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BANALITY FOR CULTURAL STUDIES

Abstract

In her 1990 essay, 'Banality in Cultural Studies,' Meaghan Morris raises very serious concerns about the relatively unexamined role that banality plays in cultural studies' work. Taking up her challenge, this essay endeavors to unlock some of the ways that banality might be, as Morris suggests, 'empowering' and 'enabling' for cultural studies and, thus, not merely banality as something that is left behind after it has been exorcised or redeemed in the movements of cultural analysis itself. Beginning with a few of Morris' own critical coordinates (such as Michel de Certeau and Maurice Blanchot), this essay, then, looks to how banality enters into the triadic philosophical conceptualizations of Henri Lefebvre on 'everyday life' – particularly through his concept of 'everydayness'. Most of all, this essay investigates the ways that this often-undertheorized concept from Lefebvre might be brought to 'life' (in the widest sense imaginable) in the writings of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on 'the virtual.' The virtual is, in one sense, a means of grasping what lies beyond the realm of cognition – a more diffuse view of the real that would include the incorporeal, the inorganic, and all points in-between (including a more broadly drawn version of consciousness). It will be argued that, through 'the virtual,' everyday life becomes available to cultural studies' accounts as a radically 'open totality' or Outside and, as such, the movements, as well as the politics, of critique take on a different sort of tone and trajectory.

Keywords

Banality; virtual; everyday life; the outside; rhythm analysis; the whole/totality; incorporeal

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> There is still the dream of the transcendence of the banal through the banal, the dream of the transcendence of everyday life through the transformation of everyday life. The metaphor of the journey – the hard road and the river – is the most trite, overused, banal metaphor imaginable for the way we move forward through time; yet it is also worth remembering the power of this metaphor as a focus for collective as well as personal identification in an always unfinished narrative of historical loss and redemption, as a lens through which the past is given shape and direction, and hence redeemed as it delivers us here, now, in front of a future which is pulled sharply into focus as a virtual space – blank, colourless, shapeless, a space to be made over, a space where everything is still to be won.
>
> (Dick Hebdige, 1993: 278)

. . . the dream of transcendence of the banal through the banal . . .

MEAGHAN MORRIS' 'BANALITY IN cultural studies' is easily one of the most disquieting essays ever written on cultural studies. I have always presumed that almost anyone who encounters it might, henceforth, decide to swear off banality, if not also cultural studies itself. It is not exactly the kind of essay that might inspire anyone to pick up his or her pen (or turn on their computer) and begin writing. To read it is to risk an unusual sort of paralysis: the brain freezes, the eyes temporarily lose their ability to focus quite so unproblematically on the apparent object of their gaze, and the tongue refuses to reproduce anyone else's speech except its own (if even that). To cut-and-paste (in order to distort the meaning of) a wonderful blurb from Ann Curthoys found on the back cover of Morris' (1998) edited collection *Too Soon Too Late*, 'Banality in cultural studies' causes its readers to begin to 'fret about method, muse on theory, and probe the contextual in a way which makes it hard [in fact, nearly impossible!] . . . Morris makes ideas we thought simple difficult again'.[1] Luckily, I am here to report that these paralysing after-effects are usually only temporary and might turn out to be transformative. And it is what can be transformative about 'banality' in cultural studies that I want to explore in this essay.

It is important to recognize that Meaghan Morris does not intend to chase away banality (in all of its potential modes) from cultural studies. Indeed, she acknowledges that a certain version of banality is an inescapable and, even, a necessary component for the project of cultural studies. Until this other banality is more directly reckoned with, Morris (1990) cautions that attempts to merely ignore it or negotiate a wide path around it will only cause banality to continually return to trouble cultural studies as an 'irritant' (p. 40). The best option, then, might be to peer into this matter of banality more closely and

attempt to understand whatever potentials it might have to offer. As Morris asserts, in what I take as one of the pivotal sentences of her 'Banality' essay: 'what may transform analytical procedures at their frontiers is precisely a 'banality' of which the repression has constituted *historically* an enabling, even empowering, condition for the study of popular culture' (p. 32). Quite convinced, then, by Morris' cultural studies critique (even as much as I was, admittedly, once laid low by it), I wish here to find a way – and, of course, there is always more than one way – toward this other 'banality', one that might be 'enabling, even empowering': a banality *for* cultural studies, and not just another banality *in* (or *by* or *of*) cultural studies.[2]

At times, getting to this *other* banality for cultural studies may prove to be a rather circuitous journey (although whether it is by hard road or river, I cannot say). But many of the initial steps along this route need not take us very far from some of the same travelling companions that Meaghan Morris picks up along her own path. Indeed, in her 'Banality' essay, Morris sketches out one potentially productive version of this other banality in the writings of Michel de Certeau. By explicitly turning to de Certeau, Morris is, in part, responding to those profoundly sincere but overly romantic critical reinflections of his work that have used it to uncover those various 'resistances' and 'tactics' where, ultimately, '[t]he people are . . . the textually delegated, allegorical emblem of the critic's own activity' (p. 23). Morris shifts her critical attention to de Certeau's argument that, if banality belongs anywhere as transformative potential, it is in 'the arrival at a *common* 'place', which is not (as it may be for populism) an initial state of grace, and not (as it is in Baudrillard) an indiscriminate, inchoate condition, but on the contrary, something that 'comes into being' at the end of a trajectory' (p. 35). But it is the trajectory's very movement that might bear the closest attention: if only because the notion of an 'arrival at a *common* place' raises some pertinent questions, as well, about the time and locale of departure.

Turning to de Certeau's own words, one finds that this trajectory never fully separates itself from his own repeated accent on a banal 'overflow'. In the pages from *The Practice of Everyday Life* that are so crucial to Morris' argument, Michel de Certeau (1984) returns again and again to this 'overflow': 'banality overflows specialty and brings knowledge back to its general presuppositions' (p. 4); 'an overflowing of the common in a particular position' (p. 5); 'the work of overflowing operates by the insinuation of the ordinary into scientific fields' (*ibid*). Finally, de Certeau concludes this particular section of his text with a fully resonant flourish on the enunciative-position and the analytical 'task' that coincides with this notion of a banal overflow:

> Even if it is drawn into the oceanic rumble of the ordinary, the task consists not in substituting a representation for the ordinary or covering it up with mere words, but in showing how it introduces itself into our techniques – in the way in which the sea flows back into pockets and crevices

> in beaches – and how it can reorganize the place from which discourse is produced.
>
> (de Certeau, 1984: 5)

It is in this way that a critical trajectory and an 'overflow' might be imagined together – *not* as an 'analytic technique' that works in a theoretical lift-up-out-of-the-mundane manoeuvre so as to leave banality behind in an act of mutual elevation for both theory and the everyday, nor, from a different direction (but with similar end-effects), as a critical rope-repelling exercise into banality that, then, achieves it for both critical discourse and 'popular' context. In regard to these two trajectories, Michel de Certeau calls the former 'the privilege of speaking in the name of the ordinary (it cannot be spoken)' and the latter 'claiming to be in that general place (that would be a false "mysticism")' (p. 5). And even worse than these two, he adds, is 'offering up a hagiographic everydayness' (ibid). For now, however, the mere mention of this third and worst alternative will have to serve as a bit of foreshadowing since its fullest implications can be more easily delineated later.

In lieu of these three alternatives, Michel de Certeau's particular conceptualization calls for a course of action that locates banality (a productive banality) as 'the place from which discourse is produced' (Morris, 1990: 35). No mutual elevation, no descent as critical rope-repelling, no saintly chronicle of always unglimpsed, but later redemptive, everyday salvation: it is a trajectory that is only and ever extruded *through* the banal as immanent (over)flow. There is no room, then, for the kind of path toward transcendence that would dare to dream itself as above or somehow detachable.[3] Quite admittedly, this might seem to be a rather strange trajectory since its movement as an analytic technique never begins from an 'elsewhere' nor does it conclude there. Rather, its movement – always in conjunction with a banal overflow – emerges from a spatio-temporal suspension of sorts: where effective difference and transformative potential are not achieved in the apparent distance between departure and destination, but, through traversing along the cusp of inseparable points of flow, as a trajectory or line in continual variation with itself. In other words, this is a trajectory not unlike an 'oceanic rumble' or wave: capable of infinite variation in its undulations, capable of immeasurable alterations in its force and sweep, capable of returning with all manner of things to its own beach (as well as sending other elements out and away), capable of nearly anything except granting itself the other shore.

Interestingly, then, when Meaghan Morris returns to further explore the interstices of some of these very issues, she does so in an essay entitled 'On the beach'. Making a move from Michel de Certeau's model of everyday praxis as enunciation/evasion to Henri Lefebvre's writings on everyday life, Morris finds her pivot point in Maurice Blanchot's review-essay of Lefebvre's work, 'Everyday speech' (1993). Blanchot's essay has a deceptively simple refrain – 'The

everyday escapes' – that Morris converts into a phrase of her own: 'pure process in excess' (1998: 111). Everyday life escapes; it *exceeds*. But what is the nature of this everyday excess or banal overflow? How does it escape? Where does it escape to? What does it *do* and, more crucially, what can be done with it? After all, Morris adds almost as soon as she brings it up, that this 'pure process in excess' is 'always . . . *potentially* political' (p. 111). What, then, if the 'potential politics' that follows from this processual excess of everyday life – as banal overflow – finds the *potential* of its politics within that *virtual* space 'where', as Hebdige says, 'everything is still to be won?'

. . . through the transformation of everyday life . . .

> Undertakings of this order give a meaning to apparent meaninglessness and insignificance – and what could be more meaningless than everyday life?
>
> (Henri Lefebvre 1968/71: 27)

> Can we say that all lives, works, and deeds that matter were never anything but the undisturbed unfolding of the most banal, most fleeting, most sentimental, weakest hour in the life of one to whom they pertain? When Proust in a well-known passage described the hour that was most his own, he did it in such a way that everyone can find it in his own existence. We might almost call it an everyday hour.
>
> (Walter Benjamin, 1969: 203)

Before going further, I would like to pause for a moment, for a moment of clarification about banality – most of all, so that it might be released from any obligatory or otherwise immediate affiliation with notions like tedium or boredom. Yes, as Lefebvre maintains, banality is intimately intertwined with meaninglessness and insignificance; yes, it always persists alongside the 'undisturbed unfolding' of the most 'everyday hour', according to Benjamin, and, yes, it is 'incised into the prose of the passage from day to day' in the words of de Certeau (1984: 163). To begin, then, it might be useful to consider how the infinitely diffuse nature of banality as '*common* place' unfolds – surreptitiously, insignificantly, and nearly imperceptibly – within and around the passages of the everyday. Indeed, its folding and unfolding occurs *so* surreptitiously, *so* insignificantly, and *so* imperceptibly that it would, no doubt, be better to consider how banality resides, more properly, *outside* of the sphere of 'meaning' and human emotion. Banality is a radical passivity that persists beyond recognizably endured states such as boredom or tedium.[4]

Perhaps this is one reason that Maurice Blanchot often uses 'banality' almost interchangeably with terms like 'the outside' and 'neutrality'. Boredom can serve as one of the ways that banality may be made manifest or actualized (conversely,

vitality is another way (Massumi, 1995: 970)) but, then, only 'as a consequence of [banality] having lost its essential – constitutive – trait of being *unperceived*' (Blanchot, 1969/93: 242). This 'unperceived' is the overflow of the banal that insists/subsists, ex-centrically, in both the most easily distracted and the most closely attentive acts of perception. It is an unperceived which, in the end, actually has little to do with the various adequacies or inadequacies of any particular apparatus of perception nor in the unity that might harmoniously connect all of them (to quickly head off any premature departure toward the Kantian sublime).[5] Although it is peripherally co-extensive – in matters decidedly human – with consciousness, sense, and sensation, the 'unperceived' of the banal overflow properly belongs to neither the subject nor the object of any encounter but to the movements and variations of intensity (as potential to affect or to be affected) that constitute a ceaselessly oscillating foreground/background or, better, an immanent 'plane' (i.e. this is an *in-between* with a consistency all its own).[6]

