

Performing Culture



John Tulloch

PERFORMING CULTURE

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Stories of Expertise and the Everyday

John Tulloch



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[T]he metaphor of performativity has emerged to focus attention on the subject's (compulsory) performance of gender and the possibilities for performing gender differently. . . . The source of textual meaning has been relocated in negotiations between readers, writers and texts. That has necessitated a theorisation of the subjects who read and write, first a deconstruction of the humanist knowing subject . . . then a gendering and sexing of the subject, and finally a recognition of the importance of her colour. . . . It is now both a feminist and a poststructuralist/postmodernist catchcry, in some places, that one does not analyse texts, one rewrites them, one does not have an objective metalanguage, one does not use a theory, one *performs* one's critique. . . . [But] I want to suggest that there are also seductions involved in allowing oneself to be positioned totally by the discourses and genres of rewriting and refusal of metalanguages, the seductions of an anti-science metaphysics. (Threadgold, 1997: 2, 1)

[Raymond] Williams' conviction [is] that people in society are their own cultural agents, transforming those situations by acting *on* and acting *in* them, in short, by performing them. . . . The significance and even the audience's *perception* of cultural practice *as* culture arises out of the place and occasion, rather than the form, of its performance. This emphasis on performance and participation in diverse cultural practices rather than 'extension' of cultural property allows us to review drama as cultural practice. No small-scale form (such as drama) belongs inevitably to a dominant minority, anymore than mass-mediated culture is 'popular' by virtue of large-scale consumption. By stressing the historical and social specificity . . . of cultural practice . . . it challenges the very commonplace that has excluded drama: the *essential* dichotomy between a 'high' culture of special works and a 'low' culture of leisure consumption [which t]o a remarkable degree . . . still underpins canonical literary criticism and contemporary cultural studies, even though they may take opposite sides. (Kruger, 1993: 56–7)

This contemporary cultural condition – postcolonial, postindustrial, post-modern, postcommunist – forms the historical backdrop for the urgency of rethinking the significance of ethnography, away from its status as realist knowledge in the direction of its quality as a form of storytelling, as narrative. This does not mean that descriptions cease to be more or less true; criteria such as accurate data gathering and careful inference making remain applicable. . . . It does mean that our deeply partial position as storytellers . . . should be . . . seriously confronted. . . . The point is not to see this as a regrettable shortcoming to be eradicated as much as possible, but as an inevitable state of affairs which circumscribes the . . . responsibility of the researcher/writer as a producer of descriptions which, as soon as they enter the uneven, power-laden field of social discourse, play their political roles as particular ways of seeing and organising an ever-elusive reality. (Ang, 1996: 75–6)

INTRODUCTION: PERFORMING CULTURE

The opening quotations of this book are about performing one's critique, performing one's everyday situations, and researchers as storytellers. These are matching notions of the poststructuralist domain. Beside them, in part composed by them, are the so-called crises of representation and legitimation that Threadgold and Ang target. Here doubt is thrown on the possibility that (academic or bureaucratic) 'experts' can hope to capture what Williams calls 'lived experience', since such experience is created in the social text that the expert writes.

We are now, said Clifford Geertz, telling stories in an era of blurred genres; and in a recent book on qualitative methodology Denzin and Lincoln spell out some of the implications of this for 'performing one's critique'. Since the early 1980s genre dispersion has been occurring: 'documentaries that read like fiction (Mailer), parables posing as ethnographies (Castaneda), theoretical treatises that look like travelogues (Lévi-Strauss)' (1998: 18). On the other hand, poststructuralism (Barthes), micro-macro descriptivism (Geertz), liminality theories of drama and culture (Turner), and deconstruction (Derrida) have been challenging the familiar 'expert' genres and narratives at their epistemological foundations.

This book is about the 'performing' of culture; and the part played in that performance by 'stories of expertise and the everyday'. Ien Ang's and Terry Threadgold's emphasis on reflexive storytelling and performance – and *yet at the same time* their insistence on 'descriptions that are more or less true' and their warnings against 'the seductions of an anti-science metaphysics' – provide my initial theoretical frame. My substantive frame is also Loren Kruger's, when she invokes Raymond Williams to go beyond the dichotomy between the 'selective tradition' of 'high-cultural' drama and the 'ordinary processes of human societies' as we 'perform our critique'.

