

# **The Verb, Noun and Dash of Consciousness:**

## **on two aspects of the quotidian condition**

Submission to Examination (MPhil)

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# Declaration

I hereby declare that the writing and thought contained in this thesis and submitted to examination herewith is wholly my own and has not been submitted previously in any part or whole to any examination nor for the awarding of a degree.

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30<sup>th</sup> September, 2016

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the respective *poiesis* of two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition as they have come to be assembled in our present modernity. The two aspects under consideration are drawn out from two primary pieces of literature. The first piece of literature to be put to use is Georges Perec's novel *Life – a user's manual* from which the presence of the present and related flow of Time and its relation to our quotidian condition is discussed, whilst the second piece of literature put to use is James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* from which the *poiesis* of life forces on our quotidian condition, as derivative of the formative life of the main protagonist of this novel, is discussed. The two novels in question aim to serve as a 'mirror' in the Benjaminian mode of an *Erfahrung*, through which two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition might be grasped. The thesis aims to analyse how these two aspects of our quotidian condition have come to be assembled and constructed historically, culturally, socially and personally, and to examine how our quotidian condition actually is as such in reference to their *poiesis*. In doing so a poetics of two elemental conditions of our ordinary life is hope to be drawn, and that for the purpose of bringing each aspect's respective constitutive mechanics to a horizontal level of consciousness. The aimed for purpose of the thesis is for each reader to begin to think through their quotidian condition again for themselves, and that any resultant understanding be put to a political use through a particular 'art of living'.

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# Introduction

## A historiographic trace of the source and treatment of the quotidian condition

Life since the emergence of the Renaissance in the Occident has increasingly taken on hues of specialisation and professional pursuits as a result of the emergent modern State<sup>1</sup>. Such emergence of performative pre-occupation in the service of statecraft, mercantile activity and the public persona of the artist have created a cleavage in relation to that which is private, ordinary, unconsciously recurring and below a threshold of consciousness, and that which is public and performative. It is as a result of this cleavage between life ordinary and life public that we can term the ordinary, recurring, habitual and mundane component of life as the quotidian condition.

Henri Lefebvre in his *Critique de la vie Quotidienne* cites Marx, writing that “everyday life” is an abstraction beholden to the appearance of the modern state, that is to say resultant from the cleavage which appeared between life lived privately and life lived publicly. To quote Lefebvre: “The abstraction of the *state as such* was not born until the modern world because the abstraction of private life was not created until modern times”.<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre goes on to write that “this formula [the abstraction of the state] allows us to place the [emergence of the notion of the] everyday within modernity...”<sup>3</sup> Thus private quotidian life and public performative life reciprocally created each other in their emergence by that which each of them exclude. The modernity to which the rudimentary emergence of the notion of the quotidian stems from, and by which it can be defined, is therefore locatable to that component of life that emerges in contradistinction to performative public administration. Consequentially to this distinction,

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<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre quoting Marx in *Critique of Everyday Life* Vol II., p21., see p360 in notes, footnote 13, Verso, London, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p89.

everything which does not belong to such public realm, namely the private, mundane, ordinary, habitual, recurring condition of life becomes the source and content of the quotidian condition.

Michael Gardiner writes that it was during the Renaissance that art, and pursuant to that the person of the artist, also acquired “a specificity and autonomy that it did not formerly enjoy; art and its practitioner became ‘this-worldly’, a source of pleasure and entertainment in daily life, yet at the same time separate from it”<sup>4</sup>. As Gardiner goes on to quote Agnes Heller, from whom these thoughts are appropriated, Renaissance society “no longer simply generated art [and thus the persona of the artist] as an integral part of daily life itself, but created, honoured and exalted it *as art*”<sup>5</sup>, thus making it part of the public realm. Following Heller and Gardiner we can surmise that from these shifts in lived life and their nature occurring from the Renaissance onwards “everyday life becomes detached from other activities when ‘higher’ or more specialised pursuits, such as [...] art, [and might we add public administration in the rise of the first republican States] become the prerogative of elites.”<sup>6</sup>

In dwelling on this separation between public life and private life, or otherwise the derivative emergence of the quotidian condition as that portion of life which is shielded from and remains outside the realm of the public sphere, the notion of the quotidian receives further affirmation in the Reformation of the early-sixteenth century, where we witness a theological distinction emerge between respect for the performative worldly practice and concomitant public duty of princes, whilst maintaining a righteous, Christ-like personal life, characterised by teachings urging inner piety and self-reflection<sup>7</sup>. This emphasis on a self-scrutinised, inner private life of protestant adherents in face of the broader external world marks the birth in northern Europe of the broader social creation of private life as distinct from public duty or performance. It is this self-scrutinised inner private life which when lived and practiced becomes none other than the proto-emergence of the modern quotidian.

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Routledge, London, 2000, p130-131.

<sup>5</sup> Agnes Heller, *Renaissance Man*, Routledge, London, 1978, p151.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday life*, Routledge, London, 2000, p130.

<sup>7</sup> see Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p26.

The separation of contemporary lived life into two distinct realms is thus borne out of an artificial, historic and causative division generated over the course of a number of centuries' social, political and technological development as a mark of practices characterising the dawn of the Modern era resulting in a reification of certain practices and concerns in life – such as public state-craft, professional, specialist or technical knowledge –, whilst leaving other ordinary, recurring, habitual areas of life cleaved off from it, producing in turn its category of the quotidian condition. It is in precisely this separation and resultant cleavage that we can define the quotidian, which is as such borne of modernity as that part of life which is shielded from the realm of specialist knowledge, public performance and their application. Because of such distinction and separation of spheres of life, the quotidian as it has come to be termed, its structure, genealogy and content is therefore worthy of thought as a phenomenon that defines a component of Being in modernity.

With the onset of industrial modernity in the nineteenth century, the development of separation between private and public realms was stamped by the preoccupations of the literary genre of the realist novel. Literary realism was a method of fiction which drew upon the condition of emerging modernisation in life to paint its characters and plot, be it of social mores, class, daily routine or other attributes. By doing so, the everyday condition of life with the emergence of the genre of fiction became both the context and the setting for characters and their character development in fictionalised story-lines, reflecting back through that the changes that had emerged in European social life, daily routine and the condition of everyday life since the Reformation and later advent of proto-modernity.

The emergence of the realist novel embodies a reflection on the concern of such modern quotidian condition, depicting and utilising the condition of lived modern life as its central concern. Sheringham quoting Charles Taylor from his *The Sources of the Self* iterates these thoughts by writing that “...the evolution of modern Western identity...establishes connections between modern selfhood, attitudes to everyday life, and the emergence of artistic genres, notably the realist novel”<sup>8</sup>. We witness therefore by the early and mid-nineteenth century, particularly in

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p40.

France, authors such as Balzac publishing *Le Père Goriot* in 1835 detailing an account of contemporary everyday life of its protagonists through the characters' narrated lives, days and settings<sup>9</sup>. Later in the century we read fictional accounts of everyday lives and environments in both the provincial countryside (*Madame Bovary*, 1857) as well as in the emerging anonymity of the metropolis (*A Sentimental Education*, 1869) in Flaubert's works, authors whom twentieth century Hungarian poet George Faludy described soberly as "...realists who meticulously described / the insignificant and trivial ways / of the average clod..."<sup>10</sup>, that is the lives of their protagonists' quotidian condition.

Beyond the confines of literature, other forms of art in the rapidly changing and industrializing nineteenth century also embraced the quotidian condition as subject and content for their work. The realist school with its concerns for depicting everyday life ascendant in literature finds its echo in the production of visual art of this period. Amongst such painters we might cite Manet and his work titled *Boating* (1874) – or indeed his portraiture oeuvre as well –, or Gustave Courbet and his work such as *The Sleeping Spinner* (1853) as central proponents of objective realism in painting, forming the Realist school of painting focused on depicting and capturing everyday life in its lived quotidian condition.

In citing work from the somewhat later Impressionist movement in painting, many of whose themes closely align with the concern of realism depicted in nineteenth century literature, we might cite Manet and Courbet's contemporary Monet's painting of two pictures on the theme of everyday leisure time in his *Bathers at La Grenouillère* (1869) and accompanying *La Grenouillère* (1869) as thematic depictions of the everyday. Similarly to Monet's theme on the private time of leisure, we witness Renoir's *Bal du moulin de la Galette* (1876) depicting a scene from everyday private life in the metropolis as yet another visualization of ordinary, realist quotidian life. It must be noted alongside the late-nineteenth century oeuvre of painting, the rise of more modern techniques of artistic production during the nineteenth century, such

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<sup>9</sup> see Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p41.

<sup>10</sup> George Faludy, Sonnet 43 (3<sup>rd</sup> stanza), in *Selected Poems of George Faludy*, edited and translated by Robin Skelton, University of Georgia Press, Athens GA, 1985, p152.

as photography and cinema, which both emerged with an emphasis on documenting ordinary life.

Addressing the condition of industrial-metropolitan developments on emerging modern society and its social-mores, daily routine and related attributes at the turn of the twentieth century was social theorist Georg Simmel. Although in Simmel's writing the meaning since attached to the term 'quotidian life' is not explicit, it is arguably precisely this concern which he addressed in his various essays ranging from ethics, through to money and metropolitan culture within capitalist metropolitan society. In Baudelaire's terms it was emergent 'modernity' with its 'ephemeral, fugitive and contingent' nature that Simmel wrote about. The nature of Simmel's analysis of this metropolitan culture consisted of 'impressionistic'<sup>11</sup> snapshots and fragments of daily life coupled with a sociological 'microscopy'<sup>12</sup> of the experience of modernity, processes that were thus aimed at uncovering the infra-ordinary quotidian condition of subjects' lives at the time. In addressing his thought toward the infra-ordinary, Simmel approached the study of the everyday by way of a micro-sopic lens which might assist in depicting a structure of it.

Amongst Simmel's essays we find several pieces concerning culture – including on female culture –, a series of sociological essays (or rather social-theories) on the meal, on the sociology of urban space, on the psychology of fashion and style, on religion, prostitution and leisure time as well as his most well-known major works, the essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" and the monograph length study *The Philosophy of Money*. This wide-spectrum of interest concerning various facets of modernity, modern life and its everyday ordinary condition is firmly rooted in the genre of essayistic 'social theory' as depicting the everyday quotidian life of contemporaneous cultural currents as opposed to specialist sociology, however having said this, the discipline of sociology of which Simmel is seen as a pioneer, is just such modern pre-occupation and measuring of the conditions of amongst other things everyday life of societies. Given this, Simmel could be depicted as a philosopher of everyday culture in the broadest sense of the term – specifically of his contemporaneous milieu of early-twentieth century modern culture. Echoing this assessment, David Frisby writes that "Simmel's gift lay in capturing the

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<sup>11</sup> Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory – an introduction*, Routledge, London, 2002, p38 and p.43.

<sup>12</sup> Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory – an introduction*, Routledge, London, 2002, p37.

mode of experience of contemporary reality”<sup>13</sup>, which reality as defined by Baudelaire, who also depicted like mores half a century earlier, is the ‘ephemeral, the fugitive and the contingent’, or what we might otherwise term as the private sphere of existence within modernity.

In the decades following Simmel’s writings, the capturing of Baudelaire’s nineteenth century emergent ‘modernity’ was the central concern of Walter Benjamin’s work in his opus *The Arcades Project*. Underpinning the writing of *The Arcades Project*, the ‘ephemeral, fugitive and contingent’ nature of modern everyday life was given the German term *Erlebnis* by Benjamin, meaning ‘experience’, but an experience that is devoid of being able to be reducible to communication and knowledge. Thus the totality of nineteenth century modernity, modern life and its everyday condition is littered with commodities and related sensations that seem to fleet away, to which Benjamin thought art and literature could not do justice to. What Benjamin sought in his writings on modernity and its everyday, was a way to turn this *Erlebnis* of modernity, into an *Erfahrung*, that is into the kind of ‘experience’ that is communicable, reproducible and knowable, and thus through it become knowledge of the modern quotidian condition. By doing so, *Erfahrung* in cinema (and it was primarily aimed at the cinematic medium), might create shock and shock-value in the viewer, which in turn was hoped to heighten the recognition of the condition of the ordinary quotidian condition amongst which people live, capturing both the character of the moments or things it describes, and the method of their critical uncovering, thus elevating the ordinary and the sub-consciousness of its condition onto a conscious plane of perception.

In his essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical (Technological) Reproduction” Benjamin enrolls the cinema montage and its potential for producing shock value as a tool for the production of *Erfahrung*. Through such tool, the fugitive, ephemeral and contingent reality of products, consumption, advertising, and the nature of the modern metropolitan street and its sensations – that is the condition of modern everyday life – was thought to be able to be reproduced to communicate real knowledge and representation of it. Modern quotidian life was sought to be represented and communicated as an embodied experience through the use of ‘shock’, creating what Ben Highmore characterises as a “sense-making that would give account

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<sup>13</sup> David Frisby, *Georg Simmel*, Routledge, London, 2002, p38.

of *Erlebnis* [experience] within a collective culture".<sup>14</sup> *Erfahrung* thus works at the level of art, at the level of percept, affect and sensation, bringing with it a communicative value on the hue and structure of everyday life. What *Erfahrung* achieves is a depiction of the hidden, of the forgotten, of the sublime, and enacts a revealing of these through shock. The technique of *Erfahrung* is thus one step toward revealing that which is lost from consciousness, which remains hidden, but is a component of reality in which we live and by which we are formed.

Benjamin's work on the nineteenth century attempted to capture the fleeting nature of modern quotidian life through the apprehension of the particularity of the material metropolitan world. Thus akin to Simmel's urban microscopy on the infra-ordinary condition of life in the modern metropolis, Benjamin's concern is also the urban and its condition, specifically the nineteenth century capitalist metropolitan condition – similarly to Realist painting –, in all its varied sensorium of modernity, which include its architecture both interior and exterior, the people and their private lives who populated it, together with its varied emergent technologies.

Writing at the same time as Walter Benjamin in the 1920s and 30s, the Parisian Surrealists, specifically amongst them Louis Aragon with his novel *Paris Peasant* and André Breton in his novel *Nadja* were depicting the modern metropolitan everyday akin to Simmel and Benjamin, but with a twist. The scene in these two works is the urban-metropolitan similar to Simmel and Benjamin's pre-occupations, however in the case of the *Paris Peasant* it is an arcade with concomitant observation of habits of consumption, eating, drinking, fashion and sexuality, along with a depiction in the second part of the book of the urban Paris park of Buttes Chaumont in the late-evening. In the case of *Nadja* it is the street, and the life of the street in the context of wooing a woman (Nadja), making their horizon, similarly to Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* or Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* in the preceding century, the modern urban condition. Their methodology is one of collage, montage, juxtaposition, an attempt to find the marvellous in the ordinary, and to negate the control of reason, the precise epochal problematic from which their intellectual concern with quotidian life arose from; it is through that, that a deeper sense of the real was hoped to be achieved. Such search for a deeper sense of the real in the cacophony of modernity and the metropolitan modern city was seen as a way toward

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<sup>14</sup> Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory – an introduction*, Routledge, London, 2002, p67.

overcoming the alienation of which Marx wrote about in relation to industrial modernity, and in turn revealing in life “what might be at the heart of what is”<sup>15</sup>, that is real life. In attempting to reveal what might be at the heart of real life, *Paris Peasant* and *Nadja* rely on a fictional documentary technique to depict it.

In 1922 James Joyce published the hitherto most modernist of modern novels *Ulysses*. Following a day in the life of the two main protagonists Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom through the comings and goings, both physical, conscious and subconscious of their respective day from morning to late at night in Dublin on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1904, James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is characterised by Declan Kiberd, as being “an image of [the protagonists’] own condition”<sup>16</sup> in the “dailiest day possible”<sup>17</sup>. With the advent of the disciplines of sociology and psychology in the early-twentieth century, a novelistic image of the “dailiest day possible” could not have been written otherwise. It is arguably through the gaze of these two newfound disciplines that Joyce’s novel develops and portrays its characters, and as such and by recourse, his novel becomes a window onto the private and ordinary life of his protagonists, just as the two respective disciplines of sociology and psychology similarly investigate their subjects of concern.

This “dailiest day possible” courses through an array of narrated minutiae constituting any possible person’s daily life living in Dublin at the turn of the twentieth century, ranging from the trials of the body to the trials of the mind, and everything in between. Thus Kiberd writes that Joyce’s work is an epic of both the body and an epic of the mind<sup>18</sup>, and in being so, and in following the structure of the Greek epic *Odyssey*, must arguably also be seen as an epic of the ordinary and the modern quotidian condition in its fullest account.

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p86.

<sup>16</sup> See Introduction by Declan Kiberd, James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin, London, 1992., p xviii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p xviii.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p xxviii.

The setting of *Ulysses* in an urban environment is not accidental, for it is within this modern urban environment – just like the metropolitan urban concern of Balzac and Flaubert, the Realist painters of the second-half of the nineteenth century, Simmel and Benjamin, and the Surrealists – that issues come to fore that problematize the quotidian condition. In depicting the importance of such entry into the quotidian condition, Kiberd writes that “what one man does in a single day is infinitesimal, but is nonetheless infinitely important that he do it”<sup>19</sup>, and arguably we might say that it is from within the backdrop and bosom of the modern urban condition that the loftier ideals born out of modern bureaucratisation and rationalisation concerning people germinate, coalesce and emerge into light and action. It is in fusing on the one hand the minutiae, and on the other the germination, coalescence and emergence of thoughts and values from such minutiae, that we glimpse an understanding of the significance of the quotidian condition to modern literature, precisely because of the condition of modernity.

Turning to post-WWII literary work on the topic, Henri Lefebvre had published in 1947 the first of what would become a three volume concern on the quotidian condition titled *Critique of Everyday Life*. In these volumes Lefebvre depicts “the everyday as the native soil of all our activities and endeavours – including higher forms of knowledge”<sup>20</sup>, which include the likes of science, philosophy and specialisation, but also and equally other ‘lesser’ forms of activity such as language, communication and for instance the life of women. Lefebvre’s argument in his *Critique of Everyday Life* is one of positioning everyday life *as* the level of reality of life – that the totality of life and its potential is tied to the condition of the ‘everyday’ and emerges from it, but that it must be critiqued and overcome given its condition within bureaucratic post-war capitalism. Given this, Lefebvre analyses post-war capitalism (and emergent post-modern neo-liberal capitalism in his third volume published in 1980), as having instituted through the fetishism of the commodity and its related modes of living an alienated and inauthentic everyday life, echoing Marx and Engel’s socio-political critique of industrial capitalism a century before<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p x.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p146.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels., *The Communist Manifesto.*, Penguin Books, London., 2002.

Such recognition of the condition of alienation within everyday life that abstract-idealist bureaucratic post-war capitalism has created, Lefebvre argues, provides the possibility for the emergence of dis-alienation and the ushering in of the potential of ‘total man’ that Marx sought in Communism. This ‘total man’ is the same ‘*l’homme total*’ which the Surrealists sought by way of attenuation to the ‘marvellous’, however in contra-distinction to the Surrealists’ project of overcoming alienation through the extra-ordinary, Lefebvre argues that the alienation of modern life can only be overcome by a focus on and liberation of the infra-ordinary, which is to say the space in which the quotidian condition exists.

Following in the footsteps of Henri Lefebvre’s thesis on everyday life, or indeed influencing it, as some – amongst them themselves – have argued, the Situationist International took up such cause of revolution (as opposed to merely theoretical critique) within the sphere of quotidian life. The Situationist International’s literary-philosophical, political and social focus could as a consequence of their Lefebvrian influence be summed up in the statement ‘we must change life’, meaning first and foremost the space which comes to structure quotidian life in bureaucratic capitalism.

Similarly to Lefebvre, the Situationists’ saw everyday life as the ultimate scene for revolutionary activity. Writing in 1961, Guy Debord in his seminal “Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life” wrote that “everyday life must be placed at the centre of everything. Every project starts out from it and every realization returns here for its true meaning. Everyday life is the measure of all things: of the fulfilment or rather the nonfulfillment of human relations; of the use of lived time; of artistic experimentation; of revolutionary politics”<sup>22</sup>. It was in this locus that the central tenet and oeuvre of the Situationist International in all their various activities, theories and writing finds its location.

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<sup>22</sup> Guy Debord, “Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life”, in Ken Knabb (ed.) *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley California, Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p69.

The Situationist International identified everyday life in bureaucratically managed consumer society consequent to the 1945 peace and reconstruction of Europe as a “colonised sector”<sup>23</sup>, colonised namely by bureaucratisation, specialisation and consumer capitalism. It was in this understanding that they forwarded thought and a related practice of living on concerns as wide ranging as urban-planning and architecture, art and the commodity, work, specialisation, leisure time and even language. The colonisation of everyday life being referred to here is the descent of the entirety of everyday life into (or rather its capture), by the socio-economic phenomena Debord termed as ‘the society of the spectacle’ in his thesis *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), and which the Situationist International rallied against.

Raoul Vaneigem was a fellow member of Guy Debord in the Situationist International, who had published *The Revolution of Everyday Life* in 1967, in which we read similar sentiments pertaining to the reified spectacle of everyday life, including a critique of ‘quantification’, ‘specialisation’, ‘isolation’, ‘mediated abstraction’ and the degradation of work, with his thesis concluding in the depiction of an image of post-revolutionary society, in which its quotidian condition is one of ‘masters without slaves’, calling on subjectification and the role of an alterity of subjectivity to bring about a real self-realisation through a reclamation of everyday life. In such respect of needing to reclaim everyday life from the society of the spectacle, Vaneigem’s thesis is not dissimilar to Lefebvre’s identification with the need to attend to changing the infra-ordinary of everyday life by way of overcoming consumer-capitalism’s stranglehold and stricture placed on it.

In attacking and aiming to overcome such ‘spectacularisation’ of lived everyday life, the Situationists forwarded a concept of ‘play’, ranging from critical methods of artistic practices encapsulated in their concept ‘*detournement*’ to critical methods of engaging with the urban environment encapsulated in their concept and practice of ‘*dérive*’. It was through the articulation and putting into practice of these critical concepts that the Situationists aimed to assemble a “project of a different style of life; or in fact simply a project of a style of life”<sup>24</sup> as revolutionary practice subverting the bureaucratically managed everyday of post-war European consumer

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p70.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p72.

society. The Situationists' saw these methods of critical concepts and practices as a "program for the realisation of human capacities"<sup>25</sup>, borne out of a revolution – albeit as a micro-level revolution of their own lives – in the condition and practice of everyday life.

The Situationist International's oeuvre owed much both to Lefebvre with whom they initially had a working relationship with until mutual recriminations of plagiarism soured it, as well as to the Surrealists. Michael Sheringham writes however that "the chief difference [between the Situationists and the Surrealists] was that where Surrealism saw experimental activity in terms of releasing the dormant energies of the unconscious, Debord's group believed it was possible to bring about change through conscious volition, via particular forms of behaviour"<sup>26</sup> such as the aforementioned practice of *dérive* or focus on play in everyday life. It was in this way that the Situationists saw themselves as an avant-garde revolutionary agency, stating that "the revolutionary transformation of everyday life...will mark the end of all unilateral artistic expression stocked in the form of commodities, at the same time as the end of all specialised politics"<sup>27</sup>.

