

KEYLESSNESS, SEX AND THE
PROMISED LAND: ASSOCIATED
THEMES IN *ULYSSES*

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EARLY IN THE "Ithaca" chapter of *Ulysses*, James Joyce refers to Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom as "the, premeditatedly (respectively) and inadvertently, keyless couple."¹ Stephen and Bloom both set out on June 16, 1904, without their keys; however, as Joyce here emphasizes, Stephen relinquishes the key to the Martello Tower knowingly, while Bloom unwittingly neglects to take the key to his house at 7 Eccles Street. In both cases, the characters' "keylessness" is a "key" to an understanding of their conditions.

W. B. Stanford explains that through "consubstantiality of the Father and Son" (a basic theme in *Ulysses*), Stephen shares Ulyssean qualities with Bloom.² Stanford uses Joyce's own terms to show that Stephen embodies the "centrifugal" or home-rejecting principle of Odysseus while Bloom ultimately favors the "Centripetal" or drawn-to-home antithesis, although both experience both impulses. Stephen is simpler; he resents Mulligan's request for the key ("Usurper," 23), and he delays delivering it until the last possible moment, but when he does ("Stephen handed him the key." 23) he does so knowingly. Then Stephen determines not to return to the tower where he is no longer master ("I will not sleep here tonight"). He realizes and accepts the fact that his father's house is not his place either ("Home also I cannot go"), where his sisters bicker and burn his books for fire, trade them for

1 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, 1961), p. 668. All subsequent citations will refer to this edition and will be noted in the text.

2 "Ulyssean Qualities in Joyce's Leopold Bloom," *Comparative Literature*, V (Spring 1953), 125-36, on p. 128.

656), as does Molly ("... and not living at home on account of the usual rowy house I suppose well its a poor case . . .," 778), but Stephen himself shows no sign of self-pity for this, and he refuses to accept Bloom's offer of a place to sleep. Stephen is haunted by the memory of his mother, but he has chosen to reject her influence upon him, as Mulligan reminds him: "You wouldn't kneel down to pray for your mother on her deathbed when she asked you" (8).

Richard M. Kain notes "Bloom's careless failure to carry his house-key is symbolic in more than one way."³ As a "keyless citizen" (697), Bloom has a Ulyssean longing for home on many levels. First, he longs to return to his house at 7 Eccles Street and his wife, Molly, who is in bed there, but he knows that his house, too, is usurped, by Blazes Boylan. Bloom yearns to return in a larger sense, however — to regain mastery of the house and to regain sexual mastery over Molly. In this connection, the Freudian symbolism inherent in the image of the key is explicit ("the barrel of an arruginated male key in the hole of an unstable female lock." 703). On another level, Bloom longs to be accepted as an Irishman, as is revealed in the "Cyclops" chapter:

- What is your nation if I may ask, says the citizen.
- Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland. (331)

Furthermore, as Stanford notes,

Bloom, though thwarted by his social condition from any prominence in politics, is not without secret ambitions to excel as a *politique*. In his delirium [sic] in Nighttown, he sees himself as 'alderman sir Leo Bloom', later to be the popular lord mayor of Dublin.⁴

In that scene, when Bloom accepts John Howard Parnell's hailing him as "Successor to my famous brother," he thanks him for "this right royal welcome to green Erin, the promised land of our common ancestors," and he is presented "the keys of Dublin" (483). Thus the city into which Bloom longs to be accepted is not only Dublin, but "the promised land" of his "ancestors," Zion. Bloom's longing is awakened early in the book, at the butcher's:

3 *Fabulous Voyager: James Joyce's ULYSSES* (New York, 1959), p. 167.

4 *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the adaptability of a Traditional Hero* (Oxford, 1954), p. 216.