The book's agenda comes on the one hand from my own developing research interests in media, theatre and cultural studies – thinking about the performance of 'culture' across its various fields of communication: of popular culture (where most cultural studies work is done); cultural policy (where increasingly – and particularly in Australia – cultural studies has become institutionally significant); and high culture (which has been almost abandoned by mainstream cultural studies, except as dichotomy and polemic). On the other hand, the different chapters and sections of the book also

reflect new agendas in anthropology and in theatre studies which situate performance/audience analysis '*both in formal performances and in everyday life*' (Schieffelin, 1998: 204, my italics).

It is that relationship of 'formal' and 'everyday' performance – paralleling in some degree tales of 'expertise' and the 'everyday' – that is my interest here. This needs to be seen, I emphasize, as a theoretical *relationship* rather than the dichotomizing polemic of 'high' and 'popular' culture that is much more familiar within cultural studies. In other words, this is *not* a book about performance theory itself (for a particularly valuable and readable overview from the perspective of theatre studies, see Marvin Carlson's *Performance: a Critical Introduction*, 1996). This *is* a book wherein notions of 'performativity' that come from disciplines dealing centrally with formal performance (theatre studies) and everyday performance (anthropology) are allowed to 'blur genres' with stories of expertise and the everyday.

Performance in theory: some theatre studies accounts

A brief summary of some of the main issues that Carlson raises may help explain why I am drawing on notions of 'performance' and 'performativity' here in the context of cultural studies, and how my choices (which I will then elaborate) fit within the wider 'performance' picture. Carlson usefully describes the development of 'performance' within anthropology, linguistics, sociology and psychology, as well as theatre studies, pointing to some of the parallels and distinctions.

- Within anthropology there has been a shift from the notion of 'performing culture' as a 'whole way of life' (for example, Singer's cultural performances as the events of theatre, religious festivals, weddings etc, where a culture is 'set apart' and thus exhibited to itself). A newer interest has been performance as 'liminal' or 'liminoid' border territory (Turner/Schechner). Here formal performance is not so much 'set apart' but rather a site of transgressive 'negotiation'. Turner's distinction between 'liminal' and 'liminoid', like the cultural studies debate over Bakhtin's 'carnival', is between performance that may invert the established order but never subvert it (liminal), and the more playful, joyful, contingent and subversive transgressions of the liminoid.
- Within sociology and psychology there is the continuing importance of Goffman's work, which brings performance back to everyday life, though within theatrical 'frames' which constitute the everyday as a performance before an 'audience'. Carlson emphasizes also the social constructionism of Berger, Luckmann, Schutz, Garfinkel et al. around 'objective' scripts and their 'subjective' re-working as a pragmatic process of 'bricolage'; and de Certeau's extension of this via his dichotomy of cultural 'strategies' (institutionalized frameworks, narratives and scripts for behaviour) and 'tactics'

(improvisatory performances which, while never formally opposing conventional strategies offer a performative ground for change, and for the formation of new, alternative strategies).

- Within linguistics, a central concept has been Austin's notion of the performative (an 'illocutionary' utterance that performs an action as it speaks, as in naming a ship or taking a marriage vow). This has been re-worked by Derrida to emphasize 'citation' (or 'iterability') as central to successful performativity (for example a marriage vow, or naming a baby as 'girl' only have power because they 'cite' a long history of vows and namings). Influential, too, has been Bakhtin's emphasis (as an alternative to Saussure's *langue/parole*) on utterance as a situated, historically contextualized performance.

As Carlson says, each of these sets of distinctions (liminal/liminoid; strategy/tactic; script/bricolage; language/utterance, etc) demonstrates 'the essentially contested essence of the term "performance", with some theorists viewing it as reinforcing cultural givens, others seeing it as at least potentially subversive' (1996: 24).

A strong example of Carlson's point, within theatre studies, is Parker and Sedgwick's book *Performativity and Performance* (1995). There we have Joseph Roach arguing for performance as *transformative* practice (as, in his analysis of circum-Atlantic performance, a collective, often colonized 'memory' challenges the official 'history' of the colonists). But within the same set of covers, Judith Butler (following Austin and Derrida) argues that the performative succeeds only because it is *ritualized* practice, echoing prior speech actions and therefore 'citing' prior authoritative practices (in a manner similar to Althusser's notion of the subject being 'interpellated' by ideological state apparatuses). Meanwhile, in the same book Cindy Patton constructs a complex argument around the distinction *between* 'performance' and 'performativity'. For her, performance, like de Certeau's 'tactics', is never more than an accretion on, or a defacement of, the 'space-oriented, capital-oriented domain of the proper' (1995: 183). The performance discourse is parasitic or is (at its most subversive) the discourse of graffiti. In contrast, performativity is more than 'tactic'. It directs new 'strategies' and policies in so far as it constitutes and reproduces its own citational chains.

