

Bloom in Circulation

Who's He When He's Not at Home?

By lorries along sir John Rogerson's quay Mr Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill lane, Leask's the linseed crusher, the postal telegraph office. (U 5.1-2)

He walked back along Dorset street, reading gravely. (U 4.191)

Stephen went down Bedford row, the handle of the ash clacking against his shoulderblade. (U 10.830-31)

Almidano Artifoni walked past Holles street, past Sewell's yard. (U 10.1101)

Joyce's *Ulysses* is a novel of walking. In its peripatetic passages, early twentieth-century Dublin is documented. Critics have claimed that city walking characterizes the modernist city novel, constituting its "idiosyncratic features."¹

Baudelaire's "flâneur" has provided a particularly popular conceptual model for interpreting modern city novels, including *Ulysses*, despite the flâneur's pre-twentieth-century origin. Walter Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire is highly influential. According to Benjamin, Baudelaire's flâneur is a reader of modern urban spaces, an observer of the city who feels himself out of place in it. Like Baudelaire himself, the flâneur is a "lyric poet in the era of high capitalism."² He "demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forgo the life of the gentleman of leisure. Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the petambulations of the *flâneur* only if as such he is already out of place."³ Anke Gieber's *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flânerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture* establishes a "theory of literary flânerie" that draws heavily on Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* and his essays on Baudelaire. She regards flânerie as "a privileged mode of perceiving modernity and its many realities."⁴

In these discussions the flâneur is a figure both out of place and out of date, a nineteenth-century gentleman who observes rather than participates in the modern urban experience. A number of Joyce critics have focused on Joyce's revisionary use of the figure of the flâneur. At the 2000 International James Joyce Symposium, two entire panels on Benjamin and Joyce were devoted to the relevance of the figure of the flâneur for interpreting Joyce's city walkers, Leopold Bloom in particular. Enda Duffy, Luke Gibbons, and Patrick McGee all located a postcolonial counter-tradition of flânerie in Joyce's Irish translation of the continental concept.⁵ In his more sustained exploration of the figure of the flâneur in *The Subaltern "Ulysses"*, Duffy views the continental model as a regressive, nostalgic figure. However, he finds it fruitful to consider Bloom as an "enlivened, reborn flâneur" (63). In his continental and English versions, according to Duffy, the flâneur "exists in metropolitan modernist works as the last hostage of realism whom the modernists (Döblin in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*) could not bear to let go" (67). Duffy says that the modernist flâneur operates as a "nexus" for "nostalgic desires" (67). In contrast, Bloom is the flâneur as subaltern subject. The figure of the flâneur thus becomes a progressive, rather than regressive trope.

In this essay, I, too, consider the art of walking in *Ulysses*, particularly as practiced by Leopold Bloom, in relation to the figure of the flâneur; however, I read it within, rather than against, the conceptual framework of nostalgia. I agree that flânerie is a kind of hand-me-down garment for both Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, one that fits and does not fit in revealing ways. But rather than dismissing nostalgia as a rearguard impulse jettisoned by the new postcolonial subject, I will argue that on many levels, Joyce exploited "nostalgia" of time and place in his representation of Dublin and Dublin walkers. Considering the role of nostalgia helps generate an image of Bloom's city walking that is not ideologically fixed in the subaltern position. After briefly considering Stephen Dedalus as a would-be flâneur, I will focus on Joyce's use of nostalgia in the Homeric sense of a longing for "home," as it applies to both Bloom's minicirculation through Dublin and the representation of Dublin in *Ulysses*.

The European flâneur provides a model for Stephen as he wanders through Dublin streets attempting to read the signatures of the city. In *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait*, in particular, Stephen is an emulator of Baudelaire's flânerie, an estranged walker in the city who desperately seeks to become its lyric poet. Baudelairean flânerie introduced a new aesthetic of