Kinnereth on the lakeshore of Tiberias. . . . Agendath Netaim: planter's company. . . . Bleibtreustrasse 34, Berlin, W. 15. (59-60)

It is ironic that Bloom finds the Zionist sheet in the shop of the "ferreteyed porkbutcher" (59), for throughout the day Bloom's desire for a home, a place to belong, is connected in his mind with Agendath Netaim, while his alienation from that home and the "ancestors" associated with it is symbolized by his violation of Jewish law by eating pork. His first Nighttown fantasy is of his father, Rudolph, "garbed in the long caftan of an elder of Zion," and the guilty Bloom "Hides the crubeen and trotter behind his back, crestfallen" (437). Bloom recognizes this irony, at least subconsciously, for the two themes remain connected in his mind, and in a later fantasy:

(The mirage of the lake of Kinnereth with blurred cattle cattle cropping in silver haze is projected on the wall. Moses Dlugacz, ferreteyed albino, in blue dungarees, stands up in the gallery, holding in each hand an orange citron and a pork kidney.)

DLUGACZ

(Hoarsely.) Bleibtreustrasse, Berlin, W. 13 (464).

Kinnereth is the site of the Agendath Netaim, and Dlugacz, the pork-butcher, is now named Moses, the Hebraic leader of the Jews to the promised land, although he is still "ferreteyed." The "orange citron" is symbolic of the "orangegroves . . . north of Jaffa" which the model farm boasted of, and the address of the Zionist organization means "be true,"⁵ which Bloom is not when he eats "pork kidney" bought of Dlugacz.

In this way, as Stanford points out, "By making Bloom of Jewish descent, Joyce is able to deepen another traditional characteristic of Ulysses . . . his love of family and his homeland, Ithaca."⁶ As Kain puts it, "the Jew, like the Irishman, has been homeless for centuries."⁷ Another critic, Harvey Gross, traces a long literary tradition that amply justifies Joyce's choice of a Jewish protagonist: "The condition of the outsider is considered the Jew's heritage, and the writer has chosen the Jew as a symbol for his own isolation, his feelings

5 Noted by Leo Shapiro, "The Zion Motif in Joyce's *Ulysses*," *Jewish Frontier*, XIII (Sept., 1946). 14-16.

6 "Ulyssean Qualities," p. 131.

7 *Voyager*, p. 80.

of being an intruder in a hostile world, his being essentially unsimilable."⁸ Thus Bloom's heritage is a metaphor for the same alienation that Stephen experiences as an artist.

Another theme is served by the same metaphor. Kain's assertion that the Jew is "like the Irishman" must not be glanced over. *Ulysses* contains many connections between the Irish and the Jews. One, the reference to "Erin, the promised land," has already been cited, but this is in Bloom's own imagination. In the "Ithaca" chapter, the narrator draws a parallel between Irish and Jewish history in recapitulating Bloom's day's activities (728-729). Robert Tracy documents at length that, "To many of the writers of the Irish Literary Movement, and especially to James Joyce and Lady Gregory, there was an explicit identification between Moses, the Jewish leader, and Parnell, the Irish leader, and consequently between the Irish people and the Jews."⁹ Tracy illustrates this with the Cyclops episode, where the citizen mouths the opinions of Arthur Griffith (who appears in the book as an acquaintance of Bloom's) and carries a copy of *The United Irishman*, wherein Griffith promulgates this identification. The citizen himself, while loving Griffith's cause, hates Bloom the Jew, dramatizing Joyce's "active suspicion of the good faith and honesty of all patriots."¹⁰

That Joyce is actually concerned with politics is affirmed by Stanley Sultan, who shows this in the "Aeolus" chapter, which he calls "fundamentally about politics."¹¹ "IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS" (116), the site of Nelson's Pillar ("servant's replica of that in the capital of the master nation"¹²) and the center of the tram lines, the "guides of society" discuss politics. Stephen tells "*A Pisgah Sight of Palestine or the Parable of the Plums*" (interpreted by Sultan to be a condemnation of England's domination of Ireland), and Professor MacHugh quickly seizes the significance of the double title: "I see . . . Moses and the promised land."¹² Bloom's Agendath is a metaphor for Ireland's return to mastery of her house, or home rule.

