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CHICAGO

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TEMPO

SECTION 5

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

LETTERS

The art of reading Joyce's 'Ulysses'

Beware of 'Finnegan's Wake'

CHICAGO — As the president of the Chicago Irish Brotherhood and as a novelist, I enjoyed your "Ulysses" article.

My message to you is that if you haven't found your way through that James Joyce well-thumped masterpiece, definitely lay off "Finnegan's Wake." His work based on an Irish street ballad about a laborer who is thought of as deceased after a fall from a ladder is mind-numbing. As a teenager, I tried to tackle Joyce's take on the popular and humorous song. My confusion drove me to the bookstore to find a Gaelic to English dictionary for translation. When I found out the wording was simply Joycean, I was stumped. After many a "jar" in Ireland and the United States, I've heard pubgoers who boast that they've read every word of "Finnegan's Wake" and never have I believed the source.

Thank you and "Happy Bloomsday."

— *Timothy K. Egan*