Thus, in Patton's argument, tropical medicine is a discourse of performance because it is 'reliant upon stable signs (the marks of coloniality, with their geography of race presupposed by the certainty about the centrality of Europe)'; while modern epidemiology has been a performative discourse both constituting its 'bodies' (HIV 'victims' as 'risk groups') and being reconstituted by them (as gay activists within health agencies have reworked these names to: 'people living with AIDS', and 'risk practices').

Roach's, Butler's and Patton's arguments are far too complex – and richly empirical as well – for me to pretend to summarize them here. In any case, my main point at this moment is to use them illustratively: just to begin to indicate the 'structure/agency' tension that circulates around the concept of

performance (with sometimes, as in Patton, the terms 'performance' and 'performativity' themselves representing this 'binary' tension). We see this tension in Terry Threadgold's comments above 'on the subject's (compulsory) performance of gender and the possibilities for performing gender differently'. And we see it, too, within recent anthropology where (though the terms 'performance' and 'performativity' tend to be synonymous, as in the following comments from Schieffelin) the 'tension' of structure/agency is still central.

The ponderous social institutions and mighty political and economic forces of late capitalism which weigh so heavily upon us are, like illusions of maya, without any reality except in so far as they or their effects are actually and continually engaged and emergent in human discourse, practice and activity in the world: generated in what human beings say and do. It is because human sociality continues in moment-by-moment existence only as human purposes and practices are performatively articulated in the world that performance is (or should be) of fundamental interest to anthropology. (Schieffelin, 1998: 195–6)

Here we are closer to Tony Giddens' notion of 'structuration'. But within this broader poststructuralist reconfiguration of 'structure' and 'agency', it is particularly the relationship between performance understood as the agency of a 'theatrical event' and performance as a 'daily practice' that has brought anthropology and theatre studies closer together. Even though each discipline has its own emphases, both focus on 'the expressive processes of strategic impression management and structured improvisation' (Schieffelin, 1998: 195) of performance.

Within theatre studies, as Joseph Roach argues, there has been a widening distinction between 'theatre' as 'a limiting term for a certain kind of spectatorial participation in a certain kind of event', and 'performance', which,

though it frequently makes reference to theatricality as the most fecund metaphor for the social dimension of cultural production, embraces a much wider range of human behaviours. Such behaviours may include what Michel de Certeau calls 'the practice of everyday life' in which the role of the spectator expands into that of the participant. De Certeau's 'practice' has itself enlarged into an open-ended category marked 'performative' . . . 'a critical category. . . . The performative . . . is a cultural act, a critical perspective, a political intervention'. (Roach, 1995: 46)

At the same time, Loren Kruger has challenged cultural studies' reifying of both traditional and local theatre as a residual 'high culture', arguing for 'an emphasis on performance and participation in diverse cultural practices' rather than as an "extension" of cultural property' (1993: 56). Hegemony, she reminds us (following Williams and Gramsci) is *lived* as consent.

While we can certainly track the evidence of hegemony in the historical exclusion of the majority from 'high culture', we cannot assume that the association of certain forms [like theatre] with a privileged audience is categorically fixed, nor

can we presume the shape of a 'popular' alternative. In each case, we must investigate the historical emergence of particular forms, the occasion and place of their legitimate performance, and challenges to that legitimacy. (Kruger, 1993: 62)

These tendencies in theatre studies are paralleled, as Conquergood emphasizes, by the wider 'ethnographic' shift from viewing 'the world as text' to 'the world as performance', which opens up a new set of questions.

