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## BEN HIGHMORE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Questioning everyday life

**EVERYDAY LIFE** is a vague and problematic phrase. Any assumption that it is simply 'out there', as a palpable reality to be gathered up and described, should face an immediate question: whose everyday life? Often enough, however, such questions are purposefully ignored. To invoke the everyday can often be a sleight of hand that normalises and universalises particular values, specific world-views. Politicians, for instance, are often fond of using terms like 'everyday life' or 'ordinary people' as a way of hailing constituents to a common culture: people like us, lives like ours. The underside of this, of course, is that this everyday life is haunted by implicit 'others', who supposedly live outside the ordinary, the everyday. Claiming everyday life as self-evident and readily accessible becomes an operation for asserting the dominance of specific cultures and for particular understandings of such cultures.

Yet the term everyday life has also been used to side with the dominated against those that would dominate. Take, for example, the use of everyday life by social historians. To invoke everyday life can be to invoke precisely those practices and lives that have traditionally been left out of historical accounts, swept aside by the onslaught of events instigated by elites. It becomes shorthand for voices from 'below': women, children, migrants and so on. But while designed to challenge certain conventions, this can still maintain an unproblematic acceptance of everyday life as a transparent realm: now instead of looking at government records, attic rooms are plundered for diaries, letters and such like. This *Reader*, however, insists on questioning the transparency of the daily. It is dedicated to a less everyday use of the term everyday life. It explicitly and implicitly addresses the 'everyday' as a problematic, a contested and opaque terrain, where meanings are not to be found ready-made. Perhaps its starting point would be the idea that the everyday presents us with a recalcitrant object that does not give up its secrets too readily.

Everyday life is not simply the name that is given to a reality readily available for scrutiny; it is also the name for aspects of life that lie hidden. To invoke an ordinary culture

from below is to make the invisible visible, and as such has clear social and political resonances. To summon-up a specific everyday, or to call a group of people together so as to recognise a shared everyday life, has been an important step in bringing to visibility the lives of those who have been sidelined by dominant accounts of social life. But this has never been a simple act of calling on an already understood daily culture – in many respects it has needed to produce that culture (as problematic) in the first place. Second-wave feminism (for instance, Chapter 5) struggles to name an everydayness that was all too readily seen at the time as both unproblematic and to a large degree simply invisible. It was precisely the untroubled ease with which both men and women (but of course, mainly men) understood the supposed naturalness of women's daily life as being organised around the needs of children and husbands that made any alternative understanding seem counter-intuitive or simply bizarre. The difficulty of bringing to light an alternative account of the everyday life of middle-class women in 1950s and 1960s America is signalled by the title of the first chapter of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*: 'The Problem that has No Name'. Of course, American women may well have experienced their lives as a domestic straitjacket prior to Friedan's book (the massive sales could be seen as an index of this), but even so, such an account of everyday life struggled to be seen as actuality. Feminism had to actively register and name American women's everyday life, and as such the revolutionary agenda of second-wave feminism was to 'raise consciousness' about women's daily life as an arena of domination. The project had to begin by actively producing everyday life as an entity.

Everyday life can both hide and make vivid a range of social differences. But it should be remembered that the production of recognisable difference initially required the manufacture of a sense of commonality (as in second-wave feminism). So the everyday (as a theoretical and practical arena) has the potential ability of producing, not difference, but commonality. It might be that this is where its generative ability lies. If 'everyday life' is going to provide a re-imagining of the study of culture (and anything less would be to carry on doing business-as-usual, thereby making a term like everyday life already obsolete) then it might need to put on hold the *automatic* explanatory value placed on accepted cultural differences. If cultural differences, such as gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and so on, are going to be useful for the understanding of everyday life (and I assume that they would be) then their usefulness cannot be just presumed or taken for granted.

For example if I asked the question (with a nod towards psychoanalysis): 'Whose daily life has been, on occasion, disturbed by the "uninvited" presence of a troubling memory?', I might expect that most people would be familiar with such a scene even if their troubling memories differed wildly. There is something of a radical commonality (which, now that psychoanalysis has become part of our everyday life, might be less visible) to the suggestion that we all share a condition where our consciousness can be undermined by our unconscious. Not only does this make visible an aspect of everyday life previously only hinted at in literature (namely the unmanaged continuation of the past in the present) but also it transforms our sense of the everyday (now the everyday becomes the unknowing host for the return of traumatic material). That which transforms our sense of the everyday in the guise of new commonalities (here memory, there a recognition of shared domination) works to produce the everyday anew. If this is the goal of everyday life theory (and why not?) then any preconstituted difference needs to be re-found in the job of producing the

everyday as an arena of study. As such we might move on from recognising a common condition (the persistence of the past) to seeing how the invasion of memories differs among people. It would seem likely that gender differences would register here, but what about other differences? How might other social and cultural conditions operate in relation to memory disturbances in everyday life? The traumas of migration and war might, for instance, affect everyday life in precisely this way.

If everyday life is going to challenge us into new ways of thinking and new ways of perceiving, then it will need to practise a kind of heuristic approach to social life that does not start out with pre-designated outcomes. In its negotiation of difference and commonality it might, potentially, find new commonalities and breathe new life into old differences. But to do this will mean putting on hold some of the familiar conventions of contemporary studies of culture.

To question everyday life and to allow everyday life to question our understanding of the world is to specifically invite a theoretical articulation of everyday life. Theory is often a dense and abstruse form of writing, often designed to throw into crisis widely accepted and practised beliefs. Everyday life theory, while at times evidencing its share of obscurity, differs from this, at least potentially. Writing eight years after starting a project to study the practices of everyday life, Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard claimed: 'we know poorly the types of operations at stake in ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations, because our instruments of analysis, modeling and formalization were constructed for other objects and with other aims' (de Certeau *et al.* 1998: 256). Everyday life invites a kind of theorising that throws our most cherished *theoretical* values and practices into crisis. For instance, theorists often promote the values of 'rigorous' thought, 'systematic' elaboration and 'structured' argument: but what if rigour, system and structure were anti-theoretical and deadening to aspects of everyday life? What if 'theory' was to be found elsewhere, in the pages of a novel, in a suggestive passage of description in an autobiography, or in the street games of children? What if theory (the kind that is designated as such) was beneficial for attending to the everyday, not via its systematic interrogations, but through its poetics, its ability to render the familiar strange? This is not to suggest that everyday life theory is anti-theoretical, far from it, but that in attending to the everyday such theory is never going to be a purely critical or deconstructive project. At the heart of the theoretical practices collected here is the desire for *constructive* and *inventive* thought, for a form of attention that struggles to articulate an intractable object (daily life) in the full knowledge that the everyday is always going to exceed the ability to register it.

No anthology of texts dedicated to a specific theme is going to be exhaustive, but if a Reader should provide a guide to the best that is on offer within a specific field, then an *Everyday Life Reader* is faced with a significant difficulty. For Henri Lefebvre, who spent his career working on the problem of the critique of everyday life, everyday life is 'defined by "what is left over" after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis' (Lefebvre 1991: 97). If we assume that 'fields' constitute such distinct and specialised forms of knowledge, then clearly, for Lefebvre, the everyday is precisely what lies outside the disciplines of knowledge. However, Lefebvre goes on to insist that 'everyday life is profoundly related to *all* activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts' (Lefebvre 1991: 97). If we look at the various fields

that make up what is optimistically called the human sciences, we might draw the following conclusion: everyday life is both remaindered from fields of study as well as impacting on every single attempt to register human life. Cultural studies, sociology, social history, anthropology, ethnography, literary studies, psychology and so on would all, I guess, want to lay some claim to attending to the everyday – yet for the most part the tendency has been for specialised disciplines to invoke the everyday as a taken-for-granted aspect of social life. While these fields have made significant contributions to the productive problematic of everyday life (as both an indivisible singularity and overarching totality), they have rarely provided a space for putting such ideas at the centre of their inquiries. The potential of everyday life studies is not to unite disciplinary fields in some dream of multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary; its potential is essentially anti-disciplinary. If as Lefebvre suggests the everyday lies both outside all the different fields of knowledge, while at the same time lying across them, then the everyday is not a field at all, more like a para-field, or a meta-field.

Thus an anthology of texts addressing the everyday cannot simply provide an overview of disciplinary approaches to everyday life, it cannot simply provide examples of how sociology (ethnomethodology, for instance) attends to the everyday, or how anthropology (participant observation, for instance) treats everyday life. If it is to do its job it will need to find those moments in disciplinary fields and outside them, when the everyday casts any disciplinary enterprise into doubt. Everyday life might therefore seem to constitute a field of doubt, but also, I would suggest, a field of experimentation, of possibility. In this introduction I want to set out something of an intellectual survey for thinking of the everyday as both problem and possibility. So if everyday life is, from here on in, going to stand in for a set of problems, for some productive stumbling blocks and detours, then we need to find a way of allowing these problems to surface. One way, the way chosen here, is to ask the most everyday of questions, the kind that 3-year olds ask in eager anticipation that a grown-up will be able to answer their curiosity ('where do clouds go to bed?' for instance). These are the blunt questions, driven by curiosity, the 'why, where, what, who, and how' that signal a frustration with nuanced interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Such questions want to cut to the chase. They necessarily require a broad brush. But unfortunately such questions rarely find satisfactory answers, inevitably generating more questions. So be warned – what follows does not provide much in the way of answers, and as a route-map to theories of everyday life it offers little in the way of short cuts.

## What?

What is the everyday? Such a question leads us immediately into the realm of speculation. So much easier to be clear about what it is not. Lightning striking TV sets for instance, or your numbers winning the national lottery. But are not such things also part of everyday life? Is not the fear of lightning what might make you unplugging your TV at night? And is not the unlikelyness of winning woven into the everydayness of the lottery? The problem with the everyday is that its contours might be so vague as to encompass almost everything (or certain aspects of everything). So on the one hand the national lottery points to the everyday as exceptional and singular (winning is exceptional), the choice of numbers nearly

always particular, as are the dreams and aspirations that accompany playing the lottery). On the other hand the lottery can be seen as part of a vast number of people's everyday life in its ordinary generality (the majority of 'players' play each week, they share an understanding that they are more likely to be struck by lightning than win, yet still play). Here then might be a question facing the study of everyday life: is everyday life characterised by singular, individual acts (an accumulation of particularity, so to speak) or is it understandable as an overarching structure common to a large group of people?

