

## On the Haunting of Performance Studies

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### On the Haunting of Performance Studies

A specter haunts performance studies. Like all ghosts, this specter often rests on the tips of tongues of scholars and practitioners interested and invested in performance. This particular ghost often reveals itself as a question, one that continually haunts performance studies as a discipline, particularly the last twenty-five years of scholarship and practice. This seemingly banal question simply asks “What is performance studies anyway?”<sup>1</sup> Whenever and wherever the question is asked, both simple and complex replies attempt an answer. Still, no reply seems to end the interrogation. In response, this essay seeks to provide a different sort of reply in hopes of furthering dialogue and fostering growth in the discipline by challenging scholars and performers to think of their own answers through their work, both written and performed. The reply we advocate in this essay acknowledges and hopes to expand the ontological aspects of the question. That is, by answering what performance studies (the discipline) *is*, we often limit what performance (the practice) *does*. This essay seeks to augment the quest for an ontology of performance with an invitation to a hauntology of performance. Simply, hauntology functions as a critique of ontology as we have understood it. Hauntology does not surpass ontology; it reimagines it. We believe that this shift in thinking opens and offers up myriad possibilities for future theory and practice.

While this study offers a different approach to knowing and doing performance, it in no way dismisses the importance of asking questions about the discipline or exploring the limit(s) of performance theory and praxis. By asking, “What is performance studies anyway?” at least two questions masquerade as one: (1) what does performance do? and (2) how does performance studies orient toward what performance does? In this essay, we advocate Derrida’s notion of haunting as an orientation toward written and performed work. The first section of our essay offers a general explanation of the impulse behind Derrida’s theory. The second section

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<sup>1</sup> *The Ends of Performance* 1998. Although Richard Schechner first poses this particular form of the question, from which we are citationally playing amidst, it lingered and lingers on in some form or another throughout the so-called paradigm shift from either Theatre to Performance Studies or Oral Interpretation to Performance Studies, take your pick.

makes a case for the productive (or haunted) space between performance theory and practice by tracing the ways ontological approaches have influenced performance studies research in the past as well as considering several approaches to performance studies that seem to share a hauntological impulse. Finally, we elaborate on Derrida's notion of haunting and conclude our essay by calling others to approach performance from a haunted perspective.

### **The Haunted Space Between Theory and Practice in Performance Studies**

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida asks us to turn away from dialectal compulsions and to think outside of the identity of a thing as the marker of truth. More specifically, truth is not found in the identity of the thing as the thing itself but through our interactions with that thing. For example, a box is not a box simply because others say it is, but it becomes a certain kind of box once we paint the walls black, hang lights in it, and start moving around inside. Therefore, perspective is shaped by interaction and how each interaction differs. However, to play hauntologically, as we imagine it, is not only to acknowledge that multiple perspectives exist, but to purposefully create spaces in our work where they might emerge and/or insert themselves. Derrida uses the term hospitality to describe this epistemology. He asks that our approach to a thing be hospitable, that we forego trying to pin the thing down, thereby reducing its complexity, but rather to let the thing be superfluous, ghostly. By readjusting our theoretical and practical orientation in our writing and performance practice through hauntology, performance studies scholars might turn away from *the* question and instead be haunted by both doing and writing about performance(s).

We suggest that, by viewing performance only in terms of a subjective "I" viewpoint, experience grounds itself in an assumed stable identity. Conversely, analyzing experience in terms of the ghost (being hospitable to the other), multiplies the possibilities for articulating experiences. Put another way, the relationship and/or tension between performance practice and theory is a process of perpetual production viewed through the lens of haunting. Rather than understanding performance as a discrete object that disappears, as Peggy Phelan advocates in her book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, haunting imagines performance as never disappearing but continually producing systems, sites, and modes of critical inquiry. Rather than writing toward disappearance, as Phelan advocates, we write toward production, utilizing and extending upon the theoretical discourses offered by contemporary performance scholars and practitioners.

