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## **A day in the life of ...: *Ulysses* in Dublin**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to show how Joyce's *Ulysses* can be used to illuminate the complexities in a chaotic yet ordered day in the life of an organization. It draws on the concepts of apophenia, sensemaking, ordinariness, the everyday, the mythical, identity and context. The paper thereby explores the complex relationships between author, narrator and reader, and the apparent conundrums of structuring a non-plot. The approach is based on Sliwa and Cairns' (2007) treatment of the novel as a resource, a surrogate case and vehicle for organization analysis. We find that through grappling with Joyce's play on time and place, which is related to narrator and authorial voice, we come to an understanding of how the effort to make sense of mundane diurnal organizational life must allow for indeterminant, undetermined and at times even unidentifiable "voices".

Key words: apophenia, identity, management, novel in organization, sensemaking, *Ulysses*

## A day in the life of ...: *Ulysses* in Dublin

### Introduction

*Ulysses* was written during the First World War, at the same time as Fayol was formulating the six managerial activities necessary for organizational success, and not long after the 1911 publication of Taylor's innovative *The Principles of Scientific Management* which purported to resolve all the problems of management by delineating the one best way to get the necessary tasks of production done (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2017; Kiberd, 1992).

We offer a view of the organizational world informed by Joyce's *Ulysses* that is quite different from the one depicted in management text books, case studies and traditional forms of research. There is no multi-step approach to success, no exemplary case, no one best way, just a look at what's going on in whatever form that takes. There's no tick list of areas to cover, and certainly more connections and meaningfulness could be found on further examination. Joyce reworks the Ulysses/Odysseus myth and the inherent properties of ambiguity and identity, and with his use of the ordinary provides an insight into the quotidian world of management. The paper follows Knights and Willmott (1999:iix) in seeing management "as an everyday activity that involves interactions between people." Taylor and Fayol and other early theorists sought to simplify management into a step-by-step recipe to be followed and attitudes to adopt; Joyce's way is to demonstrate the complexity including how complex an interpretation of the everyday can be and then show how the character copes with, or manages, the situation.

*Ulysses* is an anti-novel, and far as organization goes, it seems disorganized. The impression of arbitrary meandering is a carefully constructed artifice, thoroughly worked over, often revised and with no final edition. The reader is given clues to work with, the landmarks of Leopold Bloom's journey over a day in Dublin. Along the way he comes across actual organizational activities, but it is up to the reader to make sense of it all, to organize what is seen. In making that sense and creating organization we make use of sensemaking, the formal managerial skill of creating plausible images that rationalize what people are doing (Clegg et al, 2016, p. 16); and apophenia, the natural (therefore informal) capacity for "unmotivated seeing of connections accompanied by a specific feeling of abnormal meaningfulness ... [and] inferences [that] are not

constrained by criteria of economy and coherence ...” (Andrews, 2014:56, cited in call for papers).

The reference points in Joyce’s novel exist as apophenia – what did we expect? – and sensemaking – searching for a meaning, settling for plausibility and moving on (Weick, 2008). These, along with Joyce’s work with the Ulysses/Odysseus myth frame our paper.

Here then, are the themes we address: management, like history and life, as just one damn thing after another; time, place, and getting organized, or not; the ambiguity and shifting sense of apparently inconsequential things; unstable and opaque identity; author, narrator and reader; structuring a non-plot; time and place, author, narrator and voice. The paper is structured as follows. We place *Ulysses* in the context of the novel in English and of Joyce’s Dublin, and then offer a description of the novel and ‘prepare’ the reader for our analysis, a necessary task given that *Ulysses* is one of those well known about but unread classics. (The Goodreads website places it as number 3 in its list of The Most Begun "Read but Unfinished" (Initiated) book ever”).

We then provide a context for our use of the novel in organization studies and indicate the value of *Ulysses* for organizational studies (see “What does Ulysses ‘teach’ us?” Section 4 below) specifically with regard to the literary apparatus of author, narrator and reader; structuring a non-plot; time and place, author, narrator and voice;

## **2 The novel in organization studies**

Various schemas for the study of the novel relative to management and organization studies are emerging. The still influential work of Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux,, (1994) deployed the novel as an educational tool, “a route to managerial understanding” (page 7).

Since the publication of Phillips’ (1995) ground-breaking account of the use of fiction in management studies published 20 years ago, the field has burgeoned with studies on particular writers (e.g., De Cock, 2000; McCabe, 2014;), particular sites (e.g., McCabe, 2014), particular phenomena (e.g., Patient, Lawrence and Maitlis, 2003) and particular forms (Holt and Zundel, 2014). We extend De Cock and Land’s (2005) inquiry into how organization and literature are co-articulating and interdependent concepts using Joyce’s *Ulysses* to advance the claim that “literary fiction can reveal important truths about organizational life without recourse to the

representation of factual events” (Munro & Huber, 2012:525), particularly novels which have the unique capacity “to render the paradox without resolving it in a didactic tale ... Thus there is a different role for the manager to be deduced ... that of a socially implicated context analyst, rather than a solitary decision-maker, that of a connoisseur of complexity and paradoxes, rather than a social engineer” (Czarniawska-Joerges, & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994:13). Lionel Trilling (1961:107) suggests that “for our time, the most effective agent of moral imagination has been the novel”. Knights & Willmott (1999:9) assert that “because people working in organizations, including managers, are first and foremost human beings, insights into the experience and dynamics of life at work can also be derived from novels not ostensibly about work.”

