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Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life

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I want to start this paper from the premise that both academics in cultural and media studies, and left-wing political theorists and activists have found the everyday culture of the people in capitalist societies particularly difficult to study either empirically or theoretically. In this paper I wish, then, to interweave two lines of theoretical inquiry: one into the culture of everyday life within subordinated social formations and the other into our own academic practices involved in such an inquiry.

I would like to start with the concept of "distance" in cultural theory. Elsewhere (Fiske, 1989a) I have argued that "distance" is a key marker of difference between high and low culture, between the meanings, practices, and pleasures characteristic of empowered and disempowered social formations. Cultural distance is a multidimensional concept. In the culture of the socially advantaged and empowered it may take the form of a distance between the art object and reader/spectator: such distance devalues socially and historically specific reading practices in favor of a transcendent appreciation or aesthetic sensibility with claims to universality. It encourages reverence or respect for the text as an art object endowed with authenticity and requiring preservation. "Distance" may also function to create a difference between the experience of the art work and everyday life. Such "distance" produces ahistorical meanings of art works and allows the members of its social formation the pleasures of allying themselves with a set of humane values that in the extreme versions of aesthetic theory, are argued to be universal values which transcend their historical conditions. This distance from the historical is also a distance from the bodily sensations, for it is our bodies that finally bind us to our historical and social specificities. As the mundanities of our social conditions are set aside, or distanced, by this view of art, so, too, are the so-called sensuous, cheap, and easy pleasures of the body distanced from the more contemplative, aesthetic pleasures of the mind. And finally this distance takes the form of distance from economic necessity: the separation of the aesthetic from the social is a practice of the elite who can afford to ignore the constraints of material necessity, and who thus construct an aesthetic which not only refuses to assign any value at all to material conditions, but validates only those art forms which transcend them. This critical and aesthetic distance is thus, finally, a marker of distinction between those able to separate their culture from the social and economic conditions of the everyday and those who cannot.

There is no "distancing," however, in the culture of everyday life. Both Bakhtin and Bourdieu show how the culture of the people denies categorical boundaries between art and life: popular art is part of the everyday, not distanced from it. The culture of everyday life works only to the extent that it is imbricated into its immediate historical and social setting. This materiality of popular culture is directly related to the economic

materiality of the conditions of oppression. Under these conditions, social experience and, therefore, culture is inescapably material: distantiation is an unattainable luxury. The culture of everyday life is concrete, contextualized, and lived, just as deprivation is concrete, contextualized, and lived. It is, therefore, a particularly difficult object of academic investigation.

I wish to turn to Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) theory of the "habitus" as a way to think through both the material practices of everyday culture and our difficulty in studying them. The concept "habitus" contains the meanings of habitat, habitant, the processes of habitation and habit, particularly habits of thought. A habitat is a social environment in which we live: it is a product of both its position in the social space and of the practices of the social beings who inhabit it. The social space is, for Bourdieu, a multidimensional map of the social order in which the main axes are economic capital, cultural capital, education, class, and historical trajectories; in it, the material, the symbolic, and the historical are not separate categories but interactive lines of force whose operations structure the macro-social order, the practices of those who inhabit different positions and moments of it, and their cultural tastes, ways of thinking, of "dispositions." The habitus, then, is at one and the same time, a position in the social and a historical trajectory through it: it is the practice of hiring within that position and trajectory, and the social identity, the habits of thoughts, tastes and dispositions that are formed in and by those practices. The position in social space, the practices and the identities are not separate categories in a hierarchical or deterministic relation to each other, but mutually inform each other to the extent that their significance lies in their transgression of the categorical boundaries that produced the words I have to use to explain them and which are therefore perpetuated by that explanation.

The point I wish to make at this stage of my argument is that the taste for "distance" in art is part of inhabiting a definable habitus, one characterized by high educational levels, high cultural but low economic capital that has been acquired rather than inherited. And within this same habitus we may find the taste for congruent social and academic theories, a taste expressed in the dispositions for macro-theories that transcend the mundanities of the everyday through distantiation, that move towards generalized, abstracted understandings rather than concrete specificities and that try to construct academic or political theories that are as distanced, detached, and self-contained as any idealized art object. This is, needless to say, the habitus in which most of us academics feel most at home.

But it is a habitus at odds with those through which the various formations of the people live their everyday lives. An explanation is necessarily of a different ontological order from that which it explains, but this difference should not be absolute: the gap should be both crossable and crossed. Bourdieu's theory of the habitus allows the possibility of such movement—we can, after all, visit and live in habitats other than the one in which we are most at home. But though such tourist excursions can give us *some* inside experience they can never provide the same experience of these conditions as those who live or have lived there. Brett Williams (1988) gives a good example of both living in a mainly black, working class culture, and providing an academic account of it. She moves between the two habituses in a way I believe to be exemplary.

Her study details some of the key features of a habitus whose culture is of the material density of embodied practices. One of these she calls "texture." By "texture" she refers to dense, vivid, detailed interwoven narratives, relationships, and experiences. The materially constrained narrowness of the conditions of everyday life are compensated for and contradicted by the density and intensity of the experiences, practices, and objects packed into them. She finds this density as she follows a man down his neighborhood

main street, when every store, every encounter, every piece of gossip exchanged is packed with concrete meanings in its minutiae. The density of apartment life is part of the conditions of oppression, yet it is also available to be turned by popular creativity and struggle, into a textured culture: "The Manor's dense living, in combination with the poverty of its families is battering. Using a small space intensively, cleaning it defensively, and lacking the resources to expand or transform it, families need to work out ways to make that density bearable."

Williams goes on to describe how Lucy and Robert, as typical renters, cope with their material conditions by "texturing domestic density by weaving through it varied sights, sounds and rhythms" (p. 102). To middle class taste their apartment would seem intolerably cluttered with knickknacks and decorations yet Robert still feels a need to fill what seems to him to be a glaringly empty space. It is as though a density which is chosen by Lucy and Robert becomes a way of negotiating and coping with a density that is imposed upon them: constructing a bottom-up density is a tactic of popular culture for "turning" the constraints of a top-down density. It is an instance of the creative use of the conditions of constraint.

Television is used to increase, enrich and further densify the texture. It is typically left on all the time, adding color, sound and action to apartment life: it is used to frame and cause conversations, to fill gaps and silences. It can provide both a means of entering and intensifying this dense everyday culture and a way of escaping it, for it is also used to dilute "the concentration of crowded families, whose members can tune into television, establish a well of privacy, and yet remain part of the domestic group" (102-3).

Television not only enriches and enters the interwoven texture of everyday life, it re-presents it, too. Programs like *Dallas*, with its "vivid historically interwoven concreteness" offered renters "the same kind of texture that is so valued on the street." The women in the apartments lived in and with *Dallas* over a number of years, growing to know each character in "painstaking detail." Williams concludes: "As renters texture an already dense domestic situation by weaving in more density, shows like these favorites are appropriate vehicles" (Williams, 1988, p. 106)

Leal (1990; Leal and Oliver, 1988) too, has shown how certain formations of the people (in her case first generation urbanized Brazilian peasants) weave a densely textured symbolic environment through which they live. She analyzes in detail one such environment, or rather a mini-environment or "entourage" constructed from objects placed around the TV set. Around the TV set were plastic flowers, a religious picture, a false gold vase, family photographs, a broken laboratory glass and an old broken radio. Williams finds the culture in the density itself, but Leal interprets this texture. Her analysis shows how these people live meaningfully within the contradictions between the city and the country, urban sophistication and rural peasantry, science and magic, the future and the past. In the suburbs they are placed on the spatial boundary between the city and the country, as first generation migrants they are on the equivalent historical boundary between the past and the future.

Their use of photographs was an instance of this cultural process. On the TV set were large pictures of dead or absent family members, typically ones left behind in the country, and stuck into their frames were small I.D. pictures of those who had moved to the city: The I.D. photos were not only signs of family, but also signs of modern, urban life. As Leal comments "The social system that broke these kinship webs is reproduced in the symbolic system within the photograph frames" (p. 23) and these lost kinship webs are reasserted, reformed through bricolage. So, too, the plastic flowers were considered more beautiful than natural ones because they bore meaning of the urban, the manufactured, the new; and also because they cost money. They were validated

by their origins in the "better" life the people hoped to find by their move to the city. Natural flowers, on the other hand, were from the life they were fleeing. Leal also shows how class specific these meanings are—in the middle-class homes, for instance, there was a reversal of values so that peasant art would be displayed as bearers of valid meanings of the country and an escape from the urban. In those homes, of course, plastic flowers would never raise their cheap, manufactured, urbanized heads. Her interpretation of this dense texture of objects continues, including the TV set which is seen as "a vehicle of a knowledgeable and modern speech" (p. 24). Her readings reveal a popular culture in process by which the people live within the larger social order not in a reactive, but a proactive way. The entourage of objects around the TV set comprises

a symbolic system, including an ethos of modernity, that is itself part of a larger symbolic universe that has as its principal focus of significance the city and industry. This system of meanings seeks to "conquer" the urban power space (that of capitalistic relations), while insistently trying to differentiate and delimit urban cultural space from the rural space that is still very close to the actors, by manipulating signs that are shared by their group as indicators of social prestige. (Leal, 1990, p. 25)

Studies such as Leal's and Williams's show how the material, densely lived culture of everyday life is a contradictory mixture of creativity and constraint. This is a way of embodying and living the contradictory relations between the dominant social order and the variety of subaltern formations within it. Williams comments somewhat sardonically that "A passion for texture is not always rewarded in American society, and more middle-class strategies for urban living aim at breadth instead" (1988, p. 48). It is a comment that I wish to extend to cover academic theory as part of middle-class strategies for living.

The social order constrains and oppresses the people, but at the same time offers them resources to fight against those constraints. The constraints are, in the first instance, material, economic ones which determine in an oppressive, disempowering way, the limits of the social experience of the poor. Oppression is always economic. Yet the everyday culture of the oppressed takes the signs of that which oppresses them and uses them for its own purposes. The signs of money are taken out of the economic system of the dominant and inserted into the culture of the subaltern and their social force is thus complicated. The plastic flowers are for Leal's newly suburbanized peasants, deeply contradictory. They have a mystique because of the "mystery" of their production (unlike natural flowers)—they are fetishes, syntheses of symbolic meanings, of modernity: but they are also commodity fetishes. They require money, another fetish, and transform that money into an object of cultural display. Real money is not an appropriate decoration or cultural object, but transformed money is; its transformation occurs not just in its form, coin to plastic flower, but in the social formation, theirs to ours. The commodity fetish is deeply conflicted: it bears the forces of both the power bloc and the people. It produces and reproduces the economic system, yet simultaneously can serve the symbolic interests of those subordinated by it. The plastic flowers, Leal argues, because they cannot be produced within the domestic space but must be bought, bring with them the "social legitimacy, prestige and power" that, in an urban capitalist society can most readily be gained, in however transformed a manner, from the order of oppression.

So, too, the accumulation of objects in Lucy and Robert's apartment is not a sign of their having bought into the system by accumulating a literal, if devalued, cultural capital. It is rather their way of filling their constrained lives with a variety of multiplicity of experiences that the more affluent can achieve by their greater mobility through physical and social space.

Of course the desire for the expectation of variety and richness of experience is a produce of capitalism, and serves to maintain the system—for such variety whether of objects or experience—must usually be bought and paid for. But producing that variety, richness, density is also the work of popular creativity; it is the people's art of making do with what they have (de Certeau, 1984), and what they have is almost exclusively what the social order that oppresses them offers them.

Many of Williams's subjects were African-Americans who had moved from rural North Carolina to Washington, D.C. and thus shared important social determinants with Leal's. It is not surprising then, that both Williams and Leal find traces of a rural folk culture of previous generations within the urban popular culture of contemporary capitalism. Our thinking about such a rural or folk culture should not be nostalgically romantic—it was a culture of deprivation, oppression, or slavery, which is why its popular creativities of making do with limited resources transfer so readily to contemporary conditions. The argument that some of those resources, at least, came from nature rather than the oppressor is hardly convincing—in both agrarian capitalism and feudalism nature was transformed into land owned by the elite, its resources had to be “poached”—a constant cultural and material activity of the oppressed which de Certeau (1984) uses as a metaphor for popular practices in general. The material and cultural resources were limited, they were the resources of the other, and they always worked, in part at least, to constrain or oppress. The “continuing interplay of constraint and creativity,” which Williams (1988, p. 47) identifies as characteristic of popular culture is a condition of oppression, and thus transfers readily from rural to urban, from a slave or serf-based rural capitalism to its urban industrial equivalent.

Williams describes how this creativity works in, for instance, the culture of collard greens—the fertilizing, nurturing, and harvesting of them in urban backyards, and the multitude of ways of chopping, cooking, seasoning, and serving them. Collard greens are used to negotiate the differences and similarities between Carolina and Washington, and also between individual creativities within a common set of constraints. Barbecue sauce is another, equally important, opportunity for popular creativity. Because the ingredients for the sauce, as the conditions for growing the greens, were different in Washington from Carolina, both greens and sauce were consciously used to make comparative sense of the difference: but the difference lay in the constraints, in the resources available, not in the creativity of their use.

Popular creativity is concretely contextual. It exists not as an abstract ability as the bourgeois habitus conceives of artistic creativity: it is a creativity of practice, a bricolage. It is a creativity which both produces objects such as quilts, diaries, or furniture arrangements but which is equally if not more productive in the practices of daily life, in the ways of dwelling, of walking, of making do. Objects are comparatively easy for the investigator to describe and transcribe from one habitus to another, but the specificities of their context and the practiced ways of living are much more resistant; they constitute a culture which is best experienced from the inside and difficult to study from without.

Ethnographers attempting to get access to this culture frequently come up against what Levine (1972, p. 140) calls “sacred inarticulateness,” by which he refers to people's inability to explain their most sacred institutions in an objective discourse: instead they resort to responses like “It's hard to explain this one, but if you were one of us and did it, then you would understand” (Levine, in Brett Williams, 1988, p. 104). Williams argues that this inarticulateness, this reluctance to transform a contextualized experience into decontextualized discourse, extends beyond the sacred to the mundane; *Dallas* fans constantly “explained” their experience of the program with remarks like “if you watch it, you'll see.”

As Bourdieu (1977) points out, practices can circulate and reproduce culture without their meanings passing through discourse or consciousness. He distinguishes between practice and discourse, and notes somewhat sadly that to study practice we need to bring it to the level of discourse, but in doing so we change its ontological status, for a defining feature of practice is that it is *not* discourse (pp. 110, 120). It is hard to find a final answer to this problem, and indeed there may not be one, but a partial solution may well involve a discursive and social flexibility, the development of the ability to experience as far as possible from the inside other peoples' ways of living that must be theorized from the outside. This may well require cultural theorists to follow the example of some feminists, for example, in using their personal experience of living and practicing culture as a key element in the production of a theoretical discourse and its more distanced and generalized explanations of the world.

It is not a coincidence that the devaluation of mundane culture in many academic theories goes hand in hand with the epistemological, methodological, and ethical problems of studying it, or even of describing it or identifying it as an object of study. A science of the particular is alien to our academic habitus. This problem is not confined to social and cultural theory, it is also addressed in contemporary cognitive theory. Like traditional cultural theory, cognitive psychology has tended to focus its attention upon generalizable laws that transcend the immediate contexts of their uses. Cognitive theory has tended to devalue the contextual in favor of the universal.

Jean Lave (1988), however, in her account of the Adult Math Project and subsequent investigations into mathematics in everyday life argues against these attempts to explain calculation as a universal, non-contextualized process:

"Cognition" observed in everyday practice is distributed—stretched over, not divided among—mind, body, activity and culturally organized settings. . . . Math "activity" (to propose a term for a distributed form of cognition) takes form differently in different situations. (p. 1)

The main thrust of Lave's rhetoric is to challenge traditional cognitive theory and its pedagogic application. She gives numerous examples from her own and from others' studies of successful contextualized math opposed to "failures" in the decontextualized math performed in the classroom. A young scorer for a local bowling team performed complex, rapid error-free calculations in practice, but when asked to perform what the researchers thought were the same cognitive operations out of context (i.e. in the classroom under test conditions) he was utterly unable to. Similarly, women in supermarkets never made a mistake when comparing comparative values of different-sized, differently priced cans that they held in their hands, but were far less accurate when asked to perform the same calculations out of their social context.

Lave cites an example of contextualized math. A women shopper was faced with the problem of how many apples to buy. She picked up the apples one at a time and put them into her cart as she verbalized her math processes to the researchers:

There's only about three or four [apples] at home, and I have four kids, so you figure at least two apiece in the next three days. These are the kind of things I have to resupply. I only have a certain amount of storage space in the refrigerator, so I can't load it up totally . . . Now that I'm home in the summertime, this is a good snack food. And I like an apple sometimes at lunchtime when I come home. (Lave, 1988, p. 2)

Lave comments that there are a number of acceptable solutions, 9, 13, 21. It also seems significant that the calculations are performed through the actions of picking up apples, the matching of the actions to the idea of her children eating them, and, I assume, a

visualization of the amount of space in her fridge at that time, not as an abstract capacity but as a concrete specificity. Lave observes that this woman is not interested in a generalizable answer that relates to the problem in terms of a universalized criterion of right-wrong, but that problem and answer shaped each other in action in a specific setting. In this material setting the shopper's cognitive processes are part of her physical relationship with the goods on display. The supermarket is a densely woven texture of commodity information and display, but through her routine practices the experienced shopper transforms information overload into an information-specific setting. As she selects the commodities she wants, so she selects the information she wants. Her selections from *their* repertoire constitutes her setting which is both produced by her cognitive processes and plays a part in producing them. The "setting" is a coming together of the material specificity of the context and the mental processes by which that context is lived.

Lave's concept of the setting reminds us, in many respects of Bourdieu's habitus. Settings are constructed within the larger arenas which are the products of the social order. The supermarket is an arena full of the goods and information produced by the political economy of capitalism, but within it, shoppers construct for the period and purposes of shopping their own settings. A setting is, in Lave's definition, a "repeatedly experienced, personally ordered and edited version of the arena" (p. 151).

A setting is generated out of the practice of grocery shopping but at the same time generates that practice:

[A setting's] articulatory nature is to be stressed; a setting is not simple a mental map in the mind of the shopper. Instead it has simultaneously an independent, physical character and a potential for realization only in relation to shoppers' activity. (Lave, 1988, p. 152-53)

The setting-arena relationship also relates to the difference between place and space as theorized by de Certeau (1984). For him place is an ordered structure provided by the dominant order through which its power to organize and control is exerted. It is often physical. So cities are places built to organize and control the lives and movements of their "city subjects" in the interests of the dominant. So, too, supermarkets, apartment blocks, and universities are places. But within and against them, the various formations of the people construct their spaces by the practices of living. So renters make the apartment, the place of the landlord, into their space by the practices of living; the textures of objects, relationships, and behaviors with which they occupy and possess it for the period of their renting. Space is practiced place, and space is produced by the creativity of the people using the resources of the other. De Certeau stresses the political conflict involved, the confrontation of opposing social interests that is central to the construction of space out of place. Lave focuses more on the functional creativity of the activities involved in constructing a setting out of an arena. But her argument shows that a setting is a material and cognitive space where the inhabitant or shopper is in control, is able to cope successfully.

The construction, occupation, and ownership of one's own space/setting within their place/arena, the weaving of one's own richly textured life within the constraints of economic deprivation and oppression, are not just ways of controlling some of the conditions of social existence; they are also ways of constructing, and therefore exerting some control over, social identities and social relations. The practices of everyday life within and against the determinate conditions of the social order construct the identities of difference of the social actors amongst the various formations of the subaltern.

Theories of subjectivity, even when elaborated into ones of split or nomadic subjectivities, still stress the top-down construction of social identity or social consciousness.

Theories of split or multiple subjectivity, in particular, try to encompass the contradictions that produce differences, but these contradictions are traced back to the complex elaborations of late capitalist societies: splits in subjectivities are produced by splits in the system. Theories of the nomadic subject so move more towards the idea of social agents who exert some control over their trajectories through the social space, but their emphasis is still more upon the determining, if loosely determining, structures through which they move, rather than the practices by which those movements are put in effect and made material.

I want to help develop a cultural theory that can both account for and validate popular social difference, for it is in these differences that we find what the people bring to the social order. In promoting this perspective, I am not devaluing those studies which focus on the pervasive and determining effectivities of the power bloc, but I am asserting that accounts of the social and cultural systems which neglect the positive input of the people are not yet complete. The differences that I call popular are produced by and for the various formations of the people: they oppose and disrupt the organized disciplined individualities produced by the mechanisms of surveillance, examination, and information which Foucault has shown are the technologies of the mechanism of power. Popular differences exceed the differences required by elaborated white patriarchal capitalism. They are bottom-up differences which are socially and historically specific, so they cannot be explained by psychologically based theories of individual difference, nor by idealist visions of free will. Popular differences are not the product of biological individualism nor of any ultimate freedom of the human spirit. The embodied, concrete, context-specific culture of everyday life is the terrain in which these differences are practiced, and the practice is not just a performance of difference, but producer of it.

The Body of Difference

Foucault argues that the mechanisms which organize us into the disciplined subjects required by capitalism work ultimately through the body. He shares with ideology theorists the attempt to account for the crucial social paradox of our epoch—that our highly elaborated social system of late capitalism is at once deeply riven with inequalities and conflicts of interest yet still manages to operate smoothly enough to avoid the crises of antagonism that might spark revolution. He differs from them in disarticulating power and its attendant disciplinary mechanisms from a direct correlation with the class system, and in focusing less upon the forces that produce subjects in ideology, than upon the micro-technologies of power which produce, organize, and control social differences.

Within his enterprise the body replaces the subject. It is through the body and its behaviors that medicine, psychiatry, and the law define and impose our social norms and work to cure or punish those that exceed them. Within these norms the organization of bodily behavior in space and time forms the basis of the social order. For the system to work, we must occupy certain “work stations” at certain times in the office or factory, the classroom or family home, the shopping mall or holiday beach. These “work stations” must be individualized so that any *body* not occupying them properly can be identified and disciplined. Similarly, every *body's* individual history, his or her accumulation of behaviors, is recorded and rated in school records and grade sheets, work records, credit ratings, criminal records, driving records—our society works on a highly elaborated system of surveying, and recording, ranking, and individuating our everyday behaviors. Individuality of this sort is a top-down product: individuals are differentiated according to the demands of the system, and individuation becomes a disciplinary mechanism. Its technologies of differentiation do not measure individual differences that pre-exist them,

but actively produce those differences as part of the operation of its power. This continuous process of individuation is power-in-practice, is discipline-in-practice. It is not the power of one class over another, nor the discipline of officers over subalterns; it is a social technology of control that organizes the behaviors of everyone within it, the big cogs as much as the little cogs. The social order, as Foucault analyzes it, depends upon the control of people's bodies and behaviors: it couldn't give a damn about their subjectivities.

The body and its specific behavior is where the power system stops being abstract and becomes material. The body is where it succeeds or fails, where it is acceded to or struggled against. The struggle for control, top-down vs. bottom-up, is waged on the material terrain of the body and its immediate context.

The culture of everyday life is a culture of concrete practices which embody and perform differences. These embodied differences are a site of struggle between the measured individuations that constitute social discipline, and the popularity-produced differences that fill and extend the spaces and power of the people.

The body enters into immediate, performed relationship with the different settings or spaces it inhabits. The shopper who picks up the apples as she calculates the relationship between the number of her kids, the days till the next shopping trip, and the room in her refrigerator is not performing an abstract calculation that any *body* could but is living a concrete relationship specific to her and thus different from every *body* else's. So, too, the memorabilia that fill Lucy and Robert's apartment are not commodities that any *body* could have bought; they are embodiments of unique, personal histories that are different from every *body* else's, and they are part of the texture of everyday culture *only* because they carry this difference, because they bring the absent but unique past into the concreteness of the present where it is apprehensible by the senses of the body.

My argument's focus upon the particularity of the body and its setting does not mean that I wish to ignore or marginalize the relationship of the body of the person to the body politic, the social body. For the body is necessarily a socially situated body. Our bodies' behaviors in time and space, our practices of habitation, extend the body into the habitat and relate it to other similarly but differently habituated bodies. In this body-habitat, social space becomes geographical place, structural social relations become lived personal relationships. The body-habitat is the materializing process of habitus not a subset of it, but an embodying performance of it. The body-habitat incarnates the habitus; the habitus informs the body-habitat, and, at the same time, inscribes the larger social order into its incarnated, practiced forms. This relationship of the concrete body-habitat through the habitus to the historical social order is a synecdochal, contingent one, not a metaphorical, transformed one.

The body in this account differs theoretically though not politically from Bakhtin's account of the relationship between the body politic, the body of the people, and the licensed, excessive bodies, the grotesque bodies of carnival. For Bakhtin, the relationship between the carnivalesque bodies and the body politic is one of metaphoric transformation: the social antagonisms in the body politic are given expressive, material form in the inversions and disorder of bodies in the carnival. For him, the body becomes the expressive site of the life of the people only at moments when the oppressive order is transformed into a liberatory disorder. These moments are historically produced by the differences within the body politic between the official order and the life of the people, so the carnival body is the materialization of social difference: but the carnival body is a transformation of the mundane body. The theory I am exploring proposes the mundane

body as the synecdochal embodiment of the social order, and therefore of the social differences within that order.

Without social difference there can be no social change. The control of social difference is therefore always a strategic objective of the power bloc. A progressive theory of social difference needs to include, but must go beyond, the analysis of differences produced and controlled by the dominant social order.

I am turned, then, towards an attempt to account for the origin of progressive or popular social difference in the inescapable differences of the body's physical, geographical, and historical specificities. The fact that we have different bodies, and that no two of those bodies can occupy the same place at the same time seems a reasonable starting point. But the body, its geography and history, are not empiricist facts in a Newtonian nature. Their natural essences are semiotically inert: they become epistemologically interesting only when they enter a social order, for only then do their differences become structured rather than essential; only a social order, therefore, can make differences signify. The concrete practices of everyday life are the insertion of the body into the social order, and, de Certeau would argue, the inscription of the social order upon that body.

It is here that I find Bourdieu's theory of the habitus most helpful even if I push it somewhat further than he does. The habitus is located within a social space which has both spatial and temporal dimensions; the spatial dimension models the social space as a dynamic relationship among the major determining forces within our social order—economic, class, education, culture—and their materialization in the behavior, tastes, and dispositions of those who, because of their differential positioning within the social space, embody and enact those forces differently. The temporal dimension is where we can trace the trajectories by which social formations or individuals within them, change their geographical positioning through historical movements.

The theory of the habitus collapses many of our conventional distinctions between the individual and the social, between the interior and the exterior, between the micro and the macro, between practices and structures, between time and place. The habitus is not just a pre-given environment into which we are born, it lives in us just as much as we live in it, we embody it just as it informs us. It admits of no categorical distinctions between the inhabitants, the habitat, and the practices of habitation.

Similarly, the habitus does not relate to the social space as does a social category—class, gender, race, age, or whatever. A habitus is not distinguished from others by a categorical boundary; rather, it is a conjunctural process by which we experience and enact the forces that form (and potentially transform) the social space and the locatable practices of habitation within it. It is a process with historical and social specificity, not a generalized category. But because the habitus disallows traditional categorical distinctions does not mean that its conceptual movement is towards a polymorphous homogeneity: far from it. The whole thrust of Bourdieu's work shows that the habitus is a factor of social difference. The "habitus" offers a theoretical framework within which physical difference and social difference can be related contingently, not metaphorically, and within which social processes can be analyzed in terms of concrete practices intersecting with the structuring forces of a particular social order. Because the habitus is not circumscribed by categorical boundaries it admits of greater mobility than Bourdieu himself gives it credit for. His theory focuses on the homogenizing factors that enable him to specify more precisely where each habitus is centered in the map of social space; the corollary of this is that he tends to ignore the contradictory forces that make it difficult for some people to "settle" comfortably and make one habituated position their home. All of us, I believe, experience enough of the contradictory forces of elaborated

capitalist societies to have developed a degree of familiarity with more than one position in the social space. And some, particularly those who experience most acutely the crucial contradictions that are often set up when class, gender, and race intersect, can have multiple "homes" or habitats, often quite distant from each other. The habitus, then, describes the ways of living within a social space rather than its inhabitants, and though these ways of living are constitutive of social identity they do not constitute it totally.

As I argued at the start of this paper, most academics are most comfortable in the same region in the map of social space, that of high education, relatively high-class, high-cultural, but low economic capital, most of it acquired rather than inherited. The habitus of this position disposes our habits of thought towards the generalizable and abstract; the equivalent disposition in the academic sphere to that which validates aesthetic distance in the sphere of art. We are habituatedly disposed to find the greatest significance, as the greatest beauty, in structures that seek to explain the concrete by distancing themselves from it. We therefore, as historical products, find a science of the particular particularly difficult to envisage.

Academic theory, no less than cultural taste, is produced within and for a habitus in order to draw social distinction between it and other, differently located, habituses. From this point of view, we can usefully extend the politics of Jean Lave's work on cognition in practice. Her rhetoric is intended to challenge first the traditional orthodoxy of cognitive psychology and its universalizing tendency, and then to challenge its adoption by the educational system so that the universalized "laws" of arithmetic are used to make and measure individuated differences of mathematical competence. These laws, however, are the product of a particular academic habitus—ours—which not only produces them, but universalizes them in a way that obscures their social production—just as the traditional theory of aesthetics universalizes and obscures its own social and historical specificity. It is more useful, then, to situate her argument more broadly and to see it as not just a marshalling of counter-evidence that orthodox cognitive theory has failed to accommodate but as symptomatic of a larger problem within academia in general. Understanding the disposition or practices of habituses that are alien to our own faces us directly with the need to recognize the socially produced dimensions of our habits of thinking. I believe that the theoretical and empirical exploration of the relationships between practice, the body, and place will prove to be one of the more fruitful directions that the field will take. In taking this direction, though, I hope that cultural studies never loses its political edge.

Politics have never been far below the surface in my attempt to think critically about the relationships between dominant and subordinated habituses in cultural theory. I hope we can narrow the gap and increase the travel between them because by doing so I believe we can help change the relationship between the academy and other social formations, in particular those of the subordinate. Many of those living within such subordinated formations find little pertinence between the conditions of their everyday lives and academic ways of explaining the world. It is in none of our interests to allow this gap to grow any wider, particularly when we consider that many of the most effective recent movements for social change have involved allegiances between universities and members of repressed or subordinated social formations.

Cultural studies has always been concerned to examine critically and to restructure the relationship between dominant and subordinated cultures; it has always been concerned to interrogate the relationship between the academy and the rest of the social order, and I hope that the development whose outline is sketched in this paper will offer one way of continuing these traditions. Feminism, for example, has achieved much in making us recognize how patriarchy has shaped and informed what once appeared

to be "disinterested" academic thought. Similarly, those working in the cultural politics of ethnicity are exposing the whiteness of traditional Western theory. These movements are so valuable because they do more than explain and validate the experiences of women and people of color within a white patriarchy; they also refuse to admit that their ways of knowing and experiencing the world are in any way subordinate or inferior: instead they position them as powerful challenges to the dominant epistemological frameworks. I think there are signs that these challenges are being reproduced along other axes of domination, particularly those of class, age, educational attainment, and cultural prestige.

In this paper I have focused on one formulation of such a challenge and the problems it poses. This conference invites us to peer into the future of cultural studies, and one direction that I hope the field will continue in, and one that I intend to contribute to, is the development of ways of theorizing culture that grant the concrete practices of subordinated ways of living a degree of importance in theory which is the equivalent to that which they have in their own habitus, even though this is distanced from, and socially subordinated to, the habitus whose discourses are necessary to produce theory. Such a cultural theory will, hopefully, not position itself too singularly and securely within the academic habitus, and will thus try to avoid the risk of implicitly granting its theoretical discourse a position of privilege which would reproduce in academic terms the process of subordination which is characteristic of the social order that we wish to criticize and change. Practice may have to be changed into discourse in order to be analyzed; specificities may have to be subjected to generalization for their significances to be understood and communicated, however incompletely: but, equally, practice should be allowed to expose the incompleteness of theory, to reveal the limits of its adequacy, and specificity should be able to assert the value of that which generalization overlooks or excludes.

It should be possible to grant to the dispositions, tastes, and ways of knowing that are germane to the habituses subordinated by our current social hierarchy a legitimacy equivalent to those of a more dominant habitus. In achieving this, we should be able to set up relatively more reciprocal relationships between the habituses involved so that the critical and explanatory perspective by which one views the other can work in a bottom-up direction as well as a top-down.

Such a way of theorizing culture may well produce insights into how social differences can be produced and maintained by the people in their own interests. This bottom-up production of difference is likely to be found, *inter alia*, in the specificities of everyday life, and I think there are three movements in cultural studies which are addressing this area with different but related foci of interest. These are the ethnography of contextualized cultural practices, the theorizations of the cultural politics of the body, and the development of a cultural geography through which to analyze the meanings of place and environment at a particular historical conjuncture. In following these through I hope we can minimize the problems of establishing productive, rather than reductive, relationships between practice and discourse, and between more dominant and more subordinated ways of living in and explaining our social world.

DISCUSSION: JOHN FISKE

MEAGHAN MORRIS: I have a real problem with the notion of the habitus and with your deployment of it, and with the dichotomies that flow from it: the abstract vs the concrete, the dominant vs the popular, the cool vs the warm (in Bourdieu). You began your talk with a description of the academic position and at the end of your talk you came back again to an academic position from which it's possible to talk about habituses

alien to us. Now, it seems to me that if I had a habitus—and I'm not sure that I do—it wouldn't be the kind of high-bourgeois grounded space that you described. My habitus would be much more like a cyberpunk novel, in which this room is not the grounding of a tradition but just another knot in the net, and after a while it's no different from some grubby little concrete bunker in Sydney. The people in these spaces, are not very different, the discussions are not very different. Saying that is not an occasion for cynicism about the situation of contemporary knowledge production, but rather a question about the politics of movement which are at stake in the current redeployment and redefinition of economic oppression. These Bourdieuan oppositions have been extensively criticized by de Certeau and by John Frow (in *Textual Practice*) as coming, in the end, from an impossible perspective which is that of the disciplinary self-affirmation of a sociological knowledge which can discriminate between the abstract and the concrete. When you use these oppositions (e.g. concrete/abstract), do you believe they have an ontological status of some kind? Do you think that they emerge from your history as an English academic, or do you have some kind of strategic purpose in mind in maintaining what seems to me an increasingly difficult rhetoric to generalize in the modern world? This seems particularly true in cultural studies where people whose everyday life is constructed by gender, racial, national, and in some cases economic marginalization from the wider society are funded to theorize their lived concrete specificity. I don't think we can maintain this distance which is specific to the old European bourgeois academic class.