Strine, Long, and HopKins call performance an "*essentially contested concept*, meaning that its very existence is bound up in disagreement about what it is, and that the disagreement over its essence is itself part of that essence" (183). Acting in complete agreement, we argue that the contestation within, and not the mere concept of, performance is productive. We as performance studies scholar/artists interested in both performance practice and theory. For us, creating performance is an important means of engaging and experimenting with the theoretical and

philosophical influences that shape our orientations toward performance. Similarly, different performance theories and philosophies inform and offer various methods by which we create performances. The processes of negotiation that occur between performance practice and theory are complex, contested, and challenging. Thus, we are interested in the ways that performers, audience members, theorists, and critics of performance navigate the relationship between how performance is theorized and how it is practiced.

### **Tracing Ontological Arguments**

In his 1981 article *Representation and the Limits of Interpretation*, Eric E. Peterson delves into the problems of wedding post-structuralism and interpretation in terms of the limits of representation. He concedes that for oral interpretation “representation is a powerful force in the theoretical understanding of our practice. Not only does it allow us to distinguish oral interpretation from similar literary, theatrical, and speech arts; but it also provides a theoretical justification for the existence of oral interpretation as a discipline distinct from other disciplines” (24). Peterson formulated these arguments even before oral interpretation shifted to the broader term performance studies, but his predictions were insightful. Peterson maps out potential disciplinary costs of thinking representation in a certain way. He continues, saying that the cost of “securing this place for oral interpretation is the increasing objectification of our practice and subjectification of our practitioners. By objectifying our practice, we mean that the conceptualization of art as representation precludes the examination of the very activity of representing” (24). This causes the field to continually wrap itself up in disciplinary techniques for the “accumulation of knowledge and the exercise of power” (24) through interpretation, instead of focusing on the eroticization of performance practice itself. Peterson argues for reinvestigating the process of performance as art, not subject-object relations.

This objectification of disciplinary practice(s) manifests in strikingly similar forms throughout performance studies discourse. Kristin Langellier grounds the ontology of performance in social context. She issues a call to “examine what we already do in oral interpretation within an enlarged theoretical framework that asks how our practice is connected to and embedded within the larger social sphere” (61). She further calls for social context as the “conditions for performance” by positing four areas of performance as sites of social context: performance setting, audience, performer, and performance event (62-63). In addition, she expands upon Fine and Speer’s articulation of context by acknowledging that the

concept of social context undergoes considerable elaboration and development. Notably, a performed text cannot be understood apart from its context. We are urged in particular to consider how sociocultural factors condition performance and especially to understand the rules for performance within a speech community. In theoretical terms, interpretation from this perspective arises from

the encounter of text with context in the sociocultural experience of both the performers and the audience. (63)

Langellier places the object of performance within social conditions that set the contextual stage for understanding and interpretation to manifest. While social context is an important consideration for performance studies, Langellier's four categories of social context create or rely on an ontology based in the construct of a "social context." Rather than understand social context as an outside force acting upon the event of performance, we argue that the act of performing and viewing a performance as itself a socially charged event, haunts understandings of past and future historical and material experiences that create multiple contexts. The most exciting performances for us are those that make the audience think differently about the world far after the performance is done by capturing our attention *with* the performance, *with* the performative choices, *with* the performers as ghostly encounters.