### **The scope of this thesis**

Given the history of literature and artistic production on the quotidian condition, the structure and genealogy of our quotidian in our own lived practice of life remains remarkably allusive, beholden to an unconscious. It is to this allusive and unconscious *structure* in its elemental nature that this thesis is addressed. The purpose of such focus is to uncover and examine both the *poiesis* and *affect* of elemental aspects of our quotidian condition on our ordinary, habitual life, in order to begin to think through the structure and construction of our quotidian condition individually again.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p72-73.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p162.

<sup>27</sup> Guy Debord, "Perspectives for Conscious Alterations in Everyday Life", in Ken Knabb (ed.) *Situationist International Anthology*, Berkeley California, Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p75.

The full title of this thesis is *The Verb, Noun and Dash of Consciousness: on two aspects of the quotidian condition*, the first part of the title being taken from Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl", which portrays what might be a particular condition of the quotidian for some in our present modernity, whilst the two aspects of our quotidian condition under consideration have been chosen as to their elemental effect on our quotidian condition in such present modernity, with the aim of volitionally making conscious their structure, construction and mechanics, origin, development and source as they have come to populate and construct our daily life as infra-ordinary and inalienable components of it.

Just as Aristotle identifies components of poetics which he deems necessary to construct good drama, so too does the respective body of this thesis attempt to unpack the structure and mechanics of the two elemental quotidian objects under consideration as they might in turn bear on the construction of the condition of our broader daily life in its macro content. The thesis thus aims to discuss the structure of the presence of that which couches everything else which is ordinary and habitual in our lives. In doing so, the thesis aims to offer a "sense making that would give account of them", and that in the vein of an *Erfahrung* through which they might be consciously grasped.

The method by which such writing will follow is an essayistic social theory akin to Georg Simmel's treatment of quotidian life, whereby snapshots and fragments of ordinary daily life relating to the structure and construction of our quotidian present and related flow of Time in the first chapter, and the *poiesis* of our libido in the second, will be made. The ultimate aim of such essayistic writing in relation to these two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition is to echo Raoul Vaniegem's call for a different subjectification of the reader in relation to his/her own quotidian condition, and that as a means of individuated political action.

### **The two aspects of the quotidian in consideration**

In the first chapter titled "The Quotidian and the *Poiesis* of the Present", Georges Perec's novel *La vie - mode emploi* will be utilised as a narration of a moment within a fictional apartment

building and its residents in the XVIIth *arrondissement* of Paris. In the novel Perec narrates a moment in the life of the apartment building through the gaze of a fictional painter who in that moment is in the process of painting a picture of it. The narrator is also a fictional resident in the said building, and thus a witness to its life. The writing in this novel is a momentary transfiguration of a painterly eye, aiming to capture the everyday life and contents of his object, namely the apartment building, its residents and their possessions within a frieze of painterly time. The frieze in question, not unlike the ancient Greek friezes depicting battles, is a gaze onto an aspect of our quotidian, namely that of the presence of the Present.

The detail of the novel's almost pedantic description of objects, possessions, people and activity within the apartment building at the moment of observation in which arrest of time the narration takes place has its pre-cursor in the observations of Louis Aragon's novel *Paris Peasant* in its treatment and enumeration of observed objects and décor of a nineteenth century Paris arcade, whilst its treatment through a fictional painterly eye might have been borrowed from and be inferring Baudelaire's title of poetry *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne*.

Whilst the technique of narration of the moment in which this novel takes place is akin to Aragon's treatment of a Paris arcade, the uniqueness of the writing is in its taking that technique to its extreme, magnifying the absolute mundane in the process. It is precisely by having frozen the moment of time in which the narration plays out, and that by placing the narration into the gaze of a fictional painterly eye, that the super-magnification of the ordinary can take place, achieved by resisting a narrative sequential portrayal of time and place, and rather focusing in on the ordinary of lived everyday life of a given literal moment, and filling the metonymic canvas of the novel with it. It is precisely this magnification and focus in on the ordinary condition and fullness of daily life both as such and in our present modernity (which is more or less analogous to the modernity of 1975 in many, but not in all ways) that this thesis aims to explore.

With the extolling of this technique the novel captures the ordinary existence and contents of lived Parisian everyday life of 1975 in a literary realism echoing Joyce's capturing of a Dublin day of 1904 in *Ulysses*. The content of the narration thus becomes an *homage* to realism in the

lineage not only of Joyce, but also of late-nineteenth century Impressionist painters and nineteenth century Realist novelists. In fact what the Impressionist painters and Realist novelists of the nineteenth century captured in their paintings and novels, specifically those whose object or backdrop was Paris, was public urban life in the European capital; similarly in this novel, Perec captures life in Paris a century later, but not public urban life as his nineteenth century predecessors did, but the private life of Parisian residents inside their place of dwelling, and without attributing to its condition any explicit social or economic problematics, but rather just portraying in a realist fashion what is, and that in its modernity not unlike Baudelaire's poems a century earlier. It is in this multi-faceted lineage of Impressionist painters, Realist novelists, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Baudelaire's *Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne* and Aragon's *Paris Peasant* that this novel finds its content, nature and structure, and which the first chapter of this thesis aims to explore further, and use as an articulation on and contribution to the concerns of an aspect of the quotidian.

The quotidian theme derivative of this novel that I use to depart into a narration of an aspect of our quotidian is the Present. The aim of the unpacking of the theme is to answer what Georges Perec himself asks in his seminal series of short essays "The Infra-Ordinary": namely "How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual? [...] How are we to speak of these 'common things', how [are we] to track them down rather, flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they remain mired, how [are we] to give them a meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what is, of what we are?"<sup>28</sup>. In having asked this question of ordinary quotidian life, Perec goes on to ask: just "Where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space"<sup>29</sup>, which is to say 'where is our quotidian?' of which one aspect is found to be in an engagement with and relation to how our Present – and derivative of it Time – has been constructed, and what that construction has come to create in the sphere of our quotidian daily life.

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<sup>28</sup> Georges Perec, "Approaches to What?", in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Penguin Books, London, 2008, p210.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p210.

Through Perec's novel an address is able to be made to such "infra-ordinary" condition of our quotidian, namely the infra-ordinary condition of the frieze of the presence of the Present and related structure of Time, around which the composition of the very structure of the novel is based. The Present is elusive, almost ungraspable, and can only be grasped through a depiction of it which acts as its reflection, coming to life, its *Erfahrung*; – the Present needs a mirror (a piece of art work, literature) through which to reflect itself into being, and this mirror is the content and structure of Perec's novel, from which the presence of the Present becomes crystallised and then further theorised in relation to and as the ultimate backdrop to the structure of our quotidian condition in its most immediate form.

The Present, as such, belongs to that which Perec defines as *l'infra-ordinaire*, that part of existence which almost but escapes us if we don't pay special heed to it. Time and the Present as crucial aspects of *l'infra-ordinaire* are central in coming to an understanding of the project which Perec himself defined as the "interrogation of the quotidian"<sup>30</sup>. In interrogating aspects of the quotidian, the Present as an aspect around which so many other aspects revolve can't be ignored, because life, especially private life in its most elemental form exists *in* the Present and its construction. Whatever other aspect one might consider, such as movement, rhythm of work or ultimately death, one inexorably finds their way back to the question of Time and its recurring moments of the Present.

The second chapter titled "On the Quotidian and the *Poiesis* of the Libido" discusses the content and hue of our quotidian condition as libidinal forces come to structure and populate it. This second ontological aspect concerning the construction and *poiesis* of our quotidian will depart from the image drawn of it by James Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, specifically his treatment of the formative years of his main protagonist in the novel, Stephen Dedalus. Just as in the case of the first chapter, reference to Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* will act as a 'mirror' to the discussion and portrayal of the quotidian object of

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<sup>30</sup> Gilbert Adair, "The Eleventh Day: Perec and the Infra-ordinary", in *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Spring 2009 – Volume XXIX, Dalkey Archive Press, University of Illinois, Champaign IL, 2009.

concern in this chapter, and that for the purposes of effecting an *Erfahrung* through which this aspect of our quotidian condition might be glimpsed.

In the same vein as the discussion of the ‘present’ in the first chapter, this chapter will also attempt an answer to *l’infra-ordinaire* in which our quotidian condition is saturated, but do so in reference to the discussion of the nature, construction and effect of the Libido on it as depicted in the formative development of the central character of Stephen Dedalus. Such condition of *l’infra-ordinaire* will be traced in Stephen Dedalus’ fictional ego-development from his childhood into his adulthood as a depiction of a fictional private ontology as it might concern the thoughts, feelings, psychological lines, effects and decisions by which his subjectivity is populated and his subjectification comes to be realised in early adulthood. Coupled and in parallel with this, James Joyce’s own biographical formative life of which this novel is a partial fictional narration will also be read in this light as informing his writing of this novel and his own resultant adulthood from which Stephen Dedalus’ fictional character development is drawn. In examining this content, James Joyce’s fictional formative life in the character of Stephen Dedalus can be seen as a working through of such life instincts and death instincts as coming to form his life energy, a second component of the infra-ordinary construction of our quotidian condition.

Stephen Dedalus’ thought, feelings and utterings throughout his depicted formative development in *Portrait* might suggest reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as depicting a coming to maturity of a libidinal flow and movement as formed and being formed by experience of the external world from the inside to the outside, and from the outside forming the inside to only find expression yet again on the outside in the very character-development and ultimate destiny of the novel’s main protagonist. Thus at the core of the text and at the core of the formative development of the central protagonist detailed in *Portrait* can be said to be an authorly coming to text of libidinal flow and general psychic instinctual drive.

In reference to such coming to maturity of a libidinal flow and movement, or rather in parallel to examining such *poiesis* of the libido on our quotidian, this second chapter will also briefly discuss the oppositional relation to the libidinal drive, namely Freud’s *death drive*, and that as

depicted in Stephen Dedalus' formative fictional character. The chapter therefore in dealing with libidinal force will also draw into its orbit the opposing yet complimentary drive of death as an origin which is likewise borne in and comes to populate the content of quotidian experience.

It is through a gaze on life energy and the death drive – two opposing yet complimentary psychological forces – that the *poiesis* of another ontological aspect of our quotidian condition can be constructed. In examining a mirror in which such coming to flow of life energy is portrayed, an understanding of the role that psychological, mental and emotional content plays in creating and structuring our quotidian condition can be had. As such, life forces as depicted in the character of Stephen Dedalus' formative years and coming to adulthood in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are but another elemental aspect of our quotidian condition in its constitution.

### **Our infra-ordinary quotidian condition**

In writing about the quotidian and in making a choice for primary texts from which to depart and peel-off themes from, it is precisely the antithesis of the “extra-ordinary” which is sought. The extra-ordinary as such does not belong to ordinary, recurring, habitual, quotidian existence, but is rather an exception to it. Neither does public performative life belong to infra-ordinary quotidian existence. What in fact was being sought in the choice of themes and possible choice of literature on which to base departures into the themes was the stillness amongst which our habitual life is lived. In this sense, the present work attempts to discuss in some detail and rigour precisely that which is considered and experienced as common-place, and indeed what we more often than not don't even recognise within our lives, that which is below a level of consciousness.

The fact that the writing to follow deals with the hidden, the infra-ordinary in Perec's words, the forgotten and the phenomena that almost – if ever – even register in our consciousness is precisely the valour of its hoped for *poiesis*. It is by way of focusing on the infra-ordinary

elements that provide the context for our private life that something meaningful can be uncovered about quotidian existence. The hoped for relevance of this work is precisely the spotlight that is shone on that which escapes us, which is situated below a level of conscious horizon. In writing this thesis, the aim was to bring fore that which is below the threshold of consciousness, below our threshold of conscious horizon, and in doing so make it volitionally conscious.

In writing about the quotidian and in making choices for primary texts, what was being sought in the choice of themes and possible choice of literature was the stillness amongst which our ordinary private life is created and lived-out. In this sense, the following chapters discuss two aspects of our quotidian condition as precisely that which is considered and experienced as common-place, and indeed what we more often than not don't even recognise within our lives, that which is below a level of consciousness in order to be able to begin to think our own quotidian life – or at least two elemental aspects of it – through again for ourselves.

### **The threshold of the unconscious**

In attempting to analyse two elemental aspects of the quotidian condition as they exist as such, what is at stake is an unravelling of the substance, structure, order, origin and development of that space in which the private sphere of our lives exist collectively as well as individually, and by which in turn our lives are saturated by. Such content of life borders on the anonymous, and precisely because of this we are mostly unaware of its origins.

The content, structure, origin and development of the content of our quotidian condition in present modernity and since the emergence of the lived condition of a quotidian might be characterised as consisting of the comfortable, the familiar, the mundane, the forgotten infra-ordinary, the recurring and much more besides, the proximity of which, precisely because it is part of our habitual existence, is almost imperceptible, almost invisible, but by which we are nevertheless formed, and from which we act – even, and most often, unknowingly. The content of our quotidian lives thus has an origin, structure, source and development attached to it; it is the unravelling and bringing to consciousness of such origin, structure, source and development of albeit two elemental aspects of it that this thesis hopes to convey.

The micro-content of this almost imperceptible, almost invisible content and context by which we are constituted and in turn saturated might be what could be termed as the generic: our biological-psychological-civilisational-cultural milieu bounded by epoch and geography, but which is nonetheless causative and has been instituted in the past at particular points in history's flow. Such generic content is however always performative and punctual, constantly erupting into the actual, into the conscious and the productive. It is this performative punctuality which creates the actual of the everyday as it has been formed by our collective past.

The task of this thesis therefore is to locate and engage two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition's eruptions into the actual, conscious and productive by way of a (re)reading of their formative substance in the form of two respective narrations on them as portrayed in the respective pieces of literature that will be used. The task is to attempt a reading of the elemental substance of our quotidian condition in a way that offers a renewed perspective on it, which is nothing other than a new image of thought onto the openings of our time in relation to it, and through that onto the openings of our present modernity in which context our quotidian lives are lived. Such a (re)reading could be characterised by thinking like a seismograph of the current situation we are in: it is to make the everyday readable in such a way that from a logical standpoint anything said about it seems unexpected – however if such thinking on it is accepted critically, throws a light and understanding on us and our actions as they occur and reoccur in the content of daily life.

In this thesis it will be the micro-contents of the universal, historic, psychological, biological, cultural, economic and social which will be the objects of investigation. These forms or levels of the everyday denote potential sites of eruption and hold out the possibility of remaking events that belong to the realm of the almost imperceptible, the generic and the unconscious. The micro-objects or content of these realms come fore in the actual, at that interstitial zone where eruptions into the everyday, the colouring of the everyday occur through action, habit and will, and through them fill the void of our habitual existence. As a consequence, my general approach to the two aspects in question are by necessity specific phenomena which litter our quotidian without us even being aware of them. It is these phenomena which come to colour our daily life, our everyday, of how we live, feel and act, and in turn which make-up the context and content of our present quotidian modernity in relation to them.

## Writing as a Walk

In offering the form of the thesis as inter-disciplinary narration on two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition, the methodology which may be most suitable to be articulated for such undertaking might be a reading of our quotidian condition and related writing of it that might be likened to a metonymical 'walk' through its substance.

Henry David Thoreau has written such a metonymical walk in his much celebrated essay *Walking*. Thoreau commences his essay by trying to begin to articulate what a walk is, likening it to a sauntering, gathered from the old French *Sainte-Terrre* as he points-out, namely a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In such pilgrimage the walker passes through myriad locales, languages, customs and terrains only to unravel the substance of his journey not as an arrival at a destination (Jerusalem), but rather a meandering through tongues, peoples and lands in which it is the journey and the encounters within that journey that is of importance, as opposed to the arrival at his destination, which remains in the sauntering constantly beyond his horizon.

To saunter means to walk slowly, to savour the environment of one's place whilst passing through it. The destination in such sauntering is of only secondary importance, and often far in the distance in both time and in space; the destination is indeed the closure of such sauntering as opposed to being a part of it, therefore the sauntering consists in everything and every experience which precedes the arrival at a destination.

To saunter through a landscape or an environment is to turn inwards as much as it is to receive from without. Turning inwards and receiving from without meld into a continuum of thought and subjectivity in sauntering, a process of journeying that becomes the substance, character, nature and very act of the journey by which it is had, formed and experienced. Thus when one saunters, it is what is received from without, from one's environment which is of importance, coupled with its formation and layering upon one's subjectivity within as s/he walks, only to reach the destination of one's walk as a changed person, and in turn returning the value of the walk to the person who undertakes it.

Indeed Henry David Thoreau whilst titling his essay *Walking*, and whilst beginning his sauntering of thought with the etymological root of the act of walking, constitutes the content of his essay by an array of topics one linked to the next, from the nature and grandeur of wilderness, village life, civilisations of the East and civilisations of the past, mythology and ancient Greek writers, knowledge and ignorance, to the swampy fields of farmers. Thus his essay is not about describing or philosophising walking, nor is it for instance a history of walking or what one might be able to do on a walk, but rather a metonymical walk in its very constitutive conception, and as such a walk of thought through myriad and varied pre-occupations akin to what one might experience in the actual act of walking itself. The essay thus becomes a walk and embodies a walk by nature of its condition and treatment of writing and content.

Akin to Thoreau's essay embodying a metonymical walk, this thesis is intended to be structured and thought likewise, albeit focused on the concerns of two respective elemental aspects of our quotidian and the myriad openings they let onto. The environment, languages and land that the walk of this thesis passes through is an array of inter-disciplinary thought and phenomena concerning two elemental aspects of our quotidian as civilisational conditions in which our present modernity emerges. The thesis akin to Thoreau's sauntering is not academically definitive – which is to say it doesn't arrive at a destination nor conclusion –, but rather aims to gather useful thought and musing on the quotidian phenomena in question as it passes through them through the aid of two primary pieces of literature. Just as Frédéric Gros has written in his *A Philosophy of Walking*, the thought within and writing without in this thesis is "...but the light pause, as the body on a walk rests in contemplation of wide open spaces"<sup>31</sup>, or as Rebecca Solnit has written, "...behind the special relationship between tale and travel...to write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route. To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide – a guide one may not always agree with or trust, but who can at least be counted upon to take one somewhere"<sup>32</sup>. Thus in the vein of such method and in the vein moreover of Paul Klee's coining of the phrase concerning painting as 'taking a line for a walk', this thesis will attempt to take lines of thought for a walk through the *métier* of two respective narrations.

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<sup>31</sup> Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*, Verso, London, 2014, p.20.

<sup>32</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust*, Granta Books, London, 2014, p.72.

## A reading of the two aspects in question

Beyond merely sauntering through the content and development of two carefully chosen aspects of our quotidian condition as they have come to be, the object of this thesis is also to draw the everyday of our present through such constitutive writing of it, into a (re)reading and different understanding, thus to draw an oblique understanding and (re)reading of “us” in its context and our constitution within it. By doing so, the narration of the quotidian phenomena in question are “attempting to look afresh at something of which our time is rightly proud”<sup>33</sup>, and in looking at it afresh seek to first disturb and then renew their image in the vein of truthfulness and honesty. The narration of the aspects of our quotidian in question in this thesis must create a reading that is interesting, remarkable, or important, as it is this which determines the narration’s success or failure. “Interesting, remarkable or important” is about telling the truth, being in Nietzsche’s manner “untimely”, it is a telling of truth to power. It is in this way that the theme and its respective objects chosen to be written about will hope to cover the most mundane constructions of everyday life pertaining to its object in question.

An “untimely” narration acts “counter to our time” and its understanding, “applying a scalpel to it”<sup>34</sup>, bristling its feathers, only to “return as a ghost [to] disturb the peace of a later moment”<sup>35</sup> – such are the spectres that Derrida has termed as thought. An “untimely” narration seeks to understand the object in question from the outside, from an exterior point of view, thus disturbing its habitual understanding and construction, only to reveal an otherness and strangeness in its newfound understanding. An “untimely” narration acts to construct an other view of something in its fullness, only for that other view and understanding to then disturb our relationship to it and offer new light on it and its consequent comprehension.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p83.

<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche, “Schopenhauer as educator”, in *Untimely Meditations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p185.

<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche, “On the uses and disadvantages of history for life”, in *Untimely Meditations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2011, p60

Proceeding in such a way allows the quotidian themes and their objects under consideration in this thesis to be thrown into analysis, which fulfilment of analysis itself is none other than a political act. It is in allowing the themes to be articulated and thought by way of a particular analysis of multiple lines of inter-penetrating reading arising from oblique perspectives that a new image of them is revealed. It is by bringing the interior, hidden and forgotten conditions of two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition to light through oblique analysis that a critical narration is born. The task then is to “track down the hidden meanings, fascinating secrets, or in other words the double and triple floors of meaning...”<sup>36</sup> of our elemental quotidian phenomena - to leave but a trace of them reverberating in their unravelling through multiple substrates, and thus uncovering their trajectory and even origin.

The question I set to ask myself in relation to the quotidian is: how has Time come to be constructed, and what has this construction created? How does life function in the context of such construction, and how does thus the Present and the machinations of the Libido imprint themselves on our quotidian in their passing, and what does this passing create? How does the never-ceasing, always recurring flow of the Present and the eruptions of the Libido come to create our quotidian condition and what are they sustained by? It is in an assembling of a structure for the thinking and writing to follow that reveals the mechanics and levers of these phenomena on daily life that an answer to these questions comes fore. In forwarding writing that is interdisciplinary in structure, and in forwarding thinking that is oblique in method, the content of the work itself comes to articulate a civilisational ontology of our quotidian condition’s elemental content. Thus this thesis is positioned to analyse the ontological construction of our quotidian condition, as opposed to or in contra-distinction to its structuration by material elements or be it metaphysical attributes.

### **Everyday studies and politics**

The reason why the quotidian, and in particular two elemental aspects of the quotidian have been chosen to create a working through, is that the study and consideration of the everyday is

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p67.

a study and consideration of the human subject and what has come to shape her/his private life in its most base condition. The question of such assemblage requires a political approach to be levelled at it for the reason of understanding something about ourselves and our constitution in a critical way. Levelling such an understanding to the subject is a political act, and levelling it at our most inalienable and inescapable base condition involves a politics which directly challenges an understanding on how our quotidian condition, and through it our life, is constructed.

Indeed the very pre-occupation with “everyday studies” and the contemporary emergence of writing on the quotidian that Sheringham identifies taking place in France between 1960 and 1980 by writers such as Henri Lefebvre, Guy Debord, Raul Vaneigem, de Certeau and Maffesoli lies in the effects of rapid modernisation upon daily life, and the changes that such rapid modernisation yielded upon life and how it changed it within the context of its capitalist political-economy in the West. These changes were implemented politically by the state and the economy it governed, and therefore were processual changes implemented by a politics. To understand and choose life in the context of such changes resultant from politics another politics is required, one which attempts to understand the source of those changes historically and in their critical constitution.

