist works by exploring their references to (and thus, it is implied, continuity with) great literature of the past.

Eliot’s well-known essay “Ulysses, Order, and Myth” made this argument explicit in his claim that Joyce’s work, by invoking classical myth, provides a structuring principle for the chaos of modern life: “Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythic method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art” (681). Eliot’s formulation here rather strangely implied that certain of the allusions in Joyce were the most important reason his novel had artistic significance. A similar assumption lies behind Gilbert Highet’s discussion of Joyce and Eliot in The Classical Tradition (1949). The “tradition” Highet invoked was essentially that of Eliot’s essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” an ideal array of the best works of the past, which was always open to—and could be slightly modified by—the addition of modern works of sufficient genius. F. R. Leavis’s The Great Tradition (1948) relied upon a similar concept, although Leavis chose to put greater emphasis on moral seriousness (and chose Lawrence rather than Joyce as his modern exemplar). Such concepts, by restricting the canon to a limited number of aesthetically “serious” works and by implying that each member of the group is somehow in dialogue with all the rest, puts a formal premium on what would later come to be called “intertextuality.”

Throughout the first phase of Joyce criticism, Joyce benefitted from the New Critical revaluation of complexity, especially the sort of textual difficulty and density that the frequent use of allusion made possible. He also, perhaps wrongly, benefitted from a basically conservative valuation of classical sources, so that the association of his writing with that of Homer was taken to suggest that the effect of Joyce’s work should be similar to that of his classical model. But this of course is not necessarily the case. In a thoughtful essay on Joyce’s relationship to Homer, Fritz Senn suggests that while “ultramodernist Joyce always turned back to the classics, Aristotle, Homer, Ovid; to medieval figures like Augustine, Aquinas, Dante; and later
to Giordano Bruno, Nicolas of Cusa, Pico della Mirandola, or Shakespeare... history, Vico, and Finnegans Wake all say that each impulse of new life is a revival” (71; Senn’s emphasis). In other words, with each new invocation of a classical or medieval source everything starts afresh. As Keith Booker observes, commenting on this essay, “For Senn, Joyce does not use The Odyssey as a structural model for Ulysses. Instead, Joyce sets up the relatively pure and homogeneous style and language of Homer’s epic as a starting point against which he can define his radically heterogeneous text as the antithesis” (22).

There are several questions bearing on this issue, most fundamentally (a) how significant is Joyce’s use of a series of allusions to Homer’s Odyssey in Ulysses; and (b) if it is significant, in what way is it so? If we assume that the Odyssey bears importantly on Ulysses, it is possible, even likely, that it does so ironically. After all, Molly, Joyce’s version of Penelope, is emphatically not faithful to her wandering husband; Bloom, in confronting his “Cyclops” in a bar, is more tongue-tied than verbally clever, and instead of slaying even one suitor he appears to be a relatively complaisant cuckold. Thus we would have a Joyce who, like the traditional Eliot, shows the destruction of traditional values in our debased modern world. If we invert this same reading, we might argue that Joyce’s novel implicitly critiques the conservative, masculinist, classist, militarist values of Homer, instead offering for our admiration Bloom’s pacifism and androgyny.

Of course most readings of Joyce find him located at neither extreme, but instead partially affirmative, partially oppositional in his relationship to his classical precursors. But an even more skeptical and pragmatic reading might emphasize that readers unaware of Joyce’s sheets of correspondences and their elaboration by generations of critics might well miss virtually all the “parallels” cited there, just as the initial readers of Ulysses did. As A. Walton Litz has pointed out, a good number of the Homeric parallels Joyce listed were never actually used in his novel, while many others were added very late in composition, as finishing touches in the book’s elaborate embroidery: certainly they were not “structural” in any meaningful way (21). And even if they are taken to be structural, that does not necessarily imply that they are important to the reader’s experience. More than one critic has insisted that the Homeric references are precisely a scaffolding that allowed Joyce, as author, to create his masterpiece, lending it a form other than that dictated by simple narrative; but once the book was written, we readers could just as easily dispense with these references.4

