Introduction
This article explores the work of lists in mediating the materiality and complexity of everyday life. In contemporary cultural contexts the endless proliferation of listing forms and practices takes on a "self-reflexivity" that signals their functional and productive role in negotiating the everyday. Lists figure in vital ways within this context of consumer-based everyday life. At a general level, lists assist us in making sense of the activities, objects, and experiences that feed and constitute daily life. In this sense, the list is a crucial mediating device, a means of organising things and bringing the mundanities and the exigencies of the everyday under control.

The list categorises the ongoing chores of everyday life: organising and managing shopping, work, laundry, meetings, parking fines, and body management. (Crewe 33)

In relation to lifestyle consumption, lists and inventories constitute one key way in which "we attempt to organise and order consumption" (Crewe 29). In this sense, lists are, for Louise Crewe, important "scripting devices that help us to manage the mundanity and weightiness of daily life" (Crewe 29). The use of the phrase "scripting device" is important here insofar as lists are understood to serve as "tools for regulating and disciplining the consuming body" (idem). Lists, as expressions of self-identity and posture, are used to "script" consumer culture and to foster a sense of identity and performance. (Crewe 33).

In developing and illustrating these ideas, Crewe draws on Bill Keaggy's found shopping lists project. Originally a blog, and subsequently a book entitled Milk Eggs Vodka, Keaggy gathers (and offers humorous commentary on) a wide array of discarded shopping lists that range from the mundane, to the bizarre, to the unexpected, each in their own way, surprisingly rich and revealing of the scribes who penned them. Individually, the lists relay, through object names, places, actions, and prompts, the mundane landscape of everyday consumption. For example:

Zip lock
Ice
Beer
Fruit (Keaggy 42)

Sunglasses
Shoes
Beer
$ Food (Keaggy 205)

Keaggy's collection comes to life, however, through his own careful organisation of these personal fragments into meaningful categories delimited by various playful and humorous characteristics. This listing of lists performs a certain transformation that works only in accumulation, in the book's organisation, and through Keaggy's humorous annotations. That is, Keaggy's deliberate organisation of the lists into categories that highlight certain features over others, and his own annotations, introduces an element of invention and play, and delivers up many unexpected insights into their anonymous compilers' lives. This dual process of utilising the list form as a creative and a critical tool for understanding the everyday also lies at the heart of Georges Peres's

The Everyday Work of Lists
Rowan Wilken, Anthony McCasker

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Georges Perec: Towards an Invent-ory of Everyday Life

The work of the French experimental writer Georges Perec is particularly instructive in understanding the generative potential of the act of listing. Perec was especially attuned to the effectiveness and significance of lists in revealing what is important in the mundane and to take stock of what he calls the "infra-ordinary" as opposed to the "extraordinary and exotic." As can be detailed below, Perec's creative recuperation of the list form as a textual device and critical tool leads us to a fuller appreciation of how, in Crewe's words, "the most mundane, ordinary, invisible, and seemingly uninteresting things can be as significant and revealing as the most dramatic" (44).

Across Perec's diverse literary output, lists figure repeatedly in ways that speak directly to their ability to shepherd light on the inner workings of the everyday—their ability to make the familiar strange (Highmore 12)—and to reveal the entangled interactions between everyday consumption and personal identity. It is in this second sense that lists operate on the level of the "extraordinary and exotic." A Story of the Sixties (Les Choses, 1965), a book that the French philosopher Alain Badiou (20, note 1) describes as a "rigorous literary version of the Marxian theme of alienation—especially the prevalence of things over existence." This is clearly seen in the endeavours of Sylvie and Stéphane—a young Parisian couple who, in bourgeois terms, attempt to impose their social position in part through the capital resources they view as invested in consumer objects, and in the "things" that they acquire and desire. Perec's telling of this narrative is heavily peppered with objects of consumption and, sometimes, lists of bizarre details that come together to create an almost Kafkaesque sense of everyday reality.


References

Howard Becker has offered a challenging, though also somewhat ambivalent, critique of Perec's "sociological" method in these and other texts. Contrasting with the work that Perec described as "an anthropology of everyday life," Becker questions Perec's detailed listing of objects, people, events, and memories towards a more transformative or analytical discursive practice. In this sense, "collecting" is a way of life. Perec's lists thus serve as a series of units, "collected by a conceptual principle" (Belknap 2, 3), to a more transformative or analytical discursive practice. In this sense, lists are complex devices. Perec was especially attuned to the layers of complexity that our everyday activities and spaces, ultimately offer a productive means by which to understand, and catalogue, the everyday.

In his book Les Choses (1965), a book which comprised a series of personal essays, Perec's creative recuperation of the list form as a textual device and critical tool leads us to a fuller understanding of the everyday. In this sense lists are complex devices. Perec was especially attuned to the layers of complexity that our everyday activities and spaces, ultimately offer a productive means by which to understand, and catalogue, the everyday.

In this way, Perec's use of lists (and various forms of categorisation) can be understood as a critique of the very possibility of stable method applied to classificatory ordering systems. In its place he promotes a set of practices that are oriented towards, and appropriate to, investigating the everyday, rather than establishing scientific universals. At points in his work Perec expresses discomfort or even anxiety in taking the act of classification as a "method." He begins his essay "Think/Classify," for instance, by lambasting the "discursive deficiencies" of his own use of classification in grasping the "complexities of what we are." He then launches into a critique of the "thinkable and the classifiable into question" (189). And, yet, the act of listing, situated as it is for Perec firmly within the material contexts of particular activities and spaces, ultimately offers a productive means by which to understand, and catalogue, the everyday.

Conclusion

In this paper we have examined the everyday work of lists and the functions that they serve in mediating the materiality and complexity of everyday life. In the first section of the paper, following Crewe, we explored the functions of lists as scripting devices in simultaneously "disciplining" us as consumers and as a means of controlling the everyday in ways that also feed our self-identity. In this sense lists are complex devices. Perec was especially attuned to their ability to attend our engagement with lists. In particular, as we explored in the second part of the paper, Perec saw lists as a critical tool for understanding the everyday also lies at the heart of Georges Perec's literary and sociological project.

In setting out the importance of his own "project," and the need to question the habitual, Perec provides a set of instructions (his "pedagogical strategy")—Adair (177), presented as an approach (if not a method), and which signals his desire to critique the traditions of social science as a method of material and social ordering and analysis. Perec's appropriation of this approach, this "pedagogic strategy," also works as a provocation, as a "project" that others might adopt. It prompts his readers to "make an inventory of your pockets, your bag. Ask yourself about the provenance, the use, what will become of each of the objects you take for granted that is to say that this is a challenge that was built upon in different ways by a number of writers inspired by the esprit of Perec's approach to the everyday, especially also with "a wider cultural shift from systems and structures to practices and performances" (Sherrington 292). Sherrington, for instance, traces the "redirection of ethnographic scrutiny from the far to the near" in the work of Augé, Emaux, Maspero and Réda amongst others (292-359). Perec's lists thus serve as a series of provocations which still hold critical purchase, and the full implications of which are still to be realised.

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