Sheringham quotes Lefebvre from 1968, that “what counts is not simply what social forces do to our everyday life but what we do with those forces through the way we ‘live’ them”<sup>37</sup>. This thesis therefore attempts to posit an understanding of the structure and construction, source, origin and development of the content of our quotidian condition in the context of both its civilizational ontology and in the context of our ubiquitous capitalist modernity. The thesis attempts this for the purposes of the reader being able to begin to identify the sources and construction – or *poieses* – of their own private life within it and resultant from it. It does so in order to allow for a subjectification that might begin to possibly want to change it – not because of ideology or recourse to promethean values as some (most notable Henri Lefebvre in his three volume *Critique of Everyday Life*, or later Agnes Heller in her study titled simple *Everyday Life*) have addressed the topic, but because of a recognition of their condition and a forthcoming

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life – theories and practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, p12.

consequential desire to understand the construction of our quotidian condition in present modernity as resultant from capitalist socio-economics as such.

### **The political treatment of the writing**

Having chosen to address our quotidian condition through a narration on two elemental aspects of it, the present work aims to position itself as an observation or *theoros* on the condition of our habitual everyday relating to its object in a way that it just is, but always with an eye for the hope of a politics to follow. The politics which this present work aims to forward is contained wholly in the approach to the way of working through its object as opposed to forwarding a notion of promethean overcoming for the realisation of *l'homme total* (as Lefebvre took his stance on it from his reading of Marxist political-economy in the context of post-war capitalist society), but rather from a psycho-analytical method which might be called in the Freudian vein as a *durcharbeitung*, a working through that hopes to tear away the mask that shrouds its order, only but to reveal its true nature and bearing on the reality of our lives for the purposes of first understanding its origin, structure and construction, and then in hope that a personal reflection on it in the reader might follow<sup>38</sup>.

*Durcharbeitung* denotes a psycho-analytic understanding of our present in the context of our past and the past of others, and in yielding to it, it comes to form a particular subjectification in relation to its object. It is the structure, utilisation and carrying out of this method which I deem political in relation to dealing, thinking and writing about two aspects of our quotidian condition. Such *durcharbeitung* aims to unmask the condition of the quotidian under scrutiny in its populated state *as it is*, in order for the reader to be able to perhaps recognise what is disalienating about their respective quotidian existence for themselves, how it came about, and in turn to light a fuse of desire which might alter it and as such commence a personal political action in relation to it. In this sense, the thought which might germinate in a reader's mind for

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<sup>38</sup> See Lyotard, "Re-writing Modernity, in *SubStance*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Issue 54 (1987)

the purposes of directing their life, and possibly even directing their life differently subsequent to reading this work is the fulfilment of the politics of the present writing at play.

Articulating thus the limitation of this work, the present work aims to approach two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition in the way they respectively are and have been assembled, and to allow the reader to make of it what they will, to apply it to their life in an enthusiast's way, and to thus enable the reader to build their own cathedral each according to his or her own desire.

# Chapter 1

## The Quotidian and the *Poiesis* of the presence of the Present

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.  
If all time is eternally present  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.

—T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton” (segment - 1<sup>st</sup> stanza),

*Collected Poems 1909–1935* (1936)

Whilst literature and art which deal with the quotidian unvaryingly discuss and portray many meaningful aspects of their object, they often overlook or fail to discuss the quotidian condition's fundamental building-blocks that come to determine the structure of our quotidian itself, and hence the determinate existential condition of the object of their gaze. Existent literature and art on the quotidian is a pertinent tool to begin with however, in order to uncover and identify such 'building-blocks', as each of these works contain some elemental aspect of it, even if that elemental aspect is superseded by sometimes more obvious concerns or different accents. In examining one of the most fundamental ontological aspects of the quotidian condition and with it one of the most fundamental building-blocks of the stillness in which we find our private life, we might turn to the structure of George Perec's novel *La Vie Mode Emploi*, in English translation, *Life – a user's manual* to attempt to unravel an ur-aspect of our everyday.

In Georges Perec's *La Vie Mode Emploi* the novel details an obsessively descriptive portrayal of an apartment building, its occupants' lives, possessions and objects, together with related stories departing from these lives, possessions and objects, woven into a narration taking place within an (almost) single point in time. The writing touches on a vast array of life stories and circumstance from which it might rightly command its English subtitle: "a user's manual" to life.

The date and time that the novel revolves around is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1975, just before 8 o'clock in the evening. The fictional scene, 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier in XVII<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* Paris – at the end of the novel to be identified as the object of a recently commenced painting being painted depicting a gaze on the said address and its inhabitants –, is unfurled with a matter-of-factly detailed observation of the building's respective apartments, constituent rooms, ancillary common and ancillary private spaces and its occupants in residence at that time, and in the novel told mostly in the present simple. In contra-distinction to a novelistic narrative which involves the movement of time in and through protagonists' lives and of subsequent and related spaces, places and scenes, Perec's novel departing from the gaze of a fictional resident painter is assembled from an origo point of space and time from which a narration recedes and proceeds, detailing movements of life from (until at least the very last paragraphs) a single and static point. The novel as such is constructed not as a narrative taking place from a past into a present as a typical novelistic structure might unfold, or along a present projecting into a future

relation to what had gone before, but rather as a section or cut, a “state” through a single point in time, around which stories coalesce to form a “telling of”.

Peter Schwenger has termed the narrative operation applied by Perec in this novel as “still life”<sup>39</sup>. In contra-distinction to Schwenger’s contention that Perec’s novel constitutes a “wholesale eviction of the Event”, it might be argued that – as based on the fictional painterly-gaze of a fictional protagonist within it – it is indeed exactly an Event which occurs in this novel depicting the said fictional art-work, however not of deeds or pertaining to lives, nor of actions or resolutions, but rather a portrayal of the event of Time itself, the ever-recurring moment of the present frozen in a presence. Might it be suggested, that the content of the narration of Perec’s novel is merely secondary to the Event of the temporal poetics by which it is told, and could easily be persons, objects or series of objects other than those found in an apartment building. This freezing of time through the painterly portrayal of a moment which creates the possibility for narration, a “telling of”, a state which does not unfold along a duration but coalesces stories departing from a single point in Time, might be argued to be the *Event* of the novel.

The event of Perec’s novel in lieu of a temporal narrative is thus Presence captured in time, the time of the quotidian. It could be argued that the object of narration in Perec’s novel becomes quotidian time itself in a particular frame of arrest: the presence of the Present. In this way, as time becomes the object of narration, the “stillness [of the novel] does not exclude [...] the event”<sup>40</sup>, rather the Event operates and comes into relief by way of arresting duration and objectifying the frozen moment within it’s never-ceasing sequence, which event is not a given content of narration, but rather the possibility of language to structure time, and with it the perception of a moment, a moment in which the quotidian takes place and is filled by.

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<sup>39</sup> Peter Schwenger, “Still Life: A User’s Manual”, in *Narrative*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 2002), pp. 140-155, Ohio State University Press.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p141.

In arresting a moment and revealing the presence of the Present as Perec does through narration concerning people and their possessions, the frieze of the present in Perec's novel necessarily contains a past, a hidden past, which becomes the content of the frozen present and the content of the novel's narration; the present without a past content through which to turn it into a frieze of 'still life' is non-existent. Therefore, the Present – the very Event of Perec's novel – is full of lines, content and coagulations which originate from a near or distant past to be frozen at a given temporal moment and give narrative content and form to Time. It is this hidden aspect of the Present and its structure which makes the frozen moment of Perec's novel significant.

### **The never-ceasing zone of the Present**

In digging deeper and attempting to unravel an existential lineage of this gift, of the Present's condition and essence by which Perec's narration is constructed, we might not only better comprehend the Event of Perec's novel, but also the constituent atomic structure of the quotidian which comes to constitute the infra-ordinary of the everyday.

Ugo Perone in his book *The Possible Present* variably describes the condition and essence of the constituent atomic structure of the Present, as a "divide", a "limit", a "barrier" and a "threshold", which in contradistinction to being a point, or even a line, is characterised as being "a zone"<sup>41</sup>. It is the condition of this "zone" which constitutes the emergent yet fleeting moment of the passing Present. It is in the understanding of such "zone", in its very condition that we can speak of the nature of the quotidian.

The Present, and with it the constiuence of the quotidian as being a series of "Presents" in which we live-out our daily lives can therefore never be taken possession of, dwelled in or arrested. The quotidian as being formed by the content of the Present is then an always illusive, out of grasp experience of consciousness in which we can never arrive, but rather only move through in passing. However infinitesimally small a duration the movement of this passing

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<sup>41</sup> Ugo Perone, *The Possible Present*, State University of New York Press, Albany NY, 2011, p16.

might consist of, the Present, and with it the experience of our quotidian exists in an act of “discriminate[ing] between past and future [...being] a fleeting zone, difficult to be determined [...] even if capable of determining”<sup>42</sup>.

The “limit” which constitutes the “Present” and which in turn provides one of the quotidian condition’s existential essences, and the Event of Perec’s novel, is anything but empty or a void, but is rather full of content, which content pertains variably to cosmology and its physics, biology, as well as the phenomena of consciousness, abstraction and technology – the sum total of space-time and in which the human condition has arisen and is sustained by. The “limit” in which the Present comes to pass is therefore fulsome. Foucault writes of the “limit” that it is a “narrow zone of a line where [something] displays the flash of its passage, but perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin...”<sup>43</sup> It could be said following Foucault that the condition and essence of the “limit”, its fullness which comes to presence in the flash or passage of the “Present” is populated by the entire trajectory and origin of human life and the possibility of human life, and that it is in the coming to consciousness of the passing Present that we skim the essence of ourselves.

In addition to the Present being constituted by the very content and structure of the physics of cosmology, the sinews of biology and the emergence of the possibility for consciousness revealing themselves in the flash of their passage across “the limit”, the Present is also “exposed to the present of others and inter-related, even interwoven with those”<sup>44</sup>. It could be said that the Present is the *poiesis* of our consciousness *en tout*, and it is this *poiesis* which forms the structure of Perec’s novel. Echoing these thoughts, Perone expresses the fullness and yet arguably most ordinary, even infra-ordinary experience of the Present thus: “the present builds the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p21.

<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault, “A Preface to Transgression” in Donald F Bouchard (ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1980, pp33-34.

<sup>44</sup> Ugo Perone, *The Possible Present*, State University of New York, Albany, 2011, p28.

world because it makes [the world] exit a vague flowing by anchoring it to a point, to a subject, and to a perspective from out of which the world appears as that which surrounds me”<sup>45</sup>.

The content of the “limit” of the Present, its essence, structure and condition contains “the world” *en tout*, everything which has come to make the subject a subject, and it becomes in turn the world as a result of the subject. The subject cannot exist without the content of the world passing through the threshold of the Present and being anchored in it even if only for a moment, causing itself to appear in that anchoring. An experience of the Present is an experience with the Self, with the content of one’s entire origin and trajectory of life. It is in the passing moment of the Present that all life, and with it Being exists. The condition, essence and structure of the quotidian condition is thus a relationship with Being.

Being, and with it the passing quotidian, which is to say ordinary habitual life, is inexorably impregnated by the essence and condition of Time, which is to say that the existential experience of ordinary life is nothing other than an experiential relation with, to and of Time. The experience of the quotidian, this experience of the never ceasing, constantly recurring moment of the ordinary present and its fullness is our particular experience of Time. The experience of the Event of Perec’s novel is thus an experience of the frozen presence of Present Time as a frieze of the Present.

Perec’s narration in *Life- a user’s manual* is just such a lingering in a moment, a remaining within the threshold of a moment, within the Present, and prolonging it<sup>46</sup>. Such a moment that is the Present cannot be taken hold of otherwise “unless one lingers in it”<sup>47</sup>, with this lingering occurring “in the sense that one extends and narrates [the Present] letting it pass and then returning to it, and accelerating it in order then to interrupt its movement”<sup>48</sup>. This description of the possibility of remaining in the moment of the Present is the very structure by which Perec’s

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p16.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p27.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p22.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p22.

novel is orchestrated, displaying a lingering in which movement accelerates into departures of stories on objects and people caught in the frieze of the moment, whilst then interrupting these departures to return time and again to the content of the moment, and thus linger further in it, producing a frieze of time.

But just as the Present in which this lingering occurs can never be dwelt in or taken possession of, but rather only crossed over as a “limit” or “threshold” and recognised *posteriori*, Perec’s narration is forced to move beyond such lingering, whereby in the final paragraphs of the novel a sequence of time is articulated in which a crossing of the Present has occurred, thus making the narration of Perec’s preceding quotidian possible. The narration of Perec’s novel is only therefore possible by such having passed over and looking back at the Present which is being narrated. Perec concludes the novel by articulating a sequence of brief scenes which are denoted in order and in time as “it will soon be 8 o’clock in the evening”, “in a moment it will be 8 o’clock in the evening” and “it is 8 o’clock in the evening”<sup>49</sup>. It is in the portrayal of such passing, of the having passed moment of the Present in the coming to presence of Time, that Perec’s novel is made possible to take place, and with it capture the presence of the Present, and along with it Time as elemental content of the quotidian condition.

### **The ever-passing Present and epochal metaphysics**

The sequences of limits and thresholds which constitute the Present and unfurl our experience of Time, and with it our perceptive possibility of the quotidian that constitute the content of the scenes of Perec’s novel, go beyond the micro-structure of the frieze of the moment to extend to a larger macro-structure within which such frieze takes place.

The metaphysical conception of Time and with it its constituent Present was considered to have no beginning and no end, with the time of our life, years and days situated reciprocally as part

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<sup>49</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, pp496-497.

of such eternal Morpheus band. It was not until St Augustine's writings that Time in the Occident was understood to inextricably belong to transient earthly-physical existence within an astronomical understanding of the Universe, belonging and being tied thus to a specifically material condition. St Augustine conceptualised this metaphysical shift by stating that "the world was created with time, and not in time"<sup>50</sup>, which thinking conceptualises Time and the presence of the Present as an entity or dimension tied to the physical Universe as an inalienable component of it, and ties our experience of earthly passing to Time and to the existence of physical-material space, as opposed to an eternal spectrum.

What such Augustinian metaphysical shift forwards, is that Time and its constituent Present as phenomena are unique to our physical-material world and its contextual subsequent transient nature of physical-material life. The dimension within which our transient earthly existence within a physical-material Universe plays out is the temporal dimension, that is a fourth dimension tied to the three dimensions of physical space as a consequence of and as inalienable from physical space having come about. The nature of this fourth, temporal dimension is that it is linear in one direction pointing forward, in the sense that we can only remember and act from what has once passed, meaning that the three dimensions of space are expanding in an even manner in all directions, and with it Time progressing as a series of Presents.

We witness this progression of time, this linear arrow of Time pointing forward and the concomitant blunted ability to remember and act from what has once passed as Time proceeds in Perec's novel through his 'telling of' Bartlebooth's life. In this linear progression of Time, Perec details Bartlebooth's life from the moment of his birth in 1900 through to his decision in early-adulthood to dedicate his life to painting water-colours and solving puzzles made from these water-colours, to his subsequent journeys through six continents, and then his later retirement to his apartment in 11 rue Simon-Crubellier to solve these puzzles, finishing with his eventual death. Such linear passage of time is what all quotidian existence follows, a passing of one moment to the next in an unavoidable and inexorable ordinary continuity. Without the Augustinian metaphysical shift on the conception of Time having been made, the later conception and possibility of the quotidian, and with it "us" as its subject existing within Time and its

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Davies, *Superforce*, Heinemann, London, 1984, p16.

constituent series of Presents would be meaningless. It is only because we exist within and are inexorably tied to a temporal dimension – and that we have framed it as such in our metaphysical outlook – that Time and its constituent series of Presents can then come to found and constitute an aspect of the quotidian condition in our lives and thinking.

It is for this reason that Perec’s narration of the quotidian in 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 ends in the way it does. Perec finishes his novel with an Epilogue telling of Valène’s death: “On Friday the fourteenth of August, the only people left in the building were Madame Moreau, attended day and night by her nurse and Madame Trévins, Mademoiselle Crespi, Madame Albin and Valène. And when Mademoiselle Crespi went up towards the end of the morning to take the aged artist two boiled eggs and a cup of tea, she found him dead”<sup>51</sup>. With Valène’s death occurring, the protagonist through whose eyes Perec’s “telling of” proceeds, no perception of Time and of its constituent Present remains for the novel’s narration to continue, and with it, no further possible experience of the quotidian able to be told; the telling of the moment must by recourse cease. It is this event within the Event of Time that the novel narrates, which also signs the end of the narration of the novel’s depiction of its quotidian condition, and hence the end of the novel. A narration of a quotidian can only exist within perceptive physical-material life, of which one perceptive facet relates to Time and to an experience of Time as a series of Presents, in the case of *Life – a user’s manual* to the resident painter Valène’s perception of a particular moment through which Perec narrates his novel.

The possibility and origin of the quotidian is therefore reliant on the perceptive facet of our being in a passing Present and through it being in a series of never-ceasing, always recurring Presents which become infected by and with experience. In fact, the provisional definition of such passing Present moments which become infected by and with experience is Time. The fact that we have an experience alternately with memory, with anticipation, with fear and with joy in relation to a Present which passes and alternately with a future that is in promise to happen, is what constitutes the content of Time, and Time as such, and in turn makes the quotidian condition tangibly experiential and consequentially perceptible as a presence of past and

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<sup>51</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p500.

possible future presents in the now. The experiential quality of our quotidian rests within our perception of Time and its experiential content.

Such flow of Time and the perceptive relationship to it is also portrayed in the varying moments of joy, enthusiasm, elation and expectation in the life of Perec's James Sherwood and Professor Shaw on following the trails leading to the discovery and subsequential "authentication" of the unica of Joseph Arithemea's Very Holy Vase. We witness their perceptive relation with Time in their never-ceasing, always recurring Present moments of the days and months accompanying their labours by just such markings of joy, enthusiasm, elation and expectation, leading to a climax in the case of Sherwood, to a consequential further perceptive experience of this flowing time having then passed and its thus revealed content, in the form of gullibility and doubt once it becomes evident to him that he had been had.<sup>52</sup>

### **The flow of the Present as a fluid – until death**

In relation to the structure of such perceptive facets of the flow of Time, one can investigate the dynamics and mechanics of fluid systems in order to borrow and then put to use a metonymic structure of the Present in its context with Time as witnessed in the above instances of Perec's novel's protagonists. A first consideration of such metonymic structure might be the nature of fluids to fill the entirety of a volume in an equal and consistent way. When a fluid is released into a void, such as a gaseous substance into a room, it fills the volume into which it is released in an absolutely even and consistent way in relation to both the three-dimensional volume of the space and in relation to its eventual settled density therein. Time and the experience of our never-ceasing, always recurring Present in this respect might be viewed as a substance which has come to fill the three-dimensional volume of our universal lived space in an even and consistent way, and has done so *because* of the existence of that three-dimensional lived space, making our experience and contact with Time within our lived Universe inescapable. In everything we have done, are doing and have yet to do, we will do so in the context

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<sup>52</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, pp83-95.

and presence of the substance of Time and its never-ceasing, always recurring Present – inexorably and unavoidably – until our moment of death, just like the resident painter Valène experienced in Perec’s novel, until the moment of the perception of our existence ceases.

A second consideration of such metonymic inquiry in relation to fluid mechanics regarding Time might be the physics of entropy. We know of the nature of fluids such as air or water, that when heated, a temperature differential arises in relation to the heated volume and the temperature of its adjoining volume, which heat will then dissipate and return to equilibrium with its surrounding fluid once the heating process has ceased. The nature of this mechanics of fluid might be called retention of heat, and its converse, loss of energy or entropy. The dimension governing the retention of heat and its converse attribute of entropy is Time. The gradual cooling of a heated volume of air or water – thus its entropy of energy – directly correlates with the surrounding temperature differential divided by the passing of a unit of Time.

In a metonymic consideration, we might consider the entropy of energy from a heated volume of fluid to correlate to an experience with the Present passing into the Past. As the Present recedes into Past so are memories formed of experiences, which memories come to fade as the Past grows, or as the flow of Time carries them on. It is for this reason that we might say that Time heals, which, similarly to the process of entropy proceeding in fluids, becomes an entropic perceptual experience of the Present that we undergo in the context of its passing.

Husserl has written that temporal objects “spread their matter over an extent of time”<sup>53</sup> in the same way as we have noted of fluids in relation to space above, whether in regard to volume or density, or in regard to heat. Our quotidian series of Presents because they exist within Time and are constituent of Time – indeed which is Time as such – is just such “temporal object”, whose characteristic is akin to that of fluids, and in being so likewise and metonymically might be said to “spread their matter over an extent of time”. In this way, an experience of the quo-

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<sup>53</sup> Donn Welton (ed.), *The Essential Husserl – Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p195.

quodidien is inescapable within the workings of human perceptual faculties within our four-dimensional experiential context, it is ever-present at all times and in all material spaces, constantly haunting us as the spectre of our past, and thus comes to fill the existence of our lived lives in our both waking and resting moments, spreading itself into the furthest-most recesses of our physical-material-perceptual existence.

Indeed the series of presents which make-up our quodidien condition and which have gone through a process of entropy as a result of Time's passing continually come to haunt and re-assemble themselves at further times of our lives and its Presents which we have yet to have lived. These spectres of our entropic quodidien also in turn come to cease with the passing of Time at its absolute experience when we exit our series of Presents at the Time of our death. Such experience was that which ultimately comes to structure Perec's novel, being as it is narrated through a fictional protagonist's gaze of the apartment building. When this fictional protagonist dies and his perception of a gaze on the apartment building and its residents ceases, so does the narration of the novel inextricably.

### **Consciousness of Time**

To be conscious of our quodidien condition is thus to be conscious of one's Present and what has come to fill it – both its present momentary content as well as its experience of former flowed away past –, it is to live under the regime of the temporal dimension. To be conscious of the quodidien is to be conscious of the temporal object within which our lives play-out: our quodidien Present *is* the temporal object within which we have come to exist and which we can't escape. There is but one flow of Time – our time, our quodidien condition – which is constituted by many currents of primal sensations which begin and end and return to haunt us; our individual primal sensations are the sum total of the series of Presents which have come to constitute our flow of Time, and which in turn has come to constitute and assemble us.

An analogy of such “time-constituting consciousness”, that is of presence receding and passing, might be found in the invention and application of visual perspective, which in an analogous

relation to Time we might call a “temporal perspective”. Husserl writes of this temporal perspective that it is “an analogue of the spatial (or visual) perspective. In receding into the past [or away from the gaze], the temporal object contracts and in the process also becomes obscure”<sup>54</sup>, and that “we find in the sphere of clarity a greater distinctness and separation (the more so the closer the sphere lies to the actually present now)”<sup>55</sup>. Such analogy of the visual or spatial perspective in relation to Time provides an image of the flow of time receding from the Present to an ever-more distant past the more it recedes. Again we find a metonymic characterisation of the flow of Time as an ever increasing diminishing as it passes into obscurity along the lines of perspectival perception. As such, the analogy between visual perspectival space and that of a temporal perspective is akin to the mechanic properties of a fluid going through the process of entropy, or of physically flowing away. The physical and entropic flow and consequential passing of Time causes both obscurity in the vein of a visual perspective, as well as dissipation in the vein of the mechanic property of entropy: ever increasing dissipation into obscurity – the unfolding procession of the Past.

