Ulysses Quotīdiānus

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James Joyce's Inverse Histories of the Everyday

Jibu Mathew George

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To the One who can change accidents of personal history into lifelong engagements

and

for my Eugene and Juanita

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FOREWORD

ANNE FOGARTY
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

The events in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, as is well-known, take place on a single day, 16 June 1904. The date had private significance for Joyce, as he associated it with the beginnings of his love affair with Nora Barnacle, the young Galway woman whom he had met on the streets of Dublin some days earlier, and who was to remain his life-long consort. To this degree, the date, although it has been endlessly speculated about, is invested with an occluded erotic meaning that we can never recover.

Yet, the decision to contour his novel around the phases of a single Dublin day and evening also had other dimensions. Joyce in writing an Irish epic self-consciously chose Homer's *Odyssey* as a touchstone. The Classical text served him as an exemplar; it provided him with a scaffolding and a tool chest of leitmotifs, characters and symbols but it also acted as a malleable resource that he could at once imitate and remodel. The events in the *Odyssey* are spread out over a notional forty days and Odysseus the wily, resourceful hero has been absent from home for twenty years in total, having spent ten years in combat at the Trojan war and ten years wandering.[1] Joyce's epic by contrast effects a drastic compression of time; his chief protagonists, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, merely wander the streets of Dublin for the duration of a day and part of a night. Yet this concentration on a seemingly nondescript day constitutes the very basis of Joyce's re-envisaged, domestic epic. The everyday is not, in fact, merely the site of the unremarkable, as this study by Jibu Mathew George shows in painstaking and illuminating detail, it is the vantage point from which everything within Irish society may be scrutinised. Humdrum life, the material minutiae of everyday existence, and the foibles of the unsung anti-heroes of Joyce's native city, moreover, become the substance of this epic of the commonplace and diurnal. If others during the period in which the text was being composed, 1914-

[1] See S. Douglas Olson 91-199 and Bernard Knox, "Introduction", *The Odyssey* 3-64 for discussion of the complex chronology and timelines of Homer's text.

1922, elected to take to arms in order to liberate Ireland from centuries of British colonial rule and/or to fight in World War One, Joyce chose to liberate his fellow countrymen through a startlingly realised act of the imagination and the evocation of the minutiae of city life.

The concentration on a single day may seem, moreover, to be an endeavour by Joyce to evade the burdensome nature of Irish history with its recurrent traumas and repeated defeats. However, such a side-stepping of the past proves impossible. Stephen Dedalus's pronouncement to Mr Deasy that history is "a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (J. Joyce 1984, 2.377) is often taken to be Joyce's own mantra. However, few recall that the sentiment is immediately revised as Stephen, ruefully rethinking the bravado of his own statement, muses "what if that nightmare gave you a back kick?" (2.379). The back kicks of history explain why the unfinished business of the past keeps obtruding in the narrative. The dominance of time and history is also evident in Joyce's novel manner of drawing a line under his work. The author's signature in the final lines is replaced by the places in which the writer lived and the dates of composition: "Trieste-Zurich-Paris, 1914-1921." Historical and geographical displacements and shifts are thus part of the very fabric of this text. As Enda Duffy has succinctly noted, *Ulysses* has at once "a date and a duration" (2014, 81). This duration is not just the time span in which it was composed, but also the many temporal frames and moments in Irish history which the text rehearses, including the Famine, the rebellion of Robert Emmett, nineteenth-century Fenian campaigns, the Fall of Parnell, the Boer War, and the Phoenix Park murders, and contemporary upheavals to which it alludes albeit obliquely, such as World War One and the Easter Rising.

Indeed, Joyce sets his text in the era of the Irish cultural revival because he sees it not just as a time of personal beginnings, but also as one in which the future of his country is being reimagined and actively debated in numerous social and political circles. The historian, R. F. Foster, in his recent study, *Vivid Faces*, has explored the changes in mentality and emotional attitudes of the generation of people that came of age in Ireland, 1890-1923, in order to fathom how the political gradualism of the Home Rule movement gave way to the longing for other forms of freedom and of political separatism. Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was published in 1922, the year in which the Irish Free State was founded, portrays the period in which the political fate of the country was being rethought and renegotiated, even if it eschews direct depiction in the main of those who sought to free and reform Irish society. For Walter Benjamin, history can only serve a revolutionary purpose if it is conceived of, not as

homogeneous, but as "filled full by now-time (*Jetztzeit*)" (2003, 395). As Jibu Mathew George illustrates in his persuasive account of the material and historical underpinnings of Joyce's text, *Ulysses* pitches itself precisely in this now-time of revolutionary possibility. It at once captures and exposes the abject conditions of a colonial society and uses the tools of empathy, linguistic verve, invention, and narrative daring in order to imagine the liberation of Irish society. Joyce's exact limning of the quotidian completely upturns the twentieth-century novel and imaginatively creates the conditions of freedom for the Irish population whom he irreverently mirrors, reinvents, and fastidiously memorialises.

