But, you may say, what is so questionable about everyday life? Does not everyday life, quite by definition, consist of that which is not questioned? It is a natural disposition of life, an unthinking repetition of routines, sheltered by the ordinariness of it all. Everyday life does not involve wandering in the fields and thinking about unusual things; the everyday is about the dull manage of a house.1 Everyday life just is. Why ask questions?

The subject of “ordinary everyday life” — or a lack of it — seems quite popular in media discussions. Experts on children’s upbringing recommend ordinary everyday life as the cure for children’s and young people’s illfare; that is, sitting on the sofa and watching telly, cooking, grocery shopping. Some experts claim that people are unable to cope with ordinary everyday life, and seek all kinds of breaks and experiences to colour up the grayness of their ordinary lives, which in turn leads to divorces and neglected children, among other things. On the other hand, the everyday appears more abundant than before, while many previously festive and rare things have become everyday matters: shopping, travelling, exotic foods, drinking wine with a meal or having clothes made of a fabric that does not make you itchy are all now ordinary rather than a luxury. When I was a child, me and my brother were allowed to eat one fruit a day. Now I often throw plain and wilting fruit into the organic waste bin (although I remember the one fruit rule every time I do

1 In A Room of One’s Own Virginia Woolf talks about Lady Winnchilsea, Anne Finch, who was an English poet and a friend of Pope’s. Woolf should have liked to know more than what history had to offer about “this melancholy lady, who loved wandering in the fields and thinking unusual things and scorned, so unwisely, “the dull manage of a servile house”” (Woolf 1928/1963, 61–62).
this). Big things such as information technology, entertainment industry and media violence have also become more mundane.

The need to talk about an “ordinary everyday life”—even though mere “everyday” would be enough to convey ideas of ordinariness and habituality—tells us that everyday life is undergoing some changes. “Ordinary everyday” often refers to an everyday life which did, or is assumed to have existed “in the old days”. Ordinary everyday life may also at least implicitly assume that there be a woman who bakes the bread while her husband watches the telly or takes the children to their hobbies. It seems that the ordinary everyday is most commonly found attached to families and homes. It also appears easy for us to assume that single people have less everyday life, or at least ordinary everyday life, than families with children, who have—or at least should have—plenty of everyday life.

Everyday life becomes thematised in media discussions, but it has been a topic for scholarly interest as well. An important Anglo-American publishing house predicts that everyday life is quickly becoming a key concept for humanities and social sciences (see Gardiner 2000). This prediction seems quite likely, but we also know that the everyday has already previously been a key concept for scientific thought. I intend to begin this paper with an overview of what has been said about everyday life in the human sciences, particularly in feminist and sociological theory. Among other things, it turns out that the everyday and gender are in a multi-layered relationship. It is, therefore, a major issue in my paper to look for ways of thematising the everyday in a manner which questions the matters-of-course and naturalisations of “ordinary” everyday life while still maintaining a view into a deeply-rooted, embodied everyday practice. I am looking for a concept of the everyday that remains sensitive and critical to the gender-making practices of everyday life and yet, when necessary, retains a respect for gender-bound habitualities.

2 In this context I will give lesser attention to, for example, folklore studies which have extensively dealt with everyday life, its rituals and routines, and also thematised the everyday as people’s way of seeing, organising and living their lives (see, for example, Lönnqvist (ed.) 2000).
I am, at the same time, looking for an approach for a project that looks at the ways in which men and women live and make gender in everyday practices that are attuned to an illusion of equality, a liberal sexual ethic and normative practices of good parenthood. My empirical material consists of both spoken (interview) narratives and diary-form written everyday descriptions. With this practical orientation I try to arrive at a thematisation of ordinary life that would be helpful in the process whereby I as a researcher turn people’s everyday experience into research narrative. In this paper, however, I do not yet make use of the aforementioned materials, but hold to the theoretical explication. I take my examples from prose.

The everyday of polarities

The idea of everyday life was born with industrialisation and capitalism, when people began to cram into big cities with their modern conditions in order to work in the factories. This famous thesis by Henri Lefebvre challenges the idea of the naturalness of everyday life. That which we now call everyday life has undoubtedly existed previously as well, but the need to name and define it is a phenomenon emphasised by modernity. (Thus the everyday would have been “born”, interestingly enough, at the same time with sociology, detectives and flaneurs.) Here everyday life becomes a prime example of an unintellectual relationship with the surrounding world. Ordinary people who live everyday lives do not reflect upon their lives or see beyond the haze of the everyday world, unlike the observant intellectual. Everyday life often also becomes the “other” for various desirable and noble things, which can be viewed more clearly against the backdrop of the ordinary. The everyday is, furthermore, an antithesis for and a mirror of philosophical posture, critical reflection, speculation, and all things aesthetical. Catastrophe, battle, heroic or violent deeds or risk-taking are also unlike the everyday. (Felski 2000, 15-18). It is, therefore, both a product and a concept (Lefebvre 1987, 9): a way of life made possible by social conditions and a category constructed by an intellectual fantasy (Langbauer 1999, 5; Felski 2000, 16). An everyday that “just is” is paradoxically also a particular way of understanding life, giving meanings to actions and emotions, forming normative codes.
On the other hand, everyday life is very democratic in the sense that everybody has it – even philosophers, rock stars and top politicians. No cultural practice can escape the everyday: war, science, statesmanship and philosophy all have an everyday dimension, Lefebvre points out (according to Felski 2000, 28). This makes everyday life an amazing concept. It feels explanatory and uncomplicated, but the more one ponders upon it, the murkier and more undefined it becomes (Salmi 1991, 238; Felski 2000, 15). Holiday trips to the south, for example, are a prime example of “breaking away” from the everyday – or are they, after all, mere everyday matters when repeated several times a year? Does everyday begin where holiday ends? Or do they begin simultaneously? Every day is filled with little choices, says the teabag-label philosopher, while the sociologist claims that we now monitor ourselves routinely: we study our own everyday behaviour, its efficiency and ethicality; with constant reflection we wrap ourselves into a variety of narratives about good life (Giddens 1991). So what can we exclude from the scope of everyday life?

The question may ill-posed, but this is exactly the way in which people have often sought to conceptually grasp the everyday: with the logic of spheres. It is often thought that we have on the one hand, for example, the sphere of production and on the other hand the sphere of reproduction and consumption, i.e. of everyday life. Or that everyday life is more or less stationary, whereas the rest of life, like travelling or change, break the boundaries of the everyday sphere and move those who live in it away – so that they could again return to the (nuclear) family, the “haven in the heartless world” (Lasch 1977) or home, “which simply is there, obvious and familiar” (Bauman 1994).

Researchers, or at least social scientists, tend to think in abstractions, particularly through spheres which are their analytical tools. It is, however, worth noting that when analysing everyday life, thinking in terms of spheres may implicitly lead to locating, normatising and reducing everyday life. The matter-of-course location of everyday life is home. The heterosexual nuclear family is therefore considered to possess the greatest amount of ordinary everyday life. With reduction I refer to the fact that all too often we assume that
the “great”—and important—things are somewhere else than in everyday life. *Det lilla livet* consists of mattresses, oranges, comfortable living rooms and clean refrigerators (though Swedish mothers used these for modernising the society, according to Yvonne Hirdman’s thesis) (Anttonen 1994, 211).

The claim that the everyday is self-evidently located at home is questionable, too. Maurice Blanchot (1959/1987, 17) claims that if everyday life exists in the first place (for everyday “escapes” by definition), it is to be found in the streets! According to Naomi Schor (1922, 188), theories concerning the everyday are divided into two “camps”: the feminist or feminine, on the one hand, and the manly or masculine on the other. Schor says the manly version would seem to be dominant at the moment: the hero of everyday life is the flaneur of the streets, not the housewife. Ben Highmore (2002, 15) suggests that we might be dealing with two different orientations for the everyday, and two different modes of evaluating it. It seems to me that the home-based orientation into everyday life has been dominant in both sociology and women studies, but it is evident that the hero, at least for sociology, has been the flaneur (see also Jokinen and Veijola 1997).

One often hears people saying that instead of fighting over domestic tasks, they rather save their energy for something more important. Such significant matters may include unjust salaries or global economic problems. But is it that simple? The feminist “pioneer” of research on everyday life, Dorothy Smith (1987), proposed that it is important, sometimes even necessary, to study the “big life” through the ordinary life as lived by people. The problems of everyday life should be used as a basis for research: Smith says that sociology is thought out and evaluated through the values, culture and language of the dominant white heterosexual men. A sociology based on everyday life local practices would be able to offer more qualified research with a sensitivity to issues of power. If the sociology of work, for example, would take house work as its starting point, rather than the work/leisure –division, the life of mothers would become understandable instead of appearing bizarre (no spare time; no pay; no accumulating merit, after all one has to do it all over again the next day).
The philosophical view of Agnes Heller also regards everyday life as a separate ontological category; yet she distances herself from notions of the everyday as a private sphere of life or as a sphere of consumption. Everyday life is not a “thing” or object, but a very fundamental shared, modern life experience (Gardiner 2000, 132), which is unavoidably structured by routine, pragmatism and a lack of reflection (Julkunen 1979). According to Heller, the analysis of everyday life means exactly the reconstruction of these unavoidable structures. Everyday life can not, and should not be done away with, but if it becomes alienated, it is possible to get rid of the alienation. The alienation of everyday life or its root causes are not situated in the unavoidable structures of everyday life, but in the ways an individual has in his or her disposal for constructing the everyday within these structures. The analysis of everyday life is, therefore, the analysis of activity. (Julkunen 1979, 147; Salmi 1991, 243-245).

The sociological theories dealing with everyday life also have an undercurrent which views the everyday as an attitude rather than as a sphere or as activity. Everyday life is largely naturalised. Thus one does not question the constancy of the world or the validity of our experience; our ability to act in and with the world is a matter of fact (Schutz 1966, 257). All things ordinary are not, of course, coloured by this natural attitude, but it is a necessary interpretative resource for everyday activities, without which people simply do not get by (Heiskala 2000, 92). According to this phenomenological line of thought, there is something of the everyday in everything, it is carried along as the dimension of the ordinary or as performances of everyday life (Felski 2000, 27). Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman (1994) are interested in everyday knowledge and the way it is created: some things are obvious or natural to people with a certain cultural background, but to some extent what is considered obvious varies from one to culture to another. Thus it is interesting to study the way in which something becomes a shared matter of fact. The ethnomethodology of Harold Garfinkel (see Heritage 1996) and the discourse analysis inspired by it study everyday attitudes and rationalities in practice, for example in conversations held at the coffee table or at the doctor’s appointment (for example Tainio
2001; Sorjonen, Peräkylä and Eskola (eds.) 2001). These researchers, too, are interested in the ways that everyday life comes to existence (intersubjectively) as shared and meaningful; what is it that breaks up the everyday, does not follow the rules or disrupts the ordinary order of things, disturbs the everyday performance and attitude, breaks up the routine (Heritage 1996, 17; Ahponen 2001, 56-69). Those who study the natural attitude or shared everyday knowledge usually do not restrict everyday life into the private or domestic spheres, but rather do the opposite: they seem more interested in interaction that takes place in various public spheres, such as public transport, work places, bureaus, or on the streets.

It appears that research on everyday life has tended to regard the subject matter either as a sphere, thus following the movement of single or grouped individuals between the sphere of everyday life and other spheres, or as an attitude, whereby the potential of being everyday follows, as it were, the individual all the time, whether one moves about on one’s own or with others. Researchers’ notions concerning the degree of “vitality” or revolutionary capacity of everyday life also vary (see Gardiner 2000). Everyday life can be regarded as something that can almost be deducted or reasoned out of social structures; the everyday consists of a reproductive and alienating forced routine. But everyday life can also be invested with a quantity of potential for change; for change can only begin with the everyday. In the latter case, everyday life is a celebrated, significance-laden and indeed significance-reverting reserve, even a synonym for resistance and revolution. Such a thematisation, according to Felski (2000, 18), runs the danger of losing the essential ordinariness of everyday life.

Thinking about everyday life and change has been particularly important to feminist research, in many ways. First of all, the most celebrated feminist slogan, “personal is political”, refers to various everyday (female) experiences which, when politicised, can act as an incentive for improving the status of women. Secondly, everyday life weighs more heavily on women, as Lefebvre (1971, 73) noted: women are both the subjects and victims of everyday life. The everyday and women are often also coupled up at the level of
signification: the contempt directed at women and everyday matters often coincide (Julkunen 1986), and women can be likened to the everyday also in their corporality and primordiality. Women and everyday life are, as it were, closer to nature than men and for example travelling. Such reasoning has sometimes resulted in the assumption that women are unable to analyse everyday life: they are too close to it, drowned in its details and tedium; objects themselves and therefore lacking the objectivity required for evaluating it (for example Lefebvre 1971; see Langbauer 1999, 21). Then again, others have voiced the opposite belief, talking about women’s everyday phenomenology which strives to bring forth women’s everyday knowledge and to point out how this challenges the dominant modes of knowledge production (Ahponen 2001, 69-75; also Smith 1987, which however criticises the phenomenological approach for its high level of abstraction).

Thirdly, everyday life is connected with women and gender in general through a variety of equality issues. One often hears contemptuous remarks about feminists who direct too much attention to questions such as who does the dishes, i.e. are too concerned with evenly dividing up the housework (and consequently unable to see the “more important” social problems surrounding them). What is, however, at issue here is a much wider project, connected with the structures and hierarchies of everyday life as a whole. The egalitarian movement has voiced a demand for the equal division of all work, both everyday and non-everyday. Anna Rotkirch and J.P.Roos (1997, 7) have pointed out that such change, i.e. towards a more even division of labour, has been slow in the “far ends of society, where men have more to lose: at the top of the economy and in everyday housework”. The most ordinary housework, those small things in life like who does the dishes, are the most resistant to change, just like the elite wielding economical power.

Everyday life as spatiality, temporality and a way of being in the world

The most thorough of the theoretical studies on everyday life that I have managed to lay my hands on, one which also systematically addresses questions of gender, is Rita Felski’s long article “The Invention of Everyday Life” (2000). The article proposes that everyday
life would be most fruitfully conceptualised through the three dimensions of temporality, spatiality and modality. The temporality of everyday life would here be repetative, its spatiality connected with a sense of home, and its modality with habituality. Felski’s approach is theoretical and studies the subject in relation to the relevant history of thought. Her interest lies in the philosophical and sociological theoreticians of the everyday; by combining their strengths she creates her own conception of everyday life; she studies the hidden connections between the constructions of various thinkers.

For Felski, everyday life is characterised, above all, by its repetitive nature. The everyday is not particular or unique, but takes place day after day, with a cyclical rhythm. Felski takes the time to reflect on why the repetition of various everyday activities has so consistently been connected with women. She finds three connections: first of all, women are often considered to be closer to nature, particularly in relation to menstruation and pregnancy, which remind us that human beings still remain, to an extent, subject to nature. Secondly, women have simply been responsible for various reproductive, repetative activities such as cleaning, cooking and childcare. (Although a great amount of factory work is also repetative.) Thirdly, women are connected with repetition through consumption. Women are both the symbols and victims of consumer culture and mass production: mass production shapes femininity and women buy unnecessary things. These frightening images of repetition are particularly modern, Felski claims, for only modernity has turned the idea of always unquestioningly acting in the same manner into a sign of laziness, conservativeness or ill will. Before, it used to be a valued thing to do things as they had been done before (Felski 2000, 18-20).

According to Felski, it is unfruitful to regard repetition and creativity (or change) as the two extremes of a dichotomy. Rather, it is the relatively dull cycles of everyday life that makes inventiveness and creativity possible in the first place. “(R)epetition is not an anachronism in a world of constant flux, but an essential element of the experience of

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3 On the other hand, death and illness are also reminders of the power of nature, and they concern men, too, whereas it is possible to get rid of menstruation, and even pregnancies are not particularly “natural” anymore. Although it still remains impossible to create a human being without a woman’s uterus.
modernity. Rather than being the sign of a uniquely feminine relationship to time, it permeates the lives of men as well as women.” (Felski 2000, 22.)

The spatial dimension of everyday life, i.e. a sense of home, does not in Felski’s thinking simply refer to a home as a place, but also to home as a metaphor. Everyday life is like home to us. Everyday life exists outside the home as well: in the workplace, in public transport, in places of exercise, etc. And, furthermore, even home as a place is not without its contradictions: some of today’s technology acts to set the home apart from the rest of the world (most people have their own washing machines and a saunas; many people nowadays also have their own “entertainment centres”). On the other hand, (even the same) technology is capable of blurring the boundaries between home and the outside world, as easily evidenced by information technology. Work reaches home through the internet or a mobile phone; private matters are taken care of at work. Home and work may also switch places. According to a famous thesis by Arlie Russel Hochschild (1997), workplaces have become people’s foster homes and working-place communities have turned into families, while the things to be done at home are conceived as laborous tasks. Felski points out that the vocabulary of modernity is strikingly anti-domestic: change, movement and border-crossing are valued, while tedium and being stuck remain at home. Despite, or because of this, Felski holds on to the thought that the everydayness of everyday life appears exactly as a sense of home—but one must reconceive the meaning of home. Home means an active re-making of space. Even a routine is made, it does not just exist. A home is created out of conflicts and the use of power. (For example in Finland battles are fought over whether or not it is suitable for a representative of the established Lutheran church to bless the home of a non-heterosexual couple.)

Persistently holding on to the homeliness of everyday life is, for Felski, also a question of gender. For home unquestionably consists of gendered space. Women are seen almost as the embodiments of home. Not to mention that we all come from the female body. Feminists have sought to demystify this connection: home is not necessarily a motherly safe haven in a heartless world—especially for women, who are more likely to encounter
violence at home than out on the streets. Home is easily also a bourgeois, middle-class white metaphor. Felski, however, criticises theoreticians who have developed an anti-homely imagery of nomadism, travel and constant movement, pointing out that home does not necessarily stand in opposition to independence and self-definition, for it is the central space for women’s experience.

In a way the connection between the temporality of everyday life and its spatiality create, for Felski, the third dimension of the everyday, i.e. habituality. Habit does not merely express an act, but also an attitude: habits are often semiautomatic, absent-minded and consciously repeated activities. Our bodies move while our souls are elsewhere, although it is also possible to cultivate one’s habits. In any case, our habits shape us just as we shape our own habits—here Felski refers to Schutz’ natural attitude and Heller’s view, according to which it would be impossible for humans to survive without this unreflective principle. (Felski 2000, 26-29.)

Felski is sympathetic to the phenomenological approach: the everyday consists of a way of experiencing the world. Everyday life is the lived-through process of routinisation. It is a process whereby we conform to assumptions, activities and practices which appear obvious. Everyday life, as such, is neither revolutionary nor reactionary. It is time to “make peace” with the everyday and study it without demonising or idealising it. This would be particularly important for feminist research. (Felski 2000, 30-31.)

Felski’s way of outlining the everyday is sympathetic and breaks up many received notions: everyday life exists outside home as well, routine is more than a straightjacket. It also reveals the contradictions relating to home that exist within feminist research. Felski’s window into the habituality of everyday life also creates the possibility of understanding its corporeality, although this remains but an unexplored side track. The obvious social dimension of everyday life, which Heller (1984) defines as contact (and which Felski mentions), remains without further elaboration. And, furthermore, Felski touches upon the theme of change and its possibility, which is always important for feminist research,
in her discussion on habits, but that, too, would deserve some further reflection: what is the nature of everyday change, a change that is possible in everyday life?

Neither are the themes of routine, the sense of home and habituality completely foolproof, when one looks at them from the point of view offered by, for example, empirical research. For example, the notion of routine breaks into numerous directions when seen through the observations of both theoretical and empirical zeit-analyticians. I have already referred to Giddens, who claims that today people reflect themselves and their choices routinely. A reflectivity grown out of everyday life is one of our present-day cultural tendencies also according to Fornäs (1998). In their study of people’s concrete everyday life, Carol Smart and Bren Neale (1997, 162), for their part, note that parenting and spously seem routinely to disturb routine.

Besides routine, everyday time is also a question of rhythm. Thus Henri Lefebvre (2002) has suggested, that the time-space of everyday life should be observed by rhythm analysis: which rhythms are present in everyday life? This is a significant detail in the present day, for, as we know, many people now consider their lives (too) busy, daily activities included. How do the spatiality and temporality of everyday life stand in relation to one another? Everyday life often “comes to a halt” or “goes slowly” but does everyday space grow larger—or more localised—when everyday life goes empty? Or do both intensify and become empty simultaneously?

It also worries an empirical social researcher that if the everyday routines are automatic, unwitting and absent-minded, then how can one get information about them? When people talk about their everyday lives, they tend to pick out something which, by that very act, becomes significant. I shall try to overcome this dichotomy of conscious and not-so-conscious through the use of the phenomenological concept of corporeality.

In emphasising the home-likeness of everyday, Felski is (perhaps consciously) tendentious. She does not wish to be part of that group of feminist intellectuals who use
nomadism, travel and exile as auxiliaries to their thinking. But by underlining home and the home-likeness of everyday life, she also seems to get stuck into place, as it were, for even though domestic life conforms to certain body postures (sleeping, watching the tv, reading...), there is also a degree of movement involved even in the most everyday existence. As Marja-Liisa Honkasalo (1998) points out, space is not a container, it is something that is created through experience, through the process whereby a subject lives up space for itself.

Habit, too, is a somewhat problematic tool for structuring the everyday. Viewed from a certain perspective, social science observes habituality, in particular, as an intermediary category between action and structure (Heiskala 2000). Thus it is questionable, whether the concept of habit is good in characterising especially the everyday life.

The compulsion in everyday life

In her famous essay *Throwing Like A Girl* (1989), Iris Marion Young adopts from the phenomenology of body a thought according to which a subject’s relation to the world is defined by the way in which his or her body is directed at things and their surroundings in ordinary matters. A subject is born out of intentional stretching out into the world, by lived-through space relations, by moving in them. When life is “well”, a human being lives his or her body transcendentally and intentionally, creating space and being the original co-ordinate that combines various spatialities. But if a subject is constrained or mistreated, it regards itself as an object or views itself as if from the outside; inhabiting ready-made space. The subject moves and gestures clumsily or is huddled around itself.

In phenomenology of the body, the subject is always corporal and primarily living, not an object of life. This means simultaneously an affective and practical attitude, place, gesture and posture in the world, an active grip of things. (For example, Heinämaa 1996, Utriainen 1999.) It is significant for concrete research, that according to such a view the living body appears in movement and postures which are, to some extent, received from a world of
corporal subjects that precedes the body in question. “The preceding postures are layers of tradition, sedimentation, and imprints of the tradition in me, although in my experience they are as unquestioned as the nature.” (Utriainen 1999, 47.) The presence of the past can, therefore, be conceived as layers: some human ways of being in the world or being attached to the world have been reinforced so often, that they have developed a primary meaning (Reuter 1997, 158).

The tradition layered into everyday life has thus double strength, for everyday life in itself is the sedimentation of activities par excellence. In the everyday, we attach ourselves into the world “naturally”. Our everyday postures might not be conscious. Our bodies conform to their everyday rhythms almost casually, yet so very strictly. The everyday subject is created with the repetition, and slight modification of routinised “traditional postures”. This explains why changes in everyday life in particular can be so hard. Let me offer for example a classic case in which a woman refuses to leave even though the man is no good. In a collection of poems titled The love story of the century (1978) the author, Märta Tikkanen, describes life as the wife of a periodical drinker. The woman in the poems swears that unless this bout be the last ever, she will go; likewise if his meanness is directed at the children or if the husband starts lying again, if he turns on her again, or if the children can no longer take it. “And all this happened, and yet I did not leave.” (translated from Finnish)

The wife is unable to move, for her everyday body does not respond to reason (cf. Husso 2003). “We do not move apart / although we want to / for we still / cannot remain but / close to one another.” – Before I start to ponder, whether change is possible at all, let me give you another, perhaps less dramatic example of everyday life that is stuck, repeating its course over and over again.

Housework typically consists of repetative, perhaps tedious, yet often therapeutic management of everyday life. A routine also has the ability to save one’s strength: when one is in the habit of doing something, one also settles down to rest upon a layer of
tradition. One is careful not to bruise one’s body with strange postures. One eats at a certain time and sorts out clothes, does the ironing or the dishes, cleans up while deep in one’s thoughts, reads the paper with the morning coffee (with the paper always on the same angle against the thermos flask). But if everyday life is this wonderful, why is not everybody busy in washing and cleaning up?

Even the “energy-saving” habituality of everyday life is power-bound. Although everybody has everyday life, people are wound up in their everyday in different ways. For years the women’s rights movement has “fussed” over the infamous dish-washing, trying to point out that women do more everyday living—or do it more actively—than men do. Some researchers have even claimed that women thus use their power to ignore men. The humdrum everyday things and activities take place in such a small or insignificant way, that the idea of using power by either doing or not doing the dishes seems quite absurd. Yet according to the body-phenomenological view, even the smallest movement, the slightest gesture or the tiniest act of reaching out into the world are all significant. A subject who inhabits, constructs and lives up the everyday life also creates it into its own space, but at the same time it has to conform to the forms, patterns and given postures already present in the everyday. Therefore it makes sense to connect the humdrum of everyday life with the aforementioned rhythm analysis. The rhythms of everyday life make up a subjectively experienced pace. When the body is at ease with the routine, one feels “in time”.

In Foucaultian-Butlerian (for example, Foucault 1980; Butler 1990) terminology the same could be expressed as the birth of the subject which only comes about through participation in discursive everyday practises, which one can purposefully repeat in a different manner, but which already exist in everyday life. A particular detail of the everyday, say doing the dishes, thus both already exists and is invented through the event of actually beginning the dish-washing. In all likelihood there is no activity so insignificant in our culture, that its folds or layers would not be touched by the significations of sexual difference. Dish-washing is historically and culturally an activity that is reserved for
women (and possibly also one which empowers them), i.e. women’s “habitual” behaviour (cf. Jokinen and Veijola 2001, 18-31). It is also likely that even men will, in some sense, have to express an opinion concerning this convention when they start washing the dishes. In any case, the object of dish-washing, i.e. the dirty dishes, probably signifies slightly different things to women and men; the rest of the meaningful constructs related to dish-washing also offer different pathways and places to women and men. Therefore the “whoever has the time” attitude can be deceiving. After all, the one who has reached the present through the previous layers of similar activity is more than likely to “have the time”.

And when we start changing conventions, the subject is brought to question. In Juha Seppäla’s novel Sydänmaa (1994) the narrator is a divorced man who goes through his daily routines with great concentration. Meanwhile sitting on the sofa and sipping wine comes more naturally to his lady friend than housework. The narrator comments on this: “If I asked her particularly, she would come and help me.” On one particular Saturday afternoon he is gathering apples, conserving, freezing and making juice. He describes her way of being in the world thus: “She sat with a glass in her hand, hand bent and head slightly tipped, in an artistic pose, I thought.” In other words the woman is not altogether natural in her wine-sipper’s role. It is also worth noting that she does not move at all.

According to Iris Marion Young (1989), in our culture women’s movement is generally more ambivalent than that of men (see also Veijola 1992). Women’s experience of space is more threatening, which is realistic and has its roots in cultural history. Women’s basic bodily intentionality can also be “unfinished”; their movement has been limitid, and still is, for protective and controlling purposes. Thus it is common that women feel themselves objects in space rather than subjects who create and live up space. Women’s chances of being their own original co-ordinates are slimmer, their movement is more painful, as it were. The sequence from Seppäla’s novel, quoted above, illustrates this well: under the gaze of the narrating man, the woman moves “without concentration” and “in passing”
(although also “as experienced a thousand times before”), she is immobilised into an “artistic pose”, like a painting to be gazed at.

Everyday life is a practice, in which some practices are reinforced or marked as deviant. Despite all of its tedium and calmness, everyday life therefore is pregnant with vast potential for wielding power. A monotonous and small minor detail of life might well be the practice from which change—or unchange—springs forth. Since the traditions folded into the everyday—those that have become a “second nature” (Utriainen 1999, 47)—are just as much part of a subject as conscious reflection, for example making difficult decisions; and since one cannot exist without the other, all this can happen, and still the wife does not leave.

Change and imagination

The opening poem in Märta Tikkanen’s *Love story if a century* ends with: “And all this happened / yet I did not leave / Why?” Why does a wife and mother remain in a relationship which in all reason is hurtful; why is she unable to change her posture and movement in a decisive manner? And why, or how, does the hardened sediment hold the woman still? Why is the intention to leave never realised? Or why does the wife not have a fantasy in which she makes the man leave in order to inhabit her home in peace with her children?

An important, or even crucial condition for change is the ability to imagine it. According to Teresa de Lauretis’ reading of Freud, a fantasy is a fundamental mode of human action. A human being has the ability to imagine and transform images into a variety of products or proposals – including corporal ones. As a psychic mechanism, a fantasy molds and shapes our subjecthood by working social representations into subjective representations and presentations of the self. Social representations often take the form of public fantasies, dominant stories and storylines of cultural and popular imagination: in myths, sagas, sacred scriptures, epics and similar written, illustrated and oral narratives, which tell the
stories of nations, peoples and individuals. Where do they come from, what do they accomplish? Popular culture uses and reproduces the structures of public fantasies, as does the so-called psychoculture in offering us the causeways of good life.

Therefore we can (for a start) reply to the woman who did not leave, that she may have been without the public fantasies that a work-going mother of four children would have been able to shape into a private fantasy of leaving. When Tikkanen’s book was published, in the late 1970s, neither alcoholism or domestic violence were matters of public discussion, and in all likelihood the dominant public fantasy depicted their continuation as something that, to a great extent, the woman is responsible for. “The wife of an alcoholic / she is one / who is always the wrong way round / wherever she turns to.” Märta Tikkanen captures beautifully the corporality of this subject position.

Then again, even if the great narratives, popular culture and disposable media were filled with representations of different wives; strong and weak, happy and depressed, going and staying, subjected and headstrong, it would still not suffice to guarantee the creation of a private fantasy or a change in the pace of everyday life. A public fantasy must, in some way, be able to move or touch its “consumer”. Being touched can be emotional in nature, or be based on normative compulsion; in either case this encounter is largely not-too-conscious (Heiskala 2001). A public fantasy can appeal to one’s intellect or sense of pleasure just as well as one’s need to identify with or achieve distinction from something.

De Lauretis (1994, 147) reminds us that it is necessary make an analytical distinction between the subject of a fantasy and the social and political subject. A fantasy does not – despite its ability to move – necessary turn into conscious activity (Rotkirch 1999, 184), neither does the “game of semiosis” necessarily result in concrete activity, but rather the “facility to act, a directedness, a model for action or a set of expectations” (Koivunen 2000, 94). In other words, the process of changing everyday practices is far from swift, easy or rationally logical. Even the “good” or well-intentioned public fantasies do not turn into everyday movements just like that; neither do the bad models. On the other hand: change
becomes impossible without public and shared fantasies. Besides which, change—and its absence—usually also require social and political power behind it.

The sociality of everyday life: choirs and touching

The tangle of private and public fantasies, without which the everyday neither changes nor remains, requires for a binding agent not only an individual’s ability to imagine and move differently, but also forms of the social; shared meanings and institutions. Nobody, even after extreme individualisation, remains alone in his or her everyday containment, imagining and acting for oneself only. “(T)hen they sing three different songs at the same time”, Tikkanen’s poem says in reference to children’s activities, but the line is also an apt description of everyday human life in general. There are always some other singers with us, imaginary, media-transmitted or tradition-bound, who reside in the conscious and semi-conscious layers of our bodies. Sometimes the choir sing loudly in unison, sometimes in polyphony, still singing the same song, and sometimes there are several songs going on at the same time; for competition, too, is part of the bigger picture. Sociality, communality, touching (both with tenderness and with violence), the reproduction of life, closeness and loudness are all part of the everyday. (Whereas complete silence breaks it up.)

The social, i.e. touching and choral singing dimension of the everyday does not necessarily refer to families and relationships, although these are the images first brought to mind by everyday life. The everyday life of people who live on their own is also connected with meeting others: when the everyday consists of repetition and the daily folding up to the world, we are faced with other people and other forms of sociality through the traditions, compulsions habits and agreements we live by.

Lorraine Code (1994, ix-x) talks about rhetorical spaces that are fictive and whose silent, space-regulating imperatives structure and limit the “support of the choir”, i.e. assumptions of how well we are being heard, understood and taken seriously. It is a dream probably shared by all of us to have our everyday life backed up by a choir, which
would enable us to rest in the folds of the everyday and assume that we are being heard, understood and taken seriously. The everyday is contradictory in this sense as well: if the (usually silent) sediments of everyday life have shaped up into supports, routines can be protective; but if a routine is coercive in a damaging way, changing it can be much more difficult than changing some less routinised habit in life. The support of the choir – the dimension of being heard or getting silenced, that is – is, therefore, the dimension which organises the social in everyday life.

Everyday life with its routines is easily seen as a protection, particularly with reference to the sense of home in the everyday: I am at home in my everyday life, the choir sounds loud and clear, and the cruel world that demands reflection is far and away. But since the everyday, in practice, is like the stripes in an unsuccesfull marble cake, blending completely with the background – or like the petrol in roadside puddle, mixing with the water – one can easily assume that another important dimension of everyday sociality consists of maintaining borders. If the boundaries of a sense of home are found leaky, who stops the leaking? And who comes to rescue when the routines do not support? When nobody knows what to repeat? For one cannot effect change if one believes that change is repetition in a different manner…

The everyday does not survive for long unless maintained. For although homes themselves think, as Mary Douglas (1991) sees it, this is only for a time. The everyday, too, thinks by itself, but only for a time. The residue of the social, that which is left over from the aspirations of individual people, sustains the everyday for a while even after the aspirations have disappeared. Carpets, in other words, remain on the floor for some time even after people have ceased to keep them there. But the everyday also needs to be shaped, stretched into form.