Such entropic perceptual experience of the Present diminishing into an entropic state in the context of Time flowing can be witnessed in Perec’s account of Valène’s recollection of the building and its inhabitants in Chapter 17. In this chapter, titled “*On the Stairs, 2*”, we read of the “furtive shadows” of the buildings past inhabitants, and Valène’s attempt to “resuscitate [their] imperceptible details” as “the years had flowed past” from the time of his moving in to the building as a tenant in October 1919, up to the moment Perec narrates Valène’s recollection at just before 8 o’clock on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1975. At this moment of Perec’s telling of Valène’s recollection, for Valène the life of “the stairs were [...], on each floor, a memory, an emotion, something ancient and impalpable, something palpitating somewhere in the guttering flame of his memory...”, a condition of perceptual experience that had been formed by the entropic experience of Time flowing and having passed.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.188

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.188

Such metonymic models of visual perspective in relation to ever-increasing obscurity arising from distance do not necessitate the experience of the Present ceasing however. Quite the contrary; as Time recedes, dissipates and increases its distance from the “now”, the content of that past does not disappear, it merely becomes more obscure. Husserl writes of this phenomenon that “every actually present now of consciousness [...] is subject to the law of modification. It changes into retention [...] and does so continuously”<sup>56</sup>. The Present thus morphs into an ever-increasingly obscure, dissipated, distant form, but is nonetheless retained. The form of our quotidian condition in this dissipated, obscure and distant state is what Husserl has termed as “memory”, or what we might also term as a spectre of a Present past. Husserl writes that “when the consciousness of a tone-now [that is a Present sensation of a primal impression], passes over into retention [recedes, dissipates, becomes obscure], this retention is a now in turn, something actually existing”<sup>57</sup>. However, what exists as a consequence of primal Present sensations having receded, dissipated and become obscure is “memory” – a morphologically altered state of the Present. As such, memory and its spectre is an existential component of the quotidian and its constitutive series of Presents, something that we carry with us and comes to haunt us as a result of existing within Time.

The many accounts of lives of the residents of 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier, or the lives related to their various relatives and people present through either their objects, books or paintings which Perec details through Valène’s gaze of the building’s quotidian on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 is achievable only through memory – Valène’s memory –, and therefore are made present by way of memory arresting the temporal perspective of dissipating Time into an absolute obscurity. What holds back the absolute setting-in of such obscurity, and thus a progression of the lives recounted to an infinitely advanced entropic state, are the very physically Present nature of the objects, books and paintings which cause them to be recalled and consequentially narrated, which Present physicality arrests the ever-increasing obscurity of dissipating Time, creating the possibility for recollection, and thus also the possibility of these lives and their exploits to haunt and populate the moment of the novel at just before 8 o’clock in the evening on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975.

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<sup>56</sup> Donn Welton (ed.), *The Essential Husserl – Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p.190.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.190.

Thus the experience we undergo with the passing of our never-ceasing, always recurring series of Presents and physicality, that is to say with the inexorable connection of the fourth dimension coupling with three dimensions, and the part they play in the formation of our quotidian condition as it proceeds in our perpetual Present, is never separable from the content of past Presents and the possibility of recollection of it as memory, which when it surfaces comes to play a renewed part in a later experience. Sartre writes of this dynamic that the Past comes to "... 'be reborn' to haunt us, in short to exist for us"<sup>58</sup> in a subsequent Present. It is this haunting by the past, of it being constantly reborn, which pierces the narration of Perec's novel and by which the movement between Present and Past in it can be understood. Throughout the novel we move between the presence of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 just before 8 o'clock in the evening, and the presence of the past of his protagonists in the telling of their quotidian moment. Our quotidian condition is thus inexorably formed in equal measure by the primal, momentary sensation of the Present coupled with the spectre of the past piercing that same Present as a ghost.

An example of such ontological equivalence of Present and past is found in the depiction and narration of an aspect of Madame Moreau's apartment on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 at soon to be 8 o'clock in the evening. We read of Madame Moreau lying in her bed, with Madame Trévins and Madame Moreau's nurse being present in her bedroom, whilst on the carpet floor lay two house cats, Pip and La Minouche, both asleep, who "just a few minutes ago" had knocked over a "little jug of milk", which jug now lies "broken in several pieces" on the floor<sup>59</sup>. At the moment of Perec's narration of this scene, it is "soon to be 8 o'clock in the evening"<sup>60</sup>, however the spilling of the milk by the two house cats, and subsequent breaking of the milk jug took place earlier in time, as Perec narrates it having "took place just a few minutes ago"<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2003, p132.

<sup>59</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p101.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p495-496.

<sup>61</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p101.

## The Past and the Future as an experience of language in the Present

The ontological equivalence such conception of Time places on the Present, Past and Future in the way we “experience, think and speak about” them might suggest that the reality of the experience of the Present, past and future in our quotidian is founded upon language. This is to assert that the reality of the past and the future, together with the Present in constituting our everyday and our experience of it rests upon linguistic structures. Such an assertion suggests temporality and our experience of temporality to reside in characteristics of language patterns, which is to say in the temporal phenomena of language.

In following this assertion and turning to Martin Heidegger, we might come to crystallise such view. Heidegger has argued that “if it is true that man finds the proper abode of his existence in language – whether he is aware of it or not – then an experience we undergo with language will touch the innermost nexus of our existence”<sup>62</sup>. Heidegger continues with: “we who speak language may thereupon become transformed by such experiences, from one day to the next or in the course of time”<sup>63</sup>. What such an argument suggests is that we experience Present, Past and Future *because of* the possibility and expression of language, and *as a result of* us having come to create such language through which Time and the flow of Time can be differentiated and thus expressed.

Such an argument suggests that our quotidian Present experience with memory of the passed and of the anticipation of the future as realities rest within the temporal structure and phenomena of language articulating such forms, and thus also effecting a differentiation in our perceptual experience of Time. This phenomenological argument pertaining to the experience of our quotidian condition’s content is made clear in the understanding of the Heideggerian statement that “language is the house of Being. In its home human beings dwell”<sup>64</sup>. In expressing the

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<sup>62</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, Harper Collins, New York, 1982, p57.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p57.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p239.

form of the Past or that of the Future, we come to “dwell” in the ontological reality of the Past or that of the Future, but do so in our Present.

The “tenseless” argument of philosophy concerning Time is thus reliant on linguistic characterisations of temporality having come about, and our experience of these structures in our thinking and speech. Only in consequence of language having brought about temporal structures through which Past, Future and Present are differentiated can the argument of the Past and Future seeding, populating and thus constituting our Present as equal realities and of equal ontological weight be made. Our experience of Time as an ontological continuum of equivalence, and thus of our quotidian condition’s Present being seeded with a Past and Present content of equal ontological weight is based upon the linguistic production of language patterns and their structure of tense. This is as much to say that “our cognition [...] is inevitably and indispensably tensed”<sup>65</sup>, which is both the source of temporal structures having formed in language, and a cause as to the way we experience the content and flow of quotidian Time as a result of language.

This is evident in Perec’s putting to use of tense in his telling of the quotidian in 11 rue Simon-Crubellier at soon to be 8 o’clock in the evening on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975. The reason that the stories which recede and proceed throughout the novel make use of the present perfect “has been” or the simple past “was” in bringing the presence of those past lives into an ontological equivalence with the “now” moment of the novel’s narration is predicated on those past lives becoming equivalent with the now moment of their “telling of” in the Present. The moments of these past lives which become narrated as a result of objects and paintings in the building’s apartments clearly do/did not happen at the time of the narration, however the reality of their having happened is brought into ontological equivalence with the moment of narration, and thus seed the Present enduring moment of the novel as realities belonging to that Present with the same ontological weight as any other Present observation being made.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p96.

In relation to the truth of Time and its ontological reality of equivalence within the construction of the quotidian Present, Lacan wrote that “it is because language exists that truth exists”<sup>66</sup> and that “truth begins to be established only once language exists”<sup>67</sup>. This might be stated somewhat more pointedly in relation to an argument of temporal structures in language and their reality concerning experience: ‘it is because language exists that an experience with Time exists’ and that ‘the experience of Time begins to be established only once language exists’, re-articulating Lacan. Thus there is a connection between language, Being and our experience of Time and its construction of the never-ceasing, always recurring Present of our quotidian condition in as far as that Being finds its existence in language, that is to say in an ontological equivalence with the moment it is being uttered, because it is being uttered. This suggests that the meaning of the structures “it was” and “it will be” become ontologically real and existent in the context and moment of their articulation and utterance, at the moment they come to arise in, through and by way of language, and that in the Present: it is the invention and putting to use of the temporal structures and language patterns of tenses that conjure up the ontological reality of Past and Future in our Present and therefore in the structure of our quotidian condition, and which in turn come to colour it.

This is to say as much, that the basis for our experience of the content of our quotidian – both Present, Past and Future reality – is the temporal structure of language as it has come to exist in our cognition, and structured our cognition through language. Thus our entire conceptual experience of our Present constituting quotidian condition is reliant on language, on language patterns and structures relating to time having been invented or rather perceived and then uttered, and which perception in turn has come to signify differentiation within our experience of the flow of Time.

The telling of this still-life through language however was not originally destined to create a text which it did, namely Perec’s text. The resultant novel which was created of this quotidian moment by Perec is predicated on the fictional occurrence of Valène’s death, and his subsequent (fictional) inability to complete his painting of the still life of the apartment building’s

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p39.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p29.

quotidian on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975. It is because of Valène's death, and the mere "few charcoal lines ...carefully drawn, dividing [the apartment building] up into regular square boxes, [as a] sketch of a cross-section of a block of flats which no figure, now, would ever come to inhabit", that is to say the incompleteness and never to be completed condition of Valène's painting, that Perec is given licence for his textual, that is to say novelistic telling of the quotidian of 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier.

Valène's unfinished, barely even started painting of a quotidian moment of the apartment building's content would itself have been painted by recourse to language – the same language which fills the text of the novel - but would have resulted in a painting of quotidian still-life as opposed to Perec's textual treatment of the same scene. Regardless of the eventual medium by which the still-life of the quotidian moment of 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 just before eight o'clock had been realised, its content is nonetheless an experience of Time in and through the application of differential linguistic temporal structures and patterns which come to capture it and colour an observer's cognition of it. It is this capturing of language which would have given birth to Valène's painting, and in light of his (fictional) death instead gives birth to Perec's novel.

### **The initial production of the Present: change and movement**

But what of this quotidian moment being brought to life? We have ascertained that it is language and the cognition that language creates which brings the quotidian moment to life, which produces our perception of the flow of Time, but what does in turn this ever-passing, ever-flowing series of Presents of the quotidian bring to life? To ask such a question is to ask what does Time and with it the never-ceasing Present produce, what is the production of this never-ceasing, always recurring series of Presents?

As we have quoted Husserl above, in the flow of Time “many series of primal sensations begin and end”<sup>68</sup>, in the same way as how those primal sensations become recorded in Perec’s text, or would have been recorded in a different way in Valène’s painting. What is paramount to recognise in the course of such “beginnings” and “endings” is that these junctures are brought about as a result of Time flowing. This is thus the first thing which Time produces, namely a flow of movement whose moments have become perceptible to us through the utility of language.

With movement coming into existence as a result of the never-ceasing, always recurring passing of the Present, the second phenomenon which Time produces, derivative and in consequence to movement, is change. We might say “change” is “movement’s” consequence, with one being the flipside of the other, both constituting reciprocal productive effects of Time. Temporality inevitably produces change and hence contingent on such change, also movement. The intertwined phenomena of movement and change reciprocally emerge from the fourth temporal dimension of the Universe – it is what the temporal dimension gives birth to, it is what Time produces.

To begin with Time’s first realm of production, namely physical change and physical movement as constituting contents of quotidian ordinary life, we might cite Perec’s portrayal of Bartlebooth’s life as told through the frieze of the moment, whereby the protagonist’s past series of movements (travel across the world from one port to another through all the continents of Earth) coupled with the physical change that such movement of Time brought about (ageing, growing old), comes to coalesce in the frieze of the moment of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1975 at just before eight o’clock in the evening as Bartlebooth is sitting at his desk attempting to solve a puzzle, which state and condition of circumstance is a direct result of the sum total of change that has occurred in his life up to this point. In Bartlebooth’s sitting at his desk attempting to solve a puzzle, we witness an engagement with Time’s production in his life, with all of the movement and change that has occurred in his life coming to produce a particular circumstance. The result of Time’s stamp in creating a particular quotidian physical circumstance is a sum total outcome

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<sup>68</sup> Donn Welton (ed.), *The Essential Husserl – Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p214.

of preceding movement and change within one's life. In existing in Time, which is to say in a never-ceasing, always recurring flow and series of Presents, we also therefore inexorably exist in the presence of the stamp of movement and change, which continually create physical settings for the ordinary fullness of our lives to play-out in. It is in the outcome of movement and change brought about by the flowing and subsequent passing of Present moments stamped onto our physical environment that our quotidian condition is given a backdrop.

The second realm of Time's production, namely movement and change within and upon the cognisant-perceptual life world of the mind, is an affect of temporality without which change in thinking and feeling couldn't come about. Time's second realm of production, which is not to say secondary, but merely an extension and equal to the first, is found within the shaping and creation of subjectivity, thinking and feeling, namely the movement and change of our perceptual-consciousness through which we come to engage, understand, interrogate and resolve the fullness of our thus created quotidian moments.

An experience of such change and movement in perceptual-consciousness can be witnessed in Perec's telling of Appenzell's abandonment of Paris and of Western civilization subsequent to his return from Sumatra while he is preparing notes on a forthcoming lecture of this expedition, only in order to escape that Western civilisation and return to living in a different civilisational space, which is to say a different perceptual-consciousness with the natives he had encountered during his original field work.<sup>69</sup> The motivation from which this flight occurs is precisely the altered perceptual-consciousness he had developed both in relation to the natives of inland Sumatra, as well as flowing from that, reciprocally in relation to his native West. It is the change and movement in his perceptual-consciousness as a result of these experiences that become registered in his action of flight from Paris.

Movement and change in our perceptual-conscious cognisant realm is thus the sum total of our movement of thought and feeling in relation to sequential Presences in the course of thinking

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<sup>69</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p108-112.

and through the course of our lives and varied experiences. In the course of experiences, thinking and feeling a condition of subjectivity is being shaped – a relation to that which is thought about and has come to populate our Present and our present circumstance. Thus the movement and change which shape our physical circumstances find an echo in the movement and change which comes to shape our cognisant condition in relation to those physical and psychologically experienced circumstances. Movement and change in one realm is thus inseparable from the other – the two working together reciprocally. The formation of subjectivity, that is to say the formative relation to a circumstance, is dependant on time having passed, as Yuval Dolev writes, “...another element that is essential to change [is], namely, time’s passage”<sup>70</sup>. It is in the Present passing that a formation of thinking and feeling can take effect, and thus produce subjectivity in relation to a circumstance of life we happen to find ourselves in.

Our quotidian condition is thus structured by both physical and cognisant movement and consequential change, which movement and consequential change in both realms are inter-penetrated and reliant on one another, and above all and ultimately, reliant on the Present passing. An experience of the quotidian thus takes place within the context of movement and flow through Time. The ordinary is not still, processes are happening, thoughts formulating, physical things being done which all involve the process and presence of movement and change, and this as a result of existing within Time. An experience of the quotidian is thus not a stationary experience, the ordinary is not static; there is constant movement, displacement, progression or regression *during* and in the quotidian condition – in its very duration. The ordinary and the mundane are charged with flow, with movement, with activity, and therefore the subject goes through change as a consequence of this. We therefore can’t think of the ordinary and the mundane as moments of inertia, we can’t think of our quotidian condition as a vacuum, but rather as an always active, productive, flowing, coursing phenomenon which comes to constitute a given Present, and this because it is situated *in* Time and composed of it.

Such flow of Time and the difference it creates can be seen in Pécoc’s account of Rorschach’s life through the sequence of his occupations. Rorschach began his career in a “music hall doing

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<sup>70</sup> Yuval Dolev, *Time and Realism – Metaphysical and Anti-metaphysical Perspectives*, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2007, p33.

impressions of Max Linder and other American comedians”. At that time, such performance and related occupation was deemed by him to be of his time. He later went on to find that “the fashion was for soldier comedians” following the end of the First World War, and duly changed his act. Later still however, whilst remaining within the realms of show-business, he founded “a group specialising in brass flourishes, military tunes from Tipperary, square dances” accompanied by the requisite accessories of such performance theme. Finding that his performance troupe failed in its success with audiences, he became a manager to a trapeze artist, touring the various theatres and circuses of “the major cities of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East”. When his manager-come-show business life failed yet again due to the trapeze artist’s suicide, he took on the role of an export-import trader, and travelled to Arabia and through Africa, only to yet again find failure in his endeavours. During the Second World War he was said to have spent time in the “French Free Army, and that he was entrusted with several missions of a diplomatic nature”, however others claimed that he “collaborated with the Axis powers and that after the war he had to flee to Spain”. Nonetheless, in the early-sixties in returning to Paris, he set himself up as a producer in the *Maison de la Radio*, “and began to work for television”. Perec narrates of his latest occupational incarnation, that “at [this] time he’d gone for the American look, with floral shirts, neckerchiefs, and wristbands”, whilst later in life and closer to the time of the Present narrated in the novel, he took on the “weary lion”, “old loner” look, dressing in “canvas rubbers, leather jerkins [and] grey linen shirts”.<sup>71</sup>

In this narration of a life’s occupations and related styles of presentation of self, we witness a series of changes and movement in not just Rohrschach’s perception of himself as a self-made man, but also a change and movement in civilisational and cultural Time. Given that when Rohrschach commenced his many varied occupations radio and television didn’t exist, his journey through the various occupations he held, and his related reinvention of himself at each turn, demonstrate not only civilisational and cultural difference and change, but also a concomitant personal and subjective sequence of difference and change, and this as a result of the Present passing and consequentially Time flowing and begetting movement and change as such in both epoch and person.

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<sup>71</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p43-48.

## Difference and the epochal subject

The world as a spatial-temporal phenomenon and us within it is thus destined to produce difference through the flow of Time, and with it the possibility of history and the flow of history, as can be witnessed in the events and occupations of Rohrschach's life. The possibility of a conceptualisation of history is premised on that which is passed, and that which is therefore deemed different to the now, thus on the workings of Time. With the perceptual formation of epochs and differences of perceptual present, differences in the perception of the nature of everyday lived life also come about. The experience of the content of the quotidian – as evident in Rohrschach's various quotidian contents throughout his life – is thus directly attributable to an epochal condition, and we can thus speak of the quotidian and the epochal subject as a result of Time's imminent production of movement and change. It is precisely in this perceptual experience of delineating between that which is now and that which has gone before, and with it the emergence of an epochal subject who possesses a unique type of everyday quotidian life as brought about by the difference produced by Time's movement and change.

Another such “epochal personae” in Perec's novel is not only Rorschach and his becoming a television producer in the early-sixties, but is also characteristic of Madame Moreau's trajectory from taking over her deceased husband's “small timber working firm” to developing it in the post-Second World War era of peace and prosperity into a concern employing “two thousand people, millers, turners, fitters, mechanics, installers, electricians, testers, draftsmen, roughers-out, model-makers, painters, warehousemen, treatment specialists, packers, drivers, delivery men, foremen, engineers, secretaries, publicity writers, commercial agents and sales reps, making and marketing every year more than forty million tools of all kinds and calibres”.<sup>72</sup> In setting-out on such business expansion, Perec narrates that Madame Moreau “fore-saw that the rising cost of services would inevitably lead to a booming market for do-it-yourself equipment”<sup>73</sup>, amongst which she manufactured and marketed items such as wallpapering kits, home decorator kits, portable scaffolding, a 150 piece tool kit, masonry kits, home electrician's kits, plumber's kits and first-aid kits amongst the many other related items pertaining to home

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<sup>72</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p96.

<sup>73</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p70.

improvement and do-it-yourself renovation.<sup>74</sup> In embarking on the founding and expansion of a “do-it-yourself” manufacturing and marketing concern, Madame Moreau became by default a self-made person of considerable wealth, which wealth was derivative of a certain epoch’s values and characteristics.

### **Time and modernity**

We have already seen such “modern” characteristics of Time stamp its presence on the life and occupations of Rohrschach and Madame Moreau. One such other notable stamp of “modernity” is narrated by Perec in relation to Cinoc and his surname. Perec gives an account of the confusion that arose in the building on Cinoc’s moving in to 11 rue Simon-Crubellier in 1947 in regards to how to pronounce his surname, and from whence it originates from. In the narration which accompanies this account, Perec goes on to write that “his family’s original surname, the one which his great-grandfather, a saddler from Szczyrk, had purchased officially from the Registry Office of the County of Krakow, was Kleinhof: but from generation to generation, from passport renewal to passport renewal, either because the Austrian or German officials weren’t bribed sufficiently, or because they were dealing with staff of Hungarian or Poldavian or Moravian or Polish origin”<sup>75</sup> this surname gradually morphed and changed in spelling each time and through the generations.

The interesting thing about this account of Cinoc’s surname in relation to the “modern” and his Present is not the sequential mis-spelling and morphing of it, but the account that his great-grandfather was forced to “buy” a surname from the County of Krakow Registry Office in the first place. Krakow, as it was during the life of Cinoc’s great-grandfather if we roughly track the likely decades back to this ancestor of his, was Austrian-Habsburg territory, thus belonging to the Austrian-Habsburg Empire. It was during the later half of the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century, the later of which corresponds to the Metternich-an rule of the Empire in which the centralisation that began under Empress Maria Teresa and then continued

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p70-73.

<sup>75</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p287.

under the rule of her son Joseph II leading subsequently to the rule of Prince Metternich during which Cinoc's great-grandfather most likely had been born, required and prescribed all inhabitants of the Empire to register a surname for official registry reasons. Such centralisation and registration of population by the requirements of a surname, is a *moderne* phenomenon inherent within the conduct of modern bureaucratic states, whether republics or monarchies. Thus Cinoc's very existence of a surname is traceable to a *moderne* attitudinal-behavioural and juridical stance that authorities took toward their constituent populations, and is thus as a phenomenon a distinction in relation to the old, an action and practice which was seen to be "new", "superior" and "of its time", of a Present.

The emergence therefore of a perceptual and concrete distinctness of life which is different and superior from that which has gone before or exists elsewhere, and thus perceivable as an epochal-temporal category, is a result of social, technological, attitudinal and/or behavioural aspects creating a category termed the "*moderne*" in contra-distinction to the nature of the "*ancient*" and what populated it. Modernity is therefore a "specifically temporal category"<sup>76</sup> denoting a temporal-epochal existence which is "first and foremost a set of notions about and experiences of temporality"<sup>77</sup>, and the contents of that Present time. It is Time therefore, and the characteristics of *a* Time and its Present (and with it by necessity a place) in both the physical realm and the cognisant-perceptual realm which produces and cements the conception of an epochal distinction, and with it the emergence of an epochal subject. Everything which has been superseded by the dominant agents of that Time might be deemed as "*ancient*" in nature, and by consequence different or Other from the present "modern" time and its habits, attitudes, behaviour, social relations, technology and economy. Because the concept of the *moderne* is a distinctly Occidental one, the concept of the "Other" is also therefore inherent originally from within such developing Occidental perceptions, denoting a person and the condition of their life existing distinctly from the Present Time of the West's present and its present's cultural / civilizational temporality.

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<sup>76</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Measuring Time – Making History*, Central European University Press, Budapest-New York, 2008, p22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p22.

Thus that which the ever-passing, ever-flowing Present of our quotidian brings to life, produces and is pregnant with is a phenomenon of movement and change which can be characterised as nothing other than “monumental” in nature, registering in both the physical and psychological aspects and accompanying surroundings of our quotidian condition’s backdrop as well as in its cognisant-perceptual facets, and perhaps most importantly in precisely this later condition.

From the phenomena of movement and change as Time’s central two productive elements, we witness the emergence and possibility of subjectification – the colouring of one’s thoughts and feelings in a particular way – and by default a distinction of otherness, which in turn has produced the condition and possibility for the epochal subject and related historical personae. Tied within and to this assemblage of distinct otherness, epochal outlook and related emergence of the historical perspective we witness the cognisant-perceptual distinction of modernity and its counter-formation the *ancient*. It might thus be ascertained that our entire cognisant-perceptual evolutionary condition and consequential value formation within which our quotidian condition is played-out is predicated on what the phenomenon of the passing Present produces and has produced, which is derivative of the elemental condition of movement and change and our perception of it.

We might of course attribute such perception of Time to our ur-cognitive-linguistic structure which was able to differentiate the Past and Future from the Present, and denote this tri-partite structure by way of differing signification. However whichever way one chooses to define our civilisational trajectory, our civilisational and cognisant-perceptual journey is predicated on the production of Time, and with it the sequential moments of the Present passing. It is the movement of the butterfly wings of change and its perception by us which has created and continues to fuel the unfolding hurricane of Civilisation and with it the shaping of our lived quotidian condition, both in the present and for future generations as well. Therefore it must be apt to conclude, that once we became able to cognitively define Time’s movement and give expression to it, a civilisational journey was by default awaiting us, and this because of our inability to escape the presence of Time and by consequence its productive immanence in us.

## **Time, the *moderne*, and ever returning ordinariness**

Only in the temporal-experiential category of a modern present can an “other” emerge to it which is not it, but something else. The emergence of such cleavage in temporal existence is what instantiates the possibility of an otherness in life, namely the quotidian condition being able to be named. The concept of the quotidian condition as such emerges therefore at the same time as the concept of modernity. Just as “modernity” is primarily a temporal category of experiential life related to Time and the difference it has brought about, so too is the experience and existence of the quotidian condition a temporal category emanating from an experience of Time within a context of life untouched by the new.

The very nature, colouring and experience of ordinary life within our epochal condition is thus reliant on agents of change having brought about a distinction between that which is modern or contemporary, of the Present, and that which does not belong to such category – namely the ordinary and the mundane –, creating a cleavage between a modern and a quotidian experience of Time. Prior to such temporal and thus cognisant-perceptual distinction having come about, the “ordinary” as a unique category would not be able to have been made and distinguished from any other lived condition. Only as a consequence of the temporal transformation of our perception of life, of all the social, technological, economic agents and processes that have arisen and come to constitute a particular Time (modernity), can we distinguish between what is “ordinary” and what is specialised, of the “new”. Without the social, technological, attitudinal/behavioural, economic or juridical attributes and processes of modernity having come about, no distinction or cleavage would be emergent between what is “new” and what is “ordinary life”, definable initially as that which remains outside and beyond the scope of the “new”.

Perceptual distinctions of modernity however *becoming* ordinary and part of the quotidian condition can be seen in Perec’s account of one or other class within the apartment building in 11 rue Simon Crubellier over Time and hence in its production of difference. In Chapter Forty-Nine we read of the upper two floors of the servant quarters having had their own staircase

beyond a glass door which separated their access from the rest of the lower floors of the building. We read that the residents in the servant quarters when the building was initially occupied and in decades thereafter never used the main staircase, but were accustomed to by social condition to use an adjacent staircase reserved for people visiting the building from “trades”, and which wasn’t lined with double carpet. This *ancient* division, Perec narrates, was sacrosanct in the early decades of the building’s life, however as Time passed and *ancient* social distinctions morphed into more modern ones, and as concomitantly the occupants and residents of the upper two floors changed and become not solely “servants” but rather regular residents who happened to live in the upper two floors of the original servants’ quarters, the use of the main staircase and the prohibitions of social class related to their use also morphed.

By the time of the narration of the novel on 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1975, we read of this *ancient* division between class and use of space within the apartment building having been completely eroded and resolved in the context of a more modern social-attitudinal outlook. We witness in the narrated practices and customs of the apartment building in 11 rue Simon-Crubellier relating to the use of entrances and stairs a changing of attitudes and behaviour in relation to class distinction, in which the residents of the upper two floors of the building indeed could and did use the main staircase to access their residences. The change and difference which Time’s passing created was of a modern condition, and we see in the evidence of the narration contained in this chapter of the novel the new and superior conditions of the Present, that is the conditions of the modern take a perceptual hold in the building’s residents and in their relations to one another in their quotidian playing-out of their days.

Time and the perception of Time, and the attitudinal and behavioural perceptions of things as we can witness from the above account are therefore in constant flux and movement; an experience with Time is never static, and it is therefore consequentially possible to say that in the course of Time and the Present passing alongside its accompanying process of change and movement, epochal distinctions of the modern and new become commonplace and fall back into a background patchwork accompanying life – the value of the new can morph and change, become accepted and folded back into the rhythm of life, gradually losing its distinctness over the course of Time, only to become constituent of the ordinary and mundane and of an accepted epochal rhythm of life yet again – as can be seen in the case of the use of the main staircase in

11 rue Simon-Crubellier. This phenomenon is characterised by a normalization of that which was new, a cognitive and behavioural naturalising of the new technology, practice, attitude or behaviour.

Thus the economic, technological, juridical, behavioural/attitudinal and social changes which emerge as a result first of proto-capitalism and its modernity, and then later by the development of later capitalism proper and its modernity, once having become normative come to colonise the experience of everyday life and constitute its particular hue: modern perception moves from being *apart from*, to becoming *a part of* ordinary life. The changes which emerge to create a new experience related to Time and the perception of Time also come to affect in due course the experience of ordinary everyday life and its particular hue of fullness. Such a process is a social-psychological one, which constitutes a particular communally accepted social-psychological reading of phenomena. Social representations are commonly held perceptions of reality which characteristically “*conventionalize* the objects, persons and events we encounter”<sup>78</sup>, and once conventionalized come to “impose themselves upon us with irresistible force”<sup>79</sup>. Social representations “impregnate most of our social relations, the objects we produce or consume, and the communications we exchange”<sup>80</sup>; it is in such ways that the modernity of yesterday, the new and the distinct becomes the ordinary accepted fullness of our Present today, and thus of our quotidian condition in the Present.

### **Time and accounting for time**

At the time of Perec’s narration of the quotidian of 11 rue Simon-Crubellier on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1975, Time and the accounting of Time in the labour process is taken as granted and as the

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<sup>78</sup> Serge Moscovici, *Social Representations – Explorations in Social Psychology*, (ed.) Gerard Duveen, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p22.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p23.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p3. For more on social representations see Serge Moscovici, *Social Representations – Explorations in Social Psychology*, (ed.) Gerard Duveen.

absolute measure of labour, and consequently the absolute measure of commensurate remuneration. It is this relationship to Time which characterises Perec's narration of Madame Hourcade's working environment, which Perec writes about in her working in a box factory making boxes, and later working in a hardware store<sup>81</sup>, both of which occupations' remuneration and structure were no doubt measured by units of Time. It is undoubtedly also such relationship to Time in the course of his employment which defines Grégoire Simpson's working life as a part-time assistant sub-librarian at the Bibliothèque de l'Opera<sup>82</sup>. Gaspard Winkler's first job on moving to Paris, which he performed as a sales assistant in a toy shop during the Christmas season<sup>83</sup> is no doubt another. In all three protagonist's cases we witness their quotidian condition to bare a particular relationship to Time through the structural relation they had with it derivative of their employment.

Numerous like examples of a modern experience with Time in the account of protagonists' quotidian condition in 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier are narrated by Perec. We might mention amongst these Maurice Réol's experience with Time during his employment at a firm called MATRASCO detailed by Perec in Chapter Ninety-Eight; or of Hutting's servants' modern quotidian experience consequent to their occupations, namely of his chauffeur and odd-job man Joseph Nieto and that of his cook and laundress Ethel Rogers<sup>84</sup>. No doubt Jane Sutton's quotidian experience with Time in her employment as an au pair to the Rohrschach children<sup>85</sup> was delineated in the same accustomed manner, as indeed all of the early servant residents' quotidian experience with Time living in the upper two floors of the building.

Contemporary quotidian Time, just like the Present of many of the protagonists in 11 rue Simon-Crubbellier at just before 8 o'clock in the evening on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 1975, is saturated by what Time and Time's passing has produced in the form of epochal relations and conditions, as well as attitudinal, juridical and behavioural consequences and practices of modernity.

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<sup>81</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user's manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p40-41.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p234-235.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p245.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p33.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p35.

Whilst opposite examples of such quotidian experience of Time in the living-out of ordinary daily life can also be found narrated in Perec's novel, such as Morellet's employment by Bartlebooth to produce from his dispatched watercolours a series of puzzles every fortnight, it might be suggested, that Morellet might have accepted this work-undertaking as a way of escaping his previously measured, time-regulated employment, and thus nature of his quotidian condition at the Ecole Polytechnique<sup>86</sup>. Indeed the only people who don't live according to such measured quotidian experience of Time are the residents of the building who are industrialists such as Madame Moreau, owners such as Madame Marcia the antiques dealer on the ground floor, bohemian entrepreneurs such as the previous residents of Madame Moreau's apartment in the early-nineteen fifties, Joy Slowburn aka Ingeborg Skrifter aka Lorelei and her companions Blunt Stanley and Aurelio Lopez aka Carlos, and the otherwise idly wealthy such as Bartlebooth.

### **Time and being toward death**

The conceptual rise and practices of modernity which Time passing in its productivity has thrust upon us and our quotidian condition relate however primarily to aspects and practices which form an external or societal-collective condition in relation to Time. A more important relation to quotidian Time and to the nature of our ordinary lives as they are lived out in the never-ceasing, eternally-recurring presence of our Present is found within an internal, hidden and personal relationship to Time and thus to one's Being in the Present.

What such contra-spective personal ongoing and unbinding derestriction to the dictative conditions of modernity and its quotidian therein might be found within, is in the seeking out of "slow time", that is a relation to the Present in which reflection, thinking and contemplation guide the consequential practices of ordinary life and its passing. In such approach to structuring one's Present, a primary place comes to be wrestled-out for the creation of a radically different kind of life and a radically different kind of quotidian experiential condition.

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p21-23.

Such inward gaze and engagement with ‘slow time’ and the memory of the quotidian Self along the lines of what Paul Ricoeur writes about in his *Memory, History, Forgetting*, however can result in an inwardness which becomes a Being toward Death. To escape such condition, a balance is required between inwardness and a requisite life force in order for the Present not to flow away into entropy, but conversely in order to be able to keep on living and be involved in further action. A gaze on the past and an exclusive gaze of inwardness is a gaze which comprehends only “*vestigial* – images or imprints – present to the soul [...], which are not themselves viewed as belonging to the living present”<sup>87</sup>. If one’s perspective of gaze *only* contains and is directed to such vestigial images or imprints, no substance for filling the Present with life affirming force, decisions, plans and actions can be had.

It is precisely such condition which Perec narrates in the life of Grégoire Simpson, who was a tenant for two years in one of the rooms making up the Plassaert’s apartment under the eaves of the roof on the top floor of the building, prior to it having been converted into a two room apartment. Perec narrates that after he lost his job as an assistant sub-librarian in the Bibliothèque de l’Opéra he began to take “long walks around Paris”<sup>88</sup>, trailing “along shopfronts, went into all the art galleries, walked slowly through the arcades of the IXth *arrondissement*, stopping at every store”<sup>89</sup>. We read further along that “later, he began to stay in his room, losing little by little all sense of time. One day his alarm clock stopped at quarter past five, and he did not bother to wind it up again; sometimes his light stayed on all night; sometimes a day, two days, three days, and even a whole week would go by without his leaving his room except to go to the toilet at the end of the corridor.”<sup>90</sup>. “For the last six months he stopped going out altogether. [...] He no longer spoke to anyone, and when spoken to only replied with a sort of low grunt which discouraged any attempt at conversation”<sup>91</sup>.

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2006, p352-353.

<sup>88</sup> Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2003, p237.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p237.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

What Perec gives witness to in this account of Grégoire Simpson's quotidian Present is a slow turning inward on his Self, a gradual disengagement with his Present and any animating life force present in such Present, resulting in a gradual turning away from the Present and from Time, resulting in a Being toward Death and consequentially his ultimate demise. We read that Grégoire Simpson "a few days later disappeared completely and no one ever knew what became of him. The general opinion in the building was that he had committed suicide"<sup>92</sup>.

Such is the result of turning away from Time by way of an absolute inwardness. Such *absolute* inwardness as witnessed in Grégoire Simpson's life results in a disengagement with Time toward gradual entropy and ultimate death. It is not this kind of inwardness in which 'slow time' and an engagement with memory becomes productive, but rather in an inward gaze which always keeps one eye open toward an animating force, a gaze in which such life animating force is given space to expand and settle on the psyche *as a result* of an inward gaze, at least up to and including that point in Time in very old age or as a result of terminal illness when the only horizon able to fill the gaze of one's future is death itself. Such engagement with memory constituting 'slow time' and an inward gaze is of an altogether other character and outcome to Grégoire Simpson's rejection of his Present being able to be seeded by a future, resulting in its tragic outcome. One must live with Time and with the prospects of Time, relish Time, and put to use the beauty that an experience of passing and having passed Time affords.

In mentioning such turning away from Time and from its Present resulting in entropy, demise and a Being toward Death, it is necessary to reflect on Ricoeur's citing of Augustine, that "the present of past things is memory, the present of present things is direct perception [*contuitus*, later we will find *attention*]; and the present of future things is expectation"<sup>93</sup>. In engaging with Time, in structuring and thinking through one's quotidian, it is precisely *all* these aspects and outcomes of Time that one needs to engage with in equal measure.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>93</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006, p352. see also (*Confessions* 11.20)

The potentiality latent within expectation is the kernel and driving force by which the future is instituted into one's quotidian Present. It is through expectation and the fruit of the content of such expectation that one can forge a path through life, set out on a trajectory and its undertakings, to forge a quotidian condition that is actively opposed to what their epoch's relation to Time might attempt to bind them with. In entering into an engagement with expectation, one enters into dialectic with temporality whose fruit is yielded within the sites of awaiting future Present moments. It is for this reason why an *absolute* inwardness, an engagement *solely* with memory as one's *only* engagement results in a Being toward Death and a wrenching of the subject from the promise with which Time is pregnant with, as opposed to germinating a life affirming force of meaning which comes to colour and play out the future content of a potential quotidian lived condition. To live with and engage with expectation and thus be open to the future is in Ricoeur's term "being-a whole"<sup>94</sup>, which entails a "modality of potentiality, of possible being, as is summed up in the expression *Ganzseinkönnen* (potentiality of being-a-whole, possible being-a-whole): by [which the] whole is to be understood [as] not being a closed system but integrality, and in this sense, openness"<sup>95</sup>.

### **Time and being toward life**

An engagement with expectation and potentiality as the content and mechanics – or *poiesis* – of the Present is what Ricoeur has termed "the present of initiative"<sup>96</sup>, which is none other than the life affirming force of *libido*, which *libido* finds its emergence and *poiesis* in the Present, to take form in the quotidian of a subject's future. The *libido* shapes and moulds the future, determines and delimits the nature of future life, and as such the nature of one's future yet always Present quotidian existence, fullness and structure. The resultant dynamics of an open-to-potential inwardness as an engagement with Time and its product as a *poiesis* of the Present is the pulse of the ever-recurring, incessant, never ceasing Present need to labour, work and action – to a *doing* in short and a conceiving of doing. It is in precisely this measure that one

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p356.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 353.

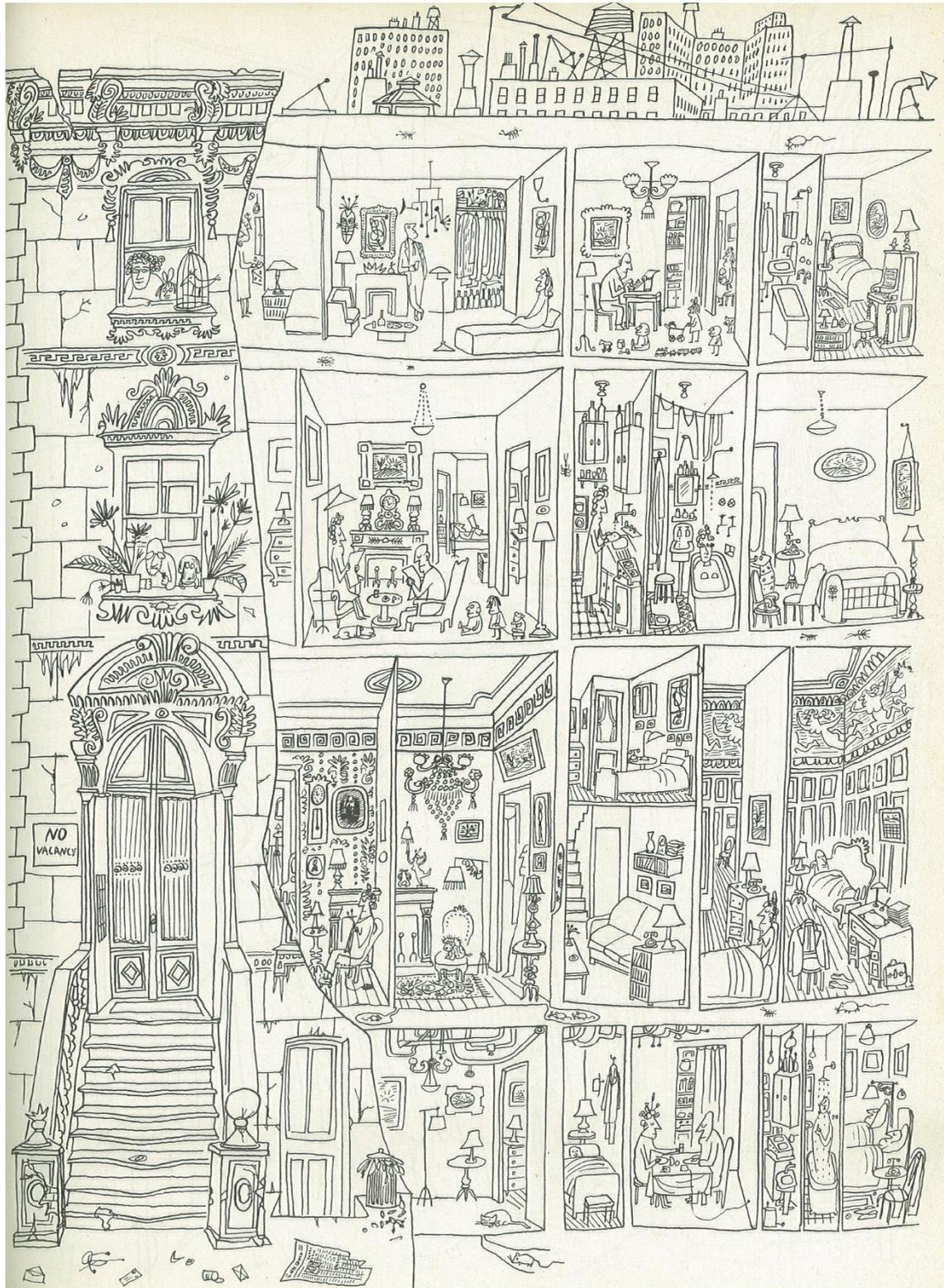
can create a life – an ordinary life – that doesn't result in entropy and decay come demise akin to Grégoire Simpson's.

Whilst the novel narrates an inward reflection of Time having passed through Valene's gaze, everything that is told in the content of that gaze on Time passed is the product of libidinal force, or life force and hence of the protagonists's *libido*. The *libido* is what colours quotidian life with content, and which colours the life and stories of all the characters that are narrated by Perec in his novel. Without *libido* as a poetic agent, all that remains is entropy and inwardness, a Being toward Death. The presence of *libido* is a pre-requisite for life and its events to take their course and consequently take place within a subject's existence, and hence within the stories of Perec's characters' objects and lives, and thus create a quotidian and its possibility; the *libido* is of central importance to the content of quotidian life and its particular hue: it is an elemental outcome of Being with Time.

Perec's intention in *Life – a user's manual* is to narrate this “being with time” of the quotidian moment of an apartment building and its occupants through both space and time. His strategy or otherwise Oulipoean tactic was to construct that narration in a way that a jigsaw puzzle might be assembled: piece by piece dictated by the set movement of a Knight across the spaces of the building. In doing so, Perec not only narrates time and space of a particular moment on a particular day in a particular apartment building along the gaze of a fictional painterly eye, but also provides us with pieces of a jigsaw from which we can in turn narrate an image of the Present and the quotidian condition in the context of Time, which when taken apart, analysed and assembled yield the possibility for a *poiesis* of the Present.

Such *poiesis* of the Present and its always recurring never ceasing nature is what gifts the fullness to our quotidian condition, which can equally be drawn from memory as it can from action. The quality and particular type of quotidian condition that one lives is reliant on subjectivity forming about one's life by way of Time having passed and the way in which one then comes to structure their Present and presents to come – this structure and structuring is the *poiesis* of the Present and Time on one's life. Time requires to having had passed in order for reflection

on what has passed to impregnate the Present and one's future presents. Only once such impregnation of one's Present has occurred – regardless of in which way or subjective quality – is one's quotidian condition set onto a path on which its content, structure, mechanics and assemblage becomes apparent. Such content, structure, mechanics and assemblage of one's quotidian condition can't be had without an engagement with Time, and thus an engagement with Time and the particular *poiesis* it produces becomes elemental to the playing-out of one's ordinary life.