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PREFACE

MATTHEW CREASY
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Frank Budgen recounts an anecdote James Joyce told to him and their mutual acquaintance, Paul Suter during 1919:

> 'A German lady called to see me to-day. She is a writer and wanted me to give an opinion on her work, but she told me she had already shown it to the porter of the hotel where she stays. So I said to her: 'What did your hotel porter think of your work?' She said: 'He objected to a scene in my novel where my hero goes out into the forest, finds a locket of the girl he loves, picks it up and kisses it passionately.' 'But,' I said, 'that seems to me to be a very pleasing and touching incident. What did your hotel porter find wrong with it?' And then she tells me he said: 'it's all right for the hero to find the locket and to pick it up and kiss it, but before he kissed it you should have made him wipe the dirt off it with his coat sleeve.' 'And what did you tell her?' said Paul and I together. 'I told her,' said Joyce '(and I meant it too) to go back to the hotel porter and always to take his advice. "That man," I said, "is a critical genius. There is nothing I can tell you that he can't tell you."' (Budgen 1960, 196)

Although its secondhand provenance may not be wholly reliable, this story is telling on two counts. Firstly, Joyce's sympathies most obviously lie with the porter rather than his German patroness. In the same way, *Ulysses* asks our sympathies for a middle-class advertising salesman. The title of Joyce's novel may allude to Greek epic, but its subject matter is more ordinary. Secondly, this anecdote is true to Joyce's own technical proclivities as a writer. Kidneys are on Leopold Bloom's mind at the start of the 'Calypso' episode, but the reader's first encounter with the rhythms of his interior monologue derive from the delicate ministering attentions he pays to his wife's tastes: 'another slice of bread and butter, three, four: right. She didn't like her plate full. Right' (4.11-12). Toast may be a poor substitute for a locket, but this fixation upon such mundane details is a daring move so early in the novel. *Ulysses* is very closely attentive to acts of attention on behalf of its characters.

Such details may seem dull, but Bloom's concern over his wife's breakfast is representative of the general solicitude he demonstrates throughout the novel. Bloom's contribution to recent Irish political history is to have rescued Parnell's hat in scuffle. Later in *Ulysses* he rescues Stephen Dedalus from a drunken assault. Over the course of the novel, the way in which Joyce shows us his creation counting out pieces of toast and making a mental note of this becomes just one instance of the careful attention to people and things in the book. At times, its prose is so closely synchronised to the minor movements which shape its characters' actions that *Ulysses* can seem like the verbal equivalent of the photographic studies of human motion conducted by Edweard Muybridge in the 1880s.

Joyce's attention to small details and to the everyday actions and thoughts of his characters in *Ulysses* is the subject of this study by Jibu Mathew George, who finds in such details an exemplary political gesture. Ordinary life, *Ulysses Quotidianus* shows, offers an alternative to the 'grand narratives' of received history. Instead of following the powerful and the privileged, Joyce's focus upon the everyday is more inclusive – so much so that, as Jibu Mathew George remarks here, 'ordinary life presents Joyce with a perspectival basis on which history can be reconceived'. In this reconception, Joyce does not merely undermine 'grand narratives of history through parody, hyperbole, grotesquerie, and trivialisation', *Ulysses Quotidianus* reveals how his novel offers 'a redeeming historical vision'.

The sheer scope of this study reflects the scale of its ambition and the nature of its material. Jibu Mathew George articulates in comprehensive detail the numerous facets of Joyce's vision of the everyday, from the implications of everyday working life, through the day-to-day functions of the human body and ordinary somatic experience, to the implications of the everyday for our understanding of gender and the position of women. These 'quotidian micro-histories' – the sheer wealth of detail provided in *Ulysses Quotidianus* – corroborate the extent of Joyce's own commitment to representing the minutiae of everyday life. The ordinary is the extraordinary within this study, in its very ordinariness.

Ordinariness is, however, an important property of the everyday. And we should note that this 'redeeming historical vision' is not sentimental or idealising. Once again, Budgen's version of Joyce's anecdote about the porter's genius is very revealing. For the porter's correction is nicely ambiguous: the lover who wipes the locket clean before kissing it may be enacting the devotion he feels towards the object of his love, but the gesture may equally be one of self-regard, placing his own hygiene before his feelings towards the girl. The tale is told in too little detail for us to tell,

but it exists in a space of possibility which is familiar to readers of *Ulysses*. This is the possibility – even likelihood – of a baser motive. His tolerance of his wife's adultery may reflect Leopold Bloom's great magnanimity, but he may also have economic motives (the income brought by Molly's imminent singing engagement) for not wishing to rock the boat. Equally, as William Empson noted in *Using Biography* (1984), Bloom's kindly behaviour towards Stephen Dedalus may be driven by the hope that the young man will provide a more sympathetic replacement for his wife's current lover, Blazes Boylan. Such revelations arise from a compulsion towards detail that is intrinsic to Joyce's investment in ordinary life.

