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HARRY BLAMIRE

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book

A GUIDE THROUGH

ULYSSES

THIRD EDITION

The New Bloomsday Book

A review of the first edition:

‘This will become the standard work of its kind... Harry Blamires has written a straightforward, unpretentious 263-page paraphrase, labour of love. Severely restricting flights of interpretation to useful cross-references, he stays close to the text at all times.’

Guardian

Since 1966 readers new to James Joyce have depended upon this essential guide to *Ulysses*. Harry Blamires helps readers to negotiate their way through this formidable, remarkable novel and gain an understanding of it which, without help, it might have taken several readings to achieve.

The New Bloomsday Book is a crystal clear, page-by-page, line-by-line running commentary on the plot of *Ulysses* which illuminates symbolic themes and structures along the way. It is a highly accessible, indispensable guide for anyone reading Joyce’s masterpiece for the first time.

To ensure that Blamires’s classic work will remain useful to new readers, this third edition contains the page numbering and references to three commonly read editions of *Ulysses*: the Oxford University Press ‘World Classics’ (1993), the Penguin ‘Twentieth-Century Classics’ (1992), and the Gabler ‘Corrected Text’ (1986) editions.

The New Bloomsday Book

A guide through *Ulysses*

Third Edition

Harry Blamires



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Conversion table

	<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>		<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>		<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>
1	1	3–4		145	168–9		305	355–6
	5	5–6		150	174–5		310	361–2
	10	11–12	9	151	176–7	14	314	366–7
	15	17–18		155	181		320	373–4
2	20	24–5		160	186–7		325	378–9
	25	30–1		165	192–3		330	384–5
	30	36		170	198–9		335	390–1
3	31	37–8		175	204–5		340	396–7
	35	41–2	10	180	210–11		345	401–2
	40	47–8		185	215–16	15	350	408–9
4	45	53–4		190	221–2			355
	50	59		195	227–8		360	419–20
	55	65		200	233–4		365	424–5
	5	58	68	205	239–40		370	430–1
	60	70–1	11	210	245–6		375	435–6
	65	76–7		215	250–1		380	441–2
	70	82–3		220	256–7		385	446–7
6	72	84–5		225	262–3		390	451–2
	75	87–8		230	268–9		395	457–8
	80	93–4		235	274–5		400	462–3
	85	99–100	12	240	280–1		405	468–9
	90	105–6		245	285–6		410	473–1
	95	111		250	291–2		415	478–9
7	96	112–13		255	297–8		420	484–5
	100	116–17		260	303–4		425	489–90
	105	122–3		265	309–10		430	495–6
	110	128–9		270	315–16		435	500
	115	134–5		275	321–2		440	505–6
	120	140–1		280	327		445	510–11
	8	124	144–5	13	284	331–2		450
	130	151–2	290		338–9		455	520–1
	135	157	295		343–4		460	525–6
	140	162–3	300		349–50		465	530–1

x *Conversion table*

	<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>		<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>		<i>Gabler</i>	<i>Oxford</i>
	470	536		530	603–4		590	670–1
	475	541–2		535	608–9		595	676
	480	546–7		540	614–15		600	681–2
	485	551–2	17	544	619		605	687
	490	557		550	625–6	18	608	690–1
	495	562–3		555	631–2		610	692–3
16	501	569–70		560	636–7		615	698–9
	505	573–1		565	642–3		620	704–5
	510	579–80		570	647–8		625	710–11
	515	585–6		575	653–4		630	716–17
	520	591–2		580	658–9		635	722–3
	525	597–3		585	664–5		640	727–8

Note: figures in bold refer to episode numbers

Introductory note

This book arises from two convictions: the first, that *Ulysses* is the major imaginative work in English prose of the present century; the second, that it is high time to extend Joyce's readership. The day ought surely to be not far distant when it will be as unthinkable to neglect *Ulysses* in English Literature courses as it would be to neglect *The Waste Land*. At present many readers are still put off Joyce by the difficulty, or supposed difficulty, of his work. The young student especially, pressed by his teachers to read so much, is tempted to push *Ulysses* aside simply because its reading will demand what seems a disproportionate amount of time. I have therefore tried to provide the kind of guide which will help the new reader to find his way more quickly about Joyce's formidable book. I should like to think that, used alongside the text, *The Bloomsday Book* will enable the reader to get from his first reading of *Ulysses* an understanding which, without my guide, it might have taken him several readings to arrive at.