If everyday life as an object of study sits uncertainly across these two perspectives (the particular and the general) we should also point out that this is merely one aspect of a range of dualities that can be seen to impact on everyday life studies. Here I want to suggest that these dualities can be provisionally grouped in interconnected ways that relate to a variety of perspectives on the everyday. So, in approaches that have privileged the particular we can find tendencies that have stressed other features of everyday life: the agency of individuals in daily life, forms of resistance or non-conformity to social structures, a stress on feelings and experience. Similarly, to approach everyday life as a realm of generality tends to privilege social structures, institutions and discourses, and to see these as a domain of power determining the everyday. Of course this is to oversimplify a complex history of the study of everyday life, and nearly all the writers and theorists who productively attend to the everyday evidence approaches that navigate across these poles (indeed this might be the very condition for attending to the everyday). However, it still might be useful to mark out these poles as tendencies with the understanding that we are not categorising approaches so much as getting a feel for certain (linked) orientations towards everyday life.

So, if we sketch out a vector of these tendencies it might look something like this:

Particular	General
Agency	Structure
Experiences/Feelings	Institutions/Discourses
Resistance	Power
Micro-analysis	Macro-analysis

For shorthand these tendencies can be seen as forms of micro-analyses and macro-analyses. And if we cannot simply line up theorists of the everyday on one side or the other of this vector without losing something of the complexity of their thought, were we to do so we might at least uncover some partial truths. To list Michel de Certeau, say, under micro-analysis, and Michel Foucault, for instance, under macro-analysis, inevitably smoothes out contradictions and nuanced thought, but it does accord with something of the general drift of their work.

Perhaps the most central question for the recent history of cultural and social theory, and clearly a crucial question for the study of everyday life, is levelled at the duality resistance and/or power. Does the everyday provide the training ground for conformity, or is it rather the place where conformity is evaded? Or to put it slightly differently: is the everyday a realm of submission to relations of power or the space in which those relations are contested (or at least negotiated in relatively interesting ways)? Informing these questions (as I have already suggested) is a scepticism aimed at questioning the transparency of the

everyday. Such scepticism is what makes any definite and simple answer to these questions problematic. Let me outline the form this scepticism takes.

Perhaps the two singular 'events' that lay the foundations for modern thought are to be found in the writing of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. What unites the very different work of Marx and Freud might be located at the level of the everyday. For Freud, as for Marx, the everyday is both real and unreal, both actually and the disguise of actuality. To put it as simply as possible: the everyday is not as it appears. Or rather behind (or alongside, or underneath) the appearance of everyday life lies another actuality. For Freud what is bracketed out in the appearance of everyday life is a forceful realm of desire and fear that can, if unchecked, burst through the propriety of daily life. If you are lucky such interruptions will be confined to the occasional slip of the tongue (Chapter 1): if, on the other hand, the irruptions of the unconscious get the upper hand then the ability to function in daily life will be severely compromised. For the most part 'culture and society' can be understood as the name given to the checking and censorship that manages the troubling presence of these drives. Propriety and etiquette (the protocols of everyday life) instil a form of life 'safe' from untrammelled desires and murderous lusts.

Yet from another perspective what is presented as civilised conduct might constitute a seemingly well over a much more unseemly actuality. From the point of view of psychoanalysis, social propriety (morality, civilised behaviour, and so on) might be seen as a ritualistic and socially sanctioned re-presentation of desirous and fearful material. Thus, primalval desires could be seen as being re-coded into socially legitimate ones: in the place of blood-thirsty aggression lies 'healthy' competition and ambition; in the stead of unrestrained sexual appetites comes the complex and bizarre rignarole of modern sexual moves. The everyday then, while it may give off a seemingly appearance, never manages completely to bracket out the murky realm of the unconscious. Everyday life becomes the stage where the unconscious performs (individually via slips, dreams and neurotic symptoms, socially via accepted morality and the protocols of conventional behaviour), but never with its gloves off. Instead, the unconscious can be seen only in glimpses: in the oblique and devious forms of mistakes and fancy; in the circuitous routes it takes to fashion social protocols. As far as this goes we might suggest that Freud invites a contradictory understanding of everyday life. On the one hand the everyday becomes a repressive realm that censors the unconscious. On the other hand everyday life (or just as pertinently, every-night life) becomes the place where, however indirectly, the unconscious makes its presence felt. Whatever debates there are about the veracity of such an approach one thing remains clear: psychoanalysis undermines attempts to pass the everyday off as the accumulation of innocent habits and customs or as governed by fully conscious beings.

The idea of 'the actuality behind the actuality' is also a theme in Marx's understanding of everyday life. Perhaps the most explicit figuring of the everyday as an illusionistic yet 'real' reality is to be found in Marx and Engels' writing on ideology. In 1846, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1985) argue that the self-understanding of a culture is produced from the 'material life-process' of society. Or to put it another way: ideology is a product of the relationships and processes of a society (rather than merely the result of thought). The way that the world appears (at first glance, so to speak) is the outcome of the particular material circumstances in which it is lived. This is Marx arguing for a form of materialist philosophy and against the prevailing inclination for idealist thought. The

point for our purposes, however, is to note that for Marx, while there is a definite relationship between the material actuality of everyday life and the actual way it is perceived, this relationship is distorted. Or in Marx and Engels' analogy, simply upside-down: 'if in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process' (Marx and Engels [1846] 1985: 47). So for Marx and Engels the appearance of the everyday works to hide (distort) the material circumstances (the division of labour, most crucially) that gives rise to this distortion. Actual everyday life is life lived upside-down, where workers are paid a modest but essentially fair wage and where those that own property and people have only been exercising their rights. But while Marx and Engels employ a language of illusion to describe the ideological appearance of the world, it is clear that not only is this the outcome of real concrete processes, but also it describes a real *lived* actuality. We live this upside-down-ness as reality. So if the *appearance* of the world it is not as fundamental as the 'actuality' behind the actuality, ideology has to be seen as a profound actuality rather than an illusion that can simply be cast off by taking a second look.

This understanding of the ideology of the everyday as both *illusory and profoundly real* is best seen historically. It is only when ideological forms are generally understood as *natural* that the sense of ideology as being both illusion and actuality can be grasped. The corollary of this is that by the time something is generally understood as ideological it is no longer operating as ideology. It is only when the upside-down-ness of daily life is perceived as right-way-up-ness (without a second thought) that ideology as a lived materiality can be seen for the profound actuality that Marxism suggests. So when sexist ideologies are *not* recognised as sexist by either the dominating sex or the dominated one, then ideology can be seen as both illusion and lived actuality (rather than only illusion). So, for instance, the moment of Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* might be seen as the moment when sexist ideology is beginning to be recognised as such, when it is becoming visible as ideological. Such a moment would have to be contrasted with a time when such an understanding of everyday life could not even enter the imagination.

The difficulty here should be obvious: either ideology is both invisible and operative, or visible and contested. If ideology is the alibi that allows exploitative divisions to appear legitimate then the alibi needs to be believed. But perhaps this is overstating the case, after all, in life ideology might be seen to operate unevenly with some people living their ideological beliefs in profound ways, while others hold on to the alibi of ideology as a form of self-interest, and still others contesting ideology at every turn. It is also not hard to imagine individuals living across these differences: fiercely contesting sexism, say while holding onto unexamined beliefs in the naturalness of heterosexual relations. Yet ideology as a form that invisibly saturates a culture as nature (or second-nature) is ideology at its most powerful and everyday.

This makes the analysis of ideology more difficult than at first it might seem because it suggests that ideologies reside in precisely those places where they are not perceived to be (or perceived at all). This is also why everyday life and ideology both overlap and have so much in common – both 'suffer' from inattention. Both need to be seen as quasi-invisible and surreptitious realms that require imaginative panache as much as straightforward effort to make them visible.

So this brief description of Marxism and Freudianism begins to outline the sense of unease that a tradition of modern thought would have in confronting an everyday life that purported to be simply self-evident. It should also be clear that from this perspective the everyday does not supply happy endings or even happy beginnings. Both Marxism and Freudianism when applied to the everyday suggest an approach that in attempting to reveal the unconscious or non-apparent structures of everyday life uncover deep structures that are relentlessly gothic in their dimensions. For Freud it is the almost inevitable tragedy of loss, forbidden love, and death anxiety, which lurks bubbling under the everyday. For Marx everyday capitalism is a catastrophic engine devouring material and human resources and structured across class antagonisms.

Marx and Freud both attempt to reveal structures that might underpin (and undermine) the everyday reality of experience and to do this they both navigate across the poles of the particular and the general. If Marx and Freud set the scene for modern cultural theory they do so in a way that casts doubt on the veracity of perceived everyday actuality. But they do this contradictorily: on the one hand the surface of the everyday (its manifest content) needs to be given the closest of scrutiny (what you see is what there is), and on the other hand the project is precisely to go behind the scenes and reveal underlying structures and latent contents.

### Macro tendencies

In certain ways Marx and Freud can be seen to approach modern everyday life from an anthropological perspective; they want to explain what it is to live as part of a culture. And it seems inevitable that anthropology (as a very loose catch-all term) will be productive for the study of everyday life. As the anthropologist Marc Augé suggests, traditional anthropology can be characterised as a 'concern for the qualitative, insistence on collecting direct testimony — lived experience', for the purpose of discerning what is 'permanent and unconscious' about a culture (Augé 1999a: 1). Of course the idea of permanent cultures is, as Augé is at pains to point out, tied to an idea that remote cultures (remote for western anthropologists that is), that have traditionally been anthropology's objects, are unchanging and socially 'backward'.<sup>2</sup> And it is this duality between empirical work in the everyday (in the field) that looks at the qualitative experience of culture, and the use of this information to construct an interpretation of culture as 'permanent and unconscious' that links us to the polar vector of micro- and macro-analyses.

Twentieth-century anthropology (like other disciplines in the social sciences) can be seen to hold out the goal of combining these tendencies. For Bronisław Malinowski (see Chapter 14), writing in the 1920s about his work in the Trobriand Islands, anthropologists need first of all to immerse themselves in the daily life of the group of people they are studying:

As I went on my morning walk through the village, I could see intimate details of family life, of toilet, cooking, taking of meals; I could see the arrangements of the day's work, people starting on their errands, or groups of men and women busy at some manufacturing tasks. Quarrels, jokes, family scenes, events

usually trivial, sometimes dramatic but always significant, formed the atmosphere of my daily life, as well as theirs.

(Malinowski 1922: 7)

Leaving aside the interesting question of Malinowski's *actual* relationship with the Trobriand Islanders (a theme eloquently explored in Clifford 1988 and Geertz 1993) his declared intention is to ground his anthropological practice in a thorough familiarity with the particularities of Trobriand daily life. Yet if Malinowski begins with the particular, his (and other anthropologists') 'duty' is 'drawing up all the rules and regularities of tribal life; all that is permanent and fixed' (Malinowski 1922: 11). The drift, therefore, of Malinowski's approach is to move from the particular to the general, from the contingencies of the daily to the permanent regularities of a culture seen as stable and fixed.