One of the more well known examples of framing performance studies ontologically is Ron Peliás and James VanOosting's essay *A Paradigm for Performance Studies*. By moving the idea of a paradigm for performance studies to the forefront of questions about disciplinary identity, Peliás and VanOosting state that scholars "may better test the case for significant differences from oral interpretation and more clearly probe the possible consequences of disciplinary affirmation and denial" (219). The basis for paradigmatic status of performance studies lies within their conception of aesthetic communication. Aesthetic communication

may be defined from the singular perspective of a performer, a text, or an audience, or from the interaction among all three within a given context . . . . To satisfy one or more conditions of the definition (the 'performer' or the 'audience') must take *responsibility* for naming an aesthetic intent, quality, or effect. Without such a claim of responsibility, aesthetic communication is not foregrounded in the flow of everyday behavior and discourse. (221)

Similar to Langellier's approach, the basic conditions for this theory of performance are text, performer, audience, and event. All of these terms simultaneously construct an ontology for performance studies through Peliás and VanOosting's strategic use of the terms as the foundation for a paradigm. The paradigm depends on the stability of the terms as identity markers as it constructs an ontology for the discipline. Again, a hauntological approach would disavow not the characteristics employed in their argument, but the manner in which they are used, namely to construct an identity for performance studies that relies on discreet ontological categories.

Another example of ontological construction in performance studies is Richard Schechner's essay *Performance Studies: A Broad Spectrum Approach*. In it, Schechner lays out a different side to the same ontological argument. Hailing from the so-called "NYU school" of performance studies, he advocates an ontology of performance because it is "distinct from any of its subgenres like theatre, dance, music, and

performance art—[it] is a broad spectrum of activities including at the very least the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 7).<sup>2</sup> Within the broad spectrum approach Schechner similarly proposes four basic ontological categories, much like Pelias and VanOosting, “authors, performers, directors, and spectators—[whose relationships] ought to be investigated using the methodological tools increasingly available from performance theorists, social scientists, and semioticians” (8). Schechner takes up his position from, what some consider, a more theatrically based anthropological dimension of performance studies. The perceived difference between performance studies as oral interpretation or performance studies as cultural theatre is crystallized perfectly in the naming of “schools” or “camps” to which performance studies practitioners or scholars can align themselves. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett identifies Richard Schechner and other theorists who invoke the “broad spectrum” approach as following the New York University model of performance studies. This model led by the historical avant-garde and contemporary experimental performance uses non-western performance practices to de-center traditional views of theatre and dramatic content in Western universities and performance practices (44-45). This “model” operates, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, at a different edge of the performance studies spectrum than the Northwestern approach. Within this “type” of performance studies practice, Northwestern “expanded the notion of literature in terms of text, broadly conceived, to include not only literature but also ‘cultural texts’” (45). While Schechner advocates methodological investigation, he also exacerbates the compulsion to define performance in ontological categories by accepting that rituals, games, theatre and dance have, at their core, stable identities initiating and participating in the performances. Obviously there are definite agents watching, creating, and studying performance. However, if we resist, or rather, rethink categorizing these agents ontologically, we may avoid reifying a structure for performance studies that relies on accepted norms and/or claims of identity as truth.

While there are differences between the two “schools” of performance studies as discussed above, the ontological assumptions at work within this line of thought provide fertile terrain for the development of norms to emerge in the form of assumptive categories of performance theory and practice in an already assumed category of “performance studies.” Jon McKenzie articulates this phenomenon through the idea of a “liminal-norm” developing within performance studies. He zeroes in on liminality as a concept that “remains key to articulating the efficacy of both cultural performance and performance studies, whether that efficacy be conceived as transgressive or resistant” (McKenzie 27). The liminal-norm develops from

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<sup>2</sup> See discussion on Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s “Performance Studies.”

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 . . . [It] operates where the valorization of liminal transgression or resistance itself becomes normative. (27)

The logic behind McKenzie’s development of the liminal-norm as a concept can also be applied in the form of a critique to the repeated valorization(s) of ontological categories and status, for and within performance studies as a discipline, shown above. McKenzie’s idea of the liminal-norm stems directly from the overarching quest for an ontology of performance studies to become grounded and identifiable. As this desire to construct ontology of and in performance is made more transparent, the need for alternative modes of thought manifest.