The mode of engagement between literature and organizational studies is identified by and is exemplified by Knights and Willmott (1999). De Cock and Land (2005) distinguish this and two further ‘modes’, one using literary theory rather than novels, a mode in which organizations are treated as texts and another using novels as a resource for organizational studies. This third category is broken down by Sliwa and Cairns (2007) into the novel as surrogate case whereby the text of the novel is seen as conveying “truths” about organizations; stories of organizing whereby analogies are drawn between depiction and lived experience; and a vehicle for organizational analysis where novels are used for the purposes of theorising at a higher level of abstraction. In their introduction to the special issue of *Journal of Organizational Change*, Land and Sliwa (2009) discuss how all the contributions use novels “as a constitutive outside from which to re-invigorate the theorization of organization” (p. 354). That is the approach adopted in this paper. We follow Land and Sliwa’s (2009:350) analysis that Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* legitimates myths of English economy. (Whereas Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a clear attempt to de-legitimate myths of early 20<sup>th</sup> century middle classes). As they say the novel, “Is not simply representation of social and economic change, but rather part and parcel of those changes”. When we examine Joyce’s use of context and identity we see *Ulysses* is part and parcel of changes.

We propose an analogy similar to that proposed by Czarniawska in *distant reading* (2009:360). We can as researchers, she writes, read texts of field such as an annual report and read it the way we read a novel. We propose a reading of *Ulysses* to help us read our experience in organization. Reading *Ulysses*, we claim, is analogous to trying to read our organization experience in the

many ways in which it presents itself. We all have the experience of trying to decipher what the manager's latest email to staff *really* means, just as managers try to 'read' their environment and translate that data into meaningful plots, themes and narrative that may affect the organization, and the jobs in it.

We write as organizational researchers, not as practising managers. We take Czarniaska's point (2009:368) that our task is not to become literary critics, but to become better researchers by learning from literary critics.

### **3 Ulysses: the novel**

We acknowledge the problem raised by Land and Sliwa (2009:352) that "if novels are to be used ... should we be concerned about their accessibility to the audiences we claim to be addressing?" Gifford (2008) quotes Joyce "I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I mean". Joyce is anarchic, an exemplar of Eagleton's novelist who breaks the rule as a rule. It is a notoriously challenging text (although one of us can say that once having started it, it was not as challenging as it is widely assumed to be). It seems to have suffered from 'literary studies' and its status as a 'popular' culture is debatable. It is also hard to classify. In their exploration of narrative and thematic coherence in management best sellers Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2016) point out various classificatory schemes. This inspires us to question what narrative and thematic coherence there may be in *Ulysses*.

So, *Ulysses* was published in 1922 and immediately considered a scandal. It was banned in the United States in 1922 when 500 imported copies were burned (McKeown, 2014). The scandal was due to the topics it tackled and its structure, or in the common view, lack of structure. In fact it was not clear at all what kind of book it was. It is structured on the *Odyssey* myth, of Odysseus's journey back to his wife, Penelope in Ithaca, but this we know because Joyce chooses to call it *Ulysses*, the alternative name of Odysseus; and the original chapter headings follows the episodes of the *Odyssey*. As Kenner (1980:3) contends, "For printed words on a page – any words, any page – are so ambiguously related to each other that we collect sense only with the aid of a tradition: this means, helped by prior experience with a genre, and entails our knowing which genre is applicable." As pointed out, this is true of any writing or indeed communication and can be related to communication in organizations. Indeed, "*Ulysses* is the

first of the great modern works that in effect create for themselves an ad hoc genre.” (Kenner, 2008:3). This we return to later in the context of apophenia and sensemaking (section 3.1).

The reader begins with the myth (see section 3.3) where the original *Odyssey* only has the journey and Penelope waiting at home (discovered to have been fighting off suitors which Molly, Bloom’s wife, does not do). The “adventures” on the way and the people that are met do not connect with each other to create a plot which will “answer a question”. The action in *Ulysses* takes place on a day in June as Bloom and Stephen wander about to various places and buildings and then in the last two parts wander home (Ithaca and Penelope) bringing the question of where home is to both Bloom and Stephen (and indeed Molly). In fact, as Kiberd (1992:xxxiv) indicates “it is the deviations from the myth, as much as the knowing references to the *Odyssey*, which secure the book’s status as a self-critical fiction.”. Joyce is clearly moving away from the “neatness of a resolved ancient tale” (page xxxiv).