perception, a connection between the flaneur and the artist as reader of the city text that Stephen exploits.⁶ "As he walked thus through the ways of the city he had his ears and eyes ever prompt to receive impressions" (SH 30). It is in the streets that he composes his essay: "His forty days were consumed in aimless solitary walks during which he forged out his sentences" (SH 69). In his conversations with Maurice, he comes closest to the model of peripatetic philosopher and flaneur, who combines "rambling, thinking, observing and talking" (Barta xiii). Baudelaire's flaneur is a man of leisure; Stephen, in contrast, is a struggling Dubliner frustrated in a depressed colonial economy. One can read his departure for Paris between *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* as his trip to the capital of the nineteenth century to become the Baudelairean poet he finds it hard to be in his native Dublin. We learn in *Ulysses* that Stephen walked through the streets of Baudelaire's Paris collecting observations: "Proudly walking. Whom were you trying to walk like?" (U 3.184). Adapting the European stance of the flaneur in the earlier novels is one way that Stephen prepares himself to leave Ireland and fly by the colonial nets that entangle him. Stephen's mother's death cuts short this continental adaptation. Stephen returns to Ireland only to suffer the humiliations of displacement once again ("He has the key. I will not sleep there when this night comes" [U 3.276]). Back in Dublin, Stephen continues to link his mental and physical "tropings": "Turning his back to the sun he bent over far to a table of rock and scribbled words" (U 3.406-7). He vacillates between desiring to be Dublin's lyric poet and escaping the city altogether.

Just as romantic nostalgia fuels Stephen's recourse to a nineteenth-century peripatetic model, it is a commonplace of *Ulysses* criticism that nostalgia also underwrites the Homeric structure of *Ulysses*. As in the *Odyssey*, nostalgia—a kind of homesickness and longing for home—fuels Ulysses/Bloom's journeys. A major difference between the forays of the European flaneur and Bloom's comings and goings in *Ulysses* is Bloom's mental homeward turning throughout the day, and his eventual *nostos*. Unlike the quintessential flaneur, Bloom is a traveling homebody, a petit bourgeois who worships household gods despite the pain they also bring. Bloom's minijourneys can be regarded as "tactics," as Michel de Certeau uses the term in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, artful ways of navigating the "cityful" of objects, people, and memories as he strategically waits to return home at day's end.⁷

Who's he when he's not at home? we might ask of Bloom, whose mini-

epic travels through Dublin are almost always conducted in relation to 7 Eccles Street, betraying tactics of either approach or avoidance. "Longest way round is the shortest way home" (U 13.110-11), Bloom thinks to himself as he visits Sandymount Strand to meditate (and, it turns out, to masturbate) at the end of the day, before visiting Mrs. Purefoy. If epic always "takes the long way round," Joyce's rendition of Odysseus's voyage makes delay strategic, a tactic of avoidance and a way to keep desire alive. "At four she" (U 11.309, 352) and "At four" (U 11.305, 392) are refrains that echo in Bloom's mind, referring to the time that Molly presumably told him Blazes Boylan was coming to rehearse (U 11.305, 308, 309). "Funny my watch stopped at half past four" (U 13.846-47), he realizes after his voyeurism of Gerty MacDowell. Home is a figure longed for *because* it is "incomplete"; narrative wanderings are prolonged in the process of Bloom's wanting and not wanting to return home.

Bloom's ambivalence is most poignantly represented in "Lestrygonians," where desire manifests itself as a general hunger:

He raised his eyes and met the stare of a bilious clock. Two. Pub clock five minutes fast. Time going on. Hands moving. Two. Not yet.

His midriff yearned then upward, sank within him, yearned more longly, longingly. (U 8:790-93)

Two pages later we read, "Just a bite or two. Then about six o'clock I can. Six. Six. Time will be gone then. She" (U 8.852-53). Bloom is killing time rather than killing suitors. The eighteen miles he covers on June 16 (eight on foot and ten by tram, horse-drawn carriage, and train⁸) are fueled by a nostalgia that keeps desire going as it defers his actual return. This narrative tropism, the repeated turnings toward and away from home, is an integral part of Bloom's *modus operandi* as city walker—his pedestrian wanderings serve the function of passing time as he passes through the city anticipating and deferring his return.

One of Bloom's strategies to maintain his emotional connection with home and protect himself on his journeys is never to leave 7 Eccles Street without little bits of home accompanying him. Since the days of Louis-Philippe, Benjamin says, "the bourgeoisie has endeavoured to compensate itself for the inconsequential nature of private life in the big city. It seeks such compensation within its four walls. Even if a bourgeois is unable to give his earthly being permanence, it seems to be a matter of honour with him to preserve the traces of his articles and requisites of daily use in per-

petuity."⁹ The inventory of favorite possessions in the "Ithaca" chapter supports this idea of compensation within the four walls of home. But equally important is the way in which the domestic is at least partly portable. Souvenir objects play a significant role in helping Bloom survive his mini-journeys on June 16th. He leaves home with his moly (his potato) and his money in the pockets of his suit (see the previous essay, "Twenty Pockets"). Compartmentalizing the components of his desire and nostalgia in his pockets—Martha's flower, Molly's picture, his mother's talismanic potato, and his money, Bloom circulates throughout Dublin, his tactics and deferrals depending upon the nostalgic image of Penelope at home, however compromised he knows that home to be. As in the *Odyssey*, home depends upon a woman in place as the man journeys, with her image accompanying him as a souvenir.