One of the most explicit links between ontology and performance stems from Peggy Phelan’s book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. This book offers provocative ideas about performance, visibility, and performance art, but relies heavily on a problematic relationship between the author’s definition(s) of ontology and performance. Phelan argues that “performance’s only life is in the present,” and that once 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” (146). In the first chapter of *Unmarked*, Phelan grounds her understanding of ontology in a psychoanalytic reading of subjectivity via Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Within this modernist understanding of self/other relations, the subject views performance as an object to be viewed and consumed. The audience-subject must consume as much as possible of the performance because performance in such a strict ontological sense is non-reproductive (148). For Phelan there is no excess or leftover in and of performance; it saves nothing, it only spends (148).<sup>3</sup> The ontological, or metaphysical, categories of “presence” and “absence” play heavily into her understanding of the ontology of performance through (in)visibility and disappearance. She spends considerable time discussing the documentation of performance through writing, video, photography, or other reproductive forms arguing that if performance disappears then any form of documentation turns performance into something that it is not. The challenge then for writing about performance is to “re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself. The act of writing toward disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward

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<sup>3</sup> Phelan links her understanding of the economy of reproduction up with a fairly traditional Marxist reading of capitalism to which Derrida provides a convincing critique of in *Specters of Marx*. This critique, which we explore in depth, offers up a rearticulation of the phenomena of capital and capitalism by reintroducing spectrality into Marxist discourse.

preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself” (148).

Phelan’s notion of performativity, however, suffers in that it allows performativity only to perform up to a point. Phelan confuses the concept of performativity with that of Austin’s performative utterance stating that “in the field of linguistics, the performative speech act shares with the ontology of performance the inability to be reproduced or repeated” (149). She goes further to add that “performative speech acts refer only to themselves, they *enact* the activity the speech signifies . . . The performative is important to Derrida precisely because it displays language’s independence from the referent outside of itself. Thus, for Derrida the performative enacts the now of writing in the present time” (149). By cementing her understanding of performativity in which reproduction and repetition are seemingly synonymous, Phelan seals up performance in the metaphysical trap of ontology through a transcendent agent or subject. Judith Butler frames performativity in a more productive and properly Derridian manner in noting that “all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; ‘agency’ then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition” (Butler 145). Butler’s view of performativity relocates agency not in a stable subjectivity, but in an iterability of performance that resists the traditional domain of the ontological.

More recently, in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor argues for an understanding of performance that articulates a relationship between an “archive” and “repertoire” of performance. Generally speaking, Taylor differentiates between the archive and the repertoire in terms of practice. She constitutes the difference as the rift between “the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual)” (19). According to Taylor the archive consists of items or written words that subsist through time and that deal with particular events, practices, histories, or experiences. Taylor places a certain emphasis on the archive’s staying power by highlighting Western society’s privileging of the written word over embodied practices. Taylor stresses that the archive is viewed typically as proof that a particular thing existed because of the West’s trust of archived things as enduring over great periods of time. She suggests that archival memory is assumed to exist as “documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change” (19). But she stresses that the interpretation of the archive can and does change, claiming, “what changes over time is the value, relevance, or meaning of the archive, how the items it contains get interpreted, even embodied. Bones might remain the same, even though their story may change, depending on the paleontologist or forensic anthropologist who examines them” (19). Taylor contrasts archival memory with the *repertoire*. According to Taylor the repertoire “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (20). She suggests that “the repertoire requires

presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same" (20).