- The question of cultural process: What are the consequences of thinking about culture as 'an unfolding performative invention instead of reified system'?
- The research question: What are the consequences of viewing fieldwork as 'an enabling fiction between observer and observed'?
- The hermeneutic question: 'What kinds of knowledge are privileged or displaced when performed experience becomes a way of knowing, a method of critical inquiry, a mode of understanding?'
- The epistemological (*and* 'performance indicator') question: 'What are the rhetorical [or institutional] problematics of performance as a complementary or alternative form of "publishing" research?'
- The political question: 'How does performance reproduce, enable, sustain, challenge, subvert, critique, and naturalize ideology?' (Conquergood, 1985, cited in Carlson, 1996: 192)

Yet even as this 'performative' thrust takes theatre studies further into everyday life, so its theorists pause to take stock of its specific and situated 'expressive processes'. Carlson argues that although the importance of emphasizing the performative aspect of agency and identity in a wide range of everyday social and cultural practices is undoubted, what is often missing in these other areas of activity is 'the specific blending of occasion and reflexivity that characterizes "theatrical" performance. . . . Performers and audience alike accept that a primary function of this activity is precisely cultural and social metacommentary, the world of self and other, of the world as experienced, and of alternative possibilities' (1996: 97). Loren Kruger says that at 'a time and place where centralized and rationalized power make large-scale appropriation of the media difficult, the intermediate technology of small-scale actions may provide an effective stage for alternative "strategies for encompassing social situations"' (1993: 66). Jill Dolan has argued for theatre studies' distinct contribution as 'a place to experiment with the production of cultural meanings on bodies willing to try a range of different significations for spectators willing to read them' (cited in Carlson, 1996: 197); and Carlson argues that this is true for traditional theatre as well as for 'performance art'. He thus gestures to the amazing omission in mainstream cultural studies of both this particular 'formal performance' site (the theatre) and its process (of performing bodies differently).

Theatre, Carlson concludes,

is a specific event with its liminoid nature foregrounded, almost invariably clearly separated from the rest of life, presented by performers and attended by audiences both of whom regard the experience as made up of material to be interpreted, to be reflected upon, to be engaged in – emotionally, mentally, and perhaps even physically. This particular sense of occasion and focus as well as the overarching social envelope combine to make it one of the most powerful and efficacious procedures that human society has developed for the endlessly fascinating process of cultural and social self-reflection and experimentation. (1996: 198–9)

And Kruger argues that the occasion of theatre (but not media) performance ‘creates a *liminoid* space in which alternative or *virtual* public spheres can be performed, tested, *entertained*’ (1993: 68).

Performance in theory: some recent anthropological accounts

Just as in theatre studies the relation (or opposition) of ‘theatre’/‘performance’ has been central, so an important direction in anthropology has been the focus on the need to explore ritual and performance as relational rather than essential terms. In a recent edited collection, Felicia Hughes-Freeland speaks of this relationship as situated social practice which, far from being part of an exoticizing anthropology, is all about ‘how anthropologists and social actors frame reality, and what the relationship is between the ordinary and the non-ordinary in terms of social action’ (1998: 2). Hughes-Freeland and her contributors argue on the one hand that both ritualization and performance are social action forms that *stand out* as ‘more than the everyday’. But on the other hand their emphasis that performance is ‘not understood as the replication of a given script or text’ but as ‘techniques and technologies of the self/selves’ (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 3) leads also (as in Dolan and Carlson) to a focus on the *daily, processual relationship* between them as ‘living human bodily expressivity, conversation and social presence’ (Schieffelin, in Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 13).

Thus performance:

cannot be explained anthropologically without reference to the specific context which frames the action and/or performances. The agency of situations is one which is constituted by a range of participants. The focus on performance allows us to understand situations interactively, not in terms of communication models, but in terms of participatory ones. (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 15)

The emphasis on performance, in anthropology as in theatre studies, then leads away from a textualist account of meaning to an emphasis on the embodied and rhetorical ‘argumentative context’ (Billig, 1987: 91; Shotter, 1993: 8) – to the ‘dialogic’ (Bakhtin, 1986), focusing ‘upon the actual “formative” or “form giving” moment in speech communication’ and emphasizing the unique, social, relational (and intrapersonal) functions of situated language use’ (Shotter, 1993: 40). The understanding of performance as

'technologies of the self/selves' thus focuses on 'words in their speaking' (Shotter, 1993:43) as embodied *situationally* in both 'formal' and 'everyday' performance. We are reminded again of Dolan, emphasizing that theatre studies is 'a material location, organized by technologies of design and embodiment . . . a pedagogically inflected field of play at which culture is liminal and liminoid and available for intervention' (cited in Carlson, 1996: 197).