8 "From Barabbas to Bloom: Notes on the Figure of the Jew," *Western Humanities Review*, XI (1957), 149-156, on p. 150.

9 "Leopold Bloom Fourfold: A Hungarian-Hebraic-Hellenic-Hibernian Hero," *Mass. R.*, VI (Spring Summer 1965), 523-538, on p. 525.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 534.

11 "Joyce's Irish Politics: the Seventh Chapter of *Ulysses*," *Mass. R.*, II (Spring 1961), 549-556, on p. 549.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 551. From *Ulysses*, p. 149.

In explaining this theme, Tracy points out that this parallel is furthered by the "keyless citizen" motif as well:

Bloom is at the same time an image of Ireland — dispossessed, wandering over the earth, without a national home, no master in his own house, without his house keys just as Ireland was without a House of Keys, that parliament of its own . . . Bloom does not rule his home, and his Homeric prototype reasserts his rule of his home; Ireland needs that Home Rule . . .¹³

The association of keys with the house of keys (parliament) is further linked with the advertisement which Bloom is striving to secure throughout the book:

— Like that, see. Two crossed keys, here. A circle, Then here the name Alexander Keyes. . . .

— You know yourself, councillor, just what he wants. Then round the top in leaded: the house of keys. . . .

— The idea, Mr. Bloom said, is the house of keys. You know, councillor, the Manx parliament. Innuendo of home rule. (120)

In Nighttown Alexander Keyes himself asks, "When will we have our own house of keys" (489)?

Those who have keys in *Ulysses* are they who have power, aligned with England rather than Ireland. Mulligan gets mastery over the tower when Stephen relinquishes the key to him, and he is using it to host Haines, the Englishman whom Stephen so despises ("Horn of a bull, hoof of a horse, smile of a Saxon" 23). Deasy, Stephen's equally despised employer, who is outspokenly pro-British (He speaks of "the pride of the English," 30), opens a moneybox to pay Stephen: "— Full stop, Mr. Deasy bade his keys" (932). The only other character to use keys, the editor, Crawford, whom Sultan identifies as one of the "guides of society," is recognized as a "villain" of *Ulysses* when he insults Bloom (To his face: "Begone!" [129] and behind his back: "Tell him to go to hell" [137]). Crawford will not leave his office without them: "Where are those blasted keys?" (144)

The sound of Crawford's keys suggests another connection:

He walked jerkily into the office behind, parting the vent of his jacket, jingling his keys in his back pocket. They jingled then in the air and against the wood as he locked his desk drawer. (130)

13 *Ibid.*, p. 555.

Jingling is associated with Blazes Boylan who has usurped Bloom's sexual prerogatives with Molly ("jingle jaunty blazes boy," 263). The sound is a conglomeration of associations with Boylan. First of all, it is the sound of the Blooms' bed when Molly moves in it ("the loose brass quoits of the bedstead jingled" [56]). Bloom hears this sound every time he thinks of Boylan in bed with Molly. It is also the sound of a piano; as Bloom listens to "Piano again. Cowley it is," he hears, "Jiggedy jingle jaunty jaunty" (271). "Jaunty" refers to Boylan's manner, and the piano is the excuse for his visit to Molly that day (to rehearse). Bloom finds the evidence of Molly's adultery on her piano "with exposed keyboard" ("exposed" suggests the openness of her adultery): "two discoloured ends of cigarettes, its musicrest supporting the music in the key of G natural for voice and piano of *Love's Old Sweet Song* . . ." (706). The cigarettes are, presumably, Boylan's, and the name of the song they perform together is suggestive of what they do together. Finally, the "key" the song is in suggests the way in which Bloom comes to terms with Molly's transgression, calling it "natural" for one of her Mediterranean temperament.

A reference has already been made of the "inserting" of a "male key in the hole of an unstable female lock." In this sense, Boylan inserts his "key" in Molly's "keyhole" in a way that Bloom has not done for years. Bloom envisions this when the figure of Boylan in Nighttown says to him, "You can apply your eye to the keyhole and play with yourself while I just go through her a few times" (566). Bloom's position with his "eye to the keyhole" represents his failure to insert the proper key in the door to Molly. The voyeuristic connotation of "keyhole" is explicit elsewhere: "Peeping Tom through the keyhole" (163). It applies to Bloom's masturbation in the "Nausicaa" chapter, at the end of which Bloom's thoughts become confused as he momentarily dozes: "tail end Agendath swoony lovey showed me her next year in drawers return next in her next her next" (382). On one level, he is remembering that Gerty MacDowell showed him her drawers, and that perhaps he will return some time to see her (and them) again. There are many other levels here, however. It may seem strange that Bloom recalls "Agendath" at this point. But, as Shapiro shows, "Plasto — Martha Clifford — adultery, whack by whack — Now, my Miss — adultery — Agendath Netaim — Bleibtreustrasse — Zion. These are the symbols which thereafter are joined, in part

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or in whole, with the Zion motif."¹⁴ The "olives, oranges, almonds or citrons" which Bloom pictures as fruits of the "planter's company," remind him of Molly eating olives and "spitting them out. . . . Oranges in tissue paper packed in crates. Citrons too. . . . Pleasant evenings we had then. Molly in Citron's basketchair. Nice to hold, cool waxen fruit, hold in the hand, lift it to the nostrils and smell the perfume" (60). Illicit sex takes Bloom back to the porkbutcher's where he saw Dlugacz flirting with "the nextdoor girl" and he himself remembers seeing her "whacking a carpet on the clothesline" (59) which afforded him a voyeuristic thrill similar to the one he recently enjoyed watching Gerty. It was there that he found the Zionist sheet, so he thinks of that, too, and it reminds him of the picture of oriental fruitfulness which he associates with Molly, who is "nice to hold" and redolent of "perfume" like the fruit. Perfume brings both Molly (when she and Bloom were courting) and Martha (her letter) to Bloom's mind: "Full voice of perfume of what perfume does your lilactrees" (275).

All of these associations function with amazing concentration in the "confused" words Bloom thinks before dozing, here quoted in full:

O sweety all your little girlwhite up I saw dirty
bracegirdle made me do love sticky we two naughty
Grace darling she him half past the bed met him
pike hoses frillies for Raoul to perfume your wife
black hair heave under embon *senorita*, young eyes
Mulvey plum years dreams return tail end Agendath
swoony lovey showed me her next year in drawers
return next in her next her next. (382)

Bloom's longing for Agendath is synonymous with his longing to have his wife once more wear perfume for him rather than her lover ("Raoul," the lover in *Sweets of Sin*, or Boylan), and to "do love sticky" in her rather than "in drawers," as he just did. Agendath reminds him of "next year in" Jerusalem from his father's Passover "hagadah book" (723) which he keeps at home and constantly associates with his father and, hence, his Jewish ancestry. But Bloom then thinks, "next in her," "her next," suggesting his hope that next time he

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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have fused.

This fusion is prepared for by earlier associations. When Bloom recalls earlier times with Molly ("I was happier then"), he feels a thrill about things he associates with her ("Gleaming silks, petticoats on slim brass rails, rays of flat silk stockings") and considers returning home, but he decides it is "Useless to go back. Had to be" (168). Immediately after this he thinks of, "High voices. Sunwarm silk. Jingling harnesses. All for a woman, home and houses, silk webs, silver, rich fruits, spicy from Jaffa. Agendath Netaim. Wealth of the world." He cannot go there, either.