The explicit drive that starts out with the recording of everyday contingencies so as to reveal what Ruth Benedict would later call the 'patterns of culture' (Benedict [1934] 1989) works to filter (and banish) exceptions from the mass of observed material so as to leave only the customary. By observing and recording the routines of daily life (and the non-everyday, but nonetheless regular, festivals and rituals) anthropologists can extract custom from the merely haphazard or aberrant. To uncover underlying structures it becomes necessary for ethnographers to search out the conventional, to be attuned to the repetitions. As a contemporary ethnographer of western industrial cultures (particularly labour unions) puts it:

I knew my job in the field was completed when I discovered the source of my impatience. I had heard the stories, witnessed the exchanges, and observed the events so many times that I knew how they would end when they began. I could predict the process as well as the outcome. To paraphrase Anselm Strauss, my research categories were saturated. To convince myself that saturation was not simply an expedient excuse for fatigue, I tried to predict how the process would unfold. When I succeeded, I knew the time to leave had come.

(Wellman 1994: 582)

Anthropological ethnography then is in many instances dedicated to looking for behavioural and discursive repetitions, for the dominant forms of a culture. It is in this way that the hard work of fieldwork gets used to underwrite interpretations of social structures, exchange networks, and so on.

A similar operation is evident in some traditions of western critical theory. For instance Theodor Adorno's most ethnographic work was concerned with the detailed analyses of mass cultural forms as a way of showing the prevalence of authoritarian irrationalism in capitalist modernity (in itself a recognisably anthropological topic). In his content analysis of the *Los Angeles Times* astrology column in the 1950s (Adorno 1994) the 'field' of ethnographic investigation becomes the textual arena of astrological journalism in the form of predictions and advice for those born under the various astrological signs. By looking at the insistent commands (voiced in the column) to follow the advice of successful friends and colleagues, Adorno establishes an underlying authoritarianism that promotes dependency on those with power, and urges submission to social norms. The fact

that Adorno's 'field' is textual makes it no less ethnographic; after all ethnographers are in the business of looking at culture as 'texts', whether those texts are spoken, gestured, performed or written. What Adorno is looking at is a number of particular instances of astrological culture as it is circulated on a daily basis (through a newspaper), and from which he can distil an authoritarian and conformist mode of address. Yet because Adorno's field is concerned only with the addressee as an imagined figure within the field of the *Los Angeles Times* we have no way of knowing what the impact of this mode of address is. This does not lessen the credibility of Adorno's analysis as Adorno is interested in cultural forms as a structure of dominance (and where better to find cultural dominance than in the pages of mass circulation newspapers?). What it does mean is that knowledge of the multiple singularities of reading the astrology column (on an occasional or daily basis) and the various modes of reading ('religiously', ironically and so on) are effectively bracketed out. In this sense the drift from the particularity of a field to the generality of interpretation bypasses the everyday as an arena of heterogeneous experience, and it does so in ways not dissimilar from anthropological practices of distillation and extraction.

Perhaps the most influential social and historical ethnographer of the West in contemporary critical theory is Michel Foucault. Although Foucault is concerned with the overarching governance of daily life, it is not at first clear how he stands in relation to the study of everyday life. On the one hand the kinds of institutional assemblages that he focuses on (hospitals, prisons and so on) clearly constitute elements of our everyday life, and at times simply become our everyday life. But if Lefebvre is right in suggesting that everyday life is what happens across and in-between these domains of specialised knowledges and practices then there is something clearly missing from Foucault's approach (for everyday life studies that is). In his accounts of the daily regimes and discursive practices of institutions like prisons (Foucault 1982) and asylums (Foucault 1971) Foucault offers a penetrating description of the way that power (or micro-power to use a specifically Foucauldian vocabulary) orchestrates daily life. For Foucault, power is never simply to be found in the legal rules governing an institution or in excessive displays of force, rather Foucault finds it in the repetitive practices that both produce and instil a sense of a disciplinary self.

Foucault is famous for an approach to culture that attends to networks of power observable within *discourses* on sexuality, health, crime and punishment, and so on. But his reliance on a specifically *written* archive of texts needs to be seen as a necessary condition of his historical orientation rather than as the object of investigation. In attempting to map the forms of power deployed in the nineteenth century under the banner of sexuality, for instance, he is necessarily limited to written documents. But it is his interest in the material *practices* of power that connects him to an ethnographic tradition of attending to culture and provides his most productive contribution to the study of everyday life. In this sense it is more accurate to see Foucault's object as an apparatus (*dispositif*) rather than a discourse. When asked what he meant by the term *dispositif* Foucault replied:

What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much

as the unsaid. . . . Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements.

(Foucault 1980a: 194)

It is this sense of particular practices (the bodily examination in the doctor's surgery for instance) linked with other practices (also based on a belief in the body's forensic ability to tell its own story) that suggests that power operates across a dispersed set of practices orchestrated by a ubiquitous understanding of the world. So here again we have an approach that starts out by scrutinising the particular and peculiar practices located at the level of the everyday, in order to arrive (through a concentrated attention to forms of repetition) at a general understanding of the operations of cultural apparatuses. In this way the everyday experience of prisoners becomes an unnecessary supplement to a story that sees the apparatus of disciplinary as the production of a particular mentality. If this ends up describing an effective regularisation of everyday life then this is due to Foucault's attention to precisely those forms of governance that sought to regulate everyday life. Yet when his attention focuses on the particularity of one specific individual's experience of the apparatus of sexuality (in his presentation of the nineteenth-century hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin's diary and medical reports) the story that unfolds cannot be reduced to a tale of the generative power of discourse to produce subjects (Foucault 1980b). If Barbin's suicide is a direct result of the determining power of the contemporary medical regime (when Barbin was legally declared male) this tragic end is set against a story of daily life that seemed (for the most part) out of reach of medical governance.

For everyday life studies, Foucault could act as a kind of caution for any one claiming too hastily that the attention towards everyday life (academic, but also more broadly social scientific) is simply beneficial, and needs to be encouraged. What we cannot help but get out of Foucault (and this is an absolute crucial element in the study of everyday life) is the way that the everyday has been continually invaded by a certain scrutiny for the effective governance of social subjects. Thus any claim simply to suggest that the everyday evidences subtle and wily evasions to forms of domination would also need to recognise that the everyday has been the focus of scrutiny for centuries, and for the most part that scrutiny has accompanied the policing of everyday life. Sexual practices, hygiene, family life, work regimes, diet, have continually been seen as the province of governmental agents.

### Micro tendencies

Perhaps the investigation of everyday life as both an accumulation of singular actions and (potentially at least) an arena for alternative and resistant practices is most easily associated with a form of sociology that could be referred to as micro-sociology. Its most noted exponent is probably Erving Goffman (see Chapter 4). In his first book (written in 1956), Goffman argues that everyday life can be seen as an arena where the self performs in a number of different ways (Goffman 1990). For Goffman individuals (particularly, though not exclusively, those that perform subservient roles) act very differently according to the environment that they find themselves in. Thus the performance of polite deference that a

waiter might enact on the restaurant floor (the 'front region' in Goffman's analysis) is reversed as the same waiter enters the kitchens (the 'back region') to perform a more unruly version of the self. In some ways then by concentrating on the micro-sociological spatiality of the everyday, Goffman finds activities that can be seen as resistant to the propriety of sanctioned social behaviour. And it is also by emphasising the *plural* performances of the self (or selves) that some form of resistant behaviour is to be found alongside more submissive activity.

A more explicit correlation between the particularity of everyday life and the theme of social resistance is provided by a range of ethnographic accounts of subcultures, most famously those associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (UK). The Centre published a special issue of its journal *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* dedicated to research on subcultures (which was quickly republished as a book) with the evocative title *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (Hall and Jefferson 1976). In some respects work on subcultures (and what had previously been labelled 'deviancy' in mainstream sociology) has an ambivalent relationship to the everyday. Clearly subcultures exist *in* the everyday (although a number of people might be identified as 'weekend' punks, bikers and so on), yet sub-cultural activity might be seen as often setting its sights on the avoidance of anything that might smack of everydayness in its normative form. For the Birmingham ethnographers, though, it was the everydayness of subcultural activity that was most interesting. What was at stake in the everydayness of drug-taking, or the spectacular uses of clothes, or the practice of communal living, was the question of resistance. Recognising that subcultural activity could not be seen as a purposeful political critique of a social system accompanied by an organised programme of action, the Centre sought ways of understanding subcultural activity in its ritualistic and symbolic opposition to a dominant social order: to take one example: Dick Hebdige's work on mods shows how the appropriation and re-accentuation of social values and material (recoding negative values as positive ones, and vice versa, for instance) works as a form of symbolic defiance:

The negative evaluations of their [mods'] capabilities imposed by the school and work were substituted by a positive assessment of their personal credentials in the world of play (i.e. the same qualities which were assessed negatively by their daytime controllers – e.g. laziness, arrogance, vanity etc. – were positively defined by themselves and their peers in leisure time).

(Hebdige 1976: 93)

Thus disaffected working-class youths' fierce identification of subcultural codes in daily life positively values meanings and practices held up as negative by the various establishments that assess these young people. But what became one of the main areas of discussion was the extent to which this could be seen as resistance rather than a form of symbolic inventiveness, which had little or no social effectivity.

An approach to everyday life that emphasises its particularity and its peculiar tenacity in the face of powerful forces from 'above' is most vividly expressed in the work of Michel de Certeau (see Chapter 6). For de Certeau the everyday is a realm that is both practical and singular, and as such everyday studies would need to look at actions, use and ways of

operating. While this follows Goffman in its emphasis on the live performativity of the everyday, and evidences some similarities with subcultural theory with its emphasis on resistance, it needs to be forcefully distinguished from these approaches as well. For one thing, de Certeau emphatically refuses to take identity as the locus for meaning in everyday life. For de Certeau the social individual is far too waywardly heterogeneous (too networked) to form the basis for an analysis of the everyday as practical life. After all, any one individual lives across a vast range of forces and relationships that, if taken as the basis for viewing the everyday, would obscure the singularity of any single action.

Perhaps as importantly we also need to qualify the term 'resistance' as it functions in de Certeau's work. Unlike many subcultural theorists, resistance in de Certeau's writing is not easily hitched to a cultural politics. In many ways resistance functions as a conservative force that is more easily associated with a slow tenacious refusal to adapt to the rhythms of modern capitalist culture than with the more flamboyant antagonisms performed by subcultures. And while de Certeau does see some of the practices of everyday life as inventively defiant, it would be more in keeping with de Certeau's position to compare everyday life to 'inner-speech'; that never-quite-heard rambling, conjuring up memories, and an uncensored response to life around us. In a weak sense the everyday (for de Certeau) is 'unconscious' in that it is not open to direct observation, or ever fully controllable.