Taylor concentrates on the repertoire and embodied action as valuable and usually in opposition to her understanding of other people's readings of the archive. She works to reclaim embodied practices as a successful form of transmitting and storing knowledge (26). Taylor continually suggests that the archive and repertoire are not binaries or at odds with each other in order to demonstrate that the power of the repertoire should be viewed on equal grounds with that of the archive. She notes that

the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization, or internalization, and transmission takes its 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 knowledge. (20-21)

Taylor continually works the Western privileging of the archive against the repertoire if only to make the argument that the repertoire has just as much power as the archive does. In order to restore power to the repertoire Taylor settles on the idea of the "scenario" as a useful way to focus on embodied behaviors or practices. However, she does so at the expense of "narratives" or "texts."<sup>4</sup>

Although Taylor spends a great deal of her book arguing that the archive and repertoire should not be set up as binaries, her valuation of the repertoire of embodied practice sets up fairly discrete categories of a particular ontology of performance. The tension between the archive and repertoire in Taylor's book is a tension of value and power. The release of that tension comes in her use of *performático* (6). However, she spends a great deal of time arguing for the value of

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor argues that "instead of privileging texts and narratives [as in the archive], we could also look to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes" (28). In Taylor's estimation scenarios include "features well theorized in literary analysis, such as narrative and plot, but demands that we also pay attention to *milieu* and corporeal behaviors such as gestures, attitudes, and tones not reducible to language" (28). Although we strongly support Taylor's focus on embodied practice as a vital way of transmitting knowledge worthy of the same rights afforded to the archive, Taylor fails to consider the multiple ways to recognize and express, in support or divergence, the bodies and bodily practices embedded in narrative and texts. By experimenting with the formal elements of embodied practice(s) one can activate those practices in their representation of a text for the archive, highlighting the importance of the practice to the overall analysis, and satisfying the needs of the archive by producing a text that remains "behind."

embodied practice in knowledge production as equal to that of the archive, subsequently setting them in opposition. In our estimation, she does not spend enough time discussing the ways that the archive and repertoire share tactics and methods in their (mutual) production(s)—how they haunt one another. What are the ways that embodied practice is enacted in the archival process itself? How can archival texts and narratives be produced as extensions of the processes of embodied practices? What happens when both the archive and repertoire are looked at in terms of a continuing process of experimentation through the tension between practice and theory?

An example of performance studies theory that experiments with the tension between the categories of practice and theory in the creation of text(s) is Ruth Laurion Bowman and Michael S. Bowman's essay, "On the Bias: From Performance of Literature to Performance Composition." In their essay, the authors create a performance on the page by engaging, utilizing, and challenging the many different performance forms and theories analyzed by the essay itself, while simultaneously reworking our understanding of the two different performance studies "camps." Bowman and Bowman use the metaphor of two different "classrooms" common to performance studies labeled "performance of literature" and "performance composition" to highlight a creative tension within the discipline (206, 208). They describe the classroom housing "performance of literature" as a place where literary texts are read aloud, text and performance are maintained as separate, and improvisation, personality, or technique are held at bay. The second classroom of "performance composition" is a place where the opposition between text and performance is blurry, onstage performances are attended to, and an odd liveliness occurs (206, 208). By framing the article with the example of the two classrooms of performance studies, the authors are able to challenge traditional narratives of the evolution of performance studies from interpretation to performance by combining both practices (interpretation of literature & performance composition) into a different type of text. The text they create draws upon multiple models of practice and theory in its construction. They use traces of performed scripts, definitions from dictionaries, theories of orality and literacy, "writerly" or "producerly" tactics of textual composition à la Roland Barthes and Gregory Ulmer. All of these tactics or methods combine to form a text that analyzes a particular question (the movement between performance of literature and performance composition) while experimenting formally with the mode of analysis. The result is a text whose formal elements metonymically reflect the arguments put forth in/by their analysis. The culmination of the essay is a seven point list of techniques and tactics to use in the construction of a performance composition that the authors themselves presumably used in their own essay. The essay therefore works beyond the page to continually produce more sites and understandings of performance through the combination of practice and theory, while continually reorienting itself to the categorical terms "practice" and "theory."