It is not, of course, possible to work on *Ulysses* for any length of time without making discoveries which, one believes, have something new to add to the literature of Joycean criticism and interpretation. Had I concentrated in my book on such discoveries, developing my own theory of *Ulysses* and pursuing in detail points which exemplify and corroborate it, I might have written a book of some interest to the Joycean specialist but of little interest to others. This was not my aim. It is not my main purpose here to join in the critical conversation carried on among those who already know and love *Ulysses*, valuable as I believe that conversation to be. Rather I wish to interest the student and the general reader whom this specialized critical literature does not touch.

Nevertheless, it would be foolish to pretend that my view of *Ulysses* is exactly the same as the next man's. A reader brings his own interests to a writer as big as Joyce, and Joyce can accommodate them. I myself have been especially interested in the theological patterns of *Ulysses* created by the numerous implicit correspondences and metaphorical overtones, and I have perhaps something new to say in exploring them. But I trust that I have not allowed this interest to become a dominant or disproportionate concern. I would not claim a paramount validity for these theological patterns; only that they exist, alongside other patterns, and demand recognition accordingly.

As I see it, the vital need at present is to stress that *Ulysses* is a great universal masterpiece, not a great freak. Its category is as much the category of *Paradise Lost* (or the *Odyssey*, of course) as that of *Tristram Shandy*. Its apparent eccentricities are superficial by comparison with the depths of its traditionalism. Its experimentation is neither so novel nor so capricious as it seems at first sight. Indeed, the devices of style and technique which startle new readers most, emerge, when studied, as logical extensions of traditional poetic practices as old as *Macbeth* and *Comus*—and older.

I have chosen the method of page-by-page commentary because this seems to me likely to serve best the needs of the student and the general reader whom I have in mind. I deal with matters in the order in which the book itself raises them. Where the text is easy my commentary is naturally brief: where it is difficult my commentary is as full as is compatible with preserving proportion and overall readability I have purposely allowed my guide to gather depth as it proceeds. That is to say, I have resisted the temptation to

pursue straightaway many of the numerous symbolic correspondences which are hinted at in the first three episodes, believing that it is better to allow the reader's interest to be fully engaged before pressing these upon him.

I have followed the now established practice of giving the eighteen episodes of *Ulysses* their Homeric titles. These titles derive from the fact that Joyce based his wanderings of Leopold Bloom in Dublin on 16 June 1904 on the wanderings of Odysseus, but they ought not to deter the reader who is ignorant of Homer. The importance of the Homeric parallel is primarily *structural*: it provided Joyce with a convenient framework, and it provides his critics and readers with a convenient nomenclature.

Finally, it is fair to warn the new reader of Joyce against the mistake which has led even some learned critics astray—that of assuming that a writer cannot be very funny and strangely serious at the same time. What Joyce called the 'jocoserious' is his most characteristic category, a source of simultaneous profundity and fun. Even satire and sympathy can co-exist, as the reader of *A Portrait of the Artist* already knows.

I am grateful to Miss Valerie Dowsett for help in compiling the Index.

Preface to the third edition

The main aim of this revision of *The New Bloomsday Book* is to bring its page references into line with current editions of *Ulysses*. At the same time I have taken the opportunity to make some slight alterations and additions here and there.

When my guide was first published thirty years ago (happily on Molly Bloom's birthday) it seemed needful to press upon the reader the stature of Joyce's *Ulysses* as a masterpiece which students of twentieth-century literature could not afford to neglect. What seemed worth saying then is self-evident now. Joyce's book is widely studied in academic courses. Many aids to the understanding of *Ulysses* have consequently become available. Scholars have tracked down allusions, local and historical, literary and musical. One may reasonably ask why my guide has nevertheless kept its usefulness.

The truth is that immediate contact with a vast array of explanatory notes can overwhelm readers who come fresh to Joyce. It is only when they have begun to find their feet in *Ulysses* and to grasp the overall pattern of event and symbol that they can happily relish more detailed exploration of the book's profligate allusiveness. *Ulysses* must not be made to appear more difficult than it is. Joyce's text is a highly organised one, and it only requires a little attention to the network of thematic linkages which undergirds the work to make the new reader feel at home in Joyce's world. That is why I chose the method of page-by-page commentary peppered with cross-reference.

My general emphasis is in line, I hope, with that of Thomas McGreevy, poet and critic, who was close enough to Joyce to be present at his deathbed and to act as his executor.

The splendour of order, to use Saint Thomas's phrase, has not been the dominating characteristic of modern English prose and it is partly because the quality was demonstrated on a vast scale in *Ulysses* that the book marked a literary revolution.