The interpretation of novels is not the novelist’s prerogative, and is ambiguous. A reader “[is] influenced by impressions that will be triggered and as in all texts, alternative interpretations can be offered” (Knights & Willmott (1999:8). This ambiguity is also a feature of myths that are accepted as containing some truth but exist in many forms. There is no final edition of *Ulysses*. Joyce worked on it over years and revised it even after the first publication by Sylvia Beach. The “endless work of finishing it he determined to hand to his readers” (Kenner, 1980:157). This openness provides a challenge to anyone wishing to reach a conclusion, a happy end: Joyce will not provide it. However, Joyce does have a ‘system’. There is a crucial tension between kaleidoscopic writing and an extremely formal schematic structure (Sherry, 2004:102). In fact, Joyce worried that, “I may have oversystematised *Ulysses*” (Dettmar, 1992:285). Joyce has places, events, characters, roles, time. *Ulysses* is intensely specific about time and place. The world portrayed is organized down to the minute and square inch. (Joyce was supposed to have claimed that if Dublin were ever razed, its geography could be reconstructed from his book.) As Kenner shows (1980:103) the book may appear to be “adrift” at times, but in fact the actions are well staged and time is of the essence in understanding. Bloom may well be “adrift”, but he knows he cannot return home due to his wife’s assignation with Blazes Boyle. He is not free to go home, but neither is he clear on when to return. In fact as Joyce’s *schemata* show, the day is divided up into clear stages and times. What may to the casual reader, if there is such a thing of

*Ulysses*, appear simultaneous or random, is part of a carefully planned division of time. We the reader hear church bells and watches are referred to (not always working as shown by Bloom on the beach), providing the reader with a feeling of what Kenner (1980:15) calls “calculated disorientation.” Specificity about time and place does not, however, lead to plot clarity or coherent identity. The link with management is that the control of elements does not secure control of the whole and nor does it provide purpose. Joyce does not offer us a finished story, a guru handbook of ‘how to do it’, but an incomplete journey where we can only rely on our own interpretations. No ‘take home’ is provided to learn and reproduce when needed. Constant readjustment and learning are what we need. Whilst the aim of research is to come to some sense of how things are, the claim that ‘this is how things are’ is made quite differently in the physical sciences and the social sciences. Management (‘science’, sometimes) sits, usually awkwardly, between the claims of the physical sciences and the social sciences. Management books often fail to see management as lived experience, but concentrate on knowledge as ‘information’ as shown in the number of quizzes available to test ‘knowledge’ of management. Management books help to sustain the misleading image of knowledge as a fixed and objective entity.

Joyce documents a major shift in our understanding of time and place and management research is catching up. We are beginning to understand that the coherence of organizational life is something we make up as we go along. We are sense-making as we organize (see section 3.1). Our organizations are sense-making devices. They are rhetorical acts. ‘We are beginning to see that organization does not exist *in space and time*’ (O’Doherty et al., 2013:1431). Literature helps to restore what the professional-scientific literature necessarily omits or slights: the concrete, the sensual, the emotional, the subjective, the valuational’ (Waldo, 1968:5 in Czarniawska-Joerges & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994:7).

### **3.1 Apophenia and sensemaking**

Apophenia seems to share meaning with sensemaking, “the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing” (Clegg et al, 2016; Weick, 2008). More will be made below of these two concepts and their relationship with *Ulysses* and each other. The reader of *Ulysses* is invited to recognize organizational norms in situations which are barely explained. There are two ways in which the making of connections and sense connect with management. As an anti-novel it can be read as analogous to Parker’s (2002) *Against*

*Management.* The novel/management do not have to be this way and can be written differently and subverted . As ‘a day in the life of ...’ it can be contrasted with Kotter’s (1999) day in the life of a general manager and we can appreciate the tension between plan and life. We have seen this before, a depiction of a manager’s work being neither more nor less than what a manager does in the workplace rather than how the role is designed by the organization (e.g. Mintzberg, 1975). However, these studies demonstrate that the plan makes sense and even if the actual behaviour does not, the two can be related. Clegg, et al (2016) discussing sensemaking in organizations point out that, “We all make sense of things all the time and sometimes the sense that we make may be quite different from another person’s – even though we might think we are dealing with the same cues.” (p. 34). Here we can clearly see the struggle the reader has of deciding what these cues are and which cues are relevant and which peripheral. Indeed Joyce leaves the reader to make these decisions and does not come out with the ultimate business plan showing priorities and secondary objectives.

We wish to draw parallels between making potential errors in making sense of organizational life and apophenia. Apophenia is the spontaneous mis-perception of connections and meaningfulness of unrelated phenomena. The term was coined by German neurologist and psychiatrist Klaus Conrad (1905-1961). Conrad focused on the finding of abnormal meaning or significance in random experiences by psychotic people (Carroll, 2012). “Human understanding is of its own nature prone to suppose the existence of more order and regularity in the world than it finds.” (Francis Bacon, 1620, *Novum Organum*, Aphorism XLV cited by Goldfarb & King 2016). They discuss scientific *apophenia*. (“the tendency to find order where none exists”). They are concerned with statistical studies and the way authors and/or reviewers search for statistically significant results, manipulate or nudge samples or models to make them significant or readers make inferences from published estimates that are unreliable or inflated.

Bergh, Sharp & Li (2017) express concern at the number of articles being published in high level journals, which later prove to suffer either from apophenia (although they don’t use this term directly) or deliberate inaccuracies or loopholes, “it is time that the field [management research] takes steps to protect the validity and trustworthiness of its knowledge base.” (p. 123). Their claim that “more than 20% of reported significant statistical findings may be inaccurate” based on Goldfarb & King (2016) amongst others, shows the difficulty in differentiating between

inadvertently seeing patterns and deliberately speeding up or ‘improving’ analysis. The over-generalization of theory implementation has also been attributed to apophenia. Goldstein (2015) takes the case of Disruptive Innovation and shows how Christensen’s industry specific theory became a “globe-spanning explanation of nearly everything” (page B7). When sought, links between industries can be found and patterns recognized. Christensen uses pattern spotting to make predictions. In fact, the relation of apophenia to the gamblers’ fallacy is clear. “This neurotransmitter [dopamine] helps us find meaningful connections between things. But the same excessive pattern-finding that sends some people off the rails can lead others to be creative, as insight requires yoking distantly related ideas.” (Hutson, 2012:54). Apophenia may be related to conspiracy theory, that wish to find a reason for everything including random occurrences (hence the popularity of accounts of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales which indicate murderous plotting rather than accident) (Dixon, 2012). Pareidolia is the pictorial equivalent of apophenia, seeing a face on the front of a house or the image of Christ in the cheese on toast.

The desire to create order and to see meaningful patterns is reflected in management literature. Joyce challenges this by leaving us to make our own patterns and decide what is significant without giving us a measurement tool to test the significance but only relying on our own instincts. Sensemaking conveys the importance of having a shared sense of an organization, creating it by improvising as one goes along (Clegg et al, 2016, Cunliffe, 2009; Sinding et al, 2014). Sinding et al (2014) suggest that this leads to organization and disorganization as due to filtering largely based on individual social and cultural experiences, different managers are “*selectively* absorbing information from the environment” (p. 19, emphasis added.). Decision-making is then based on the context in which they believe they are operating. They see this as objective. The value of sensemaking as a concept is that it justifies the complexity in developing general theories to explain how all organizations work. This clearly links to apophenia and seeing sense or meaning which is not actually there, a false hypothesis “based on incorrect patterns” (Dixon, 2012, p. 202). *Ulysses* is famous for interpretations and analyses from post-Joyce critics, seeing meaning, connections, ‘deliberate’ allusions which in reality no one can know, if they are peripheral, unintentional or not there at all. Of course in organizational studies we cannot accept a null hypothesis of “no –meaning”. We HAVE TO make meaning! Desiring a coherent life means ordering one’s experience

Here the reader can be accused of apophenia, “an error of perception: The tendency to interpret random patterns as meaningful. It can manifest itself in many different ways” (Poulson, 2012). Clegg et al (2016:34) stress that “In organizations, managers want to try and have their employees make the same sense.”, yet pointing out that individuals can make extremely different “senses” from the same cues. Joyce maybe gives us an idea of how difficult it can be to establish this shared sense and even question whether it is a desired or plausible aim. Clegg et al (2016, p. 20) show that common sensemaking is important for organizations and vital to management in attempting to create as many cues for common sensemaking as possible. Everyone uses the schemata they know, their habits, familiar concepts and categories. We see individuals predicting others’ sensemaking to their own advantage (the recent presumed terrorist attack on the BVB football team bus where actually some greedy individual wanted to make a million by betting on the stock exchange that the team’s shares would go down due to the team being blown up. He presumed the team, the public, the police, the politicians would make ‘sense’ of the incident by seeing ISIS in it therefore fulfilling people’s sensemaking categories).

We take Joyce as Dublin’s anthropologist, and consider Dublin as an organization, Joyce is an organizational ethnographer. *Ulysses* can be read as how workers experience organization. Much depends on who works at what level. YOU might think you know what is going on and maybe you do, but maybe not. Much depends on your time and place and who else is around. The changing forms of the text are like the shifts in organizational culture. We read statements of senior management like oracles. We are apopheniasts (sic!!!) We have to make sense but sometimes our efforts are merely apopheniastic - the connections we make are merely imagined. Of course, we hope that they aren't, that in fact we really are discovering meaningful connections. Joyce is the author and the narrator is always shifting. Perambulation, walking about, reflecting on what is seen, and not seeing. The primary relationship is between author, narrator and reader. It is interaction at this level that creates the literary event. Who controls the narrator? Who is the ultimate authority? All pretensions, claims, to ultimate authority are unfounded, should be rejected.

Is there a grand narrative in *Ulysses*? Our claim is that the plotless narrative and polyphony of voices mimics actual organizational forms and their poetic logic. There are four major narratives: classical drama, novel, travelogue and hagiography. The classical literary story has thematic and

narrative coherence which respects the Aristotelian unities of action place and time. There are also many ways of classifying “the basic story” (seven basic plots of all tales, and so on). What makes Joyce’s *Ulysses* worth our while is how it plays with these overarching concepts and sets them in tension with one another. For example, there is clearly a unity of place, action and time. But there is no plot, and not even a stable narrator. The novel does not “fit”.

Quite a few management theorists would say that what we need now is “that which does not fit”. Current textbooks do not deliver an accurate picture, mainly because they present a disembodied picture of management that is devoid of context (Knights and Willmott, 1999). Cf comments on case studies. This is why management can become a totalitarian enterprise (Parker, 2002). Managers need to learn to handle polyphony, the “dissensus” that results from dissimilar interpretations of conditions and events among different members of the organization (Clegg, et al. 2016, p. 278 ). Perhaps we need what Czarniawska and Rhodes (2006) call avant-garde management writing which “experiments rather than repeats; it disrespects the canon rather than either following or opposing it” (page 215). Joyce’s *Ulysses* did just this, hence its notorious publishing history of being banned in the US. Is it possible that if we understand how Joyce does this in *Ulysses* we will be able to subvert the standard managerial analysis?

### **3.2 Ordinarity/ the everyday**

The ordinariness and dealing with everyday issues can give a false sense of ‘disorder’ or ‘un-order’. Knights & Willmott (1999:127) consider how we ‘manage’ our lives, ‘manage’ to do things “as *lived experience*, there remain continuities between the process of managing (in) organizations and the process of managing mundane everyday activities”. We see the contradictions, the pull of conscience, the weaknesses, the struggles – not only in more significant decisions such as Stephen’s to stay with the Blooms, but in apparently minor considerations of how to order the events of the day. Joyce’s refusal to give us the ‘facts’, but instead a mixture of context, conversation, thought, delirium and dream provides an intricate ‘reality’ for us to interpret. Messages are not given to the reader. We must find and interpret them. As Kenner (1980:51) points out, *Ulysses* “was long regarded as an eccentrically detailed account of a man spending a Dublin day: “‘the dailiest day possible’, it was even called [by Arnold Bennett]. Not at all.” At the time of publication *Ulysses* shocked people by its “ordinariness” (Kiberd, 1992). ‘A day in the life of ...’ is a useful framing device to capture

actual everyday experience. If we compare what Stephen, Bloom and Molly do with what effective general managers do (Kotter, 1999) we can see this contrast at play. Kotter's Michael Richardson arrives at work at 7.55am and leaves the office at 5.45pm. Like other successful GMs, he spends a lot of time with others, regularly sees people who seem to be unimportant outsiders, discusses a wide range of topics often unrelated to work, wastes time even in his own opinion, and spends most of the day in unplanned meetings and in short disjointed conversations. This is Mintzberg's (1975) "fact" of the manager's role as compared with the "folklore" which claims reflective and systematic planning, "a number of regular duties", making use of a "formal management information system" and that management is a "science or a profession".

Yet Joyce's work is transcendent. His insights demonstrate to the student of systems and organizations that analysis need not begin with course books or case studies. The traditional business case study is accepted as a fiction but it has traditionally entailed two important assumptions that are precisely why it has become so criticized; firstly, that the problem is defined and all relevant information is available and all available information is relevant, and secondly that we know what we need to know to make a decision. This is not real life and actual managers do not experience this.

Joyce makes the reader work. The depiction of scenes is not simply information for the readers' understanding nor are characters described to explain a situation. Joyce challenges and exploits the disparities between the omniscient author, the omniscient narrator and the omniscient reader. Such disparities are the very stuff of organization and hierarchy. We learn the reason for Leopold Bloom wearing black by a sequence of events; why Bloom has a potato in his pocket is only revealed after the potato has been repeatedly referred to. When reading, we must notice the details to establish these connections and assess which details are peripheral and which essential for our understanding of the stages of this journey. 'the reader should not be told what no one present would think worth an act of attention.' (Kenner, 1980:31). We must analyse to even acquire a basic understanding of what those stages are. "*Ulysses* will neither hold together in one simultaneous mental grasp, nor repeat itself as we traverse once more its 260,000 words" (Kenner, 1980:155). According to Slotte, it is important to pay attention to the small particulars of the text, 'since, as they accumulate, patterns that might not otherwise be clear can start to emerge.' (Slotte 2012: x) The point is made in the call for papers: "But every damn thing matters!

It's just that we don't realize" (Bolaño, 2008:192). We must read "not only words but numbers, colors, signs, arrangements of tiny objects, late-night and early –morning television shows, obscure films" (Bolaño, 2009:102).

It is likely indeed that the reader may find parallels in the text that were not necessarily seen by Joyce and several he deliberately used may yet be discerned (see sensemaking and apophenia above). We teach management students to concentrate on the 'core' issues; however, reading *Ulysses* we find that a skilled analysis is needed to find core issues and even when found we cannot be sure another reader will have identified the same ones. Characters reappear - or are they different characters with the same names? "Most readers never realize that Bloom by Jewish standards isn't Jewish, that Stephen's mother has been dead for fifty-one weeks (...), or that he has been all day without his glasses" (Kenner, 1980:152).

We have shown *Ulysses* as everyday, yet how everyday is *Ulysses*? We claim that Joyce is presenting the everyday, changing the mundane, routine of daily life into a myth. Yet the expectations from a book on the everyday, would be a very readable text divided by hours, events, order: an everyday book for the everyday reader. Few books demand to be studied more closely than *Ulysses*, yet Joyce claimed his book would be accessible to everyone – 'All people in a true democratic culture, Joyce believed, should be able to derive pleasure from *Ulysses*.' (Bose, 2009). So how did, or did the book miss its intended audience? Kiberd (as cited by Bose, 2009) asserted "My father loved *Ulysses* as the fullest account ever given of the city in which he lived." "There were parts that baffled or bored him, and these he skipped, much as today we fast-forward over the duller tracks on beloved music albums. But there were entire passages which he knew almost by heart." Does Kiberd's father love it because it is a celebration of the everyday? Bloom is more successful in the everyday public space than in his private sphere. *Ulysses* is much devoted to Bloom's encounters on a typical day 'The ordinary incidents will, by the end, gain mythical significance, but this is Joyce's point: that the routine, the typical can be endowed with heroic potential.' (Bose, 2009).

### **3.3 The mythical**

Narrative coherence matters. "Managers, decision makers and leaders therefore need to understand that we make sense in everyday ordinary interactions as well as formal forums because we continually feel, make judgement and evaluation and try to construct some sort of

narrative rationality (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2011:8). This relates to the hero myth, which clearly is one of the tropes that Joyce is playing with. Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2016) allude to Frustum's (1995) explanation. Popular management texts invoke the heroic myth because it has to do with the control of uncertainty and making sense in a complex world.

Joyce's treatment of the myth of Ulysses can be seen as 'domesticating the epic' (Corcoran, 2010). In fact making the myths 'ordinary' is not new. As Munro & Huber (2012) point out, Kafka presents Poseidon as a bored bureaucrat dreaming of brandishing his trident through the waves. Joyce does not give us the gods, but does show his 'mythical' characters, Stephen, Bloom and Molly with all their warts and pimples. He plays with the reader fulfilling certain expectations and subverting others. Stephen plays a character of many roles: he mourns his mother, has literary aspirations, works as a teacher whilst also amassing debts through drinking. He is the Telemachus of the Odysseus myth searching for his father. The first scene, in which we meet Stephen before Bloom's first appearance, presents him as a Hamlet who mourns his mother and meets her ghost in a dream (Ulysses, Penguin edition, pages 8-10). But Joyce strips out any 'mythical' grandness; Stephen says "I am not a hero" as early as page 3. After the first chapter he is often seen in Dublin pubs. The Hamlet character is later debunked as an actress is said to play the part (see Kiberd, 1992, p. liii). We may wish for a resolution but there is none - no happy end, no glorious revelation of 'true' character. Stephen remains as complex, or as simple, at the end as at the beginning.

Similarly we can see Bloom as Ulysses and Molly as Penelope, there is no Gertrude, for Stephen's mother is dead. But Joyce does not allow his central characters to purely represent 'a type'. All of them travel, the day is full of movement. We do not travel with them but have to 'understand' where they are and how they got there. There is no reassurance that any of the epic actions (Stephen's coming of age, Bloom's homecoming, Molly's affirmation of her husband) are or will be lived through to completion.

However, by the novel's end we know what conditions the central characters and the chorus will have to meet if the epic destiny that is possible is to become actuality (Gifford, 2008).

Opportunities, dangers and uncertainties are all part of the decision making process. The parallels with management can be seen in rapidly shifting roles and complex identities.

### **3.4 Identity**

Brunsson (2006, cited by Clegg et al, 2016, p. 30) suggests identity whether organizational or individual is typically used to point out unique properties and characteristics with which individuals and organizations seek to differentiate themselves from others. All notions of identity are relational. Identities we emphasize in one situation may be very different from those we emphasise in another: we have multiple identities. In Ulysses Stephen clearly has multiple identities in his decision making regarding his future, but really Joyce does not present us with complex identities.

Identity and motivation prove to be a very complex issue. Novelists often examine 'how identity 'works' and, more importantly, how identity has to be 'worked at' in contemporary organizations and everyday life. Novels 'grasp the complexity without simplifying it.' (Czarniawska-Joerges & Guillet de Monthoux, 1994:13). The complexities and even uncertainties of this society are portrayed in Bloom. Is he indeed a man, or a woman, or both? Does he belong to the Irish race, or does his Judaism exclude him and make him a member of the Jewish race? In fact he would surely be excluded from the Jewish race by his Irish mother and Protestant and Catholic baptisms. Is his attempt to lure Stephen a search for identity? What about him joining the Freemasons?

Joyce's narrative technique is part of destabilizing identity. Keener (1980:155) remarks on the "symbiosis of observer with observed" and the unstable narrator. Slote, (2012: viii) refers to "free indirect discourse", in which the narrative voice shifts from third to first person and in and out of interior monologue, and "a lack of narrative signposting" (Slote 2012: ix). Joyce allows the reader no rest - as perspectives change the narrator changes. We are observing Stephen, we are Stephen, we move to Bloom. We not only need to know who we are, but as stated above have to establish our own intentions, where we are and how we got there. This change of perspective allows us to see the turmoil of Bloom's thoughts, yet contrast it with, for example, the daydreams of Gerty MacDowell dreaming of a husband.