Similarly, the task for this article is to locate a (non)place within performance and performance studies that reworks ontological categories from the inside. Della Pollock, in a response to Dwight Conquergood, advocates a “challenge to the ready diffusion of ‘performance’ by the very ‘performativity’ of its repetition and citation across contemporary disciplinary formations” (37). Pollock draws upon Derrida, amongst others, to formulate a theory that might “figure the relations among text, performance, performativity, and textuality without either sustaining problematic subject-object distinctions or failing to sustain critical differences between text and performance, textuality and performativity” (39). Similarly, Jon McKenzie issues a challenge that we not

abandon conceptual modelization, but rather inscribe this movement within one’s specific situation, to fold generalization back on itself in order to avoid reducing performance to any one model, be it theatre or ritual or performance art or such theoretical models as formalism, psychoanalysis, feminism, deconstruction, queer theory, or postcolonial theory. (29)

Within these calls for performance theory and practice to embrace their own performativity, Strine, Long, and HopKins repeat and differ; performance is an “*essentially contested concept*, meaning that its very existence is bound up in disagreement about what it is, and that the disagreement over its essence is itself part of that essence” (183).

### **Conjuring Derrida and (re)Thinking Being in/of Performance**

Haunting is a complicated theoretical approach hard to describe, let alone operate within. Complications arise in any proposal for an epistemology because it makes various assumptions which call into question notions of value, content, form, knowledge, and truth. For people working with haunting, these issues become even more intensely contested because haunting calls these values into question before they arrive as questions. Put simply, if one adopts haunting one will be forced into a radical rethinking of how scholars and performers articulate experience(s). Haunting requires that concepts such as presence, ontology, performativity, and identity be rethought in a way that allows for difference to emerge. The idea of difference must be rethought as well to avoid conceiving of difference in terms of subjectivity or identity. Haunting is an epistemology concerned with the treatment of the other as an ethics of difference. It is precisely because we cannot account for difference from a subjective perspective without risking alienation or (re)instating norms, that we must change the manner in which we conceive of difference, using concepts like presence or performativity in a different way. We argue that such an ethics of radical difference can also be extended to performance studies practice and scholarship.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Some scholarship on the relationship of haunting and performance already exists. Marvin Carlson’s book *The Haunted Stage* delves into the ways in which the practice of theatre and sometimes the theatre (space) itself is haunted by previous productions, characters, props,

Some areas of performance studies that might be reinvestigated using haunting as an epistemology are the relationship between performer and audience, temporality, performativity, presence and absence, and the representation of history in/as performance. Haunting calls accepted notions underlying each of these areas into question and opens them up for different forms of critique to emerge.

In order to understand what haunting is(not), we need to examine more closely how Derrida employs haunting in *Specters of Marx*. Derrida himself recognizes the importance of performance in his reading of Marx via haunting which operates as a

performative interpretation, that is, of an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets . . . [this is] a definition of the performative as unorthodox with regard to speech act theory . . . (“The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it”). (Derrida, *Specters* 51)

From the beginning of his text on ghosts and Marx, Derrida constantly operates within such an unorthodox understanding of performativity, which continually transforms the texts and theories that he engages. We argue that such a continual transformation, or increase in productive capacity, of performance theory is necessary to expand how we conceive and practice performance.<sup>6</sup> We might use

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etc. However he uses a more traditional view of haunting as a recycling of the past and ignores the productive capacity of the ghost. While we may be haunted by memories, memories are not always ghosts and memory is not necessarily haunting. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer and Joshua Gunn engaged haunting and performance via music in their essay “‘A Change is Gonna Come’: On the Haunting of Music and Whiteness in Performance Studies.” While the essay engages haunting and performance by their use of multiple voices throughout the essay, the authors’ individual positions are not necessarily haunted. Gunn also authored a piece on haunting in his essay “Mourning Speech” in which he analyzes the haunting quality of the voice recordings of victims during the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. He notes that “as its own mournful practice, performance studies is haunted by dualism. Hence a central irony of subjectification is that it comprises a life-long mourning for an unmediated and impossible harmonization. As the work of mourning, then, performance is haunted . . .” (108) While certain aspects of this theory are sound, the event of the here-now of performance is where the work of mourning, the ghosts, and performance all intersect. In this intersection, harmony *as a singularity* emerges and affects experience as the performativity of performance. The work of mourning is productive and performance must be viewed as such, not in terms of melancholia. Care must also be taken to differentiate haunting from other operations in performance studies. There needs to be more of a critical discussion centered on the differences between haunting and the concepts of citatationality, intertextuality, intersubjectivity, and the “archive and the repertoire” to qualify haunting as a method of engaging performance studies practice and discourse. While certain aspects of these elements are surely at work within haunting, they are not synonymous and the temptation to conflate them must be resisted.