De Certeau necessarily has to insist on a speculative response to the everyday: for him we have yet to describe and account for it. As such any political assessment of the everyday is simply premature. It may be then that all the talk about power and resistance that has preoccupied cultural studies obscures the attempt to ascertain what everyday life is and how it performs. While cultural studies has impatiently pronounced 'political' verdicts on the cultures of the daily, the work of attending to the everyday has yet to be done.

### Negotiated territory

If my imaginary vector (that pits generality against particularity, power against resistance, discursive apparatuses against experience, and macro-analysis against micro-analysis) provides a perspective for making certain proclivities vivid, it starts to break down irredeemably with any close examination of the practices we have been looking at. For instance, ethnographic tendencies that establish footholds in the everyday for the specific purpose of uncovering an order that transcends the everyday usually leave something of the material trace of this particularity (extracts from field journals, reported speech, and so on). Similarly those approaches that insist on the specificity of the micro-culture of everyday life also, and necessarily, provide more general schemas of understanding. In fact it is hard to imagine what the study of culture would look like if it did not at some point make general connections at a level that transcends the particularity of the everyday.

It is also clear that for those that explicitly address the everyday (Lefebvre, say, rather than Foucault) the difficulty and potential of navigating between the poles of particularity and generality becomes a specific focus. For Henri Lefebvre dialectics had to be at the centre of any engagement with the everyday. His explicit Marxism (both as a philosophy and as an activism) meant that his work gravitated towards stressing the general over the

particular, but his dialectical approach understood the particular as saturated with the general in ways that were always particular (it was never simply subsumable within the general). For Lefebvre understanding the 'totality' (which was one of Lefebvre's names for the everyday) would mean not siding with the general against the particular, but weaving the two together. Thus the 'desire for totality' (or for a way of apprehending the logic of social practice) meant a form of attention that would reconcile the polarities of my binary oppositions without sacrificing one side or the other. Totality for Lefebvre could be an endless chain of everyday particularities and plural differences, linked in ways that neither obliterate them nor abandon them to isolation.

It might seem that these days the search for the totality of a culture is too easily associated with a totalitarian view of culture for it to sit easily in an academic culture nervously attuned to cultural differences. Yet while it is true that a desire for totality has often promoted universal values of culture and society (that have elided and suppressed cultural differences in the name of a privileged set of meanings) it is not a foregone conclusion that all ideas about totality will operate in this way. Indeed it may be that the idea of totality has not so much suffered from a lack of confidence, as from a lack of nerve (which might amount to the same thing).

Michel de Certeau also overcomes the opposition between particularity and generality. In an attempt to find the *logic* (or *logics*) of everyday practices he articulates what he calls a 'science of the singular'. The problem facing de Certeau is how to make sense of the everyday as a realm of practice that is always irreducibly specific (always only understood within specific contexts). If this science is going to do something more than endlessly describe the specificity of countless practices it will need to overcome the duality of the particular and the general. The answer for de Certeau seems to be to address the everyday not at the level of content (to do this would be a Sisyphean task), but at the level of form. Thus one way of describing de Certeau's approach to the everyday is to see it as attempting to outline a *grammar* of everyday practices that will attempt to keep alive the specificity of operations while recognising formally similar modes of practice.

Lefebvre and de Certeau's very different solutions to the problem of combining micro and macro perspectives give them a central importance for everyday life studies. But rather than see them as having achieved an adequate understanding of everyday life, we need to see them as working projects that have yet to be completed.

## Who and where?

The question of where to locate the everyday takes us in directions that are both local and global or, to put it another way, both micro-cultural and macro-cultural. The question of where to 'place' the everyday also determines whose everyday life will be the subject of attention. What does it mean, for instance, to suggest (as writers such as Maurice Blanchot have) that the privileged place for the everyday is the street (Blanchot 1987: 17)? What would it mean to shift the emphasis from the street to the home? Alternatively should we locate the everyday (after Foucault) in a series of institutional arrangements (schools, doctors, courts and so on) that might seem both to organise and (at times) to dominate our daily lives? Or is the everyday best seen as outside or between such arrangements?

Alongside such micro-cultural questions we need to ask about the global extensiveness of the everyday. Is everyday life, as a problematic constellation that informs the theorists we have been looking at so far, something peculiar to European and US society? What happens when everyday life is viewed from 'elsewhere'? How might we imagine globalising the study of everyday life?

## Micro-cultural locations of the everyday

In an essay on representations of Paris in turn-of-the-century postcards (late nineteenth and early twentieth century), Naomi Schor (1992) begins by suggesting that theories of everyday life can be divided into two camps. On the one hand the everyday can be seen in a 'feminine or feminist' form that 'links the everyday with the daily rituals of private life carried out within the domestic sphere traditionally presided over by women' (Schor 1992: 188). On the other hand lies the 'masculine or masculinist' version where the everyday exists in the 'public spaces and spheres dominated especially, but not exclusively, in modern Western societies by men':

According to the one, the everyday is made up of the countless repetitive gestures and small practices that fall under the heading of what the existentialists called the contingent. According to the other, the everyday is made up of the chance encounters of the streets: its hero is not the housewife but the *flâneur*. (Schor 1992: 188)

For Schor (as for many other writers) such differences are marked by uneven attention: 'I think it would be safe to say that the street version of the everyday tends to prevail' (Schor 1992: 189). Such splitting of the outside and the inside, the street and the home, does not necessarily bracket-out actual lives (the house is occupied by both men and women, similarly the street is used by men and women). Rather the street and the home become synecdoches pointing to particular orientations and evaluations of everyday life. Put simply it can relate to the everyday as the realm of the repetitions, of habit, and the lack of value, or the everyday as the heroic realm of modernity where we 'parry the stocks of the new and encounter marvellous adventures on the street. As writers like Mike Featherstone (1995) and Xiaobing Tang (see Chapter 13) have argued, the 'heroic' is dedicated to overcoming everyday life, and in its connotations of masculinity might be seen to effectively accentuate the everyday (the non-heroic) as feminine. Perhaps then those well-known accounts of modernity, which evoke a heroism at the heart of the everyday, effectively shy away from the everydayness of the everyday (for instance Baudelaire 1964). Undoubtedly the privileging of 'the heroic life' has worked to exclude accounts of the everyday lives of women. Schor's response to this non-symmetrical division is not simply to side with the (dominantly understood) feminine everyday (which might mean continuing a feminist historical examination of the domestic) but to explore a form where two everyday lives collide – postcards of Paris at the turn of the century. Schor not only works to restore women's position in the streets of Paris (her postcards picture women cab drivers, for instance) but by attending to the written message, she uncovers the registration of a domestic everyday as



well. Looking at both sides of the postcard she finds a form that can be seen to negotiate between a *picturing* of Paris life on the one hand and a *writing* of everyday life on the other:

From the backs of these cards emerges a murmur of small voices speaking of minor aches and pains, long-awaited engagements, obscure family feuds; reporting on safe arrivals and unexpected delays; ordering goat cheese; acknowledging receipt of a bouquet of violets, a bonnet; in short, carrying on the millions of minute transactions, the grain of everyday life.

(Schor 1992: 239)

A project on postcard collecting that combines both recto and verso sides of the postcard is Tom Phillips' *The Postcard Century* (Phillips 2000). Significantly Phillips's collection of postcards which sweep chronologically across the twentieth century *show a life 'less ordinary', so to speak, while the backs evidence a pressing need to articulate daily life*. Where, then, we locate the everyday even at the most microscopic cultural level (which side of the postcard, for instance) is going to affect whose lives we talk about and how we can talk about them. It will come as no surprise to learn that some of the most productive work on the domestic everyday has emerged from feminist social historians and feminist design historians (see, for instance, Attfield and Kirkham 1995; Davidoff 1995). But it is interesting too that some of the most precisely *placed* discussions of everyday life street culture have also emerged from feminist studies (for instance, Pollock 1988b).

As we have already seen, Erving Goffman was attentive to the micro-spatiality of the daily, and it seems significant that in charting this terrain he made use of specifically feminist writing. For Goffman it is a writer like Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir [1949] 1993) who, by attending to the everydayness of women's lives, registers the particularity of location and space in the performance of gender. Earlier still we might want to suggest that a micro-cultural perspective is evident in the work of the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere writing about the daily lives of women in the 1920s:

In everyday life one may observe the mask of femininity taking curious forms. One capable housewife of my acquaintance is a woman of great ability, and can herself attend to typically masculine matters. But when, e.g. any builder or upholsterer is called in, she has a compulsion to hide all her technical knowledge from him and show deference to the workman, making her suggestions in an innocent and artless manner, as if they were 'lucky guesses'.

(Riviere 1986: 39)

What Riviere and others show by focusing on the everyday lives of women is not a series of *fixed* locations that require different performances of gender (or different masquerades in Riviere's description), but a spatiality that results from the everyday life context. Spaces that might be considered female oriented become open to a masculinisation when invaded by male professionals, just as those male professionals can find themselves feminised as they conduct their business in domestic settings.

The micro-location of the daily is clearly a productive arena for everyday life studies,

but rather than simplifying our understanding of the everyday, it effectively complicates it. It might be that the spatiality of the daily (now more so than ever) evidences the multiplicity of 'everydaynesses' that congregate in the everyday environment. As Frank Mort puts it in writing about 'The Politics of Consumption':

We are not in any simple sense 'black' or 'grey' or 'upwardly mobile'. Rather we carry a bewildering range of different, and at times conflicting, identities around with us in our heads at the same time. There is a continual smudging of persons and lifestyles, depending where we are (at work, on the high street) and the spaces we are moving between.

(Mort 1989: 169)

The micro-geography of daily life provides a way of pluralising the self that a concentration on 'identity' in the singular would miss. But it also continually finds evidence for the way that identity categories animate such a geography. To make claims for everyday life being in one place rather than another will avoid attending to the 'movement of the daily', and it might be this movement, this continual drift of the daily, that is most difficult and most productive to register.

### Macro-cultural location of the everyday

It will become clear to anyone looking at the contents and permission pages of this *Reader* that the vast majority of the chapters are European and North American in origin. Even those chapters that are about everyday life in Japan or China have been produced in US universities and publishing houses. Reflections on the problematics of everyday life are obviously not limited to such locations, yet the work of translating and disseminating a truly global perspective has yet to be done. So in thinking about the macro-cultural location of the everyday it is necessary to try to imagine what such a perspective might look like.

Returning for a moment to the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre it would seem that he posits some form of 'neo'-colonialism at the heart of the everyday. In his 1958 'Foreword' to the *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre imagines an approach to everyday life that would move from the daily activities at the level of specifically individual experience (shopping, for instance) to the level of the supra-individual, for instance, global financial markets (Lefebvre 1991: 57). Importantly Lefebvre insists on the need to see the supra-individual *already* registered at the micro-cultural level of buying some sugar. Here the particularity of Lefebvre's example is significant: while sugar (in the 1950s at least) is the proverbial everyday commodity, to choose sugar over, say, a French cheese points to an important perspective for everyday life. The fact that sugar played a significant role in the history of western colonialism infects the daily life of Parisian shoppers with the continued colonialism articulated by the global market. For Lefebvre the end of one stage of colonialism (marked by the successful liberation struggles of colonised people) does not end colonialism. Instead, new forms of colonialism find new spatial forms. For France this meant the concrete internalisation of colonial relations (as French urban environments increasingly became characterised by 'ethnic' enclaves) alongside economic

developments that linked France to a transnational capitalism that was propped up by a proletariat now located in places like China and Korea. And, of course, France is not alone in this reconfiguring of colonial relations.

The insistence that non-western lives impact at the level of everyday life in the West is an important aspect of many recent forms of political culture. A 'politicisation of the everyday' (insisted on by environmentalist groups, anti-capitalist movements, and so on) takes as its source the understanding that what happens at the level of micro-culture also reverberates at a more global level. What to buy, throw away, what to eat and drink, and so on, echo across a global life-world, where the everydayness of one action (buying a pair of trainers or jeans, for instance) directly and indirectly affects and effects the everyday lives of others. To live in the West is to be connected to patterns of exploitation, environmental catastrophe, and poverty taking place in both the West and the non-West, even if those connections are hidden in the practices of big business. But while these approaches to everyday life importantly make connections between different nation-states, and make explicit the neo-colonialism at the heart of the everyday, they do so from a perspective that is still predominantly located in Europe and North America. What might happen if we actually change the location *from* which such questions about the everyday are asked?

Frank Mort's understanding of everyday life (mentioned above) is located in the urban centres of the UK, but is it pertinent to lives lived elsewhere? Does Mort's insistence that contemporary life is lived across a range of identities allow much purchase on the lives of those living their everyday lives in Beijing or Bangkok? The answer might be that the UK provides only a relatively weak version of such everyday phenomena, and that Mort's description of 'bewildering' and 'conflicting' identities is much more vivid elsewhere. For instance, the young Chinese adults walking the streets of Beijing, with dyed blonde hair, listening to Chinese and US pop on personal stereos, experiencing the conflicting tensions of school, then going home to eat a traditional meal in the family apartment, might fulfil Mort's claims about everyday identity more convincingly than any young adults in Europe and the USA ever could.

In this sense Maurice Blanchot's words, written in the 1950s, might suggest a perspective towards everyday life that will need to be taken globally. For Blanchot everyday life becomes recognisable at moments of revolutionary transformation:

It will be a question of opening the everyday onto history, or even, of reducing its privileged sector: private life. This is what happens in moments of effervescence – those we call revolution – when existence is public through and through.

(Blanchot [1959] 1987: 12)

While Blanchot's words might suggest that everyday life becomes public literally at the moment when people take to the streets, we would need to include other revolutionary processes as well. China's contemporary 'Cultural Revolution' (Mao being swapped for IKEA) brings the everyday to the surface vividly and problematically (see Chapter 13). What Mass-Observation were noticing in Britain in the 1930s (a series of symbolic crises that drive the everyday' out of hiding: see Chapter 15) is even more applicable in con-

temporary China. Kristin Ross's claim (extracted from Benjamin and Lefebvre) that 'the moments when everyday life becomes the most vivid or tangible are the moments when most people find themselves living more than one life' (Ross 1992: 63) could have been written for the blonde-haired youth of Beijing. It might be argued then that if everyday life studies is interested in everyday life at its most vivid and intense, it will need to 'travel' to those places where everyday life is at its most liminal.<sup>3</sup>

While these brief comments have hardly scratched the surface of the issues and potential surrounding the globalisation of an imagined everyday life studies project, it seems clear that an everyday life approach to culture has the capacity to orient itself in more global ways. How it will do this and what will happen when or if it does is the challenge posed by the present.

## HOW?

If (as I argued right at the start of this survey) everyday life is not simply a quantifiable, transparent, palpable actuality to be straightforwardly mined for information, then the question of how to register it needs to be posed. But this is not simply a methodological question about how to eke out information from a shadowy and recalcitrant realm, it is also (and necessarily) a question of how to present and articulate the daily (how to write it, picture it and so on). Indeed the question of how to register the everyday might insist that issues of method take place simultaneously at the level of our attention to the everyday and in our representation of it. We have had a glimpse of the way that social science methodologies navigate across the dualities of relatively abstract categories (the particular and the general for instance), but the everyday is also an eminently practical realm that needs to pose the most practical questions to those who would try to present it. The everyday might suggest approaches that dialectically grasp daily life across a number of different registers, but the question of *how* these different registers will be practically knitted together (in a book, essay, film, etc.) is clearly crucial. The 'coherent narrative' and the 'rigorous argument' have been the dominant forms encouraged by social science approaches, but whether these forms of presentation fit the material world of everyday life is, I would argue, in need of questioning. This is to place the question of *form* at the forefront of everyday life theory. If it is not going continually to miss what it seeks, then everyday life studies will need to consider both the form of the everyday and the forms most adequate or productive for registering it.

Whether or not this is a question specific to everyday life, it seems clear that the everyday poses it in a particularly vivid way. For instance the anthropologist Michael Taussig asks:

But what sort of sense is constitutive of this everydayness? Surely this sense includes much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, an embodied and somewhat automatic 'knowledge' that functions like peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is inagentic and sensate rather than ideational.

(Taussig 1992: 141)

And if the everyday is not only, or dominantly, composed of ideas and 'knowledge', then does it make much 'sense' to talk and write about it only within such a frame? And if the everyday is something more like peripheral vision (or distraction) and is experienced as non-idealational sensation (tactile and odorous, for instance) then is not the challenge to find ways of writing and registering that are adequate to it or, perhaps more modestly, less inadequate?<sup>4</sup> For Taussig this 'calls for an understanding of the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as something suspended above and distant from the represented' (Taussig 1992: 10).

How could the everyday be represented and articulated in such a contiguous manner that its qualities become both evident and productive? For example, if tiredness, boredom, distraction, daydreaming and so on are considered important aspects of daily life, then how would a 'study' (if that is the right word) present these elements as part of a felt experience of daily life? How would tiredness and boredom *register* in an account of daily life? Can we point to socio-cultural texts where a sense of the *feeling* of tiredness is recoverable? In this regard it might be that it has been the province of art and literature to provide experiential maps of the everyday. Literary traditions from nineteenth-century realism and naturalism, through to modernist novels (the writing of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, for instance) and beyond, have insistently focused on the everydayness of life to mount what might be claimed as a literary phenomenology of modern life. I want to suggest here that the future of everyday life studies will necessitate a form of articulation built on the fault line that divides the social sciences and art. Or using another academic vernacular it will require an inventive 'blurring of genres' (Gaertz 1993: 19–35): sociology and literature, for instance, but not the sociology of literature, rather a literary sociology (for example, Edgar Morin's suggestion in Chapter 16). Clearly there is much in the past that can be thought of in terms of genre blurring (the anthropologist Ruth Benedict, for instance, saw her work in terms of its literary standing; Benedict 1989) and many of the texts included here are examples of blurred practice. Yet it is also true that such blurring is never easy, particularly when more evidently expressive or poetic forms are brought into the arena of social and human science. Implicit and explicit 'poetic' approaches to the understanding of everyday life have found themselves easily dismissed as simply aestheticising social life.<sup>5</sup> But the anxiety that the foregrounding of 'style' could discredit certain kinds of knowledge can be based only on the search for a transparency of presentation. As Roland Barthes suggested in the 1960s such a desire for transparency does not dispense with the problem of style, rather it insists on the domination of a particular style (or styles) that are rendered invisible precisely because of their domination (Barthes [1966] 1987).

The examination of style has of course been a common enough project in art and literary criticism. And since the heady days of structuralism such a project has been aimed increasingly at the human sciences more generally. Anthropology, historiography, sociology, have all been examined as literary edifices that often work to veil the ubiquitous tools of their academic trade: namely the business of writing (see for instance the classic accounts offered by White 1973 and in Clifford and Marcus 1986). What such a perspective does is refuse the idea that any text is style-less, while admitting that certain forms (say narrative realism in history) have become so naturalised as effectively to appear invisible. Inquiring into the stylistics or poetics of a work regarded as simply factual or scientific performs the

function of denaturalising it, making it strange and unfamiliar. As we will see, such procedures can be particularly useful in thinking about how to attend to the everyday.

But the project of inquiring into the poetics of the human sciences has usually been restricted to the descriptive and critical analyses of texts. Much less emphasis has been placed on the question of the generative potential of poetics for the human sciences.<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly perhaps, the theoretical debates that were primarily concerned with the generative potential of aesthetic procedures (as forms of inquiry, rather than simply 'expression') focused on practices of art production and filmmaking. These debates, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s concerning art and filmmaking, insisted on treating aesthetic procedures as forms of social practice and political engagement (particularly in regard to Marxism and Feminism). For a number of artists, filmmakers and theorists (such as Victor Burgin, Claire Johnston, Mary Kelly, Laura Mulvey, Griselda Pollock, Paul Willemen, Peter Wollen and so on), aesthetic forms became a crucial aspect of studying and articulating the social (see Pollock 1988a and Willemen 1994 for representative accounts). The dramatist Bertolt Brecht, in particular, provided some initial forms and procedures that could be adopted and adapted to articulate complex and provocative representations of the dynamics of sexuality and class. This is not the place to recount these various practices or to assess them in relation to everyday life, but it is worth considering how someone like Brecht might be a resource, not simply for the production of dramatic or artistic works, but for more prosaic attempts to register the daily. What might Brecht have to offer the practice of cultural studies, for instance, in its attempt to articulate the everyday? I want to suggest ways that Brechtianism might be a resource for articulating the everyday, but, as a qualification, I also want to suggest that Brechtianism (purposefully) ignores certain issues concerning an aesthetics of daily life.

As already hinted at, the question of 'making strange' or 'estrangement' is going to be a crucial tool for everyday life studies. Indeed as Fredric Jameson puts it in his book on Brecht's method: the theory of estrangement, which always takes off from the numbness and familiarity of everyday life, must always estrange us from the everyday' (Jameson 1998: 84). It is the everyday that receives our 'daily inattention' (Georges Bataille quoted in Hollier 1993: 14) and invites us to look elsewhere. It is to the everyday that we consign that which no longer holds our attention. Things become 'everyday' by becoming invisible, unnoticed, part of the furniture. And if familiarity does not always breed contempt, it does encourage neglect. As Brecht suggests:

before familiarity can turn into awareness the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness; we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation. However frequently recurrent, modest, vulgar it may be it will now be labelled as something unusual.