The question of the role of the Odyssey vis-à-vis Joyce’s novel epitomizes the ambiguous nature and function of allusion in his writing.
Like Stephen’s idea of an author, Homer is both omnipresent and invisible in *Ulysses*: the title directly alludes to his protagonist, although rather oddly in the Roman rather than the Greek form, and yet Joyce specifically refused to allow the “schema” he had given Gilbert to be printed as part of *Ulysses*, despite the pleadings of Bennett Cerf. So the Homeric allusion is both present and absent in the book itself: it exists most fully in a document that was generated by Joyce and publicized by him, but was scrupulously withheld from publication as part of the novel. As many critics have pointed out, this parallels the situation of Eliot’s footnotes to *The Waste Land*, although only roughly. I believe Joyce’s idea here—one that will surface in many forms in the present study—was to actively involve the reader in the production of the text. If the schema had been somehow included within the novel, and/or if Homeric chapter titles had been used in it, then that much of the interpreting would have been generally regarded as a closed question. As things stand, though, these allusions are in some degree occult: they both do and do not bear the signature of the author, and readers must take their own positions regarding their significance.

So we can distinguish between direct allusions, in which a writer or work is specifically named or quoted in the text, and occult allusions, in which there is extratextual evidence that a writer or work is to be invoked. The most frequent sort of direct (or semi-direct) allusion in *Ulysses* is not the one in which a cultural figure is named, but the one in which he or she is invoked stylistically, as in the “Oxen of the Sun” passages mimicking the history of English prose, or as in the “Nausicaa” chapter, whose style suggests a sentimental-domestic “women’s novel” (such as the one actually named, *The Lamplighter*). A far more common problem is the indirect allusion, in which Joyce appears to be invoking a given passage or cultural phenomenon, but in an indirect, and thus usually a debatable, way. Robert Boyle, S.J., in *James Joyce’s Pauline Vision: A Catholic Exposition*, recognizes at one point in his argument that he is hanging a complex reading of a passage in the *Wake* on a debatable Biblical citation, and faces the problem directly:

My own conviction—that the Pauline text shines out from *FW* 482: “What can’t be coded can be decoded if an ear aye seize what no eye ere grieved for”\(^5\)—may seem at first glance to require some relatively esoteric circumstances:…a Catholic alertness to the religious profundities of the text; a philosopher’s sensitivity to its metaphysical implications; a consideration of Joyce’s constantly deeper use, and his decreasingly acrimonious toleration, of religious and specifically Catholic doctrines and attitudes to express his own literary theory and
practice; and other elements. Maybe so. My own judgment is that what I see is actually present in Joyce’s text, and not merely in my own reading of it. But even if it is not,...I consider that the evidence I intend to bring to bear upon my perception of the text will, in illuminating Joyce’s total product, justify my procedure. (x-xi)

This issue comes up quite frequently, in different forms. Critics eager to find echoes of Dante, or Shaw, or William Stead in Joyce will be far more likely to detect their presence in Joycean passages, images, or dramatic situations than will others. The same is true when hunting for allusions to popular literature. Many titles are popular phrases, so when Bloom thinks about a man attempting to back out of a secret society and being anonymously stabbed in the back, his phrase “Hidden hand” (U 8.459) may refer to E. D. E. N. Southworth’s 1888 novel by that title, or to Tom Taylor’s 1864 melodrama by the same title, or simply to the cliché phrase. Probably the best way to determine the truth of the situation would be to investigate both anterior texts to see if a case can be made for a dialogical interchange with the passage from *Ulysses*, or whether on the contrary the two texts remain stubbornly independent of one another.

An excellent example of the indirect allusion about whose presence each reader must make his or her own decision is furnished by a man named Joseph Pujol, known by the sobriquet “Le Petomane,” which we might translate as the “flatulist.” Between about 1892 and 1900 he was the toast of Paris, and in a time when the immensely popular actress Sarah Bernhardt might make at best 8,000F in a evening, Le Petomane brought in 20,000F in a single Sunday at the Moulin Rouge. He was undoubtedly one of the most famous low-comedy performers of Paris, the city in which Joyce spent most of his adult life. According to a memoir written by his son, Pugnol discovered the abilities that his somewhat unusual anatomy allowed him to exercise when, as a young man doing military service, he was bathing with other soldiers. He found he was able to suck in an enormous amount of water through his rectum and then eject it forcefully, to the delight of his companions. More than this, he discovered that having cleansed his pipes in this way, he was able to make musical sounds of a variety of pitches and, with practice, was even able to do imitations of different musical instruments, not to mention artillery and the voice of an opera singer. As his son observed, “The word ‘fart’ is somewhat vulgar. But my father had transformed this action into an art since having taken in air that way he used it to make music or, if you prefer
it, to modulate sound from the smallest and almost inaudible to the sharpest and most prolonged, simply according to the contraction of his muscles. He could do what he liked with his stomach—and there was no smell” (Nohain and Caradec, 22–23).

Unfortunately the details of Le Petomane’s act are now unrecapturable—gone, we might say, with the wind—but it seems he comported himself at all times quite seriously, as an artist, which of course added to the general astonished hilarity. A contemporary observes, “I can truthfully say that I have never seen houses laugh, shout, and scream as they did when this little man with his William II moustache, crew cut hair and deadpan face pretended to be unaware of his incongruities…. People were literally writhing about. Women, stuffed in their corsets, were being carried out by nurses which the cunning manager…had stationed in the hall, well displayed in their white uniforms” (12–13). I might add that Le Petomane went to great lengths to demonstrate that there was no trickery involved in his performances. He gave private audiences for men only in which he performed in a bathing costume with the critical part cut away, and on one occasion was tipped a 20 franc gold piece by the King of Belgium.

Bloom, of course, is no Petomane, and unlike him will not make theatrical history; he is an amateur who merely adds his own musical coda to the performance of the bar habitués in “Sirens.” It is most unlikely that he has ever heard of Le Petomane; but, on the other hand, it is quite likely that Joyce had when he crafted this episode to feature Bloom as the final performer of the Ormond Bar concert. Throughout the chapter, Bloom, a non-singer, must listen to heartrending ballads of love, loss, and betrayal, and must somehow defend himself against them and against the despair that must accompany them. He does so, triumphantly, at the end of the chapter, as he walks out, still digesting his lunch of burgundy wine and a Gorgonzola sandwich. He sees a picture of Robert Emmet in a shop window and thinks of his famous last words, words Irish schoolchildren still sometimes learn by heart. Following his conviction of treason for his leadership of a nationalist rebellion, Emmet was asked if he had anything to say before the death sentence was pronounced, and gave the famous reply, “Let no man write my epitaph…. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not until then, let my epitaph be written. I have done.” Words like these, Bloom realizes, with their heroic resignation, are a trap for him, and he must empty them of their pathos by a musical modulation into the key of farce. He also has the practical problem that while walking down the sidewalk he
needs to pass gas and is hoping for some loud noise to cover up the process, such as a passing tram:

Seabloom, greasabloom viewed last words. Softly. When my country takes her place among.

Prrrr.
Must be the bur.
Fff! Oo. Rrpr.

PrrrPrrrPrrrrrPrrrrrr.

Done. (U 11.1284)

If we admit the allusion to Le Petomane, it should probably be classed as a contextual allusion, since no specific verbal echo is involved, either directly or indirectly. Although it would seem impossible to establish whether there is an allusion to Le Petomane inherent in this passage, it is impossible to read “Sirens” the same way once we are aware of that possibility. Insofar as Le Petomane’s history constitutes a text, there is, undeniably, space here for dialogical interplay with the conclusion of “Sirens.”

A closely related kind of allusion is the formal one, in which no specific verbal sequence, but instead the form of the Joycean passage, implicitly offers an allusion. The best-known example here is the form of “Ithaca,” in which complex, remote, often abstract questions are posed by an unknown interlocutor, to be answered sometimes with epigrammatic brevity, sometimes with inhuman loquaciousness. In the Gilbert schema, Joyce terms the chapter’s “technic” “catechism (old),” emphasizing the ritual, depersonalized character of the recitation and implicitly offering it for comparison with the “catechism (young)” of “Nestor,” where Stephen quizzes his students and is quizzed by Mr. Deasy. Other critics have pointed out the chapter’s similarity to a police report and a school viva voce examination. Critics soon identified as a model Richmal Mangnall’s Questions, which is mentioned as one of Stephen’s textbooks in Portrait (P 53). The book exists in editions as early as 1800, and in a mid-nineteenth-century version even has a section devoted to astronomy:

Mention some of the most noted astronomers of ancient and modern times.
—Ptolemy, Pythagoras and Hipparchus among the ancients; and Galilei, generally called Galileo, Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Sir