



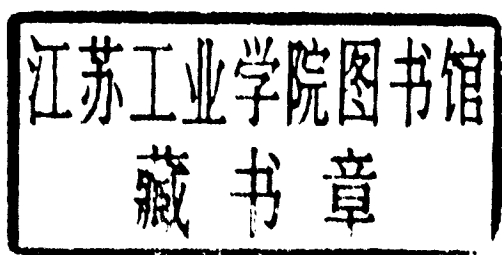
# Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life

BRYONY RANDALL

CAMBRIDGE

MODERNISM, DAILY TIME  
AND  
EVERYDAY LIFE

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## *Abbreviations*

<i>A</i>	H.D., <i>Asphodel</i>
<i>BA</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>Between the Acts</i>
<i>BMTL</i>	H.D., <i>Bid Me To Live</i>
<i>CE</i>	Henri Bergson, <i>Creative Evolution</i>
<i>CEL</i>	Henri Lefebvre, <i>Critique of Everyday Life</i>
<i>D</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>
<i>ELMW</i>	Henri Lefebvre, <i>Everyday Life in the Modern World</i>
<i>H</i>	H.D., <i>Her</i>
<i>MM</i>	Henri Bergson, <i>Matter and Memory</i>
<i>O</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>Orlando</i>
<i>P</i>	Dorothy Richardson, <i>Pilgrimage</i>
<i>PIT</i>	H.D., <i>Paint It Today</i>
<i>Psy</i>	William James, <i>Psychology: Briefer Course</i>
<i>TB</i>	Gertrude Stein, <i>Tender Buttons</i>
<i>TFW</i>	Henri Bergson, <i>Time and Free Will</i>
<i>TL</i>	Gertrude Stein, <i>Three Lives</i>
<i>TTF</i>	H.D., <i>Tribute to Freud</i>
<i>TTL</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>To the Lighthouse</i>
<i>W</i>	Virginia Woolf, <i>The Waves</i>

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## *Introduction: dailiness*

I can say it enough but can I say it more than enough that the daily life is a daily life if at any moment of the daily life that daily life is all there is of life.<sup>1</sup>

The day is a unique temporal category in being, most of the time and in most parts of the world, clearly bounded at beginning and end – by night – and always recurring in a regular rhythm. Close to the poles days can become exceptionally long or exceptionally short, but they will still wax and wane in a predictable annual pattern. Thus, unlike the relatively artificial divisions of the hour or the week, the day presents a naturally occurring, observable temporal unit, one that technology and human innovation cannot change; as Heidegger would concede, it is ‘the “most natural” measure of time’.<sup>2</sup> Even now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the fact of there being a pattern of darkness and light that gives rise to something called ‘a day’ cannot ultimately be questioned, undermined, deconstructed we might say; along with death, it is the only thing in life of which we can be sure.

A century ago, during the period when the artistic movement we call modernism was gathering pace, technology was becoming increasingly able to modify and regulate the rhythms of life. Increased street lighting, for example, and in particular the growing use of electric light in the home and place of work, would serve artificially to extend the day. As Stephen Kern emphasises in his major study on time and space in the years 1880 to 1918, ‘one of the many consequences of this versatile, cheap, and reliable form of illumination was a blurring of the division of day and night’.<sup>3</sup> Yet despite such ongoing technological innovations, the day continues to present an unchallengeable, unquestionable, temporal unit. What follows from this opening assertion of the irreducibility of the day is that the ways in which the day is represented, and the connotations of related terms such as ‘everyday’, invite attention. It is when something appears to be universal, essential,



or obvious, that it is particularly in need of exploration, and where such exploration takes place, it will reveal the range of interconnected assumptions (social, cultural, political, and so on) upon which the construction of this particular taken-for-granted category rests. In this study I explore both why and how the day and the everyday appear as particularly contested and revelatory concepts in a range of modernist texts, and I will use the term 'dailiness' to bring together these two distinct, though related, concepts: daily time, and everyday life.

