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RACISM AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Social Theory, History
and 'Race'

Andrew Smith





Racism and Everyday Life

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▶ **Racism and Everyday
Life: Social Theory,
History and 'Race'**

Andrew Smith
University of Glasgow, UK

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RACISM AND EVERYDAY LIFE: SOCIAL THEORY, HISTORY AND 'RACE'
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1

Weapon and Alibi

Abstract: *This chapter reviews a series of important accounts which consider racism as an everyday phenomenon. It looks especially at the work of Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg and Karen and Barbara Fields. It draws a series of lessons from these pioneering accounts arguing, in conclusion, that they push us to reflect not only on racism as an everyday occurrence, but on the concept of the everyday itself.*

Keywords: Barbara Fields; David Theo Goldberg; Everyday life; Karen Fields; Philomena Essed; Racecraft; Racism

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One. This is an essay about racism and the everyday. In one sense, the conjunction is a very familiar one. There has been a significant body of empirical and theoretical work exploring the mundane perpetuation of racist ideas and the ways in which racial identities are presumed, attributed or resisted in everyday contexts and encounters. In this first chapter, I start off by briefly considering some of that work and the lessons which we can take from it. At the same time, I want to argue, this conjunction could bear further consideration. As a phrase 'everyday racism' has been consigned to its own sociological 'everyday' status; to that self-evident condition which is characteristic of everyday phenomena more generally. I want to suggest that there may still be things to be asked about the relationship between racism and everyday life, and in what follows I will try to sketch out in a preliminary way why this might be the case, and what some of those unasked questions might be.

In a subsequent chapter I will consider the work of W.E.B. Du Bois which, it seems to me, offers us a crucially important account of racism and everyday life. In the recent sociological past, however, the first key point of reference is the pathbreaking work of Philomena Essed whose 1991 study, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, emerged, as she explains, from a desire to contest a view of racism which understood it either in merely subjective terms (as a problem of prejudiced individuals) or in abstractly objective terms (as something which could be studied only at the level of social or institutional structures). Essed's research, in contrast, concentrated on the *lived experiences* of racism and was characterized by careful attention to the hard-won understandings of those who had to routinely navigate and respond to such experiences. A key insight of her respondents, in this respect, was that acts of racism in everyday situations were neither arbitrary nor happenstance, but were part of a wider pattern and had to be named as such: 'Specific instances acquire meaning only in relation to the sum total of other experiences of everyday racism' (1991: 288). It is in this sense, then, that she describes racism as 'a process [...] routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices' (2). Racism has effect, at least in part, through its 'cumulative instantiation' (3) day after day, its repetition and reproduction in mundane ways of speaking and acting. Essed urges us to think of it, then, as something which happens not only in overtly political contexts, or in professional situations, but in those spaces and times which appear to be, or are construed as being, most distant from politics and economics (canteens, cloakrooms, the bus journey home) and through quotidian acts and

practices (jokes, gossip, queuing and so forth). The everyday matters for the simple reason that it is a crucial site at which ‘the interweaving of racism in the fabric of the social system’ (37) takes place.

In one sense, Essed’s account, with its emphasis on everyday practices, might seem to fit well with a general move in sociology away from a model of racism as an ‘ideology’. David Theo Goldberg’s *Racist Culture* (1993), more or less contemporaneous with Essed’s study, offers one particularly influential attempt to rebut such a model – or, at least, central aspects of such a model – associated historically, for example, with Eric Williams (1944) and contemporarily with Immanuel Wallerstein, amongst others (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: chapter 2). Goldberg rejects, in particular, any suggestion that racism should be seen as serving a primarily ‘explanatory’ purpose – that it involves a set of ideas or accounts of human life which we should think of as emerging in post hoc justification for economic inequality. He, by contrast and following Foucault, understands racial culture as a discourse rooted and reproduced in the very ways in which, in Western societies, being and personhood are constituted. It is, thus, not something ‘superstructural’, it is not something which can be explained in terms of some other set of prior relationships which precede it and for which it simply provides a rationalization. Neither should it be thought of as merely a tactic wielded by the powerful in defence of their power. Rather, the making of ‘racial’ subjects is in and of itself a part of how power works, shaping at a ‘pre-conceptual’ level what individuals feel themselves to be, and how they think and feel about others. This account implies a concern to conceive of ‘race’ not as something imposed on daily life from above, nor something to be explored only in relation to the actions of elites, but as a ‘discursive formation’ written through and continually interacting ‘with the material experience of daily life’ (1993: 46).

In this way Goldberg’s model emphasizes, importantly, the extent to which the everyday is the site, not simply of racism, but of what is sometimes called ‘race-making’: the formation and perpetuation of racialized identities as such. Yet the overall effect of his account is a despairing one, leaving us with little sense that the processes by which communities are racialized might be contested or resisted: ‘What is traditionally marked as resistance is probably impossible’, he writes (9). Indicatively, in his subsequent account of the ‘racial state’, he describes the state’s ‘racial reach and expression’ as being at once ‘super-visible, in form and force’, and yet also ‘thoroughly invisible in its osmotic infusion into the

everyday' (2002: 98). As Carter and Virdee note (2008), the political consequences of such an analysis are bleak, leaving us with a view of the world in which 'racialized' subjectivity is so completely all-pervading, so saturating of the contexts of everyday life, as to be beyond contest or critical reflection.

It is, of course, perfectly possible to conceive of the construction of 'race' as ideological without, on the one hand, reducing it to a set of ideas and without, on the other, presuming that processes of race-making are beyond the reach of critical knowledge. A final example, in this respect, is the work of Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields. The authors' central concern in their recent study *Racecraft* (2012) is to urge 'fellow Americans to explore how the falsehoods of racecraft are made in everyday life' (2012: 74). Racecraft, by analogy with witchcraft, describes the way in which everyday racist practices serve to reproduce belief in the reality of 'race' by generating social effects (inequalities in health, unequal access to the best education, disproportionate rates of arrest and so on) which are then themselves read as evidence of supposed racial differences. In this respect, K.E. Fields and B.J. Fields argue, racecraft (like witchcraft) 'has no moving parts of its own, and needs none. It acquires perfectly adequate moving parts when a person acts upon the reality of the imagined thing; the real action creates evidence for the imagined thing' (22).

This argument rests, then, on an understanding of racism as an ideology, but – following accounts developed in their individual historical and anthropological writings (Barbara J. Fields 1990; Karen E. Fields 1982) – as an ideology which entails not only theories, conceptions or representations, but those ongoing processes and practices by which we interpret and navigate daily life. Ideology, they suggest, should be understood as the 'descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence through which people make rough sense of the social reality that they live [...] It is the interpretation in thought of the social relations through which they constantly create and recreate their collective being' (2012: 134). In this respect, central to their account is the insistence that 'race' has no autonomous, free-floating existence apart from the practices and relations by which it is made real: 'ideologies do not have lives of their own' (146). To some extent, this is Goldberg's point as well, but the Fields' account emphasizes the extent to which these practices and relations are the product of self-conscious strategies and choices on the part of those who stand to benefit from the social arrangements which result: in this respect, they use the term ideology, in part, to emphasize the

extent to which the powerful are disproportionately able to 'shape the terrain of social life' (139). Conversely, their account also recognizes a much greater leeway for both resistance to racism and for self-awareness as regards the processes by which 'racialization' happens. And this is precisely because (to paraphrase E.P. Thompson) 'race' is a happening: insofar as 'racecraft' implies practice it implies the contingencies of practice. A 'trick' continuously made and remade it is, by the same token, never triumphantly concluded. 'Racecraft' can never fully rid itself of the possibility of moments of potential crisis, disconcertion or contestation.

Hence, then, they open their study with a 'tour' of racecraft in contemporary America, exploring the ways in which everyday practices serve to perpetuate the belief in 'racial' difference. These practices are subtle and routine but also profoundly unstable. When, for example, a busload of mostly black and Hispanic children turn up, by prior arrangement, to make use of the swimming pool at a leisure club in a largely white middle class neighbourhood in Pennsylvania, and are kicked out on the grounds that their presence would change the 'complexion' of the facility, what is thrown into sudden and stark relief is the otherwise unspoken demarcation of space in suburban America, racist and racializing at once: 'the everyday routines that organize racism do not always, but always can, explode' (37), the Fields note. Everyday life is thus a core site of 'racecraft', but by the same token, a site at which the practices of 'racecraft' may become subject to critical attention and, indeed, to more or less organized forms of resistance.

Two. From these initial examples, then, we might draw a series of lessons about racism and the everyday, some of which I will return to at various points in what follows. The first of these concerns the straightforward necessity of understanding racism as something which is enacted in and through everyday situations including, of course, the 'backstages' of formally public contexts such as workplaces and political institutions. 'Racist concepts', write the Fields, 'do considerable work in political and economic life; *but*, if they are merely an appendage of politics and economics, without intimate roots in other phases of life, their persuasiveness would diminish accordingly' (11). It is the concern with 'persuasiveness' which is crucial here. The Fields point out that unequal social relations are always under-written by the use of violence but are not liable to remain stable for long if that violence has to be continuously called upon. Recognizing this should not lead us to imagine that people are simply 'duped' by the powerful, or that they give a merely 'intellectual'

consent to the world as they encounter it: ‘It will not do to suppose that a powerful group captures the hearts and minds of the less powerful, inducing them to “internalize” the ruling ideology’ (138). Rather it is a question of understanding the making and remaking of social reality through mundane practices and habits: consent is a matter of our ‘doing’, not just of our ‘thinking’, of our enmeshment in day-to-day actions and relationships which shape what we understand to be real. Everyday forms of racism help create and sustain inequalities but in doing so they are themselves constitutive of the conditions for a sociologically plausible belief in ‘race’, especially on the part of those who stand to benefit from such conditions. The point is that – although such belief is always also, of course, a matter of wilful propaganda or elaboration – it is at the level of the everyday, not at the level of abstract structure, that much of the ‘persuasiveness’ of ‘race’ happens, socially speaking.

It is for this reason that it was vital for Essed’s respondents to recognize that repeated, day-to-day acts of racism – some ‘so miniscule that I can’t put them into words’, one of her informants says (1991: 152) – were not just ad hoc or isolated ‘incidents’, but involved the making real, in local and face-to-face situations, of wider power relations: ‘Each instantiation of everyday racism has meaning only in relation to the whole complex of relations and practices [...] expressions of racism in one particular social relation are related to all other racist practices’ (52). In this respect, a focus on everyday racism ought to imply a concern with recognizing the *continuity* of racism. It is important to say this, not least because the term ‘everyday racism’, as Bethan Harries (2015) notes in a valuable and cautionary account, might easily appear to assume or support a distinction between ‘real’ or ‘serious’ racism, as opposed to that which is ‘mundane’, ‘unthinking’ or ‘incidental’: merely everyday. This distinction is, in a sense, reflected in the way in which racism has been studied by social scientists, and accounts of the history of racist theory have often insisted on the importance of separating, analytically, the ‘scientific’ or ‘theoretical’ elaboration of ‘race’ from ‘lay’ or ‘common sense’ understandings (e.g. Banton 1998). Given this danger, it is important to properly reckon with Essed’s point. Everyday racism demonstrates precisely the continuous traffic between forms and expressions of racism not just at the level of ideas but in the sense just described: everyday practices and activities both reflect and reinforce the social conditions in which ‘race’ is believed in. This relationship, between everyday racism, on the one hand, and structures and histories of racism, on the other, is effective

in both directions. For Essed's informants, seemingly disconnected or 'trivial' incidents in everyday situations had the force they did, they were felt as they were, because each one was continuous with, and tacitly brought to bear, longer histories of racism and wider traditions of racializing representation. If unequal structures are at least partly reproduced in and through everyday racism, it is also the case that everyday acts of racism carry with them, in each instance, all of the weight and apparent given-ness of those structures.

In this respect, we also need to recognize – as both Essed's concern with experience and Goldberg's concern with the formation of racialized identities suggest – that race-making is not just as a matter of conceptualizations, but is something which happens through those aspects of our lives which are more personal, including our feelings and our bodies. It is in something like this sense, for example, that Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2012) describes a 'racial grammar' structuring everyday life and relationships in America and effective, at least in part, because of the extent to which it is affective; because of the ways in which whiteness comes to define ideals of aesthetic beauty and the fact that European bodies are taken as normative standards in formal scientific contexts, as also in many aspects of popular culture: the fashion industry, film-making and elsewhere (compare, in the British context, Swanton 2008). Such concerns, of course, were at the heart of Frantz Fanon's account of the experience of being seen as 'black' more than half a century ago, and it was on the basis of such concerns that he famously critiqued Jean-Paul Sartre for imagining that racialized identities were historically fungible, and would be easily superseded by class identities in due course (1986 [1952]: 134–40): 'Jean-Paul Sartre had forgotten that the black man suffers in his body quite differently from the white man' (138). Much of Fanon's phenomenological account, tellingly, focuses on the way in which 'blackness' is imposed in mundane situations and encounters. A concern with the everyday thus points us to the extent to which racism shapes lives in ways that are intimate and inward. Racialization is a matter of the subjective as well as of the structural; or, more accurately, perhaps, an emphasis on everyday life reminds us of the impossibility, in real experience, of simply separating out the latter from the former.

Yet, crucially, these processes remain knowable and nameable. Essed's account is very careful to recognize that the way in which individuals responded and understood everyday racism was necessarily conditioned by the extent to which they had 'a framework in which to place their

experiences' (1991: 98). Her respondents in America, thus, tended to situate their individual experiences within the wider history of racism and black resistance in the US. These forms of knowledge, which allowed the personal to be contextualized as part of a longer political struggle, were often, she notes, passed on within families and especially from mothers to daughters. The absence of a connection to a movement of public resistance, she found, made it correspondingly more difficult for her Dutch respondents to think of everyday forms of racism as related to wider structures of inequality, or to respond to them in ways that were assertive rather than 'defensive'. This is, of course, a crucial and cautionary point: the ways in which people make sense of their lives are necessarily shaped, not just by context, but by the availability or otherwise of intellectual, cultural and political resources, including narratives of shared experience, which allow them an 'objectifying' handle on what may otherwise appear to be merely personal or merely incidental events.

Nevertheless, Essed insists that it is characteristic that those who are subject to everyday racism will develop a particular kind of expertise with regard to it, if for no other reason than that they are able to recognize the cumulative patterning of such racism over time: 'Through prolonged practice in dealing with racism, people become experts. This means that their general knowledge of racism becomes organized in more and more complex ways, while their interpretive strategies become more and more elaborate' (74). I will return to this discussion in what follows, but the point for the meantime is to recognize the possibility of what we might call an 'everyday sociology of racism', the fact that people 'problematize' their own experiences and seek to make sense of them in relation to other experiences of their own and by comparison with the experiences of others. For these reasons we can argue – as do the Fields – that even as everyday life is a context in which 'race' is made, it is necessarily also a context in which that making may be apprehended.

All of this leads me, then, to a final point. Understanding everyday racism requires us to grasp the complexity and political significance of the concept of the everyday itself. Repeatedly, Essed reports, when her respondents sought to challenge acts of everyday racism they were met with responses that insisted on the 'merely' inconsequential nature of the acts they had challenged. These acts were passed-off as 'jokes', a matter of 'habit', a thing said or done 'off the cuff' and therefore not to be taken seriously. As Essed explains, such claims are knowingly double-edged. Her central informant, for example, whom she calls 'Rosa N', describes

one such incident: ‘we were having lunch in the hospital restaurant and they were talking about the new film with Don Johnson, but I said Don Johnson [“ó” more or less like in “boy,” which is a very common Dutch (mis)pronunciation of the phonetic “a” like in “John” in English]. Someone corrected me. You must say “Don Johnson” [Dan Jahnsun]. I came back with, why can’t I say “[Don Johnson]?”’ Subsequently, she recalls: ‘one of the girls came up to me with: yes, people always have to be so careful when they talk with you’ (152). This instance, in common with others that Essed records, involves an act which has the effect of denying Rosa N. the possibility of being taken-for-granted. An act which denies her, in other words, the possibility of being able to act in the kind of ‘unreflective’ or ‘unremarkable’ way that characterizes much of what we do in everyday life. When her speech is made the subject of remark what is precluded for her is possibility of what we might call ‘everydayness’. Yet when she challenges this act, the response turns the accusation back upon her, so that *she* is construed as being the person who is unwilling to allow others to act in ‘merely’ everyday ways and whose presence compels them to be continuously ‘careful’ or ‘reflective’ about what they say or how they behave. In this respect, ‘the everyday’ is both what is denied to those who experience everyday racism *and* at the same time the condition of ‘deniability’ for such racism. It is, as it were, both weapon and alibi at once.

This is why, for Essed’s informants and for the account which she provides, shaped by their ‘expertise’, it becomes crucial to recognize the repetitive quality of these experiences. This matters because it shifts the meaning of the term ‘everyday’ in ‘everyday racism’. The denial of everyday racism rests on construing the everyday as that which is trivial or incidental and thus discrete: not meaningfully connected to anything beyond itself. By contrast, the understanding of Essed’s informants rests on recognizing the ‘interrelated instantiations of racism’ (52) in everyday life. In other words, it begins from an understanding of racism as something which happens, at least potentially, not ‘merely everyday’ but rather *every day*, day after day, something routine and continuous rather than arbitrary and discontinuous: ‘what you expect may happen any day’, a ‘permanently felt pressure lingering beneath the surface of everyday life’ (158). Of course, once racism is understood as ‘everyday’ in this sense, as something characterized by a certain consistency, as something which systematically shapes daily life, its complicity with structures of inequality and their endurance comes much more immediately into view.

Three. An important point thus emerges. For Essed's respondents, understanding 'everyday racism' required them not only to think in new ways about 'racism' (to recognize and name many of their mundane experiences as such), but it required them also to rethink the concept of the 'everyday'. And there is here, it seems to me, a valuable lesson for sociologists who are concerned with such questions: we too need to think, not just about the 'racism' in 'everyday racism', but also about the category of the 'everyday', and about the nature of the sociological relationship between these two things. As I have suggested, there is no shortage of research in the social sciences which addresses everyday racism and the ways in which 'race' is attributed in and through the everyday use of local spaces (e.g. Phillips 2015; Clayton 2008) or in others kinds of mundane contexts and relationships (e.g. Lewis 2003). There is an even wider body of work which examines these questions in relation to the contiguous concept of 'ethnicity', with a particular focus in this case on the attribution and contestation of ethnic identities in everyday situations (e.g. Karner 2007; Wimmer 2004). Michael Billig's (1995) much cited study, meanwhile, has opened up a related concern with the ways in which national identities take shape in mundane rather than spectacular or closely officiated ways (e.g. Skey 2015). Yet, by and large, in this work, the 'everyday' is taken more or less descriptively, as a way of indicating a particular context or set of contexts, or a sort of 'background' of banal practices. What is of interest, in this regard, is what happens in everyday places and situations; for the most part, the everyday is taken as something given, something relatively straightforward or unproblematic in itself.

By contrast, however, much of the sociology of 'everyday life' emerges precisely from a concern to recognize the everyday as a sociological problem in its own right. Resisting the 'taken-for-granted' character of everyday life, this body of writing seeks to use a focus on the everyday in order to shed a critical light onto the wider social world and the processes which shape that world. Some of this work has influenced the research on racism and ethnicity I have referred to above (Essed, in particular, draws on the work of Dorothy E. Smith and Erving Goffman in her opening theoretical discussion). But, for the most part, sociologists of racism or ethnicity have not engaged in any particularly concerted way with the sociology of the everyday and nor, therefore, have they tended to think of the everyday itself as something sociologically puzzling or revealing. The converse is also true, as I discuss in more

detail in Chapter 3: for the most part the canonical social theorists of everyday life seem remarkably inattentive to the existence of racism and to processes of racialization in the contemporary world generally, and as central aspects of everyday experience in particular. What follows, then, is aimed in two different directions at once. On the one hand, I want to suggest some of the ways in which the sociology of everyday life might be of significance for sociologists engaged in research on racism and 'racecraft'. There are, it seems to me, significant and largely untapped theoretical resources in this body of writing which might help us think in useful and new ways about racism in contemporary society. On the other hand, I also want to reflect critically on the apparent blindness to racism in some of the major theories of everyday life, and the implications of this blindness for the ways in which those theories define or understand what is meant by the everyday.

In short, what I want to suggest is that there may be value for us in trying to think of 'the everyday' and 'racism' not as two discrete issues, sociologically speaking, nor as 'place' and 'event', respectively – what happens, and where it happens, as it were – but as entangled parts of the one and the same problematic. Trying to think of the two together may be of value for our thinking about either one.

2

The Bloody Riddle

Abstract: *This chapter focuses on a central proposition of the sociology of everyday life, which is the need to think about ‘the everyday’ as a problematic historical category in its own right. Following on from this idea – that we can use the everyday to help us make sense of the bloody riddle of modernity – it argues that we need to understand, also, the ways in which the emergence of the ‘everyday’ as a category is bound to a history of empire and the formation of modern ideas of ‘race’. Drawing on evidence from the European context, it aims to show how the ‘everyday’ is racialized as it is born. The chapter ends by showing how that relationship between ‘race’ and the everyday is expressed in contemporary political agendas around security and anti-terrorism.*

Keywords: Empire; Everyday life; Henri Lefebvre; Popular Imperialism; Racism; Securitization

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One. One way of starting to think of ‘racism’ and the ‘everyday’ as part of the same problematic is to recognize the extent to which they belong to the same history. In important respects, of course, the sociology of racism begins with the insistence that racism needs to be understood as something which is situated in specific social and historical contexts. Thus, for example, the different accounts of Oliver Cromwell Cox (1970 [1948]: part three) and Hannah Arendt (1973) classically, or the more recent history provided by George Fredrickson (2002), all start from this same point, contesting the idea that racism can be thought of as just one example of a supposedly universal xenophobia or antipathy towards that which is unfamiliar. This commonsense view has the effect of exonerating the hatred of the racist by rooting it in the workings of apparently timeless human nature. In doing so it ignores the unique aspects of racist ideology and, at the same time, makes it much more difficult to ask causal or political questions about racist practice: how and why does it emerge, and to whose benefit? So, whilst there is discussion about the pre-modern antecedents of some aspects of modern ‘race’ theory, a sociological approach to the understanding of racism begins with a concern to recognize its historical specificity as a set of beliefs and practices rooted in the economic and political structures of modern Western imperialism, elaborated and given a fateful intellectual legitimacy through the work of a range of Enlightenment thinkers as well as in later nineteenth-century ‘race science’, and incorporated in important ways in the workings of the modern Western state and its bureaucratic, legal and administrative institutions as these developed in both domestic and colonial contexts.

In much the same way the sociology of everyday life begins with an insistence on understanding the ‘everyday’ contextually. In other words, it begins by understanding the everyday *not* as a kind of default condition of human existence, but as a category with its own specific history of emergence. To get a sense of this argument we might start comparatively, by considering the work of Fernand Braudel. Braudel devotes the first volume of his magisterial history of early capitalism to ‘the structures of everyday life’, and he does so on the understanding that everyday life designates the realm of habitual and commonplace practices which, taken together, serve to reproduce material existence in a given social context: how people live, how they eat, dress, arrange their homes and so forth. Braudel specifically separates out this sphere of life from that of the market and of trade, which is the focus of the second volume of his study,

and from the 'exalted' (1981: 24) world of finance and an elaborated money economy, which is the focus of the last volume. Yet Braudel considers the everyday worthy of attention precisely because, in his view, it is in these banal material practices that the long term stability of cultures and civilizations is to be found; it is the barely changing rhythms and patterns of daily life which 'by indefinite repetition, add up to form linked chains' (560). Amidst the flux of history, thus, it is everyday practices which sediment into culture, providing 'the horizons and the vanishing-points of all the landscapes of the past. They introduce a kind of order, indicate a balance, and reveal to our eyes the permanent features, the things that in this apparent disorder *can* be explained' (560). Braudel's vision is profoundly democratic, turning its back on the kinds of historiography which fixate on political and intellectual elites, or on dynasties, empires and battles. At the same time, however, it has the paradoxical effect of presenting the everyday as something barely historical, an almost stable 'horizon' against which 'events' can be discerned and deciphered.

In common with Braudel, much of the sociology of everyday life has emphasized the fact that what we do day-to-day is often characterized by repetition and habit, so that mundane experience can be said to be defined by the inattentiveness which is born of familiarity and routine (e.g. Felski 1999/2000). A key difference, however, is that these theories tend to understand the 'everyday' as a category or a 'level' of social life which is both a distinctive product and a characteristic problem of the modern era. In other words, they approach the 'everyday' not as the enduring horizon of social history, as Braudel does, but as something which becomes conceivable as a distinct, unresolved aspect of existence – as a phenomena that can be approached as a problematic – only in the particular context provided by the emergence of capitalist production processes, commodification, the rise of urban living and so on.

Take, for example, Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (2014 [1947; 1961; 1981]). Lefebvre's discussion is famously complex, and twists and turns to deliberately unsettling effect as it develops across the 800-plus pages and 30-plus years which separate the first and last volumes of his *Critique*. One thing which is clear, however, is that for Lefebvre everyday life can no longer be imagined as having the kind of stabilizing or foundational role which Braudel ascribes to it historically. Indeed, we might put this more strongly: for Lefebvre the everyday is characterized by precisely the impossibility of its playing such a role. Increasingly, Lefebvre suggests, life for the majority of men and women

is organized from without: productive life falls under the rubric of capitalist discipline; appetitive life under the rubric of mass consumption, advertising and commercialism; political life under the direction of the state and its bureaucracies. The net effect of the extension of these ‘controlled sectors’, as he calls them, is to prevent any prospect of our lives ‘adding up’ to something which could be understood as a meaningful whole. Our day-to-day existence is thus characterized by the absence of just that ‘style’ or deep-rooted coherence which Braudel attributes to pre-modern and early-modern societies with their durable material cultures. Both this fragmentation and this absence of meaningful depth are evident, Lefebvre argues, in even the smallest parts of contemporary life. Much like Benjamin and Simmel before him, Lefebvre repeatedly seeks out the telling sociological detail, the way in which the minutiae of daily life attest to the wider characteristics of the lived experience of capitalism. Thus, for example, he talks about the domination of public space by ‘signals’ (2007: 62–4), by phenomena such as traffic lights which intervene repeatedly in our lives, checking and directing with a form of communication which is as empty as it is imperative: ‘Perfect rationality and perfect meaninglessness come face to face’ (2014: 573). He discusses, correspondingly, the introduction into our homes of battalions of ‘gadgets’ which break up whatever creative activities remain possible in the erstwhile spaces of domestic life: ‘small technical actions intervene in the old rhythms rather like fragmented labour in productive activity in general [...] they truncate, they make mincemeat of everyday life’ (2014: 369). We are left, he suggests, with a life which feels ‘chock-a-block full and completely empty’ (369) at one and the same time.

Yet Lefebvre’s account is not as despondent as this (much too brief) summary perhaps makes it sound. In common with other twentieth century theorists of the everyday (see, e.g. Heller 1984; Fromm 2013 [1966]; C.L.R. James (1980 [1948])), his discussion is concerned to contest a technocratic Marxism, and to place the question of the ‘human’ and of the conditions which might sustain a fuller human existence at the centre of any possible understanding of socialism: ‘If a higher life [...] were to be attained in “another life” – some mystic and magical hidden world – it would be the end of mankind, the proof and proclamation of his failure. Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all’ (2014: 147). Thus, for Lefebvre, whilst the disjointed and over-ridden nature of everyday life pays testament to the grotesquely uneven quality of capitalist ‘development’ – its capacity to produce scientific marvels at the same time as it reproduces ordinary lives

scarred by both poverty and boredom – it is also in the fugitive moments of the everyday that something other than the world-as-it-is flickers into view. The everyday is a space of never-completely repressed longing, it never absolutely succumbs to control despite the extent to which its promised freedoms are reconstituted in the ‘organized passivity’ of leisure, despite the commercialization of desire, despite the remaking of ‘free time’ in the image of work-time and despite the triumph of quantitative and calculative rationalities over even the most eccentric of ‘escape attempts’ (see Cohen and Taylor 1992 [1976]: chapter 5). In Ben Highmore’s lovely phrase, it is in the margins of ordinary life, and especially in those moments of that life which still recall older traditions of free time and popular festival, that we can find ‘a promissory note signalling the possibility of another way of being’ (2001: 124). In short, the everyday gives a name to those fragmentary or residual spaces and activities which, though continually subject to the logic and language of capitalism, nevertheless harbour the promise of a life outwith that social order: ‘a watermark beneath the transparent surface of the familiar world’ (2014: 127) Lefebvre calls it, right at the outset of his critique; ‘Daily life [...] summons up its *beyond* in time and space’ (839), he reiterates, at the very last.

Thus contemporary everyday life for Lefebvre is in complete contrast to that described in the early-modern world by Braudel: incoherent rather than coherent, increasingly disciplined from without, but always potentially discrepant or ‘unruly’ in its reality (see Ferguson 2009). The very idea of a distinctive ‘everyday life’ has to be grasped as something which is constituted in and through the processes of capitalist modernization, something which becomes ‘thinkable’ only in that historical context. But by the same token, the everyday becomes good to ‘think with’: it can be read diagnostically, as it were, in order to make sense of the world which makes it as it is. In this way, Lefebvre aims to present us with the provocative challenge of seeking to ‘decode the modern world, that bloody riddle, according to the everyday’ (1987: 10).