<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, the Deleuzian use of the term “increase in productive capacity” indicates a body or system of bodies that experiment with ways to increase possible future connections with other products or bodies through positive affect(s). A person

established concepts within performance theory against themselves in order to better highlight the contested nature of performance. That is, an understanding of performativity similar to Butler and Derrida's: through repeated usage, transformation occurs *in the usage itself*. This theory of performativity depends upon repetition and not reproduction. Similar to Butler's theory of performativity and agency, Derrida's shows the transformative potential of repetition via iterability and the trace through the performative interpretation at work within *Specters*. The trace is not a

presence but the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself, it properly has no site—erasure belongs to its structure . . . The paradox of such a structure, in the language of metaphysics, is an inversion of metaphysical concepts, which produces the following effect: the present becomes the sign of the sign, the trace of the trace. It is no longer what every reference refers to in the last analysis. It becomes a function in a structure of generalized reference. It is a trace, and a trace of the erasure of the trace. (Derrida, *Margins*, 24)

The trace emerges in a process of iterability via repetition. Where presence is commonly misinterpreted as the result of reproduction, the trace functions as a (non)presence of repetition because it always already has erasure(s) contained within it. For example, during the run of a performance, the performance transforms itself through its repetition night to night. The performance has traces of previous iterations of itself from previous nights. As a performer, one may remember a certain bodily sensation on a certain night, a look from an audience member that moved the performance in a new direction, or even the way it felt as the lights went down. Traces can extend even further into the rehearsal period, historical research, and even certain selections of music that might have been playing while learning lines. Performativity and, more specifically, the trace, destabilize the moment of performance and force scholars and practitioners to (re)orient themselves to their work.

For Derrida, justice comes in the form of responsibility to the other as difference. The others who Derrida writes of are both living others and others who have passed. He uses the ghost as a figure that calls attention to both. Individuals have a responsibility to live *with* the other and treat the other justly. In order to live responsibly then, one must be acutely aware of the socius, the *with* of the being-with Derrida writes about. The fact that we are among others calls us to be mindful of how we treat each other. This is the first order of responsibility for an individual

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experimenting with increasing their productive capacity within writing about performance would need to recognize old habits of behavior (which are by no means necessarily bad), open themselves up to new potential modes of behaving, and form new habits in order to make even more connections. Deleuze and Guattari refer to this phenomenon as de- and re-territorialization. The kicker is that the process never ends and ideally continues to produce out into the future.

concerned with an ethics of difference. The *with* prevents Cartesian subjectivity, and all of its ontological traps from forming, because this more Derridian subject has at her foundation a concern for the other in the form of the *with*. Therefore subjectivity must be rethought not in terms of an individual, but as a community of different individuals. We argue that such an ethics of difference extends also to performance. In the now of performance there are individuals experiencing performance with each other. According to Derridian logic, the audience and performers call each other into an ethical relationship that transforms the notion of “responsibility to the audience” from understanding to experience. Instead of grounding ethical responsibility for the audience in the role of facilitator of understanding, we argue for a Derridian ethics which grounds itself in the *with* of co-experiencing each other as a multiplicity of difference. This is similar to what Susan Sontag argues in *Against Interpretation*. Responsibility for the critic shifts from meaning through interpretation, toward experiencing art through an erotics or eroticization of art. In the moment of co-experiencing, the performer and audience engage each other not just in terms of what the other means, but how they excite each other’s senses. They redefine their roles according to flows of desire or sensoral engagements that they co-experience.