This is Joyce's commitment to what Jibu Mathew George calls a 'sphere of alternative historical experience'. *Ulysses,* he shows us, offers us the everyday without ever tipping into sentimentalism. The achievement of *Ulysses Quotidianus* is to lay out in loving detail Joyce's polyvocal presentation of ordinary life as powerful set of alternatives to 'monomaniacal and monotonal historical narratives'.

INTRODUCTION

GEERT LERNOUT
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In *Ulysses* the everyday is everywhere. From Mulligan shaving at the beginning of the first part (and thus of the entire novel) and the breakfast preparations at the beginning of part II, to the end of Molly's monologue: this is a novel of the quotidian. Unlike its Homeric original, this is not a novel about Bravery in War or about Love and Revenge or about all those other abstract nouns that need capitals. Nothing really important happens on 16 June 1904 in the world and you could argue that even in the lives of the three main characters nothing of import occurs. The real subject of the novel is, as Jibu Mathew George argues in this book, the ordinary and the commonplace and certainly not the grand narratives of History.

T.S. Eliot was one of the early critics of *Ulysses* to notice this aspect of the novel. Richard Aldington had been shocked by the realism of Joyce's work which he called "false and a libel on humanity." But the American poet replied that in *Ulysses* Joyce had invented the mythological method, a discovery in literature comparable to Einstein's work in science: the use of myth to organize literary works or better, in Eliot's own words, "a way of controlling, of giving shape and a significance" to the modern world.

It no longer matters whether Eliot was correct in ascribing the earlier use of the method to Joyce (and beyond him to W.B. Yeats), but when we compare Joyce's novel to the poet's own use of mythology in *The Waste Land*, we can only conclude that Eliot is describing his own poetic method. What he thought that Joyce was "controlling" and "giving shape" to, was, in Eliot's words, "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." This says much more about the American poet than about the Irish novelist.

Eliot had a much darker view of the modern world than Joyce and in this sense the fundamentally anti-modern Eliot has more in common with the Yeats who felt that the ancient sect of the Irish had been "thrown upon this filthy modern tide / And by this formless spawning fury wrecked". In the same poem ("The Statues"), Yeats does make use of myth (Cuchulain, Hamlet) in the fight against the chaos of life and thus to articulate his anti-

modern and anti-democratic philosophy. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Eliot's most virulently anti-Semitic line ("The Jew squats on the window sill, the owner, / Spawned in some estaminet in Antwerp") makes use of the same verb to describe what is so horribly wrong about the modern world that Eliot and Yeats had found themselves in.

Not so Joyce. Jewish Leopold Bloom was not spawned in an estaminet and neither is he diminished by the link with Ulysses/Odysseus. On the contrary: in his own way and, more importantly, in his own time, Bloom is as much a hero and a king than any other latter-day King of Ithaka. The trouble with Eliot's reading of *Ulysses* is that his sense of what Joyce was trying to do did not go beyond the book that he calls *The Portrait*: Eliot has developed a Stephenesque interpretation of *Ulysses* and as a result he deeply misunderstands the workings of that novel. Eliot does not see that in *Ulysses* the Stephen of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* has failed to forge anything in the smithy of his soul, least of all the uncreated conscience of the same race that W.B. Yeats believed that he belonged to ("We Irish"). The Stephen of *Ulysses* is a selfish and self-absorbed egotist who in the course of the novel pales more and more in comparison to the emphatically empathetic Bloom.

Jibu Mathew George shows that *Ulysses* is the novel of the everyman Leopold Bloom who lives in a real world that is made of real objects that are created, sold, used and thrown away by humans. In the world of Yeats metaphysical realities stalk through the post office; in the world of *Ulysses*, just outside the post office, there are trams going to Rathgar and Terenure, there are shoeblacks, postal workers, draymen rolling barrels of beer. Not a "plummet-measured face" to be seen, but real faces of real people doing what real people do everyday.

Of course Joyce was exaggerating when he said that one could rebuild a destroyed Dublin from the evidence in his books, but *Ulysses* really is full of Dublin things, not of Eliot's shape and significance, nor of Yeats's "calculation, number, measurement", but full of the colours and smells of a city inhabited by real human bodies. Molly's breasts may smell "like perfume," but other bodies do not, like that of our modern Telemachus, who does not believe in personal hygiene.