(Brecht 1964: 144)

How then do we strip the everyday of its inconspicuousness? By what means do we resuscitate something that fails to interest us?

The antidote to our negligence towards the everyday is a kind of purposefully alienating perspective that refuses to utilise ready-made descriptions (see for instance the kind of 'applied Brechtianism' evident in Chapters 19, 20 and 21). The example that Brecht gives

suggests a way of transforming something as overly familiar and everyday as a car into something strange. By insisting on 'the Eskimo definition' that 'A car is a wingless aircraft that crawls along the ground' (Brecht 1964: 145) the car is momentarily rescued from naturalised inattention by being made 'strange' (denaturalised). It is worth noting that this 1940 example implies the usefulness of cross-cultural perspectives (in this case the importing of Inuit representation as a way of interrupting the 'inconspicuous' way that cars existed in certain non-Inuit cultures). Brecht, of course, recognised that what he was giving a name to had been the mainstay of literary production for centuries (after all it could be argued that the poetics of metaphor and allegory attempts to revivify the 'ordinary' world). He also argued that the 'making strange' that was performed by literature was a recognisable feature of the everyday landscape itself (when the inconspicuous seems to suddenly demand our attention). But by theorising the techniques and aim of defamiliarisation, he provides a useful platform for thinking about the methods for registering the everyday.

Cross-cultural estrangement (using the Inuit description of a car to 'view' traffic in Berlin or New York) provides an endless repertoire that could be used to show what is under your nose (there but not seen). But cross-cultural estrangement would not only mean viewing one (geographically distinct) culture from the point of view of another. Cross-cultural estrangement could also be thought of in terms of genre blurring. For instance the 'Critical Dictionary' that Georges Bataille edited and wrote (for the journal *Documents*) provides remarkable examples of cross-cultural estrangement performed as genre blurring. Something so simple as applying the language of chemistry and commerce to give account of 'the body' performs a dramatic estrangement:

The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to manufacture seven cakes of toilet-soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium-sized nail, and sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph. In addition, a little potassium and sulphur, but in an unusable quantity. These different raw materials, costed at current prices, represent an approximate sum of 25 francs.

(Dr Charles Henry May quoted in Bataille *et al.* 1995: 56–7)

Such an 'estrangement' of the body (written in the 1920s) predicts the atrocious reality of Nazi death-camps in the 1930s and 1940s. As the entry 'Man' in the Critical Dictionary continues, Bataille shows how a certain literal facticity (albeit peppered with the rhetoric of conviction) can make the most naturalised and invisible of practices appear truly barbaric:

If, taking the animals put to death in a single day in all the slaughterhouses of the Christian countries [in the 1920s], we set them walking head to tail, with only sufficient space between them that they do not tread on one another, they would stretch in Indian file for 1322 miles – more than thirteen hundred miles of warm, palpitating living bodies, dragged each day as the years go by, to the Christians' bloody slaughterhouses, so that they might quench their thirst for blood at the red fountain gushing from the veins of their murdered victims. . . .

A calculation based on very modest figures shows that the quantity of blood shed each year in the slaughterhouses of Chicago is more than sufficient to float five transatlantic liners.

(Sir William Earnshaw Cooper quoted in Bataille, *et al.* 1995: 57–8)

For Bataille such 'base materialism' (the name he accorded such cross-cultural matter-of-factness) brought out a dimension of western everyday life continually suppressed by the superimposition of 'reason' and 'civility'. To make vivid the everyday required a savage assault on notions of western decorum.

Estrangement for Brecht was intended to purposefully cut off the supply of pacifying intoxicants that he claimed the theatre supplied to its audiences. Brecht argued that the kinds of critical expertise voiced by audiences at sports events hardly ever came to the surface at theatrical events. For Brecht, theatre audiences were being emotionally bamboozled by the tricks of naturalist theatre that encouraged empathy rather than thought. He claimed that the theatre could perform such tricks only by systematically veiling its form of production (its trickery). As an example Brecht suggests that no one would ever think of hiding the light source for a sports event (an evening football match, for instance) but that such subterfuge is basic to the dominant theatrical effect (Brecht 1964: 141). Brecht's theatre would refuse such subterfuge, lights would be seen, actors would 'act' as actors (rather than pass themselves off as someone else) and the audience would be confronted with political and ethical problems.

To export Brechtianism into the human sciences might at first glance seem unnecessary; after all, could reading a work of philosophy really be described as a pacifying experience? In many ways then a certain Brechtianism is already at work in the human sciences as they set about questioning and making-strange the world we inhabit, while also revealing their bag of tricks (by declaring research methodologies, for instance). Yet Brecht encouraged a range of 'interruptive' strategies that would be set against the finality of many presentations of the real world. By using a range of media (film, writing, music and so on) and a range of genres (the Greek chorus, folk traditions, etc.) Brecht wove together a montage that was aimed at conflict rather than resolution. And it might be that in the practice of montage, whereby no single perspective or mode of presentation is ultimately privileged, that everyday life studies could undertake a more pronounced form of Brechtianism (purposefully offering plural and contradictory accounts of the everyday). In supplying the theatre with a plethora of forms, and multiple narratives stitched loosely together, Brecht provides a way of presenting complex accounts of the social and everyday world. By refusing the naturalism of the single narrative, and through techniques of interruption, Brecht leaves us with an account of the world decidedly unfinished and open to exploration.

But Brecht's orientation towards the use of different forms had an ultimately pragmatic purpose. For Brecht the use of forms had to entertain (albeit didactically) and had to become 'popular' with audiences (if they were not already) and if this did not happen they had to be abandoned (Brecht 1964: 110–12). Indeed Brecht set his hat against the kind of sensuous writing that might be thought most fitting to describe the everyday (Brecht 1964: 109). For Brecht the question that Tausig poses about a mode of writing contiguous with its object is avoided. Brecht's theatre is dedicated to a promiscuity of

styles, in the belief that (a limited) aesthetic pluralism provided the set of tools necessary for attending to the complexities of the social. What Brechtianism offers everyday life studies is a vehicle more able to contain the multiple strands and complex interweavings of the everyday, while framing them in a way that acknowledges their constructedness and revivifies material that is continually slipping out of view.

The question that remains is still Michael Taussig's: are certain forms of expression particularly suited to the everyday, or contiguous with the everyday (stream of consciousness writing, perhaps)? Likewise are there other modes of registration that seem entirely inadequate to conveying the qualities of everyday life (the statistical survey, for instance)? The relationship between a form of registration and what is being registered is, for everyday life studies, an important question and one not easily resolved. Perhaps a short excursion into a particular moment in the history of art, when everyday life seemed (for some) to find an adequate form, will allow us to more accurately assess the problem.

### The art of everyday life

Modern western art can be seen to exhibit an uneasy relation with everyday life. The cubist collages of Picasso and Braque employed the ephemera of daily life (cheap wallpaper, adverts, newspaper cuttings and such like) in a complex arrangement of forms. Duchamp's ready-mades (a urinal, a bottle rack, a hat-rack, a snow shovel and so on) polemically inserted the everyday into the bastions of high culture. Likewise Pop Art made the everyday commercial culture of its time (commodity packaging, Hollywood icons) its one true subject. The list could go on (see David Ross 2000 for an extensive listing of art's twentieth-century relationship with the quotidian). But does this work, which is clearly both of the everyday and *about* the everyday, exist *in* the everyday? Or to put it another way, does this engagement with the everyday ultimately perform some kind of transcendence of the everyday? For instance, to take some items, usually ones given only the most cursory of attention in daily life, and employ them for the business of art (where attention is never cursory, whatever the desire of the artist), might be understood as an act of salvation: to save the mundane from the negligence that surrounds it. The same argument could be made about sociological investigations of the everyday: in pursuing an everyday activity with the kind of attention brought to bear on it by sociology the activity is removed from the flow of daily life, transforming it (de-everyday-ing it) in the process. Perhaps this is simply the inevitable outcome of attending to the unattended, and perhaps the pay-off is the estrangement that relies on the recontextualisation of the everyday. To recognise the productivity of estrangement while continuing to seek the most adequate and contiguous mode of registration might then be seen as a contradictory and futile attempt. But unless all forms of estrangement are going to be viewed equally, it is at least worth asking questions about the appropriateness of specific *forms* for the everyday.

Art's truck with the everyday highlights this problem. This is not simply an abstract problem of form, but a question of how a *practice* of rendering an image or an object can be seen to coincide (or not) with its subject matter. Here I want to look very briefly at a style that has been dubbed Impressionism.<sup>7</sup> What was radical about the artists associated with Impressionism can be seen at the level of both subject matter and form, and

(crucially) in how the two were combined. For example the work of Edouard Manet and Berthe Morisot (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) combined what might be thought of as a sketchy-ness in rendering, with a certain everydayness in terms of subject matter. While neither sketchiness nor everydayness was unfamiliar to the established world of Parisian art, the combination of both, for a practice that was designed to compete with the kind of highly accomplished historical painting (mainly of mythological subject matter) that dominated



Figure 1.1 Edouard Manet, *Music in the Tuileries Gardens*, 1862 (76 x 119 cm)  
© National Gallery, London



Figure 1.2 Berthe Morisot, *On a Summer's Day*, 1880 (146 x 75 cm) © National Gallery, London

the Paris Salon, was seen at the time as both a provocation and an absurdity (see Clark 1985a).

Tim Clark has written extensively on how paintings of 'modern' life can be seen to register *something* of the particular experience of everyday life in Paris during the Second Empire. In Clark's terms the peculiarity of Manet's work can be seen as 'a taste for the margins and vestiges of social life; a wish to celebrate the "insignificant" or disreputable in modernity' (Clark 1985b: 55). For Clark the everydayness of subject matter was both a characteristic of 'impressionist' work and a way of opposing dominant practices of art (his characterisation of this subject matter is part of an argument that claims that modern art should be seen as a 'practice of negation'). Clark goes on to suggest that what we are calling impressionism evidences 'deliberate displays of painterly awkwardness, or facility in kinds of painting that were not supposed to be worth perfecting' (Clark 1985b: 55). But the question that preoccupies Clark is how to make 'painterly awkwardness' or sketchiness relate to the historical experience of everyday living in late-nineteenth-century Paris.

The problem facing such an inquiry is the difficulty of translating the materiality of the representation (the way something is written or painted or filmed) into the experiential realm of the everyday. At first glance we might want to suggest that the connections between the sketchiness of a painting and the seemingly relaxed moments of sociability that are being depicted suggest the appropriateness of this manner of painting. But we also need to admit that the kinds of correspondence we are suggesting is being secured at the level of descriptive metaphor (how could we describe a particular manner of painting without recourse to metaphor?). For instance, 'sketchy' might be thought of as light, breezy, which suggests leisurely, and so on. Sketchiness or awkwardness are only a couple of the many metaphorical ways of describing the manner of the paintings' execution. In fact sketchiness (while an appropriate term for relating it to the business of making visual art) might be unhelpful in getting us from the style of painting to the everyday life being depicted. If instead we described Morisot and Manet's mark-making as 'impromptu' or 'improvised', we may find an easier route from the particularity of the rendition to the social life of its subject.