Very few things may seem as initially oxymoronic as the linkage of banality and intensity, but their connection proves quite essential to grasping the significance of the term 'life' (or, for Gilles Deleuze, Life with a capital 'L') in everyday life and, similarly, as we will later see, the curious vitality that inhabits the '-ness' of Lefebvre's everydayness. But, again, it is Blanchot (1980/95), this time from his *The Writing of the Disaster*, who provides one of the best (as well as most poetic) insights into what can be gained through such a linkage. Here he writes (in a manner that can only be effectively quoted at some length):

> Intensity cannot be called high or low without reestablishing the scale of values and principles characteristic of moderation's mediocre morality. Be it exertion or inertia, intensity is the extreme of difference, in excess of being that ontology takes for granted. Intensity is an excess, an absolute disruption which admits of no regimen, region, regulation, direction, erection, insur-rection, nor does it admit of their contraries; thus it wrecks what it makes known, burning the thought that thinks it and yet requiring this thought in the conflagration where transcendence, immanence are no longer anything but flamboyant, extinguished figures. . .
>
> Intensity: the attractiveness in this name lies not only in its generally escaping conceptualization, but also in its way of coming apart in a plurality of names, de-nominations which dismiss the power that can be exerted as well as the intentionality that orients, and also sign and sense, and the space that unfolds and the time that expatiates. But along with all this comes some confusion, for intensity's name seems to restore a sort of corporeal interiority – vital vibrancy – whereby the faded teachings of consciousness-unconsciousness are imprinted anew. Whence the necessity to say that only exteriority, in its absolute separation, its infinite disintensification, returns

> to intensity the disastrous attractiveness that keeps it from letting itself be translated into revelation – a surplus of knowledge, of belief – and turns it back into thought, but thought which exceeds itself and is no longer anything but the torment – the tortuousness – of this return
>
> (Blanchot, 1995, 1980: 56–7).

With this redrawing of 'intensity' – without highs or lows, without any requisitely dialectical interplay of interiority/exteriority, without simply securing some manner of equivalence or connection with the contrariness of transcendence and immanence, there is the presupposition of a reciprocal banality as an 'exteriority' of 'infinite disintensification'. As such, it is a banality that has been widened out (or flattened) – no inside/outside, no high/low – into a field or 'plane' that holds the intensities flowing over it in a turbulent suspension even as it helps to prefigure their arrival (as actualization) and their potentials of relation.[7]

This, by now, rather lengthy 'moment of clarification' about banality may only have served to make everything seem even more complicated or more abstract than before. So, let's bring it back more closely to the earlier discussion of 'pure process in excess' and cast it in light of 'everyday life' because, then, we might begin to see how certain configurations and relations begin to sort themselves out. Taken more immediately in regards to Lefebvre on everyday life, Blanchot (1969/93) describes the banal overflow as:

> (What lags and falls back, the residual life with which our trash cans and cemeteries are filled: scrap and refuse); but this banality is also what is most important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived – in the moment when, lived, it escapes every speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity.
>
> (Blanchot, 1969/93: 239)

This is the banal as residue and escape at once: making (and remaking and unmaking) itself into a mobile plane of intensive flows of excess.

It is an excess that – within the realm of everyday life – is immediately all-accessible, so accessible that there is no way of not having always already acceded to it. As Blanchot points out, it could just as easily be said that the banality of 'the human everyday' is likewise inaccessible because one cannot make the choice of entering or not entering into it: it exists at the level of ' "there is". "there is" the everyday' (p. 245). The sheer commonplace/matter-of-fact nature of this 'there is' helps to illuminate a subtly expressive event-structure for everyday life by which an integrative and cyclical connection of its different components can be discerned: the (*human*) *everyday* as an inextricable access to and immersion in 'process', *intensity* as a non-hierarchical, diffuse 'excess' of process, and the *banal* as a 'pure' processual plane where the always already accessible and residual meet

the lines of escape and open onto an overflow. This latter (the banal) is a plane moving in parallel (as side-real space) with the 'actual' existence of the human everyday, affording perpetual access to excess (in one form, as perception at its peripheries), precipitating, shifting, and accreting ever new moments and layers of residue in an everyday immersive process. Or, to borrow a line from an old commercial for Palmolive dishwashing liquid: the banal? 'You are soaking in it right now'.

Working through (or soaking in) very similar territory, Brian Massumi details some of the particularities of this event-structure's architecture:

> Time is no longer a progression to and from privileged points – beginnings, climaxes, and ends – that give *a priori* order and a depth of personal or historical meaning to the course of things . . . There is no overarching standard by which to prefer any particular course from one moment to the next. All moments are moments without qualities, indifferently divisible and possibly connectable, as if laid out on a single surface of availability, indeterminate until a contingent encounter makes one moment stand out or fall out. When any-moments-whatever collide: the course of things *follows*. It is [an] open-ended *process* of contingent time-triage . . . Its medium is banality, understood as a time-form, in turn understood as a mode of availability, or presentation, from which things flow, in open-endedness.
>
> (Massumi, 1998: 746)

Banality is time off its hinges – no longer passing through the present in a neat linear succession that places the past behind and the future always out in front. Banality is temporal succession tipped on its side: making way for the simultaneous and the subjacent. And, similarly, banality is spatiality arranged (perhaps deranged) in a manner that allows for a plurality of spaces to inhabit any single space. But it is important to highlight one potentially troublesome aspect here. Namely, in the 'contingent encounter' that causes a moment to stand out or fall out, the moment that does the standing out or falling out is not the 'null moment' that has been awaiting its '"splendid moment" so that the latter would give it a meaning, do away with it, or suspend it' (Blanchot, 1969/93: 242). Saying 'yes' to a philosophical/critical trajectory that has travelled all this way only to imagine the passing everyday 'null moment' as that which could, later, be redeemed as the 'splendid moment' would mean calling up that *even worse* pitfall mentioned earlier by de Certeau: 'hagiographic everydayness'.

If the banal of the everyday is an immanent plane of 'pure process in excess', then its radical open-endedness only carries it away from any manner of simple recoverability, reclamation, or redemption (as found, if only implicitly, in many modern philosophical – generally post-Kantian/phenomenologically derived – narratives). In one sense, this means avoiding the matter of 'tracing', as Deleuze

(1968/94) says of Kant, the 'so-called transcendental structures from the empirical acts of a psychological consciousness' (p. 135) and, thus, constructing a plane of immanence that comes to be too intimately tied to the subject 'of all possible experience from which nothing, the external as well as the internal, escapes' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/94: 46). As we have seen, the banal is predicated, precisely, upon what escapes; it is predicated upon all access to process in excess:

> The everyday escapes. This is its definition. We cannot help but miss it if we seek it through knowledge, for it belongs to a region where there is still nothing to know, just as it is prior to all relation insofar as it has always been said, even while remaining unformulated, that is to say, not yet information. It is not the implicit (of which phenomenology has made broad use); to be sure, it is always already there, but that it may be there does not guarantee its actualization. On the contrary, the everyday is always unrealized in its very actualization which no event, however important or insignificant, can ever produce. Nothing happens; this is the everyday.
>
> (Blanchot, 1969/93: 241)

No reversibility or recapture of the escape, no redemption in some divinely scripted narrative for a recuperable event-structure of the everyday. '[T]he event is pure immanence of what is not actualized or of what remains indifferent to actualization, since its reality does not depend upon it. The event is immaterial, incorporeal, unlivable: pure *reserve*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/94: 156). For Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994), it is Blanchot's writing of 'the event' that has proven to be one of the most nuanced at distinguishing:

> Between, on the one hand, the accomplished or potentially accomplished state of affairs in an at least potential relation with my body, with myself; and, on the other hand, the event, that its own reality cannot bring to completion, the interminable that neither stops or begins, that remains without relation to myself, and my body without relation to it – infinite movement.
>
> (p. 156–57)

In this passage from their last book together, *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari are explicitly aligning Blanchot's philosophy of 'the event' with their own notion of 'the virtual' and its relationship with 'the actual' and 'actualization'. As I will argue across the next two sections, it is the lifetime of work that Deleuze (and Deleuze and Guattari) devoted to unfolding the various facets of 'the virtual' that might bring them, via a slightly different route, into cultural studies, discovering in their writings what Michel Foucault – in his rhapsodic introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1972/1977b: xiii) – claimed it offered up most pertinently: a manual or handbook for 'everyday life'.

. . . pulled sharply into focus as a virtual space . . .

> Give me your hand. Now I am going to tell you how I went into that inexpressiveness that was always my blind, secret quest. How I went into what exists between the number one and the number two, how I saw the mysterious, fiery line, how it is a surreptitious line. Between two musical notes there exists another note, between two facts there exists another fact, between two grains of sand, no matter how close together they are, there exists an interval of space, there exists a sensing between sensing – in the interstices of primordial matter there is the mysterious, fiery line that is the world's breathing, and the world's continual breathing is what we hear and call silence.
>
> (Clarice Lispector, 1964/88: 90)

> Whatever the breaks and ruptures, only continuous variation brings forth this virtual line, this virtual continuum of life, 'the essential element of the real beneath the everyday.'
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87: 110)

The notion of 'pure process in excess' is what Deleuze's concept of 'the virtual' (as borrowed from the philosophy of Henri Bergson) addresses in its own specific way. The virtual might be most readily described as the excess or infinitely particulate atmosphere that circulates about an occurrence or event: the contextual space of an 'actual' moment in time.[8] More exactly, the virtual gives account to the contextual space of an actual moment in time without necessarily abstracting or arresting this moment from the *movement* that brought it into this space and made it available to this time. No wonder, then, that Deleuze (1964/72) was rather fond of referring to a quote from Proust as pertinent to the virtual: 'Real without being present, ideal without being abstract' (p. 57). No wonder, too, that Deleuze believed that the infinitive mode of the verb – to cut, to leap, to fall, to act – offered the grammar best suited to the expressive potential of the virtual. The infinitive can come to speak in any-present-moment-whatsoever: implicitly carrying its own past and future along with it and, all the while, speaking in the tone ('to live', 'to dance', 'to love', 'to die', and so on) of an ethical imperative. The virtual, in its guise as infinitive mode of language, offers a moment or interstice where expectancy (as a return or past tendency) and anticipation (as open-ness to future or new variation) are brought to bear with equal force.[9] That is, the verb tense of the infinitive feels like a suspension in time, across space – overfull with potential and, yet, of itself, neutral. Deleuze (1969/1990b) writes that:

> Between the verb as it appears in language and the verb as it subsists in Being, we must conceive of an infinitive which is not yet caught up in the

> play of grammatical determinations – an infinitive independent not only of all persons, but of all time, of every mood, and every voice (active, passive, or reflective). This would be a neutral infinitive for the pure event. . . . From this pure and undetermined infinitive, voices, tenses, and persons will be engendered.
>
> (p. 214–15)

The most immediately limited mode of the infinitive that one can possibly invoke, remark Deleuze and Parnet (1977/87), is 'to be' since it carries 'the characteristic – like an original taint – of referring to an I, at least to a possible one, which over codes it and puts it in the first person indicative. But infinitive-becomings have no subject: they refer only to an "it" of the event' (p. 64). Thus, the infinitive 'to be' serves as a sort of philosophical bookend in the infinite grammar of the virtual. And, if there is another almost equally limiting bookend, it is 'to think' – which, together with 'to be', helps give voice to two of the proximate enemies of the virtual: 'being' and interiority.

There are other terms that suit the virtual quite nicely; most usually, these words tend to have either a '-sist' (such as persists/insists/subsists) or a '-cede'/'-ceed' (such as precedes/recedes/proceeds/exceeds) as part of them. These words mark the virtual's combination of carry-over and dispersion. The virtual is the incessant sludging of contexts as they each come to persist-insist-subsist. It is the saturation and bleed of an event or situation: as a situation is given shape and tone by how it is preceded, how it recedes, how it proceeds into the next situation, how it exceeds the momentarily fixed situatedness of any actual occurrence. The virtual 'hovers' about 'the actual' as a resonating accumulation and as the ongoing modulations of a non-linearized/non-sequential space-time. For these reasons, the virtual is both mutably sticky and irrevocably slack. Its stickiness is the quality that follows from its various 'sist'-ibility, while its slack nature is due, in part, to its nature of escape (its perpetual 'ceed'-iness).[10]

Because the virtual is composed of movement, transition, and process – rather than discretely separable moments/things/states, it cannot be returned to the actual moment (whatever its previous nullity) in order to elevate it in an act of hagiographic salvation. There is no 'it' to return; what returns is not a thing, a point, a moment, or an element but a process in excess ('only the excessive returns' (Deleuze, 1968/94: 299)). Additionally, this 'excess' of pure process does not come to constitute an imaginary supplement or an aporia/gap that can, then, be read back into an actual moment in order to undo it. That is, the virtual does not perform the work of a deconstructive ever present-absent snag that, when pulled, causes one to readjust the supposed surety with which a particular determination (say, a text or a body or an event) has been knit.[11] If the virtual should 'return' – and, in fact, it does return continually (because it never fully departed) as the 'eternal return' of sheer access to process in excess, or, as Deleuze (1962/83) says, returning as the affirmation of the whole of becoming

that belongs 'to a single moment' (p. 72) – it returns through the production of 'difference', as modulating change, as prolongation of variable process.

The philosophical import of the 'virtual-actual' might be best explained by following the example of both Deleuze and Bergson and counter-posing it to the discourse of 'possible-real'. The possible-real is the rather well- (re)marked route that can be traced along an admittedly disjointed but still discernible historical thread running through certain 'core' philosophers like Descartes-Kant-Hegel-Husserl-Heidegger with occasional swirls and swoops through similar deep thinkers. If these key figures can be provisionally linked, it is because they have each, albeit in different ways, tended to make significant use of terms like 'reason', 'cogito', 'thinking', or 'being', and, thus, typically chosen to dwell for rather extended periods of time on the workings of reflective consciousness and often privilege dualistic/binaristic categories of thought.

One of the more interesting road maps through and around this philosophical discourse of the possible-real can be found in Rosi Braidotti's chapter-long critique of it, 'un-Cartesian routes', from her book, *Patterns of Dissonance*. Of the inherent Cartesianism that sends the majority of philosophy down the path of the possible-real, Braidotti (1991) writes: 'By making human essence a thinking substance, the cogito defines subjectivity as a fixed interior space, which receives its stimuli from the external world, but is distinguished above all by its capacity to correct these stimuli according to the rules of reason' (p. 71). In this (my necessarily shorthand) version of these well-travelled Cartesian routes, what the philosophy of consciousness asks, at its most basic, is: What does it mean *to be,* to *think* being? How does my mind, through its internal operations and its relations with what exists outside of it, come to *realize* what it is capable of? These are a few of the kinds of questions which presume a certain centeredness and stability for consciousness: a consciousness founded upon the initial exclusion of that which is other than thought and Reason and whose subsequent thought-movements serve to negate, subsume, and/or supersede that which is exterior to it. The outside of the possible-real is what always stands to be realized through a projection of a 'possible' thought-action from an already enclosed interior.

Stating it straightforwardly in terms of 'thought': to inhabit the world as if it were only a realm of 'possible-real' actions/encounters is to formulate the myriad *possibilities* available within any given moment and, thereupon, attempt to bring one or more of these 'possibles' toward their *realization*. There are, then, more than a few notable difficulties with philosophies that take – even if only implicitly – the possible-real as the first and last word on the general state of things and on our, as well as the world's, potentials and tendencies. One of these difficulties should probably be plainly obvious from the very word 'possible' itself. To be a 'possibility' is to begin at a state that is, by definition, somewhat less than real and, then, either this 'possibility' has reality added to it (by being realized) or it remains unrealized (as a possibility somehow thwarted or unfulfilled). Thus, one of the chief outcomes of such formulations is to (re)produce

yet another version of the Cartesian mind-body problem; that is, it is a perspective which is immediately faced by the obscurity of how conceptual knowledge (as a possible) can interact with or influence changes/movements in substance or corporeality (as reality).

Bringing the virtual-actual into this account doesn't necessarily entail denying that such possible-real concerns are, indeed, regularly part of the lived equation – although sometimes not without unfortunate consequences (most especially when 'possible-real' thought-action turns decidedly instrumental).[12] But, with the virtual-actual, one must add that, at the very least, our *bodies* and, indeed, a vast universe of quite diverse (human and non-human, organic and inorganic, corporeal and incorporeal) matters come to participate – through countless number of ways – in the movements of thought, in the workings of memory and forgetting, in the modalities of habit, in the machineries of the unconscious, in the experience of lived/living/impassive time and space, in all of the most extraordinary and absolutely ordinary parts of our 'selves'. Therefore, one of the first – and, initially, most attractive – reasons for making an appeal to the virtual-actual is simply, as Deleuze (1962/83) says (this time following Nietzsche), 'to remind consciousness of its need for modesty' (p. 113).

Throughout the history of Western philosophy, there has been an abundance of speculation and debate on the extensiveness and intensiveness of the field of consciousness, the nature of being, the powers of thought, and the workings of reason. But one of the questions that has been asked far less frequently is: *what can a body do*?:

> Spinoza offers philosophers a new model: the body. He proposes to establish the body as a model: 'We do not know what the body can do . . .' This declaration of ignorance is a provocation. We speak of consciousness and its decrees, of the will and its effects, of the thousand ways of moving the body, of dominating the body and the passions – but we do not even know what a body can do.
>
> (Deleuze, 1970/88b: 17–18)

Importantly, this is not just a call to understand a body or bodies in isolation (Deleuze is no mere corporealist or ontologist) but, rather, to grasp bodies in the midst of *doing*. Bearing in mind that a 'body can be anything; it can be animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea: it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity' (Deleuze, 1970/88b: 127), the virtual serves to designate how bodies enter into a 'becoming' with the world: how bodies and worlds interpenetrate, fold and unfold, disrupt and enjoin, exceed and immerse at all points, everywhere and at once.

Foucault (1970/1977a) refers to the virtual as Deleuze's 'incorporeal materialism' because it gives attention to what:

> Arises between surfaces, where it assumes meaning, and in the reversal that causes every interior to pass to the outside and every exterior to the inside, in the temporal oscillation that always makes it precede and follow itself [. . .] on the bold condition that instead of denouncing metaphysics as the neglect of being, we force it to speak of extra-being. Physics: discourse dealing with the ideal structure of bodies, mixtures, reactions, internal and external mechanisms; metaphysics: discourse dealing with the materiality of incorporeal things
>
> (p. 169–170)

This extra-being is the impersonal/a-human 'excess' that Deleuze's philosophy endeavours to explore. But it is an excess that derives, neither from a body or a world in isolation, but from the banal movements of pure process: 'the event'. Deleuze sought, most of all, a philosophy that would be worthy of the event and, importantly, 'the virtual' was one of the key means by which he believed that thought could move with and alongside the event.[13]

It should not be entirely surprising that, when it comes to accounting for the movement or transition between supposedly separable states of existence, a philosophy of possible-real can only offer a rather static model with sudden and inexplicable lurchings and/or the freeze-framing of living and once-fluid motion into a series of well-illuminated, captured or articulated poses. Deleuze (1968/94) writes, 'Every time we pose the question in terms of possible and real, we are forced to conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to the law of all or nothing' (p. 211). With the virtual-actual, there is no such surreptitious line of existence moving forever behind our backs – requiring (as in the possible-real) a sudden leap over it as the line crosses, in thought-projection, out in front. Instead of a leap, the virtual-actual locates itself directly on the line.

If these distinctions still seem slightly vague, it might help to briefly consider the example of proprioception: the body's motion-sense.[14] In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, Oliver Sacks (1987) discusses the unique case of 'Christina': a woman who, because of specific damage to the sensory roots of her spinal and cranial nerves, has lost all direct connection with those just-outside-of-consciousness autonomic functionings of body-movement and body-position. These various functionings – in their co-functionings within their environment – usually exist in an immediate feedback loop with other, more 'aware' sensory/sense-making aspects of consciousness. If this were not the case, our bodies would simply move about by their own volition and something as simple as reaching for a spoon at the dinner table would prove to be next to impossible. It is this feedback (and feedforward) loop continually cycling through these other lower, sensory levels of consciousness – providing the body with its 'sixth sense' (p. 43) – that has been severed in Christina's case. She has, however, found ways to compensate (after all, her joints and muscles and tendons remain physically

unaffected and are quite capable of functioning). Christina has retaught herself how to move and how to adopt a wide variety of body-postures, even if she is only remaining stationary.

Since her body can no longer constantly survey itself and its relative position in space-time, Christina has learned how to be its 'eyes'. She has substituted a conscious-visually-representational model for the body's autonomic-feedback system. Every movement, in Christina's case, must begin as a 'possible', as something that must, first, be consciously thought and, next, projected outward onto a body-part ('hand: please hold spoon'): beginning with a 'possible' that, when translated into 'real' bodily movement, can finally be realized (or not). Although, as Sacks notes, Christina's adaptation to her condition has been absolutely extraordinary, her sense of motion and posture has not returned to her in an altogether smooth running fashion. Her posture appears artificial/posed and her body tends to move in fits and starts because, as Sacks notes, 'there is no in-between, no modulation' (p. 50). It is almost as if there is a line that is continually being jumped over: a possible and, suddenly, with a thought-projection and a jerk of motion – a 'real'.

Again, in the possible-real, bodies and their potential doings are, as Deleuze noted, 'subject to the law of all or nothing' and the mysterious, fiery line that runs down the middle can only be leapt over, not inhabited. Instead, the virtual-actual locates itself directly upon this line. But what is this line? Deleuze (1990/95) refers to it as 'the line outside' and remarks: 'We need both to cross the line, and make it endurable, workable, thinkable. To find in it as far as possible, and as long as possible, an art of living. . . . We have to manage to fold the line and establish an endurable zone in which to install ourselves, confront things, take hold, breathe' (p. 111). The virtual-actual turns the line outside into a plane for living, a plane of life. The line outside is a lifeline of becoming, the line of the world's continual breathing. The virtual-actual is a movement of becoming in relation to the forces on its outside, not the possible-real realization of being as self-contained and interiorized. When an action that has been conjured up as a possibility is realized, it does not constitute a becoming – but a being stepping always into its own light.[15]

Due to its inherent pre-formism and its exclusion or negation of the outside, the possible-real cannot help but function as a logical tautology or closed system. The virtual-actual precedes, by contrast, as an open system that addresses matters of being and becoming without ever departing the real flux of the lived, without arresting the vibrancy and on-going movement of the living. And 'to live' is, after all, the primary infinitive-mode that belongs to everyday *life*. Clarice Lispector (1964/88) writes:

> To live is a gross, radiating indifference. To be alive is inhuman – the deepest meditation is one that is so empty that a smile is exhaled as though it came from some matter. . . . I sense that 'nonhuman' is a great reality,

> and that that does not mean 'inhuman': to the contrary, the nonhuman is the radiating center of a neutral love in radio waves.
>
> (p. 165)

This is the nonhuman living that goes on, simultaneously, *alongside* or on *the outside* of experience as lived by one's conscious subjectivity. It is the life in and across the interstices of substance: the world's continual breathing as immanence, its breathing in and out of the utter commonplaces of banality.