McGreevy went on to stress the epic status of *Ulysses*.

For *Ulysses* is an inferno. As Homer sent his Ulysses wandering through the inferno of Greek mythology and Virgil his Aeneas through one of Roman mythology so Dante himself voyaged through the inferno of the mediaeval Christian imagination and so Mr. Joyce sent his hero through the inferno of modern subjectivity

McGreevy was writing as one of twelve contributors to a collection of essays on Joyce's Work In Progress (the future *Finnegans Wake*) which Samuel Beckett edited in 1929 under the jocular title, *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work In Progress*. Joyce personally authenticated this book in a letter to Valery Larbaud: 'What you say about the Exag. is right enough I did stand behind those twelve Marshals more or less directing them what lines of research to follow.'

McGreevy's reference to Dante is noteworthy. Joyce's threefold design may not closely match Dante's, but the reader of *Ulysses* is spiralled down to the depths of the contemporary inferno in the *Circe* episode and gets many a glimpse of a paradiso in Joyce's favourite episode, *Ithaca*.

Part I

Chapter 1

Telemachus

Joyce's symbolism cannot be explained mechanically in terms of one-for-one parallels, for his correspondences are neither exclusive nor continuously persistent. Nevertheless certain correspondences recur throughout *Ulysses*, establishing themselves firmly. Thus Leopold Bloom corresponds to Ulysses in the Homeric parallel, and Stephen Dedalus corresponds to Telemachus, Ulysses's son. At the beginning of Homer's *Odyssey* Telemachus finds himself virtually dispossessed by his mother's suitors in his own father's house, and he sets out in search of the lost Ulysses. In Joyce's first episode Stephen Dedalus feels that he is pushed out by his supposed friends from his temporary residence, and leaves it intending not to return. The residence in question is the Martello tower on the beach at Sandycove, for which Stephen pays the rent. Buck Mulligan, a medical student, shares it with him, and they have a resident visitor, Haines, an Englishman from Oxford.

It is morning. The day begins with a parody of the Mass. Buck Mulligan, mimicking a priest approaching the altar, sings the introit and carries his shaving-bowl like the chalice. Stephen watches Mulligan from the staircase as he mockingly blesses his surroundings and offers to an imaginary congregation the 'body and soul and blood and ouns' (wounds) of a female Christ, 'christine', (His 'equine' face and hair like 'pale oak' hint at the treachery of a wooden horse.) The lathered water in the bowl represents the white corpuscles; the three whistles burlesque the sacring bell. Mulligan brings 'Chrysostomos' to Stephen's mind because Mulligan's gold-stopped teeth and his gift of the gab earn him the title which St John Chrysostom's preaching earned him, 'golden-mouthed'. Mulligan's ecclesiastical mummery before Stephen is a mockery of Stephen's seriousness, his intellectualism, and his former religious fervour.

Stephen provides a watchful but weary audience for Mulligan's performance. He complains of the behaviour of their English guest, Haines, who is subject to hysterical nightmares. Last night Haines raved terrifyingly after dreaming of a black panther. (Later passages establish the black panther as a symbol of Bloom, whose Christian name is Leopold. It is a symbol, too, which carries overtones of divinity Bloom becomes the lost 'father' whom Stephen discovers.) Mulligan borrows Stephen's handkerchief, mocks the beauty of the 'snotgreen sea', and 'Algy' Swinburne's description of it as 'the great sweet mother' (in *The Triumph of Time*). The image of the sea as mother introduces a persistent series of linkages between water and womanhood which relate to an underlying contrast between barrenness and fertility.

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(4)

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4 Mulligan seriously disapproves of Stephen for having refused to comfort his mother by praying at her deathbed. (See *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.) Because of Stephen's reputation, Mulligan has been forbidden by his aunt to have contact with him. Mulligan's rebuke brings back to Stephen the memory of a dream which he had soon after his mother's death, in which she appeared to him in her grave clothes. This memory haunts Stephen intermittently throughout the day and indeed dominates his mind at the moment of crisis in the *Circe* episode, itself the crisis episode of the book. (See pp. 473–5/681–3.)