Shortly thereafter Bloom is upset by the sight of Boylan in the street ("The flutter of his breath came forth in short sighs"), and he tries to excuse his appearance of distress by pretending to search for something: "Look for something I." There is significance in what he locates: "His hasty hand went quick into a pocket, took out, read unfolded Agendath Netaim" (183). Here again his suffering over his lost wife is connected to the Jews' loss of their homeland. The same correspondence can be seen when Boylan himself passes the porkbutcher's shop:

. . . wearing a straw hat very dressy, bought of John Plasto . . . Eh?
This is the jingle that joggled and jingled. By Dlugacz' porkshop bright
tubes of Agendath trotted a gallant-buttocked mare. (279)

As Shapiro notes, "Plasto" is part of this theme, the maker of Boylan's reappearing straw hat and the one in which Bloom carries his identification as Henry Flower, illicit lover of Martha. With his characteristic sound, Boylan becomes related to the place where the Zionist sheets are, and Agendath is related to the woman Boylan is "trotting" to see, the "gallant-buttocked mare," Molly.

The identification of this "mare" with Molly is further justified in the "Ithaca" chapter:

In what final satisfaction did these antagonistic sentiments and reflections, reduced to their simplest forms, converge?

Satisfaction at the ubiquity in eastern and western terrestrial hemispheres, in all habitable lands and islands explored or unexplored (the land of the midnight sun, the islands of the blessed, the isles of Greece, the land of promise) of adipose posterior female hemispheres, redolent of milk and honey and of excretory sanguine and seminal warmth,

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moods of impression or of contrarieties of expression, expressive of mute immutable mature animality. (734)

"Satisfaction," which is generally and here, specifically, found in the paradises of myth and religion (Joyce combines Scandinavian, Celtic and Hebraic versions of these by listing four such concepts from the different cultures which he draws on throughout his book), is said to lie in the very real region of "posterior female hemispheres," which are "redolent of milk and honey." Thornton notes, "The 'land flowing with milk and honey' is the Promised Land in the Bible."¹⁵ Female buttocks, then, take on this "promise," and, reminiscent again of the "mare" image, they express "animality." Bloom pays homage to this new religious symbol: "He kissed the plum mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump, on each melonous hemisphere, in their mellow yellow furrow, with obscure prolonged provocative melon-smellonous osculation" (734-735). The reiterated "melons," "melonous," "mellow," "melon-smellonous," suggest once more the "immense melonfields" of Zion (60), as the "furrow" recalls the agricultural settlements there.

In this way, Bloom seems to achieve a version of Agendath Netaim. Many critics interpret his burning of the "prospectus (illustrated) entitled Agendath Netaim" (he "ignited it in the candleflame," and "placed the cylinder in the basin of the candlestick disposing its unconsumed part in such a manner as to facilitate total combustion" [707]) as his rejection of Zion. Shapiro says he "is about ready to forget the prospectus," remembering it only enough to consider it as a money-making idea. Shapiro concludes that "To Bloom, Kinnereth could only be a business proposition, just another deal."¹⁶ But this need not be so. Bloom uses the burning prospectus to ignite "a black dimunitive cone" of "oriental incense." Though "dimunitive," the cone is called a "volcano," and it emits an "aromatic" and "redolent" "fume." The incense creates an oriental atmosphere which must be associated with the oriental spices of Agendath. The word "redolent" echoes the quality of Molly's milk-and-honey rump. Bloom uses the sheet which awakened his awareness of Zion to preserve some of its effect.

¹⁵ Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses: An Annotated List* (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 483.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

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reduced to a "fume" pervading the atmosphere. It fades as its companion symbol comes to fruition (Molly's flesh).

Bloom's consideration of "The reclamation of dunams of waste arenary soil, proposed in the prospectus of Agendath Netaim" (718) as a means to "vast wealth" need not be interpreted as crass materialism. His other schemes for this end are all plans that would benefit mankind: "The utilisation of waste," "the exploitation of white coal (hydraulic power)," recreational facilities, vans for milk delivery (ease for the milkwoman, Ireland), "development of Irish tourist traffic," and so on. These differ dramatically from the more common money-making schemes which only impoverish others.