To re-inject the philosophy of consciousness with its language of transcendence and possible-real into this world 'is not difficult', write Deleuze and Guattari (1991/94), 'all that is necessary is for movement to be stopped. Transcendence enters as soon as movement of the infinite is stopped. It takes advantage of the interruption to re-emerge, revive, and spring forth again' (p. 47). As a system (although, admittedly, this gives an unique twist to the more usual meanings of the word 'system'), the virtual-actual is radically open, in continual movement, and immanent to absolutely nothing other than itself. But one of the most noteworthy aspects of this system is that it does not set:

> Closure entirely aside as its other, as a closed system purports to do with openness. An open system is open even to closure. A closed system locally integrates openness in order to remain the same, as opposed to its other; an open system integrates closure as one of its local conditions (the condition under which it effectively becomes other).
>
> (Massumi, 1996a: 402)

Consider, for instance, the opening moment in the 'Refrain' chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* – the example is a child humming to himself as he skips a nervous song in the dark – where Deleuze and Guattari (1980/87) speak about the necessity of sometimes sketching a circle in the midst of chaos in order 'to organize a limited space' but, also, observe that, in the same instant, 'one opens the circle a crack . . . not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself' (p. 311). Here, the outside does not precede closure but is continually being created by closure, by the processual act (or actualization) of closure.

As Massumi (1996a) observes, 'In the Deleuzian system, closure and openness are two phases in a single process bringing self-preservation (capture) and transformation (escape) into a close embrace' (p. 402). In any and every instance, there will always an inside and an outside but their boundaries are never constituted once and for all. This open 'system' of virtual-actual consists of two reals in absolute proximity to one another but with different sets of urgencies: one insists in the infinitely modulating, contextual space-time of every action (the virtual) and one acts (actualization). And, in the moment of actualization, there is momentary (and, in the case of habit, near-rhythmic) closure accompanied by

a resonance that opens itself up to the return of process. The possible-real – as transcendence, as the point where movement is stopped, as closure – is, then, certainly a part of the virtual-actual system; it just does not begin to describe a 'system' in its entirety or even at its most incorporeally substantial.[16]

Tellingly (because of how it explicitly draws upon a *body's doing* as its model), Deleuze and Guattari's most notorious alternate designation for the virtual is their concept of 'the body without organs.' Even here, however, Daniel Smith (1997) explains that, like the circulating unthought of thought or the incorporeal spatio-temporal processes of corporeal being, the virtual as 'the body without organs is not something that exists "before" the organism; it is *the intensive reality of the body*, a milieu of intensity that is "beneath" or "adjacent to" the organism and continually in the process of constructing itself (p. xxxvii). In his own description of Deleuze's philosophy as an 'incorporeal materialism', Foucault (1970/77a) sought to describe this 'intensive reality' as a 'boundless monotony [in which] we find the sudden illumination of multiplicity itself . . . arising from the background of the old inertia of equivalences, the striped form of the event tears through the darkness' (p. 189). Here, Foucault adds, we find ourselves 'at the limit' where:

> Thought would be the intense contemplation from close up – to the point of losing one's self – of stupidity; and on its other side is formed by lassitude, immobility, excessive fatigue, obstinate muteness, and inertia – or rather, they form its accompaniment, the daily and thankless exercise which prepares it and which it suddenly dissipates.
>
> (p. 190)

To Deleuze's Spinozist call for understanding *what a body can do* by giving consideration to its *longitude* (its mode of composition) and *latitude* (its capacity for being affected), there must be, as Deleuze also knew, the additional consideration of a body's *lassitude*. This lassitude of a body is its ongoing virtual composition as a 'zone of indiscernibility': the boundless monotony of infinite disintensification, the body without organs where intensity = 0 (not because there is zero or no intensity but because it is suspended in an excess that has not yet tilted in any particularly actualized direction). The unhinged space-time of a body's lassitude is found in the *quelconque* (or, literally, *whatever*) of an 'any-space-whatever' ('the white space of conjunctions, meetings, and divisions; the part of the event which is not reducible to the state of things, the mystery of the begun-again present' (Deleuze, 1983/86: 108)) and in the 'meanwhile' (*un entre-temps* or between-moment that 'neither takes place or follows, but presents the immensity of the empty time where the event can be seen that is still to come and yet has already passed' [Deleuze, 1995/97b: 5], and, finally (wholly), in the '*L'homme quelconque*' of Blanchot's everyday (1969/93: 244), or, in sum, the nonhuman banality of processual excess.

. . . blank, colourless, shapeless, a space to be made over . . .

> Besides consciousness and science, there is life. Beneath the principles of speculation, so carefully analyzed by philosophers, there are tendencies of which the study has been neglected, and which are to be explained simply by the necessity of living, that is, of acting.
>
> (Bergson, 1896/88: 198)

> True lived experience is an absolutely abstract thing. The abstract is lived experience. I would almost say that once you have reached lived experience, you reach the most fully living core of the abstract. In other words, lived experience represents nothing. And you can live nothing but the abstract and nobody has ever lived anything else but the abstract. I don't live representation in my heart, I live a temporal line which is completely abstract. What is more abstract than a rhythm?
>
> (Deleuze, 1978/1997a: 4)

The potential that such a philosophy of the virtual could speak to the everyday was certainly not unknown to Henri Lefebvre. After all, his long life and the incredible intellectual trajectory of his career were marked by, among myriad other coordinates, an on-again, off-again, and, then, on-again relationship with the thought of Henri Bergson.[17] In this regard, Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (1996), the translators/editors of Lefebvre's final published writings, draw attention to how he had returned ('on-again'), in his last works, to concentrate 'on philosophical issues of representation and a phenomenological description of the body, its rhythms and surrounding space, which remained a virtuality' (p. 30). The utter lassitude of the virtual – as banality – was not lost to Lefebvre either. In his *Lefebvre, Love, and Struggle*, Rob Shields (1999) emphasizes that banality occupies 'an important position for Lefebvre throughout his writings' (p. 15) and, most especially, in Lefebvre's writings on everyday life. And Lefebvre (1988) himself proudly claimed that, above all else, the conceptualization of 'everyday life' was the one thing for which he would be 'most well known for adding to the vocabulary of Marxism' (p. 78). Shields (1999) notes that Lefebvre held 'everyday life as the plane of immanence in which moments of enlightenment emerge and flash, like sparkles of light on a field of snow' (p. 77). Given its accounting already in this essay, banality would be such a field at its most evenly (flatly) lit and stretched to its furthest expanses.

When directly addressing banality in his work on everyday life, Lefebvre referred to it as 'everydayness'.[18] As with so many of Lefebvre's theorizations, 'everyday life' is a concept that actually arrives as part of a packet of three. The three 'everyday life' terms have generally been translated into English as follows: 'daily life' (*la vie quotidienne*), 'the everyday' (*le quotidien*), and 'everydayness'

(*quotidienneté*). In a few sentences, Lefebvre (1988) briefly differentiates them as such:

> Let us simply say about daily life that it has always existed, but permeated with values, with myths. The word *everyday* designates the entry of daily life into modernity: the everyday is the object of programming, whose unfolding is imposed by the market, by the system of equivalences, by marketing and advertisements. As to the concept of 'everydayness,' it stresses the homogenous, the repetitive, the fragmentary in everyday life.
>
> (Lefebvre, 1988: 87)

Although helpful as a beginning, let's develop these differences a bit more.

Daily life (*la vie quotidienne*) is everyday life as 'it has always existed' – life in its most concrete materiality – but it is also completely susceptible to all manner of human intercession. As such, daily life is not some eternally or purely objective realm of 'nature' at its most rawly physical but is always already a site where human practices and what is perceived as the materiality of an 'outside world' are continually and simultaneously constituted/reconstituted. In this case, the study of 'daily life' belongs more immediately to sociological/historical analyses than to methods or techniques from the hard sciences.

Meanwhile, *the everyday* (*le quotidien*) is everyday life itself risen to the status of a concept. At a particular moment in time – specifically, modernity – 'everyday life' becomes its own kind of object for theoretical understanding, political debate, aesthetic representation, and philosophical reflection. One of the questions that Lefebvre asks is 'why?' Why did 'the everyday' become an object of study, a recognizable and 'representable' terrain, a new epistemological concern? And why did this happen when it did? The short answer to this question is that, in modernity, a space opened up that never had quite been there before: a rift between 'the subjective, phenomenological, lived experience of the individual and objective institutions' (Ross, 1984: 35). Unlike the category of daily life, which serves to describe *that which has always been* (but has also *always been outside* the spheres of contemplation, administration, and representation), the everyday has *not* always been but is, rather, a historically produced plane of existence with its own specific configuration of practices and unequal distribution of resources (Grossberg, 1997b: 99). Lefebvre's concept of 'the everyday' also serves to describe, then, what transpires upon this (modern) plane following the advent of a system of commodity relations, forms, and functions: a system that Lefebvre called 'the bureaucratic society of controlled consumerism' (or what is otherwise known as 'consumer culture'). Not surprisingly, this is the terrain that cultural studies has come to criss-cross with almost complete familiarity.

But it is *everydayness* (*la quotidienneté*) – or, sometimes, what Lefebvre will also tellingly call 'the extra-daily' or 'the extra-everyday' ('extra-', I would argue, because it is the processual excess of the first two terms) – that has been the most

overlooked member of the 'everyday life' trio. This concept has been regularly neglected not only by many commentators who have taken up Lefebvre's work, but also by Lefebvre himself who tended, sometimes, to collapse the distinctions between 'the everyday' and 'everydayness'. Initially, one of the simplest ways to mark a separation between 'the everyday' and 'everydayness' is to note that, while the everyday describes a historically determined plane of existence and a specific system of operations upon it – a plane where 'the everyday, in the modern world, has ceased to be a "subject" to, instead, become an object of social organization' (Lefebvre, 1988: 87) – everydayness addresses the way that this plane (of immanence) is lived: a single and boundless space-time for 'living'.

However, as before, this attention to the 'lived' or 'living' aspect of everyday life, as everydayness, must be cautiously approached because it does not carry the more usual phenomenological inflection of 'lived' as a particular version of (past or passed) experience nor does it carry any kind of accordance with subject/object relations and their subsequent mediation. Lefebvre remained fairly critical of many of the starting premises of phenomenology: maybe most of all because phenomenology 'refused the concept [such as "everyday life" risen to the status of a concept] as a means of investigation and limited itself to the immediacy of the lived. Modern physics has taught us that things, which appear inert, are not, so that we need to go beyond appearances' (Kofman and Lebas, 1996: 32). Everyday life, Lefebvre (1968/71) argued, cannot be neglected and disowned, eluded or evaded but, instead, one must work:

> Actively to rediscover it while contributing to its transfiguration; this undertaking involves the invention of a language – or, to be precise, an invention of language – for everyday life translated into language becomes a different everyday life by becoming clear; and the transfiguration of everyday life is the creation of something new, something that requires new words.
>
> (p. 202)

In order to 'go beyond appearances', a philosophy of everyday life must have its attention directed toward 'Life' – not merely in its immediacy (nor as a return to a F. R. Leavis-style subjectivist 'life' as found at the earliest dawnings of cultural studies) but life in all of its sticky and slack human/nonhuman, inorganic/incorporeal, phenomenal/epiphenomenal, and banal/intense everydayness. And, for Lefebvre, it is through the creation of concepts that an avenue might be opened toward what always persists (and insists and subsists) in this 'beyond.' Not dissimilarly, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/94) argue, 'The philosophical concept does not refer to the lived, by way of compensation, but consists, through its own creation, in setting up an event that surveys *the whole* of the lived no less than every state of affairs' (emphasis added, 33–4). It is, here, in this conjunction of the lived/living (or, more barely, 'Life') with the vitalistic call to concept-creation that one might first begin to consider how Lefebvre may also have

envisioned such a role for his notion of 'everydayness.' That is, *as a concept* – and no longer, ordinally, a 'third' term but as his philosophy's very ground, Lefebvre saw, in everydayness, a means of surveying 'the whole' of the lived.

In fact, if the notion of everydayness as 'lived [living] space' has already begun to set off bells and whistles for those familiar with Lefebvre's philosophy and, most particularly his writings on space, it might not be a coincidence. The trio of daily life, everyday life, and everydayness find their relative complements in Lefebvre's conception of the 'three moments of space' (1974/1991b: 36–46) – respectively, the perceived, the conceived, and the lived, or, as expressed in more strictly spatially-inflected terms: spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space (the translation of the last term here (*les espaces de representation*) has resulted in some confusion and, so, following the lead of many Lefebvrians – including Edward Soja (1996) and Rob Shields (1999) – I too prefer its more literal rendering as 'spaces of representation').[19] The alignment of the different triads is, then, as follows:

daily life	– > spatial practice	– > the perceived
the everyday	– > representations of space	– > the conceived
everydayness	– > spaces of representation	– > the lived

Daily life is 'practiced space' and a space of practices. It is always bound up with a material world and its relative situatedness through collective and individual acts of perception. All the while, daily life remains constitutively open to historical shifts in what counts as the imperceptible and the immaterial – from superstition, rumor, and myth to the various invisibilities investigated (and perhaps turned 'visible') by science – to whatever extent that these realms, then, come to shape/redefine daily practices. *The everyday* is the conceptual (everyday life as itself a concept): capable, in the modern era, of a certain level of conceptual self-reflexiveness. In the everyday an additional distance has opened up and it is, thereby, a space through which subjects and objects find a whole host of different means for representing themselves, as well as their shared and conflicted spaces, to one another. Or, in other words, the everyday is the organization (through systems of production/reproduction) of the spaces of everyday life as they become increasingly aestheticized, bureaucratized, psychopathologized, theorized, colonized (in both an interior and exterior sense), and administered.[20]

But most central to this essay's concerns is the affiliation of *everydayness* with Lefebvre's *spaces of representation* (or 'representational space') and *the lived* and, particularly, how their position of thirdness within each of their own triads constitutes their 'virtuality'. Again, one of the most significant aspects to consider is how the third term in all of these triads serves to open onto 'the outside'. When Edward Soja (1996) addresses this preference for 'thirdings', he maintains that, for Lefebvre (and for himself), a new awareness arises in 'the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and mental spaces of

the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning' (p. 11). Shields (1999) adds that, although Henri Lefebvre never 'fully pursued' his (re-)respatialization of the dialectic (remaining, in the end, closer to the Hegel), there *is* a notable shift in Lefebvre's conception of the dialectic from what was, at one time, ' "affirmation-negation-negation-of-the-negation" to "affirmation-negation-otherness" ' (p. 152). Here, Lefebvre's third element as 'excess' behaves 'not as the point set in motion (line) but as a radical "outside", a "beyond" or "otherness" ' (*ibid*). This is something shared, as Deleuze (1990/95) remarks, by many of those writers who have a preference for undertaking their analyses in 'threes': 'Three sometimes serve to close everything up, taking two back to one, but sometimes, on the other hand, takes up duality and *carries it far away* from unity, opening it up and sustaining it' (emphasis added, p. 79).[21] This is the conceptual vitalism proper to the third term: a *life* – as immanence (in the bare infinitive: 'to live') – that inheres, first and foremost, to everydayness.

However, Lefebvre would never quite 'let himself get carried away – even when one expects it' or, at least, rarely to such a degree; but, if and when it happened – in those moments when Lefebvre dared to 'move beyond rational calculation', it *was* when he spoke of 'spaces of representation' (Shields, 1999: 74). In such moments as Lefebvre allowed himself, the vitality of the virtual in his everydayness and spaces of representation and the lived comes through loud and clear:

> Representational space [spaces of representation] is alive; it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre . . . It embraces the loci of passion, of action, of lived situations, and this immediately implies time. Consequently, it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic.
>
> (Lefebvre, 1974/1991b: 69)

Time *as lived/living* is introduced into spaces of representation as central in a way that it isn't *in* either of the other two conceptual triads of space or the concepts of 'the everyday' and 'daily life' but exceeds them as process: fluid and dynamic, 'extra-.' In fact, when it comes to *the lived*, Lefebvre (1974/1991b) will say that 'time [is] even closer to us, and more fundamental [than space itself]' (p. 95). What might be among most revealing, then, is this special attention – as found in these 'third' terms: everydayness, spaces of representation, and the lived – that Lefebvre gives to a decidedly Deleuzian-Bergsonian notion of 'time' in its particular conjunctions with spatiality.

Folding time and space with *life* makes for an altogether strange geography but one that is entirely appropriate for surveying – in an immanent, immersive sweep – the whole of the lived. Brian Massumi (1992) presents this as the unique topology of the virtual:[22]

> Terms like 'far', 'deep', 'distant', would in fact lose all meaning in relation

> to the virtual, and 'level' would have to be conceived nonspatially (as a degree of immanent vibratory intensity). If the virtual is a space of pure exteriority, then every point in it is adjacent to every point in the actual world, regardless of whether those points are adjacent to each other (otherwise some actual points would separate the virtual from other actual points, and the virtual would be outside their outside – in other words relative to it and mediated by it).
>
> (p. 170)

And this is precisely the kind of orientation that must, by necessity, pertain to Lefebvre's 'everydayness' if it is to avoid the trap of falling into a hagiographic everydayness. So, this is may explain why:

> Lefebvre refuses to make a Cartesian division between two solitudes where the everyday was condemned to perpetual alienation, with perplexed academics debating the efficacy of strategies for transforming elements of the everyday into elements of an unalienated extraordinary set of 'moments'. Instead of two distinct sets – one alienated, bad, everyday; the other special, good, unalienated moments – Lefebvre proposes two overlapping sets. Each element of the alienated everyday is also potentially an element of the unalienated extraordinary set.
>
> (Shields, 1999: 70)

Any-extra-ordinary- (or extra-daily)-element-whatever (*quelconque*) of the unalienated is potentially available as a singular element in the alienated everyday in such a way that it is impossible to read this as simply an exchange relationship of one-to-one where the 'overlapping sets' line up point for matching point (because then, as Massumi notes, they would be separated and mediated by the outside rather than constituting – and continually reconstituting – it in their undulating movement). Again, this is the case only if every singular element carries with it an infinite multitude, 'an *inessential* commonality' that renders any-[. . .]-whatever universal and singular at once (Agamben, 1990/1993: 18–19).

Or, think of it this way: 'whatever' – as a 'thing *with all its properties*' (Agamben, 1990/1993: 19) – is a body's or thing's extruded belongingness to 'the whole' of banality in process. With such a notion of the whole as virtual (the infinite multitude of singularity), 'the whole' comes to serve as another element alongside any (actual) element in a processual set of singular elements or moments: without encircling an element or moment, without simply closing it off but, rather, extending it out to infinity.[23] The whole, then, does not form a fixed boundary nor constitute a totalizing ensnarement; it is a place of passage to the outside and, thus, provides access to the boundlessness of pure process in excess. In Giorgio Agamben's (1990/93) words:

> The *outside* is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather it is a passage, the exteriority that gives it access – in a word, it is its face, its *eidos*. The threshold is not, in this sense, another thing with respect to the limit; it is so to speak, the experience of the limit itself, the experience of being-*within* an *outside*.
>
> (p. 68)

This being-within is the immanent movement of the infinite into *this* world (at *this* moment, in *this* space): closure and openness as single process, capture and resonance in close embrace, actualization alternating between the integrative (sticky) and the dispersive (slack). It is a belonging to this moment and to this time while belonging also to the outside – what Agamben (1990/93) calls 'whatever' [in his case, *qualunque*] as 'being-such that it always matters' (p. 1). In 'the passage from potentiality to act, from common form to singularity, [the limit-experience of the outside] is not an event accomplished once and for all, but an infinite series of modal oscillations' (p. 19).[24] And to grasp these modal oscillations of being-within an outside, Lefebvre believed that, at the level of everydayness, one was required to pay attention to the rhythms and polyrhythms of the everyday – what he called 'rhythmanalysis'.

For Lefebvre, the rhythmanalyst is attentive to the ways in which, through the lived, time and space are folded in their complete inseparability into rhythms: 'every rhythm implies the relation of a time with a space, a localized time, or if one wishes, a temporalized place' (Lefebvre, 1996: 230). Working 'closer to the lived', a rhythmanalyst is 'more aware of times than of spaces, of moods than of images, of the atmosphere of particular spectacles' (p. 228–29). Referring to rhythms as they directly bear upon a body, Lefebvre writes:

> Consequently, every body more or less animated and *a fortiori*, all gatherings of bodies are polyrhythmical, that is, composed of various rhythms, each part, each organ or function having its own in a perpetual interaction which constitute an ensemble or a whole. This last word does not signify a closed totality but, on the contrary, an open totality. Such ensembles are always in a 'metastable' equilibrium. . . .
>
> (p. 230)

Not merely a polyrhythmical analysis of bodies but their organs and, then, not merely organs but their functions (what can an organ do?) within the whole (what can the outside do?) as metastable equilibrium. Interestingly then, in *The Production of Space* when Lefebvre (1974/1991b) describes his three part schema of perceived-conceived-lived in regard to that most peculiar and unlocalizable of organs, the heart, he notes: 'The heart as *lived* is strangely different from the heart as *thought* and *perceived* . . . Localizations can absolutely not be taken for granted where the lived experience of the body is concerned under the pressure

of morality, it is even possible to achieve the strange result of a body without organs' (p. 40). This surely must be one of those rare moments when Lefebvre lets himself get carried away: one of those singular moments when 'everydayness' – the often allusive but potentially productive element left undertheorized in his own philosophy – finds its own intensive multitude in 'the virtual' of Deleuze's.

But there is something *more* to everydayness as well, an even larger claim that could be made for it. Lefebvre (1974/1991b) writes that 'everyday life . . . figures in representational spaces [or 'spaces of representation'] – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it forms such spaces' (p. 116). And, on more than one occasion, Lefebvre will ask himself about the intricate mixity of space-time in the everyday lived.[25] To reach it analytically meant keeping one's 'ears open' to their intricate and inseparable rhythm and texture and, then, to how these rhythms and textures form systems or networks that:

> are not closed, but open on all sides to the strange and the foreign, to the threatening and the propitious, to friend and foe. As a matter of fact, the abstract distinction between open and closed does not really apply here. What modes of existence do these paths assume at those times when they are not being actualized through practice, when they enter into representational spaces?
>
> (p. 118)

I would argue that, for Lefebvre, 'everydayness' is the name reserved for those 'modes of existence' as they come to precede (and recede and exceed) their actualization into representational spaces: real without being present, ideal without being abstract.[26] That is, while it serves as the third term in Lefebvre's 'everyday life' triad (gathering together and opening up the first two terms: daily life and the everyday), everydayness also extends its thirdness across and into other two triads (the perceived/the conceived/the lived and spatial practice/representations of space/spaces of representation): at once all embracing and opening them up as a single plane. Everydayness is 'the space' of all spaces, the 'life' of all the lived. Indeed, everydayness is not just a plane of immanence but *the* very plane of immanence of Lefebvre's entire philosophical project.

Find the plane of immanence and you have found what 'constitutes the absolute ground of philosophy' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/94: 41). And, even further, the plane of immanence:

> is A LIFE, and nothing else. It is not immanence to life, but immanence which is in nothing is itself a life. . . A life should not be contained in the simple moment when individual life confronts universal death. A life is everywhere, in all the moments a certain living subject passes through and that certain lived objects regulate: immanent life carrying along the events

> or singularities which do nothing more than actualize themselves in subjects and objects. . . A life contains only virtuals. It is made of virtualities, events, singularities. What we call virtual is not something that lacks reality, but something that enters into a process of actualization by following the plane that gives it its own reality. The immanent event actualizes itself in a state of things and in a lived state which bring the event about. The plane of immanence itself is actualized in an Object and Subject to which it attributes itself. But, however hard it might be to separate them from their actualization, the plane of immanence is itself virtual.
>
> (Deleuze, 1995/97b: 4–5)

The plane of immanence is the 'a powerful whole . . . an unlimited one-all . . . the plane is the breath that suffuses the separate parts' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991/94: 35–6): not as an interior or an enclosure, but the whole is the outside, that fiery line of the world's breathing.

Lefebvre wanted to formulate a theory of everyday life that could grasp everyday life as a whole, as an 'open' totality – by drawing to attention what was most common, most non-humanly banal. Thus, for instance, in 'the everyday' and 'daily life' of consumer culture, the 'concept of everydayness does not therefore designate a system but rather a denominator common to existing systems including judicial, contractual, pedagogical, fiscal, and police systems' (Lefebvre, 1987: 9). Everydayness surveys the whole of the lived as it extends into and alongside all the singularities and relations (of lived systems as well as conceptual triads), drawing out any-whatever-element/any-whatever-moment into a larger set, to infinity. 'It is on the one hand a relationship of the human being with his own body, with his tongue and speech, with his gestures, in a certain place and with a gestural whole, and on the other hand, a relationship with the largest public space, with the entire society and beyond it, the universe' (Lefebvre, 1996: 235). Although Lefebvre believed that, with rhythmanalysis, his concept of everydayness could be made into a realizable critical project, he also knew that it ran a certain risk in its direct and critical encounter with what resided within and across all of these parts and relations. 'Banality?' Lefebvre (1987) asks himself. 'Why should the study of the banal itself be banal? Are not the surreal, the extraordinary, the surprising, even the magical, also part of the real? Why wouldn't the concept of everydayness reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary?' (p. 9). Indeed! What could be more banal than the steady accumulation and dispersion of insignificances, the perpetual folding in and out of contexts, the boundless monotony of infinite disintensification but, also, what could be more magical and surreal and vital? The perpetual escape of the everyday into everydayness. 'In this consists its strangeness – the familiar showing itself (but already dispersing) in the guise of the astonishing' (Blanchot, 1969/93: 240).

In what is one of the earliest and one of the most perceptive passages that

Lefebvre (1947/91a) wrote on everyday life, he captures nearly all of it in a single paragraph:

> Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been singled out by analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a 'technical vacuum' between one another which is filled up by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting ground, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc.
>
> (p. 97)

Almost immediately following this passage, Lefebvre seems to catch himself in the full-force of their impact – as if suddenly seeing, in these words, the outline of the project that would continue to animate his thought for the rest of the century. He pauses, then, to ask himself a question. So, what will become of 'the function of the philosopher? Will philosophy still retain a meaning as a specialized activity?' To which Lefebvre replies: 'Yes, it will. Once the philosopher is *committed to life* . . .' (emphasis in original, p. 97).

. . . a space where everything is still to be won

> The totality would allow us to utter in the same breath . . . 'Everything is ordinary!' and 'Everything is unique!'
>
> (Gilles Deleuze, 1988/1993: 91)

Near the conclusion of his Lefebvrian 'Everyday speech' essay, Blanchot (1969/1993) speaks to the potential politics of everydayness: 'to experience everydayness is to undergo the radical nihilism that is something like its essence and by which, in the void that animates it, everydayness does not cease to hold the principle of its own critique' (p. 245). In the virtual multitude or void ('whatever is a singularity plus an empty space' [Agamben, 1990/93: 67]) that circulates about and animates *life* in its everydayness is the potential for an immanent-ist form of cultural critique and political action/transformation. This point is made most immediate in a marvellous essay by Michael Taussig (1992) – an essay that has Walter Benjamin at its center and breaths not a word about

Blanchot, Lefebvre, or Deleuze (but resonates with them completely anyway).[27] Taussig writes that:

> 'The everyday' seems, in the diffuseness of its ineffability, to erase difference in much the same way as do modern European-derived notions of the public and the masses.
>
> This apparent erasure suggests the trace of a diffuse commonality in the commonweal so otherwise deeply divided, a commonality that is no doubt used to manipulate consensus but also promises the possibility of other sorts of nonexploitative solidarities which, in order to exist at all, will have to at some point be based on a common sense of the everyday and, what is more, the ability to sense other everydaynesses.
>
> (p. 141)

Building upon Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'optical unconscious', Taussig argues for a critical project that finds in 'everydayness' 'an activist, constructivist bent; not so much contemplative as it is caught in *media res* working on, making anew, amalgamating, acting and reacting' (p. 142). Catching everydayness in *media res* sounds, of course, a great deal like Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis: calling for an entry into 'everydayness' in the way – an often tactile, distracted, a-human/non-human, and impersonal way – that a body (of any sort whatever) intersects with and slips into a rhythm. Or, as Deleuze (1970/88b) writes, '[I]t is by speed and slowness that one slips in among things, that one connects with something else. One never commences; one never has a tabula rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle; one takes up or lays down rhythms' (p. 123). And it is this notion of catching a rhythm in its middle that might also help to define one of the modulations in (the coming) cultural studies, defining its own role – particularly with regard to the rhythms of everydayness – in a manner that is situated just slightly an angle with how Lefebvre conceives philosophy's function.

That is, at some point, one must begin to ask some of the same questions of cultural studies that Lefebvre asks of philosophy. Given what should be its own unique 'commitment to life', what will, then, becomes of the function of cultural studies? Will cultural studies 'retain a meaning as a specialized activity' (and an activity sufficiently different from philosophy, especially given their confluence in this essay, to remain specialized)?[28] Of course, it will. But it also depends upon reconceiving the trajectory by which analyses move, rhythmically, into the events, the moments, the elements, and the 'whatevers' that provide the horizon of the cultural studies' terrain. And this is where cultural studies *needs* banality: a productive banality: the banality of the 'nothing happens' of the everyday. Finding a way to enter into the rhythms of 'nothing happens' without committing any one or all of the three deadly sins of everyday critique (displacement, mysticism, and hagiography) as described by Michel de Certeau and Meaghan Morris. Finding along the cusp of the lived, the zigzagging horizon-line of

banality (always exceeding, extending beyond, stretching itself out in one long, oscillating infinitive: to live) even as it is wrapped in and continually interleaved with the a-temporal cycling of the astonishing: capable of saying, then, in a single breath (and never two), everything is ordinary! everything is unique! Similarly, Lefebvre (1987) writes:

> In modern life, the repetitive gestures tend to mask and crush the cycles. The everyday imposes its monotony. It is the invariable constant of the variations it envelops. The days follow one after another and resemble one another, and yet – here lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness – everything changes. But the change is programmed: obsolescence is planned. Production anticipates reproduction; production produces change in such a way as to superimpose the impression of speed onto that monotony. Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They're both right.
>
> (p. 10)

Thus, Lefebvre looked to how 'the everyday harbors the possibility of its own transformation; it gives rise, in other words, to desires that cannot be satisfied within a weekly cycle of production/consumption' (Kaplan and Ross, 1987: 3). It is here that cultural studies, by bringing a productive banality fully on-board, finds its function (or, anyway, one of the most potent of its potential functions) and its area of specialization – cultural studies as a relay of desire (of the most infinitely disintensified sort): in part, as sprung from the desires that bleed out from within and around the repetitions and cycles of modern life.[29]

I say 'in part' because it is not merely the matter of a cultural studies that attends to desires as they bleed out and around – after all, cultural studies has spent nearly the entirety of its relatively short and politicized existence traversing over and between, in one way or another, the planes of 'daily life' and 'the everyday' with the innumerable joys, pains, comforts, accommodations, refusals, and resistances that come with them and then, call for action/counter-action/continuation/transformation/alliance. But, more so, this is a cultural studies that is also willing to take a rhythmic soak in the banal diffuseness of everydayness (in its wholly immanent bleed-up and across). This is a cultural studies, as Brian Massumi sets it out in his own essay in this issue, that would work as *affective contagion* – crucially, a contagion that can only work to its fullest and most actively contagious capacity when it no longer misses, among other things, 'the qualitative excess of liveliness overspilling every determinate expression' and 'the impersonal and over-personal excesses of ongoing transformation' (Massumi). In productive banality (all-access to pure process in excess) lies the potential for cultural studies as affective contagion.

As Meaghan Morris (1998) writes, at the end of her 'On the Beach' (in the midst of an ongoing mini-debate with cultural policy studies), cultural studies

can never turn a blind eye to the ways in which 'all this living "exceeds" (to wheel in a useful term)' (p. 118). Yes, as it turns out, 'excess' is a useful term: useful, in this moment, for revealing what sets cultural studies apart from philosophy and what would make its working as 'affective contagion' uniquely different from much of what has gone on in the diverse 'functionings' of cultural studies before.[30] When Deleuze and Guattari speak of 'function' (or 'functives') in relation to concepts, they use it to trace two separate vectors that sweep into and out of 'actual states of affairs' and 'virtual events'. Philosophy follows one vector 'back up to the event that gives its virtual consistency to the concept' (1991/94: 159). In the other vector – as the line of descent from *virtual event* to *actual state of affairs*, there is (in the moment of actualization), a space that opens and a time that never stops taking place. It is the instant, say Deleuze and Guattari, when and where 'nothing happens':

> Each component of the event is *actualized or effectuated* in an instant, and the event in the time that passes between these instants; but nothing happens within *the virtuality* that has only meanwhiles as components and an event as composite becoming. Nothing happens there, but everything becomes . . . Nothing happens, and yet everything changes, because becoming continues to pass through its components again and to restore the event that is actualized elsewhere, at a different moment.
>
> (p. 158)

This 'other line' (as Massumi similarly notes) is where cultural studies finds its own distinct wedge: descending from virtual event to actual state of affairs but, then, not reascending on the other line back up to 'the concept' (and, thus, not joining philosophy on the way to its 'glowingly useless' plane of consistency). Instead, the virtual line of cultural studies descends to the actual and deflects laterally upon it, moving and branching horizontally.[31] What ultimately separates the tasks of cultural studies and philosophy (as different functions and specialized activities) is how, then, each *proceeds* through pure process in excess. In cultural studies, the open or outside is not reached in ascension to the concept but through proliferative extension from within the horizon of the event itself: opening out in a lateral and processual spread on an event's infinit(iv)e horizon.[32]

Upon this horizon, there is 'a potential or power' to be found in the state of affairs: in the way that 'the state of affairs actualizes a chaotic virtuality by carrying along with it a space that has ceased, no doubt, to be virtual but that still shows its origin and serves as absolutely indispensable correlate to the state of affairs' (p. 153). Singularly differentiated in whatever state of affairs it is actualized, this space, as carried along, is 'a space where everything (indeed, *everything*) is still to be won' – because it '*cannot be separated from the potential through which it takes effect*, and without which it would have no activity or development' (emphasis in original, *ibid*). And, hence, the potential – through cultural studies'

practice – in the further resonant and rhythmic chaining of this carried-over event-space's powers of effectuation/counter-effectuation (or, more simply, its processes of affective contagion). These are potentials that might be divulged in any number of ways: by 'extending singularities up to the neighbourhood of new ones, or following bifurcations that transform it, or passing through a phase space whose number of dimensions increases with supplementary variables, or, above all, individuating bodies in the field that it forms with the potential' (p. 153–54). Individuating through affective contagion calls upon a belonging of bodies beyond the bounds of any mere representational constitution of their relation: a belonging that, by affective necessity, relies on 'the ability to sense other everydayness' and the ability to act within the suspended, utterly banal (virtual) space of belonging's rhythmic (if only temporarily) coherence. Catching everydayness in *media res*.

A cultural studies that discovers a means of productively proceeding through the banality must, however, reckon not only with the prolongation of process but also with access to excess: the excess of 'living' (of 'a life', of everydayness) that will always exceed. This requires the 'activist, constructivist bent' that Taussig finds in Walter Benjamin (and, of course, this bent is shared by Deleuze and Lefebvre as well). As Theodor Adorno notes, Benjamin felt very keenly that that which exceeds the received notions of the real and that which exceeds, as well, what counts as 'experience' had come, in his time, to be unbearably narrow and, thus, Benjamin sought after ways to make room for expansion:[33]

> Benjamin never once acknowledged the boundary taken for granted by all modern thought: the Kantian commandment not to trespass into unintelligible worlds . . . For Benjamin everything habitually excluded by the norms of experience ought to become part of experience to the extent that it adheres to its own concreteness instead of dissipating this, its immortal aspect, by subordinating it to the schema of the abstract universal.
>
> (Adorno, 1955/1988: 4)

In Benjamin's work, the most seemingly ephemeral, transient, incorporeal, and inorganic aspects of everyday life and experience are granted equal standing with the presumably much harder and faster world of materiality and corporeality. Or, as Deleuze (1968/94) also remarks, those well-known Kantian 'conditions of experience' are always surrounded by 'subjacent conditions of real experience' (p. 231). And there are the supra-jacent conditions too. In what ways does the current pinch (the narrowness and redundancies) of cultural studies result from some of the same gradually winnowed away sub- and supra-conditions of its terrain?[34] How wide and how flat can cultural studies go? How can it take into account the ways that living exceeds, always exceeds? Both inorganically and incorporeally (as a start). When Benjamin (1918/1996: 100–110) first set down his thoughts most fully in this whole matter, he gave his essay the most impossibly

bold title: 'On the programme of the coming philosophy.' Not nearly so bold, I do sometimes wonder though if, on a road through *the banal* itself, it might be possible to discern the blank, colourless, and shapeless contours of a coming cultural studies.[35]

Notes

1 Perhaps the most succinct description of Meaghan Morris' work or, at least, the role that it plays in regards to cultural studies might be offered by Michel de Certeau (1984) at the end of his chapter 'The arts of theory'. He writes (with particular reference, in his case, to Bourdieu and Foucault) that this is 'a discourse which would be the art of talking about or constructing theory as well as the theory of that art – that is, a discourse that would be the memory and the practice, or in short, *the life-story of tact itself*' (p. 76).

2 There are several ways toward describing this 'other' banality that might be enabling and empowering for cultural studies. For an absolutely resonant alternative way that I will only be able to allude to, at times, in this essay (especially around the issue of 'whatever'-ness), see Giorgio Agamben's work, especially in *The Coming Community* (1990/93) and *Homo Sacer* (1995/98). In the latter, Agamben, following Jean-Luc Nancy, gives the name *ban* to the potentiality 'that designates both exclusion from the community and the command and insignia of the sovereign' (p. 28). Agamben's book is, in part, an investigation of the progressive 'banalization' of this *ban* (the origins of which he traces back to Aristotle) that first set 'the law' in relation to 'life'. There are direct linkages in *Homo Sacer* to several of the coordinates in my essay here: especially, Deleuze and Guattari on virtual/actual and Agamben's discussion of Aristotle and potentiality/actuality. This autonomous, yet never fully separate, realm of potentiality – as derived from the originary *ban* – is, at once, the site of Lefebvre's 'everydayness' in all of its incandescent banalities and potentialities while it is, simultaneously – as Agamben so soberingly concludes – the site of variously enhanced bio-political machinations and intrusively everyday permeabilities.

3 Perhaps this inextricability of critique of theories of everyday life *from within the everyday* is one of the reasons why Morris (1998) remarks: 'my terms, necessarily, are caught up in the problem that they try to define. I can only gesture at my problem, and say why I think it matters' (p. 109). For an illuminating essay on the genealogy of the concept of 'the everyday' and its emergence from German-Soviet debates in Marxist philosophy and from the French context, see John Roberts' 'Philosophizing the everyday: the philosophy of praxis and the fate of cultural studies'. See especially Robert's discussion of Schelling and the notion of the 'irreducible remainder' (1999: 22) in regards to the discussion of excess of process in this present essay.

4 See, for example, Thomas Carl Wall's *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (1999).

5 See, also, Deleuze and Guattari (1991/94) in their *What is Philosophy?*, 'What is called "perception" is no longer a state of affairs but a state of the body as induced by another body, and "affection" is the passage of this state to another state as increase or decrease of potential-power through the action of other bodies' (p. 154). But, importantly, these bodies need not be 'human' and, thus, even 'non-living, or inorganic, things have a lived experience because they are perceptions and affections' (*ibid*). And, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'perception will no longer reside in the relation between a subject and an object, but rather in the movement serving as the limit of that relation, in the period associated with the subject and object. Perception will confront its own limit; it will be in the midst of things, throughout its own proximity . . .' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/87: 282).

6 Thus, if and when there is a split of subject and object, they arrive as mutually constitutive 'agglomerations' upon a field of banal intensities. See Guattari (1995/1992) where he writes: '. . . a block of percept and affect, by way of aesthetic composition, agglomerates in the same transversal flash the subject and object, the self and other, the material and incorporeal, the before and after' (p. 93).

7 As reconceived, it is this immoderate current-flow of intensity that *can* make something come into being at the end of its trajectory; it can produce difference from out of itself (i.e. *not* just a difference that marks its own difference by being different *from* something else), and its arrival will always be in the form of an eternal return to the 'common place' of a banal overflow.

Although problematic, see also Michel Foucault's (1981/91) discussion of the concept of the 'limit-experience' as what unites Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot against any phenomenology that seeks to unify the subject within a field of experience. Instead, they each turn 'experience' into a 'task of "tearing" the subject from itself in such a way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely "other" than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation' (p. 31).

8 'It is less a space in the empirical sense than a gap in space that is also a suspension of the normal unfolding of time' (Massumi, 1996b: 29).

9 Similarly, in the essay from which I took this essay's epigraph, Dick Hebdige (1993) writes:

> We might talk about the inscription within particular uses of language of structured and structuring potentialities, of alternative and even antithetical futures, hiding, waiting, in the same array of signifying elements, the same array of pent-up social forces, in a figural relationship between signifying elements and pent-up social forces, which is almost there, virtually there, waiting for syntactical articulation.
>
> (p. 275)

10 'Slack' and 'steady accretion' serve to describe, as well, how the virtual acts or, rather, how the virtual moves to act. That is, the virtual never acts except

by 'ceding' its transformative force-production over to actualization at the point where a diffusely neutral accretion of banal intensities crosses a threshold and passes – in the case of 'the human' – within a more palpable range of perception, cognition, or feeling. Also, see Rob Shields (1999) on Henri Lefebvre as the creator of 'a "slacker" philosophy before its time' (p. 136).

11 Deleuze on Derrida:

> I admire it [deconstruction] very much but it has nothing to do with my method. . . . In no sense do I present myself as a textual commentator. A text, for, me is only a little cog within an extra-textual practice. It is not a matter of commenting [on] the text in terms of textual practice, nor of any other methods, but of seeing its use in the extra-textual practice into which it extends.
>
> (translation modified, quoted in Braidotti, 1991: 69)

12 Like Raymond Williams defending his 'structure of feeling' from the charge of offering 'a kind of pristine contact between the subject and the reality in which this subject is immersed' (1979: 167), there is no desire here to simply make a 'god of unexamined subjectivity' by going so far as to rule out the very real existence of 'conscious' intentionality, subjective self-reflection, the powers of the mind to reason, and all the rest. But, also like Williams, there is a real sense that a certain narrowness entered cultural studies soon after its 'two paradigms' shift, which seems to have foreclosed particular approaches to ontology, experience, materiality, and affect. For an attempt, by times successful, to address some of what was lost in the transition from 'culturalism' to 'structuralism' (and, then, post-structuralism and theories of articulation), see Michael Pickering's (1997) *History, Experience, and Cultural Studies*.

13 As Henri Bergson (1968) remarks in his 'The possible and the real' (quite obviously, it is an essay that helped to establish several of the distinctions between virtual-actual and possible-real):

> Philosophy stands to gain in finding some absolute in the moving world of phenomena . . . [in revealing a reality] to us, beyond the fixity and monotony which our senses, hypnotized by our constant needs, at first perceived in it, ever-recurring novelty, the moving originality of things.
>
> (p. 124)

14 Brian Massumi has written on proprioception in a number of essays. See, for example, 'The bleed: where body meets image' (1996b) and 'The autonomy of affect' (1995). My brief recounting of Sacks here is quite indebted Massumi's prior conceptualizations.

15 More pointedly, the possible-real denies any actual potential for outside influence, contingency, chance, or reciprocity because, even if a possibility has been realized, it unfolds within 'the same'. Ultimately, in the act of realization, nothing has really changed. Nor will it ever. Whereas the possible-real

proceeds through processes of resemblance and representation, the virtual-actual operates by acts of creation and differenciation. In this sense, then, to realize a possible is to be over and done with it: because, in its realization, all of the once-contending possibilities will have been eliminated. But, even further restricting, the seemingly full range of available possibilities had already been drastically limited from the very start by one's ability to, first, think them. For the emphasis that Deleuze (1966/88a) places on these particular points, see particularly his *Bergsonism* (p. 96–7).

16 Thus, the virtual offers a thoroughly additive way ('and . . . and. . . and. . .') to understand how the non-discursive acts upon the discursive (or, for that matter, how the non-representational intersects with the representational and a-signifying processes with signifying processes, etc), how unthought inhabits thinking, how (apparently) inert matter affects living processes, how a non-human excess emerges from everyday banal process and, of course, how the reverse is true in all of these cases as well.