**Figure 1:** Saul Steinberg's drawing of an apartment building in section, from which Georges Perec gained his inspiration to write *Life – a user's manual*. From Saul Steinberg, *The Art of Living*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1952. For George Perec's musings on this drawing, and its influence on his writing of *Life – a user's manual*, see "The Apartment Building" in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, Penguin Books, London, 2008, p40-45.

|                               |                     |                                     |                   |                       |                 |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Honoré</i>                 |                     |                                     |                   |                       | <i>Morellet</i> | <i>Simpson Troyan Troquet</i> |                             |
|                               | SMAUTF              | SUT-<br>TON                         | ORL-<br>OWSKA     | ALBIN                 |                 | PLASSAERT                     |                             |
| HUTTING                       | GRATIOLET           |                                     | CRESPI            | NIETO<br>&<br>ROGERS  | <i>Jérôme</i>   | <i>Fres-<br/>nel</i>          | BREI-<br>DEL<br>VAL-<br>ÈNE |
| <i>Brodin -<br/>Gratiolet</i> |                     |                                     |                   | STAIRS                | <i>Jérôme</i>   |                               |                             |
| CINOC                         | DOCTOR DINTEVILLE   |                                     |                   |                       | WINCKLER        |                               |                             |
| <i>Hourcade</i>               | <i>Gratiolet</i>    |                                     |                   |                       | <i>Hébert</i>   |                               |                             |
| RÉOL                          | RORSCHACH           |                                     |                   |                       | FOULEROT        |                               |                             |
| <i>Speiss</i>                 |                     |                                     |                   |                       | <i>Echard</i>   |                               |                             |
| BERGER                        | <i>Grifalconi</i>   |                                     |                   |                       | MARQUISEAUX     |                               |                             |
|                               |                     |                                     | <i>Danglars</i>   |                       | <i>Colomb</i>   |                               |                             |
| BARTLEBOOTH                   |                     |                                     |                   |                       | FOUREAU         |                               |                             |
|                               |                     |                                     | <i>Appenzell</i>  |                       | DE BEAUMONT     |                               |                             |
| ALTAMONT                      |                     |                                     |                   |                       |                 |                               |                             |
| MOREAU                        |                     |                                     |                   | LOUVET                |                 |                               |                             |
| SERVICE<br>ENTRANCE           | MARCIA,<br>ANTIQUES | <i>Claveau</i><br>OFFICE<br>NOCHÈRE | ENTRANCE<br>HALL  | <i>Masy</i><br>MARCIA |                 |                               |                             |
| CELLARS                       | BOILER<br>ROOM      | CELLARS                             | LIFT<br>MACHINERY | CELLARS               | CELLARS         |                               |                             |

**11 RUE SIMON-CRUBELLIER**  
Names of previous occupants are given in italics.

**Figure 2:** section view of the fictional apartment building of 11 rue Simon Crubellier, XVIIIth *arrondissement*, Paris, which Georges Perec’s *Life – a user’s manual* narrates. From Georges Perec, *Life – a user’s manual*, Vintage Books, London, 2008, p501. (The narration of the novel proceeds in order through the rooms and spaces of the apartment building according to the movement of a Knight across a chessboard commencing with the stairs / entrance hall.)

## Chapter 2

### On the Quotidian and the *Poiesis* of the Libido

“We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars”

— Oscar Wilde, Lord Darlington - Act III, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892)

“I *rebel* – therefore we *exist*”

— Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (1951)

With the passing of the Present in the form of Time as a fourth and inseparable dimension of space producing movement and change, so passing Time’s auto-production of movement and change produces the difference necessary for the formation of subjectivity. As a natural and consequential extension to the phenomenon of the passing Present, a further all-pervasive ontological aspect of our quotidian condition can be identified in the formation of subjectivity, precisely because it comes to exist as a naturally forming and extensive continuum to Time and inseparable from it.

In examining two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition, the productive context of subjectivity and its auto-productive *poiesis* must be placed under observation as it comes to colour our quotidian condition. Subjectivity as a base condition of habitual quotidian life might be

considered as a fifth dimension of quotidian existence unfolding from the fourth dimension of Time, and that from within the three dimensionality of material space, each one linked in formation to the other.

Subjectivity and its machinations as an aspect of the quotidian is that substance of life that comes to colour, shape and form thought and feeling, giving birth in turn to life energy, life direction and consequential life drive by which the *content* of a subject's quotidian condition comes to be populated. If the fourth dimension of Time and its passing might be considered as the 'ether' in which the quotidian condition exists as its foremost base context, then subjectivity and related action borne of life energy must be viewed as that which comes to produce the potential *content* for our quotidian condition. In examining the role of subjectivity in the formation of our individuated quotidian condition, the drives of the libido which colour our subjectivity must be examined.

### **Jung's libido**

Jung conceptualises the libido in his *On the Nature of the Psyche* as an 'energetic general psychic energy'<sup>97</sup>. In Jung's focus on the libido as general psychic energy, it is a force that lends itself to the formation of mental disposition in our lives, which we might term as the content of our subjectivity. In using the term 'life energy', it can be understood as an energy that propels and compels our life into feelings and thought, decisions and action through a general state of Being in the course of actualising that Being – be it sexualised, as in the case of Freud, or not, as in the case of Jung –, the *poiesis* of which comes to determine the colour, hue, flavour and content of our quotidian stillness, whether one is aware of it or not.

Through such definition of life energy, its origin and outcome can be located in the productive movement of subjectivity giving way to a productive movement of meaning followed by action, and that as a result of the Present passing producing a flow of Time. The production of

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<sup>97</sup> C G Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2001, p5.

such flow of Time produces a person's subjectivity through the production of difference between moments past and moments present, bringing forth an energetic drive that we can term as libidinal. Life energy as a metonymic manifestation of movement borne of difference produced by Time through the formation of subjectivity might be considered as an energy which comes to direct meaning and consequential condition of our individuated quotidian life.

Jung has written that "The idea of energy is not that of a substance moved in space; [but rather that] it is a concept abstracted from relations of movement"<sup>98</sup>, which Jung term's as the energetic standpoint<sup>99</sup> upon which his conceptualisation of 'general psychic energy' as libido is framed. 'Energy' is Jung's underlying substance in the life instinct, thus situating such life energy and its resultant formation of content as being an outcome of productive elements. The difference that movement and change in subjectivity as a result of passing Time creates is an energy, akin to the energy of the movement of waves in the ocean or the movement of air in the atmosphere, and this energy when discharged through action Jung writes "[...] we call our hypothetical life-energy [or] 'libido'"<sup>100</sup>, or as otherwise stated later "general life instinct"<sup>101</sup>.

General life instinct, life energy, life drive or otherwise the Jungian *libido* in as far as it is a psychological phenomenon is none other than the formation and consequential discharge of subjectivity. "Libido [or general life instinct] is [therefore] nothing but an abbreviated expression for the 'energetic standpoint'"<sup>102</sup>. This energetic standpoint, or energy, is what comes to emanate from and in turn manifest itself in the stillness of our quotidian condition in the form of actions and decisions that come to colour meaning and create action. When formed, subjectivity releases thoughts, feelings and particular action and decisions that emanate forth as a drive of the libido. Furthermore, in reference to Freud in this regard, there exists 'life energy' and 'life instincts' and in contra-distinctive direction to them 'death instincts', which might be said to constitute the two sides and the totality of 'life drives', whether sexualised or not in the

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<sup>98</sup> C G Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2001, p4.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p5.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p20.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p35.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p36.

ego. The phenomenon of subjectivity in its formation by life drives therefore produces a *poiesis* in turn that comes to colour and structure the way our quotidian condition comes to play itself out.

The energy of life is not always and definitively of the same type, direction and movement. That which aims to “create ever greater unities and prolong life into higher development”<sup>103</sup> we might term as life energy or ‘libido’; on the contrary, that psychic energy which aims to return to the conservative state before positive development, in which anger, hate, destruction and aggression is exhibited as means toward demolishing the gains of life energy and reversing such prolongment of development into higher realms, we might term as the ‘death instinct’. Nonetheless, the two poles upon which the forces of life manifest themselves and which come to colour subjectivity as a result of their formation are the life drive countered by the death drive. In examining the *poiesis* of life drives and life energy that guide the content of our quotidian condition, and by taking a mirror to them, these life instincts and contra-directional death instincts as sources of life energy need to be examined in discussing the individuated content of our quotidian condition.

### **The depiction of Life Energy as a template for Joyce’s *Portrait***

In examining primary ‘life instincts’, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is an exemplary source documentation in which James Joyce’s fictional formative life can be seen as a working through of such life instincts and death instincts in making life choices that come to colour and fill with content his adult quotidian condition. In what follows will be an exploration of the horizon of life instincts and death instincts as the order into which human life is born and which comes to populate the content of our quotidian condition.

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<sup>103</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of – Volume 18*, Vintage Books, London, 2001, p258.

In his article titled “Destruction and Creation in ‘A Portrait’”, Elliot B Gose Jr. describes the chiasmic nature of *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* not only within its structure as a whole, but also within many of the main protagonist Stephen Dedalus’ individual utterings, musings and capturing of thought that Joyce details. Gose likens such presence of chiasmus in the novel and in Stephen Dedalus’ formative thought and feelings to a ‘mirror’<sup>104</sup>, whereby the second thought or feeling given utterance or becoming part of structure “reflects back the first”<sup>105</sup> of a pair. An example of this in the novel might be Stephen’s utterings in Part I whereby he is recorded to utter: “*Pull out his eyes, / Apologize, / Apologize, / Pull out his eyes*”<sup>106</sup>. Gose likens this chiasmic mirror structure to the attempt of Stephen Dedalus through Joyce’s authorship to “balance the inner and outer”<sup>107</sup>, the physical with the spiritual, punishment with salvation, fear of damnation with the soaring wings of an artist’s freedom, to ultimately as Joyce places in the voice of Stephen Dedalus to create and forge in his mature life as an artist by the end of his formative development at the end of the novel “the uncreated conscience of my race”<sup>108</sup> as a direct productive outcome of such chiasmus in his formative libido, producing in turn an ultimate manifestation of his life energy.

If such chiasmic structure within the novel and within Stephen Dedalus’ formative thought-world and feeling-universe is to be accepted, one could liken it to be an emanation of the inside onto the outside, and in turn of the outside onto the formation of the inside, only to find release again on the outside of Stephen’s young life and life direction, and indeed quotidian condition as portrayed by Joyce. Caught in this iterative chiasmic condition, the portrayal of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* cannot but be thought of as a manifestation and consequential depiction of an interior life, which is to say formative subjectivity, finding hold on outer-life and life direction, that is a depiction of Stephen’s formative unconscious instinctual general psychic drive or life energy contained within his libido as being formed by

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<sup>104</sup> Gose, Elliot B Jr, “Destruction and Creation in ‘A Portrait’”, *James Joyce Quarterly* Vol. 22/No. 3 (Spring 1985), University of Tulsa, 1985, p.260.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p.260.

<sup>106</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p4.

<sup>107</sup> Gose, Elliot B Jr, “Destruction and Creation in ‘A Portrait’”, *James Joyce Quarterly* Vol. 22/No. 3 (Spring 1985), University of Tulsa, 1985, p.259.

<sup>108</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p.276.

his environment, colonising and directing his decisions and affirmations toward a maturity and through it providing an account of his early adult quotidian condition's content.

This observation must be placed into context along the lines of Jung's psychic instinctual force of libido as an unconscious reservoir and drive punctuating the performative conscious from the inside out. Such chiasmic condition of Stephen Dedalus' thought, feelings and utterings throughout his depicted formative development in *Portrait* might suggest reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as depicting a coming to maturity of a libidinal flow and movement as formed and being formed by experience of the external world from the inside to the outside, and from the outside forming the inside to only find expression yet again on the outside in the very character-development and ultimate destiny of the novel's main protagonist. Thus at the core of the text and of the formative development of the central protagonist in *Portrait* might be said to be an authorly coming to text of libidinal flow and general psychic instinctual drive, which play of libidinal flow and general psychic instinctual drive as life energy comes to form the very content of the novel's main character.

Based upon Stanislaus Joyce's account of James Joyce's rewriting of *Portrait* from the earlier manuscript of *Stephen Hero*, Richard Ellman writes that James Joyce came to metaphorically conceptualise a person's character development – following a discussion with Stanislaus –, as a theory of gestation that commences in the embryo with certain given traits.<sup>109</sup> Given such emergent pre-disposition of thought on character-development, Joyce might have arguably come to conceptualise the story of Stephen Dedalus and his related character development as a process of character gestation, which commences at the beginning of the novel among liquids and fluids as in the maternal womb, only to find fulfilment and destiny in the liquidity of the air by way of his final utterances in the novel taking flight on reaching a maturity. Accordingly, Ellman writes that “*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is in fact a gestation of a soul, and in [this] metaphor Joyce found his new principle of order”<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> Richard Ellman in John Coyle (ed.), *James Joyce, Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Columbia University Press (Icon Books Ltd.), New York, 1998, p46.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p47.

If the content and character development of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* – in fact the very substance of the novel – can be seen as a “gestation of the soul” (regardless of the transcendent nature of such conception) accompanying its chiasmic nature of structure and depiction of Stephen’s formative thoughts, feelings and utterings, then *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* cannot but be seen in similar light to that derived from the extrapolation of Elliot B Gose Jr.’s commentary, namely that it is an artistic authorly trace of a certain character’s libido or life energy coming to form and then haunt each and every turn of the central protagonist’s formative development in the depiction of his quotidian condition. In other words, what Joyce might have arguably achieved in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a structural and textual depiction of the formation, movement and emanation of Jung’s general psychic instinctual drive and accompanying life energy the libido in a given fictional character’s personal and personhood development as it came to populate the content of his ordinary, habitual private life.

If one turns to post-structuralist readings of Joyce’s *Portrait*, one might equate the depiction of such general instinctual psychic libidinal emanation with the language actually proffered by Joyce for Stephen Dedalus’ utterings. Samuel Beckett wrote in his essay on *Finnegan’s Wake* that in Joyce’s writing “form is content, content is form. [...] His writing is not about something; it is that thing itself”<sup>111</sup>, to which John Coyle adds in his edited volume on Joyce criticism: “in other words, Joyce’s texts are to be thought of less in terms of a representation of some reality out there than as a construction of reality”<sup>112</sup>.

The manner by which such ‘construction of reality’ thus proceeds along the lines of such reading of Joyce is the very materiality of language utilised by the author, including and foremost in what Stephen Dedalus utters. Given that Stephen Dedalus’ utterings are at many times chiasmic, the materiality of language utilised by Joyce comes to embody the immateriality of the psyche giving immanence to his formative instinctual life energy and psychic development

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<sup>111</sup> Samuel Beckett in John Coyle (ed.), *James Joyce, Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Columbia University Press (Icon Books Ltd.), New York, 1998, p87.

<sup>112</sup> John Coyle (ed.), *James Joyce, Ulysses, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Columbia University Press (Icon Books Ltd.), New York, 1998, p87.

through sound and content. The language of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* thus might be argued to materialise the immaterial unconscious through language, and in turn give flavour, nature and substance to his general instinctual psychic drive as life energy, his libido, as it comes to materialise his life direction and colour his quotidian condition.

Colin McCabe in his essay “James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word” writes in the regard of Joyce’s authorly language that “[...] Joyce’s texts concern themselves with the position of the subject in language”<sup>113</sup>. Stephen Dedalus is thus portrayed and comes into portrayal as a subject through the very language Joyce places into his thoughts, utterings and feelings, releasing the subject and character of Dedalus into life through language. As readers familiar with Lacan might glean, such characterisation is nothing other than of a subject which comes into being through language, which in the process is indeed cornered or made (*fait*) by language<sup>114</sup>, in so that what language emanates from the formation coming to speak marks the very coming into being of the subject as a result of what is uttered, thought, felt and thus made conscious.

The language with which Joyce populates Stephen’s thoughts, feelings, utterings come formative and forming subjectivity is the very play of his coming into a particular condition of being, which if read psychoanalytically is none other than the coming into personhood of his unconscious general instinctual psychic content driven by his life energy through the meaning of the language by which it is conveyed and formed from in the context of his environment, which is to say nothing other than a manifestation of his emerging libido by way of the very language that comes to form his consciousness, and thus the content of the novel. The language of Stephen Dedalus, the very text of his personhood by which he becomes a character in the novel is therefore nothing other than a manifestation in materiality of his Jungian libido and its energy in the context of what comes to colonise his unconscious by way of his environment, and how Stephen comes to transform that into life and life direction through consciousness of it, whether by speech or otherwise, as he matures.

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<sup>113</sup> John Coyle (ed.), *James Joyce – Ulysses / A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*, Columbia University Press (Icon Books Ltd.), New York., 1998.

<sup>114</sup> Jacques Lacan., *My Teaching.*, Verso, London., 2008., p36.

Thus might we agree with John Coyle on discussing Maud Ellman's criticism of Joyce's writing in "Disremembering Dedalus" that "[...] Joyce's language does not seek to express, represent, reconstitute or describe 'experience' or 'reality' but to construct it"<sup>115</sup>. What Joyce is proffering through language, through the language that Stephen Dedalus utters, thinks and feels in coming to constitute his formative and forming consciousness in the text is nothing other than the very reality of his forming and formative subject, which in every instance is always first unconscious residing within a Jungian libido, only coming to find release or discharge through language of speech into consciousness as his instinctual psychic drive situates itself in life to create a life, and a quotidian life at that, particular to the subject – Stephen Dedalus' life. What is being proffered by Joyce's language in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is the construction of the flow of life energy as it fictionally colours the formative development of Stephen Dedalus. This instinctual psychic drive or energy of Stephen's libido is constructed in the only way possible, which is through utterance, thought and emergent feeling, which is nothing other than the conscious presencing of his unconscious, which unconscious is given context and succour through the very content of the novel itself as a manifestation of his libido's energy.

In this way might we rightly assert that the portrayal of Stephen Dedalus' formative and forming young life in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is nothing other than a fictional and artistic representation of the Jungian libido in its instinctual general psychic drive coming to presence in the depiction of the main protagonist's quotidian condition. Such assertion might be further given credence to by various and numerous sources of utterings and thoughts of Stephen, such as when in his conversation with Cranly in one of the final scenes of the novel Cranly asks Stephen: "I don't know what you wish to do in life. Is it what you told me the night we were standing outside Harcourt Street station?"<sup>116</sup> – to which Stephen answers: "To discover the mode of life or of art whereby your spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom"<sup>117</sup>. The coming to language of these sentiments is none other than the coming to consciousness of Stephen's general instinctual psychic drive of life energy, which is to say his

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p103.

<sup>116</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p276.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p276.

libido, similarly to his statement further on in the same conversation whereby Stephen continues “...and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile and cunning”<sup>118</sup>.

The manifestation of Stephen’s life energy is however not limited to his uttering of actual speech, but is present in all his forming and formative consciousness, whether speech or feeling, such as in his childhood thought from Part II of the novel, where Joyce writes of Stephen’s forming subjectivity that “the ambition which he felt astir at times in the darkness of his soul sought no outlet”<sup>119</sup>, and again from the same part: “He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how: but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him”<sup>120</sup>. Such feelings and thoughts that Joyce places into the person of Stephen’s fictional character, whilst not spoken in every instance, are nonetheless the same emanation of his life energy coming to colour his subjectivity as the famous last lines of Joyce’s novel are, whereby Stephen goes forth to proclaim “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race”<sup>121</sup>. It is these colourings of Stephen Dedalus’ subjectivity which then come to colour and populate the content of his quotidian condition depicted some years later in his life as a protagonist in *Ulysses*.

What is foremost of importance to recognise from such analysis concerning the punctuation of Stephen Dedalus’ general instinctual psychic life energy into consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is not necessarily such particular analysis *per sé* of Joyce’s novel in a light of the above particular reading of it, but rather the consequent realisation that in thinking

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p268-269.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p67.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p67.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p275-276.

about quotidian life, and Stephen Dedalus' formative quotidian condition in particular as depicted in James Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, it is the libido in the form of life energy that comes to colour and fill our quotidian condition with a particular *poiesis*, unavoidably and inextricably. Thus might we assert following such brief analysis of Stephen's fictional quotidian character as portrayed in Joyce's novel *Portrait*, that the general instinctual psychic drive of the libido and its punctuation of life energy into consciousness is a central facet of the quotidian condition and its varying individual *poieses* as such and as we might come to experience them, not merely fictionally, but also in actuality and along the lines that the science of psychoanalysis itself argued for in Jung's writings.

### **Family context and antecedent life energy**

What is the origin of a particular colour, hue or flavour of quotidian life to come? What are its formative sources of origin that later come to bloom forth in the actual daily quotidian condition we all differently come to live? What is as such the *poiesis* of our quotidian condition in terms of its content?

Twentieth century American psycho-analyst Erick Erikson attempts to answer these questions by surmising that "One might say that personality at the first stage crystallises around the conviction 'I am what I am given', and that of the second, 'I am what I will'. The third can be characterised by 'I am what I can imagine I will be', [whilst the fourth] 'I am what I learn'."<sup>122</sup> Throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we see a fictionalised narration of Joyce's own childhood and thus the initial sources of his formative general psychic energy that come to be manifested in his later life in the fictionalised character of Stephen Dedalus. It is these formative, early-childhood developments narrated in *Portrait* that document what Erickson terms as 'I am what I am given'.

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<sup>122</sup> Erick Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle*, W W Norton and Company, Inc, New York, 1994, p87.

The first more notable of these sources of origin might be Joyce's account of Stephen Dedalus' "...elders [speaking] constantly of the subjects nearer their hearts, of Irish Politics, of Munster and of the legends of their own family, to all of which Stephen lent an avid ear"<sup>123</sup>, echoing the source of what would come to form the hue of Joyce's later libidinal flow of energy and thus content of his adult quotidian life in later years in relation to thoughts and feelings concerning the Irish nation and its politics.

Joyce portrays Stephen Dedalus, as 'lending an avid ear' to such discussions, soaking the nature and flavour of those discussions up into his unconscious, which in due time would in turn energise themselves into emanating into mature conscious points of reference for both Joyce and his fictionalised alter-ego Stephen in *Portrait*. Joyce characterises this gestation period when he writes of Stephen Dedalus that "The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him, the nature of which he only dimly apprehended."<sup>124</sup>

One of Joyce's biographers Peter Costello writes about these formative sources of psychic energy or life energy in Joyce's own adult life in not so explicit terms, when he points out that "Whatever the world might offer, the family was an institution from which James Joyce would never be free"<sup>125</sup>, which is to say neither from his family's Parnellite politics, nor from their Catholic imagery of life, however much he both later came to detest Irish Catholicism and Irish Nationalism. Costello goes on to write that "Because so many of the Irish Party were journalists, Ireland roared with controversy, as did the Joyce household"<sup>126</sup> at Parnell's demise, continuing that "The controversy surrounding Parnell was to colour Joyce's outlook on matters of sexual morality and politics for the rest of his life"<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p64.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p64.

<sup>125</sup> Peter Costello, *Years of Growth 1882-1915*, Kyle Cathie Ltd., London, 1992, p87.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p98.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p99.

The most enduring facet of Joyce's childhood – and echoed in Stephen Dedalus' childhood as fictionally portrayed in *Portrait* – finds its unconscious source in his family moving to 14 Fitzgibbon Street on the north side of Dublin, subsequent to their residence in 'Leoville' in Blackrock. Costello writes of Joyce that "Until now his life had been passed in pleasant suburbs or in rural seclusion. 'Dublin city was a new and complex sensation' [...] He could now strike out and follow the roads where they led down to the river and the ships, or out on the North Circular Road [...] He was building up in his mind a mental map of Dublin, which year by year extended to include districts and streets as remote as Malahide and Dolphin's Barn"<sup>128</sup>.

The family's move to the north side of Dublin occurred in Joyce's early-adolescence, which pinpoints the emergent source of life energy that will come to characterise much of Joyce's literary oeuvre and content throughout his life, namely his steadfast love of the city of Dublin and its characters as will come to be portrayed in the object content of his writing to come. The same move is mirrored in his fictional alter-ego Stephen Dedalus' formative life in moving to the north side of Dublin on commencement of his secondary schooling at Belvedere as narrated in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Such formative sources of latent psychic energy come to coalesce through individuation and later ego-development into content of one's quotidian condition. Jung writes that the direction and force unleashed by the general psychic energy of the libido in later adult quotidian life is akin to "the old game of the hammer and anvil: between them the [child] is forged into an indestructible whole, an 'individual'"<sup>129</sup>. It is precisely this process that Jung terms the 'individuation process', which is to say the process by which the libido and its life energy find direction and force of movement in a particular direction producing content for a quotidian condition to come.