For the same reason the book is full of objects, starting with the shaving bowl, mirror and razor in the first sentence. Of course the bowl may remind Stephen of the bowl that held his mother's bile during her final illness or it makes him think of the incense bowl that he handled as an altar boy. But it is also a bowl that Mulligan uses to shave. Every object in *Ulysses* has its own purpose and most of the time that purpose has little to do with the book's aesthetic ambitions, which sometimes are not clear

at all. But cumulatively their presence adds to what Roland Barthes called the "effet de réel," they make a fictional text seem real.

One French writer tried to outdo the author of *Ulysses*. In *La Vie: Mode d'Emploi* Georges Pérec described a single minute in the life of a single building in Paris and he did that in ways that are clearly based on procedures invented by other writers. What Pérec borrowed from Joyce is not the mythological method, but the interest in objects; he even borrowed the very same postcard that D.B. Murphy brought with him from his travels and that, seemingly seventy-one years later, ends up in a room of a Paris *immeuble* in the 17th *arrondissement*.

The material quality of the everyday is strengthened when we learn from Aida Yared that this particular postcard really did exist and that the exotic scene depicted ("a group of savage women in striped loincloths, squatted, blinking, suckling, frowning, sleeping amid a swarm of infants (there must have been quite a score of them) outside some primitive shanties of osier") may seem exotic to Dubliners, just as the life of these Dubliners is exotic to contemporary readers of *Ulysses*. This postcard shows the everyday existence of people, and that is the stuff that both life and literature are made of.

AUTHOR'S NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ulysses Quotīdiānus: James Joyce's Inverse Histories of the Everyday presents a multi-pronged inverse historical analysis of Joyce's high-modernist magnum opus *Ulysses*, foregrounding the historicity of its unapologetic subject matter – the quotidian. While the ordinary and the commonplace are a self-consciously explicit meta-literary element in Joyce's fiction and could not have escaped any critic, this book argues that the everyday life depicted in *Ulysses* espouses alternative historical trajectories neglected by traditional historiographic paradigms, which largely deal with great personages and momentous events. Across eight chapters, it endeavours to reconstruct the quotidian 'micro-histories' surrounding work and income, material objects and practices, everyday relationships, body and health, ideologies and power, socio-psychological resources, and, in one of the many internal heterogenizations of the everyday, gender issues.

Chapter 1 is divided into four sections. The first, entitled "Literary Moorings and Upheavals," traces Joyce's literary precedents in his choice of the ordinary as the subject of his fiction, and endeavours to clarify the implications of his borrowings and departures. The second, "Paralysis, Epiphany, Visionary Praxis: The Progress of a Concept," demonstrates how the conception, and project, of the everyday evolves across his three works, namely *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses*. Though the book is primarily focused on *Ulysses*, a sideward re-historicizing glance at pertinent textual instances in Joyce's other works (including *Finnegans Wake*) enables the reader to appreciate the continuity and change in the function of the quotidian throughout his oeuvre. The third section, "An Inverse Hermeneutic," takes up the interpretive subtleties of *Ulysses* vis-à-vis Homer and literary history. It outlines an hermeneutic that retrieves the value, and recognizes the claims, of the traditionally neglected and deprecated everyday phenomena through a survey of representative perspectives thereof in the nine-decade-long Joyce criticism. The fourth, "Studying the Everyday," examines the methodological challenges involved in dealing with the proliferating character of the quotidian, and also discusses the micro-historical paradigm followed by this book.

Chapter 2 has three sections. The first, "A Counter to the Nightmare of History," contextualises Joyce's deliberate choice of the quotidian, and the actual composition of *Ulysses*, synchronizing it against the background of historical developments, both in Ireland and on the Continent, and world views associated with them, which the author saw as fallacious and unconducive to life. The second, "'Everybody Knows That It's the Very Opposite' – An Alternative Historical Destiny," deals with Joyce's inverse historicity, and the complex relationships between ordinary life and grand-historical conditions. The third, "The Man Who Picked Up Parnell's Hat – Historiographic Parallels," details the theoretical bases (in particular, the French Annales School of history and the German *Alltagsgeschichte*) for the study of his fictional micro-historiography.

Chapter 3 presents the sphere of everyday practical, material concerns as both the domain where common people can experience historical agency (Joyce critiques its non-exercise in Dublin, often through absences), otherwise unavailable to them, and as the realistic criterion of historical initiatives. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first, "Toilers for their Daily Bread," shows the basic need for sustenance, not the priorities of grand history, to be the experiential matrix of everyday praxis. The second, "Historical Determinism and Freedom," presents the daily economic plight of Dubliners as intimately related to adverse macro-economic conditions, but also reveals the micro-historical possibilities of labour, initiative, and creativity. The stress on the material also reveals the sphere of daily life as one of appalling inadequacies (poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and lack of sanitation), which ought to be the priorities of historical praxis. Of course, solution to quotidian problems calls for macro-level praxis, as argued by the next section – "'Hardheaded Facts That Cannot Be Blinked' – The Need for Macro-Level Praxis."