In her discussion of Gertrude Stein's short text 'To Call It a Day', Barbara Will indicates the complexity of this apparently simple word – 'day' – as deployed by a quintessentially modernist writer. She explores Stein's incorporation of the everyday language of domesticity and consumption into her texts, in particular through cliché, interwoven with a variety of other discourses (geographical, historical, and so forth), and argues that from this perspective 'the effort to "call it a day" becomes highly complex. What is a "day", and what multitudes does "it" contain?'<sup>4</sup> This is precisely the question that this book sets out to explore. If, as Stein asserts, 'the daily life is a daily life if at any moment of the daily life that daily life is all there is of life', then what is that life like? How would one describe the 'dailiness' of that daily life? In this book, I use the question of what the dailiness of daily life consists in as the focus for my exploration of texts by William James and Henri Bergson (whose work also provides historical and conceptual ground for what follows), and then by the modernist writers Dorothy Richardson, Gertrude Stein, H.D. and Virginia Woolf. Exploring discourses around dailiness in the modernist literature of the early twentieth century not only adds another dimension to our understanding of the aesthetic context of modernism, but is also particularly revelatory of socio-cultural change and anxiety in this period.

The second and third sections of this Introduction will discuss the two strands of dailiness, everyday life, and daily time, respectively, laying out the ways in which the terms are used in my discussion. Broadly speaking, the everyday will describe content, or more specifically mode of attention to content, and daily time will of course describe temporality, or temporal structure. It goes without saying, therefore, that there will be constant dialogue between these aspects, as there always is between 'form' and 'content'. I want to begin, however, in the first section, by setting out key aspects of the socio-cultural and aesthetic context of the texts I will be addressing to explain why dailiness might be a particularly important focaliser, or 'chronotope' (a term taken from Mikhail Bakhtin which I discuss in more detail below, describing the confluence of temporal and spatial relations

in a representative image or trope within a literary text), through which to examine some of the complexities of the early twentieth-century modernist text. In other words, I want to start by addressing the question 'why dailiness?', before going on to discuss 'how?'.

#### MODERNISM AND DAILINESS

There will be three strands to this first section, which will set the scene for my discussion in later chapters of how dailiness appears in modernist texts. Firstly, the socio-cultural context is laid out; the experience of time, and life, in the early decades of the twentieth century. Secondly, I discuss the aesthetic context, in particular the valuing and privileging of exceptional moments or kinds of experience associated with modernist aesthetics. Finally, *Ulysses*, a paradigmatically modernist, and daily, text, is used as a model for the ways in which dailiness has tended to be treated thus far in critical work on modernist literature.

'The catastrophe of the First World War, and before that, the labor struggles, the emergence of feminism, the race for empire, these inescapable forces of turbulent social modernisation were not simply looming on the outside as the destabilizing context of cultural Modernism; they penetrated the interior of artistic invention.'<sup>5</sup> Michael Levenson's summary of the socio-cultural context of the modernist period alerts us to the profundity of the impact of social change on aesthetic innovation, and many of these changes have particular relevance to the exploration of dailiness. For the purposes of this study, the key 'forces of social modernisation' (and aesthetic innovation) are technological change (as sketched out above), the First World War, the rise of the women's movement, and the development of psychology. It is these phenomena or events that are central to answering the question 'why dailiness?'.

The First World War radically disrupted the ways in which human temporality was or could be conceived. Paul Fussell's now classic text *The Great War and Modern Memory* describes in detail some of the most important structures to feature in representations of the First World War. Not only was the war an event without precedent, in brutality and scale, radically challenging attempts to create an historical narrative that would be able to incorporate it, but, as Fussell emphasises, there was a widespread belief in circulation at the time that 'the war would literally never end and would become the permanent condition of mankind'.<sup>6</sup> Fussell describes how the experience of fighting at the front, characterised by often apparently meaningless routine, the carrying out of illogical or downright contradictory

orders, and absolute ignorance of what was going on even a few hundred yards down the line, let alone miles away, conspired to deprive temporality of its familiar characteristics of causality, logical succession and change. During battle in particular, chronological and even natural time is eclipsed, as day and night become indistinguishable. H.D.'s husband Richard Aldington describes his experiences as a combatant in the trenches in his autobiographical novel *Death of a Hero*: 'For Winterbourne, the battle was a timeless confusion, a chaos of noise, fatigue, anxiety, and horror. He did not know how many days and nights it lasted, lost completely the sequence of events, found great gaps in his conscious memory.'<sup>7</sup>

War literature also draws attention to the radically disrupted experience of time for non-combatants. Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End*, for example, not only describes the drawn-out tedium of life in the trenches, 'the eternal waiting that is War', but also the 'suspended animation' of the lover left at home.<sup>8</sup> The traumatic effects of the disruption of daily life on the civilian is the central theme of my chapter on H.D. However, clearly the effects of the war reverberate through the work of all the writers addressed (with the possible exception of Dorothy Richardson). Virginia Woolf's work, for example, is increasingly being read in terms of its relationship to the First World War. The 'chasm of time' constituting the 'Time Passes' section of *To the Lighthouse* has long been seen as an attempt to negotiate the traumatic and inexpressible nature of the war, and explicitly represents it as both a disruption of human time and a kind of return to primordial time. *Jacob's Room* revolves around a character made absent by the war, as if Jacob's early death retrospectively renders his life simply a phantasm, void, intangible. *Mrs Dalloway* is often read as a book in which Woolf does not address the war except through the dramatic person of Septimus; however, it is also possible to detect war trauma resonating throughout the book – the burst tyre that sounds like a gunshot, boys in uniform laying a wreath on the Cenotaph. Finally, *Between the Acts* is shot through with the oncoming menace of the next war, and the attempt to encompass all of history within the pageant presented on a single day speaks of the desperate, almost manic, anxiety to make sense, to imagine continuity in the face of an unimaginable future.

By contrast, Gertrude Stein's writing on war, and the First World War in particular, expresses remarkable equanimity. Indeed, Stein and Alice B. Toklas actually appeared to enjoy World War One, meeting GIs and driving them around France, their adopted homeland, in their beloved car; this relatively carefree attitude is most in evidence in *The Autobiography of Alice B Toklas*, as perhaps befits such a playful text. However, Stein's style,

particularly in *Wars I have Seen*, also draws attention to the experience of daily life during war, as the text metamorphoses into a diary of Stein's life during the Second World War. The negotiation of the everyday in the recreational strategies of 'Melantha' and *Tender Buttons*, the texts I address in my chapter on Stein, forms a key part of Stein's pre-war everyday aesthetic, which might be viewed as a background against which to read Stein's daily war narratives. Through the everyday means of gossip and anecdote, and her characteristic repetition of stories or phrases, Stein's war narratives evoke the permeation of the ongoing patterns of everyday life with the effects of the war, while maintaining the awareness that day still follows day, that life still goes on and a way must be found to live it.

One of the many profound effects of the First World War on Western society was the part it played in the acceleration of the women's movement, as women were seen to be able to work and contribute to society in areas previously reserved for men. The prominence of issues around gender at this time needs no underlining; Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is only the most well-known of the many literary documents of interwar feminism, and of course remains foundational to feminist thought. What Woolf drew attention to in this text, along with many other activists and writers, was the specific material conditions under which women had to live in Western societies – the conditions of their everyday lives. I will outline in more detail below the issues and problems surrounding the alignment of women with the everyday. While the reservations I express remain, there will be places where the texts addressed raise the question of a special relationship between women and the everyday. However, the important impact of the women's movement in terms of my exploration of dailiness arises both in the inflection of daily experience through one's gender, and in the categorisation of various practices that might make up daily life in terms of their association with a particular gender. Woolf's description of how Jane Austen might have had to hide her manuscript when others entered the room illustrates what I mean here.<sup>9</sup> Writing, a practice acceptable for men, was an unacceptable use of time for women – the same practice takes on a different meaning when performed by different genders. The way in which this differentiation then leads to the categorisation of certain practices according to gender, and a concomitant change in the status of that practice, is suggested in, for example, the way in which the profession of secretary has been downgraded as it has moved from being primarily a profession for men, in the late nineteenth century, to one almost exclusively for women.<sup>10</sup> The increasing visibility of issues of gender during the early decades of the twentieth century raised the question of what women should be able to expect from

their daily lives; the increasing recognition of the legitimacy of women's experience throws into question assumptions about what is valuable in a life, what makes up a life.

Increasing gender awareness went alongside, if sometimes in conflict with, increasing class-consciousness. Although an explicit class analysis will not feature heavily in this book, the rapid change in working practices around the turn of the century meant that, as Sara Blair has put it, there was a 'newly visible materiality of this everyday, middle- and working-class life-world'.<sup>11</sup> An increasingly visible, and indeed vocal, working class presented more challenges to any standard model of what constituted a life worth attending to; that is, traditionally, a life with political, historical, or aesthetic potential. Further, rapidly evolving technologies transformed the ways in which people experienced their daily lives, as the innovations of Taylorism and Fordism insisted, for many, on a workplace where time was strictly regulated. Developments in the standardisation of timekeeping, such as the establishment of Greenwich mean time in 1884, as well as the proliferation of gas and then electric lighting already mentioned, made it easier for the working day to be extended beyond its natural bounds – although, as Marx had already catalogued in detail, such natural bounds were by no means respected by employers before this period.<sup>12</sup> In addition, work itself had by-and-large moved out of the private and into the public arena – the working and middle classes were less likely to work from home, although professional people such as the dentist Miriam works for in *Pilgrimage* would often still use their home as a place of work. And yet, alongside this spatial schism between work and non-work or leisure, leisure itself was increasingly being co-opted by capitalist structures, making the time people spent at 'leisure', and the activities constituting leisure, almost as regulated as at work. This is the background against which Stein's 'working' and 'wandering' narrative, Richardson's description of the life of the working New Woman, H.D.'s anxiety about her war 'duty', and implicitly, Woolf's musings on the kind of activity reading and writing constitute, are set.

As Michael Bell puts it, 'the question of living is crucial here since modernist literature is often concerned with the question of how to live within a new context of thought, or a new worldview';<sup>13</sup> a new worldview radically transformed by feminism, technology, class-consciousness and war. This question is indeed at the heart of my interrogation of these literary texts, and brings me to consideration of their aesthetic context. The 'question of how to live' is often answered in modernist literature, at least in traditional critical accounts thereof, in terms of searching for the exceptional moment, the transcendent or the epiphanic, whether in Eliot, Joyce,

Yeats, Baudelaire, Heidegger or Benjamin. Leo Charney usefully surveys the various foundational models of the special relationship between modern life and the moment, instancing among others Heidegger, for whom the 'moment of vision', where nothing can occur and there is nothing but pure sensation, is what allows us access to the sublime; and Benjamin, where the moment as 'shock' is both a symptom of an alienated modern life, and what enables the artistic vision of, for example, Baudelaire.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Ben Highmore, in his recent survey of theories of the everyday, indicates the centrality of the 'moment' for Henri Lefebvre, who is not only one of the most important theorists of the everyday and thus will provide crucial theoretical context in this book, but was also associated with the Surrealist movement in France and therefore himself played a part in early twentieth-century modernist aesthetics. 'For Lefebvre,' says Highmore, "moments" are those instances of intense experience in everyday life that provide an immanent critique of the everyday'.<sup>15</sup> Charney characterises these positions as part of 'the modern aspiration to seize fleeting moments of sensation as a hedge against their inexorable evisceration'.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, I will focus on the ways in which the writers I discuss, rather than fighting against the ephemeral quality of the present and searching for the exceptional moment to illuminate the everyday, instead find new ways of imagining and representing the present, life now, ongoing daily time. 'For', as Michael Sheringham says, 'the everyday [. . .] is where we already are: to find it, we cannot "arise and go there", in Yeats's phrase, but have somehow to bring about a transformation that will make it visible or palpable'.<sup>17</sup> These transformations, here understood as the literary techniques these writers develop and make use of to convey the everyday and its temporality, will be the central focus of this project.