Thus we can say that in the process of individuation, ego-consciousness arises out of the unconscious, out of the energy of what Deleuze and Guattari term as 'desiring machines' fuelling

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p118-119.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p225.

the factory of the unconscious, which in turn forms ‘machinic aggregates’ in will, interest, disposition and life direction as a manifestation of energy, which energy is of the libido as life energy. Such ego-consciousness arising out of the unconscious thus colours the hues and provides the flavour of the *poiesis* of quotidian life to come in later adulthood. This sentiment is reflected in what Jung writes that “unconscious contents [are] consummated, out of [which] union emerge new situations and new conscious attitudes”<sup>130</sup>, just as can be seen in Joyce’s fictionalised account of his formative years through the character of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

### **Education and antecedent life energy**

Erikson’s second reference to formative ego-consciousness and the flow of life energy ‘I am what I will’, as well as his third ‘I am what I can imagine I will be’ comes to fore most causatively through an interaction with educators, peers and formal education in schools of elementary and secondary type, thus further sculpting the latent energy of the libido in the unconscious leading to manifestations of content in thought and feeling in a later quotidian condition.

The first line of latent unconscious energetic accumulation that will come to manifest itself in the force of its respective life energy in both Joyce’s life as well as his portrayed fictional character of Stephen Dedalus is their respective burgeoning love of literature, reading and writing as an outcome of their formative Jesuit education, which was “aside from its system, [...] literary [in] nature”<sup>131</sup>.

Joyce’s brother Stanislaus recalls of Joyce’s formative years that in his childhood he was “an omnivorous reader in English and French”<sup>132</sup>, much like the fictionalised account of Stephen

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<sup>130</sup> C G Jung, *The Essential Jung – selected writings*, Fontana Press, London, 1998, p226.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p84.

<sup>132</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p73.

Dedalus' early school years in *Portrait*. Stanislaus Joyce goes on to recall that Joyce in his formative childhood "...could prefer to stay at home with a book on a fine afternoon in summer rather than come out and play"<sup>133</sup>. We also read of Joyce's youth in the biographical account of it by Peter Costello, that lending libraries formed a large part of his school years, writing that "As is so often the case, access to free books at this critical age was the making of the writer, and during this year of grace James Joyce made full use of his opportunity"<sup>134</sup>.

Echoed in Stephen Dedalus' fictionalised character is the real life of Joyce in regards to his prize winning writing, which Stanislaus records that Joyce "Even as a boy [he] won three exhibitions, and twice, in the Middle and Senior Grades, he won the prize for English composition"<sup>135</sup>, furthermore that "The weekly English composition was his strongpoint... In the end [his teacher] took it for granted that 'Gussie', as he jocularly called him [James Joyce] from his second name Augustine, would be a writer"<sup>136</sup>, accounting for latent life energy to come, just as his fictionalised alter-ego Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait* replies at the end of the novel in regards to the question of what he intends to do with his life was "to discover the mode of life or of art whereby [my] spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom"<sup>137</sup>.

Thus we witness in both Joyce and his fictionalised portrayal of Stephen Dedalus' formative education an inclination toward literary life, reading and to the life of writing, which formative influences later come to surface in their matured life energy on graduating from university, when Joyce is recorded by his brother Stanislaus to be asked by the Dean what he intended to take up as a career or direction in life, in regards to which he writes that "Jim said that he intended to try the career of letters"<sup>138</sup>, and the fictionalised account of it in *Portrait* through

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p53.

<sup>134</sup> Peter Costello, *Years of Growth 1882-1915*, Kyle Cathie Ltd., London, 1992, p139.

<sup>135</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p68.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p58.

<sup>137</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992., p276.

<sup>138</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p188.

the words of Stephen Dedalus: “to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race”<sup>139</sup>.

The unconscious turned conscious formative influences or machinic aggregates in Joyce’s and Stephen’s unconscious come to animate themselves through their general instinctual psychic energy of the libido at such stage of early-adulthood in their lives, which is none other than a manifestation of the machinic aggregate of desiring production in the form of life energy flowing outward, occupying itself with conscious plans and decisions in the context of their environmental and societal possibilities as graduates coming to form the *poiesis* of their quotidian condition to come.

The ‘specific energy of desiring machines’, the unconscious factory of machinic production of the unconscious and its flows of energy and desire-production don’t always proceed, however, in such a straight, linearly progressive direction, and neither did they in Joyce’s fictionalised account of his youth through the character of Stephen in *Portrait*.

### **Regression of Life Energy**

Coupled with Erikson’s first two definitions of childhood ego-development and stirring life energy of ‘I am what I will’ and ‘I am what I can imagine to be’, a further factor of ‘I am what I learn’ must also be accounted for, which in the context of the Joyce’s life in the bosom of education with the Jesuits produces a regression in both Joyce, as well as in Stephen Dedalus’ fictional character, in their formative manifestation of regressed life energy in the context of their dedicated embrace of the Catholic faith.

Jung writes that “It is only when conditions have altered so drastically that there is an unendurable rift between the outer situation and our ideas, now become antiquated, that the general

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p275-276.

problem of our *Weltanschauung*, or philosophy of life, arises, and with it the question of how the primordial images that maintain the flow of instinctive energy are to be reoriented and readapted”<sup>140</sup>. Such an ‘unendurable rift’ in the flow of libido or life energy occurs to both Joyce and to his fictional character Stephen Dedalus in their respective religious turn toward and embrace of Catholicism. The damming up of a flow of life energy in such ‘unendurable rift’ Jung terms as a regression of libidinal flow, and with it a regression of the energetic animation of life energy.

Joyce writes of such regression in Stephen Dedalus’ formative life energy after his religious turn following his confessional in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, that Stephen thinks to himself that “It would be beautiful to die if God so willed. It was beautiful to live if God so willed, to live in grace a life of peace and virtue and forbearance with others”<sup>141</sup>, thus colouring the hue of his thoughts and content of his quotidian condition while the regression lasts. During this ‘unendurable rift’ and encounter with devoted Catholicism, we read of Stephen Dedalus exclaiming “Another life! A life of grace and virtue and happiness! It was true. It was not a dream from which he would wake. The past was the past”<sup>142</sup> and that “His daily life was laid out in devotional areas [...] every part of his day, divided by what he regarded now as the duties of his station in life, circled about its own centre of spiritual energy. His life seemed to have drawn near to eternity; every thought, word and deed, every instance of consciousness could be made to reverberate radiantly in heaven...”<sup>143</sup>

The general instinctual psychic energy of the libido flowing inward, occupying itself with the inner unconscious producing introversion in this documentation of Stephen’s character is what damns up his formative libidinal flow of life energy that had hitherto been pre-occupied with literature, only to be redirected toward a regression and abandoning of formative interests and flows of desire. If such regression leading to neurosis is overcome in the flow of life energy in one’s life, a subsequent reorientation and concomitant progression of life energy in the vein of

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<sup>140</sup> C G Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2002, p51.

<sup>141</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p157.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p158.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p159-160.

previously built-up desire can begin to flow again and energise thought, feeling and action. We read of just such subsequent reorientation following this event and in concomitant progression of Stephen Dedalus' formative life, when the previously ignited libidinal psychic energy of literature, art and life of the mind is rekindled on the prospect of entering university study.

In Stephen's fictional portrayal in *Portrait* it was the prospect of university toward the end of his schooling that allowed the previously dammed-up libidinal psychic energy or life energy to burst-out and find a new flow toward his earlier individuation. Thus we witness Joyce narrating a gushing forth of life energy in the fictional character of Stephen's feelings on acceptance to Trinity in *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* when he places into Stephen's thoughts on finishing his secondary schooling: "The university! So he had passed beyond the challenge of the sentries who had stood as guardians of his boyhood and had sought to keep him among them that he might be subject to them and serve their ends. Pride after satisfaction uplifted him like long slow waves. The end he had been born to serve yet did not see had led him to escape by an unseen path: and now it beckoned to him once more and a new adventure was about to be opened to him"<sup>144</sup>.

As can be witnessed in the brief account of the flow of libido in Stephen Dedalus' fictional portrayal and echoed in Joyce's real formative development, there is no stasis in the flow of life energy, it merely reorients itself into different manifestations that can be regressive and thus forming neuroses, or alternately progressive – it is this which we witness in Stephen's thoughts in the above passage concerning his dalliance with the priesthood and subsequent tearing away from the 'guardians of his boyhood' toward the prospect of university and the concomitant secular life.

Such is the *poiesis* of our quotidian condition as well in each of our lived daily lives: progression often followed by regression, which if overcome leads to a renewal with machinic aggregates of a former inference resulting in the progressive flow of life energy once more. The

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<sup>144</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p178-179.

colour, hue, flavour and structure of our quotidian condition, its *poiesis*, however is of a differing nature in each direction of energetic flow, hence producing differences and differentiation in the hue of daily lived life in stages of development toward maturity.

### **Societal order and antecedent life energy**

Jung writes that “[...] instinct [or libidinal life energy] has two main aspects: on the one hand, that of dynamism, drive or drift, and on the other, specific meaning and intention”<sup>145</sup>. Such image of life instinct or life energy is akin to a vector that has, like all vectors, two components: on the one hand an amount of energy producing force, that which Jung terms as ‘dynamism’, and on the other hand direction, which Jung terms as ‘meaning and intention’. It is when life instinct or life energy moves the person in a direction of meaning and intention resulting in action that such metonymical vector comes to constitute one’s *poiesis* of quotidian condition.

Such understanding corresponds to Jung’s same assertion that “[...] energy is always experienced specifically as motion and force when actual, and as a state or condition when potential”<sup>146</sup>. The ‘motion’ component of life energy is the direction a thought, feeling and consequential action that a person takes, while the ‘force’ of it is the magnitude of energy, or the intensity therein driving it in that direction.

In our quotidian condition in general, as well as in the fictionalised account of Stephen Dedalus’ formative life in particular in *Portrait*, we see his life being driven by such metonymical vectors, be they of origin in the family, education and schooling, the Church or the university. Indeed, our quotidian condition is populated by a myriad of such ‘instinct’ vectors, without which we would never carry-out thoughts or feelings, nor act upon anything. Life as such is only meaningful in the context of the *poiesis* that such vectors construct, which then come to populate our quotidian condition in its content. Such vectors of life energy course through our

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<sup>145</sup> C G Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2002, p56.

<sup>146</sup> C G Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2001, p17.

quotidian condition just like in the case of Stephen Dedalus' fictional life depicted by Joyce, which vectors come to carry our quotidian condition away into realms of performative life.

There are many examples of such vectors together with their direction and force in Joyce's own formative years of life as well as in Stephen Dedalus's fictional character. One such vector that could be cited, which progressed from and re-energised both Joyce's and Stephen's fictional account of life energy was the reinvestment of energy that had been hitherto directed toward Catholicism reorient itself toward a secular life direction and life interests in relation to literature and writing during his university studies. Joyce thus places into Stephen's thoughts as dreaming of becoming "...a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of ever-living life"<sup>147</sup>, witnessing in this, a description of a magnitude of force that had previously been directed toward religious life reoriented toward a secular life of letters.

Contrarily to serving Catholicism, its teachings and institution, the vector force of this life energy thus reorients itself in Stephen's young life toward university studies in Italian, French and English, which Joyce characterises Stephen as "[loving] the rhythmic rise and fall of words [and their] their associations of legend and colour"<sup>148</sup>, which same energetic psychic force was previously manifested in the same magnitude in his feelings toward Catholic devotion. Such life energy might just as well have been devoted to the priesthood, but in the vectorial change in direction of Stephen's life energy's flow on choosing to enter the university, what really changes is the direction of his life energy's vectorial agent in the choice of a literary life, but not its magnitude or intensity. Similarly, Stanislaus writes of Joyce's adolescence that the "vigour of life within him drove him out of the Church"<sup>149</sup>, which same vigour had previously seen him contemplate the devotion of all his emotional energy and physical existence as well to that same very institution from which his vigour now repelled him. Stanislaus documents this by recounting that "[...] while the business of saying adieu to the Catholic Church was still continuing, he had transferred his allegiance with diminished intransigence from the Word of God

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<sup>147</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p240.

<sup>148</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p180-181.

<sup>149</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, Da Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p130.

to the written word, about at least we can know something, and further that in this new religion the paramount virtue was literary sincerity”<sup>150</sup>, just as his devotion to Catholicism had been one of wholehearted sincerity. This turn in direction but not in magnitude of force in the form of its vectorial life energy is echoed in Stephen Dedalus’ character when Joyce narrates Stephen’s personal thoughts that “His destiny would be elusive of social or religious orders”<sup>151</sup> after his walk home from his college subsequent to having a conversation with a priest about considering to join the priesthood and then recoiling from the idea.

### **The construction of life instincts: lines, multiplicities, assemblages – complexes**

Such vectors of life instinct from Jung’s ‘energetic’ view of the libido are “capable of theoretically unlimited interchangeability and modulation under the principle of equivalence, and on the obvious assumption of a difference in potential”<sup>152</sup>. Hence our individuated yet varied quotidian conditions as individuals are highly differential, varied and multi-faceted, each according to his or her instinct’s direction and intensity in the context of civilisation, family, education and epoch. Indeed, within one life, and even within a relatively short space of time especially in youth, one can witness one’s life energy morphing and modulating in different directions and with differing intensities and reciprocally changing the hue of our individuated quotidian condition. It is precisely this which we see in the fictional account of Stephen Dedalus’ formative life, at first being seriously committed to his Catholic faith, and then subsequently that same energy intensifying in a different direction toward literature, art and a life of the mind. What exists therefore at the base of the libido and hence in its structure of *poiesis* within forming our quotidian condition is precisely the presence of such vectors, or what Deleuze and Guattari term as lines. These lines according to Jung’s ‘energetic’ theory of the libido, and as mentioned earlier, have direction and force in accordance with a certain quantity of energy driving them. Similarly to Deleuze and Guattari, who identify the coagulation of such lines into

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p204.

<sup>151</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p175.

<sup>152</sup> C G Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2001, p26.

higher manifestations of multiplicities and assemblages, so does Jung, however, terming these higher and complex manifestations of the vector lines of life energy as ‘complexes’<sup>153</sup>.

At first glance such term as ‘complex’ might allude to a negative, sickly or neurotic understanding. More importantly, however, ‘complexes’ are what result from life energy forming lines with intensity and direction regardless of their sickly nature or not, which complexes come to carve out and delineate the stillness of our quotidian condition for each and every one of us in a particular hue and colour, providing in turn its content. It is precisely the nature of these complexes and the life that they come to create that lies at the heart of the *poiesis* of our quotidian condition’s structure. Without such *poiesis* resulting in structure and direction, life energy’s intensity, that is to say ordinary lived life, would be vacuous and largely meaningless.

It is precisely these lines leading to complexes and hence a *poiesis* underlying, creating, and also emanating from a quotidian condition, that Joyce arguably set-out to portray, or at least achieved in portraying through Stephen Dedalus’ formative fictional character. Indeed, Stanislaus Joyce writes in his recollections of his brother setting-out to write *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, that “in Dublin, when we set to work on the first draft of the novel [*Portrait*], the idea he had in mind was that a man’s character, like his body, develops from an embryo with constant traits. The accentuation of those traits, their reactions to hereditary influence and environment, were the main psychological lines he intended to follow, and, in fact the purpose of the novel as originally planned”<sup>154</sup>. Thus Joyce’s intentions were explicitly to portray the forming of, direction, change and manifestation of psychological lines of growth, which lines of growth are constituted by life energy resulting in life instinct, and in the case of the novel *Portrait*, result in a textual and fictional portrait of Stephen Dedalus’ lines leading to multiplicities and assemblages – or complexes – of personhood.

The apex and supreme manifestation that such lines leading to a complex in Stephen Dedalus’ fictional character is documented at the end of the novel, where Joyce writes that Stephen’s

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<sup>153</sup> See *Ibid.*, p12-17.

<sup>154</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, De Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p17.

“[...] throat ached with a desire to cry aloud, the cry of a hawk or eagle on high, to cry piercingly in his deliverance to the winds. This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar. [...] Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable.”<sup>155</sup>

### **Creating order: positive life energy**

Such “creation of living things’ as a result of life energy’s energetic magnitude and direction as structuring the condition of our quotidian is possible only in the context of the horizon of one’s consciousness resting upon and being delimited by the ‘self’ and/or the ‘world’. It is in one’s horizon being delimited by the self that the psyche unleashes energy and flow toward particular ends for the purposes of explicitly realising that self, and it is alternately when one’s horizon is focused on the world that such instinctual psychic force can find direction.

The ‘self’, or in another term the ego, in the context of the world is what drives the magnitude and direction of the energetic content of life energy, and through it creates individuated quotidian conditions for each of us in correspondence with our complexes. Such manifestation of life energy delimited by the self and the world and as arising from family context, education and schooling or societal order, and coagulated by them, is what ignites energy for a particular libidinal flow. We might call such libidinal flow as energised by the delimited horizon of the ‘self’ and the ‘world’ as a process of establishing positive life energy which in turn creates order for lived life and structure in turn for each of our individuated quotidian conditions.

At a time in life, however, when the concept of one’s self comes to rest in a coexisting presence with the world through reason reached through reflection – and often only in the onset of middle-age – a perception of the absurdity of existence might come to reign upon the self, which

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<sup>155</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p183-184.

reign in turn smothers or reduces the energetic magnitude or component of life energy's vectorial flow or otherwise reorients it. Such reorientation or reduction in magnitude of energy as a result of a becoming conscious of the absurdity of life, in the vein of how Albert Camus writes about it in his *Myth of Sisyphus*, redirects life energy at a differing vectorial flow of magnitude toward possible other emphases, creating an altered quotidian condition.

Hence, whether in the throws of youth in which the creation of living things through the context of one's horizon resting upon the self and world in a way as yet disjointed, or whether in maturity of the self *in* the world being conjoined through a contemplated reflection and reason on its absurdity, it is the magnitude of energy unleashed by the libido in each differing case that comes to colour and structure the content of our daily quotidian life. Either way, and at different stages of life, an order is created as a result of a magnitude of energy flowing from the self in a particular direction, and it is in the result of this order that our quotidian condition comes to be lived, coloured and play itself out. Such playing itself out as a result of magnitude of energy is what comes to create order in our quotidian condition, and as such must be seen as a positive attribute of life energy.

### **Creating order: negative life energy – the death instinct**

Jung writes that “[Instincts] are the potentialities of the greatest dynamism, and it depends entirely on the preparedness and attitude of the conscious mind whether the irruption of these forces and images and ideas associated with them will tend towards construction or catastrophe”<sup>156</sup>. Life energy as discussed thus far can accordingly play out in two differing ways: the first toward the construction of some sort of amenable life edifice in harmony with its society regardless of that energy's magnitude, supported by it and supportive of it in turn – which we might term as a particular positive order of life energy –, or alternately on the other pole toward catastrophe in which life energy is harnessed toward the opposite of construction, namely destruction through hate, aggression and violence. The first of these poles of condition that life energy creates is attuned to the positive, which we might call ‘life drive’; the antonymic pole

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<sup>156</sup> C G Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, Routledge, Abingdon Oxfordshire, 2002, p75.

that life energy manifests in the form of destruction manifested by hate, aggression and violence we can term following Freud as the ‘death drive’ or the ‘death instinct’.

In a footnote to one of Freud’s essays on group psychology in his collected works, we read that Freud “attempted to connect the polarity of love and hatred with a hypothetical opposition between instincts of life and instincts of death [...]”<sup>157</sup>. Freud writes in another essay titled “The Libido Theory”, that “...the one set of instincts, which work essentially in silence, would be those which follow the aim of leading the living creature to death and therefore deserve to be called the ‘*death instincts*’<sup>158</sup>. Such ‘death instincts’ are those which Freud categorises by anger, destruction, violence and aggression, which are incorporated by a person’s instincts on him/her self, that is to say his/her own ego, or otherwise projected outward onto other people as a way of resolving his/her complexes. Thus the self can create order not solely through the ‘creation of living things’ as it were in a positive fashion, but also through energy latent in anger, destruction, violence and aggression, which drive the ego toward a negative order that we might term as the death instinct in opposition to the life instinct of a positive order of energy.

Whilst life instincts have been enumerated above, death instincts include those forces which aim at delimiting positive life forces and tarry the *poiesis* of one’s quotidian condition into another direction and hue. In the fictionalised account of Joyce’s formative years through the character of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we witness just such play of the polarity of life instincts and death instincts in delineating a line of life to live and be led by. Specifically, such forces come to surface in *Portrait* through the Catholicism and conservative Nationalism of Stephen Dedalus’ environment in Belvedere College, which Joyce gives account of in the novel through the sermon given by Farther Arnall.

The Jesuits at Belvedere College inculcated the vision of hell in Stephen Daedalus’ consciousness, which Joyce narrates in the novel through Farther Arnall’s sermon on sin. The effect of

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<sup>157</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works – Volume 18*, Vintage Books, London, 2001, p102, footnote 1.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, Volume 18, p258.

the sermon on Stephen Dedalus constitutes a negative force of destruction, producing fear and paralysation of action and possibility of life. Thus we might identify the energy unleashed by this sermon in Stephen Dedalus' ego and then directed toward it as one of resulting in destruction, namely the destruction of everything hitherto positive in Stephen's young formative life, resulting in steering Stephen into respectable Catholic ways of life, but through a destructive mechanism of fear. The energy produced in Stephen Dedalus' ego as a result of this sermon might therefore be considered as destructive, aiming to destroy life forces and positive life energy that might realise something constructive in him, but which nonetheless creates an order. Joyce recounts the bubbling up of this negative life energy in Stephen Dedalus as "When the agony of shame had passed from him he tried to raise his soul from its abject powerlessness"<sup>159</sup>; "He came down the aisle of the chapel, his legs shaking and the scalp of his head trembling as though it had been touched by ghostly fingers...flames burst forth from his skull like a corolla, shrieking like voices: Hell! Hell! Hell! Hell! Hell!"<sup>160</sup>.

The death drive thus unleashed in Stephen Dedalus' ego and directed at it by him as a consequence of this sermon also echoes through the religiosity of Joyce's own life as commented on by Gordon Bowker in his biography of Joyce, who cites Stanislaus Joyce as saying "My Mother had become for my brother the type of woman who fears and, with weak insistence and disapproval, tries to hinder the adventures of the spirit"<sup>161</sup>. Such adventures of the spirit which Stanislaus Joyce refers to in this recollection is none other than energetic forces acting-out constraints imposed by the stricture of the Roman Catholic church and its interpretation of religiosity, which in turn came to imprint themselves on both Joyce and Stephen Dedalus in their adolescence in their reaction and inner-turmoil of guilt as produced by such influences, as narrated in the fictionalised account of Father Arnall's sermon's effect on Stephen in *Portrait*.

The death drive wants to extinguish positive libidinal flow, it wants to crush positive life energy, the aim of the later which is according to Freud is to "form living substance into ever

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<sup>159</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, p124.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p134.