Under a micro-historical exegetical paradigm, the everyday objects and material practices (gastronomic, sartorial, technological, and so on) of *Ulysses*, simultaneously synchronic and diachronic in signification, become the residual fragments of an evolving material civilization. Through a reverse analysis based on Fernand Braudel's concept of long-temporality (*longue durée*), Chapter 4 tracks a Braudelian material history (from the New World potato and cocoa to Ceylonese tea and Irish tweeds, from handkerchiefs to combs) in the amorphous, fragmented fictional space of Joyce's book, which thrives as an undercurrent of the grand history, not because of the latter, but despite it and in negotiation with it. The gradualism of change implicit in the material everyday allows the text to extend its historico-mythical reach all the way back to Homeric times. After all, what is common between Joyce and Homer is the quotidian. The

chapter also examines this quotidian history's connections with grand-historical conditions and developments. The chapter is divided into three sections: "The Progress of a Quotidian Civilization in Miniature," "Necessities, Comforts, and Luxuries," and "Two Histories."

Chapter 5 takes up the shared character of everyday life, a characteristic which is germane to it. The argument here is that Joyce presents an alternative paradigm of relationships which can transcend and transform historical determinisms and inherited prejudices, illustrated by Bloom's haphazard but life-conducive definition of a 'nation.' The alternative paradigm is based on a logic 'from below' – the need to interact for fulfilment of daily needs, a vivacious communitarian sense of life that disregards structuring from the top, the opportunity for social learning across communities – as well as the ethical imperative to recognize the 'other' as 'another I' (the non-objectifying relationships advocated by Martin Buber as opposed to the unilateralism of political leadership, which he critiques). The chapter has three sections: "Relationships That Are Not Hostage to History," "A Quotidian Cosmopolitanism," and "The Question of the Other."

Premised on the idea that everyday human functions are primarily that of the body, Chapter 6 detects the micro-episodes of a cumulative bio-history in the bodily processes which are hyper-realistically depicted in the novel. The first section of the chapter, "A Bio-History in Diurnal Miniature" unravels the bodily substratum of history. In the second section, "The Need for a Health-Praxis," through a 'symptomatic' reading of *Ulysses*, I demonstrate how Joyce draws attention away from sloganeering politics to such vital daily concerns as health, particularly in the context of fatally pathological early twentieth-century Dublin. The next section, entitled "Animating History in Its Micro-Episodes," argues that Joyce presents the pacifist and pleasurable everyday use of the body as an alternative to the violent abuses of it at the hands of history – somatic care and continuity in a politico-religious history that values sacrifice and self-mortification. The body, being the immediate plane of day-to-day existence, is the elementary token of the everyday's claims against the institutions and discourses that regulate and condition ordinary life-processes. The final section, entitled "The 'Co(r)p(o)riright' of Daily Life," examines the subversive, deviant bodily ethos of *Ulysses*.

Everyday life, particularly in Joyce's colonial-Catholic Dublin, is controlled and directed by several institutions, structures, discourses, and ideologies. Chapter 7 illustrates how the novel, rather than merely confining its historical engagement to allowing some wriggling space for the actants of the everyday within the claustrophobic space of 'grand

history,' relentlessly asserts the historical agenda of transformation implicit in the quotidian. The chapter presents its argument in three sections: "A Culture of Surveillance and a Subculture of Subversion," "The Quotidian as an Ideological Palimpsest," and "An Everyday Hermeneutic of Possibilities." The first deals with how Dublin masses subvert hierarchies and resist authority in a carnivalesque 'overturning.' The chief modes of resistance are mockery, critique, reflection, transgression, and alternative use. The second section takes up the ideological accretions in the micro-departments of life, which become ossified history when the everyday routinizes its naturalness through unconscious repetition. Critical engagement of ideologies surrounding gender, class, race, colonialism, body, capitalism, church, and patriarchy in the small compass of daily praxis represent an effective historical response. In a reciprocal co-determinative relationship, the emphases of the everyday add up to constitute the transformative forces of history, and these forces in turn exert a transformative influence upon the everyday. But the paradox of everyday life is that many of its aspects that are resisted as ideological and power-driven are also its props and mainstays. Given this paradox, as I argue in the third section, the novel manifests a quotidian 'hermeneutic of possibility,' a productively oxymoronic approach that diligently negotiates between resistance to regulatory regimes and dynamic utilization of a day's repertoire of nourishing resources.

The final chapter examines the relationships among Joyce's women characters, history, and the everyday. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first, "The Everyday as a Feminine Sphere," argues that *Ulysses* recognizes the unhistoricized female contribution to civilization in the limited sphere to which patriarchal hegemonies had confined women. Women have preserved and resiliently recovered homes in the midst, and in the aftermath, of political turmoil. The second, "Eulogy as Ideology," examines the ideological implications of the ironic tribute to women as silent embodiments and guardians of quotidian stabilities. The third, "A Day of One's Own," illustrates how despite ideological conditioning, oppressive contexts, and crafty social eulogizing, Joyce's women refuse to be passive objects and victims of the male-centered social system. They subvert the system on a day-to-day basis to express their subjectivity in three ways: 1) by a relentless interrogation of underlying assumptions that condition their lives; 2) by their transgressive acts of outwitting received expectations; and 3) by jealously guarding a reality of their own against male appropriations. The final section, "What Is a Woman's Euphoric Reverie in Bed a Symbol of?", in keeping with the expanding everyday hermeneutic of possibilities, shows Molly Bloom's interor monologue as

symbolizing the utopian aspirations of daily life – the celebratory potential implicit in women's infra-marginal domain – a perpetual epiphany.

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In keeping with the tradition of using the Gabler edition of *Ulysses*, I have cited episode and line numbers instead of page numbers.

CHAPTER ONE

"THE SLUGGISH MATTER OF THE EARTH": JAMES JOYCE AND THE QUOTIDIAN

Ordinary, everyday events are a pervasive phenomenon in modernist fiction, especially in the works of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust. Writing with reference to Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Erich Auerbach finds "minor, unimpressive, random events" one of the characteristics of twentieth-century literature (1953, 546).[1] "[S]uggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it," Woolf herself writes: "Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small" (1968, 189-90). Anticipatively shifting attention from the reader-unfriendly esoteric character of his later writings, James Joyce, her contemporary, told his brother, Stanislaus during their Dublin days: "It is my idea of the significance of trivial things that I want to give the two or three unfortunate wretches who may eventually read me" (Ellmann 1983, 163). Pointing out "a certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass and what [. . . he was] trying to do [. . .]," Joyce claimed that he was "[. . .] converting the bread of everyday life into something that has a permanent artistic life of its own . . . for their [his readers'] mental, moral, and spiritual uplift" [the last ellipsis is Joyce's] (S. Joyce 1958, 103-4).

The twentieth-century interest in the unaccounted debris of the everyday and attempts to discover its significance were not confined to literature. To Sigmund Freud, "parapraxes" – slips of the tongue and the pen, bungled action, and acts of forgetting – were indeed "the dregs . . . of the world of phenomena," but he believed that these were pointers to deeper psychological processes: ". . . since everything is related to everything, including small things to great, one may gain access even from

[1] Auerbach's observations on "The Brown Stocking" in *To the Lighthouse* conclude his classic representative study of the depiction of reality in Western literature ranging from Homer's *Odyssey* and Classical history through medieval romances and ecclesiastical works to Renaissance literature and the modern novel.

such unpretentious work to a study of the great problems" (1964, 27). Similarly, in *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin hoped to trace the prehistory of modernity in the marginalia and trash of everyday life. Benjamin is one of the important theorists of the contemporary discipline Cultural Studies, in which the everyday is "a foundational category" (Langbauer 1992, 47). Philosopher Henri Bergson, whose ideas of time and consciousness influenced the modernists, wrote that ". . . the most common-place events have their importance in a life-story . . ." (1910, 187). The Mass-Observation project in Britain (1937 to mid-1960s, revived in 1981), created by anthropologist Tom Harrisson, poet Charles Madge, and painter and film-maker Humphrey Jennings, aimed to record daily life in the country through anonymous volunteer observations and surveys. The project combined socio-political analysis with poetical perception, and received collaboration from, among others, literary critic William Empson.[2]

As for Joyce, if the phrase "mental, moral and spiritual uplift" is any indication, occurrences of quotidian life are not merely the unapologetic novelistic detail of his works. As one moves from *Dubliners* (1914) to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and to *Ulysses* (1922), one senses a progressive emphasis on the ordinary as the centre of counter-historical and counter-ideological emancipatory endeavours, and as the locus of humanity's true civilizational praxis. This book argues that in *Ulysses*, where Joyce's preoccupation with the ordinary reaches a critical climax in multiple ways, his literary revaluation of everyday life presents it as a sphere of alternative historical experience. He holds out the down-to-earth praxis, the immediate challenges, and possible fulfilment in the daily lives of ordinary men and women as an experiential contrast to a 'grand history' of conspicuous events. If one historicizes the everyday Joyce, this contrastive grand history may be seen to consist of wars, civil wars, colonial domination, violent nationalism, and various kinds of religious bigotry, including anti-Semitism. My contention is that it is this negative historicity that forms the critical basis of the Joycean everyday. While everyday life, in its several aspects, houses the possibility of commendable contrasts with this grand history, it is not necessarily a repudiation (Joyce would have been the last to subscribe to such a simplistic formula!). My inverse analysis of the quotidian in *Ulysses* is a study of how lives of common people and history inflect each other in a dialectical relationship. Further, it is in the small spheres of life that

[2] For the findings and methodology of the Mass-Observation research see Nick Hubble.

ordinary people can assert historical agency, which is otherwise confined to the political elite. The sphere of these ordinary lives is also where lasting changes must be accomplished if transformations are to happen at all in what gets written or accepted as a posteriori 'history.'