FISKE: Yes, I do. I find Bourdieu's work very productive and useful provided that we don't buy into what I think he often invites us to, which is a fairly rigidly deterministic framework. It seems to me his own account of his own theories is much too Marxistly deterministic and doesn't allow enough room for ideas of the social agent having to negotiate these multiple contradictions that elaborated capitalism faces us with. So, when I push Bourdieu a bit further, what I want to do is to break his class determination, his strong polarity of thought between the bourgeois and the proletariat, and to increase the theoretical and conceptual opportunities for movement within the social space as he maps it.

And I think we need to understand that you and I inflect Bourdieu somewhat differently. Your example of a cyberpunk novel shows that you emphasize the cultural and textual dimension of habitus over the social and economic. I find his theory useful because it relates cultural and textual differences to social and economic ones and that is why, I think, I find him more useful than you do. You look for similarities, if I heard you correctly, between the people in this room and people in a concrete bunker in Sydney. I find Bourdieu useful because he helps me clarify the differences in a way that does not privilege those in this room.

Having said that, I think you have correctly pointed out that my paper may have done him a disservice. I did argue from a polarized position in a way that his map of social space does not require. The differences he charts are much more mobile and multiple than I may have implied in my paper. In particular, I think I underemphasized the space for movement both within the habitus and between habituses. We are agents active in the process of structuration, and while we are very much part of the product of our own social history, and his theory gives us some attempt to account for how we may not be totally imprisoned by that history. I find this bit of his work particularly useful, because it gives me a way of understanding, as I review my own academic development, why it is that I've not in the past been very good at seeing where my thinking has come from socially. I've not in the past been very good at seeing where my thinking has come from socially. I've tended to assume that in some way my theory has freed me from my social history, enabling me to produce frameworks of reference

and ways of thinking that I appear to have chosen and developed myself in some oddly asocial, ahistorical way. So Bourdieu's theory of the habitus gives me at least a purchase upon a way of trying to think through the production of my own thought: that is where I find Bourdieu most useful for myself. In terms of your larger question, I've got some real doubts about the traditional role of the intellectual as the provider of theory for the people that will enable the people to politicize their own experience in a way that they could not were the intellectual not to give them this new ability. It seems to me that historically we've not been very good at doing it, anyway, particularly in recent social conditions and formations. And that part of the reason we've not been good at it is because some intellectuals assume that when experience is not theorized, is not made explicitly political, the cause of this is an imagined deficiency in the people and their ways of knowing the world, a deficiency that in some way academic theory, academic intellect, can correct. I do have some real problems with this, particularly as we're getting more and more evidence to show that there are very real and valuable insights, ways of knowing, ways of thinking, in subordinate social formations. And I suppose that at the back of my mind, and sometimes at the front, is the belief that I have at least as much to learn from people who experience the world in ways that differ from my own as I have to teach them. In other words, I want to try to exploit the mobility in the habitus theory to see if I can't move my habitus closer to theirs, to narrow the gap between social differences without denying the validity and vitality of those differences. So what I'm trying to explore is how we, with our disposition towards discourse and our problem of understanding practice in concrete specificities, might be able to narrow the gap. I'm asking if it is possible to develop a two-way traffic between these different ways of experiencing social conditions and their different ways of knowing, different ways of thinking, different ways of producing culture. Because I value these differences, I think they're a source of terrific vitality in our culture, and may, under certain conditions, be a source of social change. But for us to be able to tap into this vitality, we have to try to understand it in its own terms, and in order to do that I believe we have to critically examine the limitations of our own socially produced thought processes.

PAULA TREICHLER: This is actually a mundane version of what Meaghan Morris just asked. Several years ago a colleague and I wrote a paper which required us to review the literature on actual everyday life in academic institutions. We were shocked at how pitiful and poverty-stricken this literature was. There are a lot of terrible quantitative studies about classrooms and such, but almost nothing interpretive of any depth. There are novels, like *The Mind-Body Problem*, that begin to get at the practices of academic life. There are conservative studies, like *The Academic Tribes*. There are hundreds of first-person testimonials from women, black people, gay people, postcolonial people, who are in academic institutions. But there are few real ethnographies of what universities are about or what academics do. And it seemed obvious to us that academics found the mundane activities of their own lives extremely uncomfortable and difficult to write about, perhaps ethically problematic, certainly uninteresting and unproductive. We also felt that a certain kind of leftist politics prevented academics from writing about themselves, as though it were too bourgeois, too professional, too narcissistic, too self-indulgent. Now aren't you reproducing this rather conventional received view of academic life? Isn't it possible that, like language, every habitus—including an academic habitus—is equally complex although maybe in different ways, and that the academy has as dense a culture of everyday life as that of the Brazilian peasants that you talked about? Isn't some of this already suggested in feminist work of the last twenty years?

FISKE: I think the point you make is an excellent one—there is an everyday life in academic institutions which, as you rightly point out, is disparaged by the lack of

attention paid to it. I hadn't thought of it in quite that way before, but it still seems to me that we can trace the dominant tendencies in the academic habitus at work in the way certain ways of living and knowing in academia are highly rewarded and encouraged while others are suppressed. If one implication of your question is that the study of the silenced, concrete ways of living in our own institutions is as valuable an object of study as those of other social formations, and that in addition, it is one which I am better equipped to carry out, then I take that very much to heart—it's something to think about. The question within your comment is a difficult one. I take your point that in describing the academic habitus in this way I run the risk of reproducing it, but I hope my description is critical enough to minimize that risk. My intention is certainly not to reproduce it, but rather to reveal and disqualify some of its most highly self-regarded attributes. Whether, in attempting to do this, I have oversimplified the academic habitus, homogenized it and minimized its internal contradictions, is, I think, the core of your question. I don't know. I don't know if a habitus can have the internal heterogeneity and complexity of a language, and thus be as productive or generative, but I think in Bourdieu's account of it, it does not. I think that in his model the contradictions and complexities arise between different positions in the map of social space. A habitus, for him, is relatively coherent and homogeneous. Those who are relatively immobile, who inhabit a limited terrain are thus likely to experience their world and themselves in relatively coherent and homogeneous ways: the more mobile, which means the less habituated, will experience more contradictions and complexities. This sort of generative complexity may well derive from the experience, or very often the necessity, of living in different social habitats and the habituses that go with them. What your question has made me think of, perhaps more explicitly than before, is that I may well have generalized too much from my own relative immobility and homogeneity to academia in general. I am very conscious that as a white educated male I live and work in institutions that reward precisely those social characteristics, and that therefore encourage the ways of thinking, writing, and knowing that go with them, epistemologies which both produce and are the products of the current academic habitus. The theory of the habitus helps me understand how such a social position is made interior and lived from the inside, not in terms of a subjectivity produced in domination, but through positionality within a hierarchized, but not monodimensional power structure. And, if I may continue in a confessional and self-reflexive mode for a moment, I am deeply aware that my own social trajectory has not required me to inhabit widely different terrains and thus to develop the mobility of habitus that I am trying to understand. But I offer this self-reflexivity in public only because the characteristics which dominate my habitus—whiteness, middle-classness, also dominate the academic habitus.

And this brings me to another point in your question, one that contains, I believe, an implicit rebuke which I accept. I agree with you that feminism has revealed and validated aspects of women's culture within and against patriarchy, which patriarchy systematically ignores or disparages. One aspect of this culture, not the only one by any means, but one important aspect, is that it is to be found in the specificities and practices of everyday life. My own thinking has been immensely influenced by this sort of feminist scholarship, which I hope I have acknowledged more fully in my other work than I did in this particular paper. What I did not do in this paper, and I should have done, is to make explicit in my theorizing and interpretation the fact that all three of my chosen paradigm case studies were produced by women, and that one of them was African-American, one Brazilian, and one of unspecified race. Gender and race are clearly pertinent here: I believe they not only struggle against the dominant tendencies of the academic habitus, but also produce knowledges that these dominant ways of knowing

overlook. I think these studies evidence a mobility between habituses which, if we understand it better, may lead us towards a synthesizing of theory and practice. You are quite right to make explicit, in a way that I did not, the contribution to this that can only come by knowledge crossing gender, race, and, I would add, class, differences. So, as I hear myself responding to your question, I think I am concluding that the habitus does not have the internal complexity and generativity of a language, but that mobility between or among habituses may.

BILL WARNER: What concerned me was the discrepancy or tension between what your talk sought to promote—valuing the concrete everyday life of the people in the hopes of eliding the distance between academia and academic space and the space of the people—and what your talk actually *does*, which is to produce a very abstract and ultimately aesthetic image of the life of the people. You start with a critique, by now very familiar, of a liberal humanist aesthetic stance which valorizes the aesthetic distance between the knower and the known. But in your representation of the culture of everyday life, you compose an aesthetic object with all of the classical elements of that composition. You have, for the frame, a neutral space behind everyday life which is the unspecified oppression of the people. Then you have the heroic artist, the people, where individual figures of the people are recruited to act the role of the artistic agent, the individual family that moves from North Carolina to Washington. Then you have certain specific vivid images, a flower on the television set, the apples carried into the cart by the canny English housewife. And finally you have a series of aesthetic judgments: unity, convergence, density, richness, and so on. My concern with this series of aesthetic judgments is that you are conferring upon these artists of everyday life, the people, the kind of freedom that is classically conferred upon the consumers of great art. So finally it seemed to me that you do exactly what you accuse postmodernism of doing: reducing experience to a series of images.

FISKE: In many ways of course you have reiterated the problem I was addressing in the paper, a problem which we inevitably face when we attempt to change the practices of others into our discourse—which we have to if we are to talk about them in our professional lives. I agree with you that I cannot talk about an entourage of objects around a television set without changing their ontological status by putting them into my discourse. But maybe my discourse does not have to erase their particularity entirely and does not have to set its own way of knowing as inherently superior, but tries to account for the value of concrete cultural practices in the process of putting them into discourse.

I disagree with you completely, however, in your two final points. The culture of everyday life is absolutely different from that of the heroic artist, precisely because everyone produces it, not the privileged artist. Robert and Lucy are significant because they are typical and ordinary rather than special. And far from conferring freedom upon these artists of everyday life, I emphasized how constrained they are and how this constraint makes aesthetic distance impossible.

Equally, these densely signifying objects and practices are very different from the fragmentary images of postmodernism. These practices and objects are not empty signifiers, they are not just a shiny surface, despite the shininess of many of their surfaces. They are deeply significant and firmly anchored in their users' ways of living: there is not infinite deferral or senselessness about them; they are coherent, signifying, and fixed in the particular culture of their practitioners.

HOMI BHABHA: I think, John, by setting up this habitus, that is you who are actually producing the distance between the habitus and everyday life. In a sense, in trying to

overcome the distance, you reproduce it. Perhaps there's another way of thinking that any institutional or pedagogical site, in constructing its own authority as a discourse, is always being internally distanced, is actually getting into a very chancy area where it is always going to be erased in some sense. So perhaps, instead of looking at it in a binary way, we should look (and I think Claude Lefort is quite interesting here) at the way that every pedagogical site is always having to become the exorbitant site of its own practice. Then we don't have a division between everyday life and the institution. We begin to see a much more hybrid, in-between area of contestation developing. Then questions of consensual culture and totalization don't always tend to be the horizons towards which we work. We are able then to construct differences—the differences of gender, of class, of race—in new, hybrid, unrecognizable, and perhaps even incommensurable figurations and prefigurations.

ROSALIND BRUNT: I disagree with your comment that the problem with Marxism, is that it wasn't good at looking at particularities and specificities of everyday life. I would like to reverse that and say that Marxism is only good as a practice if it does start by looking at the specificities and particularities of everyday life. But I think that it doesn't stop there. And, at the risk of being old fashioned in my Marxism, I would remind you of Lenin's description of Marxism as the science of the concrete against those who reified Marxism. He insisted that it was a concrete analysis of current situations. And nobody examined that better than Gramsci in looking at popular culture, at how common sense articulated with hegemony and so on. But Gramsci didn't just look at the particularities of popular culture; he looked at them precisely in order to move to macro-analysis and link up civil society with political society. What worries me is that if you stick with everyday life you can end up being purely descriptive and reifying theory, leaving it as a middle-class and academic practice in a way I think that Gramsci at least attempts to overcome. Thus although you constantly mentioned capitalism and patriarchy, you leave them inert and not dynamic.

FISKE: Certainly, the first part of that, Ros, I take as a well-deserved rebuke and a warning not to throw in a quick handwritten comment at the start of a paper. Of course, we should not think of Marxism, as you rightly point out, in a singular mode. There are as many different Marxisms as almost there are practitioners. And, yes, I agree with you entirely, that Gramsci's emphasis on historical specificity and the concrete is very productive. The Marxism I was referring to was more that Althusserian, Barthesian type that is much better at tracing the way that the flow of meanings and ideologies around society serves the interests of those with social power. The debate is within Marxism for sure, and certainly a very interesting one.

This leads me on to your other point, which is, I think part of an equally crucial debate over the relationship between the politics of everyday life and the politics of theory or between micro-practices and macro-political action. I think that most brands of Marxism, including many of the developments of Gramsci, though not Gramsci's work itself, have tended to underestimate the politics of everyday life, and, indeed have sometimes identified them as reactionary and have disqualified everyday life as a site of significant political activity at all. What would be more productive would be an attempt to find and build links between progressive elements at all levels of activity and culture, and this may involve favoring progressive change over radical or revolutionary change. I think James Scott's work on peasant culture may be helpful here. He starts his book on peasant culture in Malaysia with a broad survey of peasant rebellions throughout history and concludes that the peasant lot in general has not been improved by rebellion—actually the reverse for rebellion often calls down extremely repressive measures. What

has improved the lot of peasants is the everyday tactical dissembling, the working to find the weak spots in the system and to exploit them, the evasion of authority so as to create spaces for promoting, as far as practicable, their own interests; that is, he concludes it is the politics of concrete practice which have had greater practical effect than the politics of macro-social action. Now I'm not saying that the politics of everyday life are enough on their own, but I am saying that everyday life is political, that its politics can be and often are progressive (though not radical), and that political theorists on the left have not been very good at understanding these politics nor at tapping into them.