Communication between the characters is everyday in its content, yet the era the book is written in places it clearly in the historical period and encompasses the issues of the times (see section 3.5). We do not need in-depth analysis to notice the role of verbal and non-verbal communication. Bloom and Molly understand the true meaning of Blazes Boylan's letter, meeting and planned singing tour without words being spoken. Gerty MacDowell does not speak

to Bloom, but an understanding passes between them. Is he the masturbating observer in the powerful position? As the reader knows he is one of few who have 'made it', and despite ups and downs he survives in contemporary Dublin. Or is she in the powerful role, leading him on and knowing she can manipulate his reactions? The issues of identity, power, empowerment, change and role management discussed in management books are here lived out in the characters.

Almost every aspect of our everyday life is shaped by organizations and our roles within them. We may claim individuality but we are shaped as employees, students, customers, clients etc. The organization of birth and death is seen in *Ulysses* in the registering of deaths mentioned frequently (Stephen's mother, Dignam's funeral, Corny Kelleher the undertaker's employee), education (Mr Deasy's school; Stephen's employer), customers (the many pubs and bars visited, the apothecary, butcher's). Joyce confronts us with many questions such as: *Ulysses* is on his way home, but who was *Ulysses*, where has he been? In Homer's poem even his parentage changes. Who is going home to whom? The themes here are identity, and place and we can track exactly what Joyce has done with the myth, the irony and parody. Why does Joyce make his protagonist Jewish? And yet not truly Jewish by force of his Christian baptism [and other things]. Bloom is the outsider, even outside his own outsider identities. Joyce takes Bloom (and us, the reader) on a tour of Dublin – he is (and we are invited to be) both an insider and an outside observer. Bloom cannot even return home because Molly has excluded him with her assignation with Blazes Boyle. The link with identity at work – multiple identities, insider/outsider, are not always clear. Managers appear to be "in the know" as they create strategy, regulations, success criteria, working conditions, yet are often excluded from informal communication networks. The complexity of identity and the link to expectations and presumptions created by titles, names and context as explored by Joyce are not unfamiliar in management and organization.

### **3. 5 Context**

The Irish myths of heroism are reflected against the harsh reality of exploitation and dominance by the English. The question of power, powerlessness, motivation, organization, self-will and politics in general show a thread throughout the novel. The home rule question is addressed here, but also the main characters' abilities and strength to actually achieve an 'end' to their one-day journey. Anti-Semitism is a theme throughout the novel, yet with none of the addressed issues does Joyce provide direct comment. We simply see a xenophobic Ireland critical of all other

nations. The analysis is left to the reader, although the voice of certain characters can be seen to represent Joyce's ideas: Bloom's concern at the venereal disease carried by the whores and the lack of medical care, is a clear comment on health care provision. We can place this in a larger context and generalize from this work of fiction, to Dublin, to Ireland, to Europe in the early 20th century. However, we cannot expect the book to give us answers.

Joyce is quoted in an Irish Times article published on the 99<sup>th</sup> "Bloomsday (16 June, 2003) as saying that *Ulysses*, "is the epic of two races (Israel - Ireland)". Parallels between the two peoples are frequently drawn in the novel, most notably in the newspaper episode with its "extended analogy between their histories and their (possible) destinies". Their shared status as "subject races" both historically and at the time that the novel is set emphasises Bloom's separateness from others around him, he belongs in Ireland as an Irishman yet his place as the Jewish "other" reflects the "otherness" of Ireland in its relationship with Britain. (Killeen, 2003)

Ithaca is a parody of forensic inquiry. The detective. The inquisition. It is how The Church and State could control Dublin's catholic populations, and ensure the repression of sex, passion, lust, of life. Molly's soliloquy is the evidence of their failure. So, Molly is a parody of the actual Penelope. Molly suffered from the imposition of repression but did transcend it. She remained a lustful passionate being. Joyce wants to portray Bloom as the loving husband who loves Molly in spite of her infidelity, but the cadence of Joyce's language suggests that it was Joyce the author who really loved her!

And yet, Molly is flawed.

Molly is a character who at first seems almost background. She's there, she's a major influence on Bloom's actions, thoughts and mental state, but we don't 'know' her, or even 'get to know her'. She is 'the wife', she has shared experiences with Bloom and tragedy, but if we have any feelings towards her, they are not that sympathetic. Bloom is the one in the dead end job who still tries to battle it out, whilst Molly is still dreaming of a life on the boards, singing, dancing and maybe with Boylan (a carefree life, not sharing Bloom's existential concerns). However, the novel ends with her, she takes control. She is an example of the reader probably falsely putting meaning into Joyce's text. We don't expect her to buckle down and decide to get her act together (and Bloom's) and 'start afresh'. We can even say, we don't really see her capable of the

forty-page monologue she holds.

*Ulysses* takes the myth out of context, in putting it in Dublin and even in questioning what myth is and to what degree *Ulysses* is simply 'a name' like naming a child on a whim. Molly puts the book into context. Can you read *Ulysses* without knowing about the Irish problem, the position of women, the economy? Probably, but Molly's final stand, is a statement for taking control, not just letting things drift (and in the Blooms' case, negatively), but for steering life yourself, taking the reins.