Second Empire Paris has come to be seen as an exemplary instance of modernity. At the level of everyday life, modernity can be seen as a disruption of the old certainties of previous generations (although how certain 'old certainties' were is never clear). In their place are not new traditions so much as the continued disruption of the new. To put it more broadly: everyday street life in Paris was beginning to be exemplified by the 'ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent', as Baudelaire put it in 1863 (Baudelaire 1964: 13). How the new impacted on Parisian daily life was at once immediately material (the city itself was reconfigured) and strangely dislocating at the level of what we might call felt experience. Here is a Paris speeding up to the pace of rapid exchange, where relationships between people are becoming more and more governed by commodity exchange (department stores, for instance, allow for a new level of alienated communication between buyer and seller, as price tags are introduced). Would it therefore seem surprising if the deep illusionistic space of more traditional painting seemed unfitting for rendering the new and constantly changing everyday life of modern Paris? It would not be hard to make a leap between improvised paint marks and the kind of improvised behaviour that would be needed to navigate a modern everydayness in a perpetual state of transformation.

If modern everyday life can be described as an experiential realm that seemed more fleeting, less steady, than previous ways of life, then perhaps Manet and Morisot had found an adequate style for rendering it through a style that also seems more fleeting and less steady. But Clark is uneasy about making this leap too emphatically. Social historians of art, like Tim Clark, have taken a more circumspect route to try to historicise the particularity of impressionist paint-handling and its relation to its social (and everyday) moment. For instance the adoption and adaption of this quick-fire paint style should tell us first of all that traditional ways of painting no longer seemed available for picturing everyday modernity. This then is not to claim that impressionism was adequate to everyday life, merely that established ways of painting were terminally inadequate. If the impressionist project was to register the modern everyday as vividly as possible, it had to try to find a form that was at least not as inadequate as that which dominated the Salon. The mark-making that results, the impromptu, brash, hesitant, abbreviated, rough, stuttering, flowing paintwork, relates as much to the struggle to reimagine a painting practice as to the experience of everyday life. What Clark seems to suggest is that the very hesitancy of these paintings, their contradictory ambivalence between confident rendering and stuttering hesitancy, has parallels in everyday life. Rather than being wholly appropriate to a mode of daily life, Morisot and Manet's style registers the lack of possibility for there being a wholly appropriate and adequate style either in painting or in daily life. Everyday life (and by extension the business of getting it down on canvas) was just not settled enough for that.

Griselda Pollock has provided a feminist perspective for thinking about impressionism and has provided accounts of women's impressionist practice that offer something of a corrective to some of Clark's main preoccupations (Pollock 1988b). But in similar ways to Clark she is careful to suggest that a painting needs to be examined in terms of what it is not like, and what it does not include, as well as what it is like and what it does include. For Pollock the very subject matter (or more precisely the lack of subject matter) provides a trace of the conditions of everyday life. Because Morisot did not paint the kind of public displays of modernity (the café-theatre, the prostitutes and street scenes, and so on) we get a clue as to the limitations for women at this time (confirmed by looking at other forms of historical evidence). The coding of this spatial restriction though is not entirely absent from the paintings themselves, and might be glimpsed in the number of paintings by women impressionists that figure female subjects set in an environment that contains a barrier between them and the public spaces beyond. Balustrades, balconies, benches and fences reframe the female subjects within the frame of the painting. Again this is not a direct fit between the 'privacy' of middle-class women's everyday life and the materiality of the painting, but something of the particularity of this everydayness is registered in formal and structural ways.

So while we might not find in impressionist painting a perfectly adequate form we find *something* that in its hesitancy and provisional execution is more suited to registering the diverse everydayness of a moment of modernity. It is not surprising then that one of the first philosophical attempts to come to grips with everyday modernity (Georg Simmel's) was referred to (often disparagingly) as philosophical impressionism (see Chapter 29).

Perhaps then we are back in the territory of making strange: Manet and Morisot, in striving to reinvent painting, register the everyday in what seemed to be awkward and strange (non-traditional) ways. The vividness of impressionist registering of everyday life is

probably more adequately explained by this strangeness than by the explanation that painters like Morisot invented a form adequate to the daily. After all it might be said that the radical forms of collage practised by Berlin dada might be even more suited to articulating the daily. From the vantage point of the present though, the strangeness of Morisot's choppy paintwork, or Manet's abbreviated picturing, has been severely diminished, if not lost altogether. If these works look familiar it might very well be because they have entered the familiar terrain of everyday life, taking their place on biscuit tins and calendars.

If the everyday is poised on the edge of oblivion, suffering from sheer negligence and inattention, then it would need to be rescued from a habitual realm that might be responsible for sending it to oblivion in the first place (hence the importance of denaturalising everyday life). But the fate of impressionism would suggest that estrangement has a limited shelf-life, and that this shelf-life will be severely truncated by success. And if this is the case for artistic production, is it any different for more sociological or anthropological kinds of work? The historicity of form is clearly a crucial aspect of its performance, but if this would suggest a relativism in thinking about the forms for rendering the everyday, it should not suggest an absolute relativism. At any historical moment certain forms might seem to be particularly productive for looking at the overlooked. More importantly it should suggest that the business of finding adequate forms (or less inadequate ones) is not going to be completed: making strange, and inventively generating more productive forms for articulating the everyday, is the daily making and unmaking of cultural practice.

## Why?

Two sets of related questions are relevant here. First: why is the everyday (as a problem) a useful approach to questions of social and cultural life? Why the everyday rather than culture, or society, or postmodernity, or globalisation? Second (and clearly connected to the first question): why does everyday life offer a productive perspective *now*? Why, for instance, is this *Reader* being produced at this moment and not another? What are the historical conditions that might give everyday life (as a form of attention) a contemporary value? What has the everyday (as it has emerged in its recent academic revival) responded to, reacted against and established a critical relationship with? I hope that by now the general question of why the everyday makes a productive problematic needs no further justification. The question, however, of why the everyday at this specific moment (a moment that could be seen to witness the re-emergence of theoretical and practical interest in the everyday) is something that might usefully be addressed.

Judging by the number of journals dedicating issues to the theme of everyday life, and the growing number of monographs that follow an explicitly quotidian orientation, we are witnessing something of an academic boom in everyday life.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps such an explosion of interest should be met with scepticism. Could this not be seen as another example of the commodity condition of academic production, where the everyday becomes simply a fashionable logo for repackaging familiar goods? But even if we grant this scepticism some purchase on the present-day fascination in the everyday, we would still need to suggest why it is everyday life that is of interest. It might be (to continue in a sceptical vein) that a quotidian turn is being used to reassert the contours of a disciplinary that everyday life

should purposefully negate. For instance, is it symptomatic that the titles of everyday life books seem to depend on the 'and' in their titles (photography *and* everyday life, film *and* everyday life, history *and* everyday life, and so on)? Is this enacting a disciplinary status quo, or does the everyday implicitly or explicitly disrupt the sense of stability that such titles might at first suggest? Here is not the place to review this growing body of writing, but it is the place to consider the potential of everyday life at this historical moment in academic writing.

Perhaps everyday life, instead of being a distinctive intervention in the human sciences, is best seen as a way of consolidating a number of symptomatic shifts in subject matter and focus that have been underway during the 1990s. Identifying such shifts might provide a way not just of indicating the potential of an everyday life perspective, but of situating such a perspective within both a continuum and a discontinuum of academic interests. Or to put it another way, it may begin to suggest how the ground was laid so that a renewal of interest in the everyday could take root.

There may be a way of grouping some recent work in the human sciences under the title 'the return of the real'. What the various forms of 'new historicism' (see Veesser 1989 as an example) share with work on 'the body' (for instance, Featherstone *et al.* 1991), despite all their genre differences, is an attempt to ground the study of culture more emphatically in concrete phenomena. But this does not assume that there is a 'truth' of the 'body' or 'history' that will suddenly emerge once the outer shell of representation has been pierced. In many ways what connects the disparate work signalled by these terms (body or historicism, or even the city, etc.) is a frustration with the opposition implied by a focus on *re-presentation*. It is, ironically, the refusal to assume that there is something else *there*, that is being *re-presented*, that would activate a return of the real. For instance, economics might suggest a form of attention that would escape the cultural domain of representation and access the real in more substantial and satisfying ways. Yet as Clark has written:

It is one thing (and still necessary) to insist on the determinate weight in society of those arrangements we call economic; it is another to believe that in doing so we have poked through the texture of signs and conventions to the bedrock of matter and action upon it. Economic life – the 'economy', the economic realm, sphere, level, instance, or what-have-you – is in itself a realm of representations. How else are we to characterize money, for instance, or the commodity form, or the wage contract? (Clark 1985a: 6)

If this is drifting towards an understanding that there is no 'outside' to representation, then this is only half the story. If a provisional agreement is made about the extensiveness of representation and its saturation of the social, then it might seem to make little sense to assume implicitly that 'something' is still out there being *re-presented*. Instead it might seem more feasible to suggest that the social is a culture of *presentations* and *performances*. And this in turn might mean that this world of presentations is the actual material reality of social and cultural life.

So this is not to argue that the unmanageable diversity of these presentations should



simply be subsumed within an overarching schema of signification, or text (in that loose, promiscuous way). And neither does it suggest that we have exhausted the 'real' by attending to its textual traces. It is merely to claim that the duality, implied in the term representation, has little hold on the actuality of culture. It should be noted that in sweeping aside the problematic of representation in this cavalier way, we have succeeded only in making a culture more complex, more unmanageable. How, for instance, could we approach a culture of presentations that would include both an intricately constructed novel and an entirely personal experience in the world? There is no answer to this, and we should not expect one, but in letting go of the categories implied by representation we might have surreptitiously unleashed a curiosity that is well suited to the everyday.

For one thing, the very extensiveness of all those kinds of materials that designate and stipulate (the great archive of governmental decrees, for instance) could be looked at from the point-of-view of the everyday. Not just how they shape and reshape daily practices but how they might become (or not) the hard-wiring of experience. Foucault has suggested that the discursive assemblages that go by the name of sexuality or health (and so on) are not simply repressive regimes acting on preconstituted individuals. Instead he treats them as the material that constitutes the self and generates an ability to experience the world. But if we enter the world as something like empty vessels to be filled and shaped by culture, then this filling and shaping is itself likely to be heterogeneous right from the start. From the perspective of everyday life, the shape and content of culture would have to include everything from those early inchoate, and perhaps predominantly tactile experiences of babies (their groping, sucking and chewing of the world around them), to the extensive formal trainings we receive as we enter adulthood. And if such training extends throughout our lives, then does our less ideational involvement in the world not continue as well? How we experience our bodies, and how our bodies experience the world, cannot simply be adequately described by casting a critical eye over the discourses of the establishment. For one thing, the very form that such discourse takes is usually resolutely ideational and casts out-of-bounds the kinds of materials that might point to more amorphously sensate experiences.