Within anthropology, Hughes-Freeland argues, recurring key themes underpin this debate about performativity as situational interaction: agency and intentionality; creativity and constraint; the participatory nature of spectatorship; and the implications of different framings of relationships between reality and illusion.

- Concerning *agency and intentionality* in ritual and performance, Schieffelin argues that it is because performativity is the expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of practice that the distinction breaks down between a Baumann-style definition of performance as *a particular aesthetic event evoking an imaginative reality among spectators* and Goffmann's sense of human culture and social reality as articulated in the world of *everyday performative activity*. Though anthropologists vary here as to the emphasis that they place on the intentionality of performativity – Schieffelin for example argues that it is 'the expressivity (and hence performativity) inherent in any human activity in everyday life which renders our actions communicative and effective to others in our situations whether we mean them to be or not' (1998: 197), whereas Rostas speaks of ritual as 'way of acting that is non-intentional . . . that has become part of the habitus' and performativity as entailing 'the deployment of consciously formulated strategies' (1998: 89, 90) – there is agreement that ritual and performativity must be understood relationally, where the actor (both on and off the stage) is a 'double agent' (Hastrup, 1998), performing 'between identities . . . which makes it possible to work on "being" and "becoming" simultaneously' (Rostas, 1998: 92). Above all, the emphasis on the 'never-ending reflexivity' of this double-agency means a move beyond the 'linguistic turn' of cultural studies: '“Performance” deals with actions more than text: with habits of the body more than structures of symbols, with illocutionary rather than propositional force, with the social construction of reality rather than its representations' (Schieffelin, 1998: 194).

- Concerning *creativity and constraint*, performative agency is 'not unfettered agency but creativity contingent on a structure or a field of pre-conditions which constitutes a set of references . . . a liturgical script' (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 7). Thus Coleman and Elsner in their analysis of 'performing pilgrimage' to the Anglo- and Roman-Catholic shrines in Walsingham, England, describe both 'canonical' performance (embodying an interactive intensification of collective belonging to forms of religious liturgical authority and stability not found in one's 'home' church) and

'ironic' performance (involving either a self-parodying and ludic 'excess' of ritual practice or through more communal forms of liturgical transformation). The point is that in both cases performativity requires 'the presence of canonical forms as symbols and actions against which to define themselves' (1998: 7). Clearly this creativity/constraint relationship between 'ritual' and 'performativity' can be extended not only to other pilgrimage or 'heritage' sites, like the museum, as Coleman and Elsner suggest, but also to the full range of popular cultural (for example soap opera, Ang, 1985) and 'canonical' high-cultural sites. As Coleman and Elsner argue, 'Along with other contemporary ritual forms . . . pilgrimages to Walsingham are partially supported and revived by the practices of a modernity shading into post-modernity, such as the cultivation of leisure, consumption and the commercialized "staging" of culture, and are thereby sometimes transformed into objects of play, displaced from conventional temporal or liturgical frames' (1998: 62–3).

- Concerning *spectatorship as participation*, it is here that anthropologists of ritual and performance have perhaps drawn most on media and cultural studies, arguing that 'Agency does not reside in a specific group of performers who are separate from an audience of passive spectators. . . . If the degrees of technological intervention differ between media events and live ones, this is not an intervention which negates the agency of viewers or audiences' (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 8, 10). Thus whether comparing the television viewing practices of a London middle-class family with the New Guinean participants in a Fuyuge gab ritual (Hirsch, 1998), or analysing the growing role for women in bullfighting as television supplements the masculinist *ambiente* of the actual Spanish bullring (Pink, 1998), or describing the performative role of television in relation to the historically and politically evolving rituals of the Welsh National Eisteddfod (Davies, 1998), or discussing the embedding of new video practices in initiation rituals at urban shrines in Benin City, Nigeria (Gore, 1998), all of these anthropologists emphasize a conceptual framework of agency, locality, strategy and skilled daily practice in understanding their 'spectators'. Thus the 'diversity of experiences within a fixed site in media becomes subject to the variables of time and space: the media event is decontextualized, disconnected, diffused, re-diffused, and raises questions about methodological procedures for understanding it' (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 10). It is here that anthropologists of ritual and performance are also most critical of media and cultural studies: for a too limited notion of ethnography, and for an over-privileging of the reifying powers of the media (Hirsch, 1998). While supporting Ang's emphasis on telling stories situated between the local and the global, Hirsch warns that her understanding of anthropology's 'local' is outdated and simplistic. Thus, 'in all the talk of local and global relations it has to be remembered that one never actually leaves the local. . . . Rather it is the system of local contexts, their distributions and linkages, that creates a global field (such as IBM or Hollywood)' (Hirsch, 1998: 223). An underlying emphasis of all of these anthropologists' accounts is thus on the