These souvenir objects help counteract Bloom's sense of conjugal displacement from home and bed. But his displacement is part of a more general structure of displacement and longing underlying the urban experience. Discussing the general plight of the pedestrian within urban geography, Certeau sees city walking in relation to a longing for "the proper," or home, that is never satisfied:

To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City. . . . [T]here is only a pullulation of passers-by, a network of residences temporarily appropriated by pedestrian traffic, a shuffling among pretenses of the proper, a universe of rented spaces haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places. (103)

Certeau's description of this "shuffling among pretenses of the proper" has increased resonance for Dubliners, in a country where the landlord is likely to be English or Anglo-Irish. As he circulates through Dublin, Bloom is triply displaced—as cuckold, Jewish outsider, and Irish renter. As Duffy, Gibbons, and McGee rightly observe, the colonial walker is situated in a different relation to the monuments of the city and its mapped-out spaces

than to his European counterpart, the flâneur. But in reading Bloom's Irish form of flânerie, as "aggressive, emancipatory, and the blueprint for a potential version of new postcolonial subjectivity" (63), Duffy seems to freeze Bloom into the static position of subaltern. Certeau's model affords a more hybrid and improvisational pattern of comings and goings, constraints and liberations—emotional, ideological, novelistic.

Certeau's framework provides a useful apparatus for analyzing the way "ordinary practitioners of the city" (93) create specific and defining trajectories through the city according to the "tactics" that they deploy. With particular resonance for analyzing Joyce's novel, Certeau explicitly links the work of tactics to the *metis* of *Odysseus*. He regards "the proper" as a vicinity of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing" (xix). In Certeau's schema, pedestrians use tactics as they walk through the city, "jerry-built" trajectories taken amidst the spatial constraints and interdictions of the city (102). The walker "actualizes possibilities," pursuing his particular crossings, drifting, improvisations, and detours, some consciously, some not. The bodies of these city walkers "follow the thick and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms" (93). Displaced from the home he both longs for and avoids, nostalgic and crafty *Odysseus*/Bloom fills the time with compensatory exchanges, movements, errands, little comings and goings, departures and returns that occupy his attention. In constructing his daily itinerary, avoidance and activity are in artful blend.

Take his first foray at 8:00 on the morning of June 16. From the moment he leaves 7 Eccles Street, Bloom's circulation involves knowing what to avoid as much as what to engage. In his first trip of the day, "He crossed to the bright side, avoiding the loose cellarflap of number seventyfive" (U 4.77–78). This is avoidance born of familiarity, the act of a wily commuter who knows how to take detours for purposes of both efficiency and safety. Just as he avoids his neighbor's cellarflap, he avoids his acquaintances in the street. This act of avoidance is emblematic of Bloom's general avoidance of the "phatic" function, that is, an avoidance of the "effort to ensure communication" (Certeau 99). Yet Bloom is not wholly successful. As he seeks the privacy of his own pocket in which to deflower the letter from Martha Clifford he has just received, McCoy intrudes. "Take me out of my

way," Bloom thinks (*U* 5.82). Although Bloom is often cast as an outsider, a stranger amongst the other Dubliners, in fact, he is adept at avoidance because he knows the terrain of the familiar.

This familiarity is yet one more aspect of Bloom's difference from the continental flaneur. Unlike metropolitan cities such as Paris and Berlin, in which the European flaneur reads the new semiotics of modernity, Dublin is a place at once alienating and yet too cozy. "I wonder," Joyce said to Budgen about Dublin, "if there is another [city] like it. Everybody has time to hail a friend and start a conversation about a third party."¹⁰ The circulation of unwanted parties and unwanted stories dogs Bloom's steps throughout the day and night. On a typical day, he seeks to maintain his distance from much of the hailing and saluting that goes on in "Wandering Rocks." If the European flaneur of the metropole passes as observer amid the anonymous crowd, Bloom passes through city streets where he is all too often recognized, necessitating new reactive strategies. This sense of domesticity and knowledge bred of familiarity separates Bloom from the flaneur. And Bloom's willing participation in commodity exchanges should be mentioned alongside his forms of resistance.