17 The moment when Lefebvre first went 'off' Bergson (following a paper by Albert Einstein at the *Societe francaise de philosophie* that, Lefebvre claims, 'crushed' Bergson) is described in an interview conducted with him in 1987 (quoted in Gregory, 1994: 392). However, I don't think that Lefebvre remains entirely or eternally 'off' Bergson (again, the last writings of Lefebvre appear as evidence of a reconciliation of sorts with Bergson's thought) and, thus, I would argue that Shields (1999) often paints Lefebvre's philosophical antagonism with Bergson too broadly or, anyway, too finally. See Bergson's *Duration and Simultaneity* for a book length response to Einstein. See, also, Deleuze (1966/88a: 79–89) for an inspired defense of Bergson's philosophy with regard to Einstein's theory of relativity.

18 Although I don't have the space to pursue it in any detail here, for the reasons why Lefebvre's 'everydayness' is not Heidegger's 'everydayness,' see Peter Osborne's *The Politics of Time* (1995). But, briefly, some of the distinctions between Lefebvre and Heidegger are, respectively: a 'quasi-vitalist' sense of life versus a 'dissatisfaction with life', a 'we'-structure versus a 'they'-structure, and an affectual incompleteness/openness structured by repetitions and rhythms versus 'the temporality of within-time-ness' that views infinity as '"self-forgetful" representation' (p. 160–96).

19 Even the most sympathetic followers of Lefebvre, like Soja or Shields, will acknowledge that his conceptual delineations never stay in one place for very long; once-marked boundaries often unexpectedly shift or migrate and his concepts, in their trialectic relations, internally/contextually self-deviate in what seem, sometimes, a fairly haphazard fashion. So, simply overlapping these different triads can be a somewhat risky proposition. Still, I'd argue that more than sufficient evidence can be found across Lefebvre's work to warrant such a convergence of his triads.

20 The most logical culmination of cultural studies' criss-crossings of this plane of 'the everyday' is, as Meaghan Morris knows (see also Brian Massumi's essay in this issue), 'cultural policy studies.' While acknowledging its pertinence,

Morris (1998) adds that cultural policy work is 'strongly founded on closure against the *indefinite* in social life' (p. 231). Everydayness and 'the virtual' provide means for recognizing how this living always 'exceeds' this policy closure.

21 Deleuze and Claire Parnet (1977/87) maintain: 'you only escape dualisms effectively by shifting them like a load, and when you find between the terms, whether they are two or more, a narrow gorge like a border or a frontier which will turn the set into a multiplicity, independently of the number of parts' (p. 132). This multiplicity is a virtual 'assemblage' and the narrow gorge is a 'line of flight' or line outside constituted by 'several rhythms, at several speeds' (p. 125). We find ourselves on this line 'whenever we think bewilderingly enough or live forcefully enough. They're lines that go beyond knowledge (how could they be 'known'?), and it's our relations to these lines that go beyond power relations' (Deleuze, 1990/95: 110). For one of the best discussions of Deleuze's use of Spinozian philosophy to forego the negations and movements of the Hegelian dialectic, see Pierre Macherey (1996: 146–47).

22 Massumi (1992) also notes how Deleuze and Guattari move from their earlier and closer adherence to Bergson's original formulation of the virtual toward a 'more Blanchotian position' (p. 170).

23 See Daniel Smith (1997) on Deleuze and 'the whole':

> This whole is itself a part that merely exists alongside the other parts, which it neither unifies nor totalizes. Yet it nonetheless has an effect on these parts, since it is able to create non-preexistent relations between elements that in themselves remain disconnected, and are left intact. . . . [The Whole] is not a set and does not have parts; it is rather what prevents each set from closing in on itself, forcing it to extend itself into a larger set, to infinity. The Whole, in other words, is the Open, because it is its nature to constantly produce or create the new.
>
> (p. xxiii)

24 In a paragraph that sits very strangely in the essay ('Perspective or Prospective?') in which it appears but resonates powerfully with Agamben's thoughts on *the outside*, Lefebvre (1996) writes the following:

> Thus, direction is not defined by an effective synthesis, but by a convergence, a virtuality is outlined but realized only at the limit. The limit is not somewhere in the infinite, and yet it can be reached by successive leaps and bounds. It is impossible to settle in it and to establish it as an accomplished reality. Hence this is the essential feature of the method already considered and named 'transduction', the construction of a virtual object approached from experimental facts. The horizon opens up and calls for actualization.
>
> (p. 165)

See Deleuze and Guattari (1980/87) on 'transduction' (and rhythm) and its relation to 'the outside' (chaos and cosmos) in *A Thousand Plateaus* (313–20).

25 Lefebvre (1974/91b) asks the same question in the start of his conclusion ('Openings and Conclusions') to *The Production of Space* and, then, adds a couple of more questions:

> [W]here does a relationship reside when it is not being actualized in a highly determined situation? How does it await its moment? In what state does it exist until an action of somekind makes it effective?
>
> (p. 401)

26 This is, of course, Deleuze's formula for the virtual as pinched from Proust. For Lefebvre, on the 'real and ideal' in relation to actualization and the questions he raises to himself in his attempt to transform dialectical thought, see the conclusion of his 'Seen from the window' (1996: 227).

27 The resonances between Benjamin and these three (Blanchot, Deleuze and Lefebvre) are, of course, not a matter of mere coincidence. Deleuze and Benjamin – even at the level of names only – shared a mutual affection for Kafka, Nietzsche, Klee, Proust, Bataille, Klossowski, Bergson, Duns Scotus, etc. Deleuze and Benjamin also share some mutual equivocations, if not sometimes-outright antagonisms, with Hegel, Kant, and Heidegger. Shields (1999) briefly addresses several points of connection between Lefebvre and Benjamin: including the fact that Benjamin 'read and enthusiastically annotated' one of Lefebvre's earliest published works (p. 25). Additionally, Shields notes how, in linking the banal and the spatial, Lefebvre was in very close proximity to Benjamin's notion of the 'optical unconscious' – which is, in fact, the philosophical impetus behind the Taussig passage quoted here (p. 61).

28 Although I have violated her dictum at numerous points along the way, Meaghan Morris (1998) states that 'it is certainly not useful . . . to pose problems as though in studying 'the everyday' one is always directly involved in a mortal combat with the history of Western philosophy' (p. 117). And I would agree completely (in part because I also take Morris' statement to be meant as humorous and slightly self-deprecating) that such a study of the everyday would be useless (even 'glowingly useless' as Brian Massumi assesses the role of philosophy elsewhere in this issue): if that is all it is (a staged combat echoing through the halls of philosophy). But I also believe, following Lawrence Grossberg (1997a), that cultural studies still has much to gain by finding the myriad ways (for good and for bad) that 'almost all of the available theories of culture can be traced back to and located within the terrain of a Kantian philosophical discourse' (p. 19). In the end, I suppose it depends upon what cultural studies *does* with the 'glow' of philosophy's glowing uselessness.

29 Fredric Jameson's *Social Text* review of the 1992 Routledge *Cultural Studies* book (edited by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler) begins with the words, 'The desire called cultural studies . . .' (1993: 17). As Peter Osborne (1995: 241) points out, this is an allusion to Jean-Francois Lyotard's use of the expression 'the desire called "Marx"' in his *Libidinal Economy*. Osborne is also quite good on demonstrating how cultural studies as

this kind of desire mixes, in Lefebvre's work, with Marxism, Surrealism, and Existentialism (p. 190). Thus, my own calling attention to 'totality' as conceived by Deleuze and Lefebvre has some real and not-so-accidental resonances with Fredric Jameson's work. Most especially, I would argue, along with Jameson, that cultural studies would do well to begin rethinking its theory of articulation by looking at how Marx conceived the 'organic' and 'metabolism.' Doing so might at least rid the cultural studies' theory of articulation of its 'bony' and 'mechanical quality' and return it to the sinewy and softer tissue of a body without organs – or, as Jameson (1993) reminds: 'the 'organic' . . . once designated [for Marx] the radical difference in function between the various organs' (p. 30). For an enlightening discussion of some of these very issues, see Richard Dienst's *Still Life in Real Time* (1994: 36–65).

30 There is a lengthy and potentially fruitful argument that could be made here for a reinvigorated return to Raymond Williams' work, particularly by looking once again – after cultural studies' long and winding two-decade structuralist/post-structuralist detour – at how Williams always attended to change, culture-in-process, structures of feeling, and concept-creation. (See also footnote #12 above.) I don't think, however, that it can be a mere return. That is, like Deleuze's 'return to Bergson,' such a return to Williams cannot only mean a renewed admiration but also 'a renewal or an extension of his project today, in relations to the transformations of life and society, in parallel with the transformations of science' (1966/1988: 115). I would hold that all of these aspects (including and especially 'science') are equally important for any return to Williams. It seems to me that Massumi, in his essay for this issue, misses this Williams' lineage: one that continues to inhabit, albeit in often-minor ways, some portion of the cultural studies' work happening today. But I also think that, ironically enough, in Massumi's own close attention to matters of 'science,' one begins to see a way that Williams' project can find its extension into many of the issues currently at greatest concern for cultural studies.

31 See Michael Hardt's (1993) *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*:

> The skyline of society is perfectly flat, perfectly horizontal, in the sense that social organization proceeds without any predetermined design, on the basis of the interaction of immanent forces, and can thus, in principle, be thrust back at any time, as if by the indefatigable pressures of gravity, to its zero state of equality . . . The horizontality of the material constitution of society puts the weight on practice as the motor of social creation.
>
> (p. 121)

32 McKenzie Wark's (1994) *Virtual Geography* is one of the best examples of how cultural studies can enter (in *media res*) into the rhythmic space-time of 'the event'.

33 Rather interestingly, Theodor Adorno (1955/88b) also remarks that Benjamin's way of conceiving 'experience' was so wildly at odds with the criteria

by which others had long rendered and evaluated it 'that it never even occurred to him to defend himself against them as Bergson did' (p. 4).

See also Howard Caygill's extraordinary book *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* for additional detail on Benjamin's interest in set theory (like Agamben and Deleuze) and, hence, his notion of 'an immanent absolute.' 'In order to sustain the idea of an immanent absolute it was necessary to imagine a totality capable, paradoxically, of containing elements which exceeded it' (1998: 14). Caygill's book begins with a chapter-long discussion of Benjamin's important 'Programme of the coming philosophy' essay.

34 Lawrence Grossberg's (1997a: 21) call for a 'spatially materialist' cultural studies has, of course, a great deal of potential resonance with these brief remarks here on rethinking Kant (and, especially, the post-Kantians) and the concept of 'experience.'

35 On the road through the banal itself, see Walter Benjamin's 'Agesilaus Santander (Second Version)' where he writes of how, in Jewish tradition, each human being has a 'personal angel . . . who represents the latter's secret self and whose name nevertheless remains hidden' (Scholem, 1976: 213). Imagine this angel in a more impersonal (and ungendered) way, as one that might 'belong' to a coming cultural studies:

> . . . On that road to the future along which he [the angel] came, and which he knows so well that he can traverse it without turning around. He wants happiness – that is to say, the conflict in which the rapture of the unique, the ['once only'] new, as yet unlived is combined with that bliss of the 'once more,' the having again, the lived. This is why he can hope for the new in no way except on the way of the return home, when he takes a new human being along with him.
>
> (translation modified, Benjamin, 1933/76: 715)

Likewise, see Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (1977/87) on 'souls' along the road:

> . . . The soul is neither above or inside, it is 'with', it is on the road, exposed to all contacts, encounters, in the company of those who follow the same way, 'feel with them, seize the vibration of their soul and their body as they pass', the opposite of a morality of salvation, teaching the soul how to live its life, not to save it.
>
> (p. 62)

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