Shaping up the everyday obviously consists of doing things and moving, not of stationary postures or attitudes. Thus I would replace modality in Felski’s scheme with movement, typically exemplified in the everyday by touching, choral singing and shaping. I would
move habituality (tapaisuus?) into another context and talk about male and female habituality. Female habituality is historically as well as culturally “suitable” for women, wether compulsory or natural, cultural or naturalised culture (Veijola and Jokinen 2001). Shaping up the everyday is, therefore, one of the female habitual practices. Shaping up the everyday is women’s habitual movement. It is all about a multi-layered “making” of power. She who makes sure that “everything runs smoothly”, also defines such smooth running as well as that which runs smoothly, but also presents a gift for those who participate in the smooth-running everyday life. On the other hand, this shaping can become a relatively heavy and tedious activity in the long run, particularly when combined with the housewife institution, which has made feminist theoreticians talk about housework even as the foundation for the subjection of women (see Jokinen and Veijola 2001, 81-116).

Is everyday life enough for an analytical concept?

While doing my expedition into the literature on everyday life I have often despaired and thought that the only worthwhile part in my article is its name: both conceptualising and and rethinking the everyday have often seemed a questionable enterprise, to say the least. At one stage, all that kept me going was my annoyance at the way “ordinary everyday” is continuously summoned up in a variety of debates on upbringing. But the everyday has a much more fundamental significance, particularly to feminist research: we often like to talk about significance of everyday practices in maintaining differences. Thus it makes sense to for a while focus attention on the meaning and implications of that everyday practice. In the end I was, once again, aided by Virginia Wollf, who wrote to Shelley: “There are some stories which have to be retold by each generation, not that we have anything new to add them, but because of some queer quality in which makes them not only Shelley’s story but our own” (Lee 1997, 769, 868). The theme of the everyday is a similar, overall narration, a story which is valuable enough that it has to be retold and re-invented over and over again. Following Rita Felski and other thinkers who have narrated the everyday (and gender, which is also an academic concept that is constantly re-
invented), it can, with respect to feminism and gender issues, be divided into the following analytical levels:

time: routine
space: sense of home
time-space: rhythm/pace
bodily movement: touching, choral singing and shaping

It is also possible to add a fifth level here: change, which crosscuts all the other levels. Change—and unchange—are closely connected to the use of power in everyday life and its definitions.

While reflecting on the everyday as a concept and as activity, Minna Salmi (1991, 248) points out: “(t)he conceptualisation of everyday life is not about finding the substance of a specific subject, but a search for that process which produces everyday life”. Likewise, the analytical levels I have sketched out above are not tools for recognising the everyday from the non-everyday, but constructs for dimensions which are of central importance for studying people’s everyday life—or for studying a totality of life from the perspective of the everyday. Thus routine can be a lack of reflectivity, but also, even simultaneously, a routinised reflectivity. A sense of home attaches everyday life into place, but exactly because of this quality it can also turn into exploitation or power struggle. Rhythm, for its part, varies from steady to hectic or even being out of time, from unaffected to compulsory. Pace refers to the degree of compulsion and possibilities experienced in the rhythm. One can touch with love or acceptance, but at the other extreme a touch can be violent and hurtful. Choral singing supports or ignores. Shaping means care-taking, but also use of power. Change cannot take place without the everyday, but neither is it born automatically within the everyday.

Regarding the matter from the viewpoint of the people living out the everyday, the situation can be illustrated by conceiving life as a stream, in which people swim with the current and against it, with a variety of styles and with varying bodily resources. Sometimes you float in quiet waters, sometimes you get caught in a rapid torrent, even
being pulled under is a possibility. The essential part in the flow of life are the everyday currents, which make their presence known in varying degrees.

The majority of the people swimming through their lives conceive each other either as men or as women. Gender is formed during the swimming, but from the point of view of individual life histories it seems natural and original. The interaction between the current of life and gender, for its part, affects our way of swimming—and the way in which the current continues. The meeting of gender, swimming and the stream takes its own particular shape in everyday currents. Such meeting-points can be approached in various ways: we can direct our attention to people’s ways of swimming and the meanings they allocate to their swimming; or the varieties of logics for everyday activity (see Sääskilahti 1999) we can perceive in the current (one can, for example, try to recognise differences in discursive practices). We can study the “semiotic whirls” in which public fantasies and their variations meet everyday lives. We can follow the stream to its roots, and see how it calls out and forces people to swim. We can evaluate the social formations made by the swimmers of everyday.

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