At this stage begins the series of hints which establish an important correspondence between Stephen and Hamlet. As Hamlet sees his father's ghost on the platform of Elsinore Castle, so Stephen recalls, here on top of the Martello tower, the dream of his mother's ghostly reappearance. Mulligan, like Claudius, is a usurper. Mulligan chides Stephen for not casting his nighted colour off ('He kills his mother but he can't wear grey trousers'). Claudius-like again, Mulligan fancifully indulges the story that Stephen is mad (has 'general paralysis of the insane'). He tries to make Stephen see himself as others see him, holding up a cracked mirror before him; but for Stephen the mirror is a Shakespearean symbol of art (Drama holds the 'mirror up to nature' in *Hamlet*, and see p. 463/671), and the cracked looking-glass of a servant a symbol of Irish art in particular. (The metaphor is Oscar Wilde's.) Mulligan talks of touching Haines for money, then of organizing a ragging of Haines if he proves troublesome. The memory of how Clive Kempthorpe was ragged stirs Stephen, who hates violence, to say 'Let him stay'.

Once more Claudius-like, Mulligan tries to probe Stephen's moodiness, 'What have you against me now?', and Stephen refers to an occasion soon after Mrs Dedalus's death when Mulligan alluded to her callously as 'beastly dead'. Mulligan's response in part parodies Claudius's response to Hamlet. Deaths occur daily; the only tragic feature in this case was Stephen's own refusal to humour his mother's dying request. Stephen is not comforted. He resents Mulligan's insult to himself rather than the insult to his mother. And now, after telling him to stop brooding, Mulligan ironically begins to sing the very song which Stephen sang for his mother, at her special request, on her deathbed ('Who goes with Fergus?' by Yeats). This song, too, recurs to Stephen at later moments of crisis (see pp. 474/681 and 496/702). Here he recalls the deathbed scene, then moments of his mother's life from girlhood, some from her memories handed on to him, others from his own; and these lead to a fuller and more detailed recall of her ghostly reappearance in his dream, when the agony of her death and her failure to move him to pray were re-enacted in grotesque frightfulness (cf. pp. 473–5/681–3). Stephen's rejection of her dying demand that he should go through the motions of Catholic orthodoxy is a focal act around which cluster his demands for personal freedom. Indeed, symbolic correspondences give Stephen's act of

disobedience at his mother's deathbed an archetypal significance. It is associated with the acts of disobedience by which Lucifer rebelled against God (p. 42/63: 'Allbright he falls, proud lightning of the intellect...etc. '; see also p. 475/682) and by which Eve rebelled against God (p. 32/46, 'Will you be as gods?'). Thus the Fall of the Angels, by which Satan was cast out of Heaven, and the Fall of Man, by which Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, provide a cosmic background against which Stephen, exiled from his father's house and from the Martello tower, seeks independent individual fulfilment as man and as artist.

Mulligan calls Stephen down to breakfast and repeats his suggestion that Stephen should touch Haines, who is his admirer, for money. But this is just the kind of subservience (to English wealth) which Stephen rejects. Anyway, he reminds Mulligan that today is pay-day; whereupon the latter foresees a drinking bout at Stephen's expense. Mulligan goes downstairs first, leaving Stephen to meditate on his 'forgotten friendship' and his forgotten shaving-bowl. Shall he take the bowl down for him, he wonders, holding it as he used to hold the incense boat when he acted as server at Mass at Clongowes, thereby once more, in a different context, assuming the servant's role? ('Server of a servant' because Catholic Ireland is England's servant and Mulligan is ultimately the servant of Ireland and conventionality)

In the living-room below Mulligan, Haines, and Stephen settle down to breakfast, cooked and served largely, it would seem, by Mulligan, who continues his ritualistic mummery in the process. The comic story of Mother Grogan establishes a connexion between making tea and making water, which continues through the book. The two represent creativity and fertility. The young men carry on a burlesque literary conversation, mockingly treating Mother Grogan and her story as fit subjects for scholarly research.

The milkwoman arrives. Stephen sees her as a symbol of poor, sterile, subjected Ireland, around whom cluster the romantic phrases of the Celtic revivalists, but whose favour he scorns to beg. (She is transfigured into Old Gummy Granny among the nightmare caricatures of the *Circe* episode, p. 490/696). A true representative of her country, Stephen notes that she has more respect for Mulligan, the loud-voiced medicine-man, than for himself, the artist. When Haines tries out his Gaelic on her, she doesn't understand. We may take this as Joyce's comment on Celtic revivalism.

Buck Mulligan pays two shillings to reduce the outstanding milk debt to twopence. Haines speaks of visiting the national library today Mulligan proposes a swim first, then teases Stephen about his reluctance to wash. (Stephen's reluctance to wash or to bathe is symbolically associated with his rejection of his own baptism, his failure to commit himself to womanhood, and to engage himself fruitfully in artistic creation. He has rebelled against his own mother, his mother the Church, his mother country.)