ELSPETH PROBYN: I'd just like to remind you that there are also questions of actual, real danger to people, to women who walk on the street. And I would also like to recall at this moment, in the United States, in Canada, and in Britain, we have a growing popular discourse on the home, women returning to the home, the new traditionalism, the new family. And this is not about genders; this is *one* gender that is being representationally repositioned in the home with all the ideological problems that poses, as well as the problems of the violence that occurs to women in the house.

BELL HOOKS: I am frustrated by the binary opposition you make between the intellectual and the underclass, because I feel myself to be both working in the underclass in many ways and an intellectual. So that I feel all the more like an outsider here, at this conference that seems to me to be so much a mirroring of the very kinds of hierarchies that terrorize and violate.

The problem is we can't even dialogue in this space. The challenge to us here is to try and disrupt and subvert and change that and not just to sit here and be passively terrorized. We need to actualize the politics that we are trying to evoke as being that radical moment in cultural studies.

LINDA CHARNES: I appreciate the cookery in your paper, your efforts to fold de Certeau and his theory of the practice of everyday life into Bourdieu. But I think that there's an important distinction that de Certeau himself makes between strategy and tactics. What distinguishes tactics from strategies is that tactics are the practices that are deployed by people who don't own property. They're what renters do when they operate in a space that is owned by somebody else. People who operate tactically cannot keep what they produce. What I want to ask you is, how is anything produced by a renter keepable? And what would keep your practice and project from simply becoming a more "caring" way to keep the disempowered in the position where they remain simply objects of study and can't keep what you produce for them through your theory of practices?

FISKE: Yes, that's a very good question. In other of my writings, I spent much more time on the de Certeauian difference between tactics and strategy than I did here. And I do agree, it's a big problem, that, as you say, what is won by tactics cannot be stored, cannot be accumulated, cannot be kept. The victories of tactics exist only in their moments of performance. That is similar to the problem I was trying to address in this paper: tactics are practice. It is not a comfortable problem to address, but at least I am sure that we should not take one obvious way out which is to say that because tactics or because the practices of culture don't produce anything that can be accumulated and stored, they are therefore inherently less valuable objects of study or less valuable social practices than those that accumulate. I definitely want to oppose that assumption, and I'm sure you do too. And I think we ought to make something explicit which de Certeau doesn't make quite explicit enough in his writing, but I think it's there at the back of it, and this is the idea that there is something that is kept, there is something that is maintained, and that is what he calls a popular intransigence, an ultimate refusal to be subjugated.

CHARNES: There's a difference between subverting and refusing to be subjugated and actually materially benefiting from one's own practices. Every guerrilla fighter knows that it's possible to destabilize the power plot, but that doesn't necessarily transfer any of that real power, real property, or real capital into the hands of the people.

FISKE: Again, I think there's a difference that we haven't gone very far in understanding in between micro-politics of everyday life and micro-politics at the social level. I think we've got some evidence at least that in micro-politics of everyday life some of the gains may be kept, some of the terrain may be held. At what stage and under what conditions this can be translated to macro-social politics, I certainly have no answer. I agree with you, it's a very important question. And it's certainly one I'm going to think a lot about in the future.

TARA MCPHERSON: First I wanted to say that I agree with your assessment of Constance Penley's paper yesterday, and that it did provide a movement in and out of fandom and that culture, and I'm not convinced that your work bridges that gap between formulations within the academy and those in the proletariat. It seems to me that you're talking less about formulations within the proletariat, than about simultaneously universal and isolated individuals. The examples you provided us with today—a single woman grocery shopping, and the textured knickknacks of one apartment—lack the tension which was crucial in the contributions by Constance Penley, Donna Haraway, or Andrew Ross. All of them seemed to be addressing social formations more than specific individuals, and all were incorporating theory, be it psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, or ecological, with the practices of the everyday. Your examples and your specificities seem to replace what you call the divine habitus of the academy with a single habitant, so that it is just an act of reversal of the grand narrative you accuse the academy of producing.

FISKE: I agree with you that the problem of how to deal with the individual is crucial in contemporary cultural theory and you may well be right in pointing out that I haven't theorized it adequately either today or in the rest of my work. But I must disagree with you when you suggest that I talk about simultaneously universal and isolated individuals: I most emphatically do not, and the fact that you think I do is, I suspect, symptomatic of part of the main argument of my paper today—that is our difficulty in understanding the significance of the particular. The densely textured apartment, packed with particular and singular meanings for its renters, was related to the dense texturing of their walks down the neighborhood main street and their preference for densely textured television programs. And this cultural pattern was shown to be characteristic of others living in similar conditions of material deprivation and was shown to be a direct response to those conditions. Similarly, the woman shopping for apples was an example of situated cognition that could also be found in the young scorer for the bowling team and in other women shoppers, but could *not* be found in academic classrooms or most traditional academic cognitive theory. It was a particular instance of a situated, not generalized, knowledge in practice, just as the apartment was an instance of situated, not textualized, culture in practice. The way I am trying to work with the concept of the individual is first of all not to use the word because it brings with it all the baggage of ahistoricism, free will, enlightenment rationalism and so on which I reject entirely.

I suppose there are two main dimensions to my current thinking about the individual, which I might call particularity and agency. The individual body has a particularity in space and time which does differentiate it from other bodies and their spaces and their times. The socio-historical conditions that are shared by members of similar social formations are experienced in one important way, not the only way but a very

important one, on the level of particularity: Particular experiences belonging to socially situated individuals are where macro-social conditions are made material, become part of people's lives and consciousness and where, in the culture of practice, they really start to *matter*. The dimension of people's lives and social identities which often seems most important to people themselves is this particularity. In arguing this I don't want to be seen to be arguing against theories which stress the importance of class consciousness, of solidarity, and so on, but I do want to argue against the possible inflections of those theories which discount the particular and which therefore, in my opinion, misstate the main problem. For I believe that our main problem is not how we can make individuals conscious of their class (or gender or ethnic) affiliations, but rather how we can understand the links between particular experiences of subordination and the more general and historical conditions which produce that subordination.

I also believe that we need to think of the person not as an individual, nor as a subject or embodied subjectivity, but as a socially interested agent. It seems to me that there are so many contradictory forces at work within the multiple elaborations of late capitalist societies that we have to develop the notion of a social agent who is capable of negotiating his or her particular trajectory through them. The contradictions in these forces are so many that we cannot be simply subject to them, for as soon as we become subject to one set of determination, we meet another set which clash with or deflect them. Complexly elaborated societies produce social agents, not social subjects. I call these agents "socially interested" because I believe that under certain conditions, though maybe not all the time, people can both be aware of their social interests and be capable of acting to promote them. Again, I don't want this agency to appear like a revised rationalism, for there is nothing ahistorical about it. It is a situated agency which is concerned to negotiate those specific conditions with which it is faced and in this negotiation to use the resources which those historical conditions have made available.

Throughout my more recent work I have given numerous examples of people exercising this agency: nowhere do I suggest that they are free-floating individuals, but I take pains to situate them as clearly as possible at this interface between macro-social forces and micro-histories and -experiences. They are not individuals in the way that you characterize them but neither are they embodied subjectivities; I believe the most productive way of thinking about them is as socially interested agents negotiating their particular trajectories through the historical conditions into which they were born.