This is not to say that the several 'literary' and hermeneutic complexities of Joyce's representation can be overlooked. On the contrary, the analysis of the everyday as the vital mode of Joyce's historical engagement furnishes a dynamic critical framework, and a further impetus to re-examine the other aspects of his works, both aesthetic and socio-political. As I shall demonstrate in the following chapters, his intertextuality (the everyday consciousness as "palimpsestic"), his encyclopaedism, his parodistic humour, his stream-of-consciousness narrative technique, his strategies to defamiliarize the taken-for-granted fictional content, all gain new significances under this interdisciplinary critical paradigm. Although there is no attempt here to totalize the interpretive possibilities of *Ulysses* under the rubric of the everyday, an hermeneutic that circles round it helps us ask substantial cultural and philosophical questions that bear on life and writing. Such an approach also enables us to assess the extent and meaning of the subtle 'commitment' of a writer who cultivated the image of a detached aesthete, especially in the light of the recent political radicalization of Joyce. It also facilitates a rewarding sideward glance at his other works, and at some of the well-known statements delivered by and on Joyce.

Literary Moorings and Upheavals

As histories of Western literature instruct us, Joyce's decision to dwell on everyday phenomena is not an entirely new departure in fiction. Nor are the modernists the first to discover them as fit subjects for literature. The twentieth-century concern with non-events only marks the highpoint of a long representational tradition in Western literary history. As Auerbach's selections in *Mimesis* demonstrate, tokens of everyday reality register their presence in almost every work, though with varying emphases, orientations and ontological values, and in different stylistic modes. Auerbach perceptively notices solemn narratives of the past 'deviate' from their primary focus and 'slide' into realistic descriptions of mundane and practical aspects.[3] Though matters of ordinary life had

[3] Though terms such as "mundane," "practical," and "everyday" are not exact synonyms, their semantic nuances are not a serious concern for my larger argument.

always been part of art and literature, there was a marked enhancement in their presence since the Renaissance. A graphic example is the increase in detail in Andrea Mantegna's *Adoration of the Shepherds* (c. 1453) – grass on the hills; fencing at the entrance; socks on the legs of one of the shepherds, the other with bare legs; and a Joseph asleep from exhaustion – in comparison with a medieval painting of the Nativity such as Duccio di Buoninsegna's *Maestà* (1311). Giving space to the mean and everyday fact is what separates Renaissance art from medieval art. Written on the threshold of the Renaissance, François Rabelais's humanistic novel *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1532) unabashedly depicts bodily processes – eating, parturition, and defecation. The Renaissance did not sever the otherworldly connections of this world, but it recognized the place due to the earthly life of mortal beings in the divine scheme of things. Joyce recognized the change in the world view ushered in by the movement when he said that it "had created 'the sense of compassion for each thing that lives and hopes and dies and deludes itself'" (Ellmann 1983, 321). As a matter of fact, he appears on the horizon of art at the extreme end of this secularizing-democratizing vision.

If there was a paradigm shift in the approach of literature to the everyday, it occurred with the birth of the realist novel. According to Maurice Shroder, the novel as a genre is marked by disenchantment with the marvellous, and was apt to concentrate on the domestic, the practical, and the day-to-day (1967, 21). To Mikhail Bakhtin, a process of "novelisation" marks literary history, whereby the "high" is brought "low" and the low is raised in dignity (1981, 4-12; 177). Franco Moretti's assessment of the novel is also based on the premise that the everyday is the terrain in which the genre operates (2006). The factors that Ian Watt finds responsible for the rise of the novel were particularly favourable to the large-scale entry of the quotidian into literary discourse: a secular, empirical, and practical world view that resulted from the influence of Calvinism, capitalism, and the rise of the bourgeoisie; an epistemic shift from the universal to the particular; the individualistic focus on personal experience; and the changes in socio-economic conditions. To cite Watt's telling example, the movement of bread-making from the home to the baker's deprived Englishmen of the intimate knowledge of this traditional everyday process, and this prompted Daniel Defoe to describe it in *Robinson Crusoe*: ". . .'tis a little wonderful, and what I believe few People have thought much upon, (viz.), the strange multitude of little Things necessary in the Providing, Producing, Curing, Dressing, Making and Finishing this one Article of Bread" (Watt 1957, 72; Defoe 1998, 118). The connection between the novel and the quotidian is not limited to

the genesis of the genre, but extends to its reception. In part, the novel's audience also emerged in relation to the revolutions in daily life: the specialised factory production of goods (clothing, bread, beer, candle, and soap) which were earlier time-consumingly produced in households offered prospective readers, especially women, greater leisure (Watt 1957, 44). Besides, the novel appeared in publications such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* in close proximity to practical information about domestic life. The realist novel's penchant for exhaustive detail and leisurely description also proved conducive to the depiction of everyday realities. The genre also used prose, which was closer to the discourse of daily life. In *Pamela* (1740), although within an overarching seduction motif to lead the narrative with an 'event,' Samuel Richardson presents the routine of a domestic maid. He also employed the semi-literary narrative form of a letter, which was drawn from everyday life, and was suitable to the expression of intimate personal experiences (Bakhtin 1981, 410).

Concomitant with the emphasis on quotidian matter was the elevation of the common man in literary status. Watt considers *Robinson Crusoe* "the first fictional narrative in which an ordinary person's daily activities are the centre of continuous literary attention" (1957, 74). According to him, underlying the novel's serious concern with the daily lives of ordinary people is the belief, in keeping with the bourgeois notions of social democracy, that "the society must value every individual highly enough to consider him the proper subject of its serious literature" (60). As in the case of everyday events, the elitism that classical Western literature maintained towards ordinary people through genre-based distinctions also got diluted in course of time. As we know, Aristotle's definitions of the epic, tragedy, and comedy in *Poetics* reserve the first two for aristocratic heroes, and the last for characters of a lower type. Two millennia later, in *Anatomy of Criticism* Northrop Frye classifies "fictions" using the hero's power and stature as criteria. At the top of the scale is the myth, in which the hero is a divine being, superior in kind to both other men and to the environment. At its bottom are the low mimetic mode of comedy and realistic fiction, where the hero is the reader's equal, and the ironic mode, where the hero is inferior to the reader. In between are the romance, in which the hero is superior in degree to other men and to his environment; and the high mimetic mode of epic and tragedy, where the hero is superior in degree to other men but not to his environment. Having given his classification, Frye makes a statement which is of great import to us: "Looking over this table, we can see that European fiction, during the last fifteen centuries, has steadily moved its center of gravity down the list" (1957, 34). Put otherwise, the historical progress of genres in the West

tells the story of the literary rise in the status of the ordinary man. Perhaps implying this democratization of genres, in *Ulysses* Joyce places Leopold Bloom, an advertisement canvasser, and a typical hero of the low mimetic mode, within a mythical framework.

The followers of Defoe and Richardson in the genre of the English novel, namely Henry Fielding, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy, like Balzac, Zola, and Flaubert on the Continent, were no less committed in their representation of unremarkable lives and inconspicuous occurrences than the modernists.[4] Joyce acknowledges and draws upon this rich heritage of the ordinary. With his "struggles to be prosaic and observant," as Richard Ellmann and Ellsworth Mason observe, "[t]he revival of interest in common life in the late eighteenth century was inevitably of special interest to Joyce . . ." (J. Joyce 1959, 128). Stanislaus avers that Joyce "shared with [Laurence] Sterne . . . an innate scepticism in regard to the resplendent events and sumptuous personages that novelists deal in" (S. Joyce 1958, 33). With unremarkable events, *Ulysses* is a study of Dublin life as *Middlemarch*, with plenty of details that are not necessarily relevant to the plot, is "A Study of Provincial Life."

Literary precedents for both common people and inconspicuous events can also be found in Romanticism. A century before Joyce, William Wordsworth chose "incidents and situations from common life" as subjects for his ballads, and undertook to relate them in an idiom "really used by men" (1974, 123). Here beggars and tramps appear for the first time in highbrow literature. This is a consequence perhaps of the 'democratizing' impulse of the age, and the sudden grant of 'universal rights.' As Morris Beja remarks, epiphany, that hinges on everyday reality, "seems essentially a 'Romantic' phenomenon" (1971, 32). Wordsworth's use of epiphanic moments in his works, especially in the *Prelude*, is an important precedent for Stephen Dedalus's (and Joyce's) theory of epiphany. But with his antisentimental temperament in writing, Joyce chose to exalt not the Lake poet but George Crabbe (1754-1832) as one who ". . . set forth the lives of villagers with appreciation and fidelity, and with an occasional splendour reminiscent of the Dutchmen" (J. Joyce 1959, 129). The development of realism is nowhere so prominent as in the work of the Dutch still life painters (1550-1720), who specialized in the ordinary, everyday facts of life. They were keen to smuggle symbolic meanings into their quotidian details, of course, but the whole drift was towards a demythologized, almost disenchanted world of ordinary

[4] The everyday is an ideologically significant part of the naturalistic novel, especially that of Zola.