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**University of Kent
&
Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna**

Joint PhD in

Drama by Research and Performance Studies

**Intercultural Performance and Dialogue.
From Richard Schechner Performance Studies Onwards**

PhD Candidate: **Carmela Cutugno**

Advisors: Prof. Paul Allain and Prof. Marco De Marinis

Words: 78387

Final Exam - 2014

Intercultural Performance and Dialogue
From Richard Schechner Performance Studies Onwards

Carmela Cutugno

Abstract

Through a historical, theoretical and methodological excursus, this thesis analyzes the birth, development and current identity of Performance Studies, an academic research field that, born in the United States at the end of the Seventies, has always been reluctant towards any attempt to be defined. If Performance Studies conceives performance both as an object of analysis and as a methodological lens, and if, as pointed out by Richard Schechner, everything can be studied "*as*" performance and so investigated according to the analytical categories of this discipline, then, with a transitive and "*meta- methodological*" shift, this doctoral research takes Performance Studies as its object of study, observing it "*as performance*" and using the same methodological tools suggested by its object of analysis. This work investigates how the object of study of Performance Studies is, following Schechner's theory, the "*behaved behavior*", and thus how, as a result, the repertoire, even before the archive can be regarded as the true custodian of "*embodied practices*". Focusing on examples of performative "*reenactment*" such as those by Marina Abramović and Clifford Owens, as well as on the efforts undertaken by the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage section, it suggests valid examples of "*archiving performance*". The paper then examines cases that exemplify the successful identification of "*studying performance*" and "*doing performance*", it underlines the crucial and inescapable role played by the on-field research, understood as "*participant observation*", and highlights the constant social and political commitment of Performance Studies. This dissertation addresses and supports the effectiveness of Performance Studies in itself as an innovative tool able to analyze a world increasingly performative in its dynamics. Thanks to its both interdisciplinary and intercultural nature,

Performance Studies seems to be a proper lens through which to promote different levels of performance dialogue among cultures which are locally different but globally comparable.

A Mamma e Papà

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0.0 Ground floor: Introduzione metodologica

0.1 Dichiarazione d'intenti: per una meta-metodologia

My goal is nothing less than making performance studies a method of analysis, a way to understand the world as it is becoming, and a necessary tool for living¹

Con questa asserzione, la cui perentorietà non poi così tanto latente palesa una radicata progettualità d'intenti, nonché una via via collaudata sperimentazione d'indagine analitica, Richard Schechner chiosava e chiudeva, nel luglio del 2001, la prefazione ad uno dei suoi ultimi scritti: *"Performance Studies. An Introduction"*. A tale altezza cronologica erano trascorse circa tre decenni da quando, all'indomani dei sessantotteschi fervori rivoluzionari universitari (e non solo), in una non casuale simultaneità con l'istituzione bolognese del primo corso di laurea in DAMS, ma a più di sei ore di fuso orario di distanza dal capoluogo emiliano, cominciava a prender forma negli Stati Uniti (per poi diffondersi in molte altre aree del mondo anglosassone) un nuovo campo d'indagine accademica perimetrato, nonostante la costante ridefinizione dei suoi confini, sotto la denominazione di Performance Studies.

Questa tesi di dottorato ha origine dall'intento di analizzare la nascita e l'attuale dimensione costitutivo-identitaria di un ambito di ricerca accademica che, per voce dei suoi più noti esponenti e studiosi, non ama etichette definitorie di nessuna sorta e natura. Le domande principali che sin dall'inizio hanno contraddistinto questa mia ricerca ruotano dunque attorno a degli interrogativi apparentemente elementari, eppure di fondamentale importanza per giungere a dirimere il nucleo

¹ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. X. [Il mio obiettivo non è niente di meno che rendere i Performance Studies un metodo di analisi, un modo per comprendere il mondo come sta diventando, e un necessario strumento per vivere], trad. mia.

teorico che questo lavoro si propone di affrontare: cosa sono i Performance Studies? Di cosa si occupano? Qual è il loro oggetto di studio specifico? Si tratta davvero di una disciplina innovativa in grado di apportare uno sguardo nuovo ed euristico sugli oggetti di analisi presi di volta in volta in esame? Quali sono le specificità metodologiche che connotano l'approccio analitico dei Performance Studies? Il tentativo di rispondere a questa prima serie di domande ha condotto ad inoltrarsi a fondo nelle questioni prese in esame e, di conseguenza, ad aprirne via via delle altre sempre più specifiche e preziose al fine di comprendere a fondo l'entità dei nuclei teorici qui di seguito affrontati.

Se, come vedremo più dettagliatamente nelle prossime pagine, i Performance Studies concepiscono la performance sia come oggetto d'analisi sia come lente metodologica attraverso cui condurre la propria indagine, e se, come più volte specificato da Richard Schechner, praticamente tutto può essere "elevato a performance" e quindi indagato secondo le categorie analitiche di questa disciplina, ecco allora che, con uno slittamento transitivo, questa ricerca dottorale ha scelto come proprio oggetto di studio i Performance Studies stessi, osservandoli "*as performance*" e scegliendo dunque di avvalersi degli strumenti metodologici suggeriti dal suo stesso oggetto d'analisi².

I Performance Studies vengono dunque elevati in questa dissertazione sia ad oggetto di studio sia a lente metodologica. Conseguenza inevitabile di questa scelta procedurale è l'imporsi, sin dalle prime battute, della natura meta-metodologica di questo lavoro, dovuta proprio all'assunzione di alcuni dei tratti più distintivi delle procedure metodologiche dei Performance Studies stessi.

² *ivi*, p. 42. Riporto a tal proposito una considerazione fatta da Richard Schechner e da me qui impiegata come spunto di riflessione: «Everything and anything can be studied "as" any discipline of study –physics, economics, law, etc. What the "as" says is that the object of study will be regarded "from the perspective of", "in terms of", "interrogated by" a particular discipline of study».

0.2 Embodiment the subject, walk on the field!

Uno dei quattro tratti distintivi che, come vedremo in alcune delle pagine che seguono, secondo Schechner rendono “speciali” i Performance Studies, consiste nel loro basarsi su un lavoro di ricerca sul campo inteso come “osservazione partecipante”.³

[...] what role does the fieldworker play? He is not a performer and not not a performer, not a spectator and not not a spectator. He is between two roles just as he is in between two cultures. In the field he represents – whether he wants to or not – his culture of origin; and back home he represents the culture he has studied. The fieldworker is always in a “not... not not” situation. And like a performer going through workshops-rehearsals the fieldworker goes through the three-phase performance process isomorphic with the ritual process:

1. The stripping away of his ethnocentrism. [...]
2. The revelation [...] of what is “new” in the culture he temporarily inhabits. [...]
3. The difficult task of using his field notes (or raw footage and sound tapes) to make an acceptable “product” – monograph, film, lectures, whatever: the way he edits and translates what he found into items understood by the world he returns to. In brief he must make an acceptable performance out of all workshop-rehearsal material [...] some effort to make writing speak in the voice of the “away culture”. [...]

Fieldworkers now not only watch but learn, participate, and initiate actions. Directors have been, and fieldworkers are becoming, specialists in restored behavior.⁴

³ *ivi*, p. 2.

⁴ R. Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1985, pag. 108-109. [che ruolo svolge il ricercatore sul campo? Non è un performer e non è un non

Come frutto del tentativo di adottare, tra gli altri, anche e soprattutto quest'aspetto dei caratteri metodologici distintivi dei Performance Studies, questa tesi di dottorato scaturisce da un lungo periodo di ricerca sul campo, incentrato proprio sulla tecnica dell'osservazione partecipante. Più concretamente, quasi l'intero lavoro di ricerca è stato condotto durante un anno di fieldwork svolto come Visiting Scholar negli Stati Uniti, presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies della Tisch School of the Arts della New York University e il dipartimento di Theatre and Performance Studies della Brown University. L'occasione offertami da queste due prestigiose istituzioni accademiche americane mi ha concesso di esperire in prima persona quale sia realmente l'attuale identità dei Performance Studies in territorio statunitense. Ho seguito corsi offerti dal dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University, partecipato alla realizzazione di progetti dipartimentali, dialogato continuamente e proficuamente con docenti come Richard Schechner, Diana Taylor, Rebecca Schneider e André Lepecki, consultato tutto il materiale messo a disposizione dalla New York University Library e dalla New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Un altro arricchimento assai prezioso é provenuto inoltre dalla consultazione dei Richard Schechner Papers conservati presso la Rare

performer, non è uno spettatore e non è un non spettatore. Si trova tra due ruoli proprio come si trova tra due culture. Sul campo egli rappresenta -che lo voglia o meno- la sua cultura d'origine; e di ritorno a casa egli rappresenta la cultura che ha studiato. Il ricercatore sul campo si trova sempre in una situazione di "non... non non". E come un performer che si muove tra workshops e prove il ricercatore sul campo attraversa le tre fasi del processo performativo isomorfe a quelle del processo rituale: 1. Lo spogliarsi del suo etnocentrismo. [...] 2. La rivelazione [...] di ciò che è "nuovo" nella cultura nella quale egli vive temporaneamente. [...] 3. Il difficile compito di usare le note raccolte sul campo, i filmati e le registrazioni audio) per realizzare un "prodotto" accettabile -una monografia, un film, delle lezioni, o qualunque altra cosa: il modo in cui egli monta e traduce ciò che ha scoperto in oggetti comprensibili per il mondo nel quale ritorna. In breve deve tirar fuori una performance accettabile da tutto il materiale del workshop e delle prove, un tentativo di far parlare la scrittura con la voce "dell'altra cultura". [...] I ricercatori sul campo quindi non soltanto osservano ma imparano, partecipano, intraprendono azioni. I registi sono stati, e i ricercatori sul campo stanno divenendo, specialisti in comportamento restaurato.], trad. mia.

Books and Special Collections della Princeton University Library, nonché dalla ricchissima proposta newyorchese di festival, rassegne, musei, conferenze, convegni, ed eventi di varia natura tutti strettamente connessi alle modalità tramite cui viene trattato l'oggetto performance negli ambienti di maggiore avanguardia.

Secondo quanto prima proposto da Schechner, l'elaborazione di questa tesi dovrebbe quindi costituire "la terza fase del processo performativo, vale a dire quella consistente nel mettere insieme le note raccolte sul campo, il materiale video girato e le registrazioni audio, al fine di realizzare un "prodotto" (nel caso specifico una tesi di dottorato) accettabile, una performance che si sforzi di far parlare la scrittura con la voce "dell'altra cultura", una performance che risulti insomma una forma consapevole di comportamento restaurato".

La risposta che il più delle volte mi è stata fornita alla domanda "*Cosa sono i Performance Studies?*" può essere sintetizzata nella formula "*Performance Studies is what Performance Studies does*" (i Performance Studies sono ciò che i Performance Studies fanno): questo a ribadire ancora una volta l'idea in base alla quale questo ambito di ricerca non ama essere definito, e che, se proprio si cerca di farlo, allora diviene necessario basarsi non su di una identità aprioristicamente determinata, ma piuttosto su una condivisione partecipata del "*fare*" che di volta in volta li contraddistingue. La pratica incorporata (*the embodied practice or the embodied behavior*) è insomma qualcosa da cui non si può metodologicamente prescindere ogniqualvolta si ha a che fare con i Performance Studies.

Ringraziamenti

Questo lavoro nasce dalla combinazione di diversi apporti: *persone-luoghi-eventi*. Nasce dal *fare in relazione con altri in vari luoghi*.

Non avrebbe molto senso elencare qui i convegni, le conferenze, i seminari, i corsi, le performance e tutte le occasioni che hanno alimentato questi tre anni di studi e ricerche. Tutto questo, mi auguro, emerga sottoforma di contenuto dalle pagine che seguono. Mi preme invece ringraziare le persone che hanno ricombinato insieme a me frammenti di comportamento restaurato. Comincio dal professor Marco De Marinis, principale relatore di questa tesi di dottorato, colui che per primo ha deciso di credere e di investire in questo progetto. Grazie, Prof! Ringrazio Paul Allain, mio secondo relatore, per l'eccellente ospitalità offertami presso la University of Kent, soprattutto durante le fasi di lavorazione ad *Imagining O*, ultimo spettacolo di Richard Schechner. Ringrazio Richard Schechner, con cui ho avuto il piacere e il privilegio di lavorare nell'arco di questi tre anni principalmente negli Stati Uniti e in Inghilterra, ma alla fine anche in Italia. Ringrazio Diana Taylor e con lei tutte le persone con cui ho collaborato all'Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, soprattutto in occasione del progetto *WIPS (What is Performance Studies)*. Ringrazio tutti i docenti di Performance Studies e non (principalmente della New York University, della Brown University, della Princeton University, della City University of New York, della Utrecht University, della University of Kansas) con cui ho interagito e che spesso si sono anche gentilmente sottoposti alle mie interviste, e tra di loro, oltre agli stessi Richard Schechner e Diana Taylor, Rebecca Schneider, André Lepecki, Marvin Carlson, Barbara Browning, Karen Shimakawa, Deborah Kapchan, Tavia Nyong'o, Henry Bial, Patricia Ybarra, Eng-Beng Lim, Maaïke Bleeker.

Ringrazio il professor Dario Tomasello, dell'Università di Messina,

insieme al quale abbiamo organizzato un convegno sui Performance Studies, ospitando in Italia lo stesso Richard Schechner.

Ringrazio infine tutti gli studenti del corso di laurea magistrale in Discipline dello Spettacolo dal vivo dell'Università di Bologna, che durante l'anno accademico 2012/13 hanno frequentato sia il corso in Teorie e Culture della Rappresentazione sia il seminario/laboratorio sui Performance Studies: Marco Argentina, Gabriella Birardi Mazzone, Valeria Borelli, Giuseppina Calantropo, Miriam Carra, Michela Casetto, Michele Fanni, Violetta Fulchiati, Francesca Lateana, Serena Laterza, Greta Lopetrone, Carlotta Menchicchi, Verlene Mesquita, Gioele Peressini, Anna Salutato, Sonia Tarchi.

1.1 Performance Studies: impalcature generali.

If [...] institutional contexts differently constitute disciplinary identity, [...] [this] also imply that the history of a discipline changes depending upon where one decides to begin.⁵

I Performance Studies, come disciplina accademica, hanno una storia relativamente recente. Se, come scrive Shannon Jackson, la storia di una disciplina cambia in relazione a dove si decide di iniziare a raccontarla, questa breve storia dei Performance Studies prenderà il via da una città emblematica, la New York di fine anni Settanta, e da un personaggio chiave, Richard Schechner, regista teatrale, docente universitario e ideatore della teoria della performance. Questa scelta scaturisce non soltanto dal fatto che è proprio presso la Tisch School of the Arts della New York University che nel 1980 viene istituito, ad opera tra gli altri anche e soprattutto dello stesso Schechner, il primo dipartimento di Performance Studies, ma anche dalla constatazione che questo dipartimento rimane tuttora il primo e più importante al mondo per studi di siffatta natura e interesse.

Nel corso degli ultimi tre decenni diverse Università, inizialmente statunitensi, in seguito principalmente anglosassoni e australiane, hanno scelto di inserire all'interno della propria offerta formativa un curriculum in Performance Studies, pur accostandolo a volte, come nel caso ad esempio della Brown University o di Berkeley, rispettivamente a quello in Theater oppure in Dance and Theater Studies⁶.

⁵ Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pag. 10.

⁶ Si fa riferimento rispettivamente al dipartimento di Theater and Performance Studies della Brown University e a quello di Theater, Dance and Performance Studies della Berkeley University. Per una lista più dettagliata di dipartimenti, luoghi, programmi e possibilità di studio e ricerca in materia di Performance Studies fare riferimento al quadro proposto da Richard Schechner in *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 5-10.

Quella dei Performance Studies appare dunque una tendenza e un orientamento disciplinare verso cui stanno rivolgendosi molte realtà accademiche, non più soltanto di lingua anglo-americana⁷.

Infatti, come ampiamente “contestualizzato” da Jon Mckenzie e Heike Roms e C.J. W.-L.Weë in *Contesting Performance. Global Sites of Research*, all’espansione dell’ambito disciplinare dei Performance Studies negli Stati Uniti ha fatto da specchio l’emergere di programmi di studio e di ricerca in performance in differenti paesi.

[...] This expansion is mirrored by the emergence of performance research and study programs in different countries. While the United States continues to host many influential scholars and programs, the United Kingdom in particular has seen an increase in performance scholarship and in university courses of study that carry the term ‘performance’ in their names, and important research projects and academic departments have emerged in locales as diverse as Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Singapore, Slovenia, and South Africa.⁸

D’altra parte, come evidenziato dallo stesso Schechner, come conseguenza del proliferarsi dell’attenzione rivolta a questo ambito accademico, si assiste anche a fenomeni per cui in alcuni casi si finisce per “praticare i Performance Studies sotto un nome diverso” (all’interno cioè di altri dipartimenti), oppure in altri casi si decide di “rinominare” i dipartimenti all’insegna dei Performance Studies senza però revisionarne

⁷ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 5-9.

⁸ Jon Mckenzie e Heike Roms, C.J. W.-L.Weë, *Contesting Performance. Global Sites of Research*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2010, pag.1.

significativamente il curriculum.⁹

Tutto sommato oramai lo stato della disciplina appare talmente evoluto e autonomo che, a detta dei suoi stessi rappresentanti più autorevoli, non è più fortunatamente necessario doverne “giustificare” l’esistenza o spiegare nello specifico l’entità del suo operato. Nell’introduzione a *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner’s Broad Spectrum*, i due autori, James Harding e Cindy Rosenthal, precisano:

To suggest the need to rethink Schechner’s “broad spectrum” is to acknowledge more generally that as a discipline performance studies has evolved to the point where it need no longer justify its existence through carefully constructed intellectual genealogies or pedigrees, but is now in a position to take stock of the historical significance of some of its primary players, and in the case of Richard Schechner, a galvanizing pioneer.¹⁰

Sulla stessa linea si iscrive anche il pensiero di André Lepecki, docenti presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University.

There is this artist whose work I like. He is one of the co-founder of the

⁹ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 5 [Increasingly, new performance studies departments, programs, and courses are being created, some of them ambitious and far-reaching, others a renaming without revising the curriculum. Sometimes performance studies is practiced under a different name, as in the Department of World Arts and Cultures of the University of California Los Angeles. There are many schools where performance studies is a thin wedge – a single course or two being “tried out.” But the trend is clear. More performance studies departments, programs, and courses are on the way. Even if many professing performance studies work in non-performance studies environments, they form a strong and increasingly influential cohort reshaping a broad range of fields and disciplines].

¹⁰ James Harding, Cindy Rosenthal, *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner’s Broad Spectrum*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2011, pag.10.

Critical Art Ensemble; his name is Ricardo Dominguez, and he has this sentence. I just like the sentence. It said: "Every movement has three moments: the epic moment, the moment of signature and the moment of the corps... whatever movement... artistic movement, philosophical movement, etc. So, the epic one is the one in which people get together and they just make something, and that is like the beginning, the 80s in Performance Studies, the creation of the department, the formation of the department, getting people together, building something. And then I feel like I arrived here towards the very end of that epic moment, and falling to the moment of signature; and the moment of signature is the moment of economy; it's the moment in which something called Performance Studies, which existed here and at North Western, started to circulate globally and erupted everywhere... everywhere, like departments of Performance Studies all over the world, literally. And that's the 90s: that's from '95 to 2005... that's the moment when the imagine of signature becomes so consolidated. So this is what I lived here. What I remember being different is that there was an idea... I guess... but this is also for political reasons, the United States have changed, like much more foreign students, we had Africanists in the faculty [...] there was a lot of students coming from all sort of places... Sub-Saharan Africa, coming to do their PhD work here, their Master work here. The Master was longer: it was two years. There was an emphasis on post-colonial theory. So it was a quite different landscape. And then through the moment of signature I think there is a kind of distillation of Performance Studies. There is also like the desire to form a project of defining the discipline more and more. And maybe now this kind of moment in which NYU as a corporation becomes a kind of new-liberal global enterprise, maybe entering the phase of the corps, which on the other hand is the most powerful one, because it escapes economy again. So the hope is that at this point there is a possibility of creating a different kind of articulation of Performance Studies in which it does not

matter anymore to affirm it as a discipline. There is a moment when it is important, so that University boards and departments and colleagues all over the world recognize that there is such a field, and it is ok to have departments with that name and, hire faculty for these positions, develop this kind of research... it is super important. Now we have to forget again (this is my thing). Just do what we need to do.¹¹

Quella attualmente vissuta dai Performance Studies risulterebbe quindi essere, secondo l'opinione di André Lepecki, l'era della corporativizzazione, quella in cui "ai Performance Studies non importa più affermarsi come disciplina". Eppure, per chi come noi Italiani sta solo da qualche tempo a questa parte aprendo un dialogo con questa disciplina¹², per riuscire a comprendere propriamente l'odierna identità dei Performance Studies risulta ancora una volta fondamentale passare attraverso un excursus storiografico che, seppur nella sua brevità, renda conto delle origini e dei successivi sviluppi di una realtà che prima degli anni Ottanta non esisteva. Utilizzeremo quindi le successive pagine per cercare di ricostruire e descrivere, attraverso fonti bibliografiche, documenti ritrovati e soprattutto testimonianze dirette degli stessi testimoni, quelli che Lepecki, prendendo a prestito la metafora di Ricardo Dominguez, ha apostrofato come "epic moment" e "moment of the signature" nel "movimento" dei Performance Studies.

Nel fare ciò si cercherà di tenere a mente, tra le altre cose, anche il monito di Henry Bial che nella sua raccolta di scritti che rendono ragione di cosa siano i Performance Studies avverte che per alcuni studenti e neofiti della disciplina tale tentativo possa anche risultare astratto¹³.

¹¹ Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata ad André Lepecki a New York City nel maggio del 2012. L'intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 274.

¹² Consultare Marco De Marinis, *New Theatrology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011.

¹³ Henry Bial (edited by), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pag.6.

Alcuni, a suo avviso, potranno giudicare “assai riflessiva” l’impresa di scrivere in merito a come la disciplina stessa viene “praticata”, considerando l’attenzione dedicata alle definizioni disciplinari distante dallo stesso oggetto “performance”¹⁴. A fronte di tale rischio, Henry Bial evidenzia come sia importante ricordare che “il modo in cui strutturiamo i nostri pensieri è spesso un fattore fondamentale nel determinare ciò a cui possiamo pensare”. Di conseguenza l’autoconsapevolezza relativa ai contenuti e ai metodi che definiscono l’ambito disciplinare dei Performance Studies risulta essenziale per l’esistenza della disciplina stessa, e non è quindi ascrivibile ad una mera tendenza riflessiva post-moderna, ma si tratta piuttosto di una caratteristica fondamentale dello stesso oggetto “performance”¹⁵.

1.2 TDR: un copione gestativo per Performance Studies

I Performance Studies sono un ambito di ricerca che si è espanso talmente tanto che io non posso (e in realtà non vorrei nemmeno) esercitare una forma di controllo su di essi. Esistono dipartimenti o comunque corsi in Performance Studies dappertutto e ciascuno è libero di scrivere ciò che più ritiene giusto e di tracciare una propria linea all’interno di questo ambito di ricerca. Io ho un mio strumento tramite cui scelgo e diffondo i miei Performance Studies e quello strumento è TDR, la rivista di Performance Studies per eccellenza. Leggere TDR significa essere continuamente aggiornati sugli sviluppi successivi che si registrano all’interno di questa disciplina. È leggendo i vari numeri di TDR, dall’inizio sino ai giorni nostri, che è possibile ricostruire la storia

¹⁴ ididem

¹⁵ ibid.

di quanto accaduto all'interno dei PS¹⁶.

Con queste parole Richard Schechner mi spiegava in una conversazione a Canterbury, durante le fasi di lavorazione di *Imagining O*, il suo ultimo spettacolo teatrale realizzato in occasione della sua professorship presso la University of Kent, il modo in cui TDR sia da sempre la rivista che testimonia lo stato dell'arte in materia di Performance Studies, se non altro nella linea della NYU. Si potrebbe in effetti quasi parlare di un rapporto di vera e propria osmosi mutualistica tra ciò che compare nei numeri di TDR e ciò che succede nel mondo degli studi, delle ricerche e delle teorie sulla performance. Le due sfere sembrano cioè influenzarsi a vicenda, come specificato sempre da Schechner all'interno di un numero speciale di TDR, uscito in occasione del Cinquantenario dalla nascita della rivista e dedicato proprio alla storia della rivista.

The positions taken—explicitly in editorials and implicitly in the selection of materials and special issues—reflect the worldview, or at least the discipline view, of the editor. [...] I believe TDR has affected scholarship, performance theory, and—especially during my first editorial term from 1962 to 1969—what actually went on in the worlds of performance. Later, and especially since 1985/86 when I became editor for the second time, TDR influenced the development of performance studies as an academic discipline.¹⁷

E in effetti se si leggono i numeri di TDR, e con essi la storia della rivista stessa, vi si riscontrano all'interno evidenti tracce di come si sia via via giunti alla fondazione di un dipartimento, il primo, di Performance

¹⁶ Estratto di una mia intervista realizzata a Richard Schechner a Canterbury nel luglio del 2011.

¹⁷ Richard Schechner, *TDR and Me*, in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006, p. 9.

Studies alla New York University¹⁸.

TDR, The Drama Review, è ad oggi considerata la rivista di Performance Studies per antonomasia nel settore, o, comunque, uno dei “leading academic journals” indiscussi nella materia. In realtà il nome stesso rivela come, in origine, quando venne fondata nel 1955 come Carleton Drama Review da Robert W. Corrigan, la rivista non si occupasse di performance strictu sensu. Piuttosto era stata inizialmente pensata come un luogo di pubblicazione per delle serie di lectures, ed in seguito, grazie all’azione congiunta dell’allora founding editor Corrigan e del suo advisory editor, Eric Bentley, fu trasformato a tutti gli effetti in un vero e proprio scholarly journal. Il nome della rivista venne cambiato per la prima volta nel 1957, quando Corrigan, trasferendosi alla Tulane University, decise di portarla con sé dal Minnesota a New Orleans, rinominandola Tulane Drama Review. Ma la vera svolta in termini di crescita ed influenza si ebbe quando nel 1962 Richard Schechner venne nominato alla direzione di TDR. Sotto la sua guida TDR inizia ad offrirsi come vetrina per drammaturghi non tradizionali e per idee sperimentali, ed inizia in particolare ad allargare la lente su svariati altri tipi di performance, senza cioè limitare il proprio campo di indagine alla sola drammaturgia. Le scelte editoriali di Schechner hanno portato la rivista ad occuparsi ampiamente di forme di teatro politico e sperimentale, di happenings e di forme teatrali non più esclusivamente occidentali, fino a giungere all’importante virata verso le *social sciences* e il *pensiero critico* che, di lì a qualche decennio, avrebbe condotto alla metamorfosi ben più

¹⁸ Quanto qui di seguito riassunto a proposito della storia editoriale di TDR risulta dalle ricerche svolte presso la Princeton University Library, in particolare dalla consultazione della *Series 1: TDR, 1962-2001*, box 1-91, dei *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, nella sezione Department of Rare Books and Special Collections della biblioteca, nonché dall’attenta lettura di un numero specifico di TDR dedicato alla storia della rivista, *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006.

netta in performance studies.

Nella ricostruzione che fa della sua personale storia con TDR in un articolo pubblicato nella stessa rivista nella primavera del 2006, Schechner dichiara di aver chiesto ad un giornale di teatro di diventare qualcosa di più¹⁹. Sulla scorta cioè delle sue letture parigine di Sartre e Camus, Schechner voleva che TDR diventasse il giornale del teatro “impegnato”, un braccio dell’emergente rivoluzione giovanile americana connessa al movimento contro la guerra in Vietnam e a quello per la rivendicazione dei diritti per gli Afro-americani²⁰. Quello che veniva all’epoca offerto dal teatro commerciale di Broadway, dall’allora nascente movimento del “teatro regionale”, così come dal “trincerato conservatorismo del teatro accademico” di certo non consentiva una tale possibilità all’interno del teatro²¹. È per tale ragione che TDR ha iniziato ad ampliare la sua ottica al di là dei confini prettamente teatrali, per avventurarsi oltre²².

[...] My first editorship of TDR work was partly formed by my education at Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Iowa, and Tulane. Not finding what I was looking for in orthodox theatre or lit-crit texts, I turned to Sigmund Freud and to Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Erving Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), and R.D. Laing’s *The Divided Self* (1960). I began to read deeply in social anthropology and ethnography. In 1966, I was simultaneously introduced to structuralism and poststructuralism [...] to [...] Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan, among others. [...] It took a while for me to warm to Derrida et al., but I was instantly drawn to Claude Levi-Strauss’s ideas. The link between the social sciences and

¹⁹ Richard Schechner, *TDR and Me*, in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006, p. 7-8.

²⁰ *ibidem*.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*

what I would soon dub “performance theory” was made. I wanted TDR to become more concerned with theory. But I was just as influenced by what was happening all around me²³.

Nel 1967, in seguito ad una serie di frustrazioni maturate nei confronti della Tulane University, Schechner decise di unirsi ad un gruppo di altri docenti di teatro del suo dipartimento nel rassegnare le dimissioni; ma questo avvenne anche in virtù del fatto che, nel frattempo, aveva ricevuto una proposta di lavoro presso la School of the Arts della NYU, fondata e diretta nel 1965 da Bob Corrigan, suo amico nonché suo ex mentore/relatore tesi e primo ideatore di TDR²⁴. Il trasferimento alla New York University indusse Schechner a portare con sé anche TDR che, da Tulane Drama Review, venne rinominata The Drama Review. Durante gli anni newyorchesi la rivista assunse un ancora più evidente impegno politico, eppure solo due anni più tardi, nel 1969, Schechner preferì lasciare la guida editoriale di TDR per dedicare tutto il suo tempo, oltre che all’insegnamento, al suo lavoro di regista teatrale alla guida del Performance Group.

Throughout this time, I continued to teach at NYU—not only because I love teaching but also because NYU was/is my bread-and-butter. However, I discovered that I could not give myself fully to TDR and to The Performance Group at the same time. I chose TPG over TDR²⁵.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Richard Schechner, *What is Performance Studies Anyway?*, in Peggy Phelan, Jill Lane (edited by) *The Ends of Performance*, New York University Press, 1998, pag. 357-358. [In 1965 Robert W. Corrigan founded the New York University School of the Arts. Corrigan had been at Tulane University, where he was my dissertation advisor/mentor. He was also the founding editor of the Carleton Drama Review, later the Tulane Drama Review, presently the Drama Review (TDR), which I edited from 1962 to 1969 and again since 1986] [...] [In 1967 Corrigan invited me to head the Drama Department in the NYU School of the Arts. I came with TDR but declined the headache of administration, suggesting instead Monroe Lippman, who had resigned as chair at Tulane].

²⁵ Richard Schechner, *TDR and Me*, in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006, pag. 10.

La direzione editoriale di TDR passò a Michael Kirby nel 1971, e rimase nelle sue mani per i successivi 17 anni, sino al 1986, quando Schechner tornò saldamente al timone, posto che detiene tutt'oggi. A quel punto la nascita dei Performance Studies era già avvenuta e TDR divenne ufficialmente *The Performance Studies Journal*, poggiando la propria lente d'ingrandimento sempre di più non soltanto su fenomeni teatrali (per quanto d'avanguardia) quanto sul ben più ampio “spettro dei fenomeni performativi”. Tale cambiamento costò a Schechner e al suo TDR l'accusa di anti-teatralità, un'accusa dalla quale Schechner dalle pagine di TDR si difende veementemente, evidenziando il suo storico legame con la scena teatrale²⁶. La lotta del padre dei Performance Studies alla NYU non era infatti finalizzata all'esclusione del teatro, quanto piuttosto ad un ampliamento dipartimentale che consentisse di allargare l'ottica ad una più estesa fenomenologia di pratiche performative, e dunque anche teatrali²⁷. Consapevole cioè del fatto che i “generi estetici” del teatro, della musica e della danza sono espressione di un mondo più vasto, quale appunto quello della performance, Schechner all'interno del suo dipartimento ha voluto mantenere alcune distinzioni tra i Performance Studies e i Theatre Studies²⁸.

[...] most of the courses I teach are theatre courses. In terms of performance theory, as far back as Goffman (1959) and Turner (1974), and on to Jon McKenzie (2001), Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (2003), and Diana Taylor (2003), among others, all use theatre, theatricality, and drama as their core model. On a much more personal level, how can I be “antitheatrical” when I have spent most of my life

²⁶ ibidem.

²⁷ ibid.

²⁸ ibid.

working in the theatre? [...]

Schechner ribadisce il suo impegno come regista teatrale prima ancora che come studioso di Performance Studies, così come il suo aver scritto spettacoli teatrali prima ancora della “teoria della performance”²⁹.

Risulta dunque evidente come la storia personale di Richard Schechner abbia impattato quella di TDR, spronando il giornale ad occuparsi di performance senza però per questo mettere da parte il teatro.

This reflects the contradiction that my most intense artistic work takes place onstage, while my most probing theoretical thinking includes theatre but also goes beyond it³⁰.

1.3 Performance Studies: brevi cenni biografici

Era dunque il 1967 quando Richard Schechner, e con lui TDR, approdano al Drama Department della Tisch School of the Arts della New York University. Ed è proprio qui che, nell’arco di un decennio, Schechner compie i passi più significativi in direzione della creazione del primo dipartimento di Performance Studies. Sfogliando i Richard Schechner Papers catalogati e conservati dalla Princeton University Library si scopre infatti che già in quegli anni Schechner inizia ad insegnare il primo corso in Performance Theory, preludio all’imminente trasformazione del Graduate Program in Drama Department in Performance Studies. Dopo i primi riusciti esperimenti in tal senso, il successo raccolto tra gli studenti del corso in Teoria della Performance, e proprio in coincidenza con l’abbandono da parte di Schechner della guida

²⁹ *ivi*, pag. 11-12.

³⁰ *ibid.*

editoriale di TDR in funzione dell'impegno profuso con il Performance Group, arriva la definitiva svolta performativa.

Corre infatti l'anno 1980 quando si assiste alla nascita istituzionale del primo dipartimento di Performance Studies, proprio alla NYU e proprio ad opera di Schechner. Risultato della trasformazione del già esistente Graduate degree in Drama, il curriculum in Performance Studies offre quindi, sin dall'inizio, un livello di istruzione solo Graduate, cioè pari al Master's degree e al PhD³¹. In una lettera-documento ufficiale, datata 29 febbraio 1980, e considerata una sorta di atto fondativo, si legge:³²

³¹ Dall'anno accademico 2012/2013 è stato istituito, sempre all'interno della Tisch School of the Arts della New York University, anche il primo curriculum Undergraduate in Performance Studies.

³² Documento facente parte della *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, Box 151, Folder 3; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.



New York University
A private university in the public service

School of the Arts
Department of Drama, Graduate
300 South Building
Washington Square
New York, N.Y. 10003
Telephone: (212) 598-2596

February 29, 1980

The Drama Department ought to be called Department of Performance Studies. Drama suggests literature and plays within the Western tradition mostly. But we study performance in its widest application. That means we concentrate on "the thing done" as it lives on stage or wherever performances "take place". We study theatre, dance, popular entertainments, rituals, ceremonies, sports: anything that gathers an audience and live performers. The range is immense: from the New Guinea highlands to Richard Foreman's Loft Theatre.

My own concentration is in fundamental performance theory. Along with my students I am trying to describe and then define and explain and finally understand what performance is, what functions and needs it serves individuals and societies and how it shows itself in a variety of contemporary cultures.

“Il *Drama Department* deve essere rinominato dipartimento di Performance Studies”, perché, secondo quanto qui specificato, “*Drama* suggerisce letteratura e spettacolo teatrale all’interno soprattutto della tradizione occidentale. Ma noi studiamo performance nella sua applicazione più ampia. Questo significa che ci concentriamo sulla ‘cosa fatta’ così come vive sulla scena o in qualunque altro posto la performance ‘abbia luogo’. Noi studiamo teatro, danza, intrattenimenti popolari, rituali, cerimonie, sport: qualunque cosa riunisca un audience e dei performers che si esibiscono dal vivo. Il range è immenso. Il mio focus specifico è sui fondamentali della teoria della performance. Insieme ai miei studenti sto cercando di descrivere e poi definire e spiegare e

infine comprendere cosa sia la performance, quali funzioni e bisogni essa soddisfi per gli individui e la società e come palesi la sua essenza in una varietà di culture contemporanee”.

Quello che segue è invece uno schema, scritto di pugno dallo stesso Schechner a fine anni Settanta, in cui vengono graficamente dettagliati alcuni nodi metodologici essenziali del corso base in Teoria della Performance. Schechner distingue quattro essenziali “modalità analitiche”: processuale, strutturale, cinetica, semiotica; otto generi performativi: danza, teatro, musica, narrativa orale, riti di passaggio, riti del calendario, circo, sports, media. Chiudono lo schema le aree culturale d’interesse: nativa-americana, euro-americana, est-europea, euroasiatica, indiana, cinese, africana, polinesiana, australiana e della Nuove Guinea. Specificando quanto schematizzato, Schechner aggiunge che “nel corso dell’anno le quattro “modalità analitiche” vengono applicate ai generi performativi in differenti aree; e che non tutte le metodologie vengono applicate a tutti i generi in tutte le aree.”³³

³³ Documento facente parte della *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, Box 151, Folder 3; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

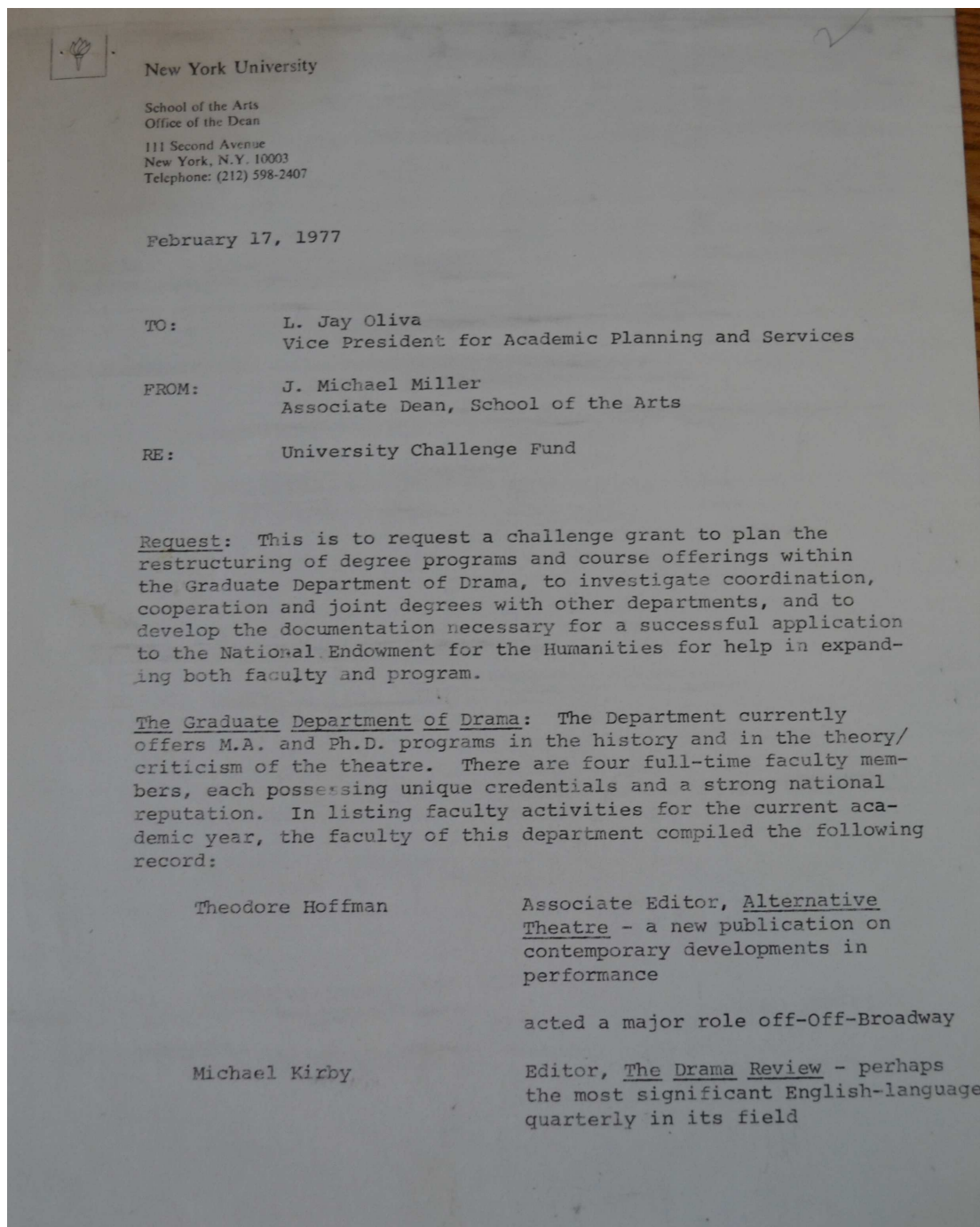
~~insert I~~ ~~BASIC~~ METHODOLOGY OF PERFORMANCE THEORY BASIC COURSE

MODE OF ANALYSIS	GENRE OF PERFORMANCE	CULTURE AREA
PROCESSIONAL (VAN GENNER, TURNER, MYERHOFF, ROTHBERG)	DANCE	NATIVE AMERICAN
STRUCTURAL (LEVI-STRAUSS, SCHECHNER, ALLAND, KEALINDIMOKU)	THEATRE (MAINSTREAM & EXPERIMENTAL)	EURO-AMERICA
KINESIC (BIRDWHISTELL, EKMAN, HALL)	ORAL NARRATIVE	E. EUROPE
SEMIOTIC (BOUSSAC, BARTHES, ECO)	LIFE CRISIS RITES (E.G., INITIATIONS, FUNERALS)	EURASIAN & NEAR EAST
	CALENDARIAL RITES (E.G., PASSION PLAYS, CARNIVAL)	INDIA & SE ASIA
	CIRCUS	CHINA & E. ASIA
	SPECTATOR SPORTS	N. AFRICA
	MEDIA (FILM, TV)	GENEVA AFRICA
	MUSIC	POLYNESIA - OCEANIA
		AUSTRALIA - N. QUEENSLAND

modes of analysis
 OVER THE YEAR THE FOUR ~~METHODOLOGIES~~ ARE APPLIED TO THE PERFORMANCE GENRES IN DIFFERENT AREAS. NOT ALL METHODOLOGIES ARE APPLIED TO ALL GENRES IN ALL AREAS, RATHER, A SURVEY ~~ANALYSIS~~ IS MADE.

A determinare l'istituzione del dipartimento di Performance Studies alla NYU sono ovviamente, oltre a Schechner, anche altre personalità che, in quegli stessi anni (fine anni Settanta), gravitano attorno al Drama Department della School of the Arts. Si tratta di membri di facoltà la cui "particolare forza risiede nel fatto di essere tutti sia preminenti studiosi sia artisti in piena attività. Sono coinvolti nella scrittura relativa a vari aspetti della performance ed anche nella realizzazione pratica di lavori in tutte le aree teatrali: recitazione, regia, scenografia e drammaturgia. I loro risultati sono stati riconosciuti sia a livello internazionale che

nazionale”³⁴. Si tratta nello specifico di Theodore Hoffman, Michael Kirby e Brooks McNamara. Ecco di seguito come vengono sintetizzati i loro curricula nella lettera del febbraio del 1967 cui si faceva riferimento poc’anzi.



³⁴ Lettera datata 17 febbraio 1997, facente parte della *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, Box 151, Folder 3; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

Brooks McNamara

Director of an experimental theatre group, the Structuralist Workshop

Wrote and directed two full-length plays, Revolutionary Dance and Photo-analysis, off-Off-Broadway

Wrote Step Right Up (1976) on the American medicine show and Theatres, Spaces, Environments (1976, with R. Schechner and J. Rojo)

Director, American Society for Theatre Research

President, Theatre Library Association

Director, Shubert Archives

Designer for Theatre '76 in Stony Brook, L.I.

contributing editor, The Drama Review

Richard Schechner

Co-edited Ritual, Play, Performance (1976)

Wrote Theatres, Spaces, Environments (1976, with B. McNamara and J. Rojo) and Essays on Performance Theory (1977)

Director of The Performance Group

Directed Mother Courage and The Marilyn Project off-Off-Broadway

contributing editor, The Drama Review

Fulbright grant 1976

Guggenheim grant 1976

This faculty's particular strength lies in the fact that all members are both prominent scholars and practicing artists. They are involved in writing about various aspects of performance and also in doing practical work in all areas of the theatre: acting, directing, design and playwrighting. Their achievements have been internationally as well as nationally recognized.

All'interno del saggio *What is Performance Studies Anyway?* Schechner propone un dettagliato racconto relativo alle personalità influenti nella storia dei Performance Studies alla NYU. Ricorda che il primo ad essere stato invitato ad unirsi al nascente progetto fu Brooks McNamara, storico e scenografo teatrale con una evidente passione per l'intrattenimento popolare, il cui supporto risultò assai proficuo per la realizzazione di

Dionysus in 69³⁵. L'allontanamento da un convenzionale Drama Department è poi avvenuto con l'assunzione a inizio anni Settanta di Michael Kirby e di Ted Hoffman, e con la collaborazione dell'antropologo Victor Turner³⁶. Fu però nel 1979 che, col supporto di David Oppenheim, direttore della School of the Arts, Schechner iniziò concretamente ad insegnare dei corsi elencati col titolo di Performance Theory³⁷. Questo fu l'impeto iniziale che spianò la strada a quello che di lì a poco sarebbe ufficialmente ed istituzionalmente diventato il dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University.

As the flyer for the first such course proclaimed, "Leading American and world figures in the performing arts and the social sciences will discuss the relationship between social anthropology, psychology, semiotics, and the performing arts. The course examines theatre and dance in Western and non-Western cultures, ranging from the avantgarde to traditional, ritual, and popular forms³⁸.

Un ruolo fondamentale nella formazione della linea dipartimentale è stato di certo determinato dal variegato range di visiting professors ospitati del calibro di Jerzy Grotowski, Paul Bouissac, Donald Kaplan, Alexander Alland, Joann W. Kealinohomoku, Barbara Myerhoff, Jerome Rothenberg, Squat Theatre, and Victor Turner³⁹. Si è probabilmente trattato della prima volta in cui antropologi, psicoanalisti freudiani, semiotici specializzati in teatro e circo, così come studiosi di danza, poeti, esperti di culture orali e di sciamanesimo, e artisti di teatro sperimentale convergevano nello stesso

³⁵ Richard Schechner, *What is Performance Studies Anyway*, in Peggy Phelan, Jill Lane (edited by) *The Ends of Performance*, New York University Press, 1998, pag. 358-359.

³⁶ *ibidem*.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹ *ibid.*

dipartimento⁴⁰. I nomi di personaggi illustri che nel corso dei successivi tre anni si sono aggiunti alla lista dei visiting scholars spiegano la variegata offerta disciplinare messa in campo. Gli argomenti spaziavano infatti da "Performing the Self" e "Play" a "Shamanism," "Cultural and Intercultural Performance," e "Experimental Performance"⁴¹.

Considerato il fatto che già alla fine degli anni Settanta Schechner e gli altri alla NYU non insegnavano più "drama" o "theatre", se non altro nel modo in cui venivano insegnati altrove, nel 1980 il nome stesso del dipartimento venne ufficialmente cambiato in Performance Studies⁴². La direzione del dipartimento venne affidata a Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, esperta di folklore, Jewish and Museum Studies, così come di tourist performances, e di estetica della vita quotidiana; fu lei a conferire un assetto più omogeneo al dipartimento, evidenziandone le principali linee d'interesse e di ricerca.⁴³ Da questo punto di vista, Schechner tiene a precisare che il focus degli studi e degli insegnamenti perseguiti all'interno del dipartimento sono una diretta conseguenza degli interessi tanto dei docenti quanto degli studenti⁴⁴.

Essendo trascorso più di qualche decennio da quando Schechner aveva affidato a questo saggio i suoi ricordi relativi ai primi anni di vita del dipartimento di Performance Studies alla NYU, nell'ultima intervista fatta insieme a lui a New York lo scorso agosto 2012, Schechner integra il racconto con gli anni più recenti.

Marcia Siegel, who had been doing dance from the criticism point of view left and we brought here André Lepecki. And he was very young at

⁴⁰ ibid.

⁴¹ ibid.

⁴² ibid.

⁴³ ibid.

⁴⁴ ibid.

that point, but we also had before that Randy Martin who is still at NYU in the Art and Public Policy, but he was a dance scholar; but then came Lepecki who was a dance theorist and very interested in European dance, while Marcia had been American dance. We always were going to have a dance component; we always were going to have an African American or African component. We started to have the queer component, and with the African and African American we introduced critical race studies; so that would be like Tavia Nyong'o, who is still again on the Faculty. Again, we added him as a very young person. Barbara Browing came in the late 90s or early 2000s, and her interest at that point was Latin America and Capoeira, and Latin America and dance; *Infectious Rhythm* was one of her earlier books. She was from Princeton and a very good writer, so she brought into the department this notion of high level of literary style in writing. In somewhere along the turn of the century, probably the late 90s, Diana Taylor joined the department. I met Diana in Durham, where I was a Visiting Scholar. I am not exactly sure how she got involved in our department, whether I was instrumental in that or Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was instrumental or whoever was instrumental... but Diana brought this enormous energy of hemispheric consciousness and she created while she was here the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics which still exists and it's extremely powerful and important to the department. I should back up a little bit: with Peggy Phelan we began the journal *Women and Performance*. So that was part of this feminist business; the journal still exists. I brought *TDR* with me from Tulane University where it was the *Tulane Drama Review*, and here it became *The Drama Review*; I still edit it here, but *Women and Performance* became a second journal in the department. There were series of other people who worked in dance like Ann Dally, who wrote a very good book on dance and moved to the University of Texas. She is now not teaching anymore. With Diana there was this opening to the rest of the Americas. For one year Joseph Roach

was here, and he brought in his particular historical sense. I am very sorry that Joe left and went to Yale. I would love to have Joe as a colleague still. Philip Zarilli: he wrote his great works on the psychophysical actor training and a lot of colleagues were here over years. There are a lot of people passed through and expanded Performance Studies. At the present moment, at the present constellation of faculty, where we have Diana being 2/3 of the time in Performance Studies and 1/3 in Spanish and Portuguese; Ann Pellegrini who is a specialist in Religion and Performance and Ritual, but she splits her time between and Performance Studies and Religion Studies, and Karen Shimakawa, who came again around 2004, 2005 from the University of California. And she was working on theories of objection and she is now starting to explore Japanese performances even though she is Japanese-American, she had roughly a little knowledge of that kind of performance. Now she is trying to open up more to that. She is the current Chair of the department. José was Chair of the department for six years of big growth. So the department has moved in my view; it has expanded its range, so it does cover more the broad spectrum than when I began and I called for the broad spectrum, but it was highly theater and dance; now it's much more. On the side that I have sometimes resistances; it is hard to distinguish Performance Studies from Cultural Studies, and I would like to see it more stay tight to the analysis of behavior, whether it's behavior in everyday life, or behavior in sport, or in popular entertainments. But sometimes we become a department really concern with high theory. And again with Peggy Phelan and then with José the import of particular post-structuralist thought was very important. And now with the influence of TDR and Lepecki and myself we are getting to deal more with neurology and neurobiology and some of the developments in cognitive psychology in performance and in performance theory. So there is a kind of tension between elements of the department that deal with performances and aesthetic performance,

elements that deal with performance behavior and elements that deal with theory⁴⁵.

È curioso osservare, sempre tra i fascicoli dedicati a Richard Schechner dalla Princeton University Library, come col passare degli anni il dipartimento di Performance Studies si sia via via evoluto, modificando costantemente il proprio curriculum, e con esso soprattutto la tipologia dei corsi offerti. Ecco cosa veniva insegnato nella primavera del 1981.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Intervista da me condotta a Richard Schechner nell'agosto 2012 a New York, consultabile nella sezione allegati di questa tesi, pag. 210.

⁴⁶ Lista dei corsi offerti dal curriculum in Performance Studies della New York University nella primavera del 1981, documento facente parte della *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, Box 151, Folder 3; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.



New York University
A private university in the public service

School of the Arts
Department of Drama, Graduate
300 South Building
Washington Square
New York, N.Y. 10003
Telephone: (212) 598-2596

PERFORMANCE STUDIES

SPRING 1981

<u>Course No.</u>	<u>Course Title</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
H42.2006.01	Classical and Medieval Theatre	Thurs.6:10-7:50	.	Allen
H42.2106.01	History of Theatrical Theory	Thurs.4:20-6:00		Kirby
H42.2209.01	History of the Avant Garde	Tues.6:10-7:50		Kirby
H42.2214.01	SPEC PRO: Popular Performance	Tues.4:20-6:00		TBA
H42.2215.01	SPEC PRO: Modern to Post-Modern Performance	Wed.6:10-7:50		Schechner
H42.2216.01	SPEC PRO: Dance	Thurs.4:20-6:00		TBA
H42.2220.01	Supervised Research	ARR		ARR
H42.2221.01	Supervised Research	ARR		ARR
H42.2305.01	Shubert Archive	ARR		McNamara
H42.2310.01	The Management of Performing Arts Collections	Mon.6:10-7:50		Henderson
H42.2505.01	Dance History II	Mon.4:20-6:00		Youngerma
H42.2509.01	Dance Criticism	Tues.4:20-6:00		Jowitz
H42.2608.01	Performance Theory	Mon.6:10-9:00		Schechner
H42.2608.02	Performance Theory:Seminar	Tues.4:20-6:00		Schechner
H42.2704.01	Dramaturgy	Tues.6:10-7:50		Hoffman
H42.2801.01	Festival and Folk Performance	Wed.4:20-6:00		McNamara
H42.2810.01	Mini Course: Poetics of Performance(May18-29)	MTWThF 1:00-4:00		Rothenber
H42.2812.01	Introduction to Dance Research: Issues and Approaches	Wed.4:20-6:00		Youngerma

<u>Performance Studies: Spring 1981</u>					
<u>Course No.</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Credits</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
<u>Monday</u>					
H42.2505.01	4:20-6:00	Dance History II	3		Youngerman
H42.2608.01	6:10-7:50	Performance Theory	3		Schechner
H42.2310.01	6:10-7:50	The Management of Performing Arts Collections	3		Mary Henderson
<u>Tuesday</u>					
H42.2217.01	4:20-6:00	SPEC PRO: History of Black Popular Performance	3		James Hatch
H42.2509.01	4:20-6:00	Dance Criticism	3		Jowitt
H42.2608.02	2:30-4:10	Perf. Theory: Seminar (Taken with Performance Theory)			Schechner
H42.2710.01	6:10-7:50	Dramaturgy II	3		Hoffman
H42.2606.01	6:10-7:50	Stage Design/Technology	3		Kirby
<u>Wednesday</u>					
H42.2216.01	4:20-6:00	SPEC PRO: Romantic Ballet	3		Dale Harris
H42.2801.01	4:20-6:00	Festival and Folk Performance	3		McNamara
H42.2215.01	7:00-9:30	SPEC PRO: Modern to Post-Modern Performance	3		Schechner
<u>Thursday</u>					
H42.2812.01	4:20-6:00	Intro to Dance Research: Issues and Approaches	3		Youngerman
H42.2110.01	6:10-7:50	20th Century Historical Mise-en-Scene	3		Kirby
<u>Friday</u>					
H42.20006.01	4:20-6:00	Classical and Medieval Theatre	3		Allen
<hr/>					
H42.2810.01	MTWThF	Mini Course: Poetics of Performance (May 18-29)	3		Jerome Rothenberg
H42.2220.01	ARR	Supervised Research	1-6		ARR
H42.2221.01	ARR	Supervised Research	1-6		ARR
H42.2305.01	ARR	Shubert Archive	3		McNamara

Di seguito invece viene riproposto uno schema che riassume i corsi offerti, ciascun semestre, dall'autunno del 1982 alla primavera del 1986⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Lista dei corsi offerti dal curriculum in Performance Studies della New York University dal semestre autunnale del 1981 a quello primaverile del 1986, documento facente parte della *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, Box 151, Folder 3; Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

	1982 Fall	1983 Spring	1983 Fall	1984 Spring	1984 Fall	1985 Spring	1985 Fall	1986 Spring
Issues in P. Studies	x		x		x		x	
Resources and Methods		x		x		x		x
Dissertation Pro.	x		x		x		x	
Performance Theory	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Documentation and Recrea.		x			x			x
Field Work			x			x		
Dance Research		x			x			x
Archives	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Management of Archives			x			x		
Dramaturgy I, II (at least each semester)								
Contemporary Performance (at least each semester)								
Folk/Popular (at least each semester)								
Western Theater (at least each semester)								
Dance (4 courses each semester in areas as needed)								

Infine, riporto di seguito degli esempi dei corsi offerti dal dipartimento di Performance Studies durante l'anno accademico 2011/2012, periodo durante il quale io stessa mi trovavo alla New York University in veste di Visiting Scholar⁴⁸.

Spring 2012 Course Bulletin

COURSE LISTING

Performance of Everyday Life - Kapchan

Projects in Performance Studies (REQ) - Browning

Projects Recitation

Foucault and the Histories of Sexuality - Nyong'o

Fetish in Performance - Browning

⁴⁸ <http://performance.tisch.nyu.edu/page/courses.html>

Theorizing Sound Writing - Kapchan
Studies in Dance: Movement Theory - Lepecki
Performance and the Technological Imagination - Clough
Landscape in Film and Performance (LE/CL) - Weiss
Memory, Trauma and Performance - Taylor
Tourist Productions - Vail
Curating Performance (LE/CL) - Lepecki/Altshuler
Artaud & the Psychopathology of Expression (LE) - Weiss
Embodiment and Performance (LE) - Taylor
Performance Composition: Performance and Revolution - Servin
On Improvisation - Johnson

Esaminando i diversi esempi di offerta formativa proposta, è possibile evidenziare la graduale trasformazione verificatasi in seno al dipartimento di Performance Studies nel corso degli anni, in direzione di una svolta didattica di impianto sempre più liberale e rispondente alle esigenze performative.

Nei primi bollettini riportati, infatti, accanto agli “avanguardistici” corsi e seminari in “teoria della performance”, era ancora possibile riscontrare una massiccia presenza di classi dedicate alla storia, alla teoria e alla critica del teatro e della danza, così come allo studio della drammaturgia. È risultato evidentemente necessario un po’ di tempo perché il curriculum in Performance Studies si consolidasse attraverso gli sforzi sperimentali portati accademicamente avanti da Schechner e colleghi. I corsi offerti oggi variano dallo studio della sessualità attraverso Foucault, a quello del fetish nella performance via Marx, passando per classi sulla memoria, il trauma e la performance in America Latina, quelle sulle produzioni turistiche e quelle sulla dimensione curatoriale della performance.

1.4 Tutta un'altra storia: Performance Studies alla NYU Vs Performance Studies alla NWU

La storia della nascita dei Performance Studies alla New York University, seppure per molti versi la più significativa, non è però l'unica. Difatti, esattamente negli stessi anni, nella cittadina di Evanston, nello stato dell'Illinois, la Northwestern University dava vita ad un'altra tradizione di Performance Studies, la cui genealogia accademica va però rintracciata all'interno della School of Speech e, più esattamente, nel dipartimento di Oral Interpretation.

The discipline is conceived, taught, and institutionalized in a number of different ways. Broadly speaking, there are two main brands, New York University's and Northwestern University's. [...] But over time, these two approaches have moved toward each other sharing a common commitment to an expanded vision of "performance" and "performativity"⁴⁹.

Come messo in evidenza prima da Richard Schechner in *Performance Studies An Introduction*, e come ulteriormente dettagliato poi da Shannon Jackson in *Professing Performance*, le origini accademiche e le specifiche declinazioni disciplinari dei Performance Studies alla NYU ed alla NWU differiscono tra di loro. Infatti alla Northwestern University il perno disciplinare ruota intorno a comunicazione, interpretazione orale, retorica, speech-act theory ed etnografia⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, p.5.

⁵⁰ Fondamentale risulta il contributo fornito da Dwight Conquergood agli studi di performance alla Northwestern in materia di etnografia. *Rethinking Ethnography* del 1991 è un testo esplicativo in tal senso; dalla sua consultazione emergono interessanti nodi teorici che legano la performance all'etnografia, molti dei quali rimandano al comune percorso intrapreso dai performance studies alla NYU, qui determinato essenzialmente dalla condivisione di una base antropologica.

The department of (Oral) Interpretation had a decades' long existence in a very different institutional milieu – that is, inside a School of Speech, one that also housed distinct departments of Communication Studies, Radio/TV/Film, and Theatre. Thus, unlike the progenitors at NYU who broke from a prior institutional identity as Theatre, Northwestern's department had considered itself something other than Theatre for its entire institutional existence. Oral Interpretation was most often positioned as an aesthetic subfield within Speech, Communication, and/or Rhetoric. Its proponents drew from a classical tradition in oral poetry to argue for the role of performance in the analysis and dissemination of cultural texts, specializing in the adaptation of print media into an oral and embodied environment. Northwestern was unusual for devoting an entire department to this area⁵¹.

Alla New York University, invece, come in precedenza visto, i Performance Studies nascono dalla trasformazione del preesistente Graduate Degree in Drama e le principali matrici disciplinari risultano dall'intersezione tra teatro e antropologia, grazie essenzialmente all'apporto condotto dall'antropologo Victor Turner⁵², amico di Schechner, e fondamentale figura nella elaborazione della teoria della performance schechneriana. *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, introdotto tra l'altro dallo stesso Victor Turner e pubblicato nel 1985, è infatti il libro di Schechner nel quale risulta possibile individuare una enucleazione di questo raccordo teorico.

⁵¹ Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pag. 9.

⁵² Victor Turner, oltre ad aver influenzato in maniera assai evidente l'elaborazione della "teoria della performance", così come concepita da Richard Schechner, è stato spesso invitato dallo stesso Schechner, a volte insieme alla compagna, Edith Turner, a tenere corsi, lezioni, seminari e workshops alla New York University.

This network of ideas and practice was nourished by my relationship with anthropologist Victor Turner. Though we knew each other's work earlier, Turner and I met in 1997 when he invited me to participate in a conference he was organizing on "Ritual, Drama, and Spectacle". The conference was so successful, and the chemistry between Turner and me so positive, that we joined to plan a "World Conference on Ritual and Performance", which developed into three related conferences held during 1981-81. [...] These conferences very much shaped my ideas about what performance studies could become. [...] Tilting performance studies toward anthropology – which was particularly strong in the 1970s and 1980s – is linked to working with Turner and people he introduced me to; other possibilities for performance studies have since come strongly into play⁵³.

Se la componente antropologica proviene eminentemente dal supporto costante degli studi di Turner, l'ingrediente teatrale invece ha origine quasi integralmente dal lavoro di Schechner e degli altri studiosi che, come poc'anzi evidenziato, sono convocati alla fondazione del dipartimento. Di particolare rilievo appaiono infatti, senza ombra di dubbio, le esperienze teatrali fatte da Schechner con il Free Southern Theater ed il New Orleans Group durante gli anni in Louisiana e con il Performance Group dopo il trasferimento a New York e proprio in concomitanza con la nascita istituzionale dei Performance Studies⁵⁴. *The Environmental Theater*, la cui prima edizione viene pubblicata nel 1973, è il libro in cui Schechner raggruppa tutte le acquisizioni teoriche sino a quel momento compiute in relazione al "fare teatrale", e provenienti dalle

⁵³ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁴ Nel 1991, sempre a New York City, Richard Schechner fonderà la sua ultima compagnia teatrale, la East Coast Artists.

sue esperienze prima col New Orleans Group (1964-67), e dopo, a partire dal suo trasferimento a New York nel 1967, con il Performance Group (1967-69, 1970-72). Nelle pagine introduttive di *Environmental Theater* è lo stesso Schechner a dichiarare che il testo è un “manuale di training per performers” che racchiude le pratiche e le soggiacenti teorie da lui sviluppate nel suo personale lavoro col TPG⁵⁵.

These methods of training – based on whole body work, yogic breathing, sound-making, and the release of feelings (connecting these feelings, sooner or later, to social or political circumstances: “the personal is the political”) – I used, and still use, in the many performer workshops I’ve led in the Americas, Europe, Asia, and, briefly, South Africa. [...]⁵⁶

Schechner però tiene anche a precisare che *Environmental Theater* è qualcosa di più di un manuale per performers, offrendo validi spunti per le regie, il design, le composizioni di performances e la formazione di gruppi performativi⁵⁷.

Environmental Theater specifies a way of working, putting this way in its definitive historical and theoretical place⁵⁸.

Di cruciale importanza nella consapevolezza teatrale via via acquisita dal regista Schechner è inoltre l’incontro artistico con Jerzy Grotowski. Dopo aver infatti preso parte ai workshops tenuti dallo stesso Grotowski alla NYU, Schechner ha deciso immediatamente di riutilizzare e rimontare il materiale appreso trasformandolo in un suo personale workshop, dallo

⁵⁵ Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, an expanded new edition, Applause, New York, 1994, pag. XI-XII.

⁵⁶ *ibidem*.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

sviluppo del quale, pochi mesi dopo, ha preso il via l'avventura del Performance Group⁵⁹. Sotto quest'aspetto Schechner descrive la fase iniziale del TPG come una sintesi di ciò che aveva appreso da Grotowski e Cieslak frammisto ad una serie di esercizi attoriali che lui stesso aveva estrapolato da una varietà di fonti, incluse le sue letture etnografiche e antropologiche, la filosofia orientale, le sue esperienze come regista teatrale e le sue partecipazioni a happenings e a workshops come ad esempio quelli tenuti da Joseph Chaikin e dai futuri componenti dell'Open Theatre⁶⁰. Ma ancora una volta il lavoro teorico filtrato attraverso le pagine di TDR sembra aver giocato un ruolo altrettanto determinante nella formazione del Performance Group stesso. Come editore del giornale, Schechner ammette infatti di essere stato molto influenzato dai contributi che leggeva, selezionava e pubblicava in TDR e che provenivano tanto da teorici quanto da praticanti del teatro e dell'happening⁶¹.

1.5 Teatro \subset Performance $\Leftrightarrow \forall$ Teatro \exists Performance

C'è un discorso pronunciato da Richard Schechner nell'agosto del 1992 in occasione di una conferenza dell'ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) e poi pubblicato su TDR col il titolo di *A New Paradigm for Theater in the Academy*, che risulta particolarmente significativo al fine di indagare il rapporto tra teatro e performance e come il focus sia slittato dal primo alla seconda. Nel citato intervento Schechner considera il teatro, nella sua tradizionale definizione di messa in scena del componimento drammatico scritto, come “il quartetto d'archi

⁵⁹ Richard Schechner, *TDR and Me*, in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006, p. 10.

⁶⁰ *ibidem*.

⁶¹ *ibid*.

del ventunesimo secolo: un genere amato ma estremamente limitato, una suddivisione della performance”⁶². Nell’auspicare una riforma accademica constatata che “il training professionale per il teatro ortodosso – una fetta molto sottile dell’intera torta performance – non è né economicamente sufficiente né accademicamente accettabile”⁶³. Vedendo il nuovo paradigma nella performance e non più nel teatro, fomenta la trasformazione dei dipartimenti di teatro in dipartimenti di Performance Studies⁶⁴.

Performance engages intellectual, social, cultural, historical, and artistic life in a broad sense. Performance combines theory and practice. Performance studied and practiced interculturally can be at the core of a "well-rounded education." That is because performed acts, whether actual or virtual, more than the written word, connect and negotiate the many cultural, personal, group, regional, and world systems comprising today's realities⁶⁵.

L’ampio spettro della performance, pur includendo le arti, va molto al di là, abbracciando intrattenimenti, riti, politica, economia e interazioni face to face; in questo modo, secondo Schechner, mette anche in campo una dimensione multiculturale e interculturale in grado di contribuire più cospicuamente all’avanzamento della vita umana⁶⁶. Infatti i corsi in performance studies dovrebbero incentrarsi su “come la performance viene utilizzata in politica, medicina, nello sport, nella religione e nelle

⁶² Richard Schechner, *A New Paradigm for Theater in the Academy*, TDR, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 1992, pp.9-10. Questo *Comment* di Schechner é in realtà la trascrizione dell’intervento fatto dallo stesso Schechner in occasione della conferenza nazionale dell’ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) tenutasi ad Atlanta nell’agosto 1992.

⁶³ *ibidem*.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

espressioni della vita quotidiana”⁶⁷. Alla luce del fatto che assai di rado la ricchezza e la pluralità delle espressioni performative divengono oggetto d’attenzione da parte dei dipartimenti di teatro, Schechner sostiene fortemente la necessità che vi si dedichi uno spazio specifico.

These worlds of performance ought to be the subject of theorizing, fieldwork, and live classroom presentations⁶⁸.

In effetti, se si osservano, come fatto poc’anzi, gli sviluppi curriculari verificatisi all’interno del dipartimento di performance studies della New York University, non vi si trovano più da parecchi anni corsi di teatro o di drammaturgia. Se questo originariamente è probabilmente accaduto al fine di affermare una totale emancipazione dei performance studies dal ramo dei theater studies, da cui, come evidenziato, discendono, almeno nella tradizione schechneriana, oggi giorno la distinzione tra studiare teatro e studiare performance è oramai, fortunatamente, netta, e ciò rende addirittura possibile fare un altro tipo di discorso, finalizzato a comprendere quale tipo di apporto i performance studies siano stati in grado di offrire ai theater studies. A tal proposito assai esplicativa appare l’analisi fatta da Marvin Carlson, studioso di teatro, ma anche esperto conoscitore e frequentatore della teoria della performance. Nel suo contributo alla raccolta di James Harding e Cindy Rosenthal sulla nascita dei performance studies, Carlson mette in rilievo come, perché e fino a che punto gli studi della performance possano fornire dei nuovi punti di vista e delle nuove metodologie che consentano agli studi sul teatro di oltrepassare quegli ostacoli che a partire dagli anni Sessanta e Settanta hanno indebolito il loro ruolo storico nel mondo

⁶⁷ ibid.

⁶⁸ ibid.

culturale ed intellettuale del ventunesimo secolo⁶⁹. Riconoscendo che l'impatto iniziale dei performance studies sui theatre studies si è verificato essenzialmente attraverso i saggi di Schechner e i numeri di TDR, Carlson individua tre aree principali in cui, a suo avviso, i performance studies hanno positivamente influenzato i theatre studies: l'internazionalismo, la democratizzazione e la contestualizzazione⁷⁰.

Volgere lo sguardo al concetto più ampio di performance ha infatti consentito di aprirsi ad altre forme di espressioni culturali, aventi spesso “una tradizione assai più ricca e profonda di quella che emerge dall'esclusiva osservazione degli imposti modelli di performance colonialisti”⁷¹. Il conseguente diffondersi di una visione del teatro più internazionalizzata ha non soltanto contrastato il prevalere delle forme teatrali e delle metodologie “eurocentriche”, ma ha anche “democratizzato” una certa tendenza interna allo stesso “dramma eurocentrico” che fino a quel momento aveva nettamente distinto tra forme alte e forme basse⁷². Dall'analisi di Carlson emerge dunque come gli studi di performance abbiano originato “visioni teoriche, strategie e metodologie che hanno aiutato l'ambito più conservativo dei tradizionali studi teatrali ad assorbire ed utilizzare il nuovo orientamento”⁷³.

Il dialogo tra gli studi teatrali e gli studi performativi si esplica su più piani. Questo significa che tra le due discipline, al di là degli evidenti scambi osmotici (tali per cui non solo una, i performance studies, è nata dall'altra, i theater studies, e l'ultima per nascita sia stata e sia tuttora in grado di contribuire allo sviluppo della prima), esistono anche delle

⁶⁹ Marvin Carlson, *Performance Studies and the Enhancement of Theatre Studies* in James Harding, Cindy Rosenthal, *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2011, pp. 16-21.

⁷⁰ *ibidem*.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid.*

“relazioni a distanza” e a tratti inconsapevoli. Una di queste “relazioni” viene individuata e messa in evidenza da Marco De Marinis che, in un articolo su TDR dell’inverno del 2011⁷⁴, enuclea dei punti di contatto tra i Performance Studies americani e la nuova Teatrologia italiana, delle vere e proprie intersezioni teoriche e metodologiche che potrebbero fungere da punti di partenza per un dialogo tra i due ambiti di ricerca. Uno di questi punti di contatto viene individuato da Marco De Marinis nel “privilegiare i processi sia sui prodotti che sui sistemi astratti”⁷⁵. A suo avviso “la nuova teatrologia osserva i lavori, siano essi testi o performances, da un punto di vista processuale e, dunque, performativo, e questa attenzione induce la nuova teatrologia a focalizzarsi, al pari dei performance studies, sugli aspetti performativi dei fenomeni teatrali”⁷⁶.

- a. theatrical works are based on relations more than on works-products in the usual sense;
- b. more than being works-products, they are events, i.e., to resort to a terminology gaining ground today, “practices in flux” (Deriu 2004) not easy to delineate or objectivate;
- c. the great importance (ever present, as a constitutive element) for theatrical works of a dimension of display, of self-referential, self-significant presentation, in short, self-mention, beyond and before mentioning the other⁷⁷.

A conclusione di questo suo intervento su TDR, De Marinis muove comunque delle critiche nei confronti dei Performance Studies, tenendo a

⁷⁴ L’articolo in questione, *New Teatrology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011, è lo sviluppo di alcune questioni già in precedenza affrontate da De Marinis in *Capire il teatro. Lineamenti di una nuova teatrologia*, seconda edizione, Bulzoni, 2008.

⁷⁵ Marco De Marinis, *New Teatrology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011, pag.71-72.

⁷⁶ *ibidem*.

⁷⁷ *ibid*.

precisare che, benché “la nuova teatrologia abbia condiviso negli anni – in maniera del tutto indipendente – molte delle istanze poste dai Performance Studies nello studio dei fenomeni teatrali come fenomeni performativi”, “esistono ovviamente anche differenze importanti fra queste due prospettive d’indagine⁷⁸”. Tra queste, in particolare, De Marinis nota in primo luogo l’eccessiva vaghezza metodologica dei Performance Studies che, a suo dire, hanno “un oggetto troppo ampio e indefinito⁷⁹”, anche alla luce del fatto che, nell’ottica schechneriana, tutto può essere indagato *as performance* e quindi diventare oggetto di studio dei Performance Studies; in secondo luogo poi, De Marinis lamenta ai Performance Studies un “rapporto poco chiaro, non risolto, nei confronti della dimensione storica e della conoscenza storiografica, con rischi di relativismo integrale e di soggettività esasperata⁸⁰”.

Entrambe le critiche avanzate da De Marinis appaiono di indubbia portata e consistenza in relazione soprattutto a questioni metodologiche da cui i Performance Studies, quasi per statuto identitario, tendono spesso a svincolarsi. Ecco qual é, in merito a ciò, l’opinione di Marvin Carlson:

I agree with Marco De Marinis, but that might partly be my theater history background. I mean I started as an historian, I think history is absolutely essential; that’s why I like “Professing Performance”, because it talks about the history of the discipline, how that has effected certain things in the discipline. [...]

Performance Studies has not done that [giving so much importance to the historiography]. Certainly individuals, Richard obviously, who knows history very well, is aware of an historical progression, but I really think that the way that Performance Studies developed, it developed in America, it developed in a particular American

⁷⁸ *ivi*, pag. 73.

⁷⁹ *ibidem*.

⁸⁰ *ibidem*.

consciousness, let's say a modernist or post-modernist consciousness, and part of that is a denial of history, or, let's say, a privileging of the new, the innovative, something that nobody has never thought of this before: "we are going to revolutionary things". This had around the early years of Performance Studies, in the 1967s, one of the effects of this was that particularly the NYU branch of Performance Studies worked very hard to be revolutionary and to say: "We are not theatre. We are going to replace theatre. This is something new". And this costed a lot of argumentation and a lot of deviousness between theatre people and performance studies people, most of which has gone away now. But there was a part of the rhetoric of performance studies that it didn't have a history; it was something that was new; it was asking questions that people have never asked before. That meant they have reinvented a lot of things, unnecessarily I think, but it might have been necessary. Let's talk about the lack of direction; I think that's a feature of this as a post-modern discipline, that is from the very beginning, especially at NYU, not quite so much at Northwestern, but especially at NYU there was a pride in the fact that there was no core to this discipline; it has no settled at all boundaries, there was no reading list, there was no standard set of books that everybody read. The students at NYU, and I think this is less true now, but it has been true pretty steadily, had very different reactions to this lack of a center, and I would say that on the whole the better students responded well to, and said: "Ok! I'll put together my own thing; Performance Studies will make what I make it. I will create something to Richard, or something to Peggy Phelan, or Barbara... whoever is, but it will be mine. And everybody in Performance Studies creates their own way of working, their own discipline, if you like. On the whole weaker students just went crazy, because they kept saying: "Where do I find books I have to read?" And nobody can tell them. And it would be a different five books if you went to find different people. And the people at NYU were proud

of that and I think justly so, I think that was in the nature of what they were doing. Again, that is a very post-modern idea. There was a cluster of someone overlapping ideas. Have you read Deleuze and Guattari? Well it is rhizomatic the way the department is organized, and that is very contemporary, that is: “This is now the way that everybody is called to think. So, yes, it is true that there is no center, but it is also true this is a calculated thing. To say that there is no center does not mean there is no discipline. Again, it’s a rhizomatic discipline. Now, does that mean that it is subjective? Well, yes! Everybody creates their own discipline. Peggy Phelan Performance Studies is quite different than Richard Schechner Performance Studies, which is quite different from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. And you can say: “What do they all have in common?” Well, not that they have a lot, and that’s not the most important thing what they have in common. It was the most important thing in a traditional discipline, that is back in the 1950s; you could say: “Professor X, Professor Y and Professor Z all teach theater; they are very different in their specialties, but what do they have in common, and that’s what we examine people on PhD exams. They all have read Aristotle, and Aristotle in theater is a kind of founding text; there is no founding text in Performance Studies; it’s not Richard Schechner’s book or one of his books, presumed everybody reads those, but that’s not; it’s not Victor Turner’s book, well books but in particular his last book, and so on. Yes, it’s subjective, yes it doesn’t have a center. Yes, so what? I mean these are legitimate complains if you think that a program cannot be subjective or a program ought to have a center. Let me just say one more word about subjectivity, and that is, we now live in a very subjective world. Let me go completely outside of Performance Studies and just talk about Anthropology for a while. You have done some work in Anthropology I suppose. Well, what would you say it’s the major change in Anthropology in the last 15-20 years? Well no, it’s not fair from me to turn back the questions o you. Let me just say that to me the

biggest change in Anthropology of the last 15-20 years is the recognition that you cannot be an objective observer. The discipline has become subjective. It used to be the model of the anthropologists was the European or American outsiders.

When anthropologists go into a culture they really try to go into the culture, they learn, of course they speak the language or try to, but try to infact participate in the rituals and understand them. The Mayan anthropologist Tedlock became a shaman. He has to become a shaman; he is a shaman. He felt he could not really as an anthropologist understand what a shaman was unless he actually became a shaman. Well, 50-60 years ago, what you were taught Anthropology was “the worst you can do is go native; you have got to keep your objectivity”. I mean even in the humanities I learnt that, that is: always, whatever you are studying, be objective, never let your own feelings get into it. Now we know that it is impossible; we really know that’s impossible. Not everybody believes that yet, but basically the academy has accepted subjectivity and certainly theater and performance studies have. Lolk at the writing of someone like Jill Dolan or Peggy Phelan or Rebecca Schneider. It is all I, I, I, I; and they are not ashamed of that necessary. Do you know Rebecca’s new book about memory and battle fields has a finger on the cover? Think of how much of that book ... think about when she’s talking about picking up that finger... that is totally subjective and totally right about performance studies. I do think that Performance Studies is one of the main reasons that much more subjectivity has entered into all forms of writing. Women’s writing has been notoriously subjective; and that’s a part of what makes what it is. People write under their own experience and indeed have nothing else to write out of. So I agree with Marco De Marinis, except that to me it’s not a criticism; it’s just what a discipline is.⁸¹

⁸¹ Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata a Marvin Carlson a New York City nel marzo del 2012. L’intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 285.

E in effetti, Mavin Carlson sembra aver ben interpretato le modalità attraverso cui Rebecca Schneider, tra gli altri Performance Studies scholars, affronta le problematiche inerenti alla componente storiografica. Chiamata a riflettere sullo stesso ordine di questioni, infatti, la Schneider sostiene:

I think it is necessary, but don't mistake me because I think there is a new form of historiography. When you say "the analysis of the specific object in the field", I mean one of the issues with Performance Studies is "no object is discrete to itself". You know, that specific object is not a specific object; I mean it's already composed of a myriad problems of looking, of spectatorship, of engaging the object from a perspective, if you will, of your viewing, and it's already gonna be other than itself, because of your engagement with it. So, there is no that kind of idea of mastery of a specific object that one can tell the lineage of that object. One has to engage with the volatile relational contingency of when one thinks one mix that object in the moment. So there is a pressure on telling the history and on thinking about history, in this new moment of the undoing of the specificities of the object. How does one do it? I mean how does one tell that story. In a way one has to tell the story of telling stories; and of course historiography is about his history thinking about history. History thinking about itself. It's not just the narrative or the chronicle; it's not just the history. Historiography is in the sense of "how do we come to this place to try even tell this story of this object; and I have to be a kind of critical of that, of the fractureness of my attempts to even do that. But I think there are ways to tell that history or to bring a history in, even while complicating that linear march of a kind of enlightenment, investment in forward moving progress oriented time.

So I think if you think about certain historiographers like Carolyn Dinshaw's book, *Getting Medieval*, has been very informative to me because she really writes about the affective echoes across time, that might happen in an object; an object might retain some kind of affective echoes from another time. But the challenge in that isn't necessarily just a kind of recover some sort of unproblematic story of this object travels to become to this place; but to engage in a really set of desires about knowing and about accounting for, "how do we account for this?" So sometimes looks like a very different historiography, and this is maybe why people say "we don't need that, we don't need that kind of history perhaps", but we do need an account of our implications, our tangle in time. And to my mind that's best surfed by deep study on other moments in time. To account for our entanglement in time, our genealogy that brings us to a moment of trying to think about telling history differently. We are best informed by looking at other efforts in other moments in time to tell the historical narrative, as we devise new ways of telling those narratives to ourselves. Some people do it by a personal narrative, some people say "my personal history is the only history that I might have to bring to this object. Other people may say something different, but I disagree that one doesn't need any kind of engagement with history or historiography. [...] One of the reasons my book, *Performance Remains*, is about reenactment is because historically there has been this idea that performance disappears, that is a basic idea of performance studies; I give an account of it in chapter 4, I don't remember, 3 or 4. But, you know, Richard Schechner said this in 1985; it was picked up by many people, Peggy Phelan, famously reiterating "performance become itself through disappearing and it cannot be recorded" etc.etc., and that's all been a very important thing to think with; but it also a kind of says "then, if performance disappears, it has no means of remaining, it doesn't have a means of remaining in the archive, whereas in the object-based and text-based archive, what about

the body as an archive? I mean Psychoanalysis gives us the body as an archive; there are many examples: Foucault gives us the eruptive body... there are many examples of body as an archive. But to tell those stories, to tell an history in that way... this is why Foucault calls it a genealogy and not a history... we aren't finished figuring out what it is to enunciate a past that comes to us through that which has been forgotten. That's a different kind of history, but it doesn't happen in isolation to what does remain in the archive. It's like what Diana Taylor argues; it's some kind of crosswind that we can become better at thinking through.⁸²

All'interno della stessa intervista però, la Schneider, mette anche in evidenza, situandosi a questo proposito su un piano non dissimile da quello di De Marinis, come la componente storiografica pertenga più propriamente ai Theater Studies che ai Performance Studies, e come, in funzione del forte legame dialogico esistente tra teatro e performance alla Brown University, qui venga fornita al lavoro di ricostruzione storiografica un'importanza maggiore di quanta non gliene se ne tributi alla NYU⁸³.

We changed the name of the Theatre Department to Theatre and Performance Studies Department because we didn't want to loose the rich Theatre Studies aspects that already had been working in this more semiotic and phenomenological or, whatever that sort of angle one took on what happens on the stage. We didn't want to loose a rigorous study on that, and sometimes performance studies in its... I don't want to say

⁸² Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata a Rebecca Schneider alla Brown University (Providence) nell'aprile del 2012. L'intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 229.

⁸³ Rebecca Schneider, attualmente capo del dipartimento in Theatre and Performance Studies alla Brown University, è una delle principali esperte e teoriche nell'ambito degli studi sulla performance. Proviene da studi teatrali, ha in seguito conseguito un Master e un PhD in Performance Studies alla New York University.

“pure form”, because there can be no pure form for Performance Studies, it’s like an oxymoron... but Performance Studies without Theater Studies, that’s possible to consider that you wouldn’t necessarily have to study theater to study performance behavior. But in our department we really had a strength in Theater Studies, so we wanted to keep study in theater history, study in theater and dramatic theory, so we wanted an historical aspect to it. When I went through NYU, it did not have and history sequence, one didn’t have to know history for instance. I happened to have studied theater, so I came with that, but it wasn’t a requirement, and I don’t think it necessarily should be, but in our department we offer that. So we train our students to... and basically what we think now, what we are working on are things like the theater history of photography, or the theater history of film, [...]

So we would like to think of the theatre history of these things more deeply and profoundly. An this is in a sense to say that something like photography could be seen as a performance, a performance study, a study of our relationship to screens, but to do that really well, one needs to know something about the history of screens and of performance. So, maybe there is a long way to answer your question, but maybe one of the differences is Theater and Performance Studies in our way of looking at it contains an history and historiography a little bit more than does Performance Studies, at least at its NYU variety at present.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata a Rebecca Schneider alla Brown University (Providence) nell’aprile del 2012. L’intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 229.

2.1 PS: Segni Particolari. Performance come Oggetto, Performance come Lente

“Performance Studies is what Performance Studies does”, “Performance Studies è ciò che Performance Studies fa”: questa è in assoluto una delle frasi che viene fuori più di frequente ogniqualvolta si discute dell’identità dei Performance Studies o si cerchi di definirli.

Per comprendere cosa siano realmente i Performance Studies cioè, ancora una volta, come successo per la definizione della performance, è preferibile slittare dal concetto dell’essere a quello del fare, dal “being” al “doing” appunto. Questa è la “strategia” esplicativa utilizzata da Schechner quando, per spiegare il significato di un sostantivo, “performance”, passa al verbo corrispondente, “to perform”⁸⁵. Forse l’origine di questa sorta di meccanismo esplicativo spesso adottato da Schechner può essere individuata nella sua convinzione che lo stesso processo nominale che fa seguito alla comprensione debba, per lo più, passare attraverso la dimensione esperienziale del fare o dell’osservare partecipando al fare⁸⁶.

Ecco dunque che, anche quando Schechner si trova ad elencare quelli che, a suo dire, sono i caratteri distintivi che rendono i Performance Studies “speciali”, punta, ancora una volta su ciò che più sembra poter contraddistinguere il fare di chi studia la performance, nelle sue varie e molteplici declinazioni.

Le prossime pagine saranno dunque dedicate a prendere in analisi alcuni dei principali tratti identitari dei Performance Studies, così come sono stati individuati e messi in evidenza dallo stesso Richard Schechner,

⁸⁵ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 28.

⁸⁶ *ivi*, pag. 2 e in Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1985, pag. 108-109.

cercando, simultaneamente, di indagarne alcuni esempi di risvolti concreti, e cioè di provare a capire come queste caratteristiche si esplichino nel concreto fare dei Performance Studies.

2.2 Performance come oggetto di studio

Dire che l'oggetto di studio dei Performance Studies è la performance potrebbe risultare un'affermazione alquanto tautologica, soprattutto perché la definizione di performance non è qualcosa di univocamente condiviso e nemmeno, molto più banalmente, noto. Spesso, ancora oggi, quando si parla di performance, soprattutto in contesti non anglosassoni, l'accezione principale con cui questo termine viene inteso riconduce all'idea di arte performativa. Eppure, sempre nella teoria schechneriana, quella artistica è soltanto una tra le “otto, qualche volta separate, qualche volta sovrapposte, situazioni in cui si verificano delle performances⁸⁷”. Di queste otto categorie situazionali fanno parte, oltre alle arti, anche la vita quotidiana (cucinare, socializzare o “semplicemente vivere”), lo sport e altri intrattenimenti popolari, il mondo degli affari, la tecnologia, il sesso, il rituale (sia sacro che secolare), il gioco.

⁸⁷ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 31.

Performances occur in eight sometimes separate, sometimes overlapping situations:

1. in everyday life – cooking, socializing, “just living”
2. in the arts
3. in sports and other popular entertainments
4. in business
5. in technology
6. in sex
7. in ritual – sacred and secular
8. in play.

Diventa immediato allora comprendere come per Schechner la performance non abbia solo la funzione di “realizzare qualcosa che sia bello”, o di “intrattenere”, ma anche quelle di “marcare o cambiare identità”, di “realizzare o ampliare una comunità”, di “guarire”, di “insegnare, persuadere, o convincere”, oppure ancora di “avere a che fare con il sacro e/o il demoniaco”⁸⁸.

La performance per Schechner è azione, comportamento, o meglio ancora, “restored behavior” o “twice-behaved behavior”, vale a dire una forma di “comportamento restaurato” che scaturisce dalla ricombinazione di frammenti comportamentali precedentemente agiti. Le azioni, siano esse fisiche, verbali o virtuali, non sono mai “for-the-first-time”, ma al contrario sempre “preparate e provate” (come succede a teatro), anche quando la “messa in scena” di una striscia di comportamento restaurato si verifichi nella più totale inconsapevolezza da parte del soggetto agente. Per il teorico degli studi sulla performance, questo concetto vale anche per le azioni che potrebbero apparentemente sembrare “once-behaved”, cioè agite per la prima volta, nel senso di tese a costituire dei comportamenti del tutto originari (come ad esempio nel caso di alcune azioni della vita quotidiana o degli Happenings di Allan Kaprow)⁸⁹. Proprio a proposito di questo importante nodo teorico De Marinis pone, sempre all’interno del sovracitato articolo su TDR, un’altra critica altrettanto significativa:

⁸⁸ *ivi*, pag. 46.

Putting together ideas drawn from various sources, I find seven functions of performance:

1 to entertain

2 to make something that is beautiful

3 to mark or change identity

4 to make or foster community

5 to heal

6 to teach, persuade, or convince

7 to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic.

⁸⁹ *ivi*, pag. 28-29

I believe Schechner's outlook is too drastic when it excludes the possible existence of a once behaved behavior. I think such a viewpoint eliminates the possibility of grasping the deeper meaning, if not the essence, of a lot of radical theatrical research in the 20th century, which generally belong to what Stanislavsky called "work on oneself," all the way to Grotowski's Art as vehicle, which aims at reaching — through a restored restored behavior — a once behaved behavior that is more than original, originary, essential.⁹⁰

Per Schechner alla base di questa apparente illusione di originarietà comportamentale risiede un'abile combinazione di "everydayness" e di "onceness" che contraddistingue l'agire umano.

[...] the everydayness of everyday life is precisely its familiarity, its being built from known bits of behavior rearranged and shaped in order to suit specific circumstances. But it is also true that many events and behaviors are one-time events. Their "onceness" is a function of context, reception, and the countless ways bits of behavior can be organized, performed, and displayed. The overall event may appear to be new or original, but its constituent parts – if broken down finely enough and analyzed – are revealed as restored behaviors.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Marco De Marinis, *New Theatrology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011, pag. 73.

Ritengo che Schechner sia troppo drastico nell'escludere la possibilità dell'esistenza di un *once behaved behavior*. Penso che in questo modo si precluda la possibilità di cogliere il senso più profondo, se non l'essenza, di molte ricerche teatrali eccentriche del Novecento, in genere racchiudibili nella formula stanislavskiana del "lavoro su di sé", fino a quella grotowskiana dell'Arte come veicolo, il cui scopo in effetti mi sembra proprio quello di attingere -attraverso il *restored restored behavior*- a un *once behaved behavior*, più che originale, originario, essenziale.

⁹¹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 29.

Al fine di rendere più chiaro, tramite l'impiego di un'immagine, la sua idea di "restored behavior", Schechner ne parla come di un "comportamento vivente trattato come un regista cinematografico tratta una striscia di pellicola. Queste strisce di comportamento possono essere riorganizzate o ricostruite, ma sono indipendenti dai sistemi causali (siano essi personali, sociali, politici, tecnologici, ecc.) che li generano. Godono insomma di una loro esistenza del tutto autonoma, e la *verità* o *sorgente* del comportamento può non essere conosciuta, oppure essere persa, ignorata o contraddetta⁹²".

Nel caso in cui si faccia riferimento a performance artistiche o comunque a forme di performance che siano "comportamenti marcati, incorniciati o amplificati, separati dalla semplice vita vissuta", allora Schechner ne parla in termini di *restored restored behavior*, o di *twice-behaved behavior*, vale a dire di forme di comportamento che risultino da un restauro al quadrato di comportamenti precedentemente agiti⁹³.

Come se, a mio personale avviso, il livello di consapevolezza presente in una certa modalità di agire (non necessariamente di natura artistica *strictu sensu*) implicasse un'elevazione al quadrato del livello di restauro del comportamento proposto.

To become conscious of restored behavior is to recognize the process by which social processes in all their multiple forms are transformed into theatre. Theatre, not in the limited sense of enactments of dramas on stages [...] Performance in the restored behavior sense means never for the first time, always for the second to nth time: twice-behaved behavior.⁹⁴

⁹² *ivi*, pag. 34.

⁹³ *ivi*, pag. 35.

⁹⁴ *ivi*, pag. 36.

Dico questo anche alla luce della definizione di performance suggerita da Marvin Carlson nel suo *Performance: A Critical Introduction*.

The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as "performance," or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself. The difference between doing and performing, according to this way of thinking, would seem to lie not in the frame of theatre versus real life but in an attitude - we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this introduces a consciousness that gives them the quality of performance.⁹⁵

La dimensione performativa dunque, nella riflessione di Carlson, è determinata dalla componente di consapevolezza presente nell'agire umano. Nel prendere in esame il concetto di "restoration of behavior" schechneriano, Carlson mette infatti in evidenza come esso riconduca ad un'idea di "performance che implichi non la dimostrazione/esibizione di abilità, quanto, piuttosto, una certa distanza tra il sé agente ed il comportamento agito, analoga alla distanza esistente tra un attore ed il ruolo che l'attore interpreta sul palcoscenico⁹⁶".

E in effetti è lo stesso Schechner che, applicando la sua nota formula "not... not not", scrive:

Restored behavior is "out there", separate from "me". To put it in personal terms, restored behavior is "me behaving as if I were someone else," or "as I am told to do," or "as I have learned." Even if I feel myself wholly to be myself, acting independently, only a little

⁹⁵ Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, New York, 1996, pag. 4. Herbert Blau è un altro studioso che ha indagato lo stesso fenomeno qui messo in luce da Marvin Carlson.

⁹⁶ ibidem.

investigating reveals that the units of behavior that comprise “me” were not invented by “me.” Or, quite the opposite, I may experience being “beside myself,” “not myself,” or “taken over” as in trance. The fact that there are multiple “me”s in every person is not a sign of derangement but the way things are.⁹⁷

Altra distinzione fondamentale che Schechner enuclea nella sua teoria della performance è quella tra “is” performance e “as” performance. Secondo il padre dei Performance Studies, infatti, cosa è performance è determinato e circoscritto di volta in volta da ciò che le singole e specifiche circostanze culturali, sociali e storiche considerano tale. Questo significa che al variare del contesto, delle convenzioni, degli usi o delle trazioni cambia anche l’idea di performance. A dispetto dei limiti imposti dalle specificità socio-culturali, tutto invece può essere analizzato “come” performance, e ciò conduce a dei vantaggi, tra cui quello di poter considerare le cose “in process”, nel loro stato mutevole, con la conseguenza di riuscire ad osservare cose altrimenti precluse al campo d’indagine⁹⁸.

Questa distinzione tra “is” performance e “as” performance aiuta inoltre a comprendere come, nei Performance Studies, la performance sia al contempo sia oggetto di analisi sia lente metodologica. Dire infatti che praticamente ogni cosa può essere indagata “come” performance equivale ad ergere la categoria della performance a strumento d’analisi. Un’implicazione metodologica di questo tipo risulta strettamente connessa all’idea schechneriana per cui le performances esistono solo in quanto azioni, interazioni e relazioni. È per questa ragione che osservare

⁹⁷ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 34-35.

⁹⁸ *ivi*, pag. 38-51.

un “oggetto”, sia esso materiale, verbale, virtuale o altro, “come” performance significa “investigare ciò che l’oggetto in questione fa, come interagisce e si relaziona con altri oggetti o esseri⁹⁹”. Interrogativi di questo tipo provengono dall’elevare a performance, e quindi dallo studiare “come” tale, oggetti d’analisi che, diversamente investigati, non rivelerebbero forse le stesse risposte.

Una posizione di questo tipo appare ampiamente condivisa dalla stragrande maggioranza degli studiosi e dei teorici che si occupano di Performance Studies e la distinzione tra l’idea di performance come oggetto di studio e quella della performance come lente metodologica ritorna nella riflessione teorica di molti di loro. Significativo mi sembra, a tal proposito, quanto argomentato da Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Secondo la docente della New York University e fondatrice dell’Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, la performance funziona come una forma di episteme, un modo per conoscere, e non semplicemente un oggetto d’analisi¹⁰⁰. Per lei infatti la performance, schechnerianamente intesa come “twice-behaved behavior”, “funziona come un atto vitale di trasferimento”, un modo cioè attraverso cui trasmettere conoscenza, memoria e identità¹⁰¹. Da una parte quindi la performance, nelle sue molteplici forme di pratiche ed eventi, costituisce l’oggetto stesso d’analisi dei performance studies, un’oggetto che richiede di essere circoscritto, visto che, al variare dei contesti sociali varia anche ciò che viene considerato come una performance¹⁰². Dall’altra parte però, precisa la Taylor, la performance rappresenta anche una lente metodologica ed epistemologica attraverso cui gli studiosi sono in grado di circoscrivere e di analizzare come performance qualunque

⁹⁹ivi, pag. 30.

¹⁰⁰Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2003, pag. XVI.

¹⁰¹ivi, pag. 2-3.

¹⁰²ibidem.

forma di pratica incorporata, come ad esempio le performances connesse a pratiche di “obbedienza e disobbedienza civica, resistenza, cittadinanza, genere, etnicità o identità sessuale”¹⁰³.

Performance and aesthetics of everyday life vary from community to community, reflecting cultural and historical specificity as much in the enactment as in the viewing/reception.[...]

Performances travel, challenging and influencing other performances. Yet they are, in a sense, always in situ: intelligible in the framework of the immediate environment and issues surrounding them. The *is/as* underlines the understanding of performance as simultaneously "real" and "constructed," as practices that bring together what have historically been kept separate as discrete, supposedly free-standing, ontological and epistemological discourses.¹⁰⁴

Alla base del pensiero della Taylor risiede anche la convinzione per cui i Performance Studies non abbiano un oggetto di studio realmente precostituito; questo significa che ciò che di volta in volta viene elevato a performance è in verità il risultato di un *frame* costruito da chi “crea” il suo oggetto d’analisi.

I would say that the object of analysis in Performance Studies is never a given. There is no object as such out there, so that it’s probably more of a lens, than it is an object. So for example I can look at lots of different kinds of things, using a Performance Studies lens, and then I create my object of analysis, and I think that that’s why Performance Studies is so different than say Theater Studies or Cinema Studies or Literature Studies, because Cinema Studies looks at cinema and Literature Studies

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

looks at literature and those kinds of studies are focused by those particular objects, but we don't have that object of analysis; we look at performance, which is very very broadly understood as behavior, I guess, it could be animal and human behavior, but it's not locked into any specific thing. So for me to be able to study say ritual or dance or a social movement or anything like that as performance I have to create my object of analysis, so that means I have to find the frame that says: "Ok! This is the object of analysis that I am looking at". So I don't have a frame that comes from the outside, that is it's not a film, it's not a text. So I have to frame it; I have to say: "This is the beginning; this is the end". I am going to go from before the Dirty War to the end of the Dirty War, for example, in Argentina. I am going to look at these different kinds of interactions, I am going to focus on these particular spaces. So I have to create that object of analysis, which is a very different project I think than most scholars have. I think in fact we are closer to historians than to any other scholars in the arts. Because historians like Performance Studies scholars have to frame and create their object of analysis.

[...] I think if you think about behaviors, embodiment, presence, all those forms of thinking about how animals or humans transfer knowledge, make meaning out of different kinds of practice, use practice to transfer meaning, all of those things you are not just looking at say, for example, a dance or a piece of theater, something that is defining almost by the form. You are looking at many kinds of behaviors that perhaps haven't been formalized, haven't been thought through as a form. And so the Performance Studies lens allows you to look at that as a kind of behavior, the way the people use something, the way the people move in a certain space; we can think about the ways people move in public spaces as performance; we can think about the ways people display their things at the market... what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls a performance of everyday life. So it's

basically the frame that's allowing us to look at that as performance, rather than saying: "Ok! Those objects in and out themselves constitute a category, that is an object; but to think of an object of analysis means that somebody has already constituted it as an object, and we haven't done that. So I think that that's what the enormous promise of Performance Studies is. It doesn't say: "Ok! I am accepting this as an object of analysis, but that means that it has already been defined. So we define and we create our own object of analysis."¹⁰⁵

Il concetto in base al quale nei Performance Studies l'oggetto di studio non esista a priori ma venga di volta in volta creato ed elevato a performance, ovviamente non significa che l'oggetto in questione non esista in quanto reale, anzi, vuole piuttosto evidenziare come le performances, intese come *embodied practices*, siano delle pratiche incorporate che non esistono in quanto oggetti preliminarmente determinati ma vadano piuttosto "incorniciati" ed analizzati come performances. Sotto quest'aspetto la Taylor conferisce ai Performance Studies un potenziale analitico assai ampio e competitivo, in termini di innovazione tanto "oggettuale" quanto metodologica, e questo potenziale, nella riflessione condotta dalla studiosa, acquista una valenza imprensabilmente politica.

¹⁰⁵ Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata a Diana Taylor a New York City nel luglio del 2012. L'intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 258.

2.3 Archivio Vs Repertorio

[...] behavior is the “object of study” of performance studies. Although performance studies scholars use the “archive” extensively – what’s in books, photographs, the archaeological record, historical remains, etc. – their dedicated focus is on the “repertory”, namely, what people do in the activity of their doing it.¹⁰⁶

Dalle parole di Schechner sembra dunque trapelare ancora una volta come il focus dell’analisi degli studiosi di performance risieda nell’azione, in “ciò che le persone fanno nell’atto stesso del loro agire”, definito qui da Schechner, il “repertorio”. Se dunque da un lato è vero che buona parte della ricostruzione storiografica viene fatta attraverso ciò che costituisce il cosiddetto “archivio”, vale a dire libri, fotografie, materiale archeologico, resti storici, tutto ciò che insomma goda di una sua consistenza materiale e tangibile, dall’altro lato appare altrettanto evidente che ciò che contraddistingue e differenzia l’indagine dei Performance Studies è il loro concentrarsi sul “repertorio”, vale a dire appunto sull’insieme delle “pratiche incorporate” che, avendo una natura intangibile ed effimera, tendono a scomparire.

Questa distinzione tra archivio e repertorio, qui riportata nelle parole di Richard Schechner, ha in realtà origine in una riflessione più estesa fatta da Diana Taylor nel suo già citato libro *The Archive and the Repertoire*, nel quale, come accennato poc’anzi, si evidenzia anche il valore politico di uno studio finalizzato a conferire importanza al ruolo giocato dalle pratiche incorporate, e quindi dal repertorio.

Le questioni relative alle possibilità di scomparsa o di persistenza della performance erano già in parte state affrontate dalla Taylor nel suo

¹⁰⁶ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 1.

Disappearing Acts, dove facendo riferimento ai desaparecidos dell'America Latina, aveva ampiamente messo in luce le dinamiche politiche legate al concetto di sparizione¹⁰⁷. La Taylor porta avanti tale lavoro sul legame tra performance e politica attraverso il suo *Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics*, dove insieme ad altri studiosi, artisti e attivisti esplora le modalità attraverso cui “la performance trasmette memorie, incarna rivendicazioni politiche e manifesta il senso di identità di un gruppo”¹⁰⁸. Un nodo cruciale degli studi fatti dall'Istituto consiste proprio nell'evidenziare l'idea che “se la performance non fosse stata utilizzata per trasmettere conoscenza, soltanto il mondo letterato e potente potrebbe reclamare memoria e identità sociale”¹⁰⁹. Dal momento che la trasmissione culturale non avviene sempre attraverso la scrittura, risulta fondamentale, e addirittura “imperativo”, soffermare l'attenzione su quelle performances “incorporate” in grado di conservare e trasmettere memoria, così come di consolidare la dimensione identitaria di “società letterate, semiletterate o digitali”¹¹⁰.

It is difficult to think about embodied practice within the epistemic systems developed in Western thought, where writing has become the guarantor of existence itself.

[...] Debates about the "ephemerality" of performance are, of course, profoundly political. Whose memories, traditions, and claims to history disappear if performance practices lack the staying power to transmit vital knowledge?¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2003, pp.XVII- 26.

¹⁰⁸ ibidem.

¹⁰⁹ ibid.

¹¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹¹ ibid.

L'argomento della Taylor volge chiaramente a favore di una consapevole distinzione tra, da una parte, l'archivio dei materiali durevoli, in grado di essere conservati nel tempo, come ad esempio libri, documenti, film, edifici, ossa e resti archeologici, e, dalla parte opposta, il repertorio costituito dalle pratiche "incorporate", come le danze, gli sport, i riti, le lingue parlate, i gesti¹¹². L'archivio quindi, custodendo materiale che si conserva e dura nel tempo, è stato storicamente considerato un elemento a sostegno del potere, mentre il repertorio, viceversa, presuppone la presenza e la produzione e riproduzione della conoscenza attraverso pratiche di trasmissione affidate al corpo¹¹³. Comprensibilmente, e come conseguenza di ciò, le azioni che appartengono al repertorio non rimangono identiche a se stesse nel tempo, ma si trasformano gradualmente nei processi di trasmissione, anche se tali cambiamenti non ne stravolgono il significato¹¹⁴. In tal senso, il potenziale intrinseco nei Performance Studies consente di "prendere in seria considerazione il repertorio delle pratiche incorporate come un importante sistema di conoscenza e di trasmissione della conoscenza stessa"¹¹⁵.

Il punto di vista espresso da Diana Taylor apre molteplici spunti di riflessione, il primo dei quali risiede proprio nel potere politico che sembra detenere la trasmissione del sapere affidata alle pratiche incorporate. Se l'archivio dei "materiali durevoli" sostiene il, ed è sostenuto dal "potere", "l'effimero repertorio delle pratiche/conoscenze incorporate" serve a trasmettere memoria, identità, tradizioni e tutto un bagaglio di conoscenze che diversamente sarebbero destinate a scomparire. E sostenendo questo, le parole della Taylor sottendono qui un

¹¹² ibid.

¹¹³ ibid.

¹¹⁴ ibid.

¹¹⁵ ibid.

altro concetto assai importante, vale a dire quello in base al quale, nonostante la sua natura effimera, legata alla dimensione della presenza, le pratiche performative, e con essa la “performance”, possano comunque essere tramandate, trasmesse, e dunque, in un certo qual modo “conservate”. Sottolineo questo concetto perché le questioni connesse all’efemerità della performance hanno dato vita nel corso degli anni a diverse riflessioni in merito all’ontologia stessa della performance e alle modalità attraverso cui sia possibile conservare, riprodurre o tramandare le pratiche performative, qualunque sia la loro natura specifica (non precipuamente artistica) e il loro contesto di appartenenza. Alcuni studiosi, tra cui la stessa Taylor, tendono a sostenere che, nonostante la natura effimera della performance, sia possibile in realtà affidarsi a delle pratiche di trasmissione che, attraverso l’*embodiment*, consentano alla performance di “rimanere” nel tempo, anche se successive parziali modifiche, per ovvie ragioni, intervengono tra una riproduzione e l’altra. Diana Taylor tende infatti a precisare che alcune forme di performance tendono a scomparire dal repertorio, mentre invece il potenziale di conservazione dell’archivio è molto più elevato¹¹⁶. Al contempo però la performance non può essere “catturata o trasmessa attraverso l’archivio”, dal momento che la “memoria incorporata”, basandosi necessariamente sulla presenza, eccede le possibilità di conservazione offerte dalla dimensione archivistica¹¹⁷. Questo però non implica affatto che la performance sia costretta alla sparizione; al contrario invece risulta possibile consentirne una specifica forma di riproduzione e quindi di conservazione attraverso delle pratiche di trasmissione che rispettino e reproducano le strutture e i codici interni alla performance stessa¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁶ *ivi*, pag. 20-21.

¹¹⁷ *ibidem*.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*.

The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge¹¹⁹.

Alla luce di quanto sinora detto risulta quindi evidente come l'archivio e il repertorio costituiscano due differenti, seppur complementari sistemi di trasmissione della conoscenza. Infatti, dal momento che ciascuno di essi custodisce il proprio bagaglio specifico di codici e strutture, nessuno dei due è in grado di supplire al lavoro dell'altro. Per tale ragione diventa fondamentale riconoscere al repertorio un potere, anche politico, analogo a quello storicamente svolto dall'archivio¹²⁰.

2.4 Remains Vs Disappearing

Su un fronte significativamente divergente, a proposito delle questioni relative alle possibilità di “conservazione” direttamente connesse all'ontologia della performance si iscrive invece la riflessione di Peggy Phelan, altro nome eminente nell'ambito dei Performance Studies. Se per la Taylor infatti la performance, per quanto effimera, si presta a delle operazioni di trasmissione che passano attraverso l'impiego del corpo, per la Phelan invece la performance si manifesta nell'atto stesso della sua “sparizione”. Essendo quindi l'essenza stessa della performance così strettamente connessa alla dimensione del “presente” e della “presenza”, qualunque tentativo di conservarla, registrarla o riprodurla, risulta in sé

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

stesso fallace. Per dirla in termini strettamente phelaniani, l'ontologia della performance consiste in una forma di "presentazione" che precluda ogni possibilità di "riproduzione".

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through-disappearance.

[...] Performance's independence from mass reproduction, technologically, economically, and linguistically, is its greatest strength.¹²¹

Più vicina alla scuola di pensiero di Diana Taylor, e quindi favorevole ai tentativi volti a "conservare" la performance, è di certo Rebecca Schneider, che nel suo ultimo libro, *Performing Remains*, fornisce, come già evidenziato dal titolo stesso, una chiara dimostrazione della sua posizione. Infatti, riprendendo alcune osservazioni fatte dalla stessa Taylor, la Schneider sostiene che considerare la performance come un'espressione destinata a scomparire nell'atto stesso della sua manifestazione, e quindi pensarla come l'antitesi della preservazione, significa accettare il rischio di limitarci ad "una comprensione della performance predeterminata da una abitudine culturale alla logica patrilineare e occidentalizzata dell'archivio"¹²². Nell'evidenziare a sua volta, come in precedenza fatto anche da Diana Taylor, un

¹²¹ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, New York, 1993, pag. 146-149.

¹²² Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Routledge, New York, 2011, pp. 97-99.

posizionamento politico nell'accostamento del concetto di performance a quello di scomparsa, Rebecca Schneider mostra il sospetto che in tal modo “si ignorino altri modi di conoscere e di ricordare, vie che potrebbero situarsi esattamente nelle modalità tramite cui la performance rimane, seppur in maniera differente”¹²³.

The ways, that is, that performance resists a cultural habituation to the ocular — a thrall that would delimit performance as that which cannot remain to be seen¹²⁴.

Un successivo e conseguente sospetto avanzato dalla Schneider suggerisce quindi che è proprio la logica dell'archivio a privilegiare l'idea di scomparsa della performance, e, per tale ragione, la Schneider afferma che equiparare la performance con il concetto di “impermanenza, distruzione e perdita incentiva, invece di annullare, l'abitudine culturale all'imperialismo inerente alla logica d'archivio”¹²⁵.

Appare evidente come in quest'idea a sostegno della tesi in base alla quale sia possibile “conservare la performance” riecheggi la *febbre d'archivio*¹²⁶ di Jacques Derrida, in più circostanze evocata soprattutto nelle riflessioni di Diana Taylor. Secondo il filosofo francese post-strutturalista infatti “non esiste nulla al di fuori del testo”, lì dove per però per “testo”, e con esso per “scrittura”, Derrida non intende esclusivamente la scrittura grafica o la letteratura, bensì l'intera ed inclusiva gamma di espressioni culturali e di pratiche sociali che costituiscono i sistemi del potere “inscritto”. È una scrittura, quella di cui parla Derrida, che non funziona mai disgiunta dal potere, ma che

¹²³ ibidem.

¹²⁴ ibid.

¹²⁵ ibid.

¹²⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*, Éditions Galilée, 1995.

piuttosto con esso interagisce in un sistema compartecipato di osmosi mutualistica.

Fostering the belief that writing fosters power [...], that it can ally itself to power, prolong it by completing it, or can serve it, the question suggests that writing can come to power or power to writing. It excludes in advance the identification of writing as power or the recognition of power from the onset of writing. It auxiliarizes and hence aims to conceal the fact that writing and power never work separately, however complex the laws, the system, or the links of their collusion may be. [...] Writing does not come to power. It is there before-hand, it partakes of and is made of it. [...] Hence, struggles for powers set various writings up against one another.¹²⁷

2.5 Reenactment: da Marina Abramovic all'Intangible Cultural Heritage dell'UNESCO

La materia effimera di cui è fatta la performance non la rende di certo né un facile oggetto di studio né, tantomeno, un oggetto che si presti ad immediati trattamenti dialogici o, eventualmente, “conservativi”. In altre parole: avere a che fare con la performance, studiarla, lavorarci sopra, cercare di “salvarla rispetto al passaggio del tempo” non risulta mai impresa semplice. Diversi sono i tentativi finalizzati a far sì che la performance “rimanga”, che non “disappaia”, che non svanisca consumandosi nell'atto stesso del suo manifestarsi. Tra gli esperimenti che con più successo hanno giocato intorno alle molteplici sfaccettature

¹²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *The Derrida Reader. Writing Performances*, University of Nebraska Press, 1998, pag. 50.

dell'ontologia della performance c'è di certo il reenactment che, a mio personale avviso, può essere considerato una forma valida di “archiviazione” della performance. Difatti, proprio perché in grado di rispettare, forse più di altri tentativi di “conservazione”, le caratteristiche ontologiche della performance stessa, i suoi codici precipui e le sue strutture peculiari, il reenactment mi sembra al contempo anche una via intelligente e innovativa per tentare di fare storiografia in materia di performance.

One of the reasons my book, *Performance Remains*, is about reenactment is because historically there has been this idea that performance disappears, that is a basic idea of performance studies. [...] But, you know, Richard Schechner said this in 1985; it was picked up by many people, Peggy Phelan, famously reiterating “performance become itself through disappearing and it cannot be recorded” etc.etc., and that’s all been a very important thing to think with; but it also a kind of says: “then, if performance disappears, it has no means of remaining, it doesn’t have a means of remaining in the archive, whereas in the object-based and text-based archive, what about the body as an archive? I mean Psychoanalysis gives us the body as an archive; there are many examples: Foucault gives us the eruptive body... there are many examples of body as an archive. But to tell those stories, to tell an history in that way... this is why Foucault calls it a genealogy and not a history, we aren’t finished figuring out what it is to enunciate a past that comes to us through that which has been forgotten. That’s a different kind of history, but it doesn’t happen in isolation to what does remain in the archive. It’s like what Diana Taylor argues; it’s some kind of crosswind that we can become better at thinking through.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Estratto di una mia video-intervista realizzata a Rebecca Schneider presso la Brown University (Providence) nel maggio del 2012. L’intera intervista è riportata nella sezione allegati di questa tesi dottorale, pag. 229.

E in effetti il reenactment, letteralmente la “ricostruzione” o “rimessa in atto”, sembra proprio uno di questi tentativi attraverso cui il corpo si propone come un archivio, cercando di “enunciare un passato che giunge a noi attraverso ciò che è stato dimenticato”. Se, come sostiene Derrida, tutti i linguaggi, i “testi” e le forme di “scrittura” si basano su codici propri, allora proprio l’esistenza di questi codici e l’abilità nel decifrarli dovrebbero condurre alla possibilità di identificarne e ripeterne i tratti distintivi.

The possibility of repeating and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible user in general. To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence, it is a rupture in presence. [...] To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be written.¹²⁹

Se si considera la performance una forma di “scrittura”, così come intesa da Jacques Derrida, allora la pratica del reenactment, nelle sue più riuscite declinazioni attuative, appare adempiere alle istanze di “re-incarnazione performativa”, interpretando e reiterando i peculiari codici ontologici del “testo” performance.

Come evidenziato da Rebecca Schneider, “reenactment” è un termine

¹²⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, Northwestern University Press, 1988, pp. 3-21.

insistentemente entrato a far parte del vocabolario artistico, teatrale e performativo del ventunesimo secolo, diventando l'esplicazione pratica del concetto accademico di "industria della memoria" in materia artistica¹³⁰. Infatti si è ampiamente diffusa la pratica del "rimettere in scena" o del "rifare" eventi o lavori artistici precedenti, così come quella del "far rivivere" specifici eventi storici all'interno di musei e parchi a tema¹³¹. Per la Schneider la citazione, la ripetizione e il 'twice-behaved behavior' di definizione schechneriana non soltanto costituiscono il materiale primordiale per qualunque forma di comportamento quotidiano, ma forniscono anche la base necessaria per tutti i tentativi di reenactment¹³².

[...] Indeed, looking even cursorily at reenactment as a practice one is soon hounded by the paradoxes of performativity and the fecund question [...] that all representational practice, and indeed all communicative behavior, is composed in reiteration, is engaged in citation, is already a practice of reenactment, or what Richard Schechner has termed "restored" or "twice-behaved" behavior. [...] all bodily practice is, like language itself, always already composed in repetition and repetition is, paradoxically, both the vehicle for sameness and the vehicle for difference or change. [...]¹³³

Nel sovracitato libro *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider prende in esame alcune esperienze di reenactment, più specificamente soffermandosi sui casi di reenactments artistici e di ricostruzioni di guerre. La Schneider esplora i reenactments della guerra civile

¹³⁰ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Routledge, New York, 2011, pag. 2-10.

¹³¹ ibidem.

¹³² ibid.

¹³³ ibid.

americana, cui lei stessa ha preso parte,¹³⁴ così come alcuni esempi di reenactments relativi al teatro, alla performance, all'arte e alla fotografia. Di particolare interesse mi sembra, nell'ambito di questa mia personale riflessione, l'analisi del "caso artistico" di reenactment che vede protagonista Marina Abramović, e la sua oramai ultra celebre exhibition al MoMA, "*The Artist Is Present*", nella primavera del 2010¹³⁵. Vivendo e lavorando a New York City in quel periodo, ho avuto l'opportunità di recarmi svariate volte al MoMa, di visitare la retrospettiva e di "vivere l'esperienza di partecipare al reenactment"¹³⁶ della Abramović.

Per circa undici settimane (poco meno di tre mesi), dal 14 Marzo al 31 maggio 2010, e per un totale di circa seicento ore, il Museum of Modern Art di New York ha ospitato la prima e più completa retrospettiva dei lavori realizzati da "Lady Performance"¹³⁷ nelle ultime

¹³⁴ *ivi*, pag. 7-9. In 1998 I began to attend US Civil War battle reenactments to try and understand what reenactors were doing and why they were doing it. [...] In the course of attending Civil War reenactments, I repeatedly betrayed my own biases in that I was continually surprised by the complexities involved in the

(re)actions I witnessed. Problems of ambivalence, simultaneous temporal registers, anachronism, and the everywhere of error were not lost on any of the reenactors with whom I spoke, despite their common depiction as, by and large, simple or naive "enthusiasts." In affective engagement, many of them find reenactment to be, if not the thing itself (the past), somehow also *not not* the thing (the past), as it passes living history and reenactment, but the "liveness" of the matter is key across multiple styles, as is the ambivalence of the live, or its inter(in)animation with the no longer live. [...] I attended multiple Civil War reenactments between 1998 and 2006 where I observed participants putting themselves in the place of the past, reenacting that past by posing as if 'they were, indeed, soldiers and civilians of the 1860s. [...] Because I did not participate as a reenactor, this book is not about the experience of reenacting though it is about the experience of participating in reenactment. The book is a theoretical investigation into reenactment as an activity that nets us all (reenacted, reenactor, original, copy, event, re-event, bypassed, and passer-by) in a knotty and porous relationship to time. It is about the temporal tangle, about the temporal leak, and about the many questions that attend time's returns.

¹³⁵ Dettagliate e documentate informazioni relative a questa exhibition, inclusi video, filmati, interviste, fotografie, saggi, possono essere reperite nella pagina internet che il MoMA ha dedicato a quest'evento:

<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/>

Esiste anche un catalogo annesso alla "mostra-performance", Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, ed un film documentario, *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present*, di Matthew Akers e Jeff Dupre, del 2012.

¹³⁶ Utilizzo tra virgolette la stessa frase impiegata (e da me pocanzi citata nella nota n.29) da Rebecca Schneider a proposito del suo aver preso parte ai reenactments della Guerra Civile americana.

¹³⁷ "Lady Performance" è il titolo dell'incontro organizzato con Marina Abramović dal Dipartimento delle Arti Visive dell'Università di Bologna, il 28 gennaio 2011, presso l'Aula Magna di Santa Lucia e facente parte del calendario degli eventi di Artefiera del medesimo anno. Quest'appellativo ricorre ovviamente in svariate circostanze con riferimento a Marina Abramović. Approfitto di questa nota per ricordare che il legame della performer serba con la scena artistica bolognese va in realtà fatto risalire a

quattro decenni. L' *exhibition* era articolata su due piani diversi del museo. Al sesto piano, nella *Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Gallery*, è stata allestita una retrospettiva che raccoglieva quasi tutti i principali lavori dell'artista serba, una cinquantina circa, inclusi i suoi primi *sound pieces* e *interventions*, le sue installazioni, fotografie, lavori video, le sue sole *performances* così come quelle eseguite in collaborazione con Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen), per lungo tempo suo compagno di arte e di vita¹³⁸. L'intento era quello di creare una "chronological installation of Abramović's work [...] revealing different modes of representing, documenting, and exhibiting her ephemeral, time-based, and media-based works"¹³⁹.

I modi tramite cui la Abramović, e con lei lo staff dei curatori del MoMA, con a capo Klaus Biesenbach, hanno deciso di "esporre" questi lavori, creando una sorta di "archivio performativo" vero e proprio dell'opera omnia dell'artista, hanno quindi seguito vie diverse. In alcuni casi si è deciso di ricostruire lo spazio espositivo con gli oggetti richiesti dalle specifiche *performances*. È il caso, ad esempio, di *Rhythm 0*, originariamente eseguita dalla Abramović nel 1974 nello Studio Morra a Napoli¹⁴⁰. Questa performance, della durata di sei ore, dalle otto della sera alle due del mattino, prevedeva la presenza su un tavolo di settantadue oggetti, tra cui anche degli strumenti pericolosi come una

molti anni indietro. Faccio riferimento alla serie di *performances* che la Abramović, insieme a l'allora suo compagno di arte e di vita, Ulay, ha eseguito presso la Galleria G7 di Ginevra Grigolo, sempre all'insegna di operazioni che mettersero a dura prova la resistenza fisica e psichica dei due performers. Ma, ancora più in particolare, mi preme menzionare *Imponderabilia*, performance realizzata dalla coppia di artisti presso la Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, nel giugno del 1977, sempre nel quadro (anche finanziario) di *Artefiera*. In questa performance, Marina e Ulay, nudi sul ciglio d'ingresso della Galleria, costringevano i visitatori, passando, a strofinarsi tra i corpi nudi dei due performers per riuscire ad entrare. Il tutto mentre una video-camera riprendeva e trasmetteva in tempo reale questi "passaggi", in maniera tale da consentire a chi era già entrato di osservare il comportamento, le reazioni, le espressioni (inclusi spesso l'impaccio e l'imbarazzo) di chi li seguiva "nell'impresa". La performance è passata alla storia anche per un ilare aneddoto, secondo cui un vicequestore fece sospendere la performance, chiedendo a Marina e Ulay la consegna dei rispettivi passaporti che, guarda caso, essendo i due performers nudi, non avevano in quel momento con loro!

¹³⁸ Il sodalizio artistico e sentimentale tra Marina Abramović e Ulay risale all'incirca al periodo tra il 1976 e il 1988. È a quegli anni che vanno dunque ricondotte anche le loro *performances* collaborative.

¹³⁹ <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965>

¹⁴⁰ Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, pp. 74-79.

pistola e un coltello. Durante la performance “gli spettatori” erano chiamati ad utilizzare questi oggetti, a loro completa discrezione e piacimento, sul corpo della Abramović. Per altre performances il MoMA ha proposto l’esposizione di fotografie o la proiezione di video, come nel caso di *The Great Wall Walk*, una performance durata novanta giorni eseguita intorno alla Grande Muraglia cinese¹⁴¹. Durante questa performance Marina e Ulay hanno percorso a piedi l’intera lunghezza della Grande Muraglia cinese, Marina camminando da est verso ovest e Ulay procedendo in direzione opposta da ovest verso est, iniziando il loro cammino il 30 marzo del 1988 e concludendolo, dopo novanta giorni, incontrandosi a metà strada¹⁴². Esiste però una terza variante di cui la Abramović ha deciso di avvalersi per realizzare la retrospettiva dei suoi valori: ha istruito alcuni suoi “studenti” affinché riproducessero ed eseguissero, in maniera quanto più fedele e pedissequa possibile, alcune delle sue storiche performances¹⁴³. In questo modo è stato possibile ripassare tra i corpi nudi di *Imponderabilia*¹⁴⁴, performance descritta in precedenza in nota 32, rieseguita, o meglio *reenacted*, a rotazione da coppie di suoi allievi posizionati, nudi, al varco di entrata che sanciva il passaggio da una sala all’altra della galleria (anche se, per dovere di

¹⁴¹ *ivi*, pp. 146-151.

¹⁴² Originariamente la performance era stata concepita con un intento diverso. L’idea era infatti sì quella di percorrere a piedi, metà a testa, l’intera Muraglia cinese, ma al fine di incontrarsi a metà strada e di sposarsi. Marina e Ulay dovettero però attendere parecchio tempo prima di ottenere il permesso dovuto dalla Repubblica cinese. Nel frattempo la relazione tra i due era volta a termine, e quando ottennero il permesso richiesto, i due performers decisero di eseguire una variante della performance precedentemente architettata: avrebbero compiuto ugualmente il percorso come stabilito, per incontrarsi a metà strada, incrociarsi e proseguire ciascuno per la propria via.

¹⁴³ Sono stati quarantuno i performers, tutti allievi della Abramović, ad eseguire i reenactments di alcune delle performances riproposte al MoMA, alternandosi ciclicamente nell’arco delle ore di apertura del museo. Ecco i loro nomi: Maria José Arjona, Brittany Bailey, John Bonafede, Lydia Brawner, Rachel Brennecke (aka Bon Jane), Rebecca Brooks, Isabella Bruno, Alfredo Ferran Calle, Hsiao Chen, Rebecca Davis, Angela Freiburger, Kennis Hawkins, Michael Helland, Igor Josifov, Elana Katz, Cynthia Koppe, Heather Kravas, Gary Lai, Abigail Levine, Jacqueline Lounsbury, Isabelle Lumpkin, Elke Luyten, Alexander Lyle, Justine Lynch, Tom McCauley, Nick Morgan, Andrew Ondrejcek, Juri Onuki, Tony Orrico, Will Rawls, Matthew Rogers, George Emilio Sanchez, Ama Saru, Jill Sigman, Maria S. H. M., David Thomson, Layard Thompson, Amelia Uzategui Bonilla, Deborah Wing-Sproul, Yozmit, and Jeremy Zimmerman.

¹⁴⁴ Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, pp. 100-103.

cronaca, è doveroso precisare che in questo caso, a differenza che nel 1977, non si trattava dell'unico varco di accesso; era infatti possibile, per chi non volesse passare in mezzo ai corpi nudi dei performers, optare per una seconda via di ingresso alla sala successiva). C'era poi chi tra gli allievi-performers della Abramović, giusto per fornire qualche esempio ulteriore, giaceva nudo su un tavolo in legno con disteso sul proprio corpo uno scheletro. Riproposizione questa di quel *Nude with Skeleton* del 2002/2005¹⁴⁵. Oppure ancora chi, esclusivamente tra le donne questa volta, sedeva sul sedile di una bicicletta attaccato alla parete, con i piedi sospesi per aria, e soggetto ad una intensità di luce via via crescente nello spazio: reenactment di *Luminosity*, performance originariamente eseguita da Marina Abramović presso la Sean Kelly Gallery di New York nell'ottobre del 1997 e della durata di due ore¹⁴⁶.

Se questi ultimi tre esempi citati costituiscono degli evidenti casi di reenactment, quanto invece simultaneamente “performato” dalla Abramović in persona qualche piano più in basso, nel Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium del MoMA, risulta ancora più singolare. Mentre al sesto piano, per la prima volta nella storia, un museo proponeva delle re-performances live dei lavori della Abramović affidati all'esecuzione di altri performers, nel tentativo non soltanto di rendere accessibili le sue performances storiche ad un pubblico più vasto, ma anche di trasmettere la presenza dell'artista, qualche piano più in basso “the Artist” era invece realmente “presente”. Seduta in silenzio su una sedia in legno per tutta la durata dell'apertura del museo (senza mai cioè abbandonare la sua postazione), Marina Abramović era pronta ad accogliere e a fissare negli occhi, sempre in rigoroso silenzio e per tutto il tempo desiderato dal suo “deuteragonista visivo”, chiunque, tra coloro i

¹⁴⁵ ivi, pp.172-175.

¹⁴⁶ ivi, pp.158-161.

quali aspettavano in fila il proprio turno, si sedesse su un'altra sedia in legno posta dinnanzi alla sua. A separarli durante le prime settimane della performance c'era un semplicissimo tavolo, anch'esso in legno, in un secondo momento tolto del tutto da uno spazio performativo estremamente (ed intuitivamente) assai essenziale e circoscritto da un nastro bianco che delimitava un ampio rettangolo intorno al quale si riunivano gli spettatori/visitatori del museo, inclusi quelli in fila in attesa di sedersi di fronte a "lady performance". Altri spettatori sbirciavano il tutto dai molteplici altri punti di osservazione: balconate, rampe di scale, corridoi di altri piani del museo¹⁴⁷.

La performance qui riproposta dalla Abramović è, a sua volta, un reenactment con variazione di *Nightsea Crossing*¹⁴⁸, una performance realizzata per ben ventidue volte insieme ad Ulay, tra il 1981 e il 1987. Nella versione originale a sedere dinnanzi a Marina, era sempre e solo Ulay. Nel reenactment eseguito al MoMA invece, come appena detto, chiunque poteva prender parte alla performance, sedendosi, per tutto il tempo voluto (e nei limiti degli orari giornalieri consentiti dal museo), davanti alla Abramović.

Questa non è ovviamente la sede nella quale soffermarsi ad analizzare nello specifico il significato di questo, come di altri lavori di Marina Abramović. Un intento di questo tipo implicherebbe infatti ben altro spazio e tipologia di riflessione. Quello che invece qui più mi preme evidenziare è il modo in cui la Abramović dialoga con l'ontologia della performance nel dar vita a delle forme di reenactment. La signora della performance, che meglio di tanti altri conosce i tratti identitari di una materia, quella performativa appunto, di cui ha fatto la sua modalità

¹⁴⁷ La struttura del MoMA di New York, ripensata a fine anni Novanta dall'architetto giapponese Yoshio Taniguchi, offre molteplici "punti di vista" sulle arti ivi esposte.

¹⁴⁸ Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, pp. 138-143.

artistico/espressiva precipua, innesta su di essa una “restaurazione comportamentale” che, se non effettuata nel rispetto dei codici espressivi interni del soggetto trattato, potrebbe assai facilmente tradire l’identità stessa dell’oggetto restaurato, snaturandone il carattere e i connotati distintivi. La performance, come la stessa Abramović ha sempre sostenuto, è strettamente legata alla dimensione del presente: *performance is about being in the present, it’s about creating a luminous state of being*¹⁴⁹. *Reperforming* e quindi *reenacting* implica ovviamente creare una nuova forma di performance, riferendosi però, e quindi riferendo (dal latino *rēfēro*: riconduco) il proprio “fare” a un “fatto” in precedenza agito. Ciò che, a mio personale avviso, più può risultare interessante in un’operazione di questo tipo è il considerare il reenactment come una modalità interna alla performance, e a alla natura di questa coerente, per “archiviare” la performance stessa, per “conservarla” e tramandarla agli allora “non presenti”. Se di tentativi di “salvare nel tempo” la performance si vuol parlare, allora bisogna tenere in conto quelli che tra tutti più sembrano rispettarne la natura intrinseca, digitandone correttamente i codici. La Abramović che di quei codici genetici ha fatto l’essenza del suo DNA espressivo, di certo sa come smontare e rimontare la catena polimerica della performance e le sue singole unità di nucleotidi di presenza. Del resto *The Artist Is Present* non è stata la prima occasione nella quale l’artista serba abbia sperimentato il reenactment performativo. Nel 2005 per sette notti consecutive, dal 9 al 15 novembre, Marina Abramović aveva realizzato al Guggenheim Museum di New York *Seven Easy Pieces*¹⁵⁰, proponendo, sera dopo sera,

¹⁴⁹ *ivi*, pag.152.

¹⁵⁰ *ivi*, pp. 186-201. Più esattamente in *Seven Easy Pieces* Marina Abramović esegue le seguenti performances:

First night, November 9, 2005 – Reperformance of Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure*

Second night, November 10, 2005 – Reperformance of Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*

Third night, November 11, 2005 – Reperformance of VALIE EXPORT, *Action Pants: Genital Panic*

le “reperformances” di cinque opere di cinque performers diversi, la reperformance di un suo precedente lavoro e chiudendo, la settima ed ultima notte, con una sua nuova performance¹⁵¹. A proposito di questo lavoro della Abramović, e qualche giorno prima dell’apertura dell’*exhibition The Artist Is Present*, Carol Kino scriveva sul New York Times

Ms. Abramovic saw [Seven Easy Pieces] as a way "to take charge of the history of performance." In the 1990s, as younger artists became interested in work of the '60s and '70s, she said she noticed that some were restaging historical works themselves, often without consulting or even crediting the originator. "I realized this is happening because performance is nobody's territory," she said. "It's never been mainstream art and there's no rules." Finding this unjust, she decided to set them herself, by recreating the works in consultation with the relevant artists and estates. Better she should do it now, she said, because "they will do it anyway when you're dead behind your back."¹⁵²

Esiste e appare alquanto evidente nelle parole della Abramović, qui

Fourth Night, November 12, 2005 – Reperformance of Gina Pane: *The Conditioning, first action of Self-Portrait(s)*

Fifth night, November 13, 2005 – Reperformance of Joseph Beuys: *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*

Six night, November 14, 2005 – Reperformance of *Lips of Thomas*

Seven night, November 15, 2005 – *Entering the Other Side*

¹⁵¹ Risulta utile ai fini di questa riflessione riportare quanto dichiarato dalla stessa Abramović e citato da Cypriano in: Fabio Cypriano, *Performance and Reenactment: Analyzing Marina Abramovic's Seven Easy Pieces*, Idanca.net, (<http://idanca.net/lang/en-us/2009/09/02/performance-e-reencenacao-uma-analise-de-seven-eeasy-pieces-de-marinaabramovic/12156/>), written September 2009, accessed March 10, 2010.)

My idea was to establish certain moral rules. If someone wants to remake a performance, they must ask the artist for the rights and pay for it, just like it's done with music or literature. For me, this is the honest way to do it, even if you want to make your own version.

¹⁵² Carol Kino, *A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Emerge*, The New York Times, March 10, 2010.

riportate dalla scrittrice e giornalista Carol Kino, l'intento di servirsi del reenactment come di uno strumento tramite cui "farsi carico della storia della performance", uno strumento che, come specificato in nota 46, deve seguire delle regole innanzitutto morali. Ma questo bisogno di dar vita ad una sorta di archivio storiografico della performance nasce nella Abramović anche dall'esigenza di voler essere lei stessa a "salvare" il lavoro di tutta la sua vita, anche dopo la sua morte. C'è sempre stato nella "signora della performance" una totale identificazione tra la sua vita e la forma d'arte da lei prescelta: la Abramović ha sempre concepito e vissuto la sua vita come una performance. Per lei "salvare" la sua arte equivale un pò a "salvare" la sua vita, e quindi, *reenacting* l'intera sua performance artistica significa *reperforming* la sua biografia, nell'intento di tenerla perennemente in vita, investendo sul "presente performante" come luogo dove "salvare" il "passato performato" per il "futuro performativo". In tal senso, un primo tentativo di "auto-archiviarsi in chiave performativa" Marina l'aveva già compiuto in nuce nel 1992 con *The Biography*.

The separation of art and life in Abramović's body of work has become one of the most discussed problems in the art-historical discourse on the artist. It does not suffice just to follow her own statements about the interconnections between her life and her art, because her mechanisms for integrating them are extraordinarily complex. Broadly speaking, different guises of the artist's polyvalent work *The Biography* became her ultimate vehicle for biographical control and a way to empower herself¹⁵³.

¹⁵³ Jovana Stokić, *The Art of Marina Abramović: Leaving the Balkans, Entering the Other Side*, in Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, pag. 22.

E in effetti questo bisogno dell'artista di "re-agirsi" e quindi di "reagire a sé stessa ri-agendo sé stessa", diventa un modo tramite cui "reagire" alla propria morte e alla morte della performance, "ri-agendo" la performance stessa che, ricordiamolo, scompare nell'atto stesso del suo manifestarsi nel presente. Alla luce di quanto appena messo in evidenza non ci sorprende dunque per niente che, con uno scarto teatrale affidato alla regia di Robert Wilson, "Lady Performance" abbia deciso di inscenare "*The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*", presentato nel luglio del 2011 al Manchester International Festival, in co-produzione col Teatro Real di Madrid. La stessa Abramović che per lungo tempo si era volontariamente e perentoriamente tenuta lontana dai palcoscenici teatrali, asserendo che la performance, a differenza del teatro, sia "pure and raw"¹⁵⁴ ("pura e cruda"), sale sulle assi di legno insieme a Willem Dafoe per inscenare la sua vita e la sua morte musicate da Antony Hegarty.

I took on theatrical form to detach myself from the pain, I think. I found the process so interesting that every five or six years I return to it, and ask a different director to take on my biography. Charles Atlas made the first biography in 1989 and Michael Laub made the last one, *The Biography Remix* in 1997. This time I wanted to work with Bob because I've been a great fan of his for such a long time. He really invented a new language of theatre in relation to time and space. His imagery is iconic, he paints with light.

Every time I do a biography I start with the same principle: to completely give up control. So by handing over the material to a director he can make a remix of my life in a way. It can be chronological or not –

¹⁵⁴ Chris Thompson and Katarina Weslien, *Pure Raw: Performance, Pedagogy, and (Re)Presentation, an interview with Marina Abramovic*, PAJ: Performing Arts Journal 82, 2006: 29-50.

it doesn't matter. I'm material, nothing more. I have no input, but what always happens is that my life looks new to me.

I can't tell you how liberating that is.

[...] This biography is different because all the other directors concentrated on aspects of my work, whereas Bob was keen to explore my life. He took all the tragic, painful and emotional stories that make up me and put them on the stage. In fact it becomes so tragic you almost have to laugh and for me that has been such a release of negativity.

[...] Why does biography continue to intrigue me? Because artists always work with the materials from their own lives. Making art is about transferring those feelings and thoughts into a universal language. That's how biography works, too. The deeper you go into yourself the more universal you become. This biography, then, could be anybody else's biography. But, for me, it is still very personal¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵⁵ Marina Abramović, *Biography as Material*, nel Libretto di sala di *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*, Manchester International Festival, 2011.

A proposito di quanto qui detto da Marina Abramović circa la sua esperienza di lavoro con Bob Wilson per la realizzazione di *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*, significativo risulta anche quanto da lei scritto nel suo contributo: Marina Abramović, *Parallel Space and Time*, in Robert Wilson, *The Watermill Center. A laboratory for Performance: Robert Wilson's Legacy*, DACO-VERLAG, 2011, pp.196-197

Since my childhood, living in ex-Yugoslavia, there was one person who really inspired my way of thinking and who had a big influence on the way my work developed later. This man was not an artist; he was a scientist, and his name was Nikola Tesla. [...] it was his thinking that most nourished my dream world.

He talked about parallel space and time. He said that every living being, as well as non-living things, have certain vibrations, and our visible world can be seen because these vibrations are similar. If we were to as much as imagine changing the frequency of these vibrations, we could enter into endless parallel worlds unknown to us; in the same room or in your own house sitting at your own table where you have your everyday breakfast.

Working with Bob Wilson is a little bit like that. I experience the same living room, the same breakfast table, while at the same time entering parallel worlds unknown to me. I always wanted to work with him. Somehow intuitively, I felt that we share a similar perception of time and aesthetic. I can understand the language of symbols he uses. It is familiar to me. Working on the play *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*, I finally had a chance to experience this.

In this process, to enter into these parallel worlds, it was important for me to completely give up control. I found myself behind the curtain for hours, waiting for his call to come onstage, walk a few steps with one finger pointing in a certain direction, and then go back. With simple gestures and movement, your state of mind means everything in becoming believable for the audience. [...] [Bob Wilson] creates a kind of holy ground where every gesture, every position of light, every sound becomes meaningful. He does not add. He reduces to the bare bones, to the essence.

La costante riflessione che Marina Abramović compie sulla sua esistenza, incluse le varie esperienze diversamente declinate ma univocamente direzionate ad interpretare il suo “materiale biografico”, l’hanno via via indotta a voler quasi “normativizzare” e “istituzionalizzare” una sua modalità performativa da lasciare come eredità. Da questo intento scaturisce anche la definizione del cosiddetto “Metodo Abramović”, la cui finalità principale sembra essere quella di costituire una tradizione metodologica tramite cui presentare e preservare per un pubblico il più vasto possibile l’idea di performance nutrita dall’artista. Per assecondare questo sua esigenza la Abramović sta dando vita proprio in questi ultimissimi anni al MAI, il Marina Abramović Institute¹⁵⁶, nella cittadina di Hudson, sulle sponde dell’omonimo fiume, immersa nella natura e a circa due ore di distanza a nord di New York City. Questa la missione del MAI nell’intento e nelle parole dell’artista:

MARINA ABRAMOVIC INSTITUTE IS DEDICATED TO THE PRESENTATION AND PRESERVATION OF LONG DURATIONAL WORK

INCLUDING THAT OF PERFORMANCE ART, DANCE, THEATER, FILM, MUSIC, OPERA, AND OTHER FORMS THAT MAY DEVELOP IN THE FUTURE

MAI WILL FOSTER COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN ART, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SPIRITUALITY, BRINGING THESE FIELDS INTO CONVERSATION WITH LONG DURATIONAL WORK

MAI WILL PROVIDE AN EDUCATIONAL SPACE TO HOST WORKSHOPS, LECTURES, RESIDENCIES, AND RESEARCH¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/>

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/statement>

MAI will be a platform for long durational works. A long durational work is any work (of music, opera, film, theater, performance art, science, and others) whose performance exceeds six hours.

The performer's use of time is a crucial element of this genre. By slowing down, lengthening, or repeating actions normally unexamined, a long durational work encourages both its performers and audience to step outside of traditional conceptions of time and examine what this experience means to them.

The history of long durational works is varied and rich¹⁵⁸.

The Abramovic Method is Abramovic's adaptation of her *Cleaning the House* workshops for the general public. The method helps participants to develop skills for observing long durational performances through a series of exercises and environments designed to increase awareness of their physical and mental experience in the moment. Abramovic will install this method at MAI via a series of chambers, each dedicated to one of these exercises¹⁵⁹.

Il Marina Abramović Institute non può che richiamare alla mente, per ovvie ragioni, il Watermill Center¹⁶⁰ di Bob Wilson, immerso nella natura di Long Island, anch'esso a circa due ore di distanza, ma a est di Manhattan. Robert Wilson aveva iniziato a lavorare a questo progetto già nel 1992, ma è solo nel 2006 che il Watermill Center viene ufficialmente completato.

I was shown the old Western Union building in Water Mill. [...] It had been vacant since 1965 and was in terrible condition. When I saw the

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/long-durational-work>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/the-abramovic-method>

¹⁶⁰ <http://watermillcenter.org/>

building and the six acres, I immediately knew that this was what I was looking for. The building reminded me of my Spring Street loft, a factory-like space. So I took all my savings and managed to raise some additional monies to purchase the building and the property for \$425,000. Pierre Bergé was the first to give a major gift for its acquisition.

In the summer of 1992, we held our first Summer Program. Although it was illegal, we lived in the building. We went on like that until 2006 when the renovation of the main building was complete, and we received our Certificate of Occupancy. At Watermill, I feel I am inviting people to my home and sharing my space with them. The underlying principle is that I will maintain the space in a certain order, allowing others to interface with it, change it, and develop their own work in an aesthetic that can be completely different from my own. This is how I learn and grow in my own work¹⁶¹.

Il Watermill Center è dunque un laboratorio interdisciplinare di performance pensato da Bob Wilson come un ambiente unico ed esclusivo per artisti giovani ed emergenti provenienti da tutto il mondo, dove esplorare nuove idee, lavorare, imparare, creare e crescere insieme. Il Watermill integra la pratica delle arti performative con le risorse derivanti delle discipline umanistiche, la ricerca generata dalle scienze (naturali, tecnologiche e sociali) e l'ispirazione generata dalle arti visive. Il centro, anche grazie ai diversi progetti di "artisti in residenza", supporta diverse attività che integrano generi e forme artistiche che sono espressione di punti di vista differenti, in grado di rompere le tradizionali forme di rappresentazione e le specificità culturali¹⁶².

Al di là delle ovvie differenze tra i due centri, il MAI e il Watermill

¹⁶¹ Robert Wilson, *The History of a Dream*, in *The Watermill Center. A laboratory for Performance: Robert Wilson's Legacy*, DACO-VERLAG, 2011, pp. 34-35.

¹⁶² <http://watermillcenter.org/about>

evidenziano, come appena messo in luce, chiari punti di contatto, primo fra tutti quello di proporsi come fucine sperimentali per performance interdisciplinari. L'idea della Abramović di metter su il suo Istituto appare sicuramente, almeno in parte, debitrice del successo riscosso nel corso degli ultimi anni dal Watermill Center di Bob Wilson. E c'è probabilmente qualcosa che, fors'anche più di altre, ha dovuto colpire l'immaginario artistico, e magari qui sarebbe anche il caso di dire "imprenditoriale", di Marina.

When I arrive in Watermill, what most impresses me is that there are no leaves on the grass. Every single leaf has been picked up. This is a Sufi meditative process, a concept of meditation and becoming connected with nature. The garden represents the mind.

[...] Watermill has its own rules, which have to be followed. Again, like a garden kept clean and empty. Again, to create stillness in your mind.

[...] The workshop participants arrive at Watermill in one state of mind, and they leave transformed, especially in their sense of time.¹⁶³

Quest'investimento sulle "vibrazioni", sui "mondi paralleli", sui cambiamenti degli "stati mentali" e sulle trasformazioni relative al "senso dello spazio e del tempo" sembra essere ciò che più interessa alla Abramović. Con buona probabilità, è proprio questa tipologia di suggestione, insieme di certo a molte altre, che la performer ha percepito nelle sue visite al Watermill, ed ha deciso di mantenere viva nel pensare al suo Marina Abramović Institute, all'estremità opposta dello stato di New York.

¹⁶³ Marina Abramović, *Parallel Space and Time*, in Robert Wilson, *The Watermill Center. A laboratory for Performance: Robert Wilson's Legacy*, DACO-VERLAG, 2011, pp.196-197.

2.6 Clifford Owens: from the Ontology of Performance to an Anthology of Performance

Torniamo per un attimo indietro a quanto si diceva in merito al reenactment, per chiudere la breve riflessione in questa sede fatta a tal proposito e per dimostrare come, in ambito performativo, il reenactment, nelle sue molteplici sfaccettature e varianti, stia via via prendendo piede, contribuendo ad intensificare la speculazione e la sperimentazione artistica intorno all'ontologia della performance.

Entering, or reenacting, an event or a set of acts (acts of art or acts of war) from a critical direction, a different temporal angle, may be, as Rich suggests, an act of survival, of keeping alive as passing on (in multiple senses of the phrase "to pass"). This keeping alive is not a liveness considered always in advance of death nor in some way after death, as Abramovic might prefer in wanting to monumentalize her work to commemorate her as dead in advance, sealing her, in this way, into the archive. Rather, it is more a constant (re)turn of, to, from, and between states in animation - an inter-(in)animation (to quote Moten, to quote Donne again). For "survival," to use Rich's word, may be a critical mode of remaining, as well as a mode of remaining critical: passing on, staying alive, in order to pass on the past as past, not, indeed, as (only) present. Never (only) present.¹⁶⁴

Il reenactment dunque può essere di certo considerato, come già evidenziato, un modo tramite cui riuscire a sperimentare una forma di archiviazione della performance, che, ovviamente, nel momento stesso in cui viene realizzata, determina non soltanto un gesto di “sopravvivenza”,

¹⁶⁴ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Routledge, New York, 2011, pp. 6-7.

ma anche un posizionamento critico dell'atto del rimanere: “un modo critico di rimanere, ma anche un modo di rimanere critici”, appunto. Questa consapevolezza critica nel caso del reenactment implica la necessaria presa di coscienza che per continuare a rimanere in vita, è necessario “trasmettere il passato in quanto passato e non, invece, come (solo) presente”.

Il caso di Clifford Owens, sotto questo punto di vista, appare tanto emblematico quanto esplicativo. *Anthology*¹⁶⁵ è il titolo dell'exhibition che l'ha visto protagonista tra il 13 novembre 2011 e il 7 maggio 2012 al MoMA PS1¹⁶⁶ di New York. Questo lavoro di Owens, costituito da fotografie, video, e soprattutto da performances live, è nato dall'idea dell'artista di dar voce, in una maniera diversa dal consueto, a degli artisti/performers afro-americani, non sempre debitamente ricordati. Secondo Clifford Owens infatti alla performance art afro-americana non è stato per lungo tempo tributato un adeguato riconoscimento e, di conseguenza, la sua storia è rimasta in larga parte non scritta. Per questa ragione Owens, che non era interessato a produrre una vera e propria ricerca accademica al riguardo, ha pensato invece di creare un compendio della performance afro-americana che non avesse precedenti, e che fosse al contempo sia altamente personale sia di natura e di valenza storica. Per perseguire questo suo obiettivo, Owens ha chiesto ad un variegato gruppo di artisti afro-americani di fornirgli degli “scores” per delle performances – letteralmente delle istruzioni scritte o grafiche per delle azioni che lui avrebbe puntualmente eseguito. *Anthology* è nata dall'esecuzione delle “partiture” ricevute da ventisei noti artisti, la maggior parte delle quali

¹⁶⁵ <http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/340>

¹⁶⁶ Il MoMA PS1 è una sede affiliata, una sorta di succursale ancora più sperimentale, del MoMA di Manhattan. Il MoMA PS1, geograficamente dislocato nel quartiere del Queens, si è proposto negli ultimi anni, prima ancora che il MoMA stesso lo diventasse, come luogo di sperimentazione per la presenza e la curatela di performances in contesti museali.
<http://momaps1.org/about/>

composte ex-novo appositamente per Owens e il suo progetto. In questo modo nell'arco della sua "artistic residency" presso il MoMA PS1 nell'estate del 2011, Owens ha utilizzato l'intero edificio per mettere in atto gli *scores* delle performances che aveva ricevuto, alcuni dei quali si limitavano a costituire dei comandi piuttosto vaghi, altri invece risultavano essere movimenti ed azioni altamente coreografati. Su una base settimanale, Clifford Owens ha eseguito queste performances in varie locations del museo, dalla sala del seminterrato della caldaia, al tetto e al sottotetto, dimostrando continuamente come, attraverso la sua lettura personale e soggettiva di ciascuno degli "scores", egli sottolineasse ("underscores" appunto) la mutevolezza e la natura elastica dei set di istruzioni ricevuti. Le fotografie scattate durante queste performances, i video girati, così come anche alcuni degli oggetti impiegati, sono diventati il principale materiale espositivo della mostra, mentre l'artista ha continuato periodicamente ad eseguire dal vivo alcune delle partiture durante l'intero corso della sua exhibition al MoMA PS1¹⁶⁷.

L'Antologia di Clifford Owens, così come i reenactments di Marina Abramović con *The Seven Easy Pieces* e con *The Artist is Present* sono dei chiari esempi di come sia possibile provare a "conservare" la performance, e a farne una sorta di storiografia a tratti critica, usandone i codici interni e giocando con essi in maniera consapevole. Nessuno nel fare ciò pretende di cristallizzare il presente performativo: un tentativo di questo genere risulterebbe infatti controproducente oltretutto primariamente infondato, data la natura stessa della performance. In questi esperimenti volti a "salvare" la performance, anche per renderla accessibile ad un pubblico "futuro" e più vasto, appare evidente da parte

¹⁶⁷ Huey Copeland, John Bowles, Christopher Lew, Clifford Owens, *Clifford Owens: Anthology*, MoMA PS1, 2012.

dei performers, l'impiego di una scrittura performativa cosciente della differenza¹⁶⁸ esistente tra una performance e il suo reenactment; un reenactment che, reiterando i meccanismi performativi ed identitari intrinseci alla performance stessa, rimanga coerente alla natura ontologica dell'oggetto in questione. Sembra quasi che, almeno al momento, l'unico modo efficiente tramite cui la performance sia riuscita a "conservarsi" sia stato attraverso "l'auto-archiviazione", vale a dire affidando alla re-performance e al suo consapevole scarto differenziale, il compito di farlo. E questo non soltanto perché, come sostiene la Abramović, "a performance is like a musical piece, an opera, or a piano concert; of course it will be different with each different interpreter after the original voice or virtuoso is gone"¹⁶⁹, ma anche perché il reenactment performativo concepisce il "salvataggio del presente" solo nei termini di una forma di cura del futuro del passato.

2.7 Non toccare l'intoccabile: una Convenzione UNESCO per salvaguardare il Patrimonio Culturale Immateriale

Il 17 ottobre del 2003, dopo oltre due settimane di conferenza a Parigi, l'UNESCO (l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite per l'educazione, la scienza e la cultura), considerando l'importanza dei beni culturali intangibili in quanto fattore principale della diversità culturale e garanzia di uno sviluppo duraturo, ha promulgato la Convenzione internazionale per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*, Editions du Seuil; Points Essais, 1979.

¹⁶⁹ Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present. The Artist Was Present. The Artist Will Be Present*, in Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, p.20.

¹⁷⁰ *Convenzione per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale*, UNESCO, Parigi, 17 ottobre 2003, pag.1.

Secondo quanto specificato nell'Articolo 1 gli scopi della suddetta Convenzione sarebbero i seguenti:

- a) salvaguardare il patrimonio culturale immateriale;
- b) assicurare il rispetto per il patrimonio culturale immateriale delle comunità, dei gruppi e degli individui interessati;
- c) suscitare la consapevolezza a livello locale, nazionale e internazionale dell'importanza del patrimonio culturale immateriale e assicurare che sia reciprocamente apprezzato;
- d) promuovere la cooperazione internazionale e il sostegno¹⁷¹.

All'articolo 2 della medesima Convenzione si legge inoltre:

per “patrimonio culturale immateriale” s'intendono le prassi, le rappresentazioni, le espressioni, le conoscenze, il know-how – come pure gli strumenti, gli oggetti, i manufatti e gli spazi culturali associati agli stessi – che le comunità, i gruppi e in alcuni casi gli individui riconoscono in quanto parte del loro patrimonio culturale. Questo patrimonio culturale immateriale, trasmesso di generazione in generazione, è costantemente ricreato dalle comunità e dai gruppi in risposta al loro ambiente, alla loro interazione con la natura e alla loro storia e dà loro un senso d'identità e di continuità, promuovendo in tal modo il rispetto per la diversità culturale e la creatività umana. Ai fini della presente Convenzione, si terrà conto di tale patrimonio culturale immateriale unicamente nella misura in cui è compatibile con gli strumenti esistenti in materia di diritti umani e con le esigenze di rispetto reciproco fra comunità, gruppi e individui nonché di sviluppo sostenibile.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ *ivi*, Sezione1, Articolo1, pag.2.

¹⁷² *ibidem*, Sezione1, Articolo 2, punto1,pag.2.

Da quanto qui appena messo in rilievo appare alquanto evidente come la definizione di “patrimonio culturale immateriale”¹⁷³ che viene fornita dall’UNESCO sia particolarmente vicina, se non addirittura perfettamente iscrivibile nelle definizioni più vaste e onnicomprensive che della performance abbiamo sino a questo momento preso in considerazione. Dal plurimitato “behaved-behavior” di Richard Schechner, alle “pratiche e ai processi culturali” di cui parla Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, fino alle “pratiche e conoscenze incorporate” poste al centro della riflessione di Diana Taylor.

La successiva esplicitazione che si fa nella Convenzione in merito ai “settori” nei quali si manifesta “il patrimonio culturale immateriale” sembra poi ulteriormente supportare quest’ipotesi.

Il “patrimonio culturale immateriale” come definito nel paragrafo 1 di cui sopra, si manifesta tra l’altro nei seguenti settori:

- a) tradizioni ed espressioni orali, ivi compreso il linguaggio, in quanto veicolo del patrimonio culturale immateriale;
- b) le arti dello spettacolo;
- c) le consuetudini sociali, gli eventi rituali e festivi;
- d) le cognizioni e le prassi relative alla natura e all’universo;
- e) l’artigianato tradizionale.¹⁷⁴

Questa schematizzazione, tra l’altro, richiama infatti chiaramente alla mente, con le dovute ovvie distinzioni, quanto specificato da Richard Schechner quando, nel definire il suo “broad spectrum of actions”, elenca

¹⁷³ La definizione che viene internazionalmente riconosciuta è quella di *Intangible Cultural Heritage*, abbreviato con la sigla *ICH*.

¹⁷⁴ *Convenzione per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale*, UNESCO, Parigi, 17 ottobre 2003, Sezione1, Articolo 2, punto 2, pag.3.

le situazioni in cui, a suo dire, si manifesta la performance¹⁷⁵.

Abbiamo già avuto modo di analizzare nelle pagine precedenti come, secondo quanto argomentato dalla stessa Taylor nel suo libro *The Archive and the Repertoire*, una certa trasmissione del sapere passi proprio attraverso delle forme di pratiche incorporate, da lei definite appunto “performances”, che costituiscono l’essenza del “repertorio”. Quello che, tramite questa Convenzione, l’UNESCO cerca qui di stabilire è l’assoluta necessità di salvaguardare e preservare un patrimonio culturale intangibile “trasmesso di generazione in generazione” e fatto di “prassi, rappresentazioni, espressioni, conoscenze, know-how”. È interessante constatare come, nelle parole dei funzionari e degli esperti associati dell’UNESCO, l’idea di “salvaguardia” e di “protezione” implichi, tra le altre cose, anche il concetto di garanzia di una vitalità (*liveness*¹⁷⁶) che va trasmessa.

[...] Per “salvaguardia” s’intendono le misure volte a garantire la vitalità del patrimonio culturale immateriale, ivi compresa l’identificazione, la documentazione, la ricerca, la preservazione, la protezione, la promozione, la valorizzazione, la trasmissione, in particolare attraverso un’educazione formale e informale, come pure il ravvivamento dei vari aspetti di tale patrimonio culturale.¹⁷⁷

Ma come fare ciò? Come riuscire cioè a preservare e a salvaguardare questo patrimonio immateriale, intangibile, performativo diremmo noi, che tanto facilmente, data la sua natura, si presta a scomparire?

Mi preme a tal proposito mettere in evidenza alcuni punti della medesima

¹⁷⁵ Per l’elenco delle otto situazioni di cui parla Schechner in *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 31, fare riferimento alla nota numero 51, pag. 56 di questa tesi.

¹⁷⁶ Il concetto di *liveness* è uno di quelli che sta alla base di qualunque teoria inerente alla ontologia della performance.

¹⁷⁷ivi, Sezione 1, Articolo 2, punto3, pag.3.

Convenzione nei quali si fa riferimento alle misure di salvaguardia da adottare, e quindi a possibili modalità tramite cui garantire la “trasmissione” di questo patrimonio costituito da comportamenti, conoscenze e pratiche culturali.

Per garantire la salvaguardia, lo sviluppo e la valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale immateriale presente sul suo territorio, ciascuno Stato contraente compirà ogni sforzo per:

- a) adottare una politica generale volta a promuovere la funzione del patrimonio culturale immateriale nella società e a integrare la salvaguardia di questo patrimonio nei programmi di pianificazione;
- b) designare o istituire uno o più organismi competenti per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale presenti sul suo territorio;
- c) promuovere gli studi scientifici, tecnici e artistici, come pure i metodi di ricerca, in vista di una salvaguardia efficace del patrimonio culturale immateriale, in particolare del patrimonio culturale immateriale in pericolo;
- d) adottare adeguate misure legali, tecniche, amministrative e finanziarie volte a:
 - i) favorire la creazione o il potenziamento di istituzioni di formazione per la gestione del patrimonio culturale immateriale e la divulgazione di questo patrimonio culturale nell’ambito di “forum” e spazi designati alla sua rappresentazione o alla sua espressione;
 - ii) garantire l’accesso al patrimonio culturale immateriale, pur rispettando le prassi consuetudinarie che disciplinano l’accesso agli aspetti specifici di tale patrimonio culturale;
 - iii) creare centri di documentazione per il patrimonio

culturale immateriale e facilitare l'accesso agli stessi.¹⁷⁸

Tra le misure qui elencate ci sono due punti in particolare che mi appaiono significativi in relazione a quanto sinora detto in merito alle pratiche di “conservazione e archiviazione” della performance artistica, e più nello specifico in merito al reenactment. Sollecitando, ai fini della salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale, la promozione di studi scientifici, tecnici e artistici, come pure di metodi di ricerca, e incitando alla creazione di “centri di documentazione” per il suddetto patrimonio, la Convenzione dell'UNESCO sembra suggerire esperimenti analoghi a quelli fatti da artisti-performers e da istituzioni museali negli ultimi anni, anche attraverso la pratica del reenactment. Sembra quasi paradossale che il tempio del patrimonio culturale materiale per antonomasia, vale a dire appunto il museo, sia stato il luogo deputato ad ergersi a “centro di documentazione” del patrimonio culturale immateriale, promuovendo ed ospitando delle iniziative (vedi i casi precedentemente analizzati della Abramović e di Owens) finalizzate a celebrare la *liveness* della performance. Di quest'aspetto e della dimensione curatoriale della performance avremo modo di parlare a breve, nel capitolo dedicato alle “pratiche” nell'ambito dei Performance Studies. Rimanendo qui focalizzati sui punti di convergenza tra quanto analizzato e trasformato in Convenzione dall'UNESCO e i tentativi sinora concretamente fatti nella direzione di una salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale, sembra proprio che gli esperimenti effettuati nel mondo dell'arte performativa possano essere considerati i più riusciti. “Preservare” la performance senza tradirne l'identità, l'abbiamo detto e ribadito più volte sin qui, non è una cosa semplice né, tantomeno, immediata.

¹⁷⁸ *ivi*, Sezione 3, Articolo 13, pp.6-7.

In contrast with the tangible heritage protected in the museum, intangible heritage consists of cultural manifestations (knowledge, skills, performance) that are inextricably linked to persons. It is not possible – or it is not as easy – to treat such manifestations as proxies for persons, even with recording technologies that can separate performances from performers and consign the repertoire to the archive.¹⁷⁹

In questo senso in effetti, data l'evidente inclusione della nozione di “patrimonio culturale immateriale” all'interno della riflessione sull'ontologia della performance, gli “studi scientifici, tecnici e artistici, come pure i metodi di ricerca” che hanno sinora contraddistinto i Performance Studies potrebbero ampiamente venire in soccorso a quanto sollecitato e propiziato dall'UNESCO stesso, producendo cioè delle risposte concrete in materia di “salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale”, declinabili in vari contesti operativi.

Nel riflettere in merito a queste questioni Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett evidenzia come la nozione di cambiamento sia intrinseca nella cultura, e per tale ragione qualunque misura finalizzata a “preservare, conservare, salvaguardare e sostenere particolari pratiche culturali” finisca spesso per “congelare la pratica stessa”¹⁸⁰. Risultando fondamentale per lei distinguere tra da una parte “intangibilità ed evanescenza”, intese come condizioni dell'intera dimensione esperienziale, e dall'altra l'idea di “scomparsa”, molti discorsi relativi all'ontologia della performance, che hanno contraddistinto alcune

¹⁷⁹ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production*, in Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (edited by), *World Heritage and Cultural Economics*, in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Duke University, 2006, pag. 60.

¹⁸⁰ *ivi*, pag. 58-60.

speculazioni accademiche da Peggy Phelan in poi, vengono da BKG diversamente declinati¹⁸¹. Riprendendo una distinzione proposta dal filosofo Nelson Goodman, parla della pittura e della scultura come di forme “autographic”, in cui cioè “l’esemplificazione materiale e il lavoro” coincidono, e delle performances come di forme “allographic”, in cui “il lavoro e la sua esemplificazione in performance” non coincidono¹⁸². Ne deduce che le forme “autographic” costituiscono il cosiddetto patrimonio tangibile, mentre quelle “allographic” fanno parte del patrimonio culturale intangibile¹⁸³. Una tale distinzione riprende la separazione e complementarità del ruolo svolto dall’archivio da una parte e dal repertorio dall’altra, dove a quest’ultimo, come evidenziato anche da Diana Taylor, spetta il compito di trasmettere la conoscenza rappresentata da quelle forme di pratiche incorporate che costituiscono il patrimonio intangibile¹⁸⁴.

According to Diana Taylor, the repertoire is always embodied and is always manifested in performance, in action, in doing. The repertoire is passed on through performance. This is different from recording and preserving the repertoire as documentation in the archive. The repertoire is about embodied knowledge and the social relations for its creation, enactment, transmission, and reproduction. It follows that intangible heritage is particularly vulnerable, according to UNESCO, precisely because it is intangible, although the historical record does not necessarily bear this out.¹⁸⁵

Risulta chiaro dall’analisi di Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett la sua

¹⁸¹ *ibidem*.

¹⁸² *ibid.*

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*

vicinanza al pensiero di Diana Taylor. Anche per lei, evidentemente, è necessaria una distinzione tra la tipologia di trasmissione consentita dall'archivio e quella permessa dal repertorio, tra le forme di espressione "autografe" e quelle "allografe", e questa consapevolezza non può che condurre alla conclusione in base alla quale sia fondamentale dedicare all'argomento "come salvaguardare il matrimonio culturale intangibile" studi, ricerche e metodologie che siano altri rispetto a quelli utili per la conservazione del patrimonio culturale materiale.

La posizione assunta dalla Taylor appare però ancora più perentoria nell'esprimere le sue perplessità circa le conclusioni "burocratiche" cui giunge, a suo dire, la Convenzione dell'UNESCO. Nella sua analisi infatti, l'UNESCO sembra sostenere un'assoluta fragilità del patrimonio intangibile che, conferendogli vita breve, lo relega ad "appartenere al passato"¹⁸⁶. La Taylor evidenzia come nel manuale prodotto dall'UNESCO la trasmissione delle pratiche culturali sia concepita come un passaggio che avviene "attraverso istruzioni e accesso alle fonti documentarie"; ma questo linguaggio burocratico, a suo avviso, "non lascia spazio alcuno per l'analisi dei codici e dei sistemi di trasmissione che hanno luogo attraverso il corpo"¹⁸⁷.

[...] Embodied practices cover a very broad gamut of behaviors: everything from the presentation of the "self" and the performance of everyday life (as Erving Goffman would have put it) to highly codified choreographies of movement that can be copyrighted (such as a Martha Graham dance).

Le pratiche culturali dunque necessitano di essere comprese e preservate

¹⁸⁶ Diana Taylor, *Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, in Tracy C. Davis (edited by), *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp.99-101.

¹⁸⁷ *ibidem*.

solo attraverso la loro stessa pratica, e non tentando di “convertirle in oggetti materiali o in manuali”¹⁸⁸. Questo assunto, secondo la Taylor, non è contemplato dalla convenzione sulla salvaguardia dell’ICH, il cui approccio viene da lei definito “burocratico” e “parossistico”¹⁸⁹. A suo avviso infatti, pur riconoscendo l’importanza ed il bisogno di rispettare ed aver cura delle pratiche culturali, una tale salvaguardia materializza la componente viva e vitale di tali pratiche performative, finendo per non comprenderle realmente”¹⁹⁰.

[...] It is impossible, I believe, to safeguard intangible manifestations of cultural heritage without assuring that the stubbornly material human bodies, or "cultural bearers" in the language of UNESCO, retain the freedom to function fully within their meaning-making systems¹⁹¹.

In definitiva, dalle riflessioni della Taylor emerge come le pratiche incorporate, non possono essere “contenute e conservate in documenti e archivi”; trattandosi infatti di forme espressive che oltrepassano la dimensione della “conoscenza scritta”, è essenziale che la loro trasmissione passi attraverso una pratica continua che consenta la riaffermazione di specifiche identità culturali e del senso di appartenenza ad una comunità.¹⁹²

Forse è possibile individuare un valido, stimolante e fruttuoso compromesso tra un linguaggio, quello della Convenzione, “burocratico” per natura, ed una teoria, quella degli studiosi e degli intellettuali, che a volte rischia di essere un pò troppo “intangibile”. L’Hemispheric Institute

¹⁸⁸ ibid.

¹⁸⁹ ibid.

¹⁹⁰ ibid.

¹⁹¹ ibid.

¹⁹² ibid.

of Performance and Politics, fondato e diretto dalla stessa Diana Taylor a New York è una chiara dimostrazione di ciò.

The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics is a collaborative, multilingual and interdisciplinary network of institutions, artists, scholars, and activists throughout the Americas. Working at the intersection of scholarship, artistic expression and politics, the organization explores embodied practice—performance—as a vehicle for the creation of new meaning and the transmission of cultural values, memory and identity. Anchored in its geographical focus on the Americas (thus “hemispheric”) and in three working languages (English, Spanish and Portuguese), the Institute's goal is to promote vibrant interactions and collaborations at the level of scholarship, art practice and pedagogy among practitioners interested in the relationship between performance and politics in the hemisphere.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/mission>

3.1 Performance Studies: “in pratica”? Praticanti della teoria, teorici di fatto

Se il primo importante tratto distintivo dei Performance Studies consiste, come appena analizzato nelle precedenti pagine, nel porre al centro della propria analisi, come “oggetto di studio”, il comportamento, una seconda significativa caratteristica che sembra distinguere, sempre in relazione al pensiero schechneriano, quest’ambito disciplinare, è la “pratica artistica”¹⁹⁴. Ancora una volta dunque, come di consueto quando ci si rapporta ai Performance Studies, diventa necessario spostare il nostro asse d’attenzione sul concetto di *doing*, e sulle varie forme attraverso cui questo *fare* si declina. Secondo quanto Schechner ribadisce più volte nei suoi scritti teorici e anche e soprattutto alla luce di quanto da lui stesso incarnato nella sua pratica, simbioticamente artistica e teorica, è impossibile prescindere dallo stretto legame esistente tra “studiare performance” e “fare performance”¹⁹⁵.

Prima di addentrarsi nell’analisi di alcune delle modalità più evidenti tramite cui questa identificazione tra il “fare performance” e lo “studio della performance” si manifesta, può risultare però alquanto utile evidenziare che questo concetto poco o nulla ha a che fare con l’idea di “performance as research”, così come si è evoluta in territorio inglese. Se

194 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag.1.

195 *ivi*, pag. 2. A tal proposito risulta di estremo interesse quanto teorizzato da Marco De Marinis in *New Theatreology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011, pag. 68-9. Infatti, parlando dei punti di contatto tra la Nuova Teatologia italiana e i Performance Studies americani, De Marinis mette qui in luce un’espressione ancora più articolata rispetto a quanto esplicitato da Schechner, formulando l’esistenza di un rapporto non più soltanto e più tradizionalmente bidimensionale tra la teoria e la pratica teatrale, ma introducendo il concetto di una relazione tridimensionale che implichi il “vedere teatro”, il “fare teatro” e il “veder-fare teatro”. In tal senso, però, quanto esplicitato da Schechner quando parla di “lavoro sul campo basato sulla tecnica dell’osservazione partecipante”, implica, nella concretezza metodologica, questa tridimensionalità relazionale cui fa riferimento De Marinis. Anche in questo, dunque, i due approcci in questione, quello dei Performance Studies americani e quello della Nuova Teatologia italiana, appaiono, come esplicitato da Marco De Marinis nell’articolo sovracitato, condividere dei punti in comune.

è infatti vero che i Performance Studies si sono sviluppati e continuano a svilupparsi in paesi diversi, dando vita di volta in volta a specifiche caratteristiche identitarie, nel Regno Unito, questa sfera disciplinare si è contraddistinta, sin quasi dal suo nascere, per il fatto di concepire la pratica artistica in ambito performativo come il tronco fertile sul quale innestare qualunque forma di ricerca in materia¹⁹⁶. La maggior parte degli studi e delle ricerche che pertengono la tradizione britannica dei Performance Studies prende infatti il via proprio dalla pratica e dalla sperimentazione performativa; ed è sulla base di queste applicazioni concrete e di queste sperimentazioni artistiche che vengono elaborate le ricerche e le teorie in materia di performance.

Quando però Richard Schechner parla di una relazione intrinseca tra “studying performance” e “doing performance”, allude in realtà a un concetto ben diverso, e cioè all’idea in base alla quale un vastissimo numero di studiosi e teorici di Performance Studies sono anche artisti praticanti che, ad esempio, spesse volte lavorano nel modo dell’avanguardia, altre invece si specializzano in una varietà di forme tradizionali occidentali e non occidentali¹⁹⁷. E in effetti lo stesso Schechner rappresenta uno degli esempi più emblematici tra le incarnazioni di questa crasi teorico-pratica in materia di performance. Teoria performativa e pratica teatrale hanno sempre avuto uguale peso nelle sue ricerche e sperimentazioni, e si sono sempre nutrite a vicenda, in un rapporto di vera e propria osmosi mutualistica, anche se, come lo stesso Schechner ha sempre riconosciuto, “il suo lavoro artistico più intenso ha sempre avuto luogo su un palcoscenico, mentre la sua riflessione teorica più probante, pur includendo ampiamente la sfera

196 Heike, Roms, *The Practice Turn: Performance and the British Academy*, in Jon Mckenzie e Heike Roms, C.J. W.-L. Wee, *Contesting Performance. Global Sites of Research*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2010, pp.51-70.

197 Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-2.

teatrale, si è sempre spinta anche al di là”¹⁹⁸. Nella raccolta di contributi curata da James Harding e Cindy Rosenthal e pubblicata con il titolo di *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner’s Broad Spectrum*, i due autori mettono in relazione il sorgere e l’evoluzione dei Performance Studies come ambito disciplinare con il lavoro svolto dallo stesso Schechner come teorico, editor di TDR, docente universitario e regista. Il filo conduttore di suddetti interventi che contano, tra le altre, anche le firme di Marvin Carlson, Rebecca Schneider, Judith Malina, Diana Taylor e Guillermo Gómez-Peña, è finalizzato ad evidenziare come

[...] any consideration of the emergence of performance studies as a discipline would be incomplete without a thorough assessment not only of how, as an individual practioner/scholar, Schechner has negotiated the path from theatre to performance, but also how how those negotiations have generated some of the most influential, if not defining, statements in the field of performances studies itself.

[...] Whether one speaks of many “Schechners” or simply of the many sides of a complex scholar-practitioner, Schechner has demonstrated a seemingly inexhaustible commitment to forging new and hybrid model for theatre and performance scholars in the academy. This commitment radiates through his prodigious accomplishments as a scholar, an editor, a teacher, and as a practitioner. [...] Beginning in the early 1970s, Schechner’s investigations and analysis of the extensive interrelationships between theatre theory and practice and the social sciences profoundly impacted his teaching, scholarship, editorial, and performance work. This new emphasis on ritual and theatre anthropology, and especially the interconnections and distinctions

198 Richard Schechner, *TDR and Me*, in *TDR: The Drama Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (T 189), Spring 2006, pag. 12.

between “social drama” and “aesthetic drama,” evolved through Schechner’s fruitful collaborations with his friend, the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner.¹⁹⁹

La tesi qui sostenuta da Harding e Rosenthal mette in evidenza come il lavoro registico svolto da Schechner nel contesto del teatro d’avanguardia sia diametralmente proporzionale all’assai fondamentale contributo da lui fornito alla formazione della disciplina dei Performance Studies. Ed è esattamente per questa ragione che i due autori di *The Rise of Performance Studies* parlano di una corrispondenza biunivoca tra la sperimentazione avanguardistica e l’apertura interculturale della pratica teatrale di Schechner e dei suoi Performance Studies. In questo senso dunque i PS, al pari del teatro di Schechner, vengono considerati, come del resto già evidenziato dallo stesso teorico della performance²⁰⁰, come avanguardia, una performance sperimentale, un work in progress permanente, e dunque una disciplina perennemente aperta.

Se si sfoglia anche solo rapidamente il *curriculum vitae*²⁰¹ di Richard Schechner, è possibile accorgersi facilmente della convergenza che vede protagonisti la sua elaborazione teorica in materia di performance con il suo *fare teatrale*, a partire dagli anni del suo attivismo politico²⁰² alla Tulane University con il Free Southern Theater, per poi passare alle prime sperimentazioni di *environmental theatre*²⁰³ con il

199 James Harding, Cindy Rosenthal, *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner’s Broad Spectrum*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2011, pp.1-5.

²⁰⁰ Richard Schechner, *What is Performance Studies Anyway?*, in Peggy Phelan, Jill Lane (edited by) *The Ends of Performance*, New York University Press, 1998, pag. 357-362, and in Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 3-4.

²⁰¹ È possibile consultare il curriculum vitae di Richard Schechner tra gli allegati di questa tesi, pag. 306.

²⁰² L’attivismo politico di Richard Schechner negli anni Sessanta si è esplicitato all’insegna del pacifismo e della lotta contro la guerra in Vietnam, dell’affermazione dei diritti civili e del movimento per la libertà degli Afro-Americani.

²⁰³ Environmental Theater è anche il titolo di un famoso libro di Richard Schechner.

New Orleans Group, e in seguito agli anni newyorkesi del più conosciuto The Performance Group di *Dionysus in '69* e delle esplorazioni in India, per poi finire con l'assai più recente East Coast Artists, sempre a Manhattan²⁰⁴.

Non sorprende quindi scoprire che persino dopo aver deciso di lasciare la direzione artistica della ECA (East Coast Artists) a Benjamin Mosse, Schechner continui comunque a portare avanti la sua costante ricerca artistica, sperimentando nuove modalità creative e produttive. Infatti, se dal punto di vista teorico gli ultimissimi anni lo hanno visto impegnato soprattutto nella scrittura di due libri sul Ramlila of Ramnagar, un ciclo di rappresentazioni sacre legate alla tradizione dell'India del Nord, e alla realizzazione della terza versione di *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, dal punto di vista artistico-pratico, il suo ultimo lavoro teatrale, da lui stesso definito come una *performance in progress*, è stato invece prodotto e realizzato in Inghilterra, durante una sua Visiting Professorship presso la University of Kent. L'opera in questione si chiama *Imagining O*, e avendo avuto l'opportunità di seguirne personalmente l'intero processo d'ideazione, creazione e messa in scena, ne riporto di seguito una sinossi consuntiva, frutto di un lavoro costante di osservazione e documentazione delle fasi di lavorazione della performance.

204 La maggior parte delle informazioni relative all'impegno teatrale di Richard Schechner e alle opere realizzate con le compagnie sovracitate provengono dalle letture fatte presso la Princeton University Library, attraverso i *Richard Schechner Papers and The Drama Review Collection*, nella sezione Department of Rare Books and Special Collections della biblioteca.

3.2 Intervallo immaginativo: Re-imagining “Imagining O”

*Imagining O ... a dispersed performance-in-progress ... Where Ophelia Meets Her Match*²⁰⁵



Richard Schechner holding the poster of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.

This is the full title of the performance that Richard Schechner directed in England in June and July 2011, in the occasion of his Visiting Professorship at the University of Kent, in Canterbury.

He visited the School of Arts at the University of Kent several times that year, giving lectures and seminars and, always as part of his Visiting

²⁰⁵ Quanto riportato in questo capitolo è parte del materiale utilizzato per l'allestimento della *Dramaturgical Room* di *Imagining O*, così come concepito e realizzato da chi scrive, in collaborazione con Richard Schechner, regista dello spettacolo. Lo stesso materiale è stato successivamente impiegato per una lecture avuta luogo presso il Dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University, il 9 Novembre del 2011 e tenuta, ancora una volta in collaborazione da Richard Schechner e da chi scrive.

Professorship, Schechner also spent 6 weeks, between June and July 2011, working on this performance.

Imagining O is, in many aspects, a very complex performance.

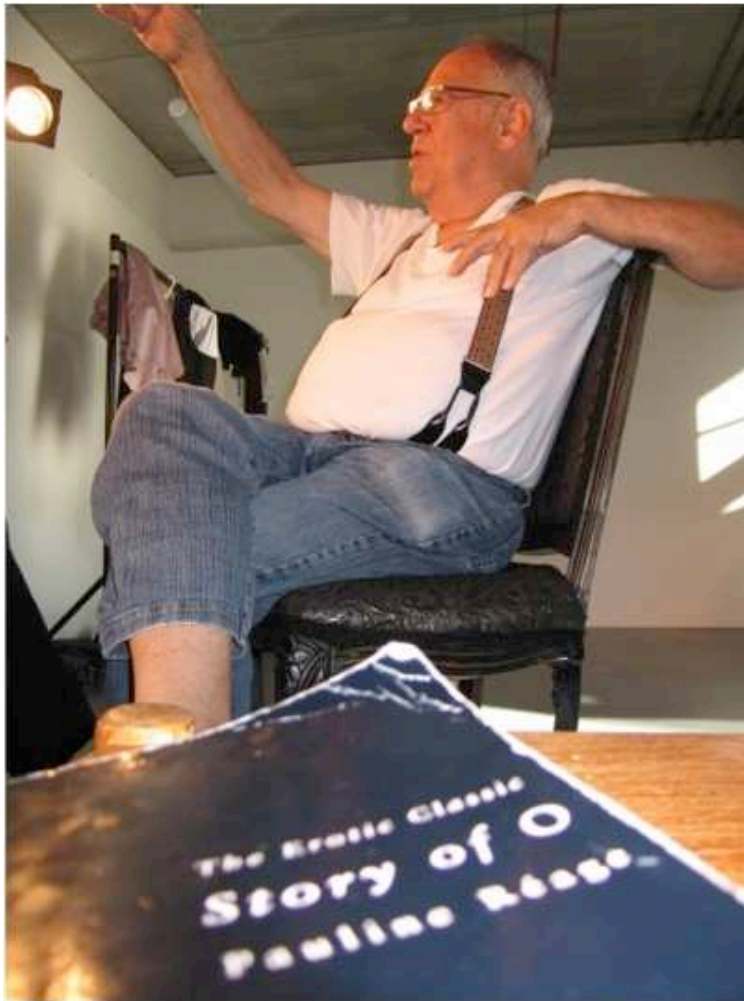
Referring to the “process of making” this performance, what’s behind and what made it possible?

When Schechner arrived at the University of Kent, he obviously had a bunch of ideas about the kind of work he wanted to do, but *Imagining O* was largely created during those 6 weeks in Canterbury, and it took its shape day by day as a real *work in progress*.

The main ingredients of this performance in progress are:

1. The Literary Texts
2. The Personal Performance Text
(meaning people who worked on the project, and the particular qualities of those particular people)
3. The Physical Space where this performance took place.

Let’s start with the **Literary Texts**



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

Schechner brought a book called *l'Histoire d'O*, **The story of O** in English, to the university. It's a French erotic novel which was published in 1954.

It's a story about love, dominance, female submission and the pleasures of sadomasochism.

IT IS the story of O, a beautiful Parisian fashion photographer, who is systematically turned into a slave through sexual assaults, regular whippings, and long hours in solitude. She is blindfolded, chained, whipped, branded, pierced, made to wear a mask, and taught to be constantly available for oral, vaginal, and anal intercourse. A remarkable

point is that, despite being treated harshly, O grants permission beforehand for everything that occurs, and her permission is consistently asked.

The book was written by Pauline Réage, which is actually a pseudonym for Dominique Aury, a French journalist and translator. She kept her identity secret for forty years after the initial publication of the novel, until just a few years before her death on May 2nd, 1998 - at the age of 91 - when she revealed that she had written *The Story of O* as a series of love letters to Jean Paulhan, her lover of 20 years, who had admired the work of the Marquis de Sade.

There is an interview in the New Yorker in which Dominique Aury reveals herself as the author of *l'Histoire d'O*. The interview is titled *The Unmasking of O* and was published on August 1st, 1994... again a few years before she died.

Schechner used this real interview in *Imagining O* to stage a scene where Ophelia (from the Shakespearean *Hamlet*) interviews Dominique Aury. This interview is performed live during the show, but it was also previously filmed and is screened during another moment of the performance.

I mentioned Ophelia because Schechner also brought Shakespeare with him...

He decided to use only Shakespeare female characters and their words and, for instance, he selected Shakespearean females' last lines before dying. Among the several Shakespearean female characters he privileged Ophelia, and *Imagining O* soon became a clash between the O of Pauline Réage and Shakespeare's Ophelia:

“two entities not ordinarily thought of, in one mind-flash” - this is the way Schechner defines them – “two young women *wronged*, but in different epochs in different ways; and written about very differently.”

Schechner’s challenge was: “How can we imagine and perform creatures never born, but written?”

In order to do this, *Imagining O* has been *conceived* of as a work in progress, based on a daily active contemplation of these troubling themes which are the substance of this performance:

Abjection

Submission

Dying

Bodies-as-erotic-objects

Innocence corrupted by thought and fantasies

The pleasure of pain and the pain of pleasure

What is the boundary between pleasure and pain? And how does this become very problematic especially when it’s voluntary?

Was this violence done to Ophelia and to O, or was there complicity in what had happened to them and from which they drew pleasure? And above all, how can this be seen as a metaphor for our lives?

Imagining O is both an individual and a collective exploring journey through all these hot themes and maybe disturbing questions. It doesn’t want to resolve them, neither avoid them, indeed, it wants to explore them. *Imagining O* means using our imagination to explore the possibilities of ‘O’ in terms of fantasies through an artistic performance.

In *Imagining O* only women can speak. Just one male performer, Pablo Pakula, has a line, but actually he acts in the performance almost like a woman. He doesn’t dress like a woman, but he does all the things the

other women of the performance do; you can see him even dance in a scene called the *Balthus Room*.

Also, in *Imagining O* we hear only words from female characters, with an exception for the Hamlet quotation “Words! Words! Words!” pronounced by Ophelia during the “Interview Scene”.

So, it is evident that, at the beginning of the process Schechner set his own rules. For example, you couldn’t use words that Shakespeare women haven’t said; and you couldn’t use words that are not in the *Story of O*. Sometimes these rules were broken. But they were largely maintained and this gave everyone a constraint in terms of finding their liberty rather than using any words to explore the abjection of women. So Richard decided that they had to use two texts that were about abjection, and if it was about women, the ensemble had to remove all the statements by men. These were the rules of this particular game. And it was in the framework of these rules that they found the freedom for their artistic imagination.

The texts used come from Shakespeare, *Hamlet* mostly, and from *The Story of O*, and they were arranged by the director and the performers.

So, in terms of giving you a first idea about what “*performance in progress*” means, at least in the specific case of the literary texts, you might need to know that at the very beginning of the *rehearsal process*, Schechner knew the basic texts he wanted to use, but he didn’t know what in those basic texts would be selected. He knew they would use the words from Ophelia (and he had written all of those out). He thought at the beginning that he would use a lot more words from the Shakespeare women scenes, but it did not turn out that way. Also, he didn’t know which texts they would use from *The Story of O*. He had selected some, but then the performers selected others. So, let’s say that the generalities

of the texts were there since the very beginning ... what women say in Shakespeare and in *The Story of O*... but what in those general texts would be announcing... that would be determined during the rehearsal process.

Another important... I would say “*visual text*” that Schechner brought to the table were some paintings by the French-Polish painter Balthasar Klossowski, better known as Balthus.

(Richard Schechner has made 2 Hamlets---and maybe *Imagining O* can be considered, in some ways, a sort of variation of Hamlet--- and he used Balthus in the those productions as well. In the first production of Hamlet, for example, Balthus Ophelia and Polonius were in a sexual relationship and he used Balthus as a way to stage their scenes together. Balthus does paintings of girls semi dressed or nude and highly erotic, but not pornographic).

Selection of Balthus paintings chosen by the director Richard Schechner for the creation of the scene called 'Balthus Room' in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

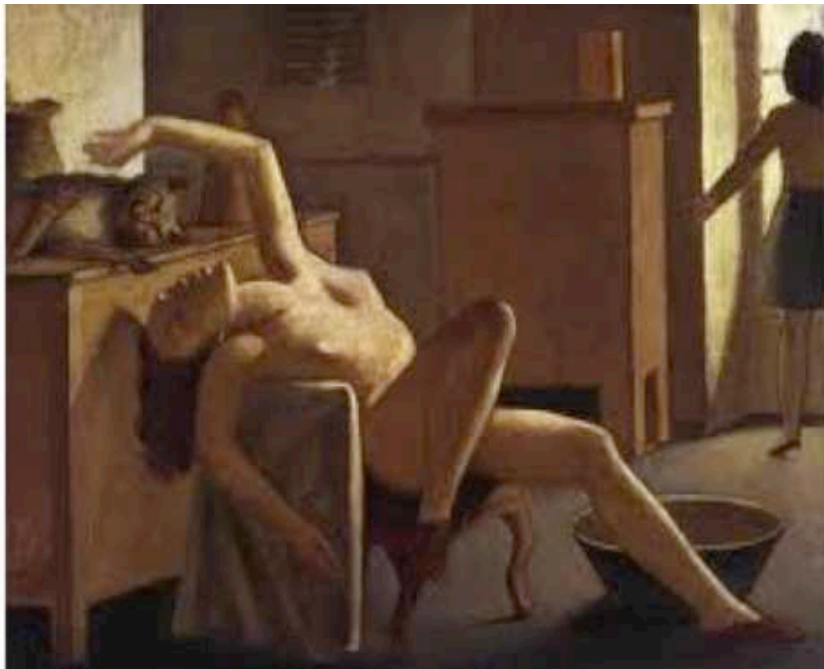














Roanna Mitchell, who is the Movement Director of *Imagining O*, started working with the performers in order to interpret these images as movements. Roanna, at the moment of the production a PhD student at the University of Kent, is also a movement teacher and a performer.



Roanna Mitchell, Movement Director of 'Imagining O' and Richard Schechner, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Roanna Mitchell and some students working at the rehearsals of the 'Balthus Room' scene in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



The 'Balthus Room' scene in the performance 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The 'Balthus Room' scene in the performance 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The 'Balthus Room' scene in the performance 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The 'Balthus Room' scene in the performance 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The 'Balthus Room' scene in the performance 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.

Schechner brought all this material and some ideas about how to use it, and above all he was bringing the particular qualities of his own fantasies and imagination, and THERE, at the University of Kent, as for Ophelia in the title of this performance, Richard met HIS own match.

First of all he found a specific Space:

the School of Arts gave him an entire building, the Jarman Art Center, to work on this performance. The structure of this building informed the structure of the performance itself.

Imagining O is defined as a dispersed performance also because the different scenes took place in different spaces and on different floors of this building: in the main hall as well as in the studios, on the stairway and in the bathrooms (women bathrooms and disabled bathroom), on one fire escape and in a space we called "the Cube" (a glass hallway on the second floor), inside and outside the building.



The Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, the building used as space for ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Space of the Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, used for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Space of the Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, used for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Space of the Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, used for ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

When Schechner began working he saw the spaces and imagined how to use them.

He started to put people in these spaces and to think about what could be staged there. For example, he thought of setting the large scenes in the studios, because they were like black box theatres.

While Roanna Mitchell -the Movement director- and the performers were doing some rehearsals for the *Balthus Scene* in one of those studios, Schechner saw a sort of alcove space on the second floor, which seemed a more intimate space, and he imagined to put the *Balthus Room* in that alcove. Then we had the third floor balcony, which was a very open and commanding space in the atrium, and while Schechner was developing

the opening scene of Queen Ophelia, he decided to move the rehearsals for that opening scene to that balcony, and so the way he went on working on the same scene got transformed by the peculiar qualities of that space.



Roanna Mitchell measuring the space used for the 'Balthus Room' scene in 'Imagining O', Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Space used for the 'Balthus Room' scene in 'Imagining O', Jarman Art Center – School of Arts, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



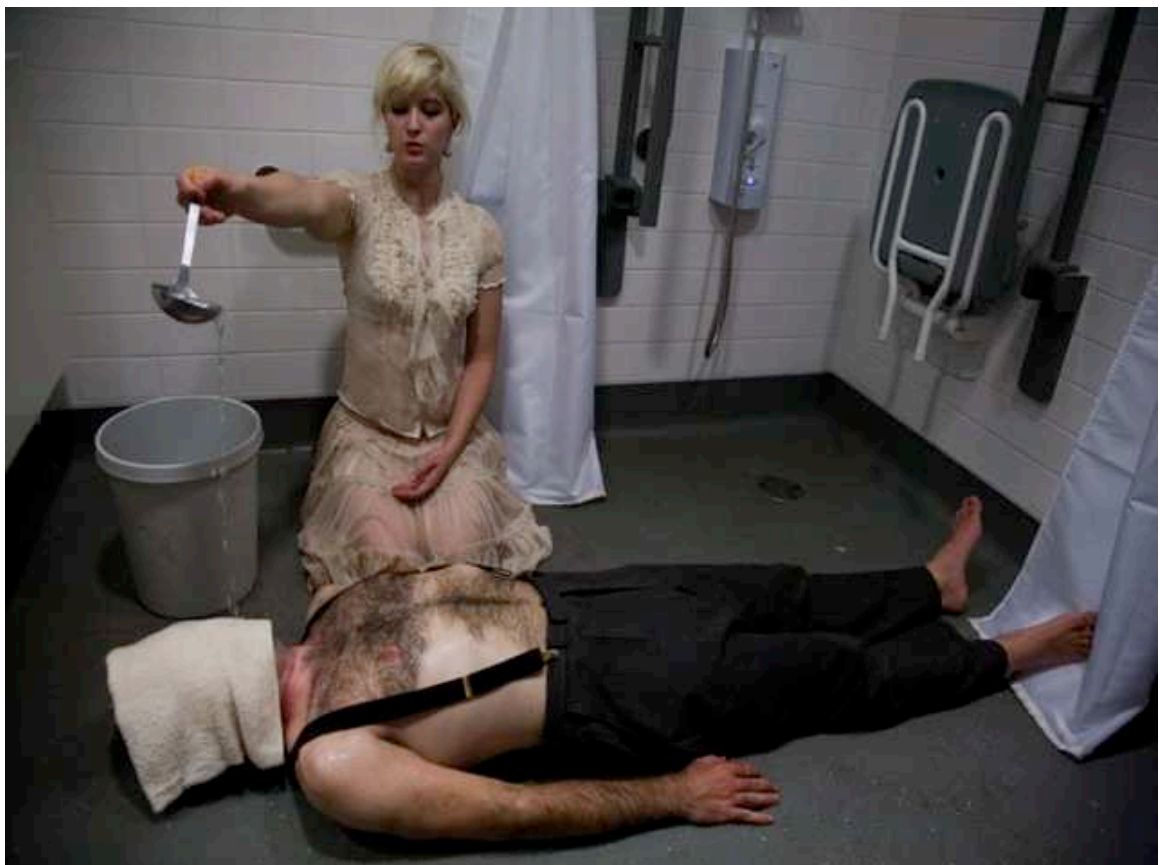
Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



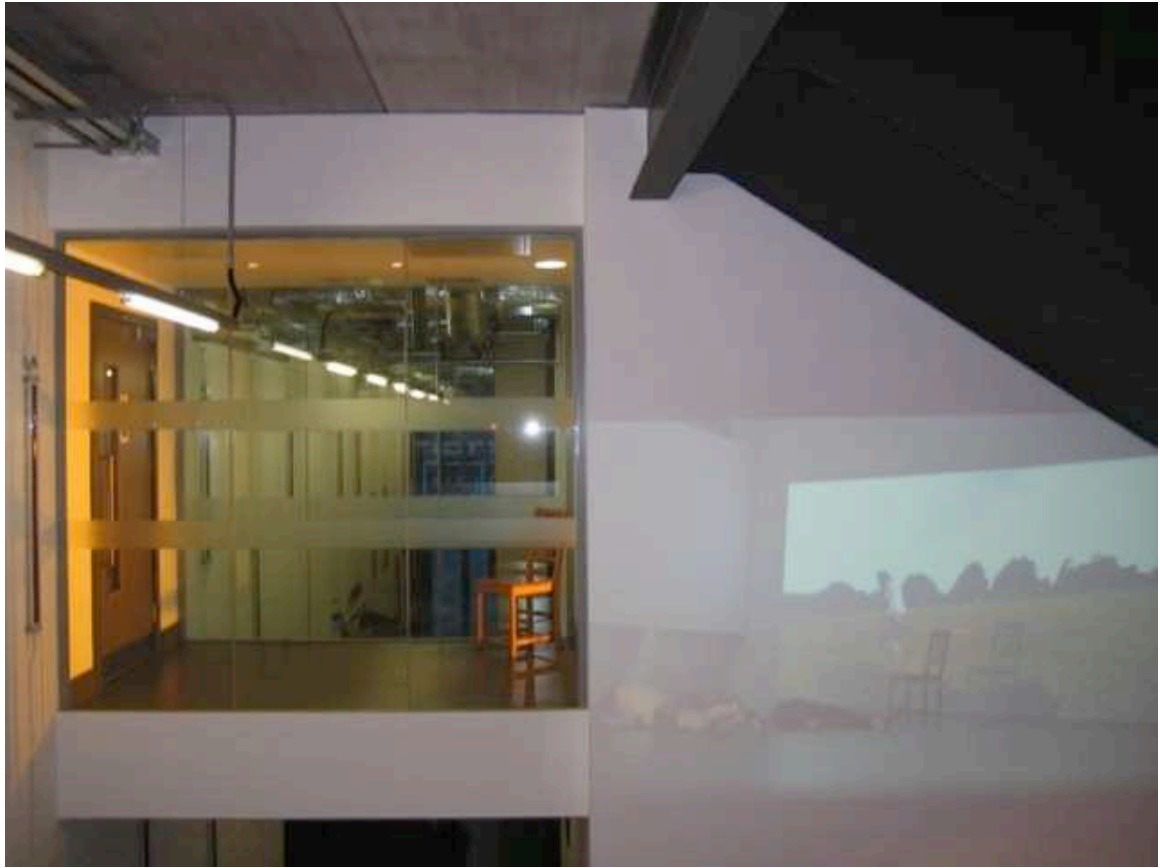
Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



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Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



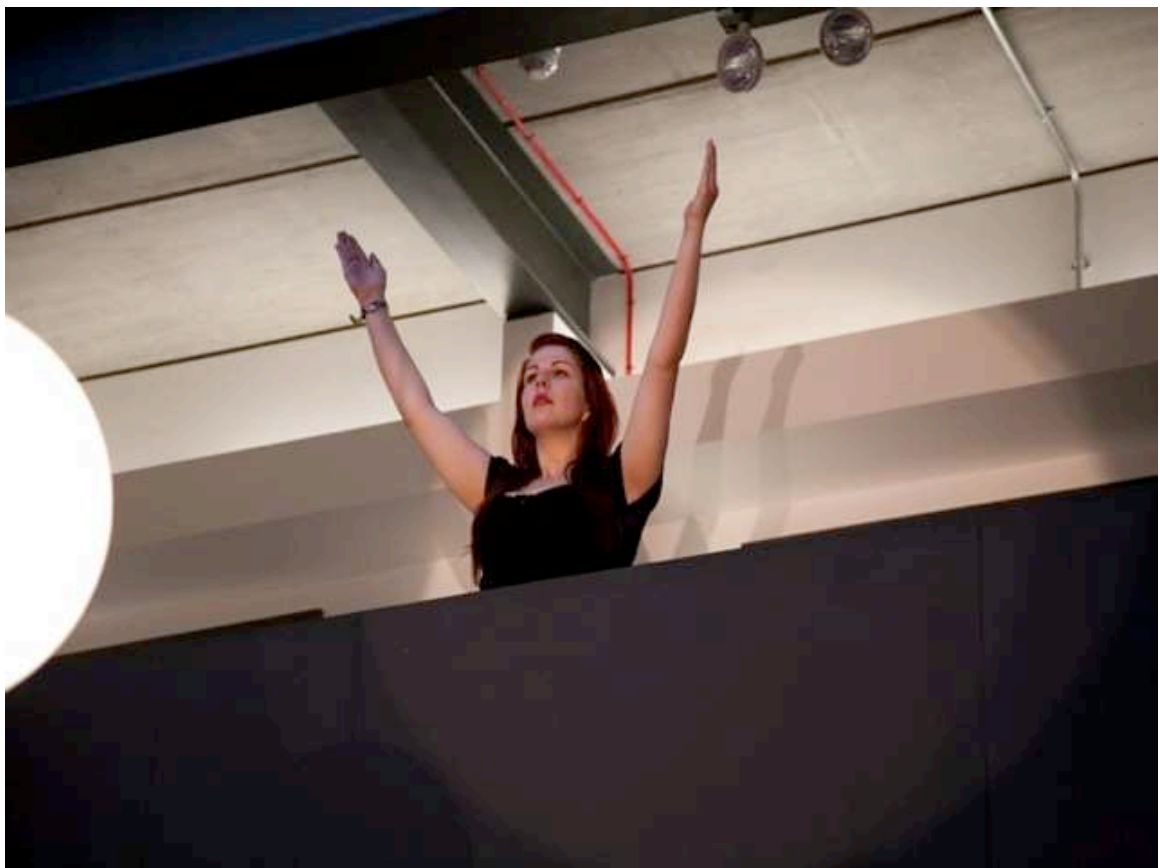
Space used for “The Cube Scene”, in ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



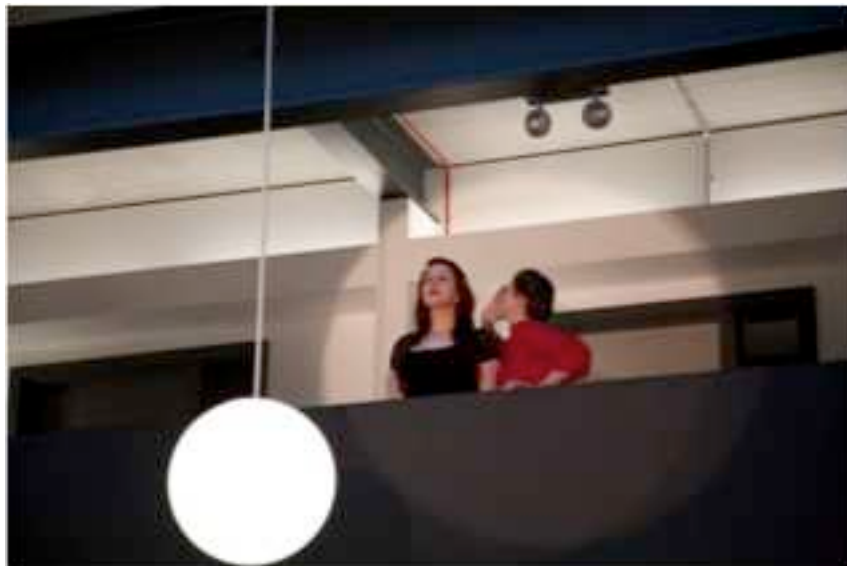
Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

The outdoors space actually came later, when the indoor river - constructed for the final scene - began leaking: so we had to move it outside, where the entire final scene was staged.

Some of these scenes even took place simultaneously. At a certain point, spectators were given a map to be able to choose which scene they would like to see and to be able to reach the different locations.



Rehearsals of “The River Scene”, in ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of “The River Scene”, in ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of "The River Scene", in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of “The River Scene”, in ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of “The River Scene”, in ‘Imagining O’, University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

In order to bring this performance to life Schechner worked closely with a crew.



Group discussion during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



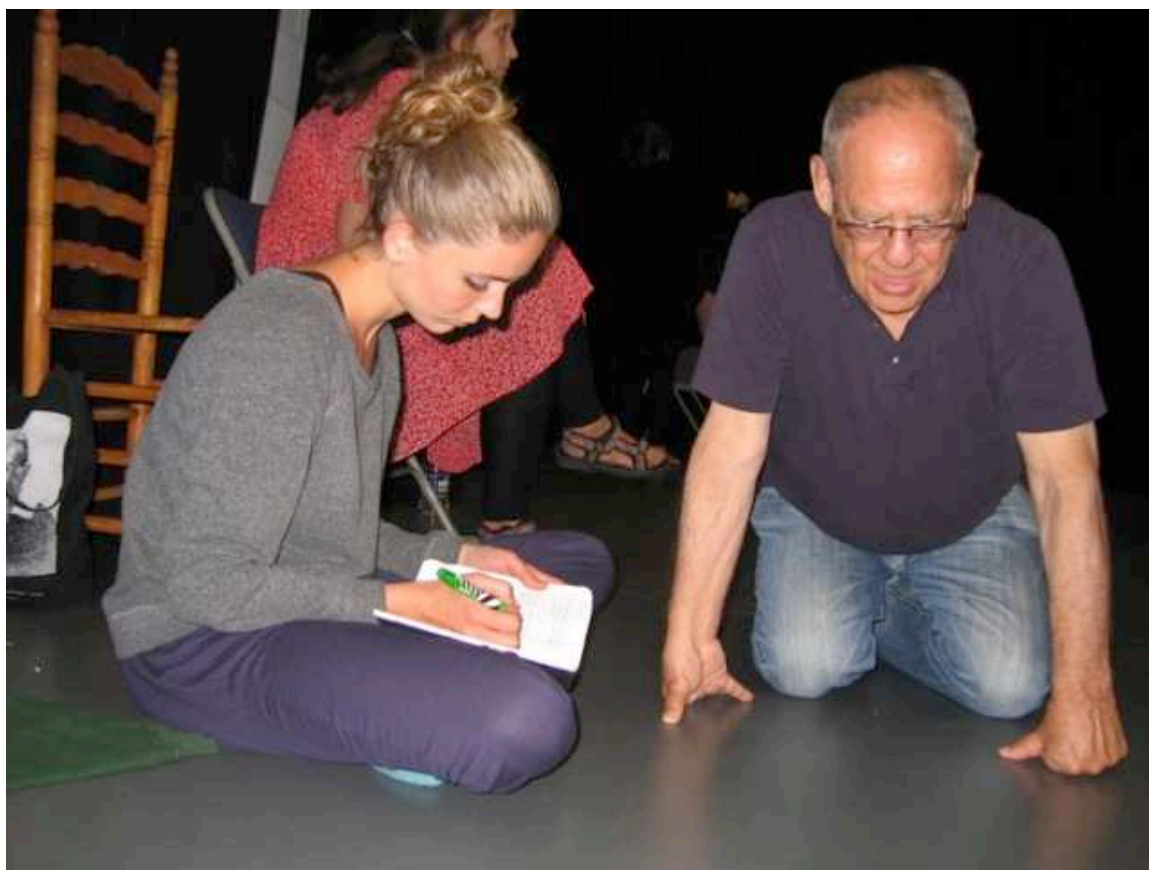
Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

First of all, I would mention the group of young performers. Several are students at the Drama Department of the University of Kent. They weren't casted for *Imagining O*. They self-selected themselves. This was actually an extra-credit project for them and they really decided to give all their commitment to it. Schechner found out what their particular qualities were, and he helped them shape those qualities detail by detail. As their director, Richard Schechner wanted to feel free to ask them to do what he wished, but he let them know that they were not obliged to adhere to him.

Actually most of the performers rose to the challenge and did more and more -and so they learned and for some degrees they also learned how to be independent. So they also learned how to take some of that work and how do it on their own, both in terms of training and in terms of composing a performance for their own work.



*Richard Schechner and Roanna Mitchell during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O',
University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.*



Richard Schechner and Roanna Mitchell during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Benjamin Mosse, Associate Director of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Benjamin Mosse, Associate Director of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



*Benjamin Mosse and some students during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O',
University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.*



Benjamin Mosse with a student during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Benjamin Mosse during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Benjamin Mosse during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner and Benjamin Mosse during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner, Benjamin Mosse and Roanna Mitchell during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner and Benjamin Mosse during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

The other participants in the production are many.

I have already mentioned Roanna Mitchell, who is the Movement Director of *Imagining O*.

Benjamin Mosse is the Associate Director of *Imagining O*. He has worked together with Schechner several times and Benjamin is actually a theatre director himself; he got his MA in Performance Studies at NYU and since 2009 Schechner gave him the artistic direction of the ECA, the East Coast Artists. As associate director of *Imagining O*, Benjamin was involved in the staging and coaching of the actors, and he worked closely with Roanna in order to develop some scenes of the performance.

They staged together two main scenes, *The Tipping Point Scene* and *The Balthus Room Dance*.

They also collaborated heavily on the media with Jake Juba, the art film videographer, and they advised the students very closely on the dispersal performances. Schechner staged all the other scenes and they all collaborated in each other scenes.

There was always a constant dialogue among Richard Schechner, Benjamin Mosse and Roanna Mitchell. Of course they often worked separately on specific scenes with single groups of performers or even with just one performer, but their work and their ideas were a continuous and symbiotic exchange. As director, Schechner actually gave a certain amount of autonomy and creative freedom to Benjamin Mosse, to Roanna Mitchell and to the performers themselves. There are some moments in *Imagining O*, which have been almost entirely created by the performers, sometimes under the supervision of Mosse, sometimes under the supervision of Schechner. I am talking about what we called *Dispersals*, which are some specific moments of the performance during which the spectators have to choose which scene they want to see. During those moments, different things happen simultaneously in different locations and it becomes impossible to see everything. We have two *dispersal moments* during the performance, each one lasts about 20 minutes. There is also another moment called the *gate-keeper*, also thought of by the performers. This scene requires a certain participation by the audience too. Each spectator needs to take part in a quick and easy “game” and to interact with the performers in order to get a map and to get access to the rest of the show.

In some aspects, *Imagining O* was quite collective... meaning that, as the Director of the entire piece, Richard Schechner enabled people to create and, in some cases, he selected from what they had done in order to bring all the elements together.

It was a very complex performance, and in keeping with the title, *Imagining O ... a dispersed performance in progress*, Schechner decided to disperse some of his power. So... if the performance was about experimenting with dispersion in space and with dispersion in text, then it was also about experimenting with dispersion in power.

During the three nights of the Performance, we had a *Dramaturgical Room*. This was led by Duska Radosavljevic, who currently teaches at the University of Kent. The *Dramaturgical Room* was a space where people could go during the performance to see some multimedia material about the process of making *Imagining O*. They could ask questions about the performance itself and learn about the rehearsal process.

The idea was to have the *Dramaturgy* going on at the same time as the written performance. Instead of having a program note or something similar, during the performance spectators could go into this room, they could meet with the 'dramaturg' and in this way they could participate in trying to understand the performance as it was going on.



Richard Schechner and the dramaturg Duska Radosavljevic during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

Also regarding people working on *Imagining O*, another interesting aspect of this production was the collaboration at the professional level from the University of Kent technical staff.

We had a project producer, Paul Allain, who at the time was the chair of the Drama Department at the University of Kent and who organized the entire Visiting Professorship of Richard Schechner. We had a lighting designer, a stage manager, an audio-visual technician and we had Sam Westbury and his carpentry. Sam is the scenic artist. He designed and built the river we used for the final scene; he built the peep house and the *Owl Mask*.



Richard Schechner talking with the technical staff of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



The technical staff of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



*Richard Schechner talking with a member of the technical staff of 'Imagining O',
University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.*



Richard Schechner talking with the technical staff of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner fixing the lights during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner talking to the carpentry Sam Westbury about the realization of the Owl Mask and the river for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner talking to the carpentry Sam Westbury about the realization of the Owl Mask and other props for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner wearing the Owl Mask for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner wearing the Owl Mask for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



*Richard Schechner wearing the Owl Mask among some actors of 'Imagining O',
University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.*



An actor wearing the Owl Mask of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



The Owl Mask at the centre of several scenes of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The Owl Mask at the centre of several scenes of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The Owl Mask at the centre of several scenes of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The Owl Mask in the final scene of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



The Owl Mask in the final scene of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.

After the second week of work, we had OPEN REHEARSALS each Friday. These *Open Rehearsals* were used to give an idea of the kind of work done, but, of course they were also an occasion for the group to test the functioning and the progress of the work -week by week- and to receive feedback from spectators.



Richard Schechner talking to the audience during the Open Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner talking to the audience during the Open Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner talking to the audience during the Open Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

We had video-cameras around all the time, filming the entire process of making the performance. This is why we have so much documentation about what was going on there during those six weeks. We have hours of footage and a lot of pictures. The film of *Imagining O* was edited by Ken Plas and Alessandra Skarlatos, the two documentary videographers of *Imagining O*.

We used different video projections in *Imagining O*. This means of course that some scenes have been filmed before, in the building or outside in many different locations.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Video projections in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



Video projections in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



Video projections in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Video projections in 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.

One example is the *Interview Scene* with Dominique Aury and Ophelia. This scene was performed live - as I mentioned - but was also screened during one of the *Dispersal Moments*, which means that not everybody was able to see it. (They might choose to see another scene performed simultaneously.) So the filmed interview was screened during another moment of the performance when everybody could watch it.

Schechner worked a lot on this scene. He wrote the dialogue, mixing together parts of the real interview from the *New Yorker*, some Shakespeare and he also added his own words. Each detail was very carefully defined and codified, each gesture and movement, each word and voice inclination. It was not like this with each scene of the performance. Some were more improvised than others, and they needed some participation and involvement by spectators.



'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, July 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Richard Schechner during the rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Rehearsals of 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.



Filming for 'Imagining O', University of Kent, Canterbury, June 2011.

THE WORKSHOP

There is something else I would like to focus the attention on for a moment. It's the underlying force behind the performance -what made *Imagining O* possible. I am referring to the *Workshop* that Richard Schechner led for the performers at the University of Kent. The rehearsals for the performance in fact took place only in the afternoon, right after the lunch break. But the morning section was entirely dedicated to this workshop.

The first 45 minutes were always allotted to the *Yoga section*.

(Schechner has been practicing Yoga for almost 40 years now. The yoga he teaches is the way he learned in Madras in the 70s).

The Yoga section was always followed by some *breathing exercises*.

After that, on a daily basis and according to the available time, performers were trained through a specific range of practices:

1. slow motion enactments
2. crossing the line exercises
3. sharing of personal experiences and fantasies
4. vocal training
5. movement improvisations
6. rasaboxes exercises

The morning workshop was very useful in terms of building a performing ensemble which could be able to work on the creation of *Imagining O*. Don't forget that we only had 6 weeks to bring to life the entire performance. Some of the students didn't even know each other beforehand. So, this daily 3-hour morning workshop was an important moment of artistic aggregation and sharing for everybody, a moment during which they learned a common basic sharing vocabulary of performance that they could then use during the rehearsals. When Schechner asked the performers to do something in relation to a certain exercise done in the morning workshop they definitely knew what he was asking them to do.

The *Workshop* represented a radical break from the canonical, "psychological" approach to acting and theatre-making. Performers were often asked to create *personae* and not characters, drawing on personal materials and aspects of themselves. All these exercises have been used as a tool not only for the performers training, but also for the performance composition.

The link between the morning workshop and the afternoon rehearsals became clear to everyone.

After the first week of work, the group understood that the morning exercises were very helpful and even fundamental in terms of developing the rehearsals of *Imagining O*.

If the morning was about learning a technique, the afternoon was about using that technique.

In the process of making this performance, the Workshop was the *Engineering* - building the foundation, while the performance was the *Architecture*.

One example of the exercises offered by Schechner during the *Workshop* is the

CROSSING THE LINE in SLOW MOTION

Schechner did a lot of slow motion work. The basic idea is slowing down and looking at things in different time frames. In this way people can really sense how their bodies are moving; they can sense other people, they can take time to look at other people and at other things. They can really stare at each other.

In ordinary life we break that lens away, we don't really stare. In this kind of exercise, you do a lot of face to face work, and this was very useful for the performers, above all during specific moments in the performance, like when they were in the peep room and when they were upstairs working very close to the audience. They were able to engage them by keeping their eyes on them, which is hard to do without training.

A slow motion crossing was done each night before the beginning of *Imagining O* and people from the audience were invited to come earlier to sit and watch the crossing.

The crossing exercises were done since the second day of the performance, and the constant repetition of this exercise gave the exercise itself a certain kind of ritual strength.

Another important type of exercise was the RASABOXES

The RASABOXES is a training technique devised by Richard Schechner that has been used since the 80s and 90s.

There are certain variations of the Rasaboxes.

This training offers performers a concrete physical tool to access, express, and manage their feelings and emotions.

The term RASABOXES comes from Rasa + Boxes.

Boxes because in these exercises the floor is divided in 9 equal boxes.

Rasa because this training is mainly *based on the Sanscrit Indian Aesthetic theory of RASA*.

Rasaboxes actually integrates this ancient aesthetic theory of Rasa with contemporary emotion research on the nervous system, studies in facial expression of emotion, neuroscience, and performance theory — including Antonin Artaud's provocative assertion that the actor is "*an athlete of the emotions*".

But the main source for Rasaboxes is the *Aesthetic theory of RASA, which is explained in a classic Sanskrit text called Natya – Sastra*.

Natya means Theatre, Dance, Music... and so the idea is pretty close to the concept of Performance.

Sastra means "secrete literature".

So Natya-Sastra means “secrete literature” about “Theatre, Dance, Music”, we would say “performance”.

The Sanskrit word “rasa” can be translated as “juice, flavor, taste, essence,’ and the underlying concept is that rasa inhabits our feelings.

Rasas can be the primary flavors such as salty, sour, sweet, pungent, astringent, and bitter. Or smells. Or the way a person feels — “blue” or “in the pink” or “heavy” and so on.

There are 8 Rasas-

BIBHATSA = Disgust

ADBHUTA= Wonderful

SRINGARA= Love

KARUNA= Sadness

RAUDRA= Anger

VIRA= Courage

BHAYANACA= Fear

HASYA= Mirth/Laughter

So... in the rasaboxes we have 9 boxes, which means that we have these 8 rasas plus a 9th box, the middle one, which is called SANTA.

Santa, that means peace, bliss, and “clear light”. It’s the perfectly balanced combination-blending of the other 8 rasas. *It’s very hard to get into that box because it means accomplishing this kind of purity which comes when you put all these flavors together in the proper mixture, transcending any feeling and arriving in Santa, where you are in perfect harmony.*

_____o0000000000_____

Basically, rasaboxes trains participants to physically express eight key emotions and to work holistically.

Rasaboxes exercises range from the very simple and personal expression of each rasa individually by means of drawing, breathing, gesturing, acting, and vocalizing to complex combinations of rasas performed by several people simultaneously.

From composing the body and guiding the breath, the work leads step-by-step to sound and movement exercises that may use objects and texts, music, masks, songs — and more. There is an unpredictability in rasaboxes.

That's why we can define Rasaboxes as a process - an open system.

In its more advanced phases, rasabox performers mix, layer, and score the eight rasas in ways that create complex expressions, dramatic characters, and psychophysical emotional relations. Using rasaboxes, artists can explore plays, compose scenes, create choreographies or music, and even invent entire performances.

The possibilities of rasaboxes are really endless.

3.3 Altri artisti della performance. Curating Performance

Se ci si sofferma ad osservare, sulla scorta di quanto detto nelle pagine iniziali di questa dissertazione, la molteplicità delle declinazioni ontologiche possibili del concetto di performance, risulta alquanto evidente che l'idea di "pratica artistica" in ambito performativo non può essere limitata a quella di regista teatrale, come nel caso di Richard Schechner. Questa inestricabile sovrapposizione di ruoli tra "studiare performance" e "fare performance" si esplica in realtà secondo modalità differenti e spesso si incarna in "mestieri" in cui, ancora una volta, la conoscenza e la padronanza teorica degli assiomi performativi da parte degli studiosi si riversa nel loro agire artistico concreto e viceversa.

Uno dei casi più emblematici in tal senso mi sembra quello del *curator* di performance. Si tratta di una figura professionale che nell'ambito degli allestimenti e, prima ancora, dell'ideazione di determinate performances, gioca un ruolo di vitale importanza. Il curator funge da autentico *trait d'union* tra l'artista e la sua performance; è letteralmente colui che rende possibile la realizzazione dell'impianto performativo, curandone appunto ogni suo aspetto, dall'idea iniziale sino alla fruizione finale. Il suo ruolo, mutata mutandis, può, a mio personale avviso, essere associato in parte a quello del *dramaturg* teatrale. Al pari del *dramaturg*, il curator ha completa familiarità con tutti i "materiali drammaturgici" della performance, ed è il deuteragonista del performer sul piano realizzativo, l'autentico attante sul piano tanto contenutistico quanto organizzativo, l'unico a detenere una visione completa ed esaustiva dei vari aspetti relativi alle possibilità attuative della performance. La consapevolezza teorica e la concretezza organizzativa del curator sono i principali strumenti che gli consentono di dialogare tanto con l'artista-performer supplendo alle sue carenze, quanto con le

strutture, le istituzioni e più in generale gli “apparati esecutivi”, traducendo diplomaticamente le istanze artistiche in un gergo maggiormente comprensibile. Tutto ciò non deve minimamente indurre a pensare alla figura del curator come ad un mero organizzatore tutto-fare; tutt’altro! Il suo ruolo detiene in realtà una cospicua componente creativa e, agendo tanto sugli aspetti ideativi quanto su quelli realizzativi della performance (ma mai eseguendo la performance, ruolo questo riservato al solo performer), ne determina buona parte delle caratteristiche ontologiche così come della materialità esecutiva. Il curator prende in mano il materiale grezzo della performance così come immaginato e suggerito dal performer e lo trasforma in un’opera completa e concretamente realizzabile e fruibile. È esattamente in queste sfere multilivellate che si esplica tutto il lavoro creativo del curator.

[...] curators around the world who work across cultures and are able to think imaginatively about the points of compatibility and conflict among them, must be at once aestheticians, diplomats, economists, critics, historians, politicians, audience developers, and promoters. They must be able to communicate not only with artists but also with community leaders, business executives, and heads of state. They must be comfortable with people who have devoted their lives to art and culture, with people who neither like nor trust art, and with people who may be willing, if they are convinced that art serves their interests or is sufficiently connected to their lives, to be won over by an artist or an exhibition.²⁰⁶

Tra gli ambienti lavorativi in cui questa figura risulta maggiormente richiesta, oltre che nei Festival e nelle Biennali, spiccano, come una sorta

²⁰⁶ Michael Brenson, “The Curator’s Moment,” *Art Journal*, Winter 1998, p. 16.

di apparente paradosso, i musei. Sono proprio le istituzioni museali a risultare, negli ultimi anni, tra i principali “datori di lavoro” dei curators di performance. Questo fenomeno, alla luce di quanto sinora messo in evidenza a proposito dell’ontologia della performance, potrebbe a tratti apparire come un paradosso. Se infatti un acceso dibattito è ancora ampiamente in corso a proposito della natura effimera della performance e della sua consequenziale presunta impossibilità di essere “salvata”, il museo al contrario è, per antonomasia, il luogo deputato alla conservazione e all’archiviazione di opere d’arte la cui essenza è chiaramente materiale. Eppure, a dispetto di tutto ciò, o forse proprio per sfidare un paradosso di siffatta natura, alcuni tra i musei più importanti e noti al mondo, tra cui proprio il già ampiamente citato MoMA di New York, dedicano, oramai da alcuni anni a questa parte, un intero programma alla performance.

The Performance Program is part of MoMA’s increased focus on the historical as well as the contemporary practice of performance-based art. The ongoing series brings documentation and reenactments of historic performances, thematic group exhibitions, solo presentations, and original performance works to various locations throughout the Museum.²⁰⁷

[...]MoMA’s Department of Media and Performance Art seeks to emphasize its engagement with both the theory and practice of performance and to reflect its shifting parameters and modes of production and presentation. Landmark performances from the past will be revisited, and in doing so will be reactivated and redefined. Moreover, to establish what we refer to as “a dialogue between the present and the past,” MoMA will commission new artworks and

²⁰⁷ <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/programs/55>

actively generate new projects for this context.²⁰⁸

Sabine Breitwieser, la Chief Curator di Media and Performance Art al MoMA, è colei che per più di due anni ha curato il programma di performance inaugurato dal prestigioso museo di Manhattan. In occasione di un incontro presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University il 15 febbraio del 2012, riflettendo su questioni relative alla “presunta anomalia” del rapporto tra museo e performance, la Breitwieser ha evidenziato come il MoMA fosse nato dall’idea di esporre arte contemporanea. In un secondo momento però, non volendo ovviamente dar via le opere esposte, il museo ha deciso di iniziare a collezionarle. Questo tipo di scelta lo ha indotto a divenire, per ovvie ragioni, meno focalizzato sulla contemporaneità. Per questa ragione, sempre nell’analisi della Breitwieser, nel tentativo di impegnarsi sempre più a fondo nel contemporaneo, il Museum of Modern Art di New York ha scelto di aprirsi significativamente alla performance, concependolo come una strategia tramite cui ancorarsi all’arte contemporanea.²⁰⁹

Ma il MoMA non è ovviamente il solo museo ad essersi cimentato in un’impresa di siffatta natura ed obiettivi. Il New Museum, sempre a New York, sotto la guida dell’italiano Massimiliano Gioni, ha a sua volta dedicato un vasto programma alla performance. Tra gli svariati progetti andati in scena al museo, dentro e fuori l’ultramoderna architettura dei due giapponesi Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa, c’è anche un esplicito *Performance Archiving Performance*²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/974>

²⁰⁹ Contenuto tratto da un intervento fatto da Sabine Breitwieser, Chief Curator di Media and Performance Art al MoMA, presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University, il 15 febbraio del 2012.

²¹⁰ Si tratta di una presentazione di progetti che ruotano tutti intorno al concetto di archivio come mezzo. Organizzato da Travis Chamberlain, Associate Curator of Performance, il lavoro è rimasto aperto al pubblico presso il Fifth Floor Resource Center del New Museum di New York dal 6

Performance archives seek to preserve some legible record of live art's imprint on culture for future study; however, many argue that archived representations of performance cannot fully capture the nuances of ephemeral experience so essential to the form. Projects by a canary torsi, Jennifer Monson, Julie Tolentino, and Sara Wookey acknowledge these concerns by conceiving of the relationship between performance and archives as unique systems. Within these systems, the acts of recording, storing, indexing, and redistributing are as much a part of the work as the performance itself. As a result, the site of performance—its position in time, space, and form—is placed in question so that the actual process of archiving may be interpreted as its own mode of performance, its own singular event.²¹¹

Enorme spazio è stato poi conferito alla performance nella Biennale del 2012 del Whitney Museum of American Art di New York, dove l'intero quarto piano del museo è stato adibito ad ospitare performance e residenze artistiche. Dalle danze da Sarah Michelson²¹² e Michael Clark²¹³, al rock di Red Krayola²¹⁴ e alle prove aperte di Richard

novembre 2013 al 12 gennaio 2014.

²¹¹ <http://www.newmuseum.org/pages/view/performance-archiving-performance>

²¹² Catalogo *Whitney Biennial 2012*, pag.2.

Devotion Study #1-The American Dancer

In Residence Mar. 1-11

Performances Mar. 1,3,4,7,8,10,11 at 4pm – Mar.2,9 at 7pm

[Sarah Michelson's dances are realized through the simultaneous artistry of her choreography, scenography, costumes, and lighting design. Physical elements, whether sculptural lighting structures, floors, or costume details, often recur from dance to dance much like choreographic phrases. Through such formal repetitions and their echoes within her ever-expanding practice, Michelson overtly compels the audience to think about the complex of relationships that fundamentally exist in dance—between the choreographer, the work, the signature (style), and the artistic legacy. All of her work is thus engaged in a searching dialogue with the form and history of dance.

Devotion Study #1—The American Dancer has been developed specifically for the 2012 Biennial as re-investigation of her most recent dance, *Devotion* (2011). *Devotion* was inspired by a text written by the playwright and theater director Richard Maxwell, founder and artistic director of New York City Players and a fellow 2012 Biennial artist. *Devotion Study #1*—The American Dancer takes 1964 as a starting point and enacts a study of Michelson's own dance-making history and that of the Whitney's fourth floor.]

²¹³ Catalogo *Whitney Biennial 2012*, pag.3.

WHO'S ZOO, 2012

Maxwell²¹⁵ e dei New York City Players, sino alla runway performativa di K8 Hardy²¹⁶. Ma questi sono solo alcuni degli esempi che testimoniano l'investimento che negli ultimi anni è stato e continua ad esser fatto sull'arte della performance. Il caso esemplificativo dei musei dimostra come si sia deciso di investire proprio su quella caratteristica precipua della performance, la sua natura effimera appunto, che la relegherebbe ad una impossibilità tanto di conservazione quanto di riproducibilità.

IN Residence Mar. 14-Apr.8

Performances Mar. 29,31, Apr. 1,5,7,8 at 4pm, Mar. 30, Apr. 6 at 7 pm

[Michael Clark is an iconic British dancer, choreographer, and artist who first came to prominence in the early 1980s. His work combines the classical ballet of his training with the music of David Bowie, Wire, and The Fall, amongst others, and collaborations with artists and designers such as Sarah Lucas, Peter Doig, Leigh Bowery, and Bodymap have all been part of this ongoing history. Clark's return to New York follows the company's remarkable residency in Tate Modern's immense Turbine Hall, developed over a two-year period. Here, in a four-week-long residency as part of the Biennial, Clark will once again engage both professional dancers and untrained volunteers to generate choreography, in an attempt to expand what our experience of movement can be. This will culminate in performances featuring lighting and video made in collaboration with Charles Atlas, with music commissioned specifically for the project. April 5 through 8, Clark will be joined by the band Relaxed Muscle.]

²¹⁴ Catalogo *Whitney Biennial 2012*, pag.5.

The Red Krayola with The Familiar Ugly in Concert, 2012

Performances Apr. 13 and 14 at 4:30

[The Red Krayola is a rock band; challenging the parameters of their activity, they have reinvented their project over five decades. Their music is complex and restless, mixing modes and addresses where entertainment meets theory—formal, political, social, existential, etc. They trade, in their words, in “genre [...] festooned with emergency conditionals. ‘It’s a pop song, just in case it might be an avant-garde performance’; ‘It’s a contribution to a conversation, just in case it’s rock ’n’ roll.’” Their Biennial project includes an index of more than four hundred entries covering their diverse membership, affiliations, and concerns (on view in the Lower Gallery). Tonight, selections from *Victorine*—an opera written in collaboration with the British conceptual artists Art & Language—will be premiered.]

²¹⁵ Catalogo *Whitney Biennial 2012*, pag.6.

Untitled, 2012

In Residence Apr. 25-29

Open Rehearsals, Daily during Museum hours

[For one week, playwright and director Richard Maxwell will make theater in the Museum, reframing rehearsal as an open and publicly presented activity. When the Museum is open to the public, Maxwell and his theater company, New York City Players, will work on a new original play, proceeding with no intent beyond a commitment to the specificity of the circumstances. Taking here as basic tenets the open gallery, the text, the movements of his actors, and the audience gathering in a room, Maxwell's practice defines and radically reconfigures the boundaries of theater. His work's deep concern for finding a complex and rigorously designed reality has led to eschewing both avant-garde clichés and the entrenched theatrical techniques of naturalism.]

²¹⁶ Catalogo *Whitney Biennial 2012*, pag.8.

Untitled Runway Show, 2012

PERFORMANCE: K8 HARDY, Sunday, May 20, 2012, at 4pm and 5pm

[Along with her photographs and sculptures on view on the second floor, K8 Hardy stages a major new performance, in which she will re-create many of the trappings of a runway show by a top fashion designer, using an experienced production team, lighting, sound, hair, and makeup technicians, as well as professional models. Walking on a runway designed by fellow Biennial artist Oscar Tuazon, the models will wear outfits conceived and styled by Hardy. This performance demonstrates Hardy's continuing interest in subverting and complicating fashion and the expectations that it creates.]

Performance in a strict ontological sense is nonreproductive. It is this quality which makes performance the runt of the litter of contemporary art. Performance clogs the smooth machinery of reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital. [...] Without a copy, live performance plunges into visibility - in a maniacally charged present - and disappears into memory, into the realm of invisibility and the unconscious where it eludes regulation and control. Performance resists the balanced circulations of finance. It saves nothing; it only spends.²¹⁷

Forse quanto qui detto dalla Phelan non corrisponde, o almeno non più, alla realtà dei fatti. Sembra piuttosto che la performance, o meglio i suoi esperti, curators in testa, abbiano trovato il modo di investire esattamente sui suoi apparenti “difetti congeniti” e a trasformarli in una fonte di vera e propria “circolazione di capitale”.

A tal proposito interessante risulta quanto spiegato da Chrissie Iles, studiosa e curator al Whitney Museum of American Art, in un articolo del New York Times del marzo del 2010 scritto dalla giornalista Carol Kino.

Performance challenges categorization, which was originally its point [...] But museums are about archiving, categorizing, and indexing. It's not always an easy fit, but maybe what's interesting is the way in which the past is reframed in the present.²¹⁸

Al pari di Chrissie Iles, diversi sono gli studiosi di performance che coniugano la loro ricerca teorica con un impegno pratico che si concretizza nella curatela di performances. Un altro esempio

²¹⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, New York, 1993, pag. 148.

²¹⁸ Affermazione di Chrissie Iles, curator al Whitney Museum of American Art, contenuta in Carol Kino, *A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Ensur*, The New York Times, March 10, 2010: AR25.

emblematico in tal senso è quello di André Lepecki, professore di Performance Studies alla New York University, e contemporaneamente dramaturg e curator²¹⁹.

Il caso della curatela di performance qui preso in esame è solamente una delle tante declinazioni possibili in cui si manifesta la sovrapposizione tra “studiare performance” e “fare performance”. Ne esistono, ovviamente, diverse altre, con caratteristiche altrettanto singolari. In ogni caso, per quanto i vari dipartimenti di Performance Studies propongano un curriculum quasi esclusivamente teorico²²⁰, sono davvero rare le circostanze in cui tanto i docenti che vi insegnano quanto gli studenti che lo scelgono come corso di laurea non si dedichino, almeno parzialmente, alla sfera pratica del fare performativo.

²¹⁹ http://performance.tisch.nyu.edu/object/io_1236779397783.html

Andre Lepecki's exhibition, Allan Kaprow: 18 Happenings in 6 Parts (Re-doing), has been awarded AICA's award for Best Performance by the American Section of AICA, the International Art Critics Association. This award is given in recognition of the exceptional and important work in the visual arts contributed that year by artists, curators, gallerists, writers, scholars, and cultural institutions.

²²⁰ A proposito del legame tra teoria e pratica presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies nella New York University, leggere questo estratto della intervista a Richard Schechner da me realizzata nell'agosto del 2012 a New York City e qui integralmente riportata nella sezione interviste di questa tesi:

In the Performance Studies department at NYU I don't know what is the link between theory and practice. I know that a lot of students who come here are practicing art, and they want to continue their practice. When somebody asks me: "Should I come to NYU to be trained in practice at Performance Studies?" I say: "No!" It's a department that focuses on theory and, to some degree, history. We do have the ECA (East Coast Artists) workshop in the summer and people enjoy that, and Anna Deavere Smith does hers as well; but it is not a "practice as research" department; it is not like the department at Kent where we worked together. It is basically more a theoretical department. I would like it to be more practical, but it is not going to be more practical, so I accommodated myself to that. I do my practice though. I do a workshop, or I do a directing. Obviously it needs to be a relationship. What constitutes a practice? Obviously artistic production causes one kind of practice, but anthropological observation, living inside a group, studying something constitutes another kind of practice.

4.1 No Conclusion: “in between” works in progress

Una terza importante caratteristica che nella riflessione fatta da Richard Schechner contribuisce a marcare l'identità dei Performance Studies, è l'idea di *fieldwork*, cioè di “lavoro sul campo”, inteso come “osservazione partecipante”²²¹. Questo tratto distintivo, cui si è fatto cenno nel capitolo introduttivo, trae la sua origine dalle metodologie di ricerca impiegate nell'ambito di alcune tradizioni di studi antropologici. Nello studio dell'*altro*, i Performance Studies optano spesso per una ricerca sul campo che privilegi una distanza critica di matrice brechtiana, non di rado portatrice anche di una certa ironia, oltre che di una partecipazione “simpatetica”. Questo tipo di distanza critica viene però assunta non soltanto nei confronti di ciò che di volta in volta si eleva ad oggetto di studio, ma anche nei riguardi di se stessi come soggetti conducenti la ricerca. Un approccio metodologico di siffatta natura, se compiuto in maniera del tutto aderente alle aspettative, comporta una messa in discussione e una revisione critica anche di se stessi in quanto soggetti investiganti e induce alla presa di consapevolezza che “le circostanze sociali - inclusa la stessa conoscenza – non sono mai fisse, ma soggette a un *processo di prove* che le testi e le revisioni di continuo”²²².

Un coinvolgimento di questo tipo, per quanto criticamente distaccato (o forse anche per questo), pone lo stesso ricercatore in una condizione di liminalità del tutto analoga a quella della cornice investigativa, i Performance Studies, appunto, in cui si muove la sua ricerca.

²²¹ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006,

p. 2.

²²² *ibidem*.

4.2 Lo stato liminale dei PS: gli "in betweenness" disciplinanti

What is performance? What is performance studies? "Liminality" is perhaps the most concise and accurate response to both of these questions. Paradoxically, the persistent use of this concept within the field has made liminality into something of a norm. That is, we have come to define the efficacy of performance and of our own research, if not exclusively, then very inclusively, in terms of liminality — that is, a mode of activity whose spatial, temporal, and symbolic "in betweenness" allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even transformed.²²³

Come qui messo in evidenza da Jon McKenzie, la liminalità è dunque uno stato che sembra contraddistinguere non soltanto la condizione di chi si dedica alla ricerca in ambito performativo, ma soprattutto e in primo luogo, la natura ontologica quanto della performance quanto dell'ambito disciplinare dei Performance Studies. Un campo d'indagine che, come detto in precedenza, non ama essere definito, né circoscritto all'interno di perimetri disciplinari tradizionali, ma preferisce piuttosto muoversi tra gli interstizi di generi, discipline e culture diverse, in quegli spazi di transizione dove cioè il già noto si trasforma in nuove e stimolanti dinamiche trasformative.

Performance studies is "inter"—in between. It is intergeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural—and therefore inherently unstable. Performance studies resists or rejects definition. As a discipline, PS cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be. It is inherently "in between" and therefore

²²³ Jon McKenzie, *The Liminal-Norm*, in Henry Bial (edited by), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pag. 27.

cannot be pinned down or located exactly. [...] PS assumes that we are living in a postcolonial world where cultures are colliding, interfering with each other, and energetically hybridizing. PS does not value "purity." In fact, academic disciplines are most active and important at their ever changing interfaces. In terms of PS, this means between theatre and anthropology, folklore and sociology, history and performance theory, gender studies and psychoanalysis, performativity and actual performance events, and more—new interfaces will be added as time goes on, and older ones dropped. Accepting "inter" means opposing the establishment of any single system of knowledge, values, or subject matter. Performance studies is unfinished, open, multivocal, and self-contradictory. Thus any call for or work toward a "unified field" is, in my view, a misunderstanding of the very fluidity and playfulness fundamental to performance studies.²²⁴

Non è insomma ciò che è stabile, consolidato, “puro” o “sicuro” a incuriosire i PS, quanto tutto quello che, proponendosi come “diverso” e “ibrido” consenta di impiegare diverse discipline, generi e culture come interfacce relazioni in costante dialogo e scambio reciproco. La natura rizomatica²²⁵ di quest’ambito disciplinare consente non soltanto una struttura non gerarchica e indotta ad una proliferazione continua in direzioni diverse e non calcolabili, ma anche l’esistenza di una miriade di punti di accesso e di uscita. Le logiche di funzionamento sono in parte analoghe a quelle del web e si basano sul concetto di una relazione perennemente *in fieri*, (*ongoing relationship*²²⁶ è la terminologia impiegata da Richard Schechner) tra gli attori in scena. Questo vale sia

²²⁴ Richard Schechner, *What is Performance Studies Anyway?*, in Peggy Phelan, Jill Lane (edited by) *The Ends of Performance*, New York University Press, 1998, pp. 360-61.

²²⁵ Gilles Deleuze e Félix Guattari impiegano questo termine in riferimento ad una dimensione teorica e di ricerca che si presenti come multipla e non-gerarchica nei suoi punti di entrata e uscita.

²²⁶ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 2.

per l'oggetto di studio di volta in volta elevato a performance e indagato non nella sua staticità, bensì nelle relazioni con tutti gli altri "attori" che ne contribuiscono a connotare il comportamento²²⁷, quanto per il campo accademico stesso dei Performance Studies, dove discipline, generi e culture non sono roccaforti sulle quali costruire le proprie teorie, quanto interfacce che si relazionano l'un con l'altra al fine di fornire un nuovo spazio dove pensare qualcosa di nuovo. Così come l'oggetto di studio nei Performance Studies non esiste, ed è lo studioso che, di volta in volta, deve costruirselo²²⁸, analogamente la disciplina dei PS non esiste come aprioristicamente definita e/o definibile, ma è sempre il ricercatore che, ogni singola volta deve selezionare gli ingredienti e gli strumenti disciplinari che gli occorrono, e creare quell'impasto a lievitazione, ogni volta diverso, su cui poi iniziare a dar vita alla propria analisi.

4.3 Studi impegnati, performances schierate

Il quarto tratto distintivo che rende i Performance Studies "speciali", sempre secondo Schechner, consiste nel loro attivo impegno sociale e nel rifiuto di una qualsivoglia forma di neutralità ideologica.

The challenge is to become as aware as possible of one's own stances in relation to the positions of others – and then take steps to maintain or

²²⁷ *ivi*, pag. 30.

The uniqueness of an event does not depend on its materiality solely but also on its interactivity – and the interactivity is always in flux. [...] a performance takes place as action, interaction, and relation. In this regard, a painting or a novel can be performative or can be analyzed "as" performance. Performance isn't "in" anything, but "between". [...] To treat any object, work, or product "as" performance – a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all – means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects of beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships.

²²⁸ Fare riferimento all'intervista a Diana Taylor consultabile tra gli allegati alla tesi.

change positions.²²⁹

Questo elemento diventa sinonimo di un'apertura dialettica e dialogica, foriera di confronto, apprendimento e crescita, ma mai di indifferenza o di assenza di posizionamento. E i Performance Studies, che rifiutano le gerarchie così come le strutture autoritarie ed egemoniche, incarnano numerosissime volte le istanze delle sfere minoritarie, spesso marginali o che, in ogni caso, si inscrivono al di fuori dei cori convenzionali.

As a field, performance studies is sympathetic to the avant-garde, the marginal, the offbeat, the minoritarian, the subversive, the twisted, the queer, people of color, and the formerly colonized. Projects within performance studies often act on or act against settled hierarchies of ideas, organizations, and people. Therefore, it is hard to imagine performance studies getting its act together or settling down, or even wanting to.²³⁰

Nella predilezione di tale schieramento ideologico i Performance Studies lasciano trasparire l'influenza che scuole di pensiero come il post-strutturalismo, la Scuola di Francoforte, il Marxismo e la psicoanalisi freudiana hanno esercitato sulla formazione di ambiti disciplinari come i Performance Studies e i Cultural Studies ad esempio. Il post-strutturalismo, in particolare, ponendo al suo centro l'idea di *decentramento*, "attacca qualunque tipo di egemonia, autorità e sistema fissato – filosofico, sessuale, politico, economico, artistico"²³¹. Nelle riflessioni fatte da Schechner a proposito del movimento intellettuale e politico che ha animato la scena americana tra gli anni Sessanta e gli anni

²²⁹ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pag. 2.

²³⁰ *ivi*, pag. 4.

²³¹ *ivi*, pag.147.

Ottanta, viene evidenziato come tutta una serie di studi sul genere, le culture, il postcoloniale, la razza, il queer e la performance, siano stati ampiamente nutriti dalla convergenza delle scuole di pensiero sovraccitate verso “un’identificazione con il subalterno, il marginalizzato, il discriminato, e il desiderio di sabotare, se non di rovesciare direttamente, l’ordine esistente delle cose”²³². Questo tipo di interesse e posizionamento ideologico è evidente nelle scelte tematiche e di ricerca condotte dagli studiosi di performance studies, che, lontani dall’essere focalizzati esclusivamente su teatro e danza, spaziano oggi ampiamente tra queer theory, religious studies, postcolonial research, folklore e feminist studies, giusto per fornire qualche esempio.

Qualcosa su cui appare utile soffermarsi forse è proprio l’efficacia con la quale i Performance Studies oggi sembrano intercettare o meno certe istanze sociali, come dovrebbe essere loro prerogativa, tanto in termini di ricerca quanto di attivismo pratico-concreto. Nel 1992, come messo in evidenza nella sezione iniziale di questa dissertazione, Richard Schechner, in occasione di una conferenza dell’ATHE, l’Association for Theatre in Higher Education, aveva invocato la trasformazione dei dipartimenti di teatro in dipartimenti di performance²³³. Soffermandosi adesso a riflettere sul ruolo giocato dal post-strutturalismo, evidenzia invece come, nonostante la loro consapevolezza politica e la loro spinta verso un mondo subalterno e marginalizzato, i post-strutturalisti si siano alla fine rintanati nella torre d’avorio dell’accademia, limitando ad un discorso prettamente teorico e ad una teoria esclusivamente discorsiva quanto invece doveva essere tradotto in una più concreta azione da

²³² ibidem.

²³³ Per un maggiore approfondimento in merito fare riferimento a quanto in questa sede detto a pag. 42-43.

dispiegarsi “nelle strade”.²³⁴

In questo senso quanto i Performance Studies aspirano a fare, nonostante la dimensione quasi esclusivamente teorica che tuttora connota il loro status accademico-disciplinare, va in direzione di un dialogo diretto e concreto col mondo che si propongono di analizzare. Un mondo che, soprattutto in virtù delle rapide trasformazioni che l’hanno visto protagonista nell’ultimo secolo, tende ad essere sempre più performativo. I Performance Studies, come ambito disciplinare, son nati proprio dall’esigenza di interpretare e rispondere a questa dimensione sempre più eminentemente trasformativa tramite cui il mondo si manifesta, proponendosi non più come “un libro da leggere, ma una performance alla quale prender parte”²³⁵. Ma per riuscire a prendervi parte in maniera consapevole e costruttiva appare innanzitutto necessario riuscire a decodificare e a comprenderne i nuovi codici espressivi e comportamentali.

Equipped with ever more powerful means of finding and sharing information – the internet, cell phones, sophisticated computing – people are increasingly finding the world not a book to be read but a performance to participate in. [...] Performance studies is an academic discipline designed to answer the need to deal with the changing circumstances of the “glocal” – the powerful combination of the local and the global. Performance studies is more interactive, hypertextual, virtual, and fluid than most scholarly disciplines. At the same time, adherents to performance studies face daunting ethical and political questions.²³⁶

²³⁴ R. Schechner, *Performance Studies. An Introduction*, second edition, New York, Routledge, 2006, pp.148-50.

²³⁵ *ivi*, pag. 26.

²³⁶ *ibidem*.

Come messo in evidenza poc'anzi dunque, la dimensione liminale dei PS viene concepita come una meta-dimensione finalizzata ad interpretare, ma al contempo anche a riflettere le interconnessioni e le contraddizioni del mondo che si prefigge di comprendere e analizzare. La lente performativa sembra quindi risultare quella più efficace per osservare un mondo che si esprime essenzialmente attraverso la performance. Oltre ad essere interdisciplinari e intergenerici, i Performance Studies devono dunque per necessità essere anche interculturali. Come conseguenza diretta della globalizzazione, la maggior parte degli “embodied behaviors” oggi si esprimono in un *linguaggio* definito da Schechner, *glocal*, una vera e propria forma di crasi culturale tra globale e locale.

In performance studies, questions of embodiment, action, behavior, and agency are dealt with interculturally. This approach recognizes two things. First, in today's world, cultures are always interacting – there are no totally isolated groups. Second, the differences among cultures are so profound that no theory of performance is universal.²³⁷

Un'analoga riflessione viene fornita a tal proposito da Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett che in merito alle questioni relative ai legami tra molteplicità culturali e creatività si esprime in questi termini:

[...] processes of globalization produce the local, while altering the very nature and value of the local. [...] Performance Studies is a promising context for exploring issues of cultural creativity in relation to the challenges of 20th century science and technology, changing knowledge industries, shifting configurations of the global and local, and issues of

²³⁷ ivi, pag. 2.

equity and social justice.²³⁸

Se, come sostenuto da Schechner, “la performance è un paradigma chiave in molte culture”²³⁹, e quindi la loro espressione più profonda, ecco allora che studiare performance si traduce nel tentativo di capire quella cultura e la fetta di mondo che in essa si esprime.

Richard Schechner sostiene da lunghissimo tempo l’urgenza di uno slittamento di paradigma che conduca all’insegnamento di corsi di Performance Studies persino al di fuori dei curricula di Performing Arts; e questo a fomentare ancora una volta e ancora di più l’idea in base alla quale è necessario espandere la visione generale di cosa siano i Performance Studies, per ovviare al comune errore di circoscriverli esclusivamente ad un ambito di pertinenza artistica, ma per considerarli piuttosto nella loro reale essenza di strumenti di comprensione di processi storici, sociali e culturali.²⁴⁰

La principale innovazione apportata dai Performance Studies sembra dunque consistere proprio nel proporre la lente performativa

²³⁸ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Performance Studies*, in Henry Bial (edited by), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pag.51. Si tratta in realtà di un contributo su “Culture and Creativity” originariamente scritto nel 1999 per la Rockefeller Foundation.

²³⁹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies. The broad spectrum approach*, in Henry Bial (edited by), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pag.8.

²⁴⁰ *ivi*, pp. 8-9.

Performing arts curricula need to be broadened to include courses in performance studies. What needs to be added is how performance is used in politics, medicine, religion, popular entertainments, and ordinary face-to-face interactions. The complex and various relationships among the players in the performance quadrilog - authors, performers, directors, and spectators - ought to be investigated using the methodological tools increasingly available from performance theorists, social scientists, and semioticians. Courses in performance studies need to be made available not only within performing arts departments but to the university community at large. Performative thinking must be seen as a means of cultural analysis. Performance studies courses should be taught outside performing arts departments as part of core curricula. [...] The happy alternative is to expand our vision of what performance is, to study it not only as art but as a means of understanding historical, social, and cultural processes.

come uno strumento di analisi metodologica tramite cui osservare e tentare di comprendere la performatività di un mondo di cui noi stessi siamo perenni attori-attanti, nelle sue varie forme e declinazioni. Questi tentativi vanno chiaramente al di là della sfera artistica, come ormai ampiamente chiarito. Non sorprende quindi che alcune delle analisi più emblematiche nell'ambito dei Performance Studies tocchino invece gli aspetti più svariati dell'agire umano, sempre analizzandolo come una forma di *twice-behaved-behavior*. In un contributo dal titolo *Performance Studies in an Age of Terror*, nel quale propone di analizzare l'attacco alle Torri Gemelle dell'11 settembre come una performance, John Bell scrive

[...] to the onset of a global war without end on the part of our "world's largest army," the idea of performance offers concepts, means of analysis, and methods of action which can help us figure out where we are and what we ought to do — certainly better than concepts of "art" or "drama" and "theater," which seem to be, consciously or unconsciously, now scrupulously estranged from the things of import that happen around us.

In other words, at the onset of the twenty-first century, the idea of performance and the young tradition of performance studies are critical to any understanding of our present situation. We can use and develop the tools of performance studies to explain to ourselves and to others what is going on around us. The analytic frameworks of "theater," "drama," and "art" analysis clearly don't allow us this opportunity [...] But performance studies does.²⁴¹

Anche le conclusioni di questo elaborato vogliono, per coerenza con l'oggetto di studio preso in esame, rimanere in un certo qual modo

²⁴¹ John Bell, *Performance Studies in an Age of Terror*, in Henry Bial (edited by), *The Performance Studies Reader*, Routledge, New York, 2004, pp. 57-58.

aperte, e preferiscono guardare avanti, alle possibilità concrete di diramazioni future di quanto sin qui messo sotto la lente d'ingrandimento dei Performance Studies stessi. Come qualunque processo liminale, anche gli studi, le ricerche, gli incontri e le esperienze tramite cui questo viaggio ha preso forma di scrittura hanno condotto il suo *iniziato* da qualche parte, in luogo altro che però, come sempre, è anche un nuovo inizio. *Onwards*²⁴², come scriverebbe Schechner!



Richard Schechner ed io in occasione della Lecture dal titolo “Re-imagining Imagining O” tenuta insieme presso il Dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University, 9 Novembre 2011.

²⁴² Formula di saluto utilizzata da Richard Schechner a conclusione della maggior parte delle sue lettere ed email.

Interviste

Richard Schechner's Performance Studies

This interview, taken in New York City in August 2012, is based on Richard Schechner's experience at the department of Performance Studies, New York University. He talks about the changes occurred since the time he contributed to create the department in the early 80s. This conversation also gives a brief overview of Schechner's focus on the concept of performance, and on the relationship between theory and practice in "his" Performance Studies.

CC: You are working on a new edition of "Performance Studies: an Introduction". I know that you are mainly working on the first chapter which is about "What is Performance Studies", and on the last one which is about the "globalization and the link between Performance Studies and globalization". I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about these updates.

RS: Well, since the book was first published I think in 2001 and then revised in 2006 and now in 2012 in terms of Performances Studies it was a pioneering effort, while now it is very wide dispersed. There are many many many places that say that they do Performances Studies and they are in all different parts of the world; they are in North America, in South America, in Europe, Asia, even some in Africa, Australia, of course; so that chapter just scans now different people, different groups, different departments and programs. Very often what has happened is that there is not a department of Performance Studies (there are still very few of them, maybe three or four or five in the whole world) but there are many departments like the one at Brown University, which is called Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies, or the one at University of California, Berkeley... I think it's also Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies; in

Europe it is sometimes called Performance Sciences. It has different names but it is basically the same notion of the expanded view of performance: performance in everyday life, performance in business, performance in sports as well as the aesthetic jobs. So that is the first chapter: just it brings that up to date with the people that I quoted in these boxes, these little citations of people who are in 2012 "*Practice in Performance Studies*". The last chapter is the movement in what constitutes globalization. After the terrorist attacks, in the second edition 2006 I did talk about the attacks on the United States, the 9/11 attacks, but in the new version I go a little bit further in terms of talking about the struggles... struggles between certain kinds of fundamentalisms. There are many efforts to, in a certain way, limit the use of technology or reject the use of technology. There are values that are pre-technological and actually pre-enlightenment even, on one side, and then humanist values on the second corner of the triangle, those are values that came in through the western eighteenth century, through the writings of people like John Lock or Emmanuel Kant, which formed the basis... let's say of notions that drove the French and American Revolutions, the notion of the universal rights of human kind and notion of democracy... that's all part of the function of the enlightenment, and it's still very active. But the third part of the triangle is technology and especially how technology is affecting economics and the global market. So, although we are living in "late capitalism", standing capitalism theory, standing markets theory doesn't really answer some of the questions that are raised by the internet and digital technology; not only at the level of increasing communication but at the level where there are generated enormously powerful artificial intelligences that guide our behaviors. And I don't think that globalization is going to go away or to turn itself back. I think there is going to be further and further integration among human societies; there

is going to be some tensions about that, and there are going to remain huge inequities between the rich and the poor. And how this pertains to performance is that at a number of levels performance investigates, celebrates, criticizes these movements. So something like the Olympic games (which are currently going on as we are talking) are a kind of globalized celebration of nationalism, but nationalism in a certain sense translated and translated into the efforts of these individual athletes, and the athletes themselves are a kind of postmodern in the sense that sometimes they run under a flag of a place that they are not really living, or they train and they perform in a certain kind of spectacle that we enjoy; but when the country wins rivalry currently between the United States and China for example... it's a false rivalry in a way; it's a true beautiful rivalry, but a false rivalry; it's the twilight of the age of nations and the emerging of this globalized world which is controlled by corporations, by interlocked systems, and so on. So the text-book is not a profound revision; it's an update. What makes the third edition most new is that it has a large media aspect. Sara Brady has worked with me to develop the series of online resources that can be used along with the text-book. So we'll have film clips embedded in it; we'll have things to do and things to discuss embedded: we'll have a number of links to different kinds of websites, and so on. So the text-book then itself becomes part of a system that is localized in whatever classroom or in the hands of a particular reader or participant, but it is globalized in terms of accessing the internet.

CC: Thank you! At the very beginning you were mentioning the fact that now we have different departments both in the States and also somewhere else, but most of the times they are not just Performance Studies departments, they are Theatre and Performance Studies

departments, or Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies departments. Could you please focus just for a while on the identity of the Performance Studies department here at NYU, talking about the way it used to be at the beginning of the 80s and the way it is now?

RS: First of all, life is a system of organic changes. So if it was the same as it was in the 1980s, which is like 32 years ago, it would be a signal that it had become like a pyramid, something beautiful but dead. At that point the Performance Studies department consisted of, I think, only one woman, maybe two women: Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett, who just arrived at that point; she was an anthropologist from the University of Pennsylvania; she is still a member of the faculty. There may have been Marcia Siegel; I am not sure if Marcia was there yet or not, but she was a dance critic and a dance scholar; she was interested in modern dance, particularly American modern dance; but in addition to that there was Michael Kirby, who wrote the book about happenings and was a visual artist and an happenner; there was Brooks McNamara who was a theatre historian, interested in particular in the history of popular entertainments and Broadway, and he was the head of the Schubert archive. There was Theodore Hoffman, who was a minister of actor training; he was interested in the theories of acting, but he was not really a scholar the way Brooks and Michael were scholars; Ted was the head of the theatre program at the Tisch School of the Arts and not really teaching acting so much as hiring people who thought acting. And then he was put in our department when they really felt that there was not room for him in the other things. So he was a kind of an addition that didn't really belong in Performance Studies. At one point he was collaborating with me on *TDR*. And then there was me and my interest that, to some degree, consisted with the anthropological study of performance, the study of rituals, the

study of performances in cultures throughout the world, currently working as I was even at that point at the Ramlila of Ramnagar, in Northern India. But I was also very interested along with Michael in the avant-garde. Michael, Brooks and I actually collaborated artistically. Michael Kirby did the towers, the design for Dionysus in '69, and Brooks McNamara did part of my production of Macbeth. Brooks had been a student at Tulane University, so I had known him from way back in the early 60s. He had come to NYU actually one year after I did. He came to NYU in 1968 and I came there in 1967 and I was one of the people who brought him there. Michael Kirby was a friend of mine before he got his PhD and he got his PhD from Performance Studies. So all of this was at that point when the department was beginning; it was a balance between the avant-garde and performance history, popular entertainments, dance and movement and what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett brought, which was the anthropological approach from the point of view of the study of food and the eating process, the study of tourists; she wrote *Destination Culture*, a book about tourist performance. We developed along those directions for about twelve or thirteen years, because Barbara was Chair from 1980 to 1993, but during that time, I am not exactly sure when, Michael passed away; and later Brooks in the late 90s or even in the early 2000 retired. And we began to open up to things that would have become what Performance Studies in the department is now. So when we hired Peggy Phelan, that was a very important hiring, and we hired her when she was still just finishing her dissertation. I don't know where she was getting it; I think she came from Rutgers, but whether she was teaching there or whether she was doing her dissertation I don't know. But she was a radical feminist scholar. She opened up the department to that branch of thinking. Sue Ellen Case, Judith Butler, Jill Dolan... well Jill had been a student in the department and worked with Michael. So that opened in

that direction, and also Peggy was very interested in what was becoming Cultural Studies, not simply Performance Studies. So that was one opening and then shortly thereafter Peggy was Chair for six years I believe, into the mid 90s. And she left for Stanford, I am not sure exactly when. But at that point we added first James Amankulor who was a scholar in African Performance, and after he passed away because of a brain tumor, we added Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o, who was a Kenyan Performance scholar, playwright, novelist. We were opening in the direction towards this kind of broader view of Culture Studies. During the 74 and the 80s I continued my work with Turner and all those developments I had already been folded in. Also Michael Taussig came to the department; he is at the Anthropology department at Columbia at present and he is a specialist in Latin American studies and shamanism in Latin America; one of his most famous books is about shamanism in Latin America. We added José Muñoz. So people circulated in and out and José, who is still on the faculty, was just finishing doing his degree at Duke University (we were hiring young people). He was obviously very very bright and his field was queer studies. So if Peggy introduced strong feminist contingents, then José introduced the queer study contingents. Marcia Siegel, who had been doing dance from the criticism point of view, left and we brought here André Lepecki. And he was very young at that point, but we also had before that Randy Martin who is still at NYU in the Art and Public Policy, but he was a dance scholar; but then came Lepecki who was a dance theorist and very interested in European dance, while Marcia had been focusing on American dance. We always were going to have a dance component; we always were going to have an African American or African component. We started to have the queer component, and with the African and African American we introduced critical race studies; so that would be like Tavia Nyong'o, who is still

again on the faculty. Again, we added him as a very young person. Barbara Browning came in the late 90s or early 2000s, and her interest at that point was Latin America and Capoeira, and Latin America and dance; *Infectious Rhythm* was one of her earlier books. She was from Princeton and a very good writer, so she brought into the department this notion of high level of literary style in writing. In somewhere along the turn of the century, probably the late 90s, Diana Taylor joined the department. I met Diana in Durham, where I was a visiting scholar. I am not exactly sure how she got involved in our department, whether I was instrumental in that or Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was instrumental or whoever was instrumental... but Diana brought this enormous energy of hemispheric consciousness and she created while she was here the *Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics* which still exists and it's extremely powerful and important to the department. I should back up a little bit: with Peggy Phelan we began the journal *Women and Performance*. So that was part of this feminist business; the journal still exists. I brought *TDR* with me from Tulane University where it was the *Tulane Drama Review*, and here it became *The Drama Review*; I still edit it here, but *Women and Performance* became a second journal in the department. There were series of other people who worked in dance like Ann Dally, who wrote a very good book on dance and moved to the University of Texas. She is now not teaching anymore. With Diana there was this opening to the rest of the Americas. For one year Joseph Roach was here, and he brought in his particular historical sense. I am very sorry that Joe left and went to Yale. I would love to have Joe as a colleague still. Phillip Zarrilli: he wrote his great works on the psychophysical actor training and a lot of colleagues were here over years. There are a lot of people who passed through and expanded Performance Studies. At the present moment, at the present constellation of faculty, where we have

Diana being 2/3 of the time in Performance Studies and 1/3 in Spanish and Portuguese; Ann Pellegrini who is a specialist in Religion and Performance and Ritual, but she splits her time between Performance Studies and Religion Studies, and Karen Shimakawa, who came again around 2004 or 2005 from the University of California. She was working on theories of objection and she is now starting to explore Japanese performances. Even though she is Japanese-American, she had roughly a little knowledge of that kind of performance. Now she is trying to open up more to that. She is the current Chair of the department. José was Chair of the department for six years of big growth. So the department has moved in my view; it has expanded its range, so it does cover more the broad spectrum than when I began and I called for the broad spectrum, but it was highly theater and dance; now it's much more. On the side that I have sometimes resistances; it is hard to distinguish Performance Studies from Cultural Studies, and I would like to see it more stay tight to the analysis of behavior, whether it's behavior in everyday life, or behavior in sport, or in popular entertainments. But sometimes we become a department really concerned with high theory. And again with Peggy Phelan and then with José the import of particular post-structuralist thought was very important. And now with the influence of *TDR* and Lepecki and myself, we are getting to deal more with neurology and neurobiology and some of the developments in cognitive psychology in performance and in performance theory. So there is a kind of tension between elements of the department that deal with performance and aesthetic performance, elements that deal with performance behavior and elements that deal with theory.

CC: Thanks! This has just brought up something which is very interesting for me. Because for people who are not from here and who are not

familiar at all with Performance Studies as a field, it might be very hard to understand what's the difference between Performance Studies and Cultural Studies...

RS: I think that these differences are in the bad sense academic. In other words: what difference does makes what the difference is. If I would have asked to tell the difference in a sense, I would say that Performance Studies must have at its basis behavior and must be based, as its research tool, either on artistic practice or anthropological participant observation; while Cultural Studies has at its basis literature and writing and takes as its primary resource texts. So if you say to me that behavior is a text, if you take a Jacques Derrida approach I would say: "No! I don't want that approach! I don't look at everything as a text. I look at text as a kind of behavior". So I am more of a J. Austin "*How to do things with words*", rather than a post-structuralist "how even a behavior is a kind of text", "there is nothing outside the text" - says Derrida. So Cultural Studies is very textually driven, Performance Studies is behavior driven. Now, this is a very slippery slope and blurry boundary between the two. And I am of course advocating behavior, I am advocating participant observation, I was deeply influenced by anthropology and anthropologists and by artistic practices where you have to be in a room doing... let's call it... practical research standing on your feet. I mean, you were there watching me work all these months in England and afterwards and you know that that's a different kind of work than sitting in a library reading a text.

CC: That was part of my attempt to try to really understand part of the methodologies in Performance Studies, because another element is just about the methodologies, which are proper of Performance Studies. So, I

guess that what you have just said is pretty much about the methodologies of the field. Am I wrong? Am I right?

RS: Again... all of this is contested and I don't wanna become a defender of any kind of orthodoxy. So when you talk about methodologies and disciplines... these are things that academicians argue about and shed blood about, but they don't defeat the angry or clothe the naked, they don't bring peace to the world, instead of war; they don't alleviate poverty, they don't cure diseases. So I think we have to keep ourselves focused on what our work does to, in a certain sense, at one level alleviate the sufferings of the world and at another level entertain, make the world a more pleasant place to live in; and in a third way advance a knowledge. Now, where do you want to call that Performance Studies or Cultural Studies, where do you want to say it has this or that methodology... those kinds of questions have never deeply concerned me. Those are academic questions like in the Middle Ages when we had these philosophers arguing how many angels dance on the head of the pin, because they want to know what is the size of an angel. So when you say methodology I say: "What is that you want to research and then we can discuss what methodology you should use to get that research done." So if you wanna do research on the performances of Grotowski during his poor theatre phase, then you have to look at those archives, you have to interview the people who performed there, you have to look at the films, you have to try to experience the plastic exercises and do them yourself, etc. etc. etc. If, on the other hand, you wanna to do surgery as performance then you would have to go to a surgical hospital, you have to go to a teaching hospital, you have to observe surgery. I don't think you can become a surgeon... that would take too long, but you have to watch what surgeons do. I think that for me the methodology in

Performance Studies is always saying “what is done”, not “what is thought”, not “what is written”, but “what is done”, that’s where it starts, and then analyzing the doing. Now, in order to analyze the doing you have to read a lot that is written, and you have to apply that kind of literally scholar’s methodology or post-structuralist methodology or Foucault methodology, whatever, but for me it is about things done, physical actions... but I think some of my colleagues would disagree, and they are welcome to their disagreement. I respect their disagreement, and I don’t try to say that everybody should do what I do. I think that what I do is make my contribution and those who want to follow it or develop it still further will, and those who wanna go some place else will also. I have never engaged myself (I don’t think) in academic polemics as such.

CC: Thanks! I am very interested in trying to understand the political power of Performance Studies. It’s something that you have just mentioned. What can we see through Performance Studies in a kind of political way that we are not able to see from another point of view?

RS: Probably nothing! There is probably nothing that we can see from many points of view. This kind of questions is a kind of what makes you special, what makes you a thing valuable. It’s a kind of like salesmanship; it’s an attempt to say: “If you buy the BMW you are gonna get something that no other car can offer you. But, you know, different cars offer roughly the same thing. So the question is if you think of the world as a set of actions, a set of doings, and you understand how people do things, how people tell the truth and lie, how people follow certain set scenarios, certain narratives and what narratives they follow; then you will be able to understand how people behave and you also understand how people make works of art or make business operations or make a

political campaign. And I think that an academic discipline like Performance Studies does not change the world directly, it is not in itself political, though I think Diana Taylor would say that in the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics and her involvement with the *Yes, men!* now she is trying to make an intervention into politics. Perhaps *TDR* makes an intervention; but my interventions are trying two types of interventions: one is trying to help students find their particular voices and ways of behaving and means of research. Since I have a handcraft called teaching, then each student whose work I guide I guide in different ways. I am not rigid, I don't say that everyone who does a dissertation with me has to do the same thing. My relationship to you is different than my relationship to Sarah Cousin, is different than my relationship to Dominique Laster; and that's a kind of like, again, directing a play: each play, each performance, each devised performance is a relationship between a particular space, a particular set of actions, a particular group of people, a particular time and circumstances. So that's very important into Performance Studies, the particularity or the specificity of each arrangement, and not overall and generalize and not to be deductive, but more inductive. So if you say "what is the politics of *Imagining O*", the piece that you observed and helped work with me (and hopefully we will continue to work on), I would say that it's a kind of unusual take on women's erotic and social experience that is at the edge between a kind of pornography and eroticism, between what is allowed and what is forbidden, what is politically correct and incorrect; my tendencies are always to move towards the regions that people feel a little bit uncomfortable. So Performance Studies when I began... the people were doing theatre, the people were doing English Literature or Literature... they all felt uncomfortable... "What is this guy doing/what is he saying? We should study sports or we should study business... we should study

anything as performance... isn't that too broad?" Well, the world is very broad. So, what's going on in *Imagining O*? Why do so many women like it? It's about a woman who has been abused and debased. But at the same time it's a celebration of one mastery owned by holding that text, by not enacting *Histoire d'O* so much, as holding the book of it and taking from and playing with it, and saying that some other questions that are raised there Shakespeare also raised. So that these are classical questions as well as modern questions; and they also arise in a kind of deep way the "place of women", the fact that women still have not totally emerged from being in a dominated position. And I would like to see a world which dominance is alternate between men and women and "transman" and "transwomen" (in other words there are many many different genders). So if there is a politics into my work it's a politics of a kind of not anarchy because I am very systematic, but a profound liberation, and a profound questioning, whatever it is represented with, rather than an accepting. So that's why I resist when you ask me "what are the methodologies", because these kinds of questions push me towards normatives, and I have always struggled against normatives.

CC: Can you explain a bit more about the way you got to focus on performance?

RS: I was thinking about these things way back in the 1960s, when I wrote the essays called "*Actuals*", in which I said that the performance activities of human beings were play, sports, rituals, popular entertainments and so on. So it's a question that when I looked around performance was everywhere; the anthropologists were studying performance. So I looked up there and Victor Turner was writing about rituals and Clifford Geertz was writing about Balinese cock fights. This is

in the 60s and 70s. Spencer and Geller were talking about circumcisions and subincisions around Australian Indigenous people. So I saw that they were calling this anthropology, but it really was performance. In other words there was following a certain kind of script; it was behavior in which the behavior meant more than what it was simply. So you cut yourself, that's not a wound, that is a kind of semiotic statement about something. It's wounds that means something. So I saw that; I went to a ball game and I saw that there was a drama in the ball game. So when you play American baseball, you hit a ball and you run around, you leave home and you go to basis, you return home, like Odysseus leaving home and going to Troy and returning; I mean I saw that there were narratives embedded in this, I felt that there were narratives embedded in these things. I make connections. I saw that what was done in the non-western and what was done in the western were very parallel. They were very similar. So in the West you have these certain magic practices, we may not call them shamanistic, but they are shamanistic. I mean these are kinds of cultural impositions, they make these broad separations, and I also saw that what was done aesthetically is also done aesthetically in rituals, excepted that in the rituals people emphasize what can the ritual accomplish, while in the aesthetics they were a kind of standing back, reflecting what did that mean. But the behaviors were very very similar; the behavior of a priest raising the host and the wine and saying "This is the flesh and this is my blood" and then "sharing and participating", or Hamlet poisoning the cup or Polonius poisoning in the cup and Gertrude takes the wine and Hamlet says "Don't drink!" So that's a kind of poison communion, between again a mother and a son, a man, a Mary and a Jesus. I mean I always see connections, rather than separations, and I wanted to generate and form an academic discipline that would thrive on making connections, rather than thriving on making smaller and smaller

separations. So that's in a certain way why I am sympathetic to certain aspects of globalization. I see that globalization undermines the nation-state and maybe then we can undermine the corporations to some degree also. I see that there is a dynamic between the rich and the poor; the poor become rich and the rich become poor, there is a constant shifting. But overall I see that the level of human accomplishment is rising and the level of human suffering is falling overall in the long term. I have thought about a very long term of what happens. A hundred years ago the life expectancy of a man was a 55 years and of a woman was 58 or something, even in Northern Europe, and now the life expectancy of a woman in Japan is like 90 years, 85 years, and so on. So we know that we are making advances in this kind of medical things. So I am interested in making connections. I am also interested in the fact that we are constantly, as Erving Goffman would say, presenting ourselves, so we are performing. "*Presentation of self in everyday life*". Wherever I looked I saw similar things being done, but I saw people putting themselves in little places, in little rooms and closets; it's not communicating. So I wanted to create a kind of form, a public place where the English professor and the theatre professor, the sociology professor, the anthropology professor and even the mathematician and the physicist come into a public forum and exchange. I look at Performance Studies as an exchange of disciplines: it's an inter-discipline. In a certain way I am glad that there are Performance Studies departments, in another way I wish there were not any Performance Studies departments, that there would only be a mixture of other departments, something like that.

CC: At a certain point you were talking about Theatre Studies as a field which was going to produce people who would not really have the chance to get specific jobs, and you were talking about this shift to Performance

Studies as a new field where you could get the chance to analyze the world in a new way²⁴³. So I am basically thinking about students in Performance Studies and the kind of things that they can do in life through Performance Studies.

RS: That's another question that at one level should concern me, but it does not concern me. I am not an employment agency. I realize that most people who get a PhD want to become College professors, I did, and I did become a College Professor, so that's good. I would think that if you have a degree from a well-known department like NYU's Performance Studies department that would make you attractive to be hired. But I don't teach in order so people can get jobs. I do know that people who have gotten into Performance Studies... a woman is a broad-caster for the NPR; there are people who have gone onto Law School; there are people into Arts Management; there are people who are theatre directors, there are people who are professors; but those are the endpoints, or the next-process points. What I am interested in is teaching the specific thing, teaching comparative Rasa-Chi, comparing Greek, Indian, Chinese and Japanese performance theory or ritual, play and performance. I am very interested in the subject I teach. I don't like writing letters of recommendation; of course, I want the people I work with to get good jobs, but I wish I never have to write a letter. I do it because that is part of what I should do to be a good guy, but I hate it. I'd rather never writing a letter of recommendation; I'd rather never talking about a job. I am interested in the subject, and that's why I love so much when I get into a rehearsal room, because I am not really concerned about how to sell it. Of

²⁴³ Richard Schechner, *A New Paradigm for Theater in the Academy*, TDR, Vol. 36, No. 4, Winter 1992. Questo *Comment* di Schechner é in realtà la trascrizione dell'intervento fatto dallo stesso Schechner in occasione della conferenza nazionale dell'ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) tenutasi ad Atlanta nell'agosto 1992.

course I want to stage it, I want people to like it, but I am not concerned about whether Niamh (one of the actresses of *Imagining O*) is gonna get a job as an actress or not; she is working for me now. So if you are in my class you are working with me; what happens later is your business. I am not a very good professor in that regard. I wish I could teach and give no grades, read only the papers I want to read, and never write a letter of recommendation: that would be the perfect job for me!

CC: This brings me to the link between theory and practice, for instance within the department...

RS: Well, in the Performance Studies department at NYU I don't know what is the link between theory and practice. I know that a lot of students who come here are practicing art, and they want to continue their practice. When somebody asks me: "Should I come to NYU to be trained in practice at Performance Studies?" I say: "No!" It's a department that focuses on theory and, to some degree, history. We do have the ECA (East Coast Artists) workshop in the summer and people enjoy that, and Anna Deavere Smith does hers as well; but it is not a "practice as research" department; it is not like the department at Kent where we worked together. It is basically more a theoretical department. I would like it to be more practical, but it is not going to be more practical, so I accommodated myself to that. I do my practice though. I do a workshop, or I do a directing. Obviously it needs to be a relationship. What constitutes a practice? Obviously artistic production causes one kind of practice, but anthropological observation, living inside a group, studying something constitutes another kind of practice. And I imagine for some people archival research is also practice: existing within a library, finding

out what happened historically... that's very very interesting. So some people do that very very well, and I respect that.

CC: When it comes to the ontology of performance, there is this big discussion which is about the nature of performance in terms of “disappearing or remaining”, how can we “save” performance if the nature of performance is about disappearing. What is your opinion on this kind of issues?

RS: You know, those arguments seem to me to be highly academic and not in a particular good way. Obviously performance manifests itself in actual behavior, and obviously once the behavior is behaved it is no longer there. When we finish this interview, the interview will have moved into the past. It is the nature of the way we live life and our consciousness that the present moment becomes the past and the future becomes the present. It's also the quality of our increasing ability to digitize and record and archive things that we tend to preserve the present into an ongoing present that is not exactly passed and we are troubled by because we say: “Well, this film of you talking to Richard is different than actually talking to him”. But this notion of ghosting, this notion of performance disappearing... I have never understood it exactly. What does it mean? Let's say we watch a film of Grotowski's *Akropolis*. It is very different than having been there. Once you say that, you were at this performance or at that performance? Unless you are Grotowski himself or the performers who were there at every performance, you are always gonna be there to sampling. So you are never sure which one you are gonna get. The amazing thing about a film of course, like with a novel or a piece of writing, is that finally there is a product which of course is not the same as its reception; the reception changes. But the primary product

itself is more frozen in time and space. There is a particular set of words, or there is a particular set of behaviors in the film and so on. In live performance, since it is repeated over and over again, or it is done only once and it is gone, you have the performance itself or you have its archival representation. The archival representation is not the same as the performance, because the performance was made for the one-on-one encounter. And in that sense it disappears, so it is the last time I kissed my wife. Most things in life disappear once we have done them. I am about to go out for supper, because it is getting closer to my wife birthday; we are celebrating this week. We are going to have a nice supper. When I am finished with that supper it is over. I'll have the memory of the supper. I now have the anticipation of the supper and then the supper itself. All I can say is that performance in that regard shares what mostly everything in life shares. When we talk about making records like books or films, films record behavior, books record description about behavior, monuments, buildings and so on... they don't disappear, they are not quite as ephemeral as behavior in itself. But they are also ephemeral in the sense that at the physical level they disintegrate, at the memory level they get reinterpreted. So I don't see where it is such a big problem! I mean I do see that people exercise themselves about it, and that's part of what academic style is about: you find something that nobody is worried about and you worry about it, and if you worry about it in an articulate way you'll get a big reputation and then you'll get promoted.

Conclusioni

Nel rispondere alle domande di questa intervista, avuta luogo a New York City nell'Agosto del 2012, Richard Schechner tocca alcuni dei nodi cardine presi in esame nell'ambito di questa dissertazione.

In primo luogo, il padre dei Performance Studies srotola una memoria dettagliata e ricca di particolari relativi ai successivi livelli di trasformazione accademica che hanno visto protagonista il dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University. In secondo luogo, seppur definendoli “lugubrazioni” accademiche non sempre portatrici di avanzamenti teorici e contenutistici, affronta sinteticamente le problematiche relative alla metodologia o alle metodologie che “dovrebbero” caratterizzare i Performance Studies. A questo proposito una specifica riflessione è dedicata alle eventuali distinzioni tra Cultural Studies and Performance Studies. In terzo luogo, ritornando brevemente su alcuni dei principi teorici inerenti al concetto di performance, Schechner si sofferma sui legami tra teoria e pratica nell’ambito dei Performance Studies.

Nel ripercorrere alcuni dei momenti più salienti relativi alla nascita e alle successive evoluzioni verificatesi all’interno del dipartimento di Performance Studies presso la NYU, Schechner prende in esame alcuni dei “cambiamenti organici” che si sono via via susseguiti nell’arco di oltre trentadue anni. Tali trasformazioni, a suo dire, hanno condotto il dipartimento verso un livello di avanzamento e di espansione tale da consentire una più vasta copertura di quello che Schechner definisce “l’ampio spettro” della performance. Infatti, se inizialmente i corsi posti al centro dell’offerta didattica e di ricerca del dipartimento erano imperniati sull’ambito del teatro e della danza, successivamente nuovi interessi e temi di ricerca e di insegnamento si sono innestati sul tronco esistente, consentendo al dipartimento di Performance Studies della NYU di coprire una maggiore gamma di declinazioni performative. Schechner evidenzia come ai tempi della sua fondazione, il dipartimento di Performance Studies, guidato essenzialmente da lui, Michael Kirby,

Brooks McNamara e Theodore Hoffman, proponesse un equilibrio tra teatro d'avanguardia, storia della performance, intrattenimenti popolari e danza. In seguito però, a tale linea si è aggiunta una forte componente antropologica, apportata dall'assunzione di Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. A questo ha fatto seguito l'aggiunta di un'impronta femminista grazie a Peggy Phelan. Poi sono arrivati i queer studies con José Muñoz, il dance criticism con André Lepecki, e l'Art and Public Policy con Randy Martin; gli African studies, gli African American studies, e i critical race studies con Tavia Nyong'o, i religious studies con Ann Pellegrini e poi, soprattutto l'ampia apertura verso la dimensione emisferica delle Americhe grazie a Diana Taylor e al suo Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics. È stato grazie all'efficace contributo di tutti questi studiosi che lo "spectrum" dei Performance Studies presso la New York University è riuscito a diventare più "ampio". Spesso però nel corso degli anni, questo non ha impedito che il dipartimento prendesse una piega "altamente teorica", a discapito di una linea più fortemente improntata sull'analisi del comportamento, sia del comportamento della vita quotidiana, sia di quello sportivo, oppure ancora di quello caratterizzante gli intrattenimenti popolari. L'influenza tanto delle teorie post-strutturaliste, quanto degli apporti provenienti dalla psicologia cognitiva, dalla neurologia e dalla neurobiologia testimoniano alcuni dei risvolti più marcatamente teorici che hanno, negli anni recenti, connotato la tendenza dei Performance Studies presso la New York University. Per questa ragione Richard Schechner sottolinea come all'interno del dipartimento esista una sorta di tensione tra elementi concernenti la dimensione estetica della performance, elementi relativi al comportamento performativo ed elementi riguardanti aspetti più insistentemente teorici.

Un secondo importante nodo affrontato da Schechner è la questione relativa alle problematiche metodologiche nell'ambito dei Performance Studies. A conferma di quanto sostenuto nella prima sezione di questa tesi, Schechner punta nuovamente l'accento sulla centralità del "fare", sostenendo che la metodologia di volta in volta impiegata varia a seconda dell'oggetto stesso della ricerca. Per quanto costantemente restio a lasciarsi travolgere da qualsivoglia trappola definitoria, Schechner arriva comunque ad affermare che se di una metodologia è possibile parlare nell'ambito dei Performance Studies, tale metodologia per lui va rintracciata in "ciò che vien fatto", non in "ciò che vien pensato" oppure "scritto". Il passo successivo consiste proprio nell'analizzare quel "fare", da lui ripetutamente visto come performativo. È esattamente in quella fase analitica che spesso si fa ricorso ad una intensa lettura e all'applicazione di una metodologia ora "letteraria", ora "post-strutturalista", ora "Foucaultiana", oppure di altra natura. La specifica importanza conferita alla dimensione del "fare" serve inoltre a Schechner per chiarire la differenza esistente tra i Performance Studies e i Cultural Studies. Infatti lì dove i primi hanno alla loro base lo studio del comportamento e utilizzano come strumenti di ricerca o la pratica artistica o l'osservazione antropologica partecipante, i secondi, invece, pongono al centro la letteratura e la scrittura e considerano il testo come la loro risorsa primaria. Quindi, mentre i Cultural Studies risultano guidati dal testo, i Performance Studies sono guidati dalla centralità del comportamento.

In tal senso gli eventuali legami tra la teoria e la pratica nell'ambito dei Performance Studies possono essere variamente interpretati. Infatti, pur precisando che storicamente il dipartimento presso la New York University ha sempre conferito una maggiore importanza alla componente teorica, e in parte storica, Schechner tende

a precisare che il concetto di “pratica” può essere diversamente interpretato e declinato. Da una parte Schechner ammette di aver sempre lottato perché il dipartimento prendesse una svolta più pratica; in questo senso i workshops curriculari da lui condotti con la compagnia degli East Coast Artists sono una chiara conferma e testimonianza di un tale intento. D'altra parte, da fondatore del dipartimento stesso, riconosce che, nonostante il suo desiderio di concepirlo come una dimensione didattica contemplante una maggiore componente pratica, il dipartimento di Performance Studies presso la NYU non si plasma sul concetto di “practice as research”, tipica invece, ad esempio, di alcune tradizioni accademiche anglosassoni. Ciononostante Schechner apre ad una concezione più ampia del concetto di pratica in materia di studi della performance, precisando che possono esistere modi diversi di intendere una tale nozione. Se infatti la “produzione artistica” costituisce la più ovvia e diffusa tipologia di pratica in ambito performativo, altre forme di “pratica” altrettanto valide sono l'osservazione antropologica, o il vivere all'interno di un gruppo, fino ad arrivare alla ricerca d'archivio che può essere “vissuta” da alcuni studiosi come una forma di pratica.

“Rebecca Schneider’s Performance Studies Remains”

This is the transcript of a video-interview I realized with Rebecca Schneider, Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies at Brown University, in May 2012. In this conversation Professor Schneider talks about her work as a Performance Studies scholar and the specific focus of her research interests. By thinking critically about certain aspects of this discipline, above all in relation to Theatre Studies, she underlines the dialogue between performativity and theatricality, as well as the importance of a certain kind of historiography in Performance Studies research methodology. Moving from the ontology of Performance Studies to the ontology of performance, she finally focuses on the idea that performance does not disappear, as she explains in her most recent book, “Performing Remains”.

CC: You come from the Performance Studies department at NYU: you gained your Masters there and then your PhD; you also taught there but now you are the Chair of the Theatre and Performance Studies department here at Brown University. I was wondering if you can talk a little bit about your personal experience in this field.

RS: Well, I was extremely fortunate to be at New York University at such an exciting time, when basically Richard Schechner, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Brooks McNamara, Michael Kirby and Marcia Siegel in dance had brought together this very exciting emerging group of thinkers around this brand new idea of performance in what Richard has called the “broad spectrum”. It’s not of course a brand new idea but it was taking a disciplinary shape and that was very exciting. At that time Peggy Phelan had just been brought in, and so she was a new addition to the department, coming out of Literary Studies. She brought

psychoanalytic lines of investigation with her. While I was there they then brought in Michael Taussing, an anthropologist, who at that time was thinking very rigorously about the work of Walter Benjamin, as well as the College of Sociology led by Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris, asking questions about the sacred and tragedy. I had taken a course about shamanism and tragedy and another with him about capitalism and Benjamin, that were very foundational for me.

So these were people that had not been trained in the same field and were coming together in one department, figuring out a field as they went along. That was extremely exciting. The questions were very new and there was a lot of debate. I think one of the reasons it was successful was that in a sense they flattened the field, which means they brought in a very large number of graduate students. There were always a lot of people around the table having discussions. And several of us who completed the course were lucky to go on and get jobs, because at that time we thought: “We are going to have a PhD in something no one has ever heard of; how we are ever going to get a job?” But the reality is that those of us who came there hadn’t done so because of the market, for jobs, or we never would have been there. We came there because we were driven to ask these questions.

Fortunately, the field of Theatre Studies at large did become the right sort of place for this new initiative. Across campuses, across other Universities there were new mandates for the globalized, the transnational... we didn’t call it transnational then, but for thinking about Theatre Studies in a global perspective, which meant that there was a new pressure on departments to include African ritual traditions as well as, let’s say, Asian, non-Western, as it was called then, theatre forms. That demanded a kind of Performance Studies perspective, the ability to talk about what the relationship between ritual and performance or theatre

and a drumming-based performance is. It so happened that there were jobs in the field because of this teaching pressure, and Performance Studies people could get these jobs. I was fortunate because I also had a theatre background, so I was employable in theatre departments. So that's one story.

Obviously NYU also had the fortunate cousin in the Northwestern program around Dwight Conquergood, that was growing up in Chicago out of oral interpretation and communication studies. So NYU came out of theatre and dance, Northwestern out of communication and oral studies... studies of oral histories. And we found conferences where we could meet up, like the Association for Theatre in Higher Education: this was before Performance Studies International. We would meet there and made a focus group. Another really foundational aspect in Performance Studies in my view was the Women and Theatre Group, a sub-group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education where many of us from Performance Studies would meet and debate questions about gender which were very focused and intense at the time. The first PSi was in 1990 or 1991, perhaps unofficially: I don't know if counted as the first PSi, but we had a Performance Studies conference at NYU. I remember debates about whether Performance Studies International should be a capitol "I" or a little "i". It was a very exciting time.

I went on from there to Yale. I had taught at NYU but then I taught a class at Yale, and then I was a Visiting Assistant at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire. I then became a Tenure Track Assistant Professor at Cornell University where I got tenure but moved to Brown to help them found a new PhD program, where I am now Professor and Chair of the Department. We changed the name of the department at that point to Theatre and Performance Studies, and our Performance Studies students have done very well in the market, so we are pretty happy about it.

CC: Would you explain a little bit more about the difference you have experienced between the Performance Studies Department at NYU and the Theatre and Performance Studies Department here at Brown University?

RS: Well, it's interesting that of several of us who got a PhD in Performance Studies and have gone into the field... you know, there is no one, except André Lepecki I think, in a Performance Studies Department who has a degree in Performance Studies. It's curious that several of us with doctoral degrees in Performance Studies sort of went on and found ourselves in Theatre Departments and had to figure out how Performance Studies fits within theatre: is it the same as theatre? Is it different from theatre? What is the overall umbrella? Is Theatre Studies an umbrella under which Performance Studies sits, or is Performance Studies an umbrella under which Theatre Studies sits? Or is an umbrella the wrong metaphor?

When I came to Brown there were already people doing Performance Studies. The Department was called Theatre, Speech and Dance and we felt that actually we had to bring theatre and dance together for instance, instead of thinking that you have theatre here and dance here, and over there that media department, and over there visual time-based art; so Performance Studies could be more of an intermediary or could help us actually have these exciting conversations between our forms that were already under the same roof. We wanted to think more profoundly about dance together with theatre, which as I said earlier, from a global perspective, if you think about African or, Asian traditions for instance or many of the American ones, like American musicals, you have to think dance and music, you have to think of these other forms

together with the spoken text, with drama. The primacy of drama was loosening a little bit with thinking about performance.

Clearly a lot of rigorous work in Theatre Studies had already been in that direction: the semiotics of the theatre, thinking about the theatrical operations of the body as a sign-making mechanism. This was already thinking beyond the text, thinking beyond the limits of what happens in theatre according to the text-centric action of the playwright narrative. We found ourselves already in league with all of those efforts in Theatre Studies. We changed the name of the Theatre Department to a Theatre and Performance Studies Department because we didn't want to lose the reach of aspects of Theatre Studies that had already been working in this more semiotic and phenomenological way. We didn't want to lose a rigorous study.

Sometimes Performance Studies in its... I don't want to say "pure form", because there can be no pure form for Performance Studies, it's like an oxymoron... but Performance Studies without Theater Studies, it's possible that you wouldn't necessarily have to study theater to study performance behavior. But in our department we really had a strength in Theater Studies, so we wanted to keep the studies in theater history, in theater and dramatic theory, we wanted an historical aspect. When I went through NYU, one didn't have to know history for instance. I happened to have studied theater, so I came with that. It wasn't a requirement, and I don't think it necessarily should be, but in our department we offer that. What we think now, what we are working on are things like the theater history of photography, or the theater history of film, because one conceives the medieval screen for instance, the screen of all aspects of the author and spectator/performer relation relative to the advance of photography, as a kind of trajectory that results in all sort of screens. Why is that not in the historical register of photography? We would like

to consider the theatre history of these things more profoundly. And in a sense say that something like photography could be seen as a performance, a performance study, a study of our relationship to screens; but to do that really well, one needs to know something about the history of screens and of performance.

This might be a long way round of answering your question, but one of the differences is that Theater and Performance Studies in our way of looking at it contains history and historiography a little bit more than does Performance Studies, at least in its NYU variety at present. In terms of looking at Performance Studies in the US, when I said at the beginning that it's interesting that those of us who have degrees... I was thinking of Shannon Jackson who has a degree in Performance Studies from Northwestern and who did the same thing at Berkeley: they changed the name into Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies. Now that doesn't mean, as with us, that these are separate things: that theatre is separate from Performance Studies, separate from dance, but it does mean that one doesn't lose the trajectory of the study of craft even, because the other difference is that we both, Berkeley and Brown, and I think Stanford maybe, changed their name too. I don't know what they are changing it to but I have heard that they have maybe changed their name... you know these are strong programs that have undergraduate study as a major part of it, and the training of craft happens with undergraduates. So they want to study acting and directing and dance and these kinds of things. That's not a requirement, it doesn't happen at NYU because they don't have any undergraduates. So that's a difference as well.

CC: They are going to have one soon I think...

RS: Yes I think they are going to have one soon and we'll see what happens with that, but they have another place at NYU where students can study acting and those things.

CC: If we use the kind of metaphor we used before, the metaphor of the umbrella or the metaphor used by Schechner when he talks about a "broad spectrum of actions", we think about all these things which are under this huge umbrella of performance. I am thinking about what the Performance Studies perspective can give which is new in terms of analyzing each specific object. I mean if we think about scholars who come from Theatre Studies and who have always studied theatre as an object of analysis, then I think: "What can a Performance Studies perspective give that is new to this specific object of analysis?"

RS: To the theatre you mean? To the study of theatre?

CC: Yes, but that is just an example. Then the same thing can be said about dance or everyday life; everything is under this kind of umbrella, so that basically, everything each time is analyzed as performance.

RS: At one point the Performance Studies perspective was new, but it doesn't seem very new right now; but maybe it is new in some places. I think quite a while ago it was scandalous even to say that one is going to look not only at what happens to this discrete object in the theatre... no, it wasn't scandalous... I mean at the beginning there was a great deal of resistance in the academy, in traditional Theatre Studies to Performance Studies, because one of the criticisms was that Performance Studies was "the study of everything". I mean if everything is performance then nothing is discrete, and if nothing is discrete, how can you study

anything? But I think this is linked to what happened in the art world in general. If you think about what happened in the visual arts with the huge explosion of time-based performances, performance-based art, it becomes very clear, and already was in the 1960s that inter-medial performance, inter-medial art expression was going to demand a new way of thinking about art. That that long tradition of segmented art disciplines, that long enlightened tradition of segregating the arts into these sorts of discrete categories was rapidly unraveling with mid-century performance work, time-based work. I have tried to write a little bit about this in a couple of publications: one was an essay, “Solo, Solo, Solo”, that I did in a book called *After Criticism: New Responses to Art and Performance* (edited by Gavin Butt, Blackwell Publishing, 2005), but I also take up the subject in my recent book *Performing Remains* a little bit, about this kind of undoing of the sure spaces between media. In that book, *Performing Remains*, I look a lot at photography and I try to read the sort of problem that theatre has had with photography and photography has had with theatre: theatre has claimed that a photograph is not the thing itself, that it can't capture theatre, and meanwhile photography is trying to claim that it was there, in the thing that is the image; it says: “We can't be theatrical! We are evidence!”. There is a lot of tension between these forms. At the same time, if you look really closely, the pose is deeply theatrical, and you have myriad examples in the rise of Naturalism of posing, even posing for photographs on stage. So these media think about each other and they think through each other.

One thing Performance Studies does is help us think about the spaces between media. It helps us think about inter-medial negotiations that one kind of medium is always sort of posing as another kind of medium. Remember that famous image of the Etienne Decroux mime.... I can't remember the year, but it's early... and he's standing with the

camera taking the photograph, the theatre and the camera together. Well, what kind of discrete medium is going to let us think about that? Photography? Why a mime? What does a mime mean? We need to think of theatre and photography together, and one way to do that may happen under something like Performance Studies or with something like Performance Studies. Thinking about the squeaky, leaky boundaries between media is one thing that Performance Studies brings to theatre that's new. I mean theatre has always been porous, leaky, composed of many different disciplines: scenographers, visual artists, dancers, actors, writers; it already has this betweenness; it's the medium of the between; it's a medium that won't stay pure; it's the medium everyone loves to hate in terms of the long tradition of anti-theatricality.

I don't know what Performance Studies brings to Theatre Studies. I am right now actually more interested in returning to a way of thinking about theatricality. Thinking about philosophy, many articulated in the 1980s and '90s what has been called "the performative turn". You have the work of Judith Butler engaging with performativity, taking up John Austin from the 1950s and a lot of queer theory. We are thinking about performativity because what performativity can do is render something real and through an act, you know, "how to do things with words", that performativity creates the real through a reiteration that doesn't understand itself as reiterative. What I tried to argue in *Performing Remains* is that this thing that John Austin calls useless to performativity, which is theatricality, is actually of extreme interest. What many scholars are now calling the "affective turn", thinking about the production of affect in a neo-liberal economy, and many of the Italian thinkers have been absolutely central to this, and thinking about "immaterial labour", requires consideration of the construction of affect; and the circulation of affect requires thinking about theatricality, about the production of

emotions that are given to circulate and may not be real, like this performative thing that is done. I am interested in theatricality and think it has a lot to offer to Performance Studies, and by that I also mean the history of theatre. I can say that because I have a PhD in Performance Studies and I am not saying it as a theatre historian who is just angry at Performance Studies. I am saying it as a Performance Studies person who wants to see that kind of rigorous analysis take place in the field.

CC: I would like to take a step back to something you just said, which is about the importance or the lack of importance of historiography in Performance Studies. I am not talking about the historiography of the field, but about a historiographic investigation of the object of analysis itself.

RS: That's interesting. I think it is necessary, but don't mistake me, because I think there is a new form of historiography. When you say "the analysis of the specific object in the field", I mean one of the issues with Performance Studies is "no object is discreet to itself". You know, that specific object is not a specific object; it's already composed of a myriad of problems of looking, of spectatorship, of engaging the object from a perspective, if you will, of your viewing, and it's already going to be other than itself, because of your engagement with it. So, there is not this idea of the mastery of a specific object so that one can tell the lineage of that object. One has to engage with the volatile relational contingency of when one thinks one mixes that object in the moment. There is a pressure on telling the history and on thinking about history, in this new moment of the undoing of the specificities of the object.

How does one do it? I mean how does one tell that story. In a way one has to tell the story of telling stories; and of course historiography is

about history thinking about history. History thinking about itself. It's not just the narrative or the chronicle; it's not just the history. Historiography is in the sense of "how do we come to this place to try even to tell this story of this object"; and I have to be critical of that, of the fracturedness of my attempts to even do that. But there are ways to tell that history or to bring history in, even while complicating that linear march of a kind of enlightenment, investment in forward-moving progress-oriented time. If you think about certain historiographers like Carolyn Dinshaw, whose book *Getting Medieval* has been very informative to me because she really writes about the affective echoes across time that might happen in an object; an object might retain some kind of affective echoes from another time. The challenge in that isn't necessarily just a kind of recovery of some sort of unproblematic story of how this object travels to come to this place; but to engage in a set of desires about knowing and about accounting for, "how do we account for this?" Sometimes it looks like a very different historiography, and this is maybe why people say "we don't need that, we don't need that kind of history perhaps"; but we do need an account of our implications, our tangledness in time. And to my mind that's best served by deep study of other moments in time. To account for our entanglement in time, our genealogy that brings us to a moment of trying to think about telling history differently. We are best informed by looking at other efforts in other moments in time to tell the historical narrative, as we devise new ways of telling those narratives to ourselves. Some people do it by a personal narrative, some people say "my personal history is the only history that I might have to bring to this object". Other people may say something different, but I disagree that one doesn't need any kind of engagement with history or historiography.

CC: So it's more about a new way of thinking about historiography in terms of Performance Studies, when the object is performance...

RS: One of the reasons my book *Performing Remains* is about reenactment is because historically there has been this idea that performance disappears, a basic idea of Performance Studies; I give an account of it in my book. But, you know, Richard Schechner said this in 1985; it was picked up by many people, Peggy Phelan, famously reiterating "performance becomes itself through disappearing and it cannot be recorded" etc. etc., and that's all been a very important thing to think with; but it also says "then, if performance disappears, it has no means of remaining, it doesn't have a means of remaining in the archive, whereas in the object-based and text-based archive, what about the body as an archive? I mean psychoanalysis gives us the body as an archive; there are many examples: Foucault gives us the eruptive body... there are many examples of the body as an archive. But to tell those stories, to tell a history in that way... this is why Foucault calls it a genealogy and not a history. We aren't finished with figuring out what it is to enunciate a past that comes to us through that which has been forgotten. That's a different kind of history, but it doesn't happen in isolation to what does remain in the archive. It's like what Diana Taylor argues; it's some kind of crosswind that we can become better at thinking through.

Conclusioni

Dopo essersi dottorata presso il dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University, lavorando a stretto contatto con Richard Schechner, e dopo aver lavorato per svariati anni sia nel medesimo dipartimento sia in altre istituzioni accademiche statunitensi, Rebecca Schneider è attualmente docente e capo di dipartimento di

Theatre and Performance Studies della Brown University. In questa intervista svolta nel maggio 2012 a Providence, nel suo ufficio presso la Brown University, la Schneider racconta a grandi linee la sua esperienza nell'ambito dei Performance Studies, e dedica una riflessione alle differenze esistenti tra la tradizione dei Performance Studies alla NYU e l'identità del suo dipartimento presso la Brown University. A tal proposito una nota di differenza viene colta nell'attenzione rivolta alla componente storiografica, e alle possibili svariate possibilità di intendere il ruolo giocato dalla storiografia nell'ambito dei Performance Studies. Nel soffermarsi a prendere in esame gli apporti allo studio e alla ricerca forniti dalla disciplina dei Performance Studies, la Schneider ribadisce l'intreccio tra "teatralità" e "performatività", sottolineando l'importanza ora dell'una ora dell'altra. Infine, riflettendo sull'ontologia della performance, e riprendendo il nucleo centrale del suo ultimo libro "Performing Remains", ribadisce il concetto in base al quale la performance non sia destinata a scomparire ma piuttosto "rimanga" nel tempo.

Nel ricordare i suoi studi, prima di Master e poi di Dottorato alla New York University, Rebecca Schneider mette in evidenza l'entusiasmo e l'energia che hanno contraddistinto il grappolo di studiosi che, raccogliendosi sotto "l'ampio spettro" performativo, ha animato gli esordi e i successivi sviluppi del dipartimento stesso. Si trattava infatti essenzialmente di esperti di vari ambiti che, provenendo da altre discipline, hanno contribuito a fondare un nuovo ambito accademico, anche sulla spinta innovatrice che in quegli anni premeva soprattutto all'interno dei dipartimenti di teatro. In molti casi si avvertiva difatti l'esigenza di allargare l'ottica degli studi teatrali in direzione di una prospettiva più globale, in grado di includere lo studio di tradizioni o di

“forme teatrali” non occidentali, come ad esempio i riti africani o asiatici. In questo senso i Performance Studies sembrano aver raccolto tale istanza, proponendosi come una lente in grado di analizzare la relazione esistenti tra riti, teatro e performance. E se è vero che la concomitante nascita dell’altra tradizione dei Performance Studies presso la Northwestern University si è verificata all’interno degli studi di comunicazione e interpretazione orale, il dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University è invece sorto proprio dall’ampliamento degli studi di teatro e danza. In tal senso l’esperienza di Rebecca Schneider, che proveniva proprio da studi teatrali, si è perfettamente inscritta all’interno del filone newyorkese degli studi performativi, sfruttando a pieno il suo background accademico. In tal senso diventa anche più semplice leggere non soltanto il suo attuale collocarsi in un dipartimento, come quello della Brown University, focalizzato simultaneamente tanto sul teatro quanto sulla performance, ma anche il suo spiccato interesse volto a tratti più verso la dimensione della “teatralità” che verso quella della “performatività”.

Riflettendo in merito alle attuali principali linee di differenza tra il dipartimento di Performance Studies della NYU e quello di Theatre and Performance Studies da lei diretto alla Brown University, Rebecca Schneider vede nella variante offerta dalla Brown una maggiore attenzione rivolta alla dimensione storica e storiografica, e in parte riconduce ciò all’aver mantenuto uno spazio specifico per gli studi teatrali. In questo senso la Schneider concepisce i Performance Studies come uno strumento in grado di garantire una fruttuosa e stimolante conversazione tra svariate forme performative, inclusi il teatro, la danza, i media o la visual time-based art. Al contempo però precisa anche che il dipartimento alla Brown University ha voluto fortemente mantenere una linea teatrale oltre che performativa per non perdere quella che la

Schneider definisce come “la ricchezza” e “il rigore” di alcuni aspetti provenienti dai Theatre Studies, connessi agli approcci semiotici e fenomenologici, e soprattutto storici e storiografici.

E proprio a proposito del ruolo giocato dalla componente storiografica nell’ambito dei Performance Studies, Rebecca Schneider precisa che per lei si tratta di un ruolo imprescindibile, anche se è possibile pensare a forme nuove di fare storiografia, soprattutto in materia di Performance Studies, dove l’oggetto d’analisi non è mai nitidamente distinto, e neppure dato a priori.

Chiamata poi a rispondere in merito all’ardua questione relativa agli eventuali apporti euristici che una disciplina come i Performance Studies è in grado di offrire agli altri ambiti disciplinari, la Schneider sostiene che uno dei principali punti di forza dei Performance Studies consiste nel muoversi fra, e riuscire ad annullare i confini tra le varie “espressioni mediatiche”. Ricorda come agli albori dell’affermarsi di questo nuovo ambito disciplinare, ci sia stato, soprattutto tra i Theatre Studies, un forte moto di resistenza verso i Performance Studies, spesse volte tacciati di voler essere “lo studio di tutto”. Tale critica si è dispiegata di pari passo con il rapido svilupparsi verso la metà del secolo scorso di forme di time-based performances che hanno contribuito a scompaginare quella lunga tradizione che privilegiava una segmentazione tra le discipline artistiche, segregate all’interno di specifiche e settoriali categorie. I Performance Studies, come lente analitica, tendono a cancellare tali inutili settorializzazioni.

Infine, accennando a riflessioni relative all’ontologia della performance e facendo riferimento a questioni ampiamente prese in esame nel suo ultimo libro “Performing Remains”, Rebecca Schneider sottolinea come il bisogno di incentrare il suo lavoro sul reenactment sia sorto proprio da una diffusa idea nell’ambito dei Performance Studies, in

base alla quale la performance, per natura, sia destinata a “scompare”. Tale posizione, fortemente sostenuta da studiosi come ad esempio Peggy Phelan, per la quale la performance diviene se stessa nell’atto della sparizione e dunque, di conseguenza, non può essere “conservata”, viene ampiamente contrastata dalla Schneider. Facendo riferimento al concetto di “corpo come archivio”, la Schneider richiama le teorie di Foucault così come le riflessioni di Diana Taylor nel suo “The Archive and the Repertoire”, e sottolinea come sia necessario proseguire su questa strada, al fine di trovare nuove vie attraverso cui “enunciare un passato che giunge a noi tramite ciò che è stato dimenticato”. In tal senso, credendo nelle possibilità di “conservazione” della performance, in primis quelle che passano attraverso “la memoria affettiva del corpo”, la Schneider afferma la necessità di sperimentare sempre nuove e alternative forme in grado di raggiungere tale risultato.

A “specific perspective” from a “Performance Studies International” voice.

An Interview with Maaïke Bleeker - New York City, May 2012

Performance Studies, as an academic discipline, was born in the United States, but nowadays it seems not to be only an American field of research. What does Performance Studies look like from a European perspective? This interview with Maaïke Bleeker, the current President of the PSi (Performance Studies International), focuses on what international, intercultural and interdisciplinary actually mean in relation to Performance Studies. Here Maaïke Bleeker stresses the idea of how powerful Performance Studies becomes when it embraces all the different traditions and the specificities that constitute it.²⁴⁴

CC: First of all I would like to ask you to briefly introduce yourself and to talk a little bit about your academic background, your research interest and your work...

MB: Ok! More or less how I ended up where I am now (laughs)... It's a mixed road. When I started going to the University, originally I wanted to go to Art School, and I ended up more or less incidentally in Art History, but I really liked it and so I stayed a long time at the University. I did a program called “Doctorat”... that was before the Bologna process; so I was working at what they now call a Bachelor and a Master together, and I studied, I think, for nine years, and I did Art History and then Theatre Studies and Philosophy, and in the meantime I started making theatre, first as costumer designer and then as a dramaturg. So it was a kind of the two things together, both the theory and the practice. Then when I finished I decided, after Philosophy, that it was time to do a PhD. Also

²⁴⁴ This interview with Maaïke Bleeker was taken in May 2012 in New York City.

very pragmatically I think that I went through the selection for the money, but having a grant through the PhD meant that I could make theatre for free, and that was for me at that time really important. Then I was in the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis for my PhD. That was at the time a very interdisciplinary School. I was the only one working at that time in theatre, performance kind of work. I did spend part of my time in California, with Susan Foster who was my supervisor, and after that I continued a kind of trying to combine theory and practice. I developed a big interest in questions of perception. My work was on visuality in the theatre, and visuality as a cultural specific phenomenon, and embodied phenomenon also very much. And from there I developed a continuing research on questions of perception and the very complicated but interesting connection between perception and cognition in thinking, so more questions on sensorial experiences, the theatre as a perspective on this kind of questions; and on the other hand in poetics; it also grew from this interest in visuality, the question of politics in visual culture, a performativity, a performance of politics, but also the politics of performance. I have been working on these things for quite a while now. And along that also we are generally still working a lot around dramaturgy from my own experiences, because I find dramaturgy at the moment a very interesting question that connects to a lot of my other research interests, thinking, perceiving, how people make sense, but also what is political, what is critical, what is important to do in the theatre now and why. And generally I am interested in new forms of theatre, a lot of dance, I write quite often about dance as well, and the kind of shifts and overlaps with visual arts and philosophy. I think this is generally where I am now. I feel also that I am running off my projects. I got to PSi also because I am interested in the question of performance studies and of Performance Studies in different cultural contexts, but this is probably

something we can talk about later more. But I guess this is how I ended up where I am. I did this PhD project, I was on a Post-doc for a couple of years, and then quite soon I was appointed in Utrecht as Head of Theatre Studies there. And that meant that a totally different part of the University became part of my life in terms of administration and much more teaching. So for that moment I thought more strategically about University politics, Performance Studies within that, and connections with other departments. In Utrecht we are very interdisciplinary so that's a very interesting kind of context to think about these things.

CC: Great! Thank you! The next question is right about PSi. You are the President of Performance Studies International, so I was just wondering if you can talk a little bit about your experience also in relation to what you did in Utrecht last year.

MB: Yeah! I guess the first thing was my surprise to end up in a way as being a President of something at all, but also maybe of Performance Studies, because, as I explained before, Performance Studies as a discipline was not part of my background, but it also had to do with the Dutch situation where Performance Studies doesn't exist separated from Theatre Studies. And a lot of what happens maybe in other places under Performance Studies does happen in the other places where I was part of Theatre Studies, Art History, Cultural Analysis like things. And PSi... I encountered PSi through a conference I went earlier in Singapore. I was going there just because of curiosity. At that time my department in Amsterdam was more connected to the International Federation for Theatre Research. So I had been going there, but I was very curious about PSi and I was very very much impressed by the conference then. It was a very interesting conference in the way that it was in a such different

cultural context, and very much asking the questions also about Performance Studies in different parts of the world. I was also much taken by the interest in a non-hierarchical type of conference: in that sense the dynamics of Performance Studies and the interaction between theory and practice in very different ways; the interdisciplinary outlook of Performance Studies also outside the arts. So that was a moment that I got curious and then I attended the next conference because I was invited to go there to get with two artists that I had been talking about in Singapore. So it was a very interesting way of entwining with the artists. And then things went quite fast. I remained interested in the conference and I was invited to become a member of the board and also, at some point, the then President started to inform whether I would be interested in organizing a conference, which was a big thing. But then I was just appointed in Utrecht and I thought: “Actually it makes sense to do that. We have a wonderful context to do it; it will be great to collaborate within my department in doing something like that.” I was more and more feeling connected to what I saw happening in PSi: this all question of Performance Studies as something that is not unitarian but something very different in different places of the world. I find it a very important question at the moment in the context of globalization but also in the context of awareness that many practices are performative and meaning itself is performative. But also this performativity means that it is loco, and it is important to understand how to negotiate this connection between the loco and the global, how to respect the differences but also to connect. That was when I got more and more involved and then, at some points, it apparently mixed... and I was informed I would have been nominated as President, and I thought: “Yeah! Actually this is an organization that I would like to do that for”. Because it felt for me, and it still feels for me like an organization that has some important and very

intriguing steps to make this movement and that made a very interesting challenge to do that. And it has also maybe to do with my background. That would be the challenge of the organization having of course a very strong connection to its origins in the United States, but as the organization having moved away from that, not in the sense of opposing the situation in the United States but becoming more diverse. At the moment the board has only four members who are affiliated to an American University on twenty-three members of the board. So that's a huge shift away to the inclusion of other parts of the world. I think the dominance now is continental Europe, becoming a mix of continental Europe and UK. I think this is very significant of this moment and the question of how to move also beyond that to include much more and then again also other parts of the world. And for me the idea of representing Performance Studies for the first time as somebody not from the US/UK/Australian connection and as a not an English native speaker. And that's of course also a big issue in an international organization. This complex relationship to English, that for me has always been the language that allowed me to communicate with people from all over the world, and that has something very positive, but it also causes power differences; and I am very much aware of being not born into English myself.

CC: Thanks! There is something you have just said that was a kind of suggesting me something else. You were talking about people who are part of the board, and so this kind of no balance in a certain way between people from US and people who are not from US. So I would like to ask you which are according to you the main differences in terms of issues between PS people from Europe and PS people from US, in your experience.

MB: I find it very hard to answer. I am not sure if there are main differences, and I also think that US are not one thing. But I think that one difference that happens is that, since the US is such a big country and Performance Studies is established as a discipline within the University, it is very easy on one hand to keep looking at Performance Studies as a US phenomenon, as long as you are within the United States. There is also maybe a very important interest because of this having been institutionalized as a discipline, which of course brings a lot of department politics. This is very different from Performance Studies in some other places in the world, where it does not exist as such an institution. So that works differently. But I think for me the main surprise sometimes is that, although I don't think it is often consciously done, but the automatic identification of Performance Studies with PSi or viceversa, or with Performance Studies as an international phenomenon within the United States... I am not so sure if it is so international within the United States. Sometimes it seems a little bit a lack of awareness of the diversity of Performance Studies outside and the specificity of Performance Studies within the US. It reminds a little bit what Peggy Phelan calls *Unmarked*. There is not specificity; specificity exists only in the rest of the world. That looks differently if you are not from the US.

CC: How was for you introducing this field through a conference in a country where, as you have just said, Performance Studies doesn't really exist as an academic field? And I am thinking about what is happening in other countries: for instance what they have done in some countries through the PSi clusters, like in Greece, or in Portugal or even in Italy. These are all countries where Performance Studies doesn't really exist as

an academic field. So I was thinking about your own experience also in terms of the feedback you got from people in your country.

MB: I don't think that was very complicated in a way, in the sense that a lot of that kind of research exists, it's just not called Performance Studies and it happens in other places, it happens partly in Theatre Studies, partly in Media Studies, in Gender Studies, and in many other fields actually. Right now there is a quite strong tradition of interdisciplinary research anyway in the Netherlands, not everywhere of course. And in a way many of the issues that are Performance Studies are also very much part of Theatre Studies in the Netherlands, and there is not that much of distinction and maybe that is also connected to the field of theatre and performance. We don't have so much of strong opposition there and maybe the opposition is getting stronger with becoming more conservative. But we have a history since the early 70s in the Netherlands in terms of state support and discourse; also a very strong interest in experimental work and in work that crosses disciplinary boundaries. It used to be not such a strong text based tradition in the Netherlands for example. So maybe most of the oppositions that were important one upon a time to distinguish Performance Studies from Theatre Studies do not make so much sense, and a lot of work that we see, you probably don't call it theatre somewhere else, but it is theatre in a Dutch context. We teach theatre and dance combined in a program, because there is so much in common in the practice that we don't have really two separate programs at the University. In practical training yes, the dancer training is different than the training for actors, but even there, they are so many interdisciplinary fields. These distinctions work differently. I did not have the feeling that it was difficult to introduce the conference of Performance Studies in a Dutch context. Also the Festival that was part

of the conference, that kind of work, it could have been called performance festival but it is called theatre festival. So in the Netherlands I usually say that Performance is the word we use to describe that, that and that. I think of the Dutch context that it was interesting to see how many people from different disciplines were interested in coming together in Utrecht to talk about these issues and to feel supported in an international community, because a lot of this work happens interdisciplinary and then sometime when you feel a bit alienated in your department, conferences like P*Si* is a moment when you notice that there is a lot of people doing similar things, and that can be helpful!

CC: Thanks! This is very helpful for me, because one of my main issues is trying to understand if, what and how Performance Studies can give something new to its own object of analysis. Most of the scholars, most of the times, come from different fields, Theatre Studies, Anthropology, and so on and so forth. And then they become part of this specific field in a certain way, which is Performance Studies. So I am still wondering what is the peculiarity of Performance Studies, in terms of what Performance Studies can give which is new to the object of analysis. For example, you were saying that as theatre scholars we are used to analyze our object of analysis in a kind of interdisciplinary way, so my question is: what do you think it is new in the Performance Studies perspective? Is there something so peculiar that we cannot find in other approaches?

MB: I do not think that Performance Studies has one methodology or one approach, but I do think that there is something which is quite characteristic of the various ways of working that happen under this label of Performance Studies. And when it is for example about what it is that it has to offer to the analysis of theatrical arts and performing arts, I think

there, in Netherlands now we have to have Performance Studies next to Theatre Studies, but somehow the idea has got incorporated as part of what Theatre Studies does. But it is a different approach that it represents, in a sense that Theatre Studies has a tradition of dealing with its object, these theories of semiotics, of drama, theories that are part of a history of a specific art-form, whereas Performance Studies brings in a perspective that does not necessary bring in this all history, but it looks a bit from the perspective of how it is performative, with all these theories of Austin and Butler and Derrida on performativity; but also the connections with the anthropological approach of ritual, of cultural performances. I think in that sense it approaches these art-forms from a different perspective, and I believe that is one way that is very refreshing and it focuses on different elements of performances; it does not necessary explain a performance in terms of this all history of how people have been thinking about theatre and what now performance is doing with it, or in relation to traditions of dramaturgical structures or that kind of things. This approach makes possible that you can look at theatre and other phenomena in similar ways. The wonderful thing about approaches from performance, performativity and Performance Studies is also that we can look at many other things, not only at performing arts in that way, and start to see connections that would remain invisible if you only look at performing arts or only from a performing arts perspective. So I think there is an interesting possibility for the field and a challenge also to expand on these possibilities, to, again, not get stuck in very specific topics or focused areas. For long time in Performance Studies the all notion of identity has been very dominant. That is something that, for example, from my Dutch-European perspective, is not a very prominent one, whereas in how I have been trained and in the connection with philosophy and in current questions about perception and cognition, very

different aspects of performance and performativity are now very interesting. In Utrecht we did this prelude panel with questions of technology where Jon Mckenzie has such a wonderful work, or with the performance of perception, or the question of the involvement of mathematic and performance, which is a slightly different approach of what can be studied from Performance Studies, and they are more cultural anthropology context, which has been quite dominant for quite a while.

CC: Thanks! You were just saying that there is not a specific kind of methodology in terms of Performance Studies. We always talk about a post-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary field for Performance Studies, but, do you think it is possible to identify some methodologies within the field, even if diverse methodologies?

MB: I think that is at the moment the big question. When I say that Performance Studies is not one thing that is my conviction when we look at Performance Studies as something that exists in different places in different ways, and even in one place it can exist in different ways. But it is not to deny that some approaches to Performance Studies are institutionalized and very strongly. And I think that part of thinking through this international character of Performance Studies is also aware of that. There are some methodologies and approaches that are more equal than others. I guess it is one of the questions at the moment to keep it open and to be aware that some more institutionalized forms of Performance Studies are only one possible form of Performance Studies, and that opening up to an international field means not only to open up to spread your own world or to include objects from all over the world, but

it is really to acknowledge that there are different approaches to what Performance Studies is, and that it is not owned by one place.

CC: ... one way of thinking about it...

MB: Yeah! One way of thinking...

CC: This can be a way we could use to define the academic field in itself. Every time we try to understand what this field is about, we also try to define it. But we are all aware that Performance Studies in itself does not like to be labeled, although, for some aspects, it is a field and it is institutionalized. Do you think that what we have just talked about, which is the impossibility of fully defining the field of Performance Studies, is part of its identity?

MB: Actually no, because I think that the state of impossibility is also a way of avoiding it, and it tends to become a kind of mythology. I think that really acknowledging differences will require that we define various Performance Studies and the specificity of each of them, and also how they are specific. This goes back to this point of *Unmarked*. A wonderful work has been done by Jon McKenzie in his *Perform or Else* to show the cultural specificity of Performance Studies as emerged in the United States. It is stronger if we can say “Ok! This kind of Performance Studies has to do with this cultural context, because that allows others to be different”. I think it is very important to look at the specificity, and then to look at what else is going on that might be called Performance Studies, which Jon McKenzie and others did in this wonderful book *Contesting Performance*. They show that there are many traditions, and I think that there is a lot of work to be done there. We can look at the research going

on in different places, and at how in different places different genealogies of performance research developed, and how they make sense in a particular loco context, and how we can benefit from that if we think about that more globally. I think specificity is really important.

CC: This is about the field and the methodologies in the field, but then there is something which is about the object of the field itself, performance. So another big issue is just defining what performance might be. How would you define performance?

MB: I don't know (laugh). This is like saying that I don't know what I am talking or writing about! I know what I am talking and writing about, but this is, of course, first of all, a language issue. Performance has a definition in English. Performance is not translatable in Dutch and that happens with many other languages as well, or, if it is translatable, it is not necessarily translatable in a similar way in opposition to, for example, theatre. So this understanding already exists within a language, which means that we will constantly be shifting in different languages. But I also think that to work with a concept is not necessarily to have a very strict definition. I mean, for some concepts that you work with, you need a very strict definition, because you want to do things with them that require strict definitions; but you can also look at performance in the context of Performance Studies as a kind of searchlight. It highlights to look through the lens of performance at objects, at a field of potential objects; it highlights different elements of this object, than looking at them as theatre, or looking at them as whatever. In that sense I like that idea of a concept as a searchlight, because then your research is doing both things: it defines the concept as performance to look at the field and then the field also tells you back what performance can be, because if you

look at something in a certain way then you realize that that thing actually could also be a performance, or could be looked at as a performance. I think that after great thinkers like Derrida we are careful with the assumption that we could ever fix the meaning of other concepts. We are very much aware of how they are all connected and of how we try to negotiate a field of meanings, how there is always interest involved, politics. For some reasons at some point it can be very useful to define something as performance, just to make something happen that you find important to happen. It can be a very critical concept because it can oppose others who say something about something that you disagree with, So, it is a tool, I think.

CC: It is an object and a methodology at the same time.

MB: Yeah! True! We cannot distinguish the method and the object, because the method will define the object and the object will define the method. They are always entwined. The challenge is to make them not entwined in a way that everything is already fixed before, but in a way that the object needs to be able to talk back and challenge the theory, because otherwise you are just putting things into theoretical categories. But as long as there can be a kind of back and forth then it makes sense to look at them as entwined.

CC: Thank you! There was something you were saying at the beginning that is about the intercultural identity of Performance Studies. Do you think that Performance Studies, by trying to be so intercultural, is really able to avoid an only western point of view?

MB: Very good question, and I think, indeed, one of the big questions for Performance Studies at the moment... the intercultural and the international. It's clear that Performance Studies from the beginning, as it developed, had a great interest in other cultures. I am not so sure how much space there is for real differences. I think that is the bigger question. It's clear that Performance Studies has been very fascinated by talking about objects from other cultures or thinking about performances from other cultures, but the real question is a question about the power relationship and the perspective in these approaches. And that I think is the big question at the moment, and that comes back to what we were talking about before: the fact that there might be different Performance Studies. That would be about acknowledging the perspective in Performance Studies as it exists and the possibilities that there are other perspectives and that there is not one way of uniting them into one overall kind of happy family, but it might be about negotiating differences much more; that is a crucial question at the moment. My address in Utrecht, when I start as a President (of PSi) was that we need to start to think about Performance Studies as a western invention, because otherwise we never get acknowledged that that is where it comes from. The only way to make the situation of *Unmarked* go away is to mark, is to acknowledge that that is how it came into being as an invention of the West, with a very beautiful intention and with a lot of good things. But if we really want to give others the possibility of thought back we also need first to be able to dare to say that we are self-specific and that the intercultural is not only about reaching out and finding beautiful things there, but also being confronted with your own specificity. I think that is a challenge at the moment.

CC: You have mentioned several times *Unmarked* which is a famous book written by Peggy Phelan. There is a specific chapter in that book that is about the Ontology of Performance, where she highlights the idea that the ontology of performance lies in its disappearing in a certain way. How do you relate, as a scholar, to this idea of dealing with performance as something which disappears?

MB: Well, the fact the object disappears and you still have to deal with it as a scholar, that also goes for history. We were all not present at the French Revolution and still that seems not to be a problem writing about it. That's much broader and of course in the context of trying to think about the ontology of performance it is absolutely an important remark, but I am not sure if that means that we cannot write about it. Sometimes it is taken as an apology that we cannot write about it. There is a very strong ideology that says that it is about presence, but this is not necessarily the same as the essence of the object. We can very well study performance in very similar ways we study history, because it is an event from a moment in the past, and there are maybe some documents left and we start writing about that. And maybe some can write from having been present there, in other cases we are not personally present there but maybe we have testimonies of what happened there, and we can go to the place where it happened. The difference is not so much essentially in the object but in the ideology that has been very strong in Performance Studies. The idea that performance is about presence is a very specific idea about performance, but I do not think it is the only necessarily one. And if, indeed, you say that performance is about presence then of course automatically you start lamenting the fact that it's basically never really present, because it is already always disappearing. But you can look at it as something which is not always necessarily present, that is the way that

many people have looked over the ages to performances; they have been looking in very very different ways, and not in the loss of presence or in the idea of a constant disappearance. So I think that is a specific understanding of performance that works through in certain approaches of Performances Studies. That is one way of approaching, but then I think it is very important to be culturally specific because this is not necessarily shared. The idea of performativity implies the concept that things are performative in the sense that they are produced in the doing, or that they get their meaning through practices instead of having that kind of internally essential there. Also that is not necessarily about disappearing. For me it is very much about the creative force of performance actually, or even the disciplinary force of performance. Performance and performativity are constantly producing what we think is the reality as given, but in fact that's the all gender argument of course of Butler, elaborated by others in their fields after her. And Butler is also very clear about the normativity of performance and performativity. How we can look at all kinds of practices in life as actually producing what we think is simply there. So my approach would be more on that side.

CC: I would like to ask you something which is about historiography in the field, which is not the historiography of the field, but it is more about the historiographic approach that each Performance Studies scholar has in relation to its own object of analysis. In one of the most recent issues of TDR there is a contribution coming from Marco De Marinis in which, among the other things, he also addresses the idea that Performance Studies does not really have an historiographic approach to its object of analysis...

MB: I think he must be responding to a specific tradition of Performance Studies when he observes that. Because I do not think it is inherent to an approach that one could call performance research that has no attention for historiography of the object. But I agree that there are many examples of concrete Performance Studies work where this is absent, but that is not a matter of the approach not allowing it. But I agree that certain people who are working in the context of Performance Studies or maybe certain traditions within Performance Studies have very little attention for that. That was also something that occurred to me coming to Performance Studies and being initiated in thinking about performance and performativity through Cultural Analysis. For me the time in school in Cultural Analysis was the time when I learnt most about performativity and performance as an approach to many different phenomena, although it wasn't a training in Performance Studies. There was always a historiographic approach as part of the reflection there, and I agree that I am sometimes surprised. I guess it is somehow in a very integrated way related to what you were mentioning before, that within certain traditions of Performance Studies there is this strong focus on presence, which on a way focuses so much on this overwhelming here and now.

Conclusioni

Questa intervista a Maaïke Bleeker, attuale presidente del PSi (Performance Studies International), è stata realizzata a New York nella primavera del 2012, mentre la Bleeker si trovava al dipartimento di Performance Studies della New York University in veste di Visiting Scholar. Buona parte delle osservazioni fatte dall'intervistata mette chiaramente in luce il punto di vista di una voce europea che s'inscrive all'interno di un ambito disciplinare di origine statunitense, ma che, oramai, ha ampiamente preso piede nel vecchio continente, oltre che nel

*resto del mondo, diventando un fenomeno non più esclusivamente americano. Dopo aver raccontato il percorso che l'ha via via condotta a scoprire e ad avvicinarsi a questioni relative alla performatività, Maaïke Bleeker affronta la vicenda dell'introduzione dei Performance Studies nel contesto europeo, e in quello olandese più specificamente, asserendo che si è trattato di un'operazione abbastanza fluida, data la già esistenza, seppur sotto altre "etichette accademiche", di studi analoghi. A tal proposito sostiene che uno dei principali elementi di differenziazione tra l'Europa e gli Stati Uniti consista nel fatto che la prima manchi di conferire ai Performance Studies una reale istituzionalizzazione accademica. In secondo luogo la Bleeker evidenzia il contributo che i Performance Studies sono in grado di fornire nel proporre un'ottica capace di affrontare diversi oggetti d'analisi, e si sofferma sugli apporti provenienti da una pleora di approcci metodologici che gravitano attorno alla famiglia degli studi della performance. Infine, sottolineando l'importanza delle mappature definitorie, la presidente di P*Si* afferma la necessità di "marcare" il campo dei Performance Studies, anche al fine di riconoscere le molteplici specificità e tradizioni che, al variare dei contesti culturali, lo costituiscono. Riafferma lo stesso rigore nell'evidenziare tanto la possibilità di "conservare" e "studiare" la performance, quanto di impiegare un approccio storiografico nel farlo.*

Nel raccontare il suo percorso accademico e come questo l'abbia condotta ad accostarsi sempre più all'ambito dei Performance Studies, Maaïke Bleeker fa ripetutamente riferimento ad un approccio interdisciplinare costante tanto nei suoi studi e nelle sue ricerche, quanto nel contesto accademico olandese cui appartiene. Muovendosi tra storia dell'arte, del teatro e studi culturali, è approdata alla combinazione tra teoria e pratica, così come anche allo studio della performatività. È per

questa ragione che, pur dichiarando che i Performance Studies non hanno effettivamente fatto parte della sua formazione, almeno non nella loro forma istituzionalizzata americana, Maaïke Bleeker sostiene di aver a lungo coltivato interessi analoghi a quelli di questa disciplina. Nel suo prendere in esame come questo nuovo ambito disciplinare stia entrando a far parte degli interessi accademici delle Università europee e non solo, la presidente del PSi afferma con forza la necessità per la tradizione statunitense dei Performance Studies di aprirsi ad altre tradizioni e contesti culturali dove, seppur non istituzionalizzate, altre forme di studi della performance assistono sotto nomi diversi e in dipartimenti diversi. Per lei, cioè, risulta fondamentale congiungere la dimensione globale di tale disciplina con i vari contesti locali, giungendo in tal modo ad un rispetto delle specificità identitarie. A suo personale avviso la componente continentale europea risulterebbe maggioritaria al momento, e questo sarebbe anche evidenziato dal fatto che tra i ventitré membri del board del PSi solo quattro sono affiliati a Università americane. Senza rinnegare le origini statunitensi della disciplina, la Bleeker chiede insistentemente una apertura a tradizioni diverse, sviluppatesi in altre parti del mondo, ed è per questa ragione che, dal suo punto di vista, l'unico elemento di forte differenza tra i Performance Studies americani e gli studi sulla performance che si sono diffusi in Europa, risiede esclusivamente nell'istituzionalizzazione accademica che si è verificata negli Stati Uniti e che invece ancora manca in Europa. Questo spiegherebbe anche perché la ricezione del PSi alla Utrecht University non ha generato molte complicazioni, ma si è fluidamente innestata sui ceppi accademici già esistenti. Se tale riflessione apparirebbe identificare come elemento distintivo dei Performance Studies la loro interdisciplinarietà, poco dopo Maaïke Bleeker riconosce anche come in realtà, rispetto alle precedenti, il loro approccio proponga

una prospettiva analitica diversa e nuova, incentrata eminentemente sulla componente performativa e sui suoi risvolti. Inoltre riflette anche sul fatto che i Performance Studies ampliano l'ottica d'analisi su oggetti altri rispetto a quelli tradizionalmente presi in esame dalle Performing Arts, e in questo modo sono in grado di portare alla luce delle connessioni che diversamente rimarrebbero invisibili sotto l'occhio di queste ultime. Tornando poi al cuore della sua posizione, la Bleeker sottolinea come le sfaccettature e pluralità metodologiche che connotano i Performance Studies potrebbero trarre ulteriore giovamento da un'apertura verso altri approcci a studi della performance che si sono via via sviluppati nel resto del mondo, al di fuori del contesto prettamente statunitense e poi anglosassone, e in questo modo ribadisce ancora una volta la sua critica verso la centralità che la tradizione americana dei Performance Studies sembra ancora detenere e "conservare".

In linea con tale presa di posizione, Maaïke Bleeker parla anche di una "mitologia" costruita attorno all'idea di impossibilità di definizione dei Performance Studies, identificando tale assunto con l'intento di evitare una reale presa di coscienza delle eventuali differenze esistenti. Per lei infatti una tale definizione consentirebbe il riconoscimento di varie linee e tradizioni di studi della performance e la specificità di ciascuna di esse. Per questa ragione apprezza particolarmente tentativi come quello di Jon McKenzie di "Contestualizzare la Performance", volti a evidenziare come esistano differenti genealogie di ricerca in materia performativa, ciascuna delle quali connessa alle specificità culturali del contesto di riferimento.

Analogamente, pur riconoscendo i limiti linguistici legati all'origine inglese di un termine come "performance" difficilmente traducibile in altre lingue, la Bleeker sottolinea l'importanza di concepire e definire la performance come una "searchlight", in grado al contempo di definire sia l'oggetto sia la metodologia di analisi dell'oggetto stesso. In opposizione a quanto sostenuto da Peggy Phelan nel suo "Ontology of Performance", lei non lega il concetto di performance a quello di presenza e, di conseguenza, non vede "speciali difficoltà" nei tentativi di studiarla o di "conservarla". Al contrario vede negli apporti adottati dalle ricostruzioni storiografiche un valido e indispensabile strumento di analisi e comprensione delle dinamiche performative stesse.

In conversation with Diana Taylor

New York City, August 2012, Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics

CC: I would like to talk with you about Performance Studies in general and then I would like to go deeper and talk about some specific topics in Performance Studies. So the first thing I would like to ask you is about how you got to Performance Studies.

DT: Well, I started out looking in theater, but it became very clear to me around 1990 that I couldn't really think about theater without thinking about everything that was going on outside of it. I knew that, I always knew that, but I had just finished a chapter on Grisenda Gambaro, a very important playwright from Argentina and then I went to Argentina right afterwards, and then I realized that even the texts could not really understood without that context or pre-text or whatever we wanna call it. So I decided that I was going to really look at the whole scenario, the whole environment first, and then try to think about how texts or scripts and then performance work in that larger framework. So I guess it's the inversion of the framework that allowed me to think of Performance Studies in a broader way and theater as one certain type of performance within that larger framework.

CC: Thanks! This leads me to something else which is pretty close to what you have just said, and which is about the difference between the Performance Studies perspective and any other perspective we can adopt when we analyze something specific. So I am just wondering if you can help me to clarify what the Performance Studies perspective can give

new to your own object of analysis (which is pretty close to what you have just said).

DT: Well I would say that the object of analysis in Performance Studies is never a given. There is no object as such out there, so that it's probably more of a lens, than it is an object. So for example I can look at lots of different kinds of things, using a Performance Studies lens, and then I create my object of analysis, and I think that that's why Performance Studies is so different than say Theater Studies or Cinema Studies or Literature Studies, because Cinema Studies looks at cinema and Literature Studies looks at literature and those kinds of studies are focused by those particular objects, but we don't have that object of analysis; we look at performance, which is very very broadly understood as behavior, I guess, it could be animal and human behavior, but it's not locked into any specific thing. So for me to be able to study say ritual or dance or a social movement or anything like that as performance I have to create my object of analysis, so that means I have to find the frame that says: "Ok! This is the object of analysis that I am looking at". So I don't have a frame that comes from the outside, that is it's not a film, it's not a text. So I have to frame it; I have to say: "This is the beginning; this is the end". I am going to go from before the Dirty War to the end of the Dirty War for example, in Argentina. I am going to look at these different kinds of interactions, I am going to focus on these particular spaces. So I have to create that object of analysis, which is a very different project I think than most scholars have. I think in fact we are closer to historians than to any other scholars in the arts. Because historians like Performance Studies scholars have to frame and create their object of analysis.

CC: Thanks! So it's more about the lens than about the object itself. So what's so specific or so peculiar about the lens in Performance Studies?

DT: I think if you think about behaviors, embodiment, presence, all those forms of thinking about how animals or humans transfer knowledge, make meaning out of different kinds of practice, use practice to transfer meaning, all of those things you are not just looking at say, for example, a dance or a piece of theater, something that is defining almost by the form. You are looking at many kinds of behaviors that perhaps haven't been formalized, haven't been thought through as a form. And so the Performance Studies lens allows you to look at that as a kind of behavior, the way the people use something, the way the people move in a certain space; we can think about the ways people move in public spaces as performance; we can think about the ways people display their things at the market... what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls a performance of everyday life. So it's basically the frame that's allowing us to look at that as performance, rather than saying: "Ok! Those objects in and out themselves constitute a category, that is an object; but to think of an object of analysis means that somebody has already constituted it as an object, and we haven't done that. So I think that that's what the enormous promise of Performance Studies is. It doesn't say: "Ok! I am accepting this as an object of analysis, but that means that it has already been defined. So we define and we create our own object of analysis.

CC: Can you tell me a little bit more about the intersection between Performance Studies and the work that you do here at the Hemispheric Institute?

DT: Well, when I first came to the department of Performance Studies, here at NYU, I knew I only wanted to be in a Performance Studies department; that's the only kind of project I was interested in really investing my time and energy in. But I also saw that it was very angled, that means that most of the literature, most of the conversations we were having in Performance Studies at NYU, were among scholars in the US, Europe and Australia. And I thought that is really important to think about performance in the Americas because one of my major theories about performance in the Americas is that body practice is actually an extremely important form of communicating knowledge through the Americas, mostly because in some places 50% of the population is semi-illiterate, which means that knowledge production does not pass automatically through printed culture; so it passes around printed culture, before, around and after. It goes through *fiestas*, it goes through demonstrations, it goes through religious practices, it goes through all sorts of embodied practices that don't have very much to do with printed culture. So I think it's very important to think about how performance doesn't necessarily have an aesthetic end, but sometimes a very instrumental end which is that communities learn to do certain things within conventions that are carried through a body practice; and those get handed on from one generation to another, or from one community to another, and that's how this knowledge production spreads. So I thought that it was important to think about Americans within that constellation, and I think that that has in a way opened up a little bit more the conversation in Performance Studies even in our angled world. I think that perhaps we pay a little more attention to colonization, to the role of archival culture in conversation with, but not in opposition with embodied culture or the repertoire, as I call it. So I think it has allowed us

to think the other kind of more angled Performance Studies, also from a different way.

CC: Thank you! So it seems like this is exactly the point where you can find the political power of Performance Studies in a certain way. Do you agree with this? And where else we can find the political power of Performance Studies?

DT: I think that that is right! I think that once you start looking at transmission of behavior, you very very quickly see these are forms of forms of power, these are actions of power. One of the reasons I thought it was so important to distinguish actions that pass through bodies, embodied practices as a way of knowing, not just the archival, that pass through documents and things like that, but there is a way of knowing and there is a way of transmitting knowledge, so that we think about performance not as that which disappears, but as that that remains. This became important politically because if you think about the way the Western cultures have prioritized knowledge as archival, and expressions perhaps as embodied, then we understand that the embodied can never have the explanatory power of the archival. It can never have the legitimating force of the archival, the persuasive force. So, all of the sudden you see that it becomes a really second class form of knowledge production, so that what's really important for analysis is the archival, the documents, the texts, the records, and everything else has seen as ephemeral, as that which disappears, and so forth. So by going back to the conquest and by thinking of colonialism you understand that the indigenous populations in the Americas had their ways of transmitting knowledge; it is not that they did not have knowledge; they did not record it through texts. So when the Spanish people came and started taking the

lands and taking possession of everything, they were saying: “Well, we have the documents! Queen and King in Spain gave us these. Here are the documents!” And of course Amerindians had no way of proving documents, and they had no “value” of proof. So the fact they lived there, that they practiced their life there and lived their life there did not have the power of proof. I am trying to think through how embodied practice has that power. And in fact I think we have seen an incredible progress in the last ten-fifteen years, because finally courts of law, for example in Canada, are beginning to accept embodied practice as a form of legitimation. So native groups can make claims based on practices there, which before they would not be able to make a claim. The UNESCO for example is trying to figure out forms through their Intangible Cultural Heritage projects, of valorizing cultural practices; so there is a lot of interest now in thinking embodied practice and how we can give it its political value, that it had lost because of this legitimating system that was based on archival logic. So I think that that is something that’s really important. I think that when it gets down to like for example demonstrations or to the politics on the street, we also have to think about embodied practice as being very very powerful. If you think again about print culture, if you want to publish a book, it is very easy to do it through a printing press. It is very easy to control things that go through television, radio and all those other means of transmission, but it is very difficult to control bodies. If you want to make a protest, it could be either bodies on the street like in groups, which is what we have seen throughout the Americas in the last two years, or they can be very settled things, like for example even in theatre in moments of dictatorship the theatre practitioners had to give scripts over to the censors, so that scripts could look innocent enough. And then when the performers enacted the roles the slider gestures could communicate a very different meaning to

the audience than the meaning that is in the script. So that would mean that censors would have to go to every single performance in order to control bodies. So bodies have an enormous potential for communicating in a kind of coded way, in a way that other people do not understand necessarily. So it becomes a huge resource in terms of the political agency of populations in times of control.

CC: Thank you! I agree with all this, and this actually makes me think about the impossibility of controlling Performance Studies as a field in a certain way, and performance itself. You are mentioning different things, such as he attempts done by UNESCO. Thinking about the essay you wrote about UNESCO I was just wondering which one might be a way to deal with performance, its ephemerality and the political impossibility of saving something without going against the nature of the thing in itself.

DT: I guess my critic of the UNESCO project and the critic of any kind of project that tries to “save” performance is that I think it is a contradiction in terms, and undoes the very dynamic energy of performance. So quite if it is the attempt at saving and what the “saving” means. Saving is a kind of preservation. It’s as if we are turning practice into a script. So the impossibility I guess is that you can’t save performance by turning it into something it is not, which is a script or a notation or a video or something like that. Performances last and have futures only if people are interested in carrying them out. But they are never repetition of the same, as Deleuze would say; it is not the repetition of the same; it’s a repetition through practice that is always going to be different. You might think it is the same, you might say it is the same, but it is not the same. And if you are interested in doing it, that’s what’s going to keep it alive. And if other people find it interesting and continue

to do it, then it is going to have a future. But there is no point of saving something when there is no interest by the community in doing that practice. Let me just give a very flat-footed example. See for example language. If you have a community of people who speak a language and they are interested in speaking it, for whatever reason that language will survive, it will live, it will change because all languages change... that is a function, or, if you want, a characteristic of its being alive. But if nobody speaks that language anymore, then what is the political or aesthetic or pedagogical reason to keep it alive. You can. Think of Hebrew. Hebrew was a dead language. Hebrew was a language that was taken up to be used as the official language of the state of Israel. A lot of people put time and energy into it, there was a lot of political commitment to make it happen, and they did it. But that was a political project and a very conscious project. But see for examples the last speakers of a certain language died out, and nobody wants to speak that language because they are speaking their own languages; there is a political project for it; how are you gonna keep it alive? What's the community of practice? So if there is no community of practice then practices died out. And that's how it is. So, instead of saying "we are going to keep it alive", why not accept that we have to support other communities of practice. If we want a practice to remain alive, then it's those communities that need to be supported, rather than the practices. So I guess that's where my emphasis is on how we can think about performances into the future. Performances are going to change and, as I said, when we think that they can't change that's when we kill them; when we think that we have to save them somehow, and I just don't think that it is the case. There are lives where the future comes through a very different avenue than through preservation.

CC: Thanks! There is another basic aspect which is about the intersection between theory and practice in the field of Performance Studies. This was one of the aims at the very beginning when the department here at NYU was founded in the early 80s. It seems like the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics is one of those realities which is actually able to put together theory and practice. My question is about the Hemispheric Institute, but it is also about the field in general. Do you think that the field of Performance Studies still wants to point out this relation between theory and practice, or it is more about academic things?

DT: I would say that Performance Studies in general is very interested in theory and practice together, although it is probably true that most people in the universities are theorists and not practitioners. I think that that's one of the things happening because academic institutions like Performance Studies, are part of a University, because they are institutionalized to a certain degree. I do not think that Performance Studies is completely institutionalized at NYU for example. I think we always have a door open because so many of our students are artists. So the connections with the Arts and especially the Arts in New York City are very strong, so I think that we do have that connection. But I think that one of the dangers that we have in Performance Studies and in any academic field is that we spend a lot of time just talking to ourselves, talking to other scholars. I think that the Hemispheric Institute has tried very hard to keep the conversation always among scholars, artists and activists. Performance means a very different thing to each of these groups, and that for me keeps the conversation alive. It is also true that those are not the only fields which are interested in performance. If you think about psychology for example, that is interested in behavior, behavior of all practices. If you think about neurology, it is interested in

the way that the brain reacts as seen behavior and intrigues other behaviors and so forth. If you think about the ways lawyers perform, or there is so much of Western medicine that is performance of power, then you can say “but performance is actually valid to all these different fields”, and I think that that is true. I think that the potential for the growth of performance is that in every single one of these fields, it’s very important to think about behaviors, which has been our area of expertise. How do we think about behaviors? So that’s going to be more and more recognized widely for all of these different areas. So there is a trans-disciplinary dimension to Performance Studies, that I think it is not the case for a lot of the other departments that are very much a product of a kind of nineteenth-century way of thinking about knowledge production. The fact that this is such a late comer to the academic field makes it potentially a trans- or post-disciplinary structure in a way that for me is very promising and that avoids this compartilization. Does it make sense?

CC: Yes, it does. It makes me think about another essay that Richard Schechner wrote many years ago, and that was about the shift from the Drama department at NYU to Performance Studies. He was talking about the fact that a lot of students in Theatre Studies could not have been able to get specific jobs because the world has been changing and so Performance Studies would have given them the chance to better understand the world the way it is becoming. So, in relation to what you have just said, I am thinking about the way Performance Studies people can use the kind of knowledge that they get through this programme in those fields that you were mentioning, like for instance in a medical environment. So which one might be the kind of contribution that Performance Studies people can give to these specific fields, in terms of something which is not academic?

DT: So, what could be an application? Well, there is a lot. If you think for example the way that cultural anthropology has thought about healing rituals. When people think about healing rituals, they think about Shamanism, and they think about Susto or these different forms of thinking about health or health issues cross-culturally. But Western medicine is as much a performance of power as the healing rituals or the Shamans. Sometimes people see somebody in a white coat with a stethoscope and all of their symptoms go away, like magically. I have seen a lot of that. So I think in a way of advising patients, and advising health care providers, in how to have a better conversation, where some of their performance of power gets minimized might be one way that it helps. Then there are some practical and horrible ways in which it helps; if you think about the ways in which for example during the wars they ask people who are trained in not Performance Studies I hope, as far as I know, but let's say for example Anthropology, to talk about the behaviors and practices of the people that the armies are invading. What cultural practice should one avoid if one does not want to offend another population, or what practice should one explicitly use to offend and to hurt and to humiliate. So those are all the ways that practices that we have learnt to think about are used for military purposes that do not have any application within our own field, but they become very very valuable. I would say that another field where it could have for me a very negative repercussion is advertising. How do people behave? Well, people in advertising know how people behave. In Performance Studies, and in Theatre Studies too, we keep saying we do not know exactly how to think about the audience, or who the audience is. But advertising knows exactly who the audience is; they know exactly how to judge that. So, do we take that role? How do we think about the audiences? There is

a lot of ways that I think Performance Studies has to be very very attentive to what's happening in advertising or in the military field or increasingly in the digital world, to think about how performance helps us to make sense of what's going on, and also to think about the ways of performance and the things that we do in Performance Studies become coopted to help the military or the commercial or business kinds of giants take advantage of consumers behaviors. So I think it's actually a really really important form of knowledge production, and one that we have to take seriously, thinking across practices at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

CC: So, maybe somebody who is not familiar with Performance Studies at all, could ask "why not psychology, why not Anthropology, why not another discipline?" Is Performance Studies able to go through all of these?

DT: Not exactly! And certainly not without the cost, in the sense that we can't understand behaviors anywhere, at all times, regardless a context, no! But because we are the one post-discipline that actually focuses on behaviors, I think that we have a training that will allow us to make those steps to think about how other powers, whether it is institutional, disciplinary, military, commercial or so forth are also using behavior and thinking about behavior. So I think that if we are only studying psychology, if that is our field, I think we could understand certain elements of psychology very clearly in the sense of "why do people behave the way they do", and if you want them to change the behaviors, what are the practices or steps that as a psychologist you take to get them to change their behaviors. That is clear. We understand what that project is. But I think that we look at the behaviors and we look at the behavior

and not simple of that person, whose behavior we are trying to change, but also at the behavior of the therapist, the behavior of the all group, the way that that gets structured, the assumptions that get made about behaviors, like “what would be proper behavior”... I remember I was at a simulation center recently where they are trying to help people who come back from Iraq for example, who are traumatized because, for example, they thought that person hidden over there was an enemy, and they killed them, and then they realized that they had killed five of six children. So they try to get them to feel ok. So, “how do you feel ok about that?” Is it just that we are gonna deal with the symptom, which is their goal, or we are we gonna deal with the politics, or are we gonna deal with the ethics, or are we gonna deal with all of the other ramifications? I think that Performance Studies has a much broader lens. I think that I, as a Performance Studies person, could look at the much broader ramifications and say: “Ok, yes! You don’t want this individual deal with his trauma, but is the only aim of this to reduce trauma, like in the drones or in the remote killers of the predators.” You have killed a lot of people, and you don’t feel a bit bad about it because you got all this technology of distancing, but maybe that technology of distancing is not a good thing. Maybe it is good for the individual because it does not get traumatized, but is it good for the way that we want to interact in conflict in this world? So I think that Performance Studies allows us a much broader field to be able to ask all sorts of questions that these disciplines that are narrowly defining maybe do not ask themselves. So that’s what I would say is the advantage of having this kind of post-disciplinary lens that allows you to look at all certain different kinds of behaviors that are not limited to the particular disciplines.

CC: Thanks! There are different ways we can think about performance. For instance when Richard Schechner talks about performance, he talks about performance in terms of “twice behaved behavior”, so it is something that it is never for the first time, and then we face the fact that performance is something which is about ephemerality, something that we cannot really save. So how can we match these two things? It is never for the first time and at the same time it is something that we cannot really save.

DT: I would say that I agree with Richard Schechner completely. Performance is never for the first time, which means that performance is by definition conventional. Performance or embodied practice takes place within a series of conventions and codes, and that’s what makes it understandable to somebody else, what makes us able to practice it, and what makes it have sense over time. So let me just give you one example. If we think about a classroom situation or a seminar situation as a performance, you have a professor, the professor sits at the head of the table or stands at the head of the class, the students know where to seat, the students know what to talk, the students understand the expectations, the professor understand the expectations, we know who has supposed to read what, or prepared what for that class, we know how long the class lasts, everybody knows how to behave, what the expected behaviors are within that class. Let’s say that that is a little performance. You’ll never going to have that particular class again. So what happened in that exact class is ephemeral to the degree that that particular constitution is that one time. People can take notes, there can be a record of it, there can be a video of it, there can be whatever, but the special configuration that takes place in that class happens only once. But when you think about the way the performance is sustained over time, it is through these conventions.

The seminars are going take place in every country, in every university again and again and again and again. It is an established form of communication. So those are never for the first time. It's only because they are established that we know how we behave there. It is always going to be a mix of the codes and the conventions and that particular thing that happens this one time within that. So do we save this one time within that? We save it through memory perhaps, we save it by inspiring to have something special happening in the next class. We might save a record of it by our notes, by our video, by whatever, but that moment is gone. So you have that combination, that's how it works. You have the spark, you have the thing that happened that one time only, but it happens within a structure, that is repeatable and reproducible.

CC: So, as Marvin Carlson would say, there is something that is about awareness in what you do every time you perform. It might be a matter of being aware...

DT: I am not sure... I am not sure if consciousness is necessarily a part of it. If you think about performance as this particular conventional thing, then yes. It's a football game, it's a mass, it's a class situation, it's a theatre performance. In that case there is a certain awareness to it, but then if you think about coded behaviors, conventional behaviors, like gender performances, or the performances of racial or national identity or something like that, are we aware of it? Yes and no, right? Well, sometimes we are aware of it; very often we are not aware of it, and we are doing it anyway. So I am not sure to what degree awareness defines this tension that you described between the ephemerality and the conventional 'ongoingness' of it, the repeatability of it. I think that that would vary.

CC: Thanks!

DT: You are welcome! Thank you!

Conclusioni

Sono molti gli argomenti affrontati in questa intervista a Diana Taylor che ha avuto luogo presso l'Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics nell'Agosto del 2012. Tutti ruotano intorno ad alcune delle questioni cruciali prese in esame nelle pagine e nei diversi capitoli di questa dissertazione. In primo luogo Diana Taylor si sofferma sul carattere innovativo dei Performance Studies, sul loro avere come oggetto di studio un oggetto d'analisi che non è mai dato a priori, ma che, invece, va di volta in volta creato e circoscritto. In questo senso sottolinea l'efficacia metodologica dei Performance Studies nel proporsi come una lente analitica volta ad indagare varie forme di comportamento e di pratiche culturali "incorporate", intese come forme di trasmissione di significato. In un secondo momento, volgendo l'attenzione al lavoro fatto con il suo Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, evidenzia il valore politico intrinseco all'interno delle espressioni performative e prende in esame tanto l'importante connessione tra teoria e pratica nell'ambito dei Performance Studies, quanto la dimensione transdisciplinare o postdisciplinare che li caratterizza. Infine, riflettendo sull'ontologia della performance, afferma che, risultando da un mix di codici e di convenzioni, la performance non si "verifica" mai per la prima volta, e che ogni tentativo volto a "salvarla" o "conservarla" è destinato a fallire.

Il primo elemento di riflessione significativo messo in luce da Diana Taylor consiste proprio nell'evidenziare come i Performance Studies, a differenza delle altre discipline, non abbiano un oggetto di studio predeterminato. Se cioè ad esempio per i Film Studies l'oggetto di studio è il cinema e per i Literature Studies l'oggetto è il testo scritto, gli studiosi di performance invece devono di volta in volta definire il proprio oggetto d'analisi, circoscriverlo a livello spaziale e temporale, e quindi interamente "crearlo" in un certo senso. Infatti, visto che qualunque forma di comportamento può essere studiato "come performance", le possibilità analitiche diventano infinite e non preventivamente circoscrivibili. In tal senso i Performance Studies sono concepiti come una lente analitica attraverso cui indagare diverse forme di comportamento che non sono state "formalizzate" e quindi "pensate in quanto aventi una loro forma". Il potenziale dei Performance Studies risiede dunque nel definire e creare il proprio oggetto d'indagine, analizzando i comportamenti o le pratiche incorporate che costituiscono una forma di trasmissione di significato e di conoscenza.

Il lavoro portato avanti dalla Taylor con il suo Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics s'inscrive all'insegna di tali presupposti e s'incentra sulla dimensione politica della componente performativa. Ampliando la sfera analitica dei Performance Studies ad un raggio emisferico, la Taylor ha evidenziato come le pratiche incorporate siano una via fondamentale di trasmissione della conoscenza soprattutto in un contesto come quello delle "Americhe" dove una vasta componente della popolazione è semi-letterata. In queste situazioni diventa evidente come la performance non abbia necessariamente un valore estetico, ma piuttosto un fine strumentale, visto che è attraverso le pratiche incorporate e le annesse convenzioni che intere comunità trasmettono di generazione in generazione il loro sapere produttivo. In

tale senso diventa più immediato comprendere il valore politico attribuito alla performance. Infatti se da una parte le pratiche incorporate sono riconosciute come mezzi di trasmissione del sapere, dall'altra le culture occidentali hanno sempre privilegiato le forme "scritte" di trasmissione del sapere, siano esse testi, documenti o registrazioni; per dirla in termini tayloriani, l'archivio ha storicamente avuto la meglio sul repertorio, la materialità sull'efemerità. Le pratiche culturali delle popolazioni colonizzate, come ad esempio nel caso degli indigeni d'America, sono state spazzate via e con esse il sapere di cui per secoli si erano fatte portatrici. Negli ultimi anni alcune istituzioni, come ad esempio la Corte di Giustizia canadese e l'UNESCO, hanno riconosciuto il valore politico di tali pratiche culturali "incorporate" e, in seguito a ciò, parecchi tentativi sono adesso condotti al fine di salvaguardare tale aspetto a fronte del sovrastante sistema di legittimazione della "logica del potere dell'archivio".

Un successivo importante punto toccato nell'arco della conversazione riguarda il legame esistente tra teoria e pratica nell'ambito dei Performance Studies. Questo legame, che pur dovrebbe essere essenziale in materia di studi della performance, viene spesso tralasciato, e questo, a dire della Taylor, è imputabile al tasso di istituzionalizzazione universitario che impone il prevalere della teoria sulla pratica. Anche come risposta a queste forme di "soliloqui accademici", l'Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics propone un costante dialogo tra accademici, artisti e attivisti, al fine di incrementare le possibilità degli studi performativi. Un concetto che va tenuto a mente però quando si parla di Performance Studies è che le performances prese in esame vanno sempre ben al di là della sola dimensione artistica, comprendendo invece le più svariate espressioni comportamentali. Questo elemento consente ai Performance Studies di

essere, per natura, molto più transdisciplinari o postdisciplinari di tanti altri dipartimenti che invece, al contrario, riflettono una suddivisione della produzione del sapere di struttura novecentesca. Per questa ragione gli studi di performance risultano particolarmente utili nella comprensione di comportamenti relativi ad ambiti e contesti molto diversi: dall'arte alla medicina e alla giurisprudenza, dalla pubblicità alle pratiche militari e a quelle religiose.

In ultima battuta la Taylor si sofferma su alcuni margini ontologici relativi al concetto di performance e considera le "pratiche incorporate" come una serie di convenzioni e di codici che si ripetono nel tempo, ma ogni volta in maniera unica e irripetibile a seconda del contesto specifico. Quindi, mentre la struttura di tali pratiche è riproducibile, ed anzi è esattamente quella a permetterne la riproducibilità, ogni singola pratica performativa rimane però un evento unico e irripetibile nella sua specificità. Ed è esattamente per tale ragione che qualunque tentativo volto a tentare di "conservare" tali pratiche non soltanto risulta un fallimento, ma determina la morte di quelle stesse pratiche, ingabbiandole in una impossibile e rigida staticità che non ne consente una riproducibilità differenziata. Per la Taylor infatti risulta impossibile "salvare" la performance trasformandola in qualcosa che non lo sia, come ad esempio un copione o un video. L'unico modo attraverso cui garantirle un futuro è "perpetuarla", "ripeterla", senza però mai pretendere che quella "ripetizione" sia uguale a se stessa, ma accettando che si tratta invece di una ripetizione attraverso la pratica che sarà, ogni volta, differente. Il cambiamento nella ripetizione delle pratiche è insomma quella circostanza del tutto naturale che ne permette la sopravvivenza e la riproduzione; per la Taylor infatti "esistono delle vite dove il futuro giunge attraverso una strada molto differente da quella del preservazione".

An Interview with André Lepecki

New York City, May 2012, New York University

CC: I was wondering if we can talk a little bit about you, your academic and professional interests and the kind of work and research you are interested in.

AL: I am a Professor in Performance Studies. I came to New York in 1993 to do my doctoral studies here at NYU. I was coming from Portugal where I grew up, and in Portugal I had undergraduate degree in Cultural Anthropology, and after that for three years I was what they call Junior Researcher in something called Center for Sociological Studies, at the University of Lisbon, where I was doing research related to the history of smells in medical literature in the XVIII century in Portugal. So I was working at the time more in competitive psychology actually, in ethology, animal behavior... that kind of stuff. But in the late 80s my friends were all dancers and musicians, by chance, and because of my work in Anthropology and non-verbal communication we had conversations, and then I started helping them in productions. In Portugal that was a very big moment because my generation is the first that achieves a kind of young adulthood in democracy, after the revolution 1975, and there is a big dance boom. So I was working with these people, I was writing for newspapers for a science supplement, and I had a weekly column on science. So I was writing and it was through this kind of articulation between anthropology, social sciences and dance that I kind of discover a field called Performance Studies. I was working closely as a *dramaturg* and I was working also as a dance critic, but I would have never thought that would be a field that would host all these kinds of things. So by chance in a conference in 1991 I think, in the

North of Portugal there was a conference on the body or something like that, and I met Dwight Conquergood who was chair in Performance Studies at the Northwestern at that time, and Santiago Novac, they both passed away. Santiago is a very important dance scholar; I was presenting this paper on Pina Bauch and Ethnography, actually Ethnography and Surrealism, and they both came to me and said: “There is something called Performance Studies”. So I first got invited to go to Northwestern. I got accepted there but I did not get all the grants, but I also felt it was a little bit too ethnographic at that time for what I was interested in. And then I learnt about the department here, and I came here to do Performance Studies. When I came here my project was to think about post-colonial – let’s say – forgotten in post-colonial in Portugal. It was about like how a kind of history of colonialism had been raised immediately after the revolution, and a kind of new identity for Portugal was built upon the notion of being a European country. So I arrived with kind of desire to write the dissertation. I came to work with an anthropologist that was here at that time at Performance Studies, Michael Taussing. Michael had left for Columbia the semester I arrived, but then I met Peggy Phelan, who was here. And the year after I arrived, José Muñoz was hired as an assistant professor. Encountering Peggy and José made a huge shift for me in thinking about my work and the kind of scholarship I was thinking about, because I had educated myself in anthropology and dance, so in a way there this paradigm of Performance Studies being something between theatre and anthropology, to quote the title of Richard Schechner book. But then with Peggy, the year I arrived *Unmarked* came out, and the next year José arrived from Duke. And with both of them Performance Studies somehow (in many different ways... they don’t have the same scholarship) became something between philosophy and critical theory and performance art, as supposed between theatre and

anthropology. So a different kind of paradigm, and that's when it became very very interesting, because I did not have any training in critical theory of philosophy, except from the peripheral things that one needs to read to do cultural anthropology. Also performance art was quite new. I had been working with dance theatre, with Mark Stuart and other choreographers in Europe, with Veramentero in Portugal and other people, but not performance art; it was something I did not know. So I think at that moment my work re-calibrated itself, shifted, and the question that Peggy Phelan and also other scholars in Performance Studies ask, which is the political ontology of performance, became very very important for me. So that also inflected more my doctoral work, my dissertation which was about, again, postcolonial mismanagement of memory in Portugal, but now in relation to choreography and in particular in dialogue with certain critical theory. And then, after much back and forth, I worked as a curator, independent writer, I was doing projects mostly in Europe. And then the opportunity, there was a job opened in Performance Studies for a dance scholar, to which I applied and I became a professor here, and been teaching here for ten years. And I feel like during that period my interest in thinking about dance from a performance studies perspective was to emphasize two things. One was to emphasize the articulation between philosophy and contemporary dance, and the other one was to think about "what does it mean to create methodologies, epistemologies and modes of approaching contemporary dance that dance studies produced at this very moment through choreographers, and how to implement a kind of critical, theoretical apparatus to address that, because this has to do with dance studies stuff, dance studies the way I met it here". I was a student of Mark Franco, who was a professor of dance history and dance theory at Santa Cruz. He was super important; he had a big influence on me. He was teaching here as a

guest, a visiting professor in Performance Studies, and I was also having dance classes with Marcia Siegel, who was one of the founders of the so-called “*New York Dance Criticism School*”. So there are very different approaches and with Mark it is very clear that it is about critical theory, it is about the kind of Marxian cloud of thinking about a dance, but inflected with the historical work that he does, mostly Baroque dance, but then around the formation of what we call Modern Dance, the 20s, 30s, 40s. So I had this historical model and then there was dance anthropology, and then the contemporary was done through criticism or dance reviews. I found that very very bizarre; there was a big vacuum at least in the 90s of how to create what Randy Martin called “critical dance theory”. That’s the project that I have been developing here in Performance Studies, particularly with a specific philosophical constellation that I like, which a kind of Deleuze cloud, which means Agamben, Foucault, a little bit of Walter Benjamin once in a while, and a big big conversation with certain post-colonial theory... these are the fields that speak mostly to the kind of also political proposition in dance that I like to write about. That is my work and there few books that came out of that, which is “*Of the Presence of the Body*”, which is an anthology that came out in 2004, and there the idea was really to think about this kind of critic of presence in dance studies, coming from Derrida and that kind of stuff. And then the anthology was “*Planes of Composition*”, that came out of a series that I did for TDR called “*Dance Composes Philosophy Composes Dance*”, which is the solution of this big amalgamation of dance and philosophy, which is actually quite natural for coreographers, but for some reasons academics or the public at large find it bizarre. But it has been always a very fruitful combination or dialogue. And then “*Exhausting Dance*”, where we have both the desire to find this articulation between performance art and coreography, and to

think about also this articulation between choreography and visual art and philosophy and political issues as well. I think that after "*Exhausting Dance*" I spent three years working intensely in four curatorial projects. One was a smallish festival called "*Nomadic New York*" for Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, the other one was a big project of an authorized re-doing of Allan Kaprow's "*18 Happenings in Six Parts*", in 2006. And then in 2008-2009 to be the chief curator/director of this performing arts festival *Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin*, called IN TRANSIT. And those are mega-projects, so for a while I was totally involved in this kind of curatorial projects. For me it is always very informative to have not only a spectatorial relationship to art, but also to make it. And I was lucky to have these invitations. And then another project of building a dance archive for an exhibition in a gallery... And so, after that, after these curatorial big four years, what happened was that was going on in terms of writing in "*Exhausting Dance*" now became two separated projects; so I am working on a book right now which is a kind of archeology of the relationship between sculpture and dance since the 50s, and it's really about the relationship between visual arts and dance, not so much dance and visual arts. Why is that visual artists all of the sudden find in dance like a mode of articulation for visuality. So that's one thing, and it's already somewhere in "*Exhausting Dance*", but not completely. And the other think is this kind of the politics of performance, or the coreopolitics of dance, if you want, which is becoming another book called "*Grounds of Performance*".

CC: Thanks! You have been touching many topics that anticipate some of the questions I have for you, so I will be trying to navigate your answer to highlight certain elements... You have been here both as a student and now as professor, so you have been witnessing different phases of the

department. I was just wondering if you can tell me a little bit about the developments that you have been living here. So how this department has changed since you got here until now, so which is the current identity of the department now in relation to the way it used to be.

AL: It is huge! Because I have been here for almost twenty years. I arrived in August in August 1993. It's crazy, right? First of all, institutionally and architecturally it did not look this way. It was more shabby, falling apart. It's almost a different planet. The economy was different. There were many more PhD students entering every year, but also there were not fundings for the PhD students... a very very different place. There is this artist whose work I like. He is one of the co-founders of the Critical Art Ensemble; his name is Ricardo Dominguez, and he has this sentence. I just like the sentence. It said: "Every movement has three moments: the epic moment, the moment of signature and the moment of the corps... whatever movement... artistic movement, philosophical movement, etc. So, the epic one is the one in which people get together and they just make something, and that was like the beginning, the 80s in Performance Studies, the creation of the department, the formation of the department, getting people together, building something. And then I feel like I arrived here towards the very end of that epic moment, and falling to the moment of signature; and the moment of signature is the moment of economy; it's the moment in which something called Performance Studies, which existed here and at North Western, started to circulate globally and erupted everywhere... everywhere, like departments of Performance Studies all over the world, literally. And that's the 90s: that's from '95 to 2005... that's the moment when the image of signature becomes so consolidated. So this is what I lived here. What I remember being different is that there was an idea... I guess... but this is also for

political reasons, the United States have changed, like much more foreign students, we had Africanists in the faculty [...] there was a lot of students coming from all sort of places... Sub-Saharan Africa, coming to do their PhD work here, their Master work here. The Master was longer: it was two years. There was an emphasis on post-colonial theory. So it was a quite different landscape. And then through the moment of signature I think there is a kind of distillation of Performance Studies. There is also like the desire to form a project of defining the discipline more and more. And maybe now this kind of moment in which NYU as a corporation becomes a kind of new-liberal global enterprise, maybe entering the phase of the corps, which on the other hand is the most powerful one, because it escapes economy again. So the hope is that at this point there is a possibility of creating a different kind of articulation of Performance Studies in which it does not matter anymore to affirm it as a discipline. There is a moment when it is important, so that University boards and departments and colleagues all over the world recognize that there is such a field, and it is ok to have departments with that name and, hire faculty for these positions, develop this kind of research... it is super important. Now we have to forget again (this is my thing). Just do what we need to do. But I am going away from your question... the differences? I think one of the biggest differences... I feel there is more emphasis on critical theory, and I think that just because of geopolitical issues, after 9/1, in a way and perhaps unfortunately, with the exception of the Hemispheric Institute, American Studies is dominating... it used to be much less like that; it was more global.

CC: Thank you! You were saying that now Performance Studies does not need to be explained anymore. It is not like twenty years ago. But there

are still some places where Performance Studies does not exist as an academic field. How would you describe Performance Studies there?

AL: Well... I am not so sure if it is a field. So, in order to define it, you have to go away from ontology, and instead of saying “what it is” you have to say “what it does”... and that’s already a Performance Studies approach, right? So this emphasis on performativity. So what is it that Performance Studies I think does to the academia at large? I think there are two major modes of approaching Performance Studies. One through thinking about performance of everyday life, meaning looking at behavior of social groups, communities, political formations as performance, and try to identify methods that could address politics or institutional formations, away from the usual discourses that we tend to attach to them. So this would be one way of thinking about it, and that’s not necessarily what I do. I leave this to my colleagues. What I do is to look at art, and particularly contemporary art, and try to see how can we formulate discourses and critical tools to address artistic practices away from discourses that already assign to them a specific image and identity. So, let’s say, if you are thinking about dance, for instance, if you think about dance in terms of its identity, you would say “dance it’s about movement, there for whatever is relevant, you look at dance to be some kind of descriptive, photological instrument , so that through my ‘movement analysis’ I can then say or explain this art object”. I think that Performance Studies breaks down this kind of methodologies that are already embedded with specific apparatus of perception in critical analysis and to say that dance does much more, for instance to move. So perhaps there are ways in which they are there for I can develop different critical mechanisms to enrich the reading of that particular discipline. So, for instance, dance doesn’t move, it stays still, dance produces books,

dance produces films, dance produces photography, dance produces discourse. So I feel that what Performance Studies does is to allow possibility to break down this kind of rigid, preconceived disciplinary boxes, that on one way fixate the art-work and fixate the scholar who is gonna analyze that art-work. So for me it's not a field, but it's a system of circulating ideas that have to be always always always into with the processes of formation that it tries to address or read or to write about. I refuse to say that Performance Studies is the field that studies performance in everyday life, and looks at models... and bla bla bla... and that's what I meant by the phases of the corps. I think right now we can escape the kind of the disciplines of the signature... you know... this is what we do... this is who we are... we are not theatre studies, we are different from theatre studies because we look at the performative aspects of drama, for instance, as supposed just to literature; but that seems to be not productive. I am not sure if this answers your question...

CC: Yes, it does! Thank you! One of my attempts is trying to understand what a Performance Studies perspective can reveal which is new in terms of analyzing a specific object. And so, if we think about the object of Performance Studies, which is performance, and this is a tautological thing, then you might ask 'what is the difference when you use a Performance Studies perspective or a dance studies perspective if my object is dance'. You have just answered this question, but I was wondering if you could expand a little bit on it.

AL: ... but even thinking about perspectives... perspective is interesting because it is possible to build a prospectively correct representation with several vanishing points... that's the thing and I feel like Performance

Studies is able to or should aiming at creating representation, by saying that we can have multiple vanishing points in an image. It's always about parallaxes. I am moving, the thing is moving, so how to account for these endless mobilities of discourses and objects that we analyze. So the perspective in a way I think is a savage perspective. I think it's not by chance that it comes to be in the United States, because there is a slight necessity for a little bit of critical misbehavior, or a little bit of cracking hope in the well-behaved modalities of academic appliances of what is a definition of a field; the moment you define a field the field is gone, you have generalized space. So the question is more topographical.

CC: The last question is about the "ontology of performance" and what Peggy Phelan writes about it, which I find quite illuminating, as I think you do too. I was wondering how do you face the main features of performance, for instance its nature of disappearing, every time you deal with this object both as a curator and as a scholar...

AL: That's a huge question! But in short I would say that it's not only performance that disappears, it's not only dance that disappears. The question of disappearance is everywhere. Bill Viola in one of his books talks about videos and ephemeral art in the same terms. So for me, maybe because informed by a genealogy of dance history, one of the moments in which coreography comes into being is expressed in dance manuals from the late Sixteen century French dance manual, in which there is this kind of dialogue, in which one of the interlocutors of the dialogue talks to the dancing master and he says: "Dance disappears, it goes away, please write it down then on a book, so that in a future I can dance again, and I can learn these dances". So in dance studies at least there is a kind of melancholia associated to this disappearance. And the question is "how to

transform the effect of melancholia into a different kind of affect that is not one that freezes the object into this kind of desire to be turned into something that has already past. So I think more about potentials and virtualities. I think disappearance is just a wonderful way for reappearance, it's a conditional possibility for reappearing, and reappearing is always an invention, an event. It's always an activation of natality... the possibility of the course of an event is actually disappearance. So it is about changing the affect around this notion of disappearing and remembering that it persists... performance persists through memory, through corporeality, through remembering... and then the question of writing... my opinion is that every time you write you are off-time; so you are always writing about the past, the future, the present... writing is a different kind of thing.

Conclusioni

In questa intervista realizzata nel maggio del 2012 presso la New York University, André Lepecki offre una prospettiva unica sullo sviluppo dei Performance Studies alla stessa NYU. Essendo infatti l'unico attuale membro del dipartimento ad essere stato prima uno studente sia di master che di dottorato, e dopo un docente presso lo stesso dipartimento, Lepecki ha una visione di prima mano e plurisfaccettata sui tratti distintivi della tradizione newyorkese dei Performance Studies e sui cambiamenti che li hanno caratterizzati negli ultimi venti anni. Giunto infatti alla New York University agli inizi degli anni Novanta, con un bagaglio fatto essenzialmente di studi di antropologia e di danza, qui Lepecki ha incontrato la filosofia, la performing art e gli studi di "critical theory". Analizzando la storia dei Performance Studies alla NYU, Lepecki vi individua tre momenti o fasi salienti: il momento "epico", il momento "della firma", e quello ultimo "delle corporazioni".

Inoltre riconosce nelle linee attuali un maggiore focus sulla “critical theory”, ma anche sugli “American Studies”, che, ad eccezione del lavoro svolto da Diana Taylor col suo Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, lascia poco spazio all’apertura globale dei decenni trascorsi. A suo avviso oggi il dipartimento privilegia due filoni di studi principali: quello delle “everyday life performances” e quello della “performing art”. Infine, riflettendo sull’ontologia della performance, individua nel suo “disappearing” il ricco potenziale per le sue svariate forme di “reappearing”.

Quello di André Lepecki è l’esempio di un incontro forte tra una formazione europea, nel suo caso specifico portoghese, e la tradizione dei Performance Studies newyorkese agli inizi degli anni Novanta. Provenendo infatti da studi, ricerche ed esperienze pratiche condotte nell’ambito dell’antropologia culturale e della danza, Lepecki ha impattato la versione della NYU dei Performance Studies soprattutto attraverso le figure di Peggy Phelan e di José Muñoz. Questo ha significato per lui fondere i suoi interessi, soprattutto di matrice post-coloniale, con la performance art, la filosofia e la critical theory, vale a dire con le linee di ricerca che in quegli anni maggiormente connotavano il dipartimento, testimoniando un parziale slittamento dall’originario intreccio tra teatro e antropologia. In questo modo Lepecki ha deciso di focalizzarsi sulla “critical dance theory”, e sfruttando da una parte una certa teoria post-coloniale, e dall’altra una costellazione filosofica costituita da Deleuze, Agamben, Foucault, e Walter Benjamin, ha coltivato i suoi interessi relativi alle istanze politiche esistenti nella danza. Pensare quindi alla danza dalla prospettiva dei Performance Studies gli ha consentito di enfatizzare da una parte l’articolazione tra filosofia e danza contemporanea, e dall’altra la possibilità di creare un apparato critico e teorico tramite cui sviluppare metodologie,

epistemologie e nuovi modi di indagare la danza contemporanea. In tal senso, in relazione ai tradizionali studi sulla danza, i Performance Studies gli hanno consentito di andare oltre la rigidità di ambiti disciplinari precostituiti che cristallizzano l'opera d'arte e lo studioso che la analizza, e in questo modo gli hanno permesso di sviluppare meccanismi critici in grado di arricchire la lettura del suo oggetto di studio.

Prendendo poi in esame i cambiamenti dipartimentali che nell'arco dei suoi venti anni alla NYU ha avuto modo di vivere e testimoniare in prima persona, Lepecki vi individua tre fasi o momenti essenziali. Il primo è quello "epico", vale a dire il momento iniziale in cui un gruppo di persone si raduna per dar vita a qualcosa di nuovo, e questo, nel caso dei Performance Studies, si è verificato agli inizi degli anni Ottanta con la fondazione del dipartimento alla NYU. Il secondo momento è quello "della firma", che coincide con l'affermazione degli interessi economici. Nel decennio che va dal 1995 al 2005 dipartimenti di Performance Studies, sul modello di quello alla NYU e alla Northwestern, hanno cominciato a proliferare ovunque in giro per il mondo. Si tratta anche del momento in cui, mossi dal desiderio di definire in maniera sempre più chiara l'ambito disciplinare dei Performance Studies, si giunge ad una sorta di "distillazione" della disciplina stessa. Il terzo e attuale momento sarebbe invece quello "della corporazione", cioè la fase in cui i Performance Studies diventano una sorta di impresa globale neo-liberale, e non è più necessario che difendano il proprio stato di disciplina.

Da un punto di vista più prettamente tematico e contenutistico, il dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University appare oggi più incentrato sulla "critical theory" di quanto non lo fosse in passato. Al contempo, e su un versante più negativo, risulta avere

un'ottica e un'apertura meno globali di un tempo; infatti, con l'eccezione dell'Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics di Diana Taylor, e probabilmente anche a causa di ragioni geopolitiche connesse agli veneti dell'11 settembre, oggi la linea geografica privilegiata è quella degli American Studies.

Lepecki ribadisce la convinzione in base alla quale l'identità dei Performance Studies possa essere definita solo in relazione a ciò che fanno, a ciò di cui si occupano, e in tal senso individua due filoni principali nel dipartimento alla NYU. Il primo, volto ad occuparsi delle "everyday life performances", prende in esame il comportamento performativo di gruppi, comunità e formazioni politiche. La seconda linea invece si concentra in particolare sull'arte contemporanea e, nell'analizzare pratiche artistiche, cerca di formulare discorsi e strumenti critici altri rispetto a quelli che tradizionalmente assegnano a tali pratiche un'immagine ed una identità specifica.

Infine, dedicando una rapida ma efficace riflessione al concetto di "scomparsa" della materia performativa, André Lepecki propone un'accezione positiva del concetto di "desappearing". Considera infatti la "scomparsa" della materia performativa come una condizione essenziale e valida per l'attivazione di potenzialità e virtualità di successive "ricomparsa". Il concetto di base è che risulta del tutto inutile tentare melanconicamente di congelare un qualcosa che appartiene di già al passato; al contrario, invece, bisogna attivare le molteplici potenzialità di "ricomparsa" della dimensione performativa attraverso, ad esempio, gli strumenti offerti dalla memoria, dalla corporeità e dalle vie tramite cui diviene possibile "ricordare".

Marvin Carlson Interview

New York City, March 2012, CUNY

CC: I don't know if you remember but we had a very brief conversation at Princeton in December...

MC: Yes!

CC: ... and I was telling you that my research is mostly about an historical, theoretical and methodological analysis on some developments in American Performance Studies. So I am trying to understand the main characteristics and elements of this field as an academic discipline; its origin and its current identity...

MC: I think I asked you in Princeton: "Have you read the book *Professing Performance*"?

CC: Yeah!

MC: Yeah! Because that has a very good description of at least one person's view of how the discipline developed... that's a good start...

CC: Yes, she did a very good job...

MC: Yes! Well, she was a graduate student at the time. I think she was at NYU, so she had an inside view on this.

CC: Yes... and I have been talking to some people who actually come from NYU, like Rebecca Schneider, and this is a very useful thing because some of these scholars coming from the NYU tradition of

Performance Studies are now developing the field somewhere else, just like, Rebecca Schneider, who is currently the chair of the Theatre and Performance Studies department at Brown University...

(Marvin Carlson and I talk about some extra aspects of my research, fellowship and work in the US, e.g. professors I was working with and the kind of work done)

CC: Thinking about Performance Studies as discipline, I would start talking about its object, performance of course. In your book *“Performance: A Critical Introduction”*, you define performance as “all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself”. Richard Schechner uses the concept of “restored behavior” to describe performance. So I was wondering to which extent you feel close or distant from Schechner’s idea of performance?

MC: I think that my idea of performance is really quite close to Richard’s. The concept of “restored performance” is a very important one, it’s a key concept in Performance Studies. Though it’s looking at something psychological; it’s looking at something very similar to when I talk about activity that is consciously performed; that is, if you are aware of something as activity, that means you have a model in mind and that leads back to restored performance. If you say “I am not just washing the dishes, but I am performing the act of washing the dishes”, the very use of the word performance means that you already have an idea in your mind of what that action is, just as an action, and you are doing it again. It’s been done before; there is a model. So the concept of “restored performance” is another way around to express that same central concept.

It really goes back to consciousness. Performance involves a particular kind of consciousness and restoration is one way of talking about that.

CC: Keeping on talking about performance as restored behavior, when Schechner talks about performance relates to the notion of “restored behavior” and “twice behaved behavior”. So performance in the “restored behavior” sense means “never for the first time”

MC: Yes! That’s right!

CC: DO you think it is possible to think about “once behaved behavior”? And in this case I am more specifically thinking about some experimentations in theatre during the last century, like for instance Grotowski’s work with Afro-Caribbean chants, and the attempt to reach the idea of organicity and spontaneity, interiority, inner act and total act. So, according to you, is it possible to think about behavior as “once behaved behavior”?

MC: I think it is, though as soon as you introduce consciousness to it, you introduce something that leads you to performance, that is to say that a spontaneous act, if it is truly spontaneous, that is not consciously produced, but produced just out of an impulse, seems to me potentially to be not performance. You don’t perform a sneeze, to take an obvious example, you just sneeze. Now an actor can sneeze and so perform a sneeze, but he is consciously producing the sneeze. And it seems to me that anything that is spontaneously produced. If as you said, it is a part of a religious chant of whatever, I can imagine someone putting himself into a state where it’s like automatic writing, when something just flows out of your unconscious or pre-conscious, or whatever state that you don’t

control and you don't even know what it is that tells that it has to be done. But as soon as consciousness intervenes, as soon as you are aware of what you are doing, then potentially performance intervenes.

CC: Thank you! Another element is that, according to Richard Schechner, everything can be studied as performance. Do you agree on this? And so do you think that everything can be claimed as an object by Performance Studies?

MC: Well, everything is a big word! Can a chair be studied by Performance Studies? It's a thing. And I think the answer is no, that chair is not performing. Even if I put that chair on a stage is not performing. I perform when I go on stage. In semiotics studies we used to say that everything can be studied by semiotics. I think everything can be studied by semiotics, everything can be a sign, a chair can certainly be a sign, but I don't think Performance Studies can study everything. I think Performance Studies can study every kind of behavior, but it is connected with behavior, and it is a particular way of looking at behavior. I don't see that Performance Studies can look at objects like chairs in a way. Of course a chair can be part of a performance, but that's something else. So not everything, but I think every behavior, every human activity, and many people would say not even human activity, they would include certain animal behavior as capable of being a performance. But I think once you move beyond the realm of behavior, then I don't think that Performance Studies in the normal sense of the word really works. It's still a very broad field and it does arise the question "can people be performing even if they don't know they are performing?". And of course the answer is yes. As long as their activity has been analyzed with a performance consciousness. I started to say as an example politicians, but

of course politicians know that they are performing. Let's stick with Erving Goffman, of course a classic of modern Performance Studies, and "*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*", at the very basis of Goffman's theory is that people play roles; they might be not fully conscious of the fact that they are playing a role, but it is. When I am playing the role of a professor interviewee, I know I am playing a role, but that's because I am conscious of Performance Studies. I am wearing the proper costume, I am using the proper gestures, and so on and so forth. I know I am performing. Now somebody else might come in and say: "No, he is not performing. He's just been interviewed!" Do it depends on what grid you put on it, but the grid of Performance Studies can be out on any behavior, either by the being that is doing the behavior or by an analyst who is looking at the behavior, whether the person who doing it is conscious of being in performance or not.

CC: I feel quite close to what you have just said in terms of what Performance Studies can study or not, but then, as you know, Schechner in "*Performance Studies: an Introduction*" writes about the possibility of analyzing a map as performance, and there are classes about fetish in performance (thought by Barbara Browning). So I guess in these cases we can assume that even an object can be analyzed as a performance if you put that object in relation to something else...

MC: ... you see what you have just said... if you put an object, that is that the object is not performing. You are creating a performance environment. We talk about performing objects or a fetishized object, but any such object is converted into a performance by human agency. The object doesn't perform. The object can't perform because it is a restoring behavior. I mean that chair is not thinking: "Oh! I was in that same

position yesterday!” No, no! No, no! Now I can certainly take that chair and convert it into a performing object, but I create the performance. There is a wonderful scene at the beginning of “*Mnemonic*” by the *Theatre de Complicite*. At the beginning the director comes out and there is a chair on the stage and he says: “I want to introduce you to this chair! This chair has appeared in a number of *Complicite* productions; some of you might recognize it!” And I recognized it. I had seen it in other productions. And he goes on and says: “Actually this chair began its career as a domestic object. It was in my father house and I inherited it... and so on”. Well, that chair had now got layers and layers of performances, but it’s all imposed on the chair by human consciousness. The chair is not performing. Now I think you might argue that not everybody believes this, but a monkey can perform or a bear can perform, and I believe that, but not every performance theorist does. But I don’t believe that a chair can perform. I think you can take any object and use it in a performative way, but it’s not performing. We use the term performing objects, but we mean really something else... when you say “fetishized”, the object does not know it is a fetish. It’s some human being that has made it into a fetish, by their thought processes. And of course it’s not just a matter of agency; we left out an important part of Performance Studies. Performances consciously produce behavior for somebody to have a particular kind of effect. I mean I can sit here and perform being a professor as much as I want to in the quiet of this office, but in order for it to be what I think it was a full realized performance it has to be for somebody: you have to come and film me or watch me or whatever. Again you can take a chair, as they do in “*Mnemonic*”, and say: “Look! I want you to look at this chair; this is a chair that had this experience and this life and so on”. They see it as a performing object. We have a number of artists in the city that perform with objects. The

telling stories use objects like puppets, and they move them around. The objects do not perform.

CC: In the Harding and Rosenthal book *“The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner Broad Spectrum”*, you analyze how the development of Performance Studies has profoundly affected and enhanced the field of theatre studies, and you focus in three areas: internationalization, democratization and contextualization. Then you close your essay by saying that you did not want to try to even suggest the wide range of impact that modern Performance Studies has had on the intellectual map of the last twenty century. Actually my next questions are now going to that kind of direction. And so that first question in that direction is: “Do you think that by studying something as performance we can actually understand something new or something more about our object of analysis?” By saying this I mean, do you think the Performance Studies perspective can always reveal something new about its object of analysis, apart from what you said about theatre as object?

MC: I think certainly so! I always get a little nervous if someone says “always”, because usually you can find some cases when this is not true. But let me say “almost always”, usually applying performance analysis to any activity opens up different perspectives, though I think this is true of any fruitful theoretical construct; for instance applying feminist analysis to any human activity opens up perspectives that you did not have otherwise, or applying Marxist cultural materialism to any activity opens up aspects you might not otherwise notice; so this is true of Performance Studies. Let’s take an obvious example, and I am saying “obvious” because I think that everybody now realizes, but there might have been a time, 30 or 40 years ago, when this was not the case, and that is, as I

already mentioned, politicians. This is not theatre exactly, not traditional theatre, but we all recognize that politicians are performing. They are following the scripts, they are settling themselves inside theatrical settings with American flags in the background, and wearing the proper costumes and making the proper gestures... and acting a role. So, performance analysis exposes that, and it's not a great surprise with politicians, but can apply it to many other things. A certain amount of work has been done on sports for example. We have a student in the program who is doing a dissertation on professional wrestling as performance, and this not theatre obviously, but it certainly is a part of a cultural entertainment; you can go on with many other kinds of activities and apply performance analysis to them. I guess the only reason I say you can always apply and open up new perspectives is not so much a problem with performance analysis, but maybe a problem with the person who is doing it. It might be that performance analysis can be applied to some situations and it doesn't open anything up because the analyst is not clever or ingenious enough to see what prospects it opens. But I think any activity, any behavior potentially opens new perspectives, new layers of understanding of the behavior.

CC: Thanks! How would you define Performance Studies as an academic field?

MC: As an academic field.... Well, let me think about that a moment. Let me try... I haven't thought through that question. The study of the operations of repeated behavior in human culture. I say repeated rather than restored because I think people understand repeated better. That's a very vague and general definition. I think you have to say something about human culture, and that does exclude animal performance. But I

think it is true that more and more the field of animal performance is now becoming an important part of Performance Studies. But I think the focus is still on human behavior. I think you have to say behavior in culture, because it is a social cultural activity primarily. And I think you have to say something about the kind of behavior you are talking about, and repetition is probably the easiest and quickest way to talk about it. There are other ways you can talk about this. You can say the study of the operations of symbolic behavior in society; symbolic would be pointing to the fact that it isn't just random or spontaneous behavior, but it is behavior that is intended to create an effect. I don't say that it's behavior that is intended to communicate a message, because that leads to semiotics and I am not sure that you want to be that restrictive. But you could say something like the study of behavior and its effects in human society or something like that. It has to be very general, but it has to be talking about behavior, it has to be talking about social or control behavior. As I said, you always have to go back for the real essence of Performance Studies, you have to go back to behavior that is consciously produced for somebody. Unless you have that triangle I don't think you really quite have the core of Performance Studies. You can say, I suppose: "What if I am brushing my teeth in front of a mirror?" And I am aware that I do this in a certain way and I have done this before, and I always brush on the left side first and so on. Am I not for myself performing there? And I would say: "Yes! But you can only do that by doubling yourself. And the language gives you a way when you say: "I am performing this action for myself. You are the somebody you are performing for. You haven't destroyed the triangle. The consciousness has to be there.

CC: In terms of methodologies Performance Studies combines approaches from different disciplines, including performing arts, ethnography, anthropology, theatre studies, gender studies, feminist studies and much more. BKG says that “Performance Studies is more than the sum of its inclusions”. Do you think that this interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary approach is working well in the field of Performance Studies?

MC: Well, it is a very large field, though I don't think it is in anyway unusual among disciplinary fields, that is to say something that has happened in the last fifty years is that almost any field you can think of has become more interdisciplinary. It's expanding out... take the two most traditional well established and dominant fields in the humanities are English and History. Now everything you say about performance you can also say about English and History. If you study English now you might be studying all manner of things: feminist work, anthropology, sociology, ethnographics, and the same in History. All the fields have become more and more conscious of their interconnections and overlaps. And I think in that way, Performance Studies, although it is a new field, is no different from any field in the humanities, and for that matter in any field in the sciences either. You talk to a physicist and you find out the field now overlaps with everything. Talk with a chemist, certainly talk with a biologist. And obviously this is true with the social sciences. What is psychology now, or sociology, or anthropology? They have moved down, blended, connected with many many other fields. All fields are interdisciplinary now, or trans-disciplinary. So I think Performance Studies may seem special because it's relatively new, but I don't think it's at all special in that way. Those people who say “what is the essence of Performance Studies? What is that really makes Performance Studies a

discipline?” are asking an old-fashion question? It’s a high modernist question. We used to spend a lot of time at the end of the 19th century saying “what is the essence of theatre? What is the essence of music? What is the essence of painting?” We don’t talk about essence much anymore. And the reason is that we are not modernist anymore, we are post-modernist, and an important part of post-modernism is the recognition that all boundaries leak, that is a hopeless test to try to essentialize any discipline. Performance Studies is not at all unique in this. The most interesting works are on the boundaries; it’s checking where you overlap with other things, and things are mixing, because that is where the action is. You talk to a psychologist and he will say the same thing: “The important work is on the boundaries”. If you talk about identity and the construction of identity, which is a concern of maybe philosophers or maybe psychologists, they will say that all we are gonna look is the boundaries, this is where the interesting things are. But even they say not to define the boundaries, they just what are the negotiations going on. So I really cannot answer a question about what is Performance Studies essentially. There are certain questions that are very close to the way that Performance Studies works in terms of operations, and this is where we started today. But it is a very fluent open ending field, but my point is that doesn’t make it in any way special; it just makes it a very contemporary field.

CC: And so, in relation to this, do you think that Performance Studies scholars achieve their aim in terms of really understanding something different about what they study, and by using this post-disciplinary approach they are able to get something new?

MC: I know that at the beginning Performance Studies often talk about itself as being an inter-discipline or a post-discipline, but I did not believe that at the beginning and I don't believe that now. And I remember once saying to Richard Schechner: "OK! You say you are an anti-discipline or post-discipline. Come back to me in five years, and if Performance Studies has not established annual conferences, has not established professional journals with peer-reviews, has not established departmental disciplines with that name, then I will say that you are not a discipline!" You know the American joke about the duck? If it walks like a duck, and sounds like a duck and look like a duck, it's a duck! Similarly, if it acts like a discipline and sounds like a discipline and performs like a discipline, if we talk about performance, it's a discipline! Performance Studies is a discipline. There are departments of Performance Studies, there are conferences of Performance Studies, there is an International Organization of Performance Studies. How is that different from English or History? By a subject matter? No, no, no! The subject matter, as you pointed out, is shared with others. Is it interdisciplinary? No, no, no! That's a common point! Now, is Performance Studies in its totality putting a different grid on human activity? Yes, but in that sense it is not different from women studies. Is women studies a discipline? In some universities it is. But I think Performance Studies is not post-disciplinary, really. Do People use Performance Studies to accomplish things? Of course they do! Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider, Richard Schechner himself, Dwight Conquergood, Joseph Roach, I can go on and on... you know all these people. Of course they have illuminated, made a better understanding, opened new perspectives on a range of contemporary and historical subjects, using material they learnt out of Performance Studies. So, fine! People are also doing the same thing in Physics. Performance Studies

gives us a set of tools that we did not have before, just like semiotics did. And it's wonderful; I am glad I have them; I use them all the time. But it's not special. People we are in might feel it special. I don't consider myself a person who is in it. After all I am a professor of (to talk about categories) theatre, comparative literature and Middle Eastern studies. That's how I am defined by my Institution. I am not a professor of Performance Studies.

CC: ... but you know about performance very well...

MC: Well, I do! I have written a book on Performance Studies, which is one of the standard books in the field. I teach Performance Studies, but that's fine. I teach Shakespeare too, but I am not an English professor; I don't consider that in anyway makes me unfit to teach Shakespeare. I teach Brecht, but I am not a German professor, though I am a professor in comparative literature so I guess that would count.

CC: You have just said that you learnt some tools from Performance Studies. Which ones do you consider the most important to you in terms of new tools to use for your own studies?

MC: We can go back to the piece you quoted earlier of what do I think the major contributions of Performance Studies have been to the field of theatre, because I came out of the field of theatre, as Richard did. There are three things that need to be talked about. Let me start with the contextualization, because that's the biggest one. Theatre started really as a branch of English or speech and oratory, but theatre was missing something at the beginning, and this something was the stage history of these plays. Only texts were thought. This is when theatre professors

started asking questions about how has Hamlet been performed in different historical periods, how has he been conceived on stage? Or indeed even in the original production, how did Shakespeare stage it? What kind of a stage was he on? What was the costume like? What was the architecture like? Now these seem obvious questions, but people in English did not ask these questions. Now theatre began to ask these questions. These were new questions. When I started studying theatre and there was not such a thing as Performance Studies, what we studied was those questions, what we studied was plays and how they have been staged. And when I say plays I don't mean all plays; we studied what's called the canon. We studied Shakespeare and Molière and so on. We didn't study musical theatre or popular plays, vaudeville, burlesque, any of that kind of low class entertainment. The other thing to say is that we did not study anything around the theatre. We studied the text, the play, the theatre, but we did not study the society, that is... what is the theatre position? I wrote a whole book called "*Places of Performance*", just about things like "where is the theatre located in the city? What does that mean?" It is really a semiotic question, but it involves performance too. Richard Schechner has written very interestingly about the whole theatre event, that is not just a matter of the event starting when you enter the door, the event starts when you go to the theatre, what kind of neighborhood you are going through, what does that mean. And Performance Studies encourages the opening the doors of the theatre and the looking around; what's going on? What's the economics? What's the social background? What's the whole picture? So that's contextualization. The next most important thing, and that changes the way I look at theatre certainly, is that it has opened up the kind of things we study in theatre. We used to just study great plays. Now we study insignificant plays and even things that are not plays at all. Now we study

popular culture; theatre has never studied popular culture; we never studied circus. So Performance Studies has opened all that up. And finally in theatre we studied not only the great plays, but the European and the American great plays. If you go back and look at the history of World Theatre so called, from 1940-50, it would be Europe, the United States, Japan and India and maybe China: that was the world. Now Performance Studies has said that there is a world of performance that includes Africa, Latin America and so on and so forth. Theatre never used to study anything like Africa. Performance Studies says that it's not just plays. There is a great tradition of shadow puppet theatre, of storytelling theatre, of ritual performance. All of these are not plays, but Performance Studies has opened my eyes to the importance of that. Now maybe anthropologists might have been studying some of this material, but theatre people never did.

CC: So, maybe nobody or almost nobody in theatre studied some subjects, but maybe somebody else from another fields, maybe an anthropologist, studied the same object. So I am wondering in this case the difference is again the Performance Studies perspective... because otherwise I would say why don't we look at the work done by an anthropologist?

MC: We do, but each grid, each interpretive theory that you put on a material shows you different things about it. People have been writing about Shakespeare for hundreds of years, and then the feminists came along and look at the same plays and found totally different things in them. Or the Marxists, or the Freudians. *Hamlet* means something very different from a Freudian point of view. So, yes, we can and we do go through anthropological reports on let's say ritual performances in Africa,

and they tell us things, but they don't tell us everything and we ask other questions that tell us other things.

CC: Thanks! Another element of Performance Studies should be, according to Richard Schechner, the relationship between theory and practice, between studying performance and doing performance. Do you think that this element exists in the field or do you think that Performance Studies is more about a theoretical investigation?

MC: I think that as it has been developing it is more about a theoretical investigation. There was a great deal of interest in the early days of Performance Studies in introducing a performance element into the research itself. Not just a performance consciousness, but an actual performative element of doing performance as you were reporting on performance. And I remember seeing at conferences a number of attempts of people to perform... I mean everybody performs... but not performing in a traditional way of giving a paper, they would dance a paper or something like that. You still occasionally see that. Susan Foster, who is a great dance scholar, is an example. I have seen and greatly admired a number of presentations she has given at academic conferences. You remember her presentation at Princeton, you were there too... that is a good example. Then she was really performing a research project, and research and performance are really part of the same thing. That does not happen very often unfortunately, partly because there are not so many people as talented in performing as Susan is. Most of the work done in Performance Studies is academic, or academic based; it's mostly published or given at an academic conference, and really it is not, except for the subject matter, phenomenologically different from English presentations. I think you have a few exceptions, like Susan, and I guess

on the other side you have a few people who are primarily performers, or very occupied with working out theoretical material in their performances... performance material you might say. These are mostly off-off-Broadway people. There is no anybody in the mainstream. There is somebody like Richard Foreman who works back and forward between theory and performance. It is not entirely performance theory. There is quite an important movement in England that is I would say related to Performance Studies, and a lot of people who are involved in it are connected with Performance Studies, and that's *The Device Theory Movement*... their work is consciously created out of the experience by the company. It's close to what we used to call collective creation. And there is also, and again this is much more important in England than here, something which is called "applied theatre", and this also has some overlaps with Performance Studies. So there is a certain amount of connections in that way. But I think that if you actually just say things that are done in the name of Performance Studies, I would say about 90% of that, it might be inspired by performance, it might be writing about performance, but it is really academic. It is either academic papers or it is presentations of papers at conferences.

CC: Marco De Marinis, who is the advisor in Italy for my PhD, defines the New Theatrology as a discipline relying not on two levels, theory and practice, but on three levels, history, practice and then theory. He highlights the importance of historiographic knowledge and of the historical dimension as a necessary base for any strong theatrology, and talking about performance he writes: "I find that the Performance Studies relation to the historical dimension and the historiographical knowledge lacks clarity and direction, risking radical relativism and excessive subjectivity". So I was wondering what's your opinion on this.

MC: I agree with Marco, but that might partly be my theater history background. I mean I started as an historian; I think history is absolutely essential; that's why I like "*Professing Performance*", because it talks about the history of the discipline, how that has effected certain things in the discipline. Let's talk about Marco De Marinis for a minute. Because here again history is very important... Marco, as you know, started as one of the founding members of modern semiotics, though the Italian semioticians were particularly aware, as not everybody was, of the prove people who came before them, that is they were aware they were carrying on a certain historical projects that then informed some of the questions that they ask. One of Marco's greatest contributions from my point of view is that he was one of the very first semioticians to really look at reception, to really talk about the audience. That really changed semiotics; it made it a different discipline, and changed something of the history of the discipline. But semiotics always as a discipline was historically oriented. I remember people going back and talking about the medieval use of signs, and knowledge of signs, and the classic use of signs and knowledge of signs. Performance Studies has not done that. Certainly individuals, Richard obviously, who knows history very well, is aware of an historical progression, but I really think that the way that Performance Studies developed, it developed in America, it developed in a particular American consciousness, let's say a modernist or post-modernist consciousness, and part of that is a denial of history, or, let's say, a privileging of the new, the innovative, something that nobody has never thought of this before, we are going to revolutionary things. Around the early years of Performance Studies, in the 1967s, one of the effects of this was that particularly the NYU branch of Performance Studies worked very hard to be revolutionary and to say: "We are not

theatre. We are going to replace theatre. This is something new”. And this costed a lot of argumentation and a lot of deviousness between theatre people and performance studies people, most of which has gone away now. But there was a part of the rhetoric of Performance Studies that it didn't have a history; it was something that was new; it was asking questions that people had never asked before. That meant they have reinvented a lot of things, unnecessarily I think, but it might have been necessary in order to make a mark on the profession. Let's talk about the lack of direction; I think that's a feature of this as a post-modern discipline, that is from the very beginning, especially at NYU, not quite so much at Northwestern, but especially at NYU there was a pride in the fact that there was no core to this discipline; it has no settled at all boundaries, there was no reading list, there was no standard set of books that everybody read. The students at NYU, and I think this is less true now, but it has been true pretty steadily, had very different reactions to this lack of a center, and I would say that on the whole the better students responded well to, and said: “Ok! I'll put together my own thing; Performance Studies will make what I make it. I will create something to Richard, or something to Peggy Phelan, or Barbara... whoever is, but it will be mine. And everybody in Performance Studies creates their own way of working, their own discipline, if you like. On the whole weaker students just went crazy, because they kept saying: “Where do I find books I have to read?” And nobody can tell them. And it would be a different five books if you went to find different people. And the people at NYU were proud of that and I think justly so, I think that was in the nature of what they were doing. Again, that is a very post-modern idea. There was a cluster of someone overlapping ideas. Have you read Deleuze and Guattari? Well it is rhizomatic the way the department is organized, and that is very contemporary, that is: “This is now the way

that everybody is called to think. So, yes, it is true that there is no center, but it is also true this is a calculated thing. To say that there is no center does not mean there is no discipline. Again, it's a rhizomatic discipline. Now, does that mean that it is subjective? Well, yes! Everybody creates his own discipline. Peggy Phelan Performance Studies is quite different than Richard Schechner Performance Studies, which is quite different from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. And you can say: "What do they all have in common?" Well, not that they have a lot, and that's not the most important thing what they have in common. It was the most important thing in a traditional discipline, that is back in the 1950s; you could say: "Professor X, Professor Y and Professor Z all teach theater; they are very different in their specialties, but what do they have in common, and that's what we examine people on PhD exams. They all have read Aristotle, and Aristotle in theater is a kind of founding text; there is no founding text in Performance Studies; it's not Richard Schechner's book or one of his books, presumed everybody reads those, but that's not; it's not Victor Turner's book, well books but in particular his last book, and so on. Yes, it's subjective, yes it doesn't have a center. Yes, so what? I mean these are legitimate complains if you think that a program cannot be subjective or a program ought to have a center. Let me just say one more word about subjectivity, and that is, we now live in a very subjective world. Let me go completely outside of Performance Studies and just talk about Anthropology for a while. You have done some work in Anthropology I suppose. Well, what would you say it's the major change in Anthropology in the last 15-20 years? Well no, it's not fair from me to turn back the questions to you. Let me just say that to me the biggest change in Anthropology of the last 15-20 years is the recognition that you cannot be an objective observer. The discipline has become subjective. It used to be the model of the anthropologists... the European or American

outsiders... when anthropologists go into a culture they really try to go into the culture, they learn, of course they speak the language or try to, but try to in fact participate in the rituals and understand them. The Mayan anthropologist Tedlock became a shaman. He has to become a shaman; he is a shaman. He felt he could not really as an anthropologist understand what a shaman was unless he actually became a shaman. Well, 50-60 years ago, what you were taught Anthropology was “the worst you can do is go native; you have got to keep your objectivity”. I mean even in the humanities I learnt that, that is: always, whatever you are studying, be objective, never let your own feelings get into it. Now we know that it is impossible; we really know that’s impossible. Not everybody believes that yet, but basically the academy has accepted subjectivity and certainly theater and performance studies have. Look at the writing of someone like Jill Dolan or Peggy Phelan or Rebecca Schneider. It is all I, I, I, I; and they are not ashamed of that necessary. Do you know Rebecca’s new book about memory and battle fields has a finger on the cover? Think of how much of that book ... think about when she’s talking about picking up that finger... that is totally subjective and totally right about performance studies. I do think that Performance Studies is one of the main reasons that much more subjectivity has entered into all forms of writing. Women’s writing has been notoriously subjective; and that’s a part of what makes what it is. People write under their own experience and indeed have nothing else to write out of. So I agree with Marco De Marinis, except to me it is not a criticism, it is just what the discipline is.

Conclusioni

Questa lunga conversazione con Marvin Carlson ha avuto luogo nel marzo del 2012 presso la CUNY (City University of New York), dove

Carlson è professore di teatro, letteratura comparata e studi sul Medio-oriente. La sua vasta frequentazione della materia “performance” fa di lui una delle voci più autorevoli nel settore; al contempo però il suo non essere parte del mondo dei Performance Studies strictu sensu, gli consente anche di costituire una consapevole e informata “voce fuori dal coro”, in grado di fornire una prospettiva diversa da un’angolazione altra, ma pur sempre profondamente conscia ed esperta della materia in oggetto. Una prima consistente parte della conversazione risulta dunque incentrata su questioni relative alla definizione ontologica della “performance”, mentre una seconda parte è dedicata all’analisi dei Performance Studies, degli apporti che questa nuova disciplina ha generato nell’ambito dei Theatre Studies, e alla loro eventuale connotazione interdisciplinare o post-disciplinare, qui da Carlson contrastata. In un terzo momento l’attenzione si sofferma sull’intreccio tra teoria e pratica nell’ambito dei Performance Studies, un’intersezione agognata e cercata agli inizi negli anni Ottanta secondo Marvin Carlson, ma che non si è mai del tutto concretizzata. A proposito poi della spesso mancata importanza conferita alla componente storiografica tra gli studiosi di performance, Carlson ne fa una questione abbastanza comune nell’ambito dei Performance Studies.

Il primo importante capitolo qui affrontato da Carlson è quello relativo all’ontologia della performance. Nel suo “Performance: A Critical Introduction”, Marvin Carlson definisce la performance come “ogni tipo di attività svolta con consapevolezza”. In questa intervista chiarisce come tale definizione sia abbastanza simile a quella proposta da Richard Schechner quando parla della performance come di “comportamento restaurato”, evidenziando che nel momento in cui agiamo consapevolmente, di base perseguiamo un modello d’azione che abbiamo in mente, e questo riconduce all’ipotesi di “comportamento

restaurato". Per Carlson infatti il concetto di performance implica necessariamente un particolare tipo di consapevolezza, e la "restoration" è un modo per alludervi. In tal senso Carlson intravede la possibilità di un "once behaved behavior", e quindi di un atto totalmente spontaneo e non "restaurato", solo nella totale assenza di consapevolezza; trattandosi però in questo caso del risultato di un impulso, non se ne può parlare come di una performance. È esattamente per questa ragione che Carlson concepisce la performance come relativa esclusivamente al comportamento umano, e forse animale, ma solo nel caso in cui successive scoperte scientifiche siano in grado di dimostrarne una dimensione di consapevolezza comportamentale. Esclude dunque una dimensione di performatività intrinseca negli oggetti.

Passando poi a riflettere sulle caratteristiche dei Performance Studies come ambito disciplinare, Marvin Carlson li definisce come lo "studio delle operazioni di comportamento ripetuto o restaurato nella cultura umana". Sostiene che anche i PS, al pari di tutti gli altri "fruttuosi apparati teorici", aprano nuove prospettive analitiche, e siano conseguentemente in grado di mettere in luce nuovi aspetti relativi all'oggetto di studio preso in esame. Un discorso analogo, a suo avviso, può però essere fatto per qualunque altra ottica analitica, sia essa quella proposta dagli studi femministi o dal materialismo culturale Marxista, ad esempio. Gli aspetti innovativi dell'applicazione di un'ottica d'analisi performativa dipenderebbero dunque non tanto dalla lente adottata, ma dalla capacità dello studioso stesso. Non considera i Performance Studies particolarmente innovativi nel loro proporsi come un approccio interdisciplinare o postdisciplinare. Tutti gli ambiti disciplinari infatti, a suo dire, hanno assunto una tale connotazione nell'epoca post-moderna; tutte le discipline cioè per Carlson hanno abbandonato quella spinta "modernista" volta ad "essenzializzare" le discipline, ed hanno

compreso che le scoperte più significative si realizzano sempre ai margini, negli interstizi disciplinari. Carlson riconosce ampiamente che i Performance Studies forniscono degli strumenti nuovi d'analisi, e come messo in luce anche nel suo contributo al testo curato da Harding e Rosenthal, "The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner Broad Spectrum", questi strumenti sono tornati molto utili anche ai Theatre Studies, suo principale ambito di pertinenza. Dal suo punto di vista sono tre le aree principali in cui i Performance Studies hanno maggiormente influenzato i Theatre Studies: l'internazionalizzazione, la democratizzazione e la contestualizzazione. A questo ultimo punto Carlson dedica una più proficua attenzione, evidenziando come i Performance Studies abbiano incoraggiato un'apertura dei Theatre Studies verso ciò che sta attorno al teatro e che, appunto, ne costituisce il contesto. In questo modo si è iniziato ad analizzare la condizione economica del teatro, così come il background sociale ad esempio, al fine di fornirne una fotografia maggiormente contestualizzante. Inoltre si è ampliata la gamma di "tipologie teatrali" prese in esame. I Performance Studies hanno infatti spinto i Theatre Studies ad allargare la lente su forme di cultura popolare, sul circo, sul teatro delle ombre e delle marionette, così come sui story-telling e sui rituali performativi.

In ultima istanza Carlson riflette sull'eventuale rapporto tra teoria e pratica nell'ambito dei Performance Studies, sostenendo la prevalenza della dimensione teorica a discapito delle applicazioni pratiche. Ricorda che, soprattutto agli esordi di quest'ambito disciplinare, i tentativi di rimanere ancorati alla dimensione pratica del fare performativo si esplicavano anche nelle manifestazioni più prettamente accademiche. Un esempio è dato dal fatto che nelle conferenze si cercava di riportare il contenuto delle ricerche attraverso degli escamotages performativi. Una

studiosa come Susan Foster tuttora “danza il contenuto” dei suoi papers. La Foster però viene considerata da Marvin Carlson come una delle poche eccezioni rimaste in un contesto generale dove invece i contributi accademici vengono spesso presentati in maniera più tradizionale.

Questa voglia di assoluta innovazione, secondo Carlson, si ripercuote su diverse sfere metodologiche dei Performance Studies, non ultima la loro scarsa, seppur consapevole, attenzione verso un approfondimento di natura storiografica. Tale elemento, dal suo punto di vista, è riconducibile a quella retorica diffusa tra i Performance Studies scholars volta a concepire questo ambito di studi come qualcosa di esclusivamente nuovo ed innovativo, che non deve necessariamente guardare alla “storia”. Seguendo una tendenza tipicamente post-moderna, ogni studioso di performance “crea il suo particolare modo di lavorare, la sua propria disciplina in un certo qual senso”. Sulla scia delle teorie di Deleuze e Guattari, la struttura del dipartimento di Performance Studies alla New York University può dunque essere definita come un’organizzazione rizomatica, in cui ciascuno crea la propria linea disciplinare. Questa struttura rizomatica della disciplina, dove non esiste un autentico centro, non annulla lo statuto disciplinare dei Performance Studies, ma ne fa una disciplina figlia della contemporaneità post-moderna.

RICHARD SCHECHNER

**1 Washington Sq. Village, PHA
New York, NY 10012**

***Performance Studies*
Tisch School of the Arts
New York University
721 Broadway, 6th Fl.
New York, NY 10003**

EDUCATION

- 1962 PhD, Tulane University
- 1958 MA, University of Iowa
- 1957 No degree, The Johns Hopkins University
- 1956 BA, Cornell University

PERMANENT PROFESSORSHIPS

- 1991-present University Professor, New York University
- 1980-present Professor of Performance Studies, New York University
- 1967-1979 Professor of Drama, New York University
- 1962-67 Assistant, then Associate, Professor of Theatre, Tulane University

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS

- 2007-present Honorary Board Member, International Centre for Performance Studies, Morocco
- 2006 Artistic Consultant, "Home, New Orleans?" New Orleans
- 2000-present Consultant, Practice Performing Arts School, Singapore
- 1992-2009 Artistic Director, East Coast Artists
- 1992-96 Co-Chair Performance Studies Focus Group, ATHE
- 1988-91 Member, then Chair, Theatre Discipline Committee, CIES (Fulbright)
- 1975 & 1977 President, A Bunch of Experimental Theatres of New York
- 1968-86 Board of Directors, The Wooster Group

1967-80 Artistic and Executive Director, The Performance Group
1965-67 Co-Artistic Director, New Orleans Group
1963-66 Co-Producing Director, Free Southern Theater
1962-67, 1985-present Editor, *Tulane Drama Review* (later, *TDR: The Drama Review*)
1957, 1958, 1962 Artistic Director, East End Players, Provincetown, MA (a summer theatre)

SPECIAL PROFESSORSHIPS/TEACHING POSITIONS (since 1975)

2010 Leverhulme Trust Fellow, Kent University, UK
2010 Erasmus Mundus Fellow, European Union
2009 Cline Centennial Visiting Professor in the Humanities, University of Texas-Austin
2009 Curator, Year of Grotowski/New York
2005-present Consulting Director of the Richard Schechner Center for Performance Studies at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, China
2004 School for Criticism and Theory at Cornell University
2004 Visiting Guest Professor, Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan
2000 Ida Beam Distinguished Visiting Professor, University of Iowa
1999-2005 Andrew H. White Professor-at-Large, Cornell University
1997 Theaterwissenschaft, Justus-Liebig University, Giessen, Germany
1996 Institute for Theatre and Media Studies, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany
1995-present Honorary Professor, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China
1993-present Professor Titular Adjunto, Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba
1992 Theatre Program, Princeton University
1991-92 Emens Professor, Ball State University
1990 ISSSIS, Semiotics Institute, University of Toronto
1990 Various institutions, Taiwan
1989 Whitney Halsted Visiting Scholar, School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1988 Shanghai Theatre Academy, China
1987-88 Hoffman Eminent Scholar, Florida State University
1985 Theaterwissenschaft, Justus-Liebig University, Giessen, Germany

1985 Arts & Humanities, University of Texas at Dallas
1984 School of Theatre, Florida State University
1982 Theatre Department, Carnegie Mellon University
1981 Theatre Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison
1979 Theatre Department, Connecticut College

1978 Theatre Department, University of California, Santa Cruz
1977 Theatre Department, American University
1975 Theatre Department, American University

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS (since 1976)

2011 Leverhulme Trust Fellowship, UK
2010 Thalia Prize, International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC)
2010 Erasmus Mundus Fellow, European Union
2009 Honorary Doctorate, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts
2009 Odznake Honorowa: Zasłużony Dla Kultury Polskiej (Medal from the Polish Government for Supporting Polish Culture)
2008 Lifetime Career Achievement Award, American Theatre in Higher Education
2005 Fellow, Central School of Speech and Drama, London
2004 American Council of Learned Societies Fellow
2002 Lifetime Achievement Award, Performance Studies International
2001 Award for Inspiring Scholarship, American Academy of Religion, Eastern Region
2000 Otto Award for Political Theatre from Castillo Cultural Center, New York
2000 Asian Cultural Council, travel grant to India
1999 Montgomery Fellow, Dartmouth College
1997 American Institute of Indian Studies Senior Research Fellowship
1995 IREX, for travel to Eastern Europe
1995 Asian Cultural Council for directing *The Oresteia* in Taiwan (my adaptation, translated into Chinese)
1994 Asian Cultural Council for research in Japan
1992-93 Visiting Senior Fellow Council of the Humanities & Old Dominion Fellow, Princeton University
1987-92 Fellow, New York Institute for the Humanities
1991 Special Award, New England Theatre Conference
1991 Special Award, Towson State University
1990 Principal Organizer, Interculturalism Conference, Bellagio, Italy (Rockefeller Foundation)
1988 National Endowment for the Humanities, Senior Research Fellow
1988 Asian Cultural Council Fellow
1987 Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research
1985 Mondello Prize, Palermo, Italy
1985-87 Society of Fellows, New York University
1983 Smithsonian Institution Research Fellow
1983 Fulbright Travel and Study Fellow
1982 Social Science Research Council

1982 Wenner-Gren Foundation. Principal Organizer (with Victor Turner) of the Theatre and Ritual Conference
1978 Indo-American Fellowship
1976 Fulbright Senior Research Fellow
1975 Guggenheim Fellow

AUTHOR, BOOKS

Under contract, Portuguese edition of selected essays
In press, Spanish Edition, *Performance Studies—An Introduction*
In press, Lithuanian Edition, *Performance Studies—An Introduction*
2010 *Essays of Richard Schechner* (in Chinese). Special issue of *TDR/China*. Shanghai: Culture and Art Publishing House (Shanghai Theatre Academy)
2009 *Performancia: teórie, praktiky, rituály*. Bratislava: Edícia Svetové divadlo
2009 *Performance: Introdúcere si teorie*. Bucharest: Editura Unitext
2008 *Performance: Experimentation et theorie du theatre aux USA*. Paris: Editions Theatrales
2006 *Performatyka* (Polish edition of *Performance Studies—An Introduction*)
2006 *Performance Studies—An Introduction*, revised and expanded. London: Routledge.
2004 *Over Under and Around: Essays on Performance and Culture*. Calcutta and New Delhi: Seagull Books. Revised version of *Performative Circumstances* (1983)
2003 *Performance Theory*, revised and expanded. London and New York: Routledge
2002 *Interculturele Puzzels* (Dutch) Utrecht: PassePartout Publications. (Includes work by and about Schechner)
2002 *Performance Studies—An Introduction*. London: Routledge
2001 *Environmental Theatre* (Chinese). Shanghai: Shanghai Theatre Academy
2000 *Performance: Teoria & Practicas Interculturales* (Spanish). Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas Universidad de Buenos Aires
2000 *Przyszlosc Rytualu* (Polish). Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen
1999 *Magnitudini della Performance* (Italian). Rome: Bulzoni
1998 *Performance Studies: Where Theatre Meets Anthropology* (Japanese). Tokyo: Jimbun Shoin
1996 *Between Theatre and Anthropology*. Seoul. (Korean)

- 1994 *Environmental Theater*, expanded addition. New York: Applause Books
- 1993 *The Future of Ritual*. London & New York: Routledge
- 1992 *Ka Postmodernom Pozoristu* (Serbo-Croatian). Belgrade: Institute for Theatre, Film, Radio, and Television
- 1990 *Theater-Anthropologie* (German). Hamburg: Rowohlt
- 1989 *A Performance* (Hungarian). Budapest: Muszak
- 1988 *Performance Theory*. London & New York: Routledge
- 1988 *El Teatro Ambientalista (Environmental Theatre, Spanish)*. Mexico City: Arbol
- 1987 *The Englebert Stories* (with Samuel MacIntosh-Schechner). New York: PAJ Publications
- 1985 *Between Theater and Anthropology*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press
- 1984 *La Teoria della Performance* (Italian). Rome: Bulzoni
- 1983 *Performative Circumstances from the Avantgarde to Ramlila*. Calcutta: Seagull Books
- 1982 *The End of Humanism*. New York: PAJ Publications
- 1978 *Makbeth*, after Shakespeare, Schulenburg, TX: I. E. Clark
- 1977 *Essays on Performance Theory*. New York: Drama Books Specialists
- 1975 *Theatres, Spaces, and Environments* (with Brooks McNamara and Jerry Rojo). New York: Drama Books Specialists
- 1973 *Environmental Theater*. New York: Hawthorn
- 1968 *Public Domain*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill

ORIGINAL PLAYS, ADAPTATIONS, TRANSLATIONS

- 2011 *Imagining O* (using texts from Shakespeare and Pauline Réage)
- 2005 *Yokastas Redux*, with Saviana Stanescu
- 1995 *The Oresteia*, after Aeschylus using existing translations
- 1993 *Faust/gastronome*, after Marlowe, Goethe, and other sources
- 1987 *Don Juan*, Moliere translation
- 1985 *Prometheus Project*, after Aeschylus and other sources.
- 1981 *Richard's Lear*, after Shakespeare
- 1970 *Commune*, from various sources
- 1969 *Makbeth*, after Shakespeare
- 1968 *Dionysus in 69*, after Euripides using an existing translation

BOOKS EDITED

- 1997 *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (with Lisa Wolford). London: Routledge.

- 1990 *By Means of Performance* (with Willa Appel). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- 1976 *Ritual, Play, and Performance* (with Mady Schuman). New York: Seabury Press
- 1970 *Dionysus in 69*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux
- 1969 *The Free Southern Theater* (with Tom Dent). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill

GENERAL EDITOR “Enactments” (Seagull Books)

In press, *Doorways: Grotowski’s Legacy*, Lisa Wylam and Mario Biagini, eds.

In press, *Chinese Performance Art*, Meiling Cheng

2011 *The Avantgarde: Race, Religion, War*. Mike Sell

2011 *Conversations Across the Border, Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Laura Levin*

2010 *Enacting Pleasure*, Peggy Cooper Davis and Carol Gilligan

2010 *Eternal Performance Taziye and Other Shiite Rituals*, Peter Chelkowski, ed.

2010 *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man*, Rachel Bowditch

2010 *Planes of Composition*, Andre Lepecki and Jenn Joy, eds.

2009 *Performance in Place of War*, James Thompson, ed.

2009 *Paleoperformance*, Yann-Pierre Montelle

2009 *Singing Emptiness: Kumar Gandharva Performs the Poetry of Kabir*, Linda Hess, ed.

2009 *Crucible Bodies*, Uchino, Tadashi

2009 *Grotowski’s Empty Room*, Paul Allain, ed.

2008 *Theatre of Roots*, Erin Mee

2007 *The Colonial Staged*, Sudipto Chatterjee

2007 *Performing Religion in America*, Alyshia Galvez, ed.

2006 *Global Foreigners*, Carol Martin and Saviana Stanescu, eds.

GENERAL EDITOR, “Worlds of Performance” (Routledge)

2007 *Performing the Senses* (Sally Banes and Andre Lepecki)

2005 *Carnival* (Milla Riggio)

2002 *Popular Theatre: A Sourcebook* (Joel Schechter)

2001 *Re: Direction* (Rebecca Schneider and Gabrielle Cody)

2000 *Brecht Sourcebook* (Carol Martin and Henry Bial)

1999 *African American Performance* (Annemarie Bean)

1997 *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner)

1996 *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre* (Carol Martin)

1994 *Happenings and Other Acts* (Mariellen Sandford)

1994 *Acting [Re]Considered* (Phillip Zarrilli)

EDITOR, JOURNALS

1985- *TDR: The Drama Review*
1982 Guest editor, Intercultural issue, *TDR*
1973 Guest editor, Social Science issue, *TDR*
1962-69 *Tulane Drama Review (TDR)*

EDITORIAL BOARDS

2008-present *Journal of Theatre Studies* (Taiwan)
1987-present *Journal of Ritual Studies*
1987-1996 *Text and Performance*
1983-present *Asian Theatre Journal*
1982-85 *Performing Arts Journal*
1970-85 *TDR: The Drama Review*

PERFORMANCES DIRECTED (since 1964)

2011 *Imagining O – A Work-in-Progress* (using texts by Shakespeare and Pauline Réage), Kent University, Canterbury, UK

2009 *Swimming to Spalding* (Lian Amaris). East Coast Artists at Here, New York

2007 *Hamlet: That Is the Question*. Shanghai Theatre Academy and East Coast Artists at the Shanghai Experimental Theatre Festival, Shanghai. This production toured to festivals in Wroclaw, Poland (2009) and Cariova, Romania (2010).

2005 *YokastkaS Redux* (Saviana Stanescu and Schechner). East Coast Artists at La Mama, New York

2002 *YokastaS* (Saviana Stanescu and Schechner). East Coast Artists at La Mama, New York

2002 *Concerning Waiting for Godot*, Lublin International Theatre Festival, Lublin, Poland

2002 *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett), Cornell University

1999 *Hamlet* (Shakespeare). East Coast Artists at the Performing Garage, New York; and at Dartmouth College

1995-7 *Three Sisters* (Chekhov). East Coast Artists at La Mama, New York

1995 *The Oresteia*, (Aeschylus) Contemporary Legend Theatre, Taipei, Taiwan

1993-4 *Faust/Gastronome* (Schechner, Marlowe, Goethe). East Coast Artists at La Mama, New York

1992 *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (August Wilson) for the Grahamstown Festival, South Africa

1989 *Mingri Jiuyao Chu Shan* (Sun Huizhu. Tomorrow He'll Be Out of the Mountains), co-director, Stephen Chan. Shanghai Peoples' Art Theatre, China

1987 *Don Juan*. (Moliere) Florida State University

1983-85 *The Prometheus Project* (Schechner and others). University of Texas, Dallas; Performing Garage, NY

1983 *Cherry Ka Baghicha* (Anton Chekhov. The Cherry Orchard). Repertory Company of the National School of Drama, New Delhi

1981 *Richard's Lear* (Shakespeare, Schechner). University of Wisconsin, Madison

1981 *The Red Snake* (Michael McClure). Public Theatre, New York (closed in previews)

With The Performance Group:

1979-80 *The Balcony* (Jean Genet)

1978-79 *Cops* (Terry Curtis Fox)

1977 *Oedipus* (Seneca)

1975-76 *The Marilyn Project* (David Gaard)

1975-77 *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Bertolt Brecht)

1972-74 *The Tooth of Crime* (Sam Shepard)

1970-72 *Commune* (The Performance Group, Schechner, various)

1969-70 *Makbeth* (Shakespeare, Schechner, The Performance Group)

1968-69 *Dionysus in 69* (Euripides, The Performance Group)

With The New Orleans Group:

1967 *Victims of Duty* (Eugene Ionesco)

1966/66 (co-directors, Franklin Adams, Paul Epstein)

With the Free Southern Theater:

1964 *Purlie Victorious* (Ossie Davis)

With East End Players:

1962 *When We Dead Awaken* (Henrik Ibsen)

1962 *Philoctetes* (Sophocles)

1962 *The Lesson* (Eugene Ionesco)

1958 *Miss Julie* (August Strindberg)

ARTICLES SINCE 2000 (full listing on request):

2011 "The Avant-garde and Global Systems," *Reflect #08*: 32-45.

2011 "Shame on Syracuse University Press," *TDR* 55, 1: 7-12.

2010 "The Conservative Avantgarde," *New Literary History* 41, 4: 895-913.

2010 "Casting Without Limits," *American Theater* 27, 10 (December): 26-30.

- 2010 "Circulation d'(In-)Comprension: Entretien avec Richard Schechner sur le Théâtre Interculturel," 142-47. *Comunicare, Identite, Cultura*. Craiova: Editura Universitaria.
- 2010 "O que pode a Performance na Educacao? Uma entrevista com Richard Schechner" (What can Performance do in Education? An interview with Richard Schechner), *Educacao & Realidade* 35, 2: 23-36.
- 2010 "Broadening the Broad Spectrum," *TDR* 54, 3: 7-8.
- 2010 "There's Something Happening Here...," *TDR* 54, 2: 12-17.
- 2010 "Future Nostalgias," *RIDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 15, 3: 309-15.
- 2009 "9-11 as Avantgarde Art?" *PMLA* 124, 5: 1820-29.
- 2009 "Brooks McNamara 1937-2009," *TDR* 53, 4: 7-9.
- 2009 "Plagiarism, Greed, and the Dumbing Down of Performance Studies," *TDR* 53, 1: 7-21.
- 2008-09 "Teaching Ritual," *Interval(les)* II.2-III.1 (fall 08- winter 09).
- 2008 "Pet avangardi ... ili nijedna?" *Teatron* 142 (Belgrade): 58-78.
- 2008 "Grotowski and the Grotowskian," *TDR* 52, 2: 7-13.
- 2008 "L'avant-garde et les systemes globalisants," *Theatre/Public* 2008/3: 8-18.
- 2008 "Spalding," ix-xxi, *Spalding Gray's America*, William W. Demastes. New York: Limelight Editions.
- 2007 "What Is Needed Today in the Collaboration Between Performance Theorists and the Sciences," *Cultura teatrale* no. 16, primavera 2007: 9-12.
- 2007 "Living a Double Consciousness," 15-28, *Teaching Ritual*, Catherine Bell, ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2007 "Rasaesthetics," 10-28 in *The Senses in Performance*, Sally Banes and Andre Lepecki, eds. New York and London: Routledge.
- 2006 "Performed Imaginaries: Ramlila in the City of Varanasi," 88-134 in *Sacred to Profane: Writings on Worship and Performance*, Anjum Katyal, ed. London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books.
- 2006 "Towards Tomorrow? Restoring Disciplinary Limits and Rehearsals in Time" (interviewed by Richard Gough), 229-42 in *A Performance Cosmology*, Judie Christie, Richard Gough, and Daniel Watt, eds. London and New York: Routledge.
- 2006 "An Interview with Richard Schechner" (by Carl Lavery), 213-22 in *Jean Genet: Performance and Politics*, Clare Finburgh, Carl Lavery, and Maria Shevtsova, eds. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- 2006 "Anna Halprin," ix-xii in *Anna Halprin: Experience as Dance* by Janice Ross. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2006 "A Polity of Its Own Called Art," 33-41 in *Artistic Citizenship*, Mary Schmidt Campbell and Randy Martin, eds. New York: Routledge.

- 2006 "Jocasty Wracaja (*Yokastas Redux*)" (with Saviana Stanescu) *Dialog*, Maj-Czerwiec 2006, no. 5-6 (594-595):197-221.
- 2006 "TDR and Me" *TDR* 50, 1: 6-12.
- 2006 "Ritual und Theater: Rekonstruktion von Verhalten," 431-45 in *Ritualtheorien*, Andrea Belliger and David J. Krieger, eds. Weisbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- 2005 "Performer" tr into German from *Environmental Theater*, 330-57 in *Schauspiel Theorien*, Jens Roselt, ed. Berlin: Alexander Verlag.
- 2005 "In Memory, Suresh Awasthi 1918-2004" *TDR* 49, 1: 10-11.
- 2005 "Performance and Religion" (revised), *Encyclopedia of Religion*. New York: MacMillan.
- 2005 "Carnival Theory After Bakhtin," *Carnival*, Milla Riggio, ed. London: Routledge.
- 2005 "Dixi, Namahage, and the Question of 'Folk Performance' (Chinese), *Taipei Theatre Journal*: 1: 7-25.
- 2004 "Quo Vadis Performance History?" *Theatre Survey* 45, 2:271-74.
- 2004 "In Memory, Spalding Gray" *TDR* 48,4: 11-12.
- 2004 "One Hand, Many Fingers," *TDR* 48, 3: 174-79.
- 2004 "Why Social Theatre" (with James Thompson), *TDR* 48, 11-16.
- 2004 "The Big Issues and the Happy Few," *TDR* 48, 2: 6-9.
- 2004 "The Titanic of Everyday Life" (with Susanne Winnacker), *TDR* 48, 1:79-86.
- 2004 "Women's Work," *TDR* 47, 4: 5-7.
- 2004 "Joseph Chaikin: 1935-2003," *TDR* 47, 4: 8-12.
- 2003 *YokastaS* (play), Saviana Stanescu, co-author. *Dioniso*, annual publication of the National Institute for Ancient Drama, 246-73. Palermo: G. B. Palumbo.
- 2003 Theatre in Times/Places of Crisis: A Theoretical Perspective, *Dokkyo International Review* 16: 27-42.
- 2003 "O Que e Performance?", *Opercevejo* 11, 12: 25-50.
- 2002 "Que es el performance?", *Tablas LXXI*: 13-25.
- 2002 "Rasaesthetics" in Chinese. *Theatre Arts*, Shanghai, 5/2002: 31-44.
- 2002 "Theatre in Times/Places of Crisis: A Theoretical Perspective," 155-70 in *War Theatres and Actions for Peace*, Claudio Bernardi, Monica Dragone, Guglielmo Schinina, eds. Milan: Euresis Edizioni.
- 2002 "Fundamentals of Performance Studies," ix-xii, *Teaching Performance Studies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- 2002 "The 'Yes', 'No', and 'But' of Intercultural Performances," 32-35 in the Program for *Search:Hamlet*, Copenhagen: Betty Nansen Theatre.
- 2001 "Performance Studies in/for the 21st Century," *Anthropology and Humanism* 26, 2 (December): 158-66.
- 2001 "Rasaesthetics," *TDR* 45, 3:27-50.

- 2001 "Vibhuti Narain Singh, Maharaja of Banaras," *TDR* 45, 2:5-7.
- 2001 "What Is 'Performance Studies' Anyway?" 1-12 in *New Approaches to Theatre Studies and Performance Analysis*, edited by Gunter Bergaus. Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag.
- 2000 "A Maharajah's Festival for Body and Soul," *Arts and Leisure, New York Times* 26 November: 1, 37.
- 2000 "The Five Avant Gardes...or None" (in Chinese), *Theatre Art* 5: 4-13.
- 2000 "Wujaszek Jack Z Sachodniej Wirginii" (Polish) *Dialog XLV Lipiec* 7:148-51.
- 2000 "Zachowac chłodne sporządzenie" (interview Polish), *Didaskalia Grudzien*: 60-61.
- 2000 "Znaczenie rytuału w dzisiejszym świecie przekazywanie wiedzy rytualnej," (Polish) *Didaskalia Grudzien*: 53-59.
- 2000 "Food," 205-10, *Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties*, Linda Montano, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2000 "Die Zukunft des Rituals" (German), 229-78, *Aufbruch zu neuen Welten Theatralität an der Jahrtausendwende*, Michael Huttler, Susanne Schwinghammer, and Monika Wagner, eds. Frankfurt: IKO—Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation.
- 2000 "Approaches to Performance Theory," 194-201, *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*, Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay, eds. London: Routledge.
- 2000 with Carol Martin, "Out of Asia," *BAM Stagebill*, October: 18 & continued.
- 2000 "Organicity in Action, Exercises, Spaces, and Persons: Jerry Rojo's Project," i-vii, Preface to Rojo's *An Acting Method Using the Psychophysical Experience of Workshop Games-Exercises*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.
- 2000 "An Interview with Richard Schechner" by James M. Harding," 202-14, *Contours of the Avant-Garde*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- 2000 "Post Post-Structuralism," *TDR* 44, 3: 4-7.
- 2000 "Mainstream Theatre and Performance Studies," *TDR* 44, 2: 4-6.
- 2000 "Already Reworking the Classics of Modern Realism," *New York Times, Arts & Leisure*, 13 February: 7, 18.
- 2000 "Approaches to Performance Theory," 194-201, *Politics and Performance*, Lizbeth Goodman, ed. London: Routledge.
- 2000 "Theatre Alive in the New Millennium," *TDR* 44, 1: 5-6.
- 2000 "Rasaesthetics," *Teatro e Storia XIII-XIV 1998-1999* (Italian): 19-38.

LECTURES SINCE 2000 (full listing on request):

2011 “Schechner Saturday” – rasaboxes workshop, selection of films and powerpoint of productions, and talkback, Barbican Center, London, UK

2011 “Rasaesthetics,” Goldsmiths College, UK

2011 “The Conservative Avantgarde,” Leverhulme Lecture, Kent University, UK

2011 Three Lectures – “9-11 as a Work of Art?,” “The Conservative Avantgarde,” and “Who Is Rama?” for Meisterklasse University of Konstanz, Germany

2011 “A Day With Richard Schechner,” Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey

2011 “Open Meeting With Doctoral Candidates and Faculty,” University of Manchester, UK

2011 “Who Is Rama?” Brussels Academy of Sciences Colloquium

2011 “NY-Tehran Two Day Skype Workshop,” New York University

2011 “Performance Studies,” Yale School of Drama

2011 “Rasaboxes and the Natyasastra,” International Conference on Natyasastra, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Varanasi, India

2011 “On Directing,” Columbia University

2010 “The Directing Work of Richard Schechner,” Tel-Aviv University, Israel

2010 “Rasaboxes,” School for Visual Art, Jerusalem, Israel

2010 “The Conservative Avantgarde,” Haifa University, Israel

2010 “Genet’s *The Balcony* in Retrospect,” Center for French Civilization and Culture, New York University

2010 “The Conservative Avantgarde,” Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2010 “9-11 as Avantgarde Art?” Nanjing University, China

2010 “Gender Free,” International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC), Yerevan, Armenia.

2010 “The Performance Group in India,” University of Hawaii, Manoa, Hawaii

2010 “The Directing Work of Richard Schechner,” University of Hawaii, Manoa, Hawaii

2010 “Restagings, Performance Theory, and the Nicheguard,” Erasmus Mundus Colloquium, Free University of Brussels (ULB), Belgium.

2010 “Victor Turner, Then, Now, and Onwards,” University of Manchester, UK.

2010 “9-11 as Avantgarde Art?” University of Nice, France.

2010 “9-11 as Avantgarde Art?” NYU, Paris, France.

2010 “9-11 as Avantgarde Art?” Odeon Theatre, Paris, France.

2010 “Performance Theory,” University of Paris/Nanterre, France.

2010 "Audience Participation," Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, France.

2010 "Contemporary Performance," Warsaw, Poland via internet.

2010 "9-11 As Avangarde Art?" Erasmus Mundus Lecture, College de France a Bruxelles, Belgium.

2010 "Richard Schechner's Directing Work," Kent University, Canterbury, UK.

2010 "Performance Studies, History and Prospects," University of Lille, Lille, France.

2010 "Theatre and Theory of Richard Schechner," two lectures, Frankfurt University, Frankfurt, Germany.

2010 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Muenster University, Germany.

2010 "9-11 As Avangarde Art?" University of Paris-Sorbonne, Paris, France.

2009 "*Dionysus in 69* Then and Now," University of Texas, Austin.

2009 "9/11 as Avantgarde Art?" University of Texas, Austin.

2009 "Polish Theatre," Year of Grotowski, Los Angeles via internet.

2009 "Grotowski," Year of Grotowski, Paris via internet hookup.

2009 "Theatre and Theory of Richard Schechner," four lectures Bucharest Theatre Festival.

2009 "Experimental Theatre Today," Keynote for the 21st Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre.

2009 "9/11 As Avantgarde Art?" Keynote for Cornerstone Arts Week, Colorado College.

2009 "Self-Inflicted Wounds," Ritual and Performance Conference, Museum Quai Branly, Paris.

2008 "Five Avantgardes ... Or None?" Keynote for the IATC (International Association of Theatre Ctitics) at the Premio Europa Per Il Teatro, Thessaloniki, Greece.

2008 "Globalization and the Avantgarde," Keynote via internet ECUM, Performing Arts World Meeting, Belo Horizonte and Sao Paolo, Brazil

2008 "On The Performance Group's *Commune* Then and Now," for the conference/festival "Re-Education 'You too can be like us'" Hebbel Theatre, Berlin

2008 Keynote: "The Avant-Garde and Global Systems," for the conference, L'impact de ;'avant-garde americaine sur les theatres europeens et la question de la performance," Theatre National de la Colline/INHA, Paris.

2007 Various panels at PSi conference, New York University

2007 "Richard Schechner and the American Avant-garde Theatre," Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2007 "From *Dionysus* to *Hamlet*: Re-presentation of the Classics," National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

2007 "The Future of Ritual," National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

2007 "Intercultural Performance," National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan

2007 "Ritual and Performance Studies," Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2007 "Meeting of Eastern and Western Masters," Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2007 "*Hamlet: That Is the Question*," East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

2007 "Beijing Opera in/and *Hamlet*," Special Olympics, Theatre Academy, China

2007 "The Ramlila of Ramnagar," University of Trinidad and Tobago, Distinguished Fellows Series: The Classical and The Contemporary"

2007 "American Experimental Performance," Vassar College

2006 "Teaching Ritual," American Association of Religion annual meeting, Washington, DC

2006 "The Responsibilities of the Artist To/In Society," East China Normal University (ECNU), Shanghai, China

2006 "The Responsibilities of the Artist To/In Society," Shanghai Drama Center, China

2006 "Performance Studies: Theory Into Practice Into Theory," World Symposium of Drama School Directors, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2006 "After Katrina," NOCCA (New Orleans Center for Culture and Art), New Orleans

2006 "My Directing and Performance Studies," The Burian Lecture, State University of New York, Albany

2006 "Theatre in Turmoil," keynote for UTSAV (National Theatre Festival), National School of Drama, New Delhi, India

2005 "Directing," Central School of Speech and Drama, London

2005 "Ramlila of Ramnagar: Religion, Performance, and Politics," Center for Cultural Sociology, Yale University

2005 "Performance Studies," Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2005 "Performance Studies," Beijing University, China

2005 "Directing," Central Academy of Drama, Beijing, China

2005 "Directing," Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2004 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," keynote address, Association for Asian Performance at ATHE, Toronto, Canada

2004 Panel on Performance Studies, ATHE, Toronto, Canada

2004 Panel on Future of Performance, ATHE, Toronto, Canada

2004 "Performed Imaginaries," School for Criticism and Theory at Cornell University

2004 "Self-Inflicted Wounds," School for Criticism and Theory at Cornell University

2004 "Directing Across Cultures," Conference on Cinema, Theatre, and the Written Word: Translating Cultures Through Performance, University of California, Irvine

2004 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," UNAM and Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico City

2004 "Richard Schechner, Director," UNAM and Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico City

2004 "Richard Schechner, Director," Hong Kong Theatre Academy, Hong Kong

2004 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Hong Kong Theatre Academy, Hong Kong

2004 "Performance Studies," Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2004 "Rasaesthetics," Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2004 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Taipei National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2004 "Richard Schechner, Director," National University of Taiwan

2004 "Intercultural Performance," Conference on Intercultural Performance, National Center for Traditional Arts, Yilan, Taiwan

2004 "Performing Justice," Conference on Performance and the Classics, New York University

2003 Off Off Broadway, Then and Now," New York Community Dish

2003 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

2003 "Translation of Culture(s)" (with Homi Bhabha and Mikhail Ryklin), House World Cultures, Berlin

2003 "Law, Performance, and Democracy, and Social Practice," New York University

2003 "Social Sciences and Performance," Yale University

2002 "Social Theatre," University of Milan, Italy

2002 "Self-Inflicted Wounds: Art, Religion, and/or Sickness?" University of Maryland

2002 "Performance Studies: Past, Present, and Future," University of Maryland

2002 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Muhlenberg College

2002 "Performance Studies: Past, Present, and Future," Muhlenberg College

2000 "Theatre in the 21st Century," University of Buenos Aires

2000 "Theatre in the 21st Century," University of Iowa

2000 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," University of Iowa

2000 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," Krakow 2000 "Mysteries, Initiations.

2000 "Ramlila of Ramnagar," University of Monterey, Monterey Mexico.

2000 "Remembering the Future in (Research About) Ramlila of Ramnagar," Cornell University.

2000 "East is East/West is West: What Happens When the Twain Meet," Cornell University.

2000 "Rasaesthetics," Concordia University, Montreal, CA

2000 "Performance in a Global World," New York University, Morning on the Millennium, NY, NY.

2000 "Theatre in the 21st Century," Florida International University, Miami, Fl.

PERFORMANCE WORKSHOPS SINCE 2000 (full listing on request):

2010 One day, Free University of Brussels (ULB), Belgium.

2009 Three weeks, New York University East Coast Artists

2009 Two days, International Theatre Festival, Wroclaw, Poland

2009 Five days, Master Directors Workshop, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2007 One day, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2006 One day, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2004 Five days, for directors, La MaMa Umbria, Spoleto, Italy

2004 Five days, UNAM and Institute of Fine Arts, Mexico City

2004 Four days, Hong Kong Theatre Academy, Hong Kong

2004 One day, Shanghai Theatre Academy, China

2004 Two days, Taiwan National University of the Arts, Taiwan

2003 Six days, DasArts, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

2002 Two days, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

2001 Two days, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

2000 One Day, Monterey University, Monterey, Mexico

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Abramović, Marina, *Biography as Material*, nel Libretto di sala di *The Life and Death of Marina Abramović*, Manchester International Festival, 2011

Abramović, Marina, *Parallel Space and Time*, in Robert Wilson, *The Watermill Center. A laboratory for Performance: Robert Wilson's Legacy*, DACO-VERLAG, 2011

Allain, Paul, Harvie, Jen, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*, Routledge, New York, 2006

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Biesenbach, Klaus, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010

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Cypriano, Fabio, *Performance and Reenactment: Analyzing Marina Abramovic's Seven Easy Pieces*, Idanca.net, (<http://idanca.net/lang/en-us/2009/09/02/performance-e-reencenacao-uma-analise-de-seven-eeasy-pieces-de-marinaabramovic/12156/>, written September 2009, accessed March 10, 2010.)

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De Marinis, Marco, *Capire il teatro. Lineamenti di una nuova teatrologia*, seconda edizione, Bulzoni, 2008

De Marinis, Marco, *New Theatrology and Performance Studies. Starting Points Towards a Dialogue*, translated by Marie Pecorari, in TDR (T212), Vol. 55, No 4, Winter 2011

Harding, James, Rosenthal, Cindy, *The Rise of Performance Studies. Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2011

Jackson, Shannon *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, Cambridge University Press, 2004

Kino, Carol, *A Rebel Form Gains Favor. Fights Ensue*, The New York Times, March 10, 2010

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, *Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production*, in Ivan Karp, Corinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (edited by), *World Heritage and Cultural Economics*, in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, Duke University, 2006

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Mckenzie, Jon, Heike Roms, Wee, C.J. W.-L., *Contesting Performance. Global Sites of Research*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2010

Phelan, Peggy, *Unmarked. The Politics of Performance*, Routledge, New York, 1993

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Roms, Heike, *The Practice Turn: Performance and the British Academy*, in Jon Mckenzie e Heike Roms, C.J. W.-L. Wee, *Contesting Performance. Global Sites of Research*, Palgrave-Macmillan, New York, 2010

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Schneider, Rebecca, *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Routledge, New York, 2011

Stokić, Jovana, *The Art of Marina Abramović: Leaving the Balkans, Entering the Other Side*, in Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010

Taylor, Diana, *Performance and Intangible Cultural Heritage*, in Tracy C. Davis (edited by), *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008

Taylor, Diana *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Duke University Press, 2003

Thompson, Chris, and Weslien, Katarina, *Pure Raw: Performance, Pedagogy, and (Re)Presentation, an interview with Marina Abramovic*, PAJ: Performing Arts Journal 82, 2006: 29-50.

UNESCO, *Convenzione per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale*, UNESCO, Parigi, 17 ottobre 2003

Whitney Biennial 2012, Catalogo

Wilson, Robert, *The Watermill Center. A laboratory for Performance: Robert Wilson's Legacy*, DACO-VERLAG, 2011

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<http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/>

<http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/long-durational-work>

<http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/statement>

<http://www.marinaabramovicinstitute.org/mission/the-abramovic-method>

<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/>

<http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965>

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<http://momaps1.org/about/>

<http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/340>

<http://www.newmuseum.org/pages/view/performance-archiving-performance>

http://performance.tisch.nyu.edu/object/io_1236779397783.html

<http://performance.tisch.nyu.edu/page/courses.html>

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<http://watermillcenter.org/>

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