relationship between performativity and local knowledge: where, as Rapport argues, whatever the degree of globalized commoditization and structural power, 'It is through narrational performance that we maintain conscious selves; through the performance of narratives, we continue to write and rewrite the story of our selves' (Rapport, 1998: 20).

- Concerning the *framing of reality and illusion*, Schieffelin critiques the high-cultural *western dramaturgical* (Roach's 'theatrical') framing of sociological models of performance. 'Fundamental to this image is the division between (relatively active) performers and (relatively passive, but emotionally responsive) audiences. In Euro-American (basically Aristotelian) tradition this divide is also a metaphysical, even ontological, one between a world of spectators which is real and a world conjured up by performers which is not, or more precisely, which has another kind of reality: a virtual or imaginary one. . . . What I am concerned with here is that this set of ideas about the relationship entailed in performance carries hidden moral and epistemological judgments, when transported into anthropology, that tend to undermine our ethnographic intent.' (Schieffelin, 1998: 200) In Schieffelin's and Hughes-Freeland's accounts, the emphasis on 'illusion' in performative models in the social sciences is 'endemic'. 'Is social life merely a tissue of illusions skilfully woven by us all? Where are the truth and efficacy in ritual located? The fact of the matter is that these issues are in large part an artefact of the way the relation between performers and audience is conventionally (if naively) conceived' (Schieffelin, 1998: 202). Rather than move into a radically postmodernist celebration of the fake, the illusion, the simulacrum, Schieffelin and other anthropologists of performance move further into the local and the ethnographic. 'The simplest lesson for anthropology is that the exact nature of the performative relationship between the central performers and the other participants (including spectators) in a cultural event cannot be sustained analytically, but must be investigated ethnographically. . . . [F]or anthropology, these relationships need careful investigation – both in formal performances and in everyday life – because it is within these relationships that the fundamental epistemological and ontological relations of any society are likely to be implicated and worked out: because this is the creative edge where reality is socially constructed' (Schieffelin, 1998: 202, 204). As 'creative edge', performativity thus becomes central to ethnographic analysis. 'The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations, is the imaginative creation of a human world . . . and these need to be explored ethnographically rather than a priori assumed' (Schieffelin, 1998: 205).

The move we need to make, all these scholars in anthropology and theatre studies are telling us, is away from a reifying textualism or a determinant globalism, towards the localized, situated 'performing of one's critique'. But performance is never agentive in a voluntaristic way. It *is* situated in historical time, geographical and conceptual space.

Thus it is in the context of both anthropological and theatre studies' emphasis on **performativity as embedded in 'liturgy' but also as 'ludic' excess, as limited by 'canonical theatre' but also as 'political intervention', as 'citation' but also as transformative practice** that this book tells its stories. It is on behalf of that particular focus that it makes its selection of 'performance' debate within theatre studies and anthropology. I am not trying to be 'representative' or to present an archival 'survey' in my discussion of 'performance' in either theatre studies or anthropology. Inevitably, I perform the texts I have chosen from these disciplines too.

So, perhaps unusually, the book tells in one place 'ethnographic' stories of expertise and the everyday that focus on performing Chekhov as parodic 'excess' and political intervention side by side with others about designing HIV/AIDS campaigns within the daily leisure performances of Australian Builders' Labourers (and against the grain of 'canonical' government campaigns). My point is not to take further the blurrings and distinctions between 'ritual' and 'performance' within anthropology, or between 'performance' and 'performativity' (which exists in some parts of theatre studies, but not in others). For this reason there will be no attempt here to 'put right' the slippage between 'performance' and 'performativity' that occurs in some of my key intertexts, like Hughes-Freeland's *Ritual, Performance, Media* (see, for example, the beginning of Chapter 4).