Molly is a good example of 'but the context matters'. It is significant – her role is more interesting for knowing the context. Gerty McDowell, on the beach is also acting and steering events, but the extent her 'power' gets to is seeing the evidence of Bloom's sexual desire, rather than any power to change or improve her situation.

The link between identity and context is worthy of investigation. Are the characters only understandable through their context? Is the context historical or is it simply age old issues (men earning more than women, women mostly the child carer, men mostly the pub goers, men dealing with psychological problems of low-status jobs etc). Should we suppose that Molly Bloom personifies Dublin in Bloom's life? Or that she is The Dublin "Everywoman"

The economic context is clear and plays a significant role in the events of the day. Money plays a very strong role in *Ulysses* – there are those who are certainly on their way down and out. Professions/trades play a role: we have Corny Kelleher the undertaker employee, Hynes the journalist, the head teacher Mr Deasy, Stephen the teacher; but the majority of characters seem to be on the streets of Dublin with no regular income. In fact borrowing enough to survive is a permanent theme. Prices are mentioned in exact amounts as Stephen counts what is left at the end of the day when he meets Bloom, and Bloom's expenditure and income for the day are presented as a double entry account. Not having enough to pay the rent and being in arrears seems a common situation to be in. However, how the economy of this city works, we are not made privy to. We are looking at the fate of individuals and the decisions made and faced within 24 hours. From this concentrated vignette we can predict survival chances, but no end to this tale is given. The overview of current issues and the importance of context can be seen here as in all management situations and decision making contexts.

Management and organization is part of ordinary everyday life. Reading *Ulysses* as a management text, conscious of it as fiction, attending to its tensions, its play on structured meandering, and its constant fragmenting of identity may enrich the way we read management texts, with their fictions, and claims of stable knowledge and assumptions of stable identities.

#### **4 What does *Ulysses* ‘teach us’?**

In this paper we have concentrated on how Joyce seems to challenge much that can be called current management learning. We have concentrated on the dangers of making sense where no sense can or should be made, on the risks in making sense of other people and their decisions, actions and identities and in attempting to categorise data as relevant or in degrees of relevance. Identity has been shown to be portrayed as something both complex and also representative of ‘type’. *Ulysses* can be read irrespective of context, but an extra stratum is added by consideration of the historical and geographical context. Can we claim that Joyce is deliberately examining these issues, or are we the modern researcher guilty of apophenia, reading meaning where no meaning was intended? Can we analyse Joyce’s work, irrespective of his aims and ideas? We would argue that Joyce’s *Ulysses* deliberately confronts the reader with complexity presented in the form of the everyday. Only on closer reading or attempting to read ‘the whole’ do we realise that the journey from A to B and the clear roles and context indicated in the title are only a base from which greater complexities ensue. To what extent can we refute our earlier claim that Joyce’s work cannot be interpreted as a ‘to do’ guide, but does in fact include inherent guru tips on how to confront organizational and managerial challenges? We have criticised the guru management handbooks with ‘do it my way’ tips, yet Joyce does have a lot to say on how to improve life. We cannot claim he just recounts the tale of a day in Dublin.

The length of *Ulysses* and the deliberate mix of literary styles and perspectives makes it no surprise that the potential ‘lessons’ to be learnt from the text are numerous. However, our aim to focus on managerial and organizational implications has concentrated on making sense, the everyday, the mythical, identity and context. The paper has shown how these issues are not isolated, but in *Ulysses* as in ‘real life’, intertwined with interdependencies and mutual correlations and impacts. Bose (2009) suggests that *Ulysses* does have a lesson for the reader and this should not surprise as “The idea that a book like *Ulysses* can suggest better, more humane ways in which to conduct ourselves might come across as simplistic to some, revolutionary to

others. But the idea of seeking wisdom in literature goes back to Shakespeare, Dante, and the Bible.” The question then arises as to whether our study has shown “better, more humane ways to conduct ourselves”. We would argue that an attempt to understand our own sensemaking and that of others is essential in decision making and communication. An understanding of identity is clearly connected to sense and an awareness of ambiguities and changing roles are vital in effective management. The mythical may seem out of the realms of everyday management and organization, but everyday is indeed the cue as Joyce takes the mythical out of the myth and shows us his heroes in their everyday endeavours. Certainly examining the everyday routine of management and the skills used and indeed the difficulty in deciding what is useful and meaningful allows us to move away from headline cases and look more at the daily life of organization and management in all its facets.

More eclectic approaches are on the increase in management education including a broadening of teaching resources. Whether Joyce’s *Ulysses* can play a role here is certainly worthy of debate. *Ulysses* provides a rich example which could certainly in part be used to highlight the above issues and to awaken awareness of the management issues apparent in other sources than management and company literature. We are advocating ‘reading’ organizations not only through management texts, but through the reading of fiction. *Ulysses* has been shown to provide questions to many issues relevant to organization. To what degree these questions can be answered is left to the reader. Perhaps we can now ‘read’ organizations more sensitively than we were able, before *Ulysses*, with sensitivity to time, place, narrative, authority and point of view.

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