<sup>161</sup> Gordon Bowker, *James Joyce – A Biography*, Phoenix imprint – Orion Books Ltd., London, 2012, p65.

greater unities, so that life may be prolonged and brought to higher development”<sup>162</sup> Such negative life energy is also characteristic of and present within our quotidian condition, and indeed can create a certain type of order upon it.

### **Creating order through rebellion**

In the context of the death drive delimiting flows of positive instincts and thus creating order but through a negative flow, one act remains by which a subject might either affirm such order or alternately steer the condition of his/her quotidian onto a different course, and that is the act of rebellion. Albert Camus writes in regards to rebellion: “What is a Rebel? A man who says no: but whose refusal does not imply renunciation. He is also a man who says yes as soon as he begins to think for himself.”<sup>163</sup>

In the throes of the death drive when a subject comes to think for himself a point is always reached that amounts to an act of rebellion. Such rebellion either acts against the effects of such death drive returning the order and direction of one’s flow of life energy to a trajectory of positive order by rejecting the direction of the negative flow, or otherwise might sustain that negative direction of flow and order as an act of rebellion precisely against positive energetic order through rejecting it. In either case a ‘no’ is required to be conceived, which ‘no’ constitutes the direction of the coming flow of life energy, which rebellion comes to manifest itself in the order of libidinal flow toward either positive or negative ends of order. In the case of the ‘no’ rejecting the negative order, a reinforcing or unleashing of instinctual psychic energy toward positive flows recommences. In the case of the ‘no’ being directed toward a rejection of the positive order of vectorial flow a negative rebellion comes to be unleashed in instinctual psychic energy resulting in acts of hate, aggression, violence and destruction.

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<sup>162</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of – Volume 18*, Vintage Books, London, 2001, p258.

<sup>163</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p19.

In regards to a rebellion that rejects the direction of the death instinct thus restoring a positive order of life energy and thus also a particular quotidian condition flowing from it, Camus writes that “Rebellion, though apparently negative since it creates nothing, is profoundly positive in that it reveals the part of man which must always be defended.”<sup>164</sup> It is precisely such defence of his person that Stephen Dedalus’ chooses in his rejection of the priesthood. At the moment that such ‘no’ is conceived and uttered by Stephen in *Portrait*, a wholesale reorientation of the direction of his quotidian condition’s order is achieved, with instinctual psychic energy becoming unleashed toward a positive order of quotidian condition to come, namely the university and all it has to offer young Stephen.

In fact in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as well as in Joyce’s real formative life a number of moments of rebellion can be found which come to reorient either his or Stephen’s direction of flow of life energy. The most notable amongst these is the already iterated rejection of Jesuit teaching and consecration to the priesthood concerning devoted Catholic faith. Another is Joyce’s refusal of selling-out his spiritual life to a form of literature that didn’t agree with him, namely an English vein of literature, which moment in Joyce’s life Stanislaus documents on him meeting with an editor in London to whom Yeats had introduced him documenting it thus: “The smug, pretentious phrase had displeased him. Too gross to be an epiphany of the editor of London literary life, the comfortable distinction it implied between the physical and the spiritual life, the former reserved for after-dinner stories, the latter for sale to high-class literary reviews, illuminated certain differences which he held to be insuperable between English editors and himself, and revealed just that attitude of English literature against which, more than against English dominion in his country, he was in revolt.”<sup>165</sup> A third area of rebellion in Joyce’s formative life which later came to colour his quotidian thought and feeling about his country as well as seed his writing can also be witnessed in the above account, namely the rebellion against his country’s political nationalism, which Stanislaus also documents that “...my brother [had an] almost neutral attitude in Irish politics.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p25.

<sup>165</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, De Capo Press, Cambridge MA, 2003, p196.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p216.

Rebellion as “the common ground upon which every man bases his first values”<sup>167</sup>, and thus his/her existence, always creates a new type of life and possibility in accordance with the change in direction life energy’s vectorial flow. The rebellion in Joyce’s life which saw him reject the prospect of teaching French at Trinity College after his graduation is what came to institute and set in motion the secular artistic assemblage of order in his quotidian condition which resulted in him becoming a writer. Such rebellion is rebellion which institutes a certain life energy to flow in a particular direction, one which results in an affirmation of the desires of one’s life instincts, and it is by such rebellions and in such affirmation of life instincts that our quotidian condition comes to be coloured. Camus in his essay on rebellion expresses just such sentiments when he writes that “[...] the affirmation implicit in each act of revolt is extended to something which transcends the individual in so far as it removes him from his supposed solitude and supplies him with a reason to act”<sup>168</sup>, which resultant act comes to place into play a particular flow of life energy and hence colour and hue of quotidian condition to come.

### **The product of the libido in our quotidian condition: personality**

Regardless of the term by which the concept of the *libido* is employed, whether it be as Aristotle denoted it in the term *ὀρμή*, as Plato conceived it in the term ‘Eros’, as Empedocles understood it in the phrase ‘love and hate of the elements’, as Schopenhauer termed it by the term ‘Will’, as Bergson called it by *élan vital*, as Jean Nabert understood it in ‘effort to exist’, as Leibniz attached the understanding of ‘appetite’ to it, or as Lyotard termed it ‘pulsions of the psychical apparatus’ in conceiving of the libidinal band, life energy of the libido and its *poiesis* does nothing else than create a condition of order by which our quotidian condition plays out, which order surfaces on the condition that our individuated quotidian takes. Individual rebellions against our epoch’s all pervasive order or conversely in line with and in supplication to it might well be had however, which rebellions come to create what Jung termed as ‘personality’<sup>169</sup> or

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<sup>167</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p28.

<sup>168</sup> Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, Penguin Books, London, 2000, p21.

<sup>169</sup> see C G Jung, “The Development of Personality” (1934) in *The Essential Jung – selected writings*, Fontana Press, London, 1998.

‘archetypes’. Where instinctual general psychic life force doesn’t rebel toward the carving out of a distinct and individual personality, life energy remains within what Jung termed as ‘convention’ of a mass of people or society, which is ultimately on the other hand what the order of any epoch relies upon for its stability.

Throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we read of a series of minor and major acts of rebellion in young Stephen Dedalus’ formative life, which rebellions in their sum total came to carve out and delineate his personality and direction, magnitude and flow of life energy that would establish his mature personality. It is in such establishment of a mature personality through a series and sequence of both minor and major rebellions that our quotidian condition as we come to exist in it and live it out comes to be established. Our quotidian condition is irremediably connected to the outcome of such rebellions and is coloured by them. It is the direction and magnitude of force therefore of our vectorial flow of life energy regardless of its source that comes to colour our quotidian condition and establish its *poiesis* as we all might come to create it individually for ourselves.

Such sequence of both minor and major acts of saying ‘no’ followed by an affirmative ‘yes’ is what creates order for our quotidian condition and hence the structure of its *poiesis*. Rebellion holds-out a promise: however minute or limited its effects might be, it is the only way to tear oneself away from a bland type of acquiescence to whatever is received or encountered in life, which rebellion comes to register in the subject’s personality, in turn charting a path toward the creation of a personality as such, with all its dangers and accompanying snares along the way. It is in the outcome of rebellions against or otherwise acquiescence to the backdrop of our epoch, and the difference that such stances produce in each of us as it might be individuated in and by us, which create the *poiesis* of our Being, and with it the *poiesis* of our individuated respective quotidian condition arbitered within the broader realm and order of our time. Might well we say: the *poiesis* of the libido and our quotidian condition – where desire may live.

## Afterword

“Lefebvre insists that life should be lived as a project and that the only intellectual and political project that makes sense is a life”<sup>170</sup>

- David Harvey on Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Afterword

In having discussed two infra-ordinary ontological aspects of our quotidian condition in which the stillness of our habitual, ordinary life is saturated in, and in reflecting in turn on our own individuated quotidian condition’s *poiesis* as each of us has come to construct it individually, the quote above might provide a preliminary articulation for how one might approach the construction of their quotidian condition differently.

Harvey’s inference of Henri Lefebvre’s thought concerning ‘living life as an intellectual and political project in and for the purpose of a life’ contains in its thrust a refutation to the type of quotidian condition that post-war bureaucratic capitalism, and in our time neo-liberal capitalism has structured it by. The infra-ordinary context of our quotidian condition discussed in this thesis attempted to unpack and provide a trace of just that; the task of such trace, however, is to open a conscious realisation as to how it might be lived differently and as a political project at that.

Borrowing from Felix Guattari, such intellectual and political project is of a micro-segmentary or molecular revolutionary<sup>171</sup> nature in one’s subjectivity, thought and feeling on a personal

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<sup>170</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Afterword – written by David Harvey., Blackwell Publishers Ltd, London., 1991., p431.

<sup>171</sup> See Felix Guattari., *Molecular Revolution – psychiatry and politics*., Penguin Books, London., 1984.

and individuated level. It is in the bringing the structure and mechanics of the construction of one's quotidian life's infra-ordinary elements to a horizontal consciousness that 'a project of a life' in the context of capitalism can play-out, and that precisely through realising what has come to create its strictures and content. The thus realised subjectivity that might initiate a personal derestricted individuated motivation is what instantiates 'life as a political project' and what might promise a different type of *poiesis* and subsequent condition for one's quotidian condition.

Such 'living differently' as a consequence of a personal derestricted individuated subjectivity having emerged in relation to the lines that have come to form our stillness is precisely a politics of sort, and as such a *project* of life. It is a personal politics born out of the subject within a given context involving his/her thoughts and feeling. What one chooses to make of their present, how one chooses to create the *poiesis* of their present and with it the flow of their life's Time, and how one chooses to direct the flow of their libidinal drive by recourse to the forces that exist in a particular epoch and in a particular civilisational space, is the basis of Harvey's inference of Lefebvrian thought concerning a particular 'life project'. A subjective stance in regard to the hue of one's individuated quotidian condition can only thus begin to take shape through an understanding of the myriad cultural, technological, civilizational, epochal and relatedly produced habitual cues that daily life in our present modernity is structured by.

To begin to reorder one's habitual life from the strictures that one's epoch places on the subject – if that is the direction one's subjectivity takes – thus indeed becomes both an intellectual as well as a political project in which conscious realisation, will and action play an equal measure. It is through an understanding of historical and civilisational genealogy on the two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition discussed in this thesis that one's quotidian condition can be understood for a purpose of structuring it differently.

The stillness of our infra-ordinary, habitual ontological condition is a constructed territory, and the politics and project of life that Harvey infers to Lefebvre's thought is to manage the poetics of this territory. How one manages to live-out and create their own series of ordinary, habitual moments and content of those moments in which they come to live their life is a question of

art and politics – art in relation to its *poiesis*, and politics in relation to a particular stance toward it. Indeed, the art of living in a particular way becomes the politics of a stance of living, a political and lived art of life if you will. The realisation, however, of such project, the intellectual awakening that gives impetus to such project, becomes the micro-constituent of ordinary psychological, biological and material processes and presences – it is these that this thesis has aimed to portray: to assemble them in an artful way becomes the *poiesis* of one’s quotidian condition.

Some such people who attempted to realise such stance in our present modernity were members of the Situationist International in the late-1950s, 1960s and early-1970s, in roughly the same decades that Lefebvre wrote on everyday life, and from whom they took their cue. For the members of the Situationist International it was precisely the presence of a molecular subjective stance toward post-war capitalism and its strictures on ordinary life that surfaced. In Guy Debord’s essay “Perspectives for Conscious Alterations of Everyday Life” published in the *International Situationiste* journal in 1961, he writes that “everyday life is the measure of all things: of the (non)fulfilment of human relations; of the use of lived time, of artistic experimentation; and of revolutionary politics”<sup>172</sup>, and that such everyday life is “an object which is itself less to be studied than to be changed”<sup>173</sup>. Debord calls upon artistic experimentation with quotidian life for the purposes of instituting a revolutionary subjective politics in one’s ordinary lived quotidian, however in order to institute artistic experimentation one needs to find its strictures alienating. Precisely as a result of such subjective molecular politics, an artful *poiesis* of daily life in relation to the facets of quotidian existence narrated in this thesis would aim to be directed and structured differently by recourse to will, desire and a certain type of renewed subjectivity and action, only to institute an altered way of living and constructing as such of one’s quotidian life.

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<sup>172</sup> Guy Debord, “Perspectives for Conscious Changes in Everyday Life”, in Ken Knabb edited *Situationist International Anthology*, Bureau of Public Secrets, Berkeley CA, 2006, p92.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p90.

Amongst the myriad areas and aspects of quotidian life Debord sites in his essay, we read of the question of “consumption of lived time”<sup>174</sup>, of “developing a style of life different from the present one”<sup>175</sup> of instituting derestricted “communication and of self-fulfilment”<sup>176</sup>, which might in turn produce an “opportunity to personally make [our] own history”<sup>177</sup>, whilst “[work- ing] ceaselessly toward the organization of new chances”<sup>178</sup> for the purposes of “creative as- pects of life [to] always predominate over the repetitive ones”<sup>179</sup>.

Some of the protagonists of Georges Perec’s *Life – a user’s manual* consciously pursued such strategies in their life, to name but a few, Joy Slowburn aka Ingeborg Skrifter aka Lorelei and her companions. To consciously realise on a horizontal plane of cognition a delimitation of epochal strictures as these characters did is the first step toward artful experimentation in at- tempting to recapture one’s quotidian life and begin to live it differently. Likewise, in *A Por- trait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus also came to verbalise a delimited dere- stricted subjective relation to his time and his inherited faith in his pronouncement “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race”. Such pronouncement is a realisation and coming to fulfilment of a desire to institute, as Debord has written, “new everyday prac- tices...new types of human relationships”<sup>180</sup> in one’s quotidian condition, which in turn result in “the liberation of everyday experience”<sup>181</sup>.

Indeed, everyday life according to Debord in his essay “covers an uncatalogued and unclassi- fied residue of reality”<sup>182</sup>, virtually anything and everything we take as granted in our lives and

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p92.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p95.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p95.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p95.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p95.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p98.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p98.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p94.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p91.

in the context of our present modernity as the way things must be done. Instead, what such political, artful experimentation with life forwards is a questioning of one's entire cognition and habitual processes in living their daily life, and in questioning it begin to realise a discomfort with it, which in turn institutes a molecular revolutionary change in how one lives. It is such call to revolution as a lived-out political project that both Harvey inferred on Lefebvre's thought, as well as what Guy Debord calls for.

The reason why such subjective, molecular revolutionary artful experimentation is requisite in and for a different quotidian condition to be instituted is because, as Debord writes in his essay, "[the] level of everyday life is a colonised sector"<sup>183</sup>, which "demands that [it leads] to nothing less than a reinvention of revolution"<sup>184</sup> –, a revolution that takes place in the micro-constituent of one's feeling and thoughts at the outset of bringing their content and construction to a horizontal conscious level. Such bringing of feelings and thoughts on one's quotidian condition to consciousness and how it is structured is precisely what Felix Guattari termed as a 'molecular revolution', a revolution which begins in the sinews of thought and feeling, which when instituted by will and action comes to reorient one's libidinal vectors and substance of time, and in result instituting a new *poiesis* of them playing out.

Guy Debord writes in relation to such revolution of quotidian everyday life that "the critique and perpetual recreation of the totality of everyday life, being carried out naturally by everyone, must be undertaken in the present conditions of oppression, in order to destroy those conditions"<sup>185</sup>. Such stance echoes the thought of John Holloway in his book *Crack Capitalism* in which he argues that the only way capitalism can be inflicted with cracks is by each and every one of us to first intellectually realise the vacuity and poverty of quotidian life that capitalism in our present modernity is offering us, and then to choose to actively resist it by means of living a different life, an art and *poiesis* of quotidian life that resists the strictures of capitalism, and that for the purposes of instituting a desire for a different quotidian condition.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p93.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p94.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p98-99.

Amongst the strategies that Holloway puts forward in *Crack Capitalism* for the purposes of such revolution, he cites the temerity to say ‘no’, as in the case of Camus’ rebellion, to which iterative temerity he attributes the beginning possibility of cracks appearing. When one says ‘no’, one begins a derestricted oppositional engagement with how things are presented to have to be. When one says ‘no’, the beginning opening for another way of conceiving one’s quotidian Time, Present and libidinal flow is afforded. Saying ‘no’ is the precursory iteration for another way of life.

The cracks which such iteration of a ‘no’ lead to according to Holloway is the breaking of a dimension of lived space that hitherto was thought of and accepted as the only possible way in which quotidian life can be lived. Indeed, in opening a space for otherness in assembling our quotidian life, such ‘no’ and the cracks that open up from them become the beginning of “explorations in an anti-politics of dignity”<sup>186</sup>. The cracks caused by the iteration of a ‘no’ is the beginning of a revolutionary project to take back one’s quotidian condition from the dictates and strictures that capitalism in our present modernity places upon it. Holloway goes on to write that such cracks afforded by the iterative and consciously carried through ‘no’ become a weapon against the social synthesis of capitalism that had hitherto governed our perception of doing things, “which cracks exist on the edge of impossibility, but do exist”<sup>187</sup>. By being bold, by having temerity, and by following through such temerity with meaning and action can the binds that bound our perception of life and how it should or ought to be structured and lived be broken free of. In recolouring our perception of how our Present should be structured and lived and in recolouring the drive of our Libido, and in making these restructings ‘a project of life’, each one of us for ourselves can institute a new quotidian space in our lives, and form a new type of individuated quotidian condition.

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<sup>186</sup> John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism*, Pluto Press, London, 2010.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

That our quotidian condition in ubiquitous capitalism is indeed governed by civilisational and resultant economic cues dictated by and for the purposes of capital accumulation and its servitude is gleaned very eloquently from a piece of poetry which encapsulates much of our quotidian condition in our present modernity:

*That for many – billions – life isn't*

*Either easy.*

*a bed*

*a house furnished.*

*or food in the stomach.*

*it isn't*

*a lough*

*an orgasm*

*or smiles*

*its hard, like ground constantly, over centuries.*

*pounded.*

*its sick – like bills that pile up and up and up and*

*up.*

*It smells of unemployment and underemployment*

*Of salaries taken away*

*It feels like sleep on cemented floors*

*Its about dreams learnt to be unlearnt*

*Above all its about numbness – of the sofa and*

*the tv and the social media – or of the 8 to 6's and*

*8 to 6's and again those 8 to 6's*

*It's about constant daily defeats induced by debt –*

*life if not an academics essay or a poets poem or*

*a artists film or canvas. It is a defeat of your poem*

*– never written. of your film- never made. of your*

*painting – never painted.*

*Because life is this for the billions but for some.  
a few:*

*A breeze  
An acquired taste  
A bouquet  
And yoga*

*A wave of the hand, a trip to the beach. or a schol-  
arship to the US and holidays back and forth.  
That it is scented with fruits and salaries  
That it feels like metal and ice and wooden steer-  
ing wheels.  
And uncles and aunties in high places.*

*Because life for them is  
Water (imported) garlanded with petals  
And for the billions – life is deferred.*

*Because of this  
I believe in class struggle.*

Qalandar Bux Billiwalla – ‘Class Struggle’<sup>188</sup>

...it is to this sentiment that Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life is addressed, and to which Holloway’s ‘crack’ is a political response.

Of course, one must desire such ‘crack’. Given the discussion of two elemental ontological aspects of our quotidian condition in this thesis, the only conclusion one can draw, is that given

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<sup>188</sup> Qalandar Bux Billiwalla, ‘Class Struggle’, *Naked Punch*, Issue 17, p.06

a *poiesis* and playing-out of one's lived quotidian condition, desire in relation to a particular assemblage of it is key as to the direction of its unfolding: of how one chooses to assemble their quotidian condition in the context of an individuated desire as formed in the subject in consequence to economic and political conditions, and/or the reciprocal desire that we ourselves individually project onto our lives in response or in dissidence to it in building the cathedrals of our respective individual lives.

To form and sustain a new-found quotidian condition, artful experimentation is required in addition to a particular hue of desire, which involves a *poiesis* of living. Only if one's 'no' is followed by a 'yes' can the cracks that open up as a result of that 'no' be filled with something life affirming that takes on a new dimension of life and a new direction for it. It is in instituting and living out the content of that 'yes' that a *poiesis* of living is formed, the structure and richness of which comes to consequently reorient and then colour one's quotidian condition.

To live artfully and to begin on a revolutionary political project in relation to one's daily life therefore in the context of the two elemental aspects of it discussed in this thesis, first a 'no' and then a 'yes' is required. It is in these two conjoined iterations coming to fold onto and into one another that a revolutionary project for one's quotidian life, and hence a *poiesis* for it, is born. Such iterative 'no' followed by an equally affirming iterative 'yes' must, amongst other things, address how one's Present is structured, how one's Libido has found direction and magnitude, and what they are governed by. It must address the ontological heart of one's subjectivity, which is none other than one's silent present moment in which one constantly and repeatedly finds themselves in when being toward the self.

Such iterative couple is found with an engagement with *Aeon* time, whereby life's habitual dictates are suspended for but a short while, and an engagement with life through memory has the potential and possibility to alter moments to follow. It is in this engagement with *Aeon* time that both the requisite 'no' and the forthcoming requisite following 'yes' can be grasped and brought to consciousness; and such 'no' and such 'yes' is what begins to reorient libidinal flow. Again, it is a question of engaging with those silent moments in which the sinews of authentic and honest thought and feeling are heard and experienced. A being toward the self is thus the

requisite precondition in which a crack can emerge, and the beginning of the institution of a *poiesis* that might lead to another way of living.

Beyond such initial crack of grasping consciously a ‘no’ followed by a ‘yes’, a being toward life is required, for it is through being toward life that a possibility for the affirmative ‘yes’ has space to come forth and be grasped. In being toward life one seizes the possibility of a new way of living, instituting an artful way of living which in turn produces a *poiesis*. It is in engaging such poetics of life that a new quotidian space has the hope to emerge, and with it the beginning of a revolutionary process.

The sum outcome of being toward the self, coupled with being toward life creates the possibility for an altered and renewed *poiesis* of one’s Present to be instituted, and through that, a particular *poiesis* of one’s Being in and through their libidinal drive and relationship to Time, a different flow of one’s Time and different orientation of one’s Libido, creating in its turn a particular and different flavour and hue of one’s quotidian condition. It is in such a way that one can begin on a political project in relation to one’s life and institute in it an artful way of living in the context of the dictates of our present modernity.

The thesis contained in this work is of utter uselessness if one evaluates it against some sort of academic measure. The utility of the work contained in this thesis is had in the hope that it might open up some conscious horizontal realisations in its readers on how two ontological and elemental aspects of quotidian life have come to be structured in our present modernity, and in turn open up a consequential desire to live a different kind of quotidian condition in relation to them.

Oscar Wilde wrote that: “...the only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intently”.<sup>189</sup> Maybe the two narrations on two elemental aspects of our quotidian condition as I have written and thought about them, when measured against weightier pre-occupations that

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<sup>189</sup> Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, The Preface, Vintage Books, London, 2007, p4.

others write about or specialise in is useless, but maybe at least, just maybe, it might find a gaze amongst its readers which fixes on it with intense admiration. After all, what's the point of life if one isn't producing art? If this were to come to pass, the work's topic's seeming uselessness will have found its purpose.

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