Two. Taking on Lefebvre’s challenge, grasping the everyday not as ‘what simply is’, but as a historical category, opens up the possibility of considering racism and everyday life as entangled parts of the same thing, as aspects of modernity which emerge not just in parallel but in ways that are constitutively interwoven. In other words, it allows us to move beyond a view in which racism and everyday life are related only as ‘act’ and ‘context’ and to think of them instead as part of the making of each other. This is not to imply that we should not continue to pay

attention to the reality of racism in everyday contexts and practices, but it does suggest that it may be important to think also about the racializing of the everyday as such and, conversely, of the part that conceptions of 'everydayness,' as Lefebvre calls it, play in the making of 'race.'

In the British context, and in the wider European context as well, one significant part of this story, historically, concerns the way in which the construction of everyday life proceeded in and with the development of an increasingly commercialized 'popular imperialism' in the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth century. There has been a great deal of research which has uncovered the multifarious ways in which empire comes to be written into ordinary British life in this period, something that could be encountered and imagined in all kinds of relatively mundane situations (in the street, in the public park, in the kitchen) or consumed – figuratively as well as literally – in commodities of daily use (e.g. MacKenzie 1984, 1986; Driver and Gilbert 1999; Attridge 2003; MacDonald 1994). Writing in the context of the Boer War, J.A. Hobson recognized that part of what explained the popular embrace of empire at the end of the nineteenth century (a process, of course, which did not occur without dissent), was the very nature of the everyday lives which working people were being forced to lead. In words that pre-empt, in many respects, later theorists of mass society, he says:

The crowding of large masses of work-people in industrial operations regulated by mechanical routine, and an even more injurious congestion in home life, the constant attrition of a superficial intercourse in work or leisure with great numbers of persons subject to the same environment – these conditions are apt to destroy or impair independence of character without substituting any sound, rational sociality such as may arise in a city which has come into being primarily for good life, and not for cheap work. (1901: 6–7)

For Hobson, thus, popular imperialism – jingoism as he called it – inserted itself into the cracks left by the fragmentation of popular social life; it was causally related to things lost and lacking in that life. The great spectacles of late Victorian empire, the imperial pageants and parades, spoke to a popular longing for the transcendence of the relentless routines of working life, just as the grand fairs and exhibitions of the same period spoke to a longing for what Lefebvre calls 'plenitude' or richness of existence. In these ways, we should remember, empire offered an (ultimately empty) promise to make good on the very things which modern capitalism was stripping out of day-to-day existence for ordinary men and women in the metropolitan heartlands of the world-system.

Yet if popular imperialism appeared to offer consolation for the material and spiritual impoverishments of everyday life, it contributed at the same time to a re-imagining of the everyday as such. When the Cambridge historian J.R. Seeley famously suggested that the English had conquered half the world in a 'fit of absence of mind' (1883: 8) his point was to insist that empire should become integral to the way in which 'the English' (or sometimes the 'British') understood and conceptualized themselves. The absence of mind which Seeley bemoaned was not an absence of strategic planning so much as a failure to rethink English identity in the light of empire: 'we did not allow it [empire] to affect our imaginations or in any degree to change our ways of thinking' (8). In this respect, Seeley urged his audience to overhaul their understanding of what it meant to be English, to allow empire to become a part of their day-to-day sense of themselves. Already by the time that he was writing, of course, and increasingly in the years that followed, empire *was* becoming a prominent part of English (and British) self-identity, not so much as a consequence of intellectual appeals such as his, but by its growing entailment in the stuff of quotidian experience such as the 'King's Empire Christmas Pudding' (Constantine 1986), or the rise of racialized imagery in commodity advertising (McClintock 1995: chapter 5), or the turn-of-the-century craze for exotic postcards, for 'pictures that encapsulated the world, and brought it into even the humblest living room' (MacKenzie 1984: 21). The double-edged conceptual quality of such processes is crucial. The postcard of the far-flung colony on the mantelpiece may, as MacKenzie suggests, have offered to those who displayed it the feeling that they had some tenuous emotional stake in the imperial project. But it seems likely that, no less compellingly, it served to reconfirm the 'humble living room' as a space of belonging, as a home whose homeliness could be appreciated all the more clearly by being juxtaposed with a distant and exotic other world. In short: if empire is made a part of everyday life in this period – if empire 'becomes everyday' – it simultaneously plays a crucial role in the making of 'everydayness', of a changing conception of the 'ordinary', the mundane or the domestic.

Most crucially of all, of course, the everyday which comes to be imagined in this way is implicitly racialized. As Paul Greenhalgh (1988: chapter 4) demonstrates, a prominent feature of imperial exhibitions across Europe, from the later part of the nineteenth century to the First World War, was the construction of 'native villages'. These living 'exhibits', as Greenhalgh notes, such as those gathered in the 1889 Paris Exhibition,

were treated as demonstrations of the evolutionary and racial typologies which were being established by European 'science'. They were to serve this purpose, however, precisely by putting on display the 'ordinary lives' of the peoples who were exhibited. These displays have to be understood, of course, as performances – often compelled – which had little if anything to do with the real lives of colonized peoples. What is striking, nevertheless, is that it was the idea of everyday life which was central to the claim that the 'Völkerschau' revealed a particular people as they were in themselves, in their unvarnished and authentic state. In this respect the 'everyday' comes to play a crucial definitional and supposedly evidential role in the popular establishment of ideas of 'racial' difference. Yaël Simpson Fletcher (1999) points out a resulting irony, which is that the men and women who were exhibited in these contexts were required to pretend that they were oblivious to the very fact of their being exhibited, to act out an everyday inattentiveness to their own situation so as to ensure the apparent authenticity of the 'otherness' which they were taken to represent. In this regard, 'everydayness' becomes a crucial means of concealing the performative and ascribed quality of 'race'.

In later exhibitions the 'scientific' ambition of these shows was traded in for entertainment, but the conceptual lesson clearly remained the same. According to newspaper reports of the time, more than one million of the ten million visitors who attended the 1911 Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, held in Glasgow's Kelvingrove park, paid to visit the 'West African Village' in which a group of Senegalese weavers played out an imagined version of their day-to-day life. The 'Village', in this case, was sited at the far end of the park, at maximum distance from the high cultural sections of the Exhibition, but next to the 'Joy Wheel', the 'Rifle Range' and the 'Mountain Slide' (Kinchin, Kinchin and Baxter 1988). As this spatial arrangement makes clear, the Scottish staging of an imagined African 'everyday' was intended above all as a form of amusement, but an amusement which played its own role in inscribing the idea of a fundamental difference between Africans and Europeans. After the show, of course, the paying visitor could return once again to their own life, the very 'ordinariness' of which was reconfirmed by this up-close encounter with the 'exotic' others of empire.

In all of this one sees evidence of exactly those processes which Lefebvre associates with the emergence of the everyday as a 'remained' category of modern social life: the turning of popular traditions of festival into modes of passive entertainment ('training schools' in

the habits of exchange value, Walter Benjamin called them, 1999: 201); the commercialization of leisure; the extension of control over previous forms of popular freedom. Tellingly, the prize for one lucky visitor to the Exhibition, a Mrs. Temple of Yoker Road, was a gold watch (*The Scotsman*, 1911: 10), as if in evidence of the extent to which E.P. Thompson's 'work-time disciplines' (1969) were coming to infiltrate and arrange the supposed liberties of 'leisure'. Yet at the same moment as the everyday is being made, 'race' is being made in and with it, not just as a coeval process but as an inextricable part of the same thing: Mrs Temple 'won' her watch for being the millionth visitor to the West African village, and with it, a season ticket for the same attraction. In such ways the European 'everyday' is racialized as it is born; it makes 'race' as it is made.

So, on the one hand, the 'racial' difference of colonized peoples is represented as being 'knowable' through the performance of their ordinary life. Here the endlessly replicable quality of 'the everyday' and the endlessly replicable quality of 'race' become absolutely complicit, each serving as confirmation of the supposed timelessness of the other, as in John Claudius Loudon's vision of permanent, 'living' ethnographic exhibitions of 'aboriginal' peoples to be installed in British hothouses where they could forever reproduce their environments, themselves and their supposed racial difference by doing nothing more than reproducing their everyday lives (Hassam 1999). On the other hand, however, for British audiences it was at least partly through such processes that conceptions of domestic 'ordinariness' came to be implicitly racialized while, conversely, 'race' became ordinary. Whiteness, as Alastair Bonnett shows (1998, see also 2008), lost its connotations of aristocratic heroism and imperial leadership in this period, and came to symbolize instead that which was understood to be normal, familiar and unremarkable. Bonnett notes that such language emerged, in part, from a strategy of resistance: a defence of 'the ordinary' could be used in ways that were profoundly anti-elitist and related to politicized notions of the 'people' or the 'popular'. Yet at the same time this language also consolidates the idea of the ordinary as something racially bounded – an idea of 'the people' as, at root, a national or racial rather than a class category (see Virdee 2014) – setting the scene for subsequent anti-immigrant racism and, as Ben Jones' (2013) analysis of post-war Mass Observation data shows, the divisive manipulation of the 'politics of the ordinary' in the Thatcherite period and since.

Three. In summary then: a sociological understanding of racism is, it seems to me, potentially enriched by a willingness to take the ‘everyday’ as something which is historically explicable, allowing us to think in new ways about the ‘bloody riddle’ of the modern world. In this case, what I have particularly suggested is that such an approach opens up the prospect of thinking of racism and everyday life as part of the same problematic, as entangled with each other both historically and constitutively. The everyday is not just a place where ‘racism’ happens, as it were, but is a category bound up with the processes by which ‘race’ is made and attributed. This said, however, prominent theories of everyday life have paid far too little attention to the relationship between ‘race’ and the everyday, and it is this fact and its implications which I consider in more detail in the following chapter.

The point, of course, is not just to think about this as a historical question, but to use such an approach to open up ways of reflecting on these same processes contemporarily. A final example is perhaps worthwhile in this regard. At the start of one of the core texts of the popular imperialism which I have been discussing – *Scouting for Boys* – Robert Baden-Powell asks his young, imagined readers an intentionally disconcerting question: ‘If an enemy were firing down this street’, he says ‘and I were to tell one of you to take a message across to a house on the other side, would you do it?’ (2004 [1908]: 12). Baden-Powell, like Seeley before him, longed for a British self-identity which was intimately shaped by empire, and if such a project was to be possible it required that the power relationships of empire should indeed become ordinary, a reality to be felt in ‘this street’, where ‘the enemy’ might any day make their appearance. Mafeking, Baden-Powell cautions his readers, ‘was quite a small ordinary country town [...] Nobody ever thought of its being attacked by an enemy any more than you would expect this town (or village) to be attacked’ (10). In saying this, Baden-Powell does not mean to emphasize, of course, the improbability of such an attack domestically, but just the opposite, to construe this ‘threat’ as ever-present and as justifying and requiring a correspondingly ever-present sense of patriotic loyalty and preparedness. ‘[I]f you boys will only keep the good of your country in your eyes *above everything* else’, he writes, ‘she will go on alright. But if you don’t do this, there is very great danger, because we have many enemies abroad, and they are growing daily stronger and stronger’ (28).

In this way, then, Baden-Powell’s ‘Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship’ makes the racialized identities of empire ‘everyday’,

conceptions which are written through the mundane spaces of daily life: this street, this town, this village. At the same time, though, such a process relies on representing these enemies as the enemies of everyday life itself, as the forces that compel a perpetual attentiveness, a state of crisis. The threat of an ever-imminent warfare which Baden-Powell summons up is of a piece with those processes which Lefebvre describes by which forms of discipline and control come to be extended into popular life. Yet the provenance of these processes is projected elsewhere, becoming the moral responsibility of those shadowy foes whose threatening presences are what demand from the 'good citizen' a state of perpetual 'readiness' such that every act, from the walk home to the winter snowball-fight, becomes a preparation for a coming war. In this way the 'good citizen' is required to relinquish any prospect of the everyday as a time or space which is in any sense 'free' or 'unruly' or potentially disruptive. Rather it is to be understood as a continual testing ground in which the practices of national loyalty are reproduced and refined.

The over-ruling of everyday life, then, proceeds absolutely in and with its racialization. These are mutually constitutive parts of the same process: the demand for a constant attentiveness which disciplines the everyday works, to a significant extent, by summoning up the person or figure whose difference marks them out as a threat to that life:

Let nothing be too small for your notice, a button, a match, a cigar ash, a feather, or a leaf, might be of great importance. A scout must not only look to his front but also to either side and behind him, he must have 'eyes in the back of his head' as the saying is. Often by suddenly looking back you will see an enemy's scout or a thief showing himself in a way that he would not have done had he thought you would look round. (72)

Just prior to this, Baden-Powell has insisted that one especially telling detail to which the good citizen must continuously attend is the physical appearance of the people around them: 'The shape of the face gives a good guide to the man's character,' he says, before reproducing three profile images drawn directly from the iconographic traditions of racial 'science' and the 'anthropological criminology' of Lombroso: 'Perhaps,' he asks rhetorically, 'you can tell the character of these gentlemen' (69)? To see difference in the everyday, and to see it *by virtue* of the everyday – by its discrepancy or presumed threat to everyday life – becomes a central duty of the good citizen.

Baden-Powell was writing in a specific historical and social context, of course. Yet, notwithstanding the contextual differences, there is a telling continuity between the epistemology which he promotes and that which is promoted by the recent anti-terrorist strategies of Western states. In the British context, the most recent version of these – the ‘Contest’ strategy of the coalition Liberal and Conservative government – begins, just as does Baden-Powell, with the representation of a threat which is taken as imminent (the document opens by citing the latest global figures for terrorist casualties and the latest JTAC assessment that a domestic attack is ‘highly likely’ (2011: 9)), but also as intimate, something liable to appear unpredictably in the most familiar of spaces. Thus the Summary version of the same strategy is illustrated with pictures of streets, sports stadia and airport terminals which are clearly intended to produce a de-familiarizing sense of these places as potential targets which are, therefore, no longer capable of being ‘merely everyday’. In this way the strategy is premised on the idea of defending everyday life – the ability of people to ‘go about their lives freely and with confidence’ (ibid.) – but represents the necessary cost of such a defence as the extension of state surveillance and activity throughout that life. In the allied measures of the ‘anti-radicalization’ ‘Prevent’ strategy, a similar emphasis is placed on ‘pre-emptive’ practices in ordinary situations, and on local interventions, as crucial to the prevention of ‘radicalization’.

The mundane outcomes of these different strategies are all too familiar: the relentless, automated messages in train stations warning us to be alert to that which is ‘out of place’; the posters which depict a pair of eyes entitled ‘bomb detectors’; the ways in which the scrutiny of belonging becomes a part of the mundane practices of working life, in those processes which have been described as ‘everyday bordering’. The first lesson in the contemporary Handbook of Good Citizenship remains, just as it was, a demand for continual vigilance. Thus we are exhorted, amongst other things, to learn to recognize threats in the most banal of objects and arrangements: next-door’s discarded rubbish becomes evidence of suburban bomb-making (‘These chemicals won’t be used in a bomb because a neighbour reported the dumped containers’, as one British Transport Police poster has it). That vigilance implies, just as it did for Baden-Powell, the surrendering of whatever unruly qualities might be harboured in everyday life. More than that, indeed, it works by turning those qualities against the everyday itself: just as for Baden-Powell, it makes the everyday the criterion by which we identify those who are not

like us, and who are, in the same breath, taken as being the cause of our need to surrender those very freedoms. It is the double-edged nature of this process which we need to grasp. Racialization happens, in no small part, in and through the everyday. But correspondingly, it is in no small part in and through that process of racialization that the 'interstitial freedoms' of everyday life – as Lefebvre called them – are brought under 'control'.

3

Order and Disorder

Abstract: *This chapter explores, in particular, the failure – on the part of some of the most influential accounts of everyday life – to properly consider racism as a part of ordinary experience. More than this, however, it argues that those theories have not paid sufficient attention to the ways in which ideas of everyday-ness have been a part of, and are marked by, the history of modern race-making. It looks particularly at the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau in this regard.*

Keywords: Everyday life; Henry Lefebvre; Michel de Certeau; Racism

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One. I have argued in the previous chapter that it may be valuable, for sociologists concerned with understanding racism and processes of racialization, to learn from the sociology of everyday life, at least insofar as that work asks us to think of the everyday, not as a simple description or as an adjective, but as a historical category. Apart from anything else, I have suggested, this raises the prospect of considering the ways in which ‘race’ and the ‘everyday’ are constitutively related, part of the making of each other. But recognizing that relationship requires us to think about what it implies in *both* directions. Any attempt to decipher the ‘bloody riddle’ of the modern world through an investigation of the everyday has to address racism, not just as an empirical feature of everyday experience but also as it relates to ideas of everyday-ness; it must pay attention to the ways in which ‘race’ weaves into and out of our understandings of the quotidian, the ordinary and the mundane, including the way in which those terms are used by sociologists themselves. By and large, it seems to me, the ‘classical’ sociology of everyday life has not been as attentive as it might have been to these questions. It is this lacuna in the theory of the everyday, and its consequences, which I address in this chapter.

Two. First of all we need to reckon with the presence of an argument which claims that the very recognition of ‘everyday life’ as a specific arena or space of social existence, with a significance and value of its own, is a peculiar achievement of the ‘West’. Contemporarily this argument often proceeds through the implication that this achievement is under threat. Here, for example, is Tzvetan Todorov, in his short and cogent *In Defence of the Enlightenment*:

[W]eapons have become less and less expensive and their miniaturization has made them easier to transport. All you need is a cellphone to trigger an explosion. In this way, one of the most common everyday objects can be used as a formidable weapon! It is relatively easy for perpetrators of such acts to hide and escape military retaliation, for an individual has no territory. They come from several countries but identify with none: they are stateless. (2009: 52)

Todorov makes this comment in the course of a passage which seeks to identify the dangers which, in his view, a globalized world poses to the prospects for the Enlightenment ideal of popular sovereignty. The danger which he remarks upon here is emphasized precisely because of its infiltration of what is ordinary: it is a threat not just in, but *to*, everyday life. This claim needs to be understood in the context of what Todorov has argued at the outset of his book, which is that ‘ordinary life’ comes to

be thought of as having its own particular dignity as a consequence of the Enlightenment's decoupling from religious and conventional forms of authority, and its corresponding emphasis on the autonomy and uniqueness of the individual. These moves are registered culturally, for example, in the emergence of autobiographical writing or in the unvarnished artistic depictions of domestic life by artists such as Jean Siméon Chardin: 'paintings that turned away from the great mythological and religious subjects to show the ordinary gestures of unexceptional human beings depicted in everyday activities' (9). An appreciation and respect for ordinary life is thus to be understood as central to the Enlightenment project, corresponding to its defence of democratic politics, and corresponding also to an emerging mode of scientific inquiry based on the empirical observation of the world as it really exists. In short, for Todorov, a concern for the everyday lies at the heart of a complex of accomplishments which are understood to be peculiarly – or at least originally – European.

It should be said that Todorov insists absolutely on a respect for the dignity of others and he emphasizes what he calls 'self-detachment' as a guard against the kinds of universal claim which conceal the self-interest of those who make them. His defence of the Enlightenment is carefully qualified and, in many ways, compelling. Nevertheless, his comment here is a troubling one, it seems to me. If the establishment of the dignity of ordinary life is a specific achievement of the Enlightenment and if, as he goes on to argue, 'without Europe there would be no Enlightenment and without the Enlightenment there would be no Europe' (147), then respect for 'everyday life' all too easily appears as part of what makes and characterizes 'European-ness'. This new concern for the stuff of ordinary life, which Todorov describes, is presented as a corollary of the Enlightenment's rejection of thinking in 'types', of a new-found respect for the singular qualities of individuals and objects in themselves. Yet the Enlightenment did *not* give up on thinking in types. Pivotal Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant were no less pivotal in giving intellectual credibility to the idea that there are pre-given and ineradicable differences between distinct categories of human being. Kant, notoriously, argued that such differences could be understood *teleologically*. In other words, Kant suggests, they require a theoretical presumption of the existence of 'purposive primary predispositions implanted in the line of descent' (2001 [1788]: 44; see also Bernasconi 2001). In this way 'race' is established, not just as a

matter of phenotype – of differences in how people look – but of a fateful, predetermined difference in their dispositions and potentialities. Todorov would, of course, absolutely contest such a view. Yet a shadow of typological thinking remains here and it is cast, at least in part, by claims about different attitudes towards the sanctity of the everyday. It is this which gives a particular edge to the parallel which he proceeds to draw between the person-without-polity, the person who refuses the claim of territorial identity, and terrorism. His comment, against his intention no doubt, risks giving succour to the view that it is those who are without belonging – those who disrupt modernity’s ‘privileging of the nation’, as Richard Iton describes it (2008: 14) – who are, perforce, the potential enemies of ‘our’ everyday life, capable of turning even the most mundane objects, such as a mobile phone or a bottle of bleach, into a weapon.

It is worth recalling, in this respect, and as Enrique Dussell (1995), Paul Gilroy (2004) and others have argued, that many of the key practices of disciplinary order and institutional governance which came to characterize European nations first emerged, or were elaborated and fine-tuned, in the context of European imperial conquest and the subsequent ‘management’ of non-European populations. At the same time, however, Europe came to understand itself through a conceptual distinction which was drawn between the colonized and the non-colonized, between the space of domestic law and order, and the state of ‘exception’ (Arendt 1973: 121–34) which applied to those who were conquered: ‘the entity called Europe was constructed from the outside in as much as from the inside out’ (Pratt 1992: 6). As I have argued in the previous chapter, our conceptions of ‘everyday life’ are shaped by that history, by modernity’s construction of a world ordered by ‘race’ or by analogous forms of supposedly fundamental human difference. So whilst it may appear as a neutral or merely descriptive designation for particular spaces or activities, ‘the everyday’ all too easily comes to act in a definitional manner, serving to reiterate the ‘thinking in types’ on which European modernity, and its colonial projects, depended. The moral claims which are battened onto these distinctions – the sense, for instance, that it is right that ‘we’ should defend ‘our’ ordinary way of doing things – are what served (and continue to serve) to legitimize the many ways in which everyday life within Europe was (and continues to be) subject to surveillance and control, even as they attribute the responsibility for these measures to those who are construed as a threat to that life.

Three. As we saw in the previous chapter, Henri Lefebvre's canonical account of the everyday begins from a position which is, to all intents and purposes, opposed to the one which I have just described. For Lefebvre, the 'everyday' is to be understood *not* as an accomplishment of Western modernity, but as a symptom of its failure, and especially of the absolute failure of capitalism to sustain lives which are meaningful or enriching for most people. More than this, Lefebvre sought to make everyday life a measure of progress in order to displace a merely quantitative or rationalist understanding of what an alternative set of social arrangements might look like: 'ready-made equality of possession for all individuals is nothing more than an apology for boredom, uniformity, humdrum, day-to-day greyness', he writes (2014: 175). In this sense he used 'the everyday' as a means of turning the focus of political engagement onto 'the development of human powers as an end in itself' (174). He used the 'everyday', we might say, precisely in order to try to 'open up' the question of human becoming.

Yet, more than once, and especially in the early statements of his *Critique*, one feels that there is a rather different conception at work, a conception in which 'the everyday' appears not as a way of keeping open the question of human becoming, but rather as evidence of already existing differences between human beings. Early on in the first volume of Lefebvre's *Critique*, for example, he cites a passage from Marc Bloch which 'reads' the French countryside as the achievement of a vast, collective and mundane labour: 'We have learned how to perceive the face of our nation on the earth', says Lefebvre, 'in the landscape, slowly shaped by centuries of work, of patient, humble gestures. The result of these gestures, their totality, is what contains greatness' (154). In this example, at least, ordinary life appears much more as it does in the writings of historians of material culture such as Fernand Braudel. For Braudel, as we have seen, 'everyday life' described a series of all-but-inert factors and practices which created and maintained the characteristic identities of civilizations or cultural 'orders' (1981: 560), such that, prior to the modern era, 'humanity was divided between different *planets*, each the home of an individual civilization or culture, with its own distinctive features and age-old choices' (561). Lefebvre's concern is to bring that focus on the social labour of ordinary life into the present; to map the processes by which the resilient creativity of popular life has been corralled and broken into 'sectors' by the forces of 'control'; whilst also recognizing how far forms of insurgent knowledge and longing may emerge from

within it. Yet in doing this, even as he seeks to honour the ‘greatness’ achieved by this unacknowledged mundane labour, even as he turns ‘the everyday’ into a weapon of critique against modernity, Lefebvre comes close to accepting that those practices of everyday life give expression to radical differences between human beings, revealing the ‘distinctive features’ of each cultural order (in Braudel’s phrase) or each nation’s own recognizable ‘face’ (in his own). These metaphors are, of course, drawn straight from the language of physiognomy: not quite ‘race’, but not quite not. Moreover, these phenomena are taken to constitute a ‘totality’ in themselves, as if the ‘face’ of France were not also the product of myriad other unacknowledged forms of labour spread out across the Atlantic world and beyond.

Later on, in the *Foreword* to the first volume of his study, written 10 years after the original volume, Lefebvre congratulated himself that a focus on everyday life had become increasingly central to the concerns of anthropologists and historians. Here again he seems to endorse an understanding of everyday life as that which lies at the historical basis of fundamental differences between peoples:

For the historian of a specific period, for the ethnographer, for the sociologist studying a society or a group, the fundamental question would be to grasp a certain quality, difficult to define and yet essential and concrete, something that ‘just a quarter-of-an-hour alone’ with a man from a distant or extinct culture would reveal to us. (2014: 29)

Lefebvre goes on, in the pages which follow, to reiterate his defence of a Marxism premised on the full development of the human being: ‘without the notion of the total man, humanism and the theoretical conception of the human fall back into an incoherent pluralism’ (90). He insists, again, that it is in everyday life that we must learn to trace the blueprint of that wholeness: ‘Everyday life [...] 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’ (119). Yet his understanding of everyday life, at this point at least, cannot serve to make whole the fragmented human, because it is already a means of defining cultural and national specificity. If everyday life is constitutive of ‘a certain quality, difficult to define yet essential and concrete’ which characterizes the ‘man from a distant culture’, then all that can be made whole is each ‘man’ on their own cultural or national ‘planet’. Thus Lefebvre immediately qualifies his own claim: ‘this “whole” must be taken in the context

of a specific country and nation, at a specific moment of civilization and social development' (110). The theoretical conception of 'the human' falls back into an 'incoherent pluralism' before it takes another step. At this point, the everyday no longer seems to be a straightforwardly historical category. It appears instead as a kind of sociological phenotype, a marker which might all too easily be read teleologically, *a la* Kant, as evidence of underlying differences in cultural or national predisposition or potential.

In other words, if Lefebvre was, as Ben Highmore suggests, a romantic Marxist, then he shares with other versions of romanticism a tendency to define modern society by opposing it to something supposedly outside of itself. Thus in the first volume of his *Critique*, for example, he argues specifically that modern man has lost the capacity for a genuine 'anguish' or sense of 'mystery', such as might be felt by 'a primitive man lost in a jungle [...] a being who feels utterly weak and helpless in the face of nature' (2014: 145). Later, in the second volume he relies on the same comparison in order to define the fragmented nature of modern experience (613–16). 'Primitive' societies he argues, for all of their 'brutality' created objects that were symbolic and functional at one and the same time, whereas capitalist production forces aesthetics and utility apart, so that modern society is characterized by an 'absence of style'. The point here is not simply that Lefebvre shared some of the 'noble savage' myths of European intellectual culture, but that his critical project begins by enacting the familiar conceptual trick by which modernity can only be known or grasped – even critically – by opposition to something which is defined as lying outside or anterior to it, something which it has left behind or expelled in order to become itself. The effect is that when Lefebvre banks on a search for richness of life as the means of providing a critical opening within modernity, that opening is, in the same breath, an exclusion or a limit. The critical possibility of everyday life becomes thinkable only by summoning up those who are assumed to be incapable of being modern, and who serve as the definitional shadow of the everyday itself.

In fairness to Lefebvre, this is not where he ends; his continual wrestling with the nature of the contemporary world leads him, especially in the final volume of the *Critique*, to a striking set of reflections about the politics of difference and their reproduction in everyday life. Moreover, his later use of the theory of uneven development offers a valuable means of overcoming the invidious deployment of 'everyday-ness'. He suggests,

instead, the more exacting and exciting possibility of thinking of the monolithic tower blocks of the postcolonial city and the pre-fabricated homes of the European post-war housing estate – and, moreover, the lives lived out in these places – as different outcomes of a single process, as part of the same ‘conquered country’ (800), rather than as the distinctive features of different national faces. The point here, however, is to draw attention to the fact that the concept of the everyday which Lefebvre wishes to wield against modernity, and in search of human ‘totality’, has already been wielded as part of modernity’s denial of human totality. One cannot suture with a scalpel: as a concept, the everyday cannot be safely put to use until we reckon with the divisive uses to which it has already been put.

Four. At a different level, one can note a critical inattention to questions of racism in some of the key empirical studies of everyday life. As I have suggested elsewhere (Smith 2014: 1140–1), we can see evidence of this in accounts such as those produced by the students of Michel de Certeau, which make up the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Pierre Mayol’s ethnographic account of life in a working-class neighbourhood of Lyons, for example, provides a quite brilliant description of the relationships and behaviours that characterize local space, following de Certeau’s more general concern (1984) to understand what people *do* in their ordinary lives, how they go about making meaningful use of the things and structures which they encounter in those lives. For Mayol neighbourhood space is constituted by its own distinctive set of practices and, in particular, it is to be understood as a space which is appropriated in a certain way. Unlike the commute to work, for example, where the aim is to obliterate space, to traverse it as quickly and unthinkingly as possible, the relationship to the neighbourhood is ‘gratuitous’, characterized by a willingness to dedicate ‘the maximum of time to a minimum of space’ (de Certeau, Girard and Mayol 1998: 13). Thus the local area becomes, for the resident, one associated with precious freedoms, a space into which one can ‘withdraw’ or through which one can stroll, establishing ‘itineraries for his or her use and pleasure’ (10). At the same time, however, those freedoms are understood as being earned through recognition and respect for an ethic of propriety which governs interaction in the neighbourhood, the key demand of which is that one is ‘not to be noticed’ (18). The gratuitous use of time and space which the neighbourhood affords is, in this respect, a function of its ‘given-ness’; to stand-out is to disrupt the ‘supposed transparency’ (18) of what is

local or ordinary, and its precarious liberties. In this sense, the everyday, for Mayol, can be thought of as something which is made and remade, collectively, through a tacit agreement to reject that which is ostentatious or which seeks to call attention to itself. As Maurice Blanchot has it: it is a 'level of life where what reigns is the refusal to be different' (1987 [1959]: 17).

Such an account describes a powerful form of strategic defence on the part of those who are dispossessed, built on a rejection of the self-serving displays of the wealthy and the competitive one-upmanship promoted by consumerism (Bourdieu's famous discussion of working-class culture in *Distinction* (1984), of course, emphasizes many of the same themes). Nevertheless, what this account does not consider is the way in which, historically and contemporarily, conceptions of ordinariness and belonging in European contexts have been both racialized and racializing. Thus Blanchot's description of the everyday treats difference as essentially a matter of will: one chooses or refuses to be different. In doing so it fails to recognize that ideas of the everyday may themselves be central to the designation or attribution of difference, in ways that are experienced by those so designated as all-but inescapable. Frantz Fanon, we might recall, reflecting on his encounter with racism on the streets of France, including those of Lyons, longed for nothing more than the capacity 'not to be noticed' (1986 [1952]: 116), the ability to slip into the 'transparency' of the everyday. For him, as for many of Philomena Essed's respondents, the 'propriety' which Mayol describes as governing and defending the freedoms of local space involved something more than an ethical claim about the nature of proper behaviour; it sustained also a powerful and exclusionary *proprietary* claim about the symbolic ownership of local space, defining who did and who did not have the right to withdraw into the given-ness of the neighbourhood's everyday.

Let us remember here that Michel de Certeau's original discussion of everyday life, (1984) which inspires Mayol's study, was at pains to find a way of talking about the everyday which rejected the politics of identity and which presented everyday life as inimical to such a politics. Our response to the 'epoch of the number', de Certeau argued – that is, to a world dominated by the quantitative analysis of social life – must not take the form of a nostalgic longing for the 'epoch of the name'. For this reason, de Certeau argued, we need to attend to practice, not actors; we should focus our attention on how people make use of the formal structures, the kinds of knowledge and institutional apparatuses with

which they find themselves continually confronted. The everyday should be understood as 'a way of doing things' rather than as the bearer of, or the means of consolidating an identity; it points us to the popular capacity for creative response in the face of what is given, the pilfering of opportunity from the 'actual order of things' (1984: 26).

All of this is encapsulated in de Certeau's famous distinction between *strategies* and *tactics*. The former begins from the assumption of a discipline, of a specific competence, and it identifies that which is external to itself as the object of its activity. The latter, by contrast, is forever immanent, always operating within that which 'belongs to the other' (xix), always seizing its opportunities 'on the wing'. Clearly, in this respect, de Certeau was alert to, and sought to guard against, an understanding of the 'everyday' which made of it a 'proper place', a place understood as property or as belonging to a 'proper' name. Yet Mayol's ethnography, inspired as it is by de Certeau's brilliantly provocative account, describes a situation which is rather less comfortable and less hopeful. The division between tactics and strategies may not be a straightforward 'either/or': what looks like a tactic, in one regard, may seem like a strategy in another. The everyday appropriation of local space which Mayol describes is tactical, when viewed in response to attempts to commercialize or redevelop such spaces on the part of developers or heritage bodies, or when it is situated alongside the disciplines and regimentation of working life. In this respect such uses of local space provide one instance of what de Certeau calls the 'Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game, that is the space instituted by others [which] characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces' (18). Yet practice traffics continually into place. What happens when the 'using' of local space sustains a 'laying claim to', a taking for one's own? What happens when that 'subtle, stubborn, resistant activity' becomes the basis for an assertion about authenticity or belonging? Such activity may take shape against 'already established forces', against those whose authority or wealth grants them the ability to shape, control or organize local spaces, but its vis-à-vis quality might also be directed otherwise, towards those who also 'lack their own space'. There are ways of 'playing and foiling the other's game' which can come to constitute 'others' of their own.

Five. What I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, then, is that some of the most significant attempts to 'think with' the everyday in

European social theory, some of the most enduring attempts to use a focus on 'everyday life' in order to critically engage with modernity, have not paid sufficient attention to the ways in which ideas of everyday-ness have been a part of, and are marked by, the history of modern race-making.

In one sense, 'the everyday' appears to be a name for that which is most familiar to us, most immediately and instinctively known and understood. It describes, in that respect, those parts and times of our lives during which we fall back into well-grooved routines, when we are off-guard, at home or at our ease. For these very reasons – its familiarity, its absence of a demand for self-reflection – we often talk about everyday life as being where we are 'most ourselves'. Much of the sociological attempt to understand everyday experience begins by seeking to challenge such a presumption. Nevertheless, herein, as we have seen, lies a trap which that theory has not always wholly eluded: if, on the one hand, it is in the everyday that we come closest to a life most truthful to our inward selves and if, on the other, race-thinking presumes the existence of categorical differences defined by the presumption of distinct inward qualities or dispositions, then the former becomes, all too easily, a proxy for the latter. Almost unnoticed and by virtue of its very familiarity, everyday life becomes *our* 'everyday life', the 'given-ness' of the everyday becomes complicit with the attribution of differences which are themselves presumed to be 'given'.

On the other hand, and with a familiar paradox, the everyday is also repeatedly taken to describe that which is disordered or indiscriminate, not wholly conformed to the arrangements and epistemologies of modern social life. It is, in this respect, the arena of encounters which can have a radically disconcerting effect, in which, we might say, we are most likely to 'lose ourselves' or see ourselves afresh. These disorientating juxtapositions of everyday experience were, *inter alia*, what the surrealists and the early Mass Observation project organizers were equally interested in exploring. There is, here, something to reckon with as regards ideas of 'racial' or cultural difference. We can think, for example, of recent studies of young people's uses of space and the ways in which relationships are formed in multiethnic cities (for example, Clayton 2009; Karner 2007: chapter 4). Such accounts have drawn a carefully qualified attention to the fragile 'common ground' that can be uncovered 'beyond race and static ideas of national identity' (Clayton 2009: 494), in and through the disorderly negotiations of the everyday. Yet the celebratory account of

everyday life can also seem remarkably blind to the role that the everyday plays in the making and remaking of 'race'. In a famous formulation at the end of the second volume of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau and Luce Girard describe everyday life as involving a 'practical science of the singular'. This science, they argue, is characterized by the endlessly ad hoc process of 'making do'. It entails, therefore, a continually creative appropriation and reuse of the structures and forms of order. In this regard they claim for everyday practice both an ethical potential (in that it 'tenaciously restores a space for play, an interval of freedom' (de Certeau, Girard and Mayol 1998: 255) and a profoundly disruptive quality (in that it 'puts our [...] epistemological categories on trial, for it does not cease rejoining knowledge to the singular, putting both into a concrete particularizing situation' (256). Yet that account of the everyday as merely a series of discontinuous events is *precisely* the understanding that Philomena Essed's respondents learned that they had to challenge. The central lesson in the hard won expertise born of the encounter with everyday racism was to recognize the 'cumulative instantiation' of seemingly singular events which, far from establishing a disorder or an 'interval of freedom', were constitutive of their own form of ordering, and which amounted to a persistent denial of freedom. 'Race', after all, is not merely an 'epistemological category', but is rather – as we have seen Karen and Barbara Fields argue – something made in action: a matter of doing, not being. In that respect, focussing on the *practice* of everyday life makes it more, not less, necessary for us to ask how such practices may play their part in the making and remaking of 'race', moment by moment.

4

A Thousand and One Little Actions

Abstract: *This chapter draws on the work of Dorothy E. Smith in order to consider the ways in which everyday life can be understood as a concept, or space, which is itself profoundly implicated in the production and reproduction of social inequalities. With that lesson in mind, it turns to consider the work of W.E.B. Du Bois who, it is argued, provides a pioneering recognition of the importance of studying everyday life sociologically. Moreover, of course, Du Bois also demonstrates the centrality of the everyday to the making and remaking of 'race'.*

Keywords: bell hooks; Dorothy E. Smith; Everyday life; Racism; W.E.B. Du Bois

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One. In a short ‘intermezzo’ section in the second volume of their *Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau and Luce Girard discuss what they describe as ‘ghosts in the city’. By this they indicate those tumble-down places and buildings, the ruins and the remains, which ‘burst forth from within the modernist, massive, homogenous city like slips of the tongue from an unknown, perhaps unconscious, language’ (de Certeau, Girard and Mayol 1998: 133). These ‘untamed’ places, they argue, have an unsettling quality, opening up ‘a certain depth within the present’ (135), throwing off kilter the grand narratives of urban redevelopment or civic heritage. At the same time, though, people make play of these spaces; they are the subject of the everyday practices by which streets and neighbourhoods become meaningful as people use or weave stories around them, making themselves ‘at home’: ‘the subtle and multiple practice of a vast ensemble of things that are manipulated and personalized, reused and [which] turn the city into an immense memory where many poetics proliferate’ (141).

This is, at first glance, a very hopeful way of reading the city. Yet thinking especially of Glasgow, the city in which I live, I find myself uneasy. The ghosts of Glasgow’s urban space – the derelict but ornate mausoleums of the city’s central graveyard; the crumbling civic buildings; the abandoned railway tunnels; the overgrown former wharves along the Clyde – are all, certainly, places which people ‘practice’, places which are put to various kinds of unregulated popular use. In many instances they are the scene of long-standing struggles over the right to community control. Yet these places are also, very largely, the remnants of an imperial past: the graves are the graves of Glasgow’s mercantile elite; the buildings and tunnels, the products of that period of dramatic urban growth which was fuelled by Glasgow’s position at the heart of the economic nexus of British imperial power. The ghosts in Glasgow’s cityscape are the ghosts of empire. Moreover, they are ghosts which have been eluded because of their very familiarity. It is the everyday-ness of the city’s imperial past, the way in which imperial wealth and self-identity are written into the city’s fabric, its streets, buildings, statues and parks, which has made that past so hard to reckon with. Thus it is true, in one sense, that the everyday uses of these ghostly places cuts across the narratives of regeneration to which the city has been subject – sounding an uncanny note in the ‘city of glass’, as Girard and de Certeau have it. Yet it is also true, in another sense, that the everyday familiarity generated by these practices can serve to domesticate those ghosts, to postpone once

again a proper reckoning with them, with the history from which they arise, and with what that history means, here and now, for the question of who is allowed to 'belong' to the city. So when Girard and de Certeau celebrate 'the population of ghosts that teem within the city and that make up the strange and immense vitality of an urban symbolics' (137) it seems important to respond with a question: how are those revenant imperial presences encountered by the postcolonial migrant communities who live in cities like Glasgow? Those communities are, of course, absolutely active in the appropriation and reclamation of those spaces, and are a part of the 'vitality' that Girard and de Certeau acclaim. But there is a danger in an unquestioning celebration of an everyday, unruly creativity. The history of which those spaces speak – the depth which they open up – is one which bequeaths violence to the present, both symbolic and real, and challenging that violence requires, amongst other things, unsettling the practices by which that history is rendered banal, ordinary or beyond remark.

This, then, is the central point which I sought to make in the previous chapter. Most straightforwardly: the canonical texts in the sociology of everyday life have not been sufficiently attentive to racism, or to racialization, as features of everyday experience. More importantly, though, I have sought to raise critical questions about the attempt to use the 'everyday' as a way of making sense of the divisive ordering of modern capitalist society. That attempt seems to me to be valuable, and absolutely worth defending, but necessarily incomplete until we come to acknowledge the ways in which understandings of the everyday are both shaped by, and have contributed in turn, to the racialized dimension of that ordering. In the same way, I would argue, the hope invested in the everyday as a site of unruly, resistant practice has to be qualified by an awareness of the ways in which such practices can be complicit with, or can encourage inattention towards, those same forms of racialized order.

Two. Here we could take a comparative lesson from Dorothy E. Smith. Smith's brilliant account of the everyday world (1988) starts from the recognition that the dominant ways of understanding society, including those forms of understanding characteristic of sociology as a discipline, claim their authority precisely on the basis of their assumed distance from the messy, complicated and embodied experiences of everyday life. Crucially, Smith points out, these dominant 'forms of thought put together a view of the world from a place women do not occupy' (19). Whereas men, operating for the most part in contexts characterized by

abstract, generalized forms of knowledge, are always able to talk as ‘more than themselves’ (31), attempts to talk about women’s experience are treated as being ‘confined to the subjective’ (4), or they require women to treat themselves ‘as looked at from outside’ (52).

Smith, then, begins from a critical awareness of everyday life as something constituted by, and expressive of, the gendered arrangement of social relations. By the same token, the everyday is the site of forms of labour and experience which are at odds with those ‘theoretical projects that seek [...] coherence prior to an encounter with the world’ (11). Smith’s response is to seek to take day-to-day sense-making seriously, to reclaim everyday life as a site of an on-going, largely unacknowledged effort to understand the world. Thus she proposes a sociology which begins from everyday experiences and the attempt to make sense of those experiences, and which aligns itself with the urgent but mundane question: ‘how does it happen to us as it does’ (154)? Aside from anything else, she argues, that ‘standpoint’ of everyday knowledge brings with it a vital awareness of what it really means to describe our lives as ‘socially constructed’: those immersed in the intricate, daily labour of everyday life know from long practice what it is to ‘see realities as social and arising in an ongoing organization of practices that continually and routinely reaffirm a world in common as the most basic grounding of our life’ (125).

What I want to take from Smith, then, is a two-fold lesson. First of all, she raises the question of how far one can really understand ‘the everyday’ without thinking through its implication in relations of social power: ‘Ordinary descriptions, ordinary talk, trail along with them as a property of the meaning of their terms, the extended social relations they name as phenomena’ (157), she notes. Her focus, in this regard, lies with the gendered ordering of everyday life, whereas mine has been with its relationship to ‘race-making’. These are, of course, not discrete questions: ‘race’ and ‘gender’ are absolutely entangled, and the ‘everyday’ is a complicated part of their interwoven relationship. bell hooks (1981: 154–6), for example, in a pioneering discussion which helped pave the way for later ‘intersectional’ analyses, pointed out that the ability of white women to employ black servants in segregated America was itself a reflection of a gendered division of labour in which housework was inevitably ascribed to women. At the same time, though, that relationship of power was woven into – and had woven into it – a racialized division of labour. In hooks’ example, the ‘everyday’ is a category constitutive of gendered inequality (the domain of ‘women’s work’) *and* the site of the reproduction

of 'race' (the place where 'white' and 'black' identities are remade through the operation of unequal labour relations). Thus everyday life, in this instance, involves a complex interleaving in which racism both supports and conceals, simultaneously, the operations of patriarchy.

We might, in that respect, just insert a note of care in response to Smith's characterization of everyday life as the place where 'a world in common' is routinely reaffirmed. That life, for all of the reasons already discussed, can entail an 'ongoing organization of practices' that create worlds apart, or worlds in common against others. Moreover, we should note, it is the very fact, as hooks points out, that racialized and gendered forms of oppression operate at one and the same time, yet with potentially divergent logics, which is crucial to their effectiveness: 'sexism operates both independently of *and* simultaneously with racism to oppress us' (7), she says. We should recognize, then, that the way in which 'everyday life' comes to play a part in the making of gender generally works differently from the way in which it may come to play a part in the making of 'race'. What Smith, and other feminist theorists of the everyday demonstrate (e.g. Felski 1999/2000) are the arrangements by which the everyday has come to be constructed as a distinctively gendered domain, associated with domesticity rather than public life, and with cyclical time, rather than a supposedly linear, male-dominated story of historical progress. Male theorists of the everyday (Lefebvre most glaringly) have tended to rehearse such constructions rather than resist them. In this respect, then, women have been attributed the particular burden of everydayness: they are assumed to be the ones who are lost within the repetitive, mundane work which reproduces the stability of the social order. It is because they are most immediately subject to everyday life that women are, according to Lefebvre's outrageous claim (2007: 73) 'incapable of understanding it'. Thus it is the idea of the 'given-ness' of the everyday which is integral to its gendered construction and, conversely, to the role which it plays in the making of gender. By contrast, racialization often depends upon an alienation from that which is treated as given or normative; the racialized are constructed as aberrant or extraordinary in some respect. If women are treated as synonymous with the everyday, those who are racialized are treated as anomalous with regard to it. As hooks points out, in different and shifting ways, one relationship may subtend or disguise the other. At the same time, however, as she further points out, their discrepancy can also generate tensions which make possible a critical knowledge of both.

This leads to the second lesson which I want to draw from Smith, which is that – contra Lefebvre – it is precisely by reclaiming the perspective of the everyday and learning to rethink the relations of knowledge production from the standpoint of the overwhelmingly feminized labour that ‘articulates’ between abstract, general thinking and ordinary life that a critical perspective on those relations themselves becomes possible. In this regard, then, she emphasizes the extent to which a critical ‘making-sense’ of social relations already proceeds in the everyday, however much that sense-making is concealed from expert view by the definition of such space as somewhere in which only personal or parochial things happen. Think, she says, of that moment when, suddenly, on a familiar street, a gap appears where a building has been demolished; from the perspective of the planner or the property magnate who has caused that ‘gap’ to appear, this new emptiness is wholly explicable, part of a strategy of redevelopment or the outcome of an investment decision. Yet, says Smith, ‘if we examine [such events] as they happen within the everyday world, they become fundamentally mysterious’ (1988: 94). The operations of power are taken-for-granted only by those who direct and arrange those operations, and for whom their effects are encountered in the form of abstract calculations, balance sheets, productivity reports. By contrast, it is from the perspective of everyday life, from the perspective of those who encounter those effects as sudden changes in the world of real, phenomenal experience, that those operations can have a jarring, unsettling quality. It is the ‘opening’ made possible in such moments which Smith seeks to build from: the everyday, far from being the scene of an unreflective or bored acceptance of the world, can be understood as being, often, ‘that in which questions originate’ (91). Not all of those questions can be answered from within the ambit of everyday experience itself, of course, and Smith is careful to acknowledge this. Nevertheless, if the everyday is, on the one hand, shaped by relationships of power, it provides, on the other, a ‘standpoint’ from which a critical awareness of that power can be established, precisely by learning to register and respond to the ‘defamiliarizing’ effects of the choices of the powerful within our everyday worlds.

Three. Various echoes of these lessons from Smith, it seems to me (the need to grasp the ways in which the everyday is implicated in relations of social power and an awareness of the forms of critical knowledge which can emerge from within everyday life) can be found in the pioneering work of W.E.B. Du Bois, and it is that work which I will consider in the

second half of this chapter. I do this, developing a discussion sketched out briefly elsewhere (Smith 2014: 1146–8), with the intention of starting to respond to the lacuna in the dominant theories of everyday life which I described in the previous chapter. Du Bois was profoundly interested in the politics of everyday life, but his interest was part of a wider insistence on making clear the absolutely central place that racism played in the shaping and arrangement of modern societies. Du Bois is clear that understanding modern society requires an understanding of racism, and no less clear that understanding racism requires an attention to the ways in which ‘race’ is made in everyday contexts and shapes everyday relationships. At the same time, however, and not unlike Smith, he insisted that such processes necessarily gave rise to forms of questioning self-awareness and to critical responses which emerged within ordinary or seemingly mundane situations.

At the beginning of the penultimate chapter of his pioneering work of urban sociology, *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois describes the granting of ‘Negro Suffrage’ as part of ‘one of the most daring experiments of a too venturesome nation’ (1996 [1899]: 368); what, he goes on to ask, have been the ‘results of this experiment?’ Du Bois’ language here – the idea of approaching the situation of black communities in the USA as if they constituted the object of a kind of historical experiment – is in keeping with the tone which characterizes much of that study and, indeed, much of the research which he undertook while he was based at Atlanta University. ‘Social scientists’, he would say later, ‘were then still thinking in terms of theory and vast and eternal laws, but I had a concrete group of living beings artificially set by themselves and capable of almost laboratory experiment’ (1986 [1940]: 600). To a large extent this view and this approach reflected Du Bois’ own classed and gendered experience and his early, paternalistic confidence in the ability of an educated elite to resolve social problems through the application of scientific inquiry. Racism was, he felt at the time, a matter of ‘gross and vindictive ignorance’, to which the answer was ‘enlightening knowledge and systematic observation’ (1978 [1904]: 55).

That faith in the power of ‘systematic observation’ is, of course, especially evident in *The Philadelphia Negro* with its numerous tables of quantitative data, painstakingly compiled by Du Bois and his assistants, revealing the levels of education of black residents in Philadelphia’s seventh ward, their occupations, their mortality rates, incomes, family sizes, etc. Yet we should recognize that even here, in the work in which

Du Bois was arguably at his most positivist (see Reed 1997), something else is discernible beyond a concern to accurately record the aggregate facts about black social life. Occasionally, but tellingly, one comes across passages in the text which have no place in a 'laboratory' view of social relations, brief fragments of ordinary life reported with all the immediacy and urgency of the ethnographer or the novelist. For example: 'imagine this pork fried in grease and eaten with baker's bread, taken late in the afternoon or at bedtime' (1996 [1899]: 161); 'Affairs will be gliding on lazily some summer afternoon at the corner of Seventh and Lombard streets [...] Suddenly there is an oath, a sharp altercation, a blow; then a hurried rush of feet, the silent door of a neighbouring club closes, and when the policeman arrives only the victim lies bleeding on the sidewalk' (312).

Moreover, in the final chapter of the book, Du Bois explicitly turns away from 'systematic observation' in order to ask about 'the meaning of all this' (385). Much of what he says in that chapter has a decidedly patrician air, with its talk of 'duties', its criticism of black communities' spendthrift ways and its proposals to ensure that 'young ladies' are chaperoned to church. Yet at the end, and addressing a white readership directly, he makes quite clear that racism is not something that can be known or grasped only in terms of those effects that can be calculated and tabulated as percentages or ratios, arguing that it must also be understood experientially, as something which operates through feeling and affect. In that later regard, especially, he notes, racism is woven in and through everyday interaction. Much of the 'sorrow and bitterness that surrounds the life of the American Negro', he says, is a consequence of the 'prejudice and half-conscious actions' encountered in daily life: 'One is not compelled to discuss the Negro question with every Negro one meets [...] one is not compelled to stare at the solitary black face in the audience as if it were not human' (397).

Du Bois, of course, would famously come to turn his back on 'calm, cool, and detached' science, arguing that such an approach had no useful place in a world where 'Negroes were lynched, murdered and starved' (1986 [1940]: 603). That political turn on his part perhaps conceals the frequency with which, even in his more conventionally sociological work, one can find him emphasizing the experiential and mundane aspects of racism. In an early essay on 'The Black North in 1901', for example, he had argued that while it was crucial to gather a 'picture of the Negro from without' (1978 [1901]: 150), it was no less necessary to 'place ourselves

within the Negro group and by studying that inner life look with him upon the surrounding world' (151). Writing more theoretically about these questions at the time, he explicitly defended a form of sociology sufficiently broad as to be able to describe *both* social structures *and* lived experience. Conversely, he argued, a sociology which concerned itself exclusively with abstract, quantitative data whilst remaining oblivious to the questions of 'inner life', would be akin to 'Newton, noticing falling as characteristic of matter and explaining this phenomenon as gravitation' but then determining 'to study some weird entity known as Falling instead of soberly investigating Things which fall' (2000 [1905]: 39).

Four. The experience which Du Bois reflects upon in the final pages of *The Philadelphia Negro*, in somewhat 'arms-length' terms ('One is not compelled to discuss the Negro question with every Negro one meets'), is revisited, of course, in the much more urgent, personal account which forms the famous opening statement of *The Souls of Black Folk*. Here, in a startlingly direct passage, Du Bois describes what it means to find oneself caught within social interactions which are framed by the compelling, ever-present but 'unasked question [...] How does it feel to be a problem?' (1995 [1903]). That opening signals many things, of course, but in some respects the most important point is Du Bois' decision to *begin* his account in this way; his decision to foreground a phenomenology of everyday racism. This was, of course, an absolutely calculated move on his part and he signals in both his title and in his 'Forethought' that his concern in *The Souls of Black Folk* is to get beyond the description of broad sociological patterns of inequality in order to vivify 'the spiritual world in which ten thousand thousand Americans live and strive' (41). Although, as I have suggested, we should recognize that this approach was already an incipient part of Du Bois' sociology, *The Souls of Black Folk* does represent a break, not least because he explicitly contrasts his concern to bear witness to the world of black experience with the off-hand judgements of the 'car window sociologist' (179) or with a quantitative sociology which went on 'gleefully' counting 'bastards' and 'prostitutes' (50) as if the resultant data contained its own explanation (see, in this respect, Green and Driver's account (1976) of the racism characteristic of late nineteenth US sociology). We might note, in this respect, that aside from anything else, Du Bois' phenomenological turn in *Souls*, and his concern with the meaningful worlds of everyday life, was clearly driven in no small part by his awareness of the potential complicity between a merely 'enumerative' sociology and

the kinds of generalized thinking – the ‘mark of the plural’, as Albert Memmi describes it (2003: 85) – on which racism depends.

What is also striking about Du Bois’ opening, though, is what it tells us about the nature of racism. He begins his study by foregrounding the same point with which he ends *The Philadelphia Negro*, which is that racism denies the racialized person the right to simply ‘be’, or, we might say, the right to unreflective ‘being’. That process occurs, Du Bois insists, in and through mundane social situations and interactions: ‘in the room or on the street’ (1996 [1899]: 397), he says. The shared characteristic of these encounters, as Du Bois describes them, is that they place the social personhood of the racialized person under question by referring it always to the category of ‘race’, and the characteristic effect of that category is that it allows all queries regarding the person so designated to be answered *a priori* (see Du Bois 1995 [1903]: 13). Frantz Fanon, of course, would point out much the same thing, later on, describing the way in which racism involved the banal but persistent withholding or denial of the possibility of being-for-itself: ‘Oh, I want you to meet my black friend...’ (1986 [1952]: 116). Thus when Du Bois says, sardonically, ‘being a problem is a strange experience’, (1995 [1903]: 44) it seems to me that we should read his comment quite literally. Everyday processes of racialization involve a mundane practice of estrangement, the denial of the very quality of ‘given-ness’ which supposedly defines participation within everyday life. The lesson, which I have tried to outline, but which Du Bois was making clear in the very period when sociological was being consolidated as a discipline, is that the ‘everyday’ is not just a ‘where’ but also a ‘how’, so far as racism is concerned. The everyday is not just a scene in which racism occurs – although Du Bois clearly intends that we should pay sociological attention to the politics of ordinary situations and relationships – it is also a constitutive part of the making and attribution of ‘race’.

Five. This lesson is reiterated throughout *Souls of Black Folk*. Later on in the study, when Du Bois discusses the nature of social relations in the segregated Southern states of the USA, for example, he is explicit that the nature of those relations cannot be grasped without understanding their everyday dimensions:

I have thus far sought to make clear the physical, economic, and political relations of the Negroes and whites in the South, as I have conceived them, including for the reasons set forth, crime and education. But after all that has been said on these more tangible matters of human contact, there still

remains a part essential to a proper description of the South which it is difficult to describe or fix in terms easily understood by strangers. It is, in fine, the thousand and one little actions which go to make up life. In any community or nation it is these little things which are most elusive to grasp and yet most essential to any clear conception of the group life taken as a whole. (203)

This, it seems to me, is as clear a manifesto for the importance of studying everyday life as one could possibly find. Yet Du Bois wants his reader here to do something more than simply recognize that racism is a feature of everyday experience. He goes on – following the passage just quoted – to provide a short, imagined account of a ‘casual observer visiting the South’ (ibid.), aware only of how ‘the days slip lazily on, the sun shines’ and believing that ‘this little world seems as happy and contended as other worlds he has visited’ (204). To this white visitor the ‘Negro problem’ appears invisible, a ‘far-fetched academic’ issue, until it is revealed in a sudden ‘whirl of passion which leaves him gasping at its bitter intensity’ (204), or in a moment of alienation when he finds himself ‘in some strange assembly, where all faces are tinged brown or black, and where he has the vague, uncomfortable feeling of the stranger’ (ibid.). Only in such events does this casual visitor come to understand the truth about the ordering of the relations around him:

He realizes at last that silently, resistlessly, the world about flows by him in two great streams: they ripple on in the same sunshine, they approach and mingle their waters in seeming carelessness, – then they divide and flow wide apart. It is done quietly; no mistakes are made, or if one occurs, the swift arm of the law and of public opinion swings down for a moment. (ibid.)

In saying this, then, Du Bois is not merely making evident the violence that might at any moment interrupt ordinary life in the segregated South. The relationship he is describing is more complicated, because it is exactly that seeming ordinariness of the everyday scene – the quietness, the routine, the taken-for-granted management of relationships – which already provides the accomplice, as it were, to that violence. Thus, Du Bois’ insistence on understanding and giving an account of the everyday, his insistence on the importance of recognizing the minutiae of the everyday – ‘the thousand and one little actions’ which go to make up ‘group life’ – emerges from a sociological recognition that everyday-ness is itself constitutive of the relations he describes. Everyday-ness is caught up in the definitional work by which the boundaries of ‘group life’ are patrolled. Everyday experience is not just what both ‘black’ and ‘white’ are

subsumed within – a setting or a stage – but is rather a significant part of the means by which that distinction comes to be lived, socially speaking.

Apart from anything else, it seems to me that Du Bois' account here should make us cautious of those discussions of everyday life which over-emphasize the humanizing quality of mundane interactions. I do not mean, in saying this, to deny that the messy and indiscriminate encounters of daily life can be liberating or disruptive. Du Bois himself, after all, honours the quietly heroic action of 'a black man and a white woman [who] were arrested for talking together on Whitehall Street in Atlanta' (ibid.). We might recall also, in a different context, Zygmunt Bauman's recognition that Nazi propagandists such as Streicher were uneasily aware of the possibility that the 'morally saturated' encounter between their potential supporters and individual Jews could serve to give the lie to the 'mythological Jew' (2000 [1989]: 187–8) that they wished to construct. It may well be that there is a truth, therefore, to Harvie Ferguson's argument that 'it is within the banal that the virtue of goodness can be restored'; in other words, that 'the sustaining heart of a genuinely human culture' is to be found in small acts of everyday benevolence, rather than in 'beliefs, ultimate values, truth and everything 'higher' in civilization' (2009: 187). Yet this faith in banal goodness, and in the benevolent possibilities of everyday relationships, can too easily become naïve. Witness, for instance, Robert Park's suggestion that the ordinary interactions of the plantation system had the effect of corroding that system from within, such that everyday relations between master and slave served as the seedbed of 'a new and more humane social order' (1950: 181). This line of argument leads Park, with a fateful inevitability, to argue that in the South today (i.e., 1937), 'the Negro is quite alright in his place' (182). One hardly needs to point out the fallacies in this argument, but suffice it to compare with Du Bois, who remembers the act of this couple who talked together on Whitehall Street precisely *because* that act called into open view the mundane and repetitive practices, the banal forms of etiquette and ritualized encounter which, far from corroding racialized order from within, were integral to the endurance of that order. For Park, a discussion of everyday relations becomes a way of exonerating or overlooking structures of racism and economic inequality, on the grounds that the former operate on a moral rather than a utilitarian plane; for Du Bois, reflecting from the perspective of racialized experience, one comes to understand the latter precisely through the former, and through an awareness of how the former subtends the latter.

It is all too easy to read *The Souls of Black Folk* as a merely personal text in Du Bois' corpus, and as one which, both formally and substantively, leads away from his sociological research, away from a sociological approach more generally and towards the activism, the journalism and the novel writing on which he came to embark. But it seems to me that we should interpret it otherwise: it is, in fact, through that text's brilliant unpacking of the racializing politics of everyday life that Du Bois gets beyond a view of racism as merely a matter of ignorance and moves towards those later analyses in which racism is framed in increasingly global terms, and in which it is situated ever more clearly as a central part of the formation and organization of modern society (Bobo 2000; Marable 1996). Charles Lemert has argued that it was precisely Du Bois' reflections on the experience of racism which made his understanding of social identity so pioneering, and so attuned to the complexities and alienations of modern subjectivity: 'There is [to Du Bois] no universal Self. There are only selves. White sociology has been looking under the dim light of its own cultural blindness, looking thereby for some universal thing that, from Du Bois' point of view, does not exist' (1994: 390). We might make, it seems to me, a parallel claim as regards the sociology of everyday life; not only can *The Souls of Black Folk* be quite reasonably read as a path-breaking statement on the importance of paying sociological attention to everyday experience and practices, but that recognition on Du Bois' part cannot be separated out from his increasingly explicit understanding that racism was neither an incidental nor an aberrant part of modern society, but was central to its arrangement. Du Bois' critical understanding of the ways in which the attribution of 'race' pivots on a denial of the everyday quality of 'given-ness' is inextricable from his growing sense of racism as an integral but hidden aspect of modernity as such; his critical reading of the racialized politics of everyday life leads *not* towards a concern with the merely subjective, but towards an account of racism as a central structural and historical feature of modern societies. In saying all of this, then, my concern is not to suggest simply that Du Bois 'got there first', so far as 'everyday life' was concerned. It is more than that: his conclusions throw a profoundly critical light onto some of the central ways in which the everyday has been discussed and analysed in 'classical' European social theory.

Six. In 1940, in a chapter in *Dusk of Dawn*, Du Bois imagines a series of debates between himself and what he describes as his internalized 'white companions'. To one of these imagined interlocutors, the tellingly named

‘Roger van Dieman’, he insists that ‘race’ must be grasped as a cultural and historical phenomenon. Van Dieman responds by trying to trap Du Bois in a kind of constructivist catch-22: ‘But what is this group; and how do you differentiate it; and how can you call it ‘black’ when you admit that it is not black?’ At which point Du Bois replies, tersely, by pointing back to the making and living of racist structures through everyday practices: ‘I recognize it quite easily [...] the black man is a person who must ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia’ (1986 [1940]: 665–6). The straightforward point of Du Bois’ vignette is, of course, clear: it was those who had to ride ‘Jim Crow’ in Georgia who necessarily understood most critically the complicity between everyday practices and the making of ‘race’. The everyday life that du Bois describes could never be merely habitual, nor characterized by the kind of absent-mindedness which various theorists have tended to associate with the everyday. That privilege belongs, in his account, to the ‘casual [white] visitor’ and to the ‘car window sociologist’, not to the person potentially subject to the ‘swift arm of the law’. For the latter, pre-reflective action, living in the moment, is precisely what is precluded. In that respect, it is those who negotiate everyday racism who can best recognize both the phenomenological reality of ‘race’, as a quality of daily experience, but by the same token, are best positioned to grasp it as a historical rather than natural reality. In this regard Du Bois’ writing on racism in America – and *Souls of Black Folk* most especially – clearly anticipate the kinds of project which we have heard Dorothy Smith propose: a sociology built up and out of the ongoing work of self-reflection and self-understanding which racism forces upon those who are subject to it, a sociology grounded in the labour of critical reflection born of the ‘double-ness’ he so famously discussed and which was possible precisely because racism meant that black communities could not be reconciled to the normativity which was otherwise implicit in conceptions of everyday American life.

For Du Bois, though, this kind of critical possibility cannot be understood as something which is inherent in everyday life *as such*. It was the very fact that everyday life was divisive, that it was integral to the reproduction of racism, which meant that black communities lived it as alienated, as ‘un-homely’. It was precisely because that life asked of those communities perpetually and implicitly, ‘what does it feel like to be a problem’, that they were likely to face that life with the questioning detachment which he famously described as ‘second sight’. In this respect, Smith and W.E.B. Du Bois make different but inter-related claims about

the forms of critical knowledge which are responses to the gendered and racialized aspects of everyday experience. It is those who, in one particular dimension or both, benefit from a given set of social arrangements, those who rule by virtue of those arrangements, who are most likely to take those arrangements for granted: 'To exist as subject and to act in this abstracted mode depend upon an actual work and organization of work by others who make the concrete, the particular, the bodily, thematic of their work and who also produce the invisibility of that work' (Smith 1988: 81). In just the same way, for Du Bois, mainstream sociology in America repeatedly explained away social inequalities *a priori* by reading those inequalities only as evidence of supposed racial differences. This is exactly what the Fields refer to as 'racecraft', the way in which everyday practices of 'race making' not only reproduce the conditions of white domination, but at the same time 'produce the invisibility' of those conditions, at least in the eyes of those who benefit. Through the 'vast and hanging darkness' of the veil of 'race', Du Bois would write, 'the Doer never sees the Deed' (1920: 246; see also Roediger 1999). Neither his account, nor that of Smith, seems to fit all that well with that of de Certeau and his colleagues for whom everyday practices are always and endlessly recalcitrant with regards to social order. Nor, for that matter, do they fit well with the account of Goldberg, in which race-making so infiltrates everyday life and subject formation as to be more or less beyond conceptual grasp. It is just because Smith and Du Bois begin from an understanding of the role of the everyday in the management and construction of modernity's unequal social order, that they acknowledge an unequal critical possibility; the practices and relationships which make ruling possible are more easily grasped by those whose lives mean that they have to understand, manoeuvre within and survive those practices and relationships: 'We who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans cannot' (Du Bois 1986 [1926]: 993).

5

The Everyday Denial of Everydayness

Abstract: *This final chapter concludes by offering a summarizing proposition: racism entails, amongst other things, the everyday denial of everydayness. That is to say that: (a) 'race' is made everyday, in mundane situations and relations; (b) that 'race' is made, in part, through the everyday, through the attribution of qualities of ordinariness and familiarity; (c) that the very everyday quality of these processes also serves to conceal them. A sociology which has as its avowed aim the grasping of everyday life as a problematic is thus obliged to listen more closely to those whose experiences mean that the everyday is already a problem, something which is placed in question.*

Keywords: Abdulmalek Sayad; bell hooks; Everyday life; Henri Lefebvre; Racism

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One. One way of phrasing a conclusion from the foregoing discussion is to suggest that, inter alia, racism entails *the everyday denial of everydayness*. To say this is to imply at least three interrelated points. This chapter outlines and briefly elaborates on these points. *Firstly* and most straightforwardly, it means acknowledging that ‘race’ is made everyday. That is to say that racism involves mundane and unremarkable practices, and that racialized identities are given social life through such practices, however much they are also shaped by larger acts of policy or public representation. In general, as I have tried to show, the canonical sociology of everyday life has tended to overlook the presence and meaning of racism as a feature of day-to-day experience. But just as feminist theorists have drawn attention to the everyday as a crucial site of the reproduction of gendered identities and the forms of oppression resting on those identities, we need to understand everyday life as central to the attribution of ‘race’, through the symbolic allocation and ‘reading’ of space, through the banal arrangements of social interaction and through all of the other ‘thousand and one little actions’ by which, as Du Bois points out, ‘race’ becomes an ordering, disciplining feature of modern society. Critical ‘race’ theorists, it seems to me, are absolutely correct to insist that racism is ordinary in this sense.

Two. In many respects, of course, mundane forms of racism are continuous with more organized forms of racism and they can entail many of those same practices of oppression or exclusion which can be identified in working or public life. This is indicative of a more general analytical problem, which is that the boundaries of ‘the everyday’ are not easily or straightforwardly drawn. It was for just this reason – although not in relation to racism specifically – that Norbert Elias questioned whether the term was sociologically useful at all: ‘the structure of everyday life is not a more-or-less autonomous structure in its own right’, he insisted, it can only be understood as an integral component ‘of the power structure of society as a whole’ (1998: 169). Elias’ caution about the danger of treating the everyday as a *sui generis* phenomenon deserves to be heeded, and it is clearly crucial that we continue to trace the continuities between formal and informal expressions of racism. Nevertheless, learning from Essed, Du Bois and other writers that I have considered, I would argue – and this is the *second* point implied in the formulation above – that it is possible to identify a particular modality of racism which can be said to be ‘everyday’ in that it entails a denial of those attributes or conditions which are taken to characterize everydayness itself. This is why engaging with the social theory of everyday life is valuable, despite the absence

of an awareness of racism in some of the most prominent expressions of that theory. What the sociology of everyday life makes possible is a conception of the everyday as a historical 'problem' in its own right. It is that insight which allows us to think beyond the everyday as simply the site or stage for certain forms of racism, and to pay attention to the ways in which the making of everydayness and the making of 'race' are part of the same historical process.

It is worth making explicit one particular aspect of that inter-relationship. A significant contribution of the theory of everyday life has been its attempt to grapple with the distinguishing ambivalence of everyday experience, its quality as a 'space' or set of practices which are both routine and disordered at once, which are characterized by the prospect of both 'the given' and 'the unanticipated': 'a halting place and a springboard', as Lefebvre has it (2007: 14). It is precisely in respect of this two-sided aspect of the everyday, it seems to me, that we can most closely identify its historical relation to racism. Everyday racism, in other words, entails a particular 'making-use' of this double-edged feature of everyday experience, it recasts that tension between the 'familiar' and the 'unfamiliar' as a line of symbolic demarcation, a racialized border or a limit. It is in this sense that we can talk about a form of racism which is 'everyday' not just because of 'where' it happens, not just because it involves the making of 'race' *in* everyday ways, but because it involves the making of 'race' *out of* the everyday itself, so to speak: that is, through the attribution or denial of the qualities of ordinariness or familiarity or given-ness. Everyday racism, thus, works on and through the everyday as that which is central to the construction of ideas of sameness and difference. There is a flip side to this argument, as I suggested in an earlier chapter. If we take seriously the racializing of the everyday then we can start to acknowledge the crucial role that this process has played in the marshalling and controlling of that life, the bringing to heel of its potential unruliness.

I want to try to exemplify this claim, and at the same time acknowledge its consequences for the sociology of everyday life, by comparing two accounts of the city street. Henri Lefebvre, in a fascinating section towards the end of the second volume of his *Critique of Everyday Life*, takes the street as a 'microcosm' of contemporary everyday life. What he particularly emphasizes is the shift by which the street ceases to be a space of passage or transit and becomes instead a site endowed with a fascination all of its own. In this regard, Lefebvre argues, the street is representative of a tendential shift in capitalist societies by

which mediating phenomena – cars, money and so on – acquire a new significance and in which, more generally, ‘means’ displace the properly human ‘ends’ of social life: ‘all around us, the places through which we pass and where we meet – the street, the café or the station – are more important and more truly interesting than our homes and our houses, the places which they link’ (603). For Lefebvre, this is a situation specifically related to the conquest of public space by commodity fetishism and the corresponding transfer of a sense of meaningfulness and autonomy from people to things, such that the longings and energies of the urban street are attributed to the ‘objects’ which ‘lead their sovereign life behind the shop windows’ (605–6) whilst the people who pass those objects appear stripped of individuality, disappearing into the street’s ‘diversified monotony [...] becoming almost interchangeable’ (604–5).

We might compare this account to bell hooks’ recollection of her childhood ‘journey across town to my grandmother’s house, a journey through the city which she remembers as a drawn-out encounter with ‘terrifying whiteness’: ‘Oh! That feeling of safety, of arrival, of homecoming when we finally reached the edges of her yard [...] Such a contrast, that feeling of arrival, of homecoming, this sweetness and the bitterness of that journey, that constant reminder of white power and control’ (1990: 41). It might be objected that Lefebvre is talking about different kinds of streets to those described by hooks, ones which are commercial rather than residential. Yet both are talking about the street as a public, urban space, and in that respect the comparison remains, I think, a very telling one. For Lefebvre the street is a deeply ambivalent location: on the one hand, it is suggestive of how far everyday life has come to be dominated by economic forces which reduce characterful individuality, leaving a featureless equivalence in which human beings are all but indistinguishable from each other. On the other hand, however, it becomes a place in which disruptive possibilities emerge. He elaborates on the ‘interstitial freedoms’ of urban space at greater length in a later work, emphasizing especially the de-familiarizing possibilities which lie waiting in the ‘surprise of an encounter’ (2007: 172). It is through the encounter with ‘difference’ which urban space affords, Lefebvre suggests, through the unregulated ‘coming-together of people [...] different patterns of existence’ (190), that the ‘diversified monotony’ of everyday life can be challenged or refused. In that regard, the urban street is, for Lefebvre, a site of unpredictability, of a potential ‘newness’ born of what he calls the city’s ‘time of unexpectedness’ (ibid.).

In many ways this is typically powerful and Lefebvre's point emerges as part of a concerted attempt, in his later writing, to rethink the politics of everyday resistance so as to foreground the disorderly quality of human 'difference', and to understand that difference as a potential counter to the mundanity of a world formed in the image of exchange value. Yet, it seems to me, his account appears premature when it is placed alongside hooks' act of remembering, which makes explicit the ways in which the city streets are central to the operation of racist terror. From that perspective, the ambivalent quality of everyday space appears absolutely otherwise to the way in which Lefebvre describes it. What hooks emphasizes is the extent to which racism denies 'integrity of being' (1990: 41) *not* by submerging individuality within the 'implacable reality' of everyday life, not by creating a 'monotony' in which human beings become interchangeable, but by the terrifying attribution of difference. Conversely, whilst Lefebvre tends to construe the 'taken-for-granted' quality of everyday life as *the* problem, it is just that possibility of unspoken and unremarkable acceptance which, hooks points out, was what black women in America struggled to make possible through their long labour to create and defend the 'subversive homespace' (47):

Failure to recognize the realm of choice, and the remarkable re-visioning of both women's role and the idea of "home" that black women consciously exercised in practice, obscures the political commitment to racial uplift, to eradicating racism, which was the philosophical core of dedication to community and home. (45)

Lefebvre's instinct, which is to bank on the unanticipated quality of the urban 'encounter' as a means of destabilizing the everyday sense of 'given-ness' appears one-sided if we take seriously a mode of racism that works by making everyday spaces a site of fear and control. In that context, the mundane prospect of 'encounter' becomes something which, far from being potentially redemptory, is central to the force and functioning of a racialized everyday: 'Even when empty or vacant', hooks recalls, those streets and the houses which formed part of them, 'seemed to say "danger", "you do not belong here", or "you are not safe"' (ibid.). In this sense, then, it seems to me that Lefebvre lays claim where he ought really to listen; he does not reckon with the extent to which everydayness is already a means of attributing 'difference' and the implications of that for the ways in which the 'everyday' might be experienced.

What bell hooks describes, importantly, is a 'political commitment' to the labour which makes possible a liveable life. This is, of course, in many respects just the same struggle which Lefebvre sees as woven through the ambivalent space of the everyday. Moreover, it is a struggle with the same humanizing goal as its end, the same search for 'integrity of being', the same desire to be 'whole'. To say that everyday racism entails the everyday denial of everydayness, then, should not be read as suggesting that those who are subject to racism do not have 'everyday lives' or that they are excluded from the politics of the everyday. It is, rather, to acknowledge that this politics may appear differently in the context of a racism which seeks to make a threshold of everydayness itself. What hooks describes, in that respect, is aimed, firstly, at the defence of a space that allows those who are racialized to reclaim given-ness or ordinari-ness, and all of the unremarkable qualities of the everyday which racism, through their denial, makes part of the making of 'race'.

I do not mean to deny, either, the possibility that it is through the messiness and contingency of everyday practices and relations that dominant epistemologies or ways of understanding the world can come to be disrupted or challenged. There clearly is evidence that in the unregulated meetings and interactions of the postcolonial city all kinds of discrepant self-identities take shape, cutting across or hyphenating or shaking up established ideas about nationality, 'race' or ethnicity. Christian Karner's study has very helpfully explored the 'counter-hegemonic potential of everyday life' (2007: 119) in this regard, both as a site of political resistance and contestation in its own right, but also as a space in which, frequently, identities are revealed in all of their hybridity and fluidity: 'the everyday refuses to conform to the rigidity demanded by ethno-nationalist ideology' (121), he notes. Moreover, it is clear that forms of conviviality and reciprocity can emerge out of the banal acts of cooperation and interaction which occur in everyday situations and settings (see, e.g. Everts 2010; Kramvig 2005).

Yet we need to be cautious. European racism has frequently operated through a dialectic of stigma *and* celebration – the 'savage' could always become the 'noble savage' and vice versa – as numerous postcolonial studies of the texts of empire have demonstrated. The kind of account from Lefebvre which I have just described too easily ends up in a situation in which those who are already racialized as the 'others' of 'our' everyday life get recast as potential saviours of that life, as the bearers of a 'difference' which challenges monotony, or of an 'authenticity' which

'our' life has forgone. In both cases, of course, they remain confined to the role of the antonym, the counter-point. The tendency in the later parts of Lefebvre's critique to assimilate 'difference' to the 'unruly' aspect of everyday life, to place it in the 'credit column' of everyday 'possibility', as a means of contesting everyday sameness is serious and identifies something significant, but I wonder if it bears, all the same, some of the marks of that romanticism which I pointed to in the earlier sections of his account. If the critique of everyday life is to avoid an endless replaying of that story of denigration-cum-fetishization, it needs to begin with a self-critical assessment of the ways in which conceptions of the everyday, including sociology's own conceptions of the everyday, have played a constitutive part in the making of those 'others' by virtue of which modernity claims to know itself.

Three. Many of the major theorists of the everyday have grappled with a core conceptual – and methodological – problem which is the difficulty of properly making sense of phenomena which are defined by their very familiarity. Thus for Braudel, for example, everyday life was a 'dust' which 'History' as a discipline had failed to catch between its fingers. Georg Simmel, many years beforehand had argued, likewise, for the importance of a sociology which sought the principles of historical change, not in singular heroic acts, but in the hitherto overlooked passage of 'quiet, nameless and equable hours' (2011: 299–300). De Certeau, for his part, turns this relationship between formalized regimes of knowledge and mundane experience the other way about. For him, the issue is one of incommensurability: the resilient practices of ordinary life, he said, form a 'rumble' which simply cannot be translated into specialist or scientific language. To write of everyday practice, de Certeau suggested, is already to make it something which it was not, to appropriate it or – more properly – to 'discipline' it. As we have seen, Dorothy Smith emphasizes this same difficulty, but with particular attention to the gendered structures by which sociological knowledge is produced, and which enact a process of abstraction that overwrites the expertise and practical understanding which are to be found within everyday life itself.

There is a particular dimension to this problem as it relates to racism as an everyday practice. What Smith says, apropos the experience of women, seems to me to be applicable in relation to racism: 'the sociology of everyday life' has put together a view of the world from a place that racialized communities do not occupy. Just compare

again Lefebvre's claim, on the one hand, that the street, the café or the station have become more important and more truly interesting than our homes and our houses, with hooks' honouring of the subversive labour of the homespace, on the other. To say, then, that racism involves *the everyday denial of everydayness* is also – and this is the *third* point – to sound a warning against the potential complicity of theories of everyday life with those very processes by which racialization is made ordinary in modern society. I mean this, of course, in both of the senses described above, both that racism and racialization are commonplace and familiar aspects of social life, but also that they are constitutively related to the ways in which the 'familiar' or the 'common' are themselves constructed and understood: racism is 'ordinary' not just because it is 'politics as usual', but because the designation of the 'ordinary' is already a part of how that political work is done. Much of the canonical sociology of everyday life has tended to overlook racism, not because racism happens in some other 'place' beyond its purview, but because it was already inscribed in the everydayness which it took as its subject.

From the standpoint of racialized communities, by contrast, as is made clear by Du Bois and many other writers who have taken seriously the experiences of those communities, the problem is often not one of 'de-familiarization', of finding a way to step 'outside' of the quotidian social order so as to think about it afresh. Rather, as Du Bois makes absolutely explicit, the effect of pervasive racism is precisely an awareness *already* of the everyday as something estranged and estranging. What does his metaphor of 'second sight' refer to, after all, if not the fact that racism meant, for those who experienced it, a particular awareness of 'sameness' and 'difference' as an attribution continually enacted through the most mundane acts, practices and situations? In a similar way, more recently, Abdulmalek Sayad, reflecting on the experiences of racialized communities of migrant workers in France, has pointed out that it is those who benefit from the given arrangements of social life who are mostly likely to take those arrangements for granted. Acquiescence with things as they are, he notes, is 'primarily a characteristic of the dominant, and it is part of the culture of the dominant [...] Given that they have every confidence in themselves [...] there is nothing for the dominant to "reinvent", and nothing to understand' (2004: 90). By contrast, Sayad insists later, the experience of life as an emigrant, particularly in the face of the demand that the emigrant remake themselves in the image of the

'host culture', gives rise to the sense of perpetually 'looking at themselves from the outside' (261). There is thus, for Sayad, a profound difference in the scope for reflexive awareness, in likely acuity with regard to the workings and content of social relationships, depending on which side of that everyday normativity one finds oneself: 'Depending on whether one is dominant or dominated, one is either to oneself what one is for others and thanks to others, or one is for others what one is for and through oneself' (ibid.). In this way, as he notes elsewhere, situations of dominance oblige 'the dominated person (colonized, black, Jew, woman, immigrant, etc.) to work at clarifying the relationship, which means working upon oneself' (1999: 581).

Sayad is more than aware, I think, of the danger that this point gets treated naively, as if oppression conferred some kind of blessing or special wisdom on those who are oppressed. What he is reflecting on is a kind of enforced *savoir-faire*, born of the experience which Du Bois describes as 'being a problem', and how that continual need to 'work upon oneself' makes possible – although not inevitable – a critical reading of the social relationships through which that problematic status is conferred. Here, for example, is one of Sayad's respondents reflecting on exactly this everyday experience of being subject to questioning, of having his being or belonging placed under question: 'questions 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; you hear it, see and read it everywhere all your life [...] especially on everyone's face, in everyone's eyes' (2004: 265). The interviewee goes on to reflect on one particular instance of being rendered a 'problem': the routine demand from the police that he produce his 'papers'.

You take out your CNI [*Carte nationale d'identité*]: French, nationality: French. He [the officer] shakes his head. Deep inside himself, he must be saying to himself: 'Another one'. He'd have liked to be the only one who was French, the good Frenchman, along with all the other Frenchman like him [...] You can see all that going through the cop's mind, even if his eyes don't shine with intelligence. So he says: 'Ok, Ok. Move along [*circule*]'. He gives you back your papers. But I say to myself '*circule, virgule*' [literally: 'move along, comma']. That's what you are: a comma, that's all [...] For him the *virgule* is your features, he doesn't know that a comma can give France a meaning. A France without commas would be an incomprehensible France. (2004: 265)

What is revealed here, it seems to me, is not just that it is those who are subject to a continual questioning who are driven to understand the nature of the social relationships which render them 'questionable'. More than that,

they are also aware of the extent to which those relationships are integral to the mundane reproduction of the very self-identity by which the questioner claims the right to question. Thus, the speaker notes, France becomes comprehensible through making *virgules* of others, even as it disavows the role that they play in giving France meaning. In the face of this, Sayad's respondent seeks to turn the situation around: 'Let them ask themselves about what they are, see if they can answer their own questions about themselves, before answering questions about others.'

The lesson, it seems to me, for a sociology which has as its avowed aim the grasping of everyday life *as a problematic*, is an obvious one: to listen more closely to those whose experiences – '24 hours a day, 365 days a year' – mean that the everyday is already a problem, something which cannot be accepted as given, something which is placed in question. For those of us who speak from a position of privilege, in this regard, it is necessary to keep at hand the challenge posed by Sayad's respondent, the challenge that we ask and keep asking ourselves the de-familiarizing questions about who we are and about how we benefit from the everyday recreation of the grounds of that privilege.

Four. In the end, Lefebvre's central political ambition in foregrounding the 'everyday' as a political question seems to me to be a compelling one. Political struggle aimed at structures in the abstract risks losing sight of the human being, and of human longing, creativity and a desire for plenitude as the purpose of struggle. To ask the question of everyday life is not to prioritize the personal over the public, the local over the global or even the qualitative over the quantitative. It opens, rather, to the broader question of what it might mean to be human. Du Bois, of course, knew this only too well, and his concern to give expression to the experiential and the everyday in *Souls of Black Folk* was intended exactly to resituate the human as the focus of sociological enterprise: in seeking to 'grasp and comprehend the real condition of a mass of human beings', he warned, we too 'often forget that each unit in the mass is a throbbing human soul' (1995 [1903]: 169). That point is both a statement against the dehumanizing effect of racism's 'mark of the plural', but also against the potentially dehumanizing effect of a social science that forgets that what it is concerned with are acting, feeling men and women. In other words, the everyday emerges in Du Bois as a way of asking, as he does at the very end of *The Philadelphia Negro*: after all, what are the boundaries of the human? In this respect, the wholeness which hooks describes as being at stake in the labour to

make the homespace is the same wholeness which Lefebvre wishes to make possible as well. And for that reason, it seems to me, Lefebvre's dictum is worth defending: the human must be everyday, or they will not be at all. Yet, is that dictum not also ahead of itself? Before we can bear it further, we must grapple with the ways in which conceptions of the everyday themselves may be used to preclude or deny the category of 'the human'.

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