This suggests that everyday life studies will require from the start more than one perspective. It also suggests that in looking for evidence of daily life, everyday life studies cannot simply supplement attention to the texture of the social 'from above' (by looking at those established and dominating assemblages of writings on health and sexuality, for instance) with more empirical ethnography. After all, the kinds of knowledge that can be accessed via observation, or solicited by questioning, are also likely to express what is most easily demonstrated and articulated. If everyday life includes those more hidden aspects of experience, then we might also need to look to those forms that have tried to attend to precisely this aspect of daily life. It might be that those attempts to try to grasp the texture of daily experience in art and literature need to be attended to as both evidential and theoretical. Just as Freud found that his immediate precursors were not other scientists but novelists and poets, so the study of everyday life might find that it has as much in common with Joyce and Woolf as it does with Garfinkel and Foucault.

When Alice Kaplan and Kristin Ross (Chapter 7) ask, 'what does it mean to approach cultural production from the vantage point of everyday life?' their answer suggests that

everyday life studies is situated *between* the kinds of attention that would focus *either* on subjective experience *or* on the institutional frames of cultural life.

It means attempting to grasp the everyday without relegating it either to institutional codes and systems or to the private perceptions of a monadic subject.

Between, for example, the traffic court and the angry driver who has received a moving violation, we would need to evoke a complex realm of social practice and to map out not merely a network of streets, but a conjunction of habit, desire and accident.

(Kaplan and Ross 1987: 3)

It might be that, in trying to compose an archive of 'habit, desire and accident', we could do worse than take as a starting point those complex imaginary investigations that go by the name of 'art'. Rather than treating art as high culture, requiring connoisseurship and elaborate decoding, the everyday life archive would render relevant works as experimental studies in the experiential realm of the daily.

It might also be that, in attending to the everyday, studies of daily culture will need to look at those moments when everyday life breaks down, when everyday life becomes interrupted and dysfunctional. In the same way that studies of the body have focused on body modification (prosthetics, for example: see Stelarc 1997) or self-induced pain, everyday life studies might want to attend to daily life as it is wittingly and unwittingly disfigured. The purposeful interventions in daily life concocted by the Situationists (see Chapter 23) might serve as archetypes for experimental studies of daily life carried out in the field, so to speak. Or the psychoanalytic archive might be plundered for accounts of the impossibility of everyday life, when patients experience the everyday as a realm of obsession and horror. Edgar Morin's suggestions that ethnography should deal in extremes (rather than cultural norms) and should experimentally intervene in daily life, seem particularly appropriate for rethinking the study of everyday life (see Chapter 16).

But if everyday life studies might want to follow in the wake of some of the problems suggested by 'the body' or 'new historicism', it also becomes clear that it establishes itself in contradistinction to other tendencies within the human sciences.

### Post-ism

Intellectual life in the human sciences during the 1980s and 1990s (predominantly, though not exclusively, in Europe and the USA) might be seen as characterised by posts: the most pervasive ones being the posts of poststructuralism and postmodernism. It is partly as a response to these posts that the historicity of contemporary interest in the everyday might be glimpsed most clearly. This is not to say that the everyday is necessarily a negation of the orientation that these posts represent (though I think in some cases this may be true), but that the everyday represents some kind of realignment of these loosely defined orientations. The everyday then might operate as some kind of antidote or corrective to what are perceived to be the excesses of poststructuralism, without having to hand back all its (or their) accomplishments. The move towards more historically grounded work (especially in



the case of literary studies and film studies) can be taken as a sign of a general frustration with the abstract and textual orientation of much poststructuralism (or with its various Anglophone imitators). To take only one example: if the star that was deconstruction began to wane (and for some has simply become a black hole) then partly this was due to the *perceived* unanchored uses that were made of its interpretive textual wizardry.

But such a straightforward account of the historicity of what might potentially be called everyday life studies is in danger of painting itself into a corner named 'a return to order' or 'back to basics'. Another way of historicising the appeal of everyday life studies, is to suggest that the general drift of poststructuralist thought might simply not be ambitious enough: it concedes, as unavailable, too much right from the start. By submitting the world to a form of textualisation, it renders the 'real' simply out of reach. Everyday life studies, in wanting to register the sensuous feel of culture, and wanting to have a go at weaving together the heterogeneity of the social, might simply find much that goes by the name of poststructuralism disappointing; at once too limited and too bombastic.

To see everyday life studies as a response to, and a critique of, postmodernism is perhaps more difficult. For one thing, many of the most influential formulations of the postmodern concentrated as much on the daily lived-ness of culture as on particular aesthetic objects that might or might not be designated as postmodern. In Jean-François Lyotard's account of postmodernism he makes a claim that the guarantors of knowledge have become delegitimised (knowledge for knowledge's sake, or knowledge for human betterment, no longer provide the alibis for research) as well as suggesting that postmodern life is defined by a hotpotch of styles. It is not clear if the two are necessarily connected, but the lack of a singular style might be seen to relate both to the promiscuity of aesthetic forms and the delegitimation of knowledge (the former being a symptomatic expression of the latter, and both being symptomatic of more socially cataclysmic events). In an appendix to his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Lyotard argued that the postmodern is a form of stylistic eclecticism:

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games.

(Lyotard [1979] 1986: 76)

On the one hand, then, Lyotard grounds his argument (impressionistically) in 'ordinary' everyday culture, while on the other he seems to describe an experience of culture most available to the jet-setter or successful conference-hopping academic. It is worth noting, however, that Lyotard is aware that such a culture relates directly to economics and suggests that 'this realism of "anything goes" is in fact that of money' (Lyotard [1979] 1986: 76).

Where postmodernism connects with everyday life studies is in the ambition to provide a cognitive mapping of the contemporary world (although everyday life studies might want to map other ways of experiencing the world alongside the cognitive). And in this it tends to place the everyday as the context for its arguments. For instance in claiming that the postmodern can be seen as more spatial than temporal, Jameson (1991) insists on the

context of daily life: 'I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time' (Jameson 1991: 16). But everyday life departs from postmodernism in an insistence not on the latest cultural phenomena, but on the range of cultural experiences in circulation. In this it would want to argue that most people in the world do not live the kinds of lives that postmodernism describes, and even those that might seem to be in the thick of postmodernity would be unlikely to be full-time postmodernists. By concentrating on the literal day-to-day (work, food, washing and so on) an everyday life perspective can qualify the extensiveness of what goes by the name of the postmodern. In this Terry Eagleton's rejoinder to Lyotard is worth noting:

It is not just that there are millions of other human subjects, less exotic than Lyotard's jet-setters, who educate their children, vote as responsible citizens, withdraw their labour and clock in for work; it is also that many subjects live more and more at the points of contradictory intersection between these two definitions.

(Eagleton 1986: 146)

If postmodernism is interested in the plurality of cultural experiences on offer, everyday life studies need to pluralise this plurality, so to speak, by insisting on the persistence of more residual cultures.

Everyday life, then, as a specific theoretical orientation has not necessarily required a turning away from postmodernism and poststructuralism (although, for some, this might seem a very attractive proposition). What it has required is a regrouping of such interests in the materiality of culture. It might, however, be the case that when the question of everyday life is raised there is simply too much going on to spend time mounting stringent critiques of deconstruction (say) or other poststructuralist approaches. Everyday life studies might (it is hoped) get so wrapped up in its attempts to give account of the overlooked, that the conventional academic business of painstakingly arguing against intellectual positions you do not hold might itself get overlooked.

## Notes

- 1 Perhaps there is a missing question here, namely the question of 'when'? Elsewhere (Highmore 2002, especially Chapter 1) I have argued that while everyday life is not limited to modernity in any essential way, the qualitative changes in time and space brought about by industrialisation constitute a shift in the patterns of daily life. These qualitative shifts and the emergent culture that proceeded them (such as leisure time, commuting and so on) make it problematic to think of everyday life as a category that can usefully be applied across history. As such, everyday life might best be reserved for naming the lived culture of modernity.
- 2 The idea that non-western cultures were backward or undeveloped turns on the belief that 'spatial distance' can be translated into 'historical distance'. In fact, Victorian anthropology was often practised as a form of archeology of past or residual cultures that anachronistically persist in the present. That such forms of anthropology were informed by a social Darwinian understanding of the evolution of cultures, and that this was linked to the bigger project of colonial domination of non-western cultures, is often the basis for critical investigation of anthropology's history (see Asad 1973; Augé 1999a; Fabian 1983).

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3 The Subaltern Studies collective might provide a useful orientation for the historical extension of this attitude. Studying the histories of South Asian societies, specifically as they are poised at moments of colonial conflict and crises, Subaltern Studies looks to those whose lives are saturated by conflicting cultural cosmologies (see for instance Chatterjee 1993; Chaturvedi 2000).

4 This introductory essay, written in a style that this section would cast in doubt, is obviously not an attempt to answer this challenge. But here I am not attempting to register the everyday, merely to survey the problems and potentials for those (including myself) who might want to attempt this at some point.

5 For instance Michel de Certeau has been accused of 'an aestheticising strategy' that turns the study of everyday life into 'a poetics of the oppressed' (Bennett 1998: 174). Such a complaint is an old one; Simmel for instance suffered from it. It might be worth noting along with Michel Serres that 'what a sign of the times, when, to cruelly criticize a book, one says that it is only poetry!' (Serres and Latour 1995: 44).

6 A number of exceptions could be made here, particularly in the field of anthropology/ethnography. For one account of the various ethnographic filmmakers who have been interested in experimenting with the form of anthropology see Russell (1999). Clifford and Marcus (1986) also include attempts to rethink the practice of doing anthropology (including of course writing it) in both deconstructive and reconstructive ways.

7 The art historical literature on impressionism is of course vast and the problem of the category 'impressionism' has been the cause of much split ink. For those interested in the problems of designing the who, what and when of impressionism, a good place to start is with the essays by Richard Shift and Stephen Eisenman in Frasca and Harris (1992). It should be noted that I am playing fast and loose with the category 'impressionism'.

8 A record of this should be clear from the bibliography, but for journal special issues on everyday life, see: XCP – *Cross-cultural Poetics* 7, 2000, *Daidalos* 75, 2000, *Antithesis* 9, 1998 and *Current Sociology* 37(1), 1989.

## PART ONE

# Situating the everyday