Certeau's point is that individual walkers through the city often imaginatively navigate around the obstacles and monoliths the city presents to them. He views the deployment of tactics in the everyday practice of walking as a sign of freedom within constraint, a "discreteness" of statement (98) in what he calls the rhetoric of walking. He says that the walker "condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others spatial 'turns of phrase' that are 'rare,' 'accidental,' or 'illegitimate'" (99). Like Duffy and Gibbons in their discussions of the colonial flaneur, Certeau sees the rhetoric of walking as potentially emancipatory, a way to evade the totalizing, bureaucratic plan of the city. Although I find Certeau's model useful and more flexible than Duffy's, I want to illustrate, with three short examples, how multivalenced is Joyce's depiction of the rhetoric of walking, so that one cannot assign a particular ideological weight to the activity of walking. First, the "Wandering Rocks" chapter illustrates how everyday practices like walking can be consistent with social conformity as easily as social subversion. Walking in this chapter of perambulation concludes in gestures of obeisance to the "cavalcade" of power. The ubiquitous and mindless salutes throughout the chapter, parodied in the final line in which even Almidano Artifoni's "sturdy trousers" salute the viceregal procession,

reveal how "rare male walkers" subscribe to colonial ideology (*U* 10.1282, 1278–79).

The second example, from "Eumaeus," is meant to question further Duffy's view of Bloom as subaltern flaneur. Such a view effaces the ways in which Bloom attempts to distinguish himself from many of his fellow travelers. In "Eumaeus," where economic exploitation is represented in the itinerancy of Dubliners whose "leisure" derives from being out of work or underemployed, Bloom struggles to distinguish his own travels from theirs. Despite the sympathies with workers, peasants, and tenants he demonstrates in the chapter, he takes pains to separate the "peaceable pedestrians" like himself from the "famished loiterers" (*U* 16.121–22, 123). The discourse of bourgeois rationality and regulation woven throughout the chapter establishes Bloom's self-congratulatory distance from the "submerged tenth" he encounters (*U* 16.1226).¹¹

My final counterexample to a reading that flatly associates movement with liberation in *Ulysses* involves women walkers, figured differently in relation to movement through the city. The obvious example is the prostitute. As Gleber points out in *The Art of Taking a Walk*, women are in a wholly different relation to flanerie, for when they circulate, like the prostitute in the straw hat in *Ulysses*, their mobility is read as promiscuity. In this case, movement signifies economic constraint. But a more interesting counterexample to movement as the positive sign of freedom is Gerty MacDowell, whose physical disability is revealed precisely at the moment she moves in "Nausicaa":

Slowly, without looking back she went down the uneven strand to Cissy, to Edy, to Jacky and Tommy Caffrey, to little baby Boardman. It was darker now and there were stones and bits of wood on the strand and slippery seaweed. She walked with a certain quiet dignity characteristic of her but with care and very slowly because—because Gerty MacDowell was . . .

Tight boots? No. She's lame! O!" (*U* 13.766–71)

As Susan Stewart points out in a brilliant reading of "Nausicaa," it is only when Gerty moves that the perfect pornographic tableau of desire, which depends upon stasis, is fractured.¹² What's missing or lacking becomes visible only then, disturbing Bloom's fixated gaze. Like Molly's picture "prudently pocketed" in Bloom's suit built for traveling, Gerty's fetishized image

is appropriated by the male traveler and is disturbed only in her movement.

Thus, Joyce represents the tactics of male walkers alternately succeeding and failing to compensate for the displacements they suffer. In a larger sense, Joyce exploited nostalgia in constructing *Ulysses* as itself a testament to a home always incomplete. Like Bloom with Molly's image in his pocket, Joyce created the seven-hundred-odd pages of the novel as a kind of souvenir of the city that has passed out of existence.

"I want . . . to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book"—these are some of the most quotable lines in Budgen's *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses"* (67–68). When Joyce made this statement to Budgen in Zurich in 1918, the Dublin of 1904 was already gone. As Susan de Sola Rodstein has pointed out in her excellent essay, "Back to 1904: Joyce, Ireland, and Nationalism," the "back-dating" of *Ulysses* betrays a desire to preserve a Dublin already altered in a decade of radical political change, coupled with "a post-Rising sense of the city's actual perishability."¹³ My point is not that Joyce regretted the decade of revolutionary activity between the setting and the writing of *Ulysses*, but that in the complex archaeological layering of political landscapes, he creates a souvenir of a time and place passing and gone. The city is arrested, dated, in its premodern phase. The spatial and temporal distance between the city and its novelistic image, between "home" and Joyce, is captured in Joyce's signature at the end of the novel, which records his migration away from the city of his origin—"Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914–1921" (*U* 18.1610–11).