The relative critical neglect of the specific temporality of dailiness in modernist literature can be shown by surveying critical perspectives on the temporality of that paradigmatically modernist, and daily, text *Ulysses*. *Ulysses*, Arnold Bennett argued, represents the 'dailiest day possible', the most representative, mundane, unexceptional day that Joyce could have chosen. The paradox of dailiness comes immediately to the fore in Bennett's formulation: the dailiest day is exceptional, exemplary, in its very mundanity. As Lefebvre would have it, the date 16 June 1904 is significant 'by chance and not by chance' (*ELMW* 2); in a formulation which resonates throughout my elaboration of the concept of dailiness, it is 'both-and'.

Critics have tended to address the temporal structure of Joyce's text in one of two ways. Firstly, there is source criticism, focusing on the unearthing or elaborating of the temporal models informing *Ulysses's*

structure. Particularly in the wake of T. S. Eliot's influential essay 'Ulysses, Order and Myth', written only the year after *Ulysses*'s publication, criticism of this kind has tended to view the dailiness of *Ulysses* as the surface matter beneath which lay the real substance of the text, its mythic analogues – primarily, of course, Homer. That none other than Eliot described the method employed in *Ulysses* as having 'the importance of a scientific discovery' would inevitably, to subsequent critics, focus attention on the mythic structure which, in Eliot's words, 'giv[es] a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.<sup>18</sup> Eliot's construction indicates to the reader that the only way in to this daunting text is through attending above all to this (mythic, Homeric) shape, which orders an otherwise incommensurable, incomprehensible everyday chaos. Further strata of Joyce's temporal system were revealed with reference to, most importantly, Giambattista Vico, as well as other less well-known figures.<sup>19</sup> Vico's model of cyclical recurrence in history intersects interestingly with the questions of the quality of repetition in dailiness, which will be discussed at greater length below. However, critics addressing the influence of Vico have tended to proceed through an increasingly detailed mapping of Vico's system onto Joyce's texts, dissecting Joyce using Vico as a tool, rather than, for example, asking how Joyce's daily structure might speak back to Viconian models.

Secondly, there is a tradition of criticism that focuses on the stream of consciousness in Joyce's text, the mundane psychic development and activity of his characters, developing from interest in the influence of Henri Bergson. This approach was particularly prominent in the 1950s and 1960s – Shiv K. Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* is probably the most influential of these studies, and the connection between Bergson and modernist literature will be explored in more detail in Chapter 1. However, an Eliotic depth and surface model persists in the work of the important critics of this period. Margaret Church summarises Robert Humphrey's argument, for example, thus: 'the formless nature of the psychic life of his characters forced Joyce to impose exterior patterns on his narrative [. . .] One pattern is, of course, the eighteen hours of one day.'<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Hans Meyerhoff 'pointed out how Joyce injects into the stream of consciousness the hours of the day'.<sup>21</sup> Joyce's text is still figured in a binary fashion: as psychic interiority with exteriority – the hours of the day – imposed upon it, or injected into it. However, while the hours of the day are indeed a relatively artificial pattern, the day itself is not. Indeed, as my chapter on Bergson and William James will show, Bergsonian models of psychic flux are already and inevitably marked by the patterns and experiences of dailiness.



The psyche is not simply a surface text revealing a depth of dailiness, nor is dailiness a grid overlaid on an otherwise uninflected psyche.