Bloom, with characteristic compassion, has pitied Stephen for being "house and homeless," but he has been so himself. As Tracy remarks, he has "travelled racially,"¹⁷ through the moves his father made before arriving in Dublin ("London, Florence, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Szombathely") which "Leopold Bloom (aged 6) had accompanied. . . by constant consultation of a geographical map of Europe" (724). In his own life, he has moved from house to house around Dublin; Kain lists five residences which are identified in the book.¹⁸ But by the end of *Ulysses* Bloom is planning "to purchase by private treaty in fee simple a thatched bungalowshaped 2 storey dwellinghouse" and grounds (712), which he considers naming: "Bloom Cottage. Saint Leopold's. Flowerville" (714). In these names the various images of Bloom are recalled. It is for purchase of this home that he desires to find a "rapid but insecure means to opulence" (717). This purpose belies the interpretation which Shapiro advances¹⁹ and which Kain endorses when he says, "Bloom's real religion, like that of most men, is money."²⁰ Bloom is not like most men. Even Molly saw this, for in answer to Bloom's question, "Why men?" he recalls Molly's answer: "Because you were so foreign from the others" (380). Bloom is like Odysseus, and like Ireland; he longs for a home in which he will belong and rule, to which he will have the key.

There are suggestions in *Ulysses* that Bloom may realize his goal.

17 *Op. cit.*, p. 523.

18 *Voyager*, p. 244.

19 See quote p. 14, footnote #16.

20 *Voyager*, p. 182.

in Molly's rump, and there is her decision to serve him breakfast the next morning. One great source of Bloom's alienation is his feeling of failure to produce a viable male heir. At one point he considered the possibility that he is still able: "No son. Rudy. Too late now. Or if not? If still" (285)? Molly, too, considered this possibility, and she makes it clear that she would want it from Bloom: "supposing I risked having another not off him [Boylan] . . . Poldy has more spunk in him yes thard be awfully jolly" (742). When Bloom recalls the women who showed interest in him during the day, he thinks of "the possibility of exercising virile power of fascination in the most immediate future after an expensive repast in a private apartment in the company of an elegant courtesan, of corporal beauty, moderately mercenary, variously instructed, a lady by origin" (722). The word "after" may suggest that Bloom considers exercising "virile power" with Molly *after* having dinner with a courtesan. In any case, the very contemplation of this "power" is significant, and the description of the "courtesan" is not inapplicable to Molly, with the exception of the term "lady by origin." Bloom is beginning to feel like a man again, and he proves this by ordering breakfast in bed.

A change in Molly seems imminent. She decides to comply with Bloom's order: "Ill just give him one more chance Ill get up early in the morning Im sick of Cohens old bed in any case I might go over to the markets to see all the vegetables and cabbages and tomatoes and carrots and all kinds of splendid fruits all coming in lovely and fresh" (780). That she is sick of the bed, which she has hardly been out of all day, is an encouraging sign. That she will go to the market implies that she is beginning to assume womanly duties; her vision of the "splendid fruits" suggests that some of the Agendath incense fumes reached her nose. It cannot be denied that Molly wonders "whod be the 1st man Id meet theyre out looking for it in the morning," but she cannot know yet that Bloom has undergone a change. "Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him [Bloom] have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him," she plans, perhaps foreshadowing his real renewed responsiveness to her. Molly's may, after all, have been the "drawers" in Bloom's own plan: "in drawers return next in her next her next." Bloom has been planning all day what to do with his commission from the Keyes advertisement (whose

"home rule" connotation should be kept in mind): "Could buy one of those silk petticoats for Molly" (180). This seems like a desire to recreate his association which has already been cited to illustrate their earlier rapport: "Gleaming silks, petticoats on slim brass rails, rays of flat silk stockings." There is at least the "possibility" that his desire will be satisfied.

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