Rather, my point is to try to address in one place the different 'popular' (and expansive) and 'high' (but effaced) terrains of cultural studies *via* the kinds of theoretical and practical performativity discussed here. Thus just as Brian Wynne has drawn on the 'local knowledgeability' of Cumbrian farmers in challenging the 'liturgical' expertise of the British scientific institution, so I have drawn on Cumbrian teenagers in their spectating of the canonical, high-cultural 'Chekhov'; and also on Sydney building workers in co-designing an Australian HIV/AIDS campaign.

To try to engage conversationally and rhetorically with the academics' (or health policy makers') 'others' is, as Shotter says, a different matter from the familiar, top-down 'disciplining' of our audiences.

And this is why – when claiming to represent the needs of others unlike ourselves, the poor and the oppressed, those 'outside' our language games – we fail to grasp why our representations of them are demeaning. We exclude their voices; they can play no part in those fleeting, extraordinary moments of indeterminacy, undecidability and ambivalence, when we determine each other's being, each other's identities. Our conversational politics excludes them. . . . [N]o matter how concerned with 'their' liberation, with 'their' betterment, with preventing 'their' victimisation, etc – the fact is that 'we' do not make sense of 'their' lives in 'their' terms. 'We' do not even make sense of 'their' lives 'with them', thus to arrive at a version upon a common 'ground' between 'us'. (Shotter, 1993: 48)

It is because I have not wanted my 'conversational politics' to 'exclude their voices' that I have adopted a case study format to this book. For example, the Sydney building workers' voices are given space in this way

(and I wish there was space for this in other case studies). On the other hand, I do not want to fall into the romanticizing discourse of seeing the local, situated voice as simply 'authentic' representation of the 'disadvantaged' (Silverman, 1993: 6). The Sydney building workers are men, and their voices engage interactively in our interviews with other men, reworking gender alibis, mythologies and various 'liturgical' stories of their own; similarly, the Cumbrian teenagers' voices are also interactive within a cultural 'micropolitics' of constraint, in this case as 'A-level' students in English or Russian studies. Those 'forms of order' need to be understood as conversational activities too; as must the 'reading formations' of the researchers/interviewers in the same interactive process. These 'experts' tell their own stories in their own words, often 'dense' or 'difficult' words, as my opening pages have represented. And so the words and languages of 'expertise' and the 'everyday' also blur as genres in this book.

Performance on the street

All of this sounds very theoretical for a book which emphasizes stories of both 'expertise' and the 'everyday'. So, I want to move straight into everyday 'story telling', to try to flesh out some of these more abstract 'disciplinary' points. My first narratives come from 'Julie', a respondent in a recent Fear of Crime consultancy that I conducted in New South Wales with colleagues at the Centre for Cultural Risk Research, Charles Sturt University.

Julie was one of the parents of teenagers (one of three generational cohorts in our research) whom we interviewed by focus-group and long interview methods. The two-hour interview with Julie about fear of crime and the media generated many stories, conveyed as a series of biographical memories. Together these helped constitute Julie's understanding of any one of her current performances.

Julie remembered, for example:

- how as a child she had been brought up in a communist/anarchist household; where, for all his libertarian ideals, her father when drunk 'beat her to the wall and back';
- how later, in her twenties she had joined a radical feminist group where she learned that 'there is no safety anywhere, anytime, so you may as well live your life and not let the fear control you';
- how when she was a women's refuge co-ordinator and protester, she had drawn on this feminist confidence to physically swing away a 'rogue male' policeman who had seriously injured her female colleague by throwing her down the steps of Parliament House in Canberra;
- how even today, she uses this feminist consciousness to walk through the trains at night when passing through 'scary' suburbs, talking with nervous women travelling by themselves; and

- how recently she, her female partner, and her teenage daughter had seen off a group of men and youths intent on robbing a drunken older woman on the train.

Yet, despite her confidence in her partner who boxes, her daughter who at least twice has assaulted a male harassing her, and her own physical profile that 'gives out "Don't mess with me"', Julie is reflexively aware of the potential power of the globalizing media over her. She will not watch movies on TV where women are stalked because, from her experience in childhood, she feels she has become especially sensitive to the signs of male threat. The global, as Hirsch would say, is created in the local. It is because of the range of signs of male violence which her father taught her that she thinks these media texts disempower her now, reducing her self-confidence. For example, having watched the first episode of *Millennium*, she gave it up.

I don't watch things that are too close to home. And the fact that in the very first episode the fellow's wife and child were threatened and there was an implied threat that may come true in the future – That made me think I don't want to watch that any more.