‘Thus far’, Margaret Church summarised in 1983, ‘two major temporal patterns have emerged in critical assessments of Joyce’s work: a structured Viconian pattern and a more freeflowing Bergsonian one, one socially and historically oriented, the other individually’.<sup>22</sup> It is surprising that the temporal pattern of dailiness itself – both structured and freeflowing – has been overlooked. The anteriority of the day as temporal rhythm to Bergsonian, Viconian and even Homeric temporal structures might suggest that, rather than seeing mythic, philosophical depth overlaid with daily surface, we should rather see Joyce trying to make sense of daily depth by overlaying a variety of mythic and philosophical structures. This idea of daily depth is suggestive for my project in general, although a simple inversion of Eliot’s depth-and-surface model will not quite do. Rather, we see how the very idea of depth and surface is challenged in many of the texts under discussion. Stein’s texts, for example, with their absolute refusal of any epistemological ground, appear in one sense as nothing but surface, as the infinite permutations of significance allowed by their ‘insistence’, or their agrammaticality, mean one can never truly penetrate the text to access some depth of meaning; and yet this sliding on the surface of meaning itself reveals the valid, productive, re-creational everyday process of meaning-making. Richardson’s geological model of time, by contrast, seems to correspond more strongly to a notion of daily depth, of the profundity of experience lying behind the experience of each day; and yet her archaeology of dailiness refuses to hierarchise everyday experiences, contraindicating conventional assumptions about what is ‘deep’, profound, significant. H.D.’s palimpsest of texts, each rewriting the others, problematises the concept of a single surface to be penetrated; each textual surface is itself already overlaid with other texts, and has other texts lying beneath it, as every day is already overlaid with the many days which precede and will follow it. There is a constant dialogue in these modernist texts between surface and depth. I find in them a refusal either to participate fully in a search for a specious depth beyond the surface of everyday life – which surface they attend to and valorise – or to reject the idea of depth in dailiness, of there being something, as Virginia Woolf put it, ‘that lies beneath the semblance of the thing’ (*W* 123).

Finally, it is worth noting the increasing critical interest in the concept of the everyday in literary studies, and the fertile ground this strand of work has found in *Ulysses*. The use of everyday discourses of consumerism in *Ulysses*’s ‘Nausicaa’, or mass communication in ‘Aeolus’, and so forth, has



been one focus of interest; Garry Leonard's work on Joyce and advertising is exemplary here. However, much work coming out of the sociology of the everyday, including literary criticism, has focused on the spatial. Michel de Certeau, one of the most important recent theorists of the everyday, explicitly says that he 'has concentrated above all on the uses of space';<sup>23</sup> Highmore argues that for Lefebvre, 'the unmanageability of the everyday archive is increasingly managed by spatializing the interrelations of the everyday'.<sup>24</sup> In *Ulysses*, naturally, the importance of space and place is not to be overlooked; not for nothing does Joyce meticulously trace Bloom's and Stephen's steps around Dublin. Nevertheless, I want to distinguish my approach, not only from the depth-and-surface model of the source and psychological criticism characterising approaches to daily temporality, but also from the foregrounding of the spatial, which I discuss further below, in much work on literary modernism's everyday.

#### 'DAILINESS': EVERYDAY LIFE

The everyday: what is most difficult to discover.<sup>25</sup>

Maurice Blanchot lays out in his succinct essay on 'Everyday Speech' the revisiting of the category of the everyday through the 'critique of everyday life', a process most associated with, but by no means instigated by, Henri Lefebvre. 'The everyday', says Blanchot, 'is no longer the average, statistically established existence of a given society at a given moment; it is a category, a utopia and an Idea, without which one would not know how to get at either the hidden present or the discoverable future of manifest beings'.<sup>26</sup> Blanchot describes how what might be called the everyday concept of the everyday, as that which is unmarked, unhistorical (in the sense that it does not enter into dominant narratives of history), average, and reducible (to, say, statistics), is brought from the background to the foreground in the work of Lefebvre, among others. Far from being that which is taken for granted, it becomes that which should not, indeed must not, be taken for granted. Without a critique of the everyday, an examination of what it has come to signify and of why it has come thus to signify, we will simply be unable to understand what it means to *be*, or what it might come to mean. Where I use the term 'critique', then, in my discussion, I intend it to mean a critique in this sense, as a project revisiting the concept of the everyday, rather than in the sense of a criticism or rejection of the everyday.

Two different strands can be detected within work on theories of the everyday. On the one hand, there is the phenomenological strand, including