At what point would a picture, a souvenir photograph, be "complete" enough to replace the original? The answer, of course, is never. Susan Stewart points out that the souvenir is always incomplete: it is metonymic, substituting a part for the whole, a sample. As Stewart puts it, the souvenir "both mourns and celebrates the gap between object and context of origin" (164). *Ulysses* is such a miniature and souvenir in two senses: in a general way, it partakes of a kind of nostalgia that could be said to mark all narrative: "The souvenir may be seen as emblematic of the nostalgia that all narrative reveals—the longing for its place of origin" (Stewart xii). But the back-dating of *Ulysses* heightens the sense of nostalgia and remembrance, making *Ulysses* a historical novel. Dublin is dated—both documented at a specific time and out of date by the time of the novel's publication (a point that is emphasized in the meta-dating of the novel itself when Miss

Dunne types "16 June 1904" in the "Wandering Rocks" chapter [*U* 10.376]). Furthermore, the particular date Joyce chose, June 16, 1904, had personal resonance for him, functioning commemoratively. For superstitious Joyce it was significant that June 16 was the day he and Nora went walking together.¹⁴ A souvenir, Stewart says, "moves history into private time. Hence the absolute appropriateness of the souvenir as *calendar*" (138). *Ulysses*, then, functions as both historical novel and anniversary celebration, the textual souvenir of a moment and experience. Stewart points out that the souvenir "contracts the world in order to expand the personal" (xii), the world cut down to size. Via *Ulysses*, the Dublin of June 16, 1904, is immortalized as *James Joyce's* Dublin. The spate of books with such titles as *James Joyce's Dublin*, *James Joyce's Ireland*, and *James Joyce's Odyssey: A Guide to the Dublin of "Ulysses"* make us suspect that Dublin, and Ireland by proxy, indeed "belonged" to him.¹⁵

But, as we know, June 16th has come to be identified as Bloomsday, not Joyce day. The personalization, the nostalgia, to which Stewart refers is invested most clearly by Joyce (and, I would contend, by most readers of *Ulysses*) in Leopold Bloom. On Bloomsday Dublin travels are commemorated in anniversary performances in European cities that, at least at the beginning, duplicated Joyce's own migrations.¹⁶ Desmond Fennell's *Bloomsday: A Day in the Life of Dublin*¹⁷ is only the most recent fictional update of Bloom's itinerary.¹⁸

In the acts and arts of walking in *Ulysses*, particularly Leopold Bloom's, spatial and temporal "passings" coalesce, so that the data of the real, accumulated as the city is traversed, commemorate a home perpetually desired but already lost. A careful reading of the pedestrian travel in *Ulysses* reveals a constant refrain of "passing" that doubles the sense of movement in space and time. The temporal aspect is muted in narrative phrases cited earlier, such as "By lorries along sir John Rogerson's quay Mr Bloom walked soberly, past Windmill lane" (*U* 5.1–2) or "They went past the bleak pulpit of saint Mark's, under the railway bridge, past the Queen's theatre: in silence" (*U* 6.183–84). But the sense of a city past and passing is sometimes foregrounded explicitly, as in "Lestrygonians" when Bloom's "smile fade[s] as he walked" (*U* 8.475), and he thinks,

Cityful passing away, other cityful coming, passing away too: other coming on, passing on. Houses, lines of houses, streets, miles of pavements, piledup bricks, stones. Changing hands. This owner, that.

Landlord never dies they say. Other steps into his shoes when he gets his notice to quit. (U 8.484-87)

In *Epic Geography: James Joyce's "Ulysses,"* Michael Seidel speaks of the "mapping impulse" evident in the representation of the wanderings in *Ulysses*, an impulse toward "the realization of place names."¹⁹ Yet, although the picture of Dublin is denoted monument by monument and street by street, the refrain of passing creates a spectral urban landscape. The city is a haunted landscape and the scene of multiple displacements. The documentation of place is punctilious because it is always partial.

In representing Bloom's nostalgic journey through a Dublin already vanished, Joyce reenacted what Stewart calls the "very desire of part for whole which both animates narrative and, in fact, creates the illusion of the real" (xii). The tactics of walking and the tactics of representation, Bloom's and Joyce's *metis*, overlap in a city novel that conjoins flanerite and nostalgia, modernity and epic return. In documenting the "cityful passing," Joyce represented narrative *and* domestic longing in action, with their losses and compensations on display.

WHO'S AFRAID OF JAMES JOYCE?

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