On the other hand, she loves watching popular TV series like *The X-Files* and *The Pretender*, enjoying a 'resistance to US authority' reading. Her Left politics convinces her that the 'government cover up' emphasis of these series is an accurate representation of the relationship between the US government and her Australian one, and between her government and herself (as with the policeman on the steps of Parliament House, Canberra).

I really like the government conspiracy ones. . . . I especially like *The Pretender* – nasty government agency doing all sorts of funny experiments on children. . . . One of them grows up and escapes and is being chased by the agency. . . . It's the fear of authority getting at you, but the fear more of what they're doing out there than what they're doing to me; and I like the aspect of escaping from authority and getting even with them. I really, *really* like that aspect of *The Pretender*.

The particular story that I want to focus on (to work through Hirsch's and Rapport's discussion of the global and local, and Roach's emphasis on the performative as a critical category) is one when Julie left behind her familiar 'mental maps of the city' (Taylor et al., 1996: 313), and went to the USA, where one night she was walking through the streets of Seattle.

I was very aware, say late at night in inner-city Seattle, of being much, much more fearful. And what I did, as I walked, doing my usual thing of eyes up and walking straight ahead, was to think 'is my fear justified or not?' . . . And nothing 'bad' came at me. . . . But in fact the portrayals of race violence in America did affect me. . . . I was very conscious that it had gone into my head. So when I was walking through an area that had a lot of black people in it I was much more conscious of the fear then. But thankfully I *was* conscious of it and thinking about it and *judging* it all the time.

Julie is a white, middle-class, lesbian woman who, in this particular story, focused on her brief encounter with two black men in American city streets at night. She is far from being racist; indeed, she tells the story of how a particular anti-racist text has helped her work through her own fears.

I *know* about violence, it can't scare me. I've just been reading a wonderful book about a white woman in the southern states of America who . . . said 'I have been there. I have experienced the fear that the racists can make me feel. I have lost sleep, sat up all night with a gun in my hand. . . . I know what they can do. They may hurt me. They may kill me. They will never make me fear again.' . . . For me it has taken more processing than that, a lot of ingrained fear that I had to learn about in order to get past it so I could say 'I will never fear again'. . . . Mine was a long-term project to get there. But that feeling at the end . . . is very real for me.

Yet Julie's story indicated the way in which both her own 'long-term project' and her 'globalized' view have to be *reflexively renegotiated* and performed in each new, fine-grained, localized experience. At a strategic moment Julie performed, and at the same time, to use de Certeau's terms, her role as globalized spectator expanded into that of participant.

A black man was walking towards me. He had a piece of paper wrapping up something in his hand. As he got fairly close to me he crumpled it up and threw it at my feet. He was *directing* it at my feet, at the ground right in front of me. I didn't look at him but I stepped around it, sort of slightly bowed my head in his direction, and kept him in sight as I walked past him. I didn't turn my back on him until I knew he was past me, and continuing on his way; and *then* I turned around and kept walking. At this point I brought my eyes up again to assess the crowd around me, and the next black man who was maybe twenty feet behind the first one, looked at me and met my eyes and smiled. . . . I have no idea how my reaction was perceived by either man. It was a completely instant reaction. . . . I was in a way acknowledging the first man's presence by half-nodding my head, stepping around the paper. . . . It was an unusual situation. I didn't know the ground rules. I was very conscious of the media's portrayal of race violence, and I didn't *know* how much of it was true, how much wasn't. . . . My conditioning was a very, very big factor there. . . . And the second man's smile – I was trying to read so much into two seconds. But I would say I saw a slight humour in it, I would say I saw a slight appreciation of my tactics, I would say I saw a slight reassurance 'I'm not going to do the same thing'. Who knows how much of that was real, but I looked up, and I met his eye, and he smiled, and I gave a half-smile, and I nodded again, and kept going – and thought 'whew, calm down now'.

In Julie's perception the first black man, the second, and Julie herself are all engaging in what de Certeau calls 'tactics' – the sequences of 'advances and retreats, tactics and games played with the text' (1984: 175) called 'race riot'. Whatever the strategies of the US government in this regard, and whatever the strategies of the media in globalizing popular meanings about 'black city race riots', the first black man in Julie's story has his moment – in Roach's sense – not of theatre, but of the performative as 'a cultural act,