Within *Specters*, Derrida focuses primarily on Marx. Derrida wants to maintain the “specters of Marx” without conjuring them away into vulgar (i.e., traditional) readings; he recoups Marx and Marxism through the lens of deconstruction. One of the major tasks that Derrida continually attempts is to describe the ghost and how it operates. This task ultimately fails because of the need for the ghost to be constantly reinvestigated and questioned. The ghost “*is* something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it *is*, if it exists . . . One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of knowledge” (Derrida, *Specters* 6). The ghost, by its very nature, confounds what is accepted as knowledge. The ghost is not a static identity, rather it haunts as a “*non-sensuous sensuous* . . . the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone other. And of someone other that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit, and so forth” (7). The ghost is a figure that defies traditional definitions of being. We cannot sense the ghost as a subject or an identity that resides in understanding as knowledge. According to Derrida, the ghost is the closest figure to that of the other because it is a body without flesh. We perceive the body of the ghost, but its flesh exceeds our senses and our understanding. Similarly, we perceive the other but cannot locate the other in stable identity for fear of eliminating possible forms for the other to take. This alterity is the injunction from which we inherit the law, the absolute law of hospitality as justice to the other.

The ghost exists although we often do not see it. Invisible between its apparitions, it enacts a kind of invisible visibility. This asymmetry, or *visor effect*,

interrupts, de-synchronizes, and recalls us to anachrony (6-7). First and foremost the “the spirit comes by coming back [revenant], it figures both a dead man who comes back and a ghost whose expected return repeats itself, again and again” (10). The question of the ghost is a question of repetition because the specter is always a revenant and begins by coming back. We cannot control the ghost’s comings and goings (11). According to Derrida, the ghost is always other and sets out the task for the living to constantly (re)orient themselves to experiencing the figure of the ghost *as* other. In performance, the ghost could take the form of a figure from history such as Orson Welles. If we were creating a performance about Orson Welles in which a performer on stage represents him, the ghost of Orson Welles could repeatedly take on different forms *in* the body of the performer. At their simplest manifestation, these forms could be verbal or physical actions that evoke Orson Welles in some manner. In between possessions of the body of the performer by “Orson,” the ghost would remain hidden, but always looking out at both the performers and audience from the past, waiting to (re)materialize as a trace of history.

The ghost works, it produces, and therefore must be *allowed* to work. It works in the “mode of production of the phantom, itself a phantomatic mode of production” (97). This mode of production shows the work of mourning to be rethought as never-ending work. Mourning then, is “work itself, work in general, the trait by means of which one ought perhaps to reconsider the very concept of production” (97). According to this logic, mourning is not a process that ends after a set period of time. Performance can be mourned in such a way. Experiencing a performance does not end once the lights come up and the audience leaves; the performance has not disappeared. We necessarily wrestle with our experience and allow it to produce new places to engage, create, and critique future performances. We argue for a mourning of performance in its spectrality, rather than an interpretation of performance in its finality like Phelan suggests.

Through the figure of the ghost, then, Derrida rethinks possibilities for our experience of time. Temporality, he says, can be thought “only in a dis-located time of the present, at the joining of a radically dis-jointed time . . . Not a time whose joinings are negated, broken, mistreated, dysfunctional, disadjusted . . . a time without *certain* joining or determinable conjunction” (17-18). In other words, temporality is not the progression of the “now” moving from the past to the future sequentially, otherwise the “now” would be granted with a presence that Derrida says is impossible. Derrida explains this “disjuncture in the very presence of the present, this sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself (this radical untimeliness or this anachrony on the basis of which we are trying here to *think the ghost*)” (25) as the conditions for the impossibility of presence as such. He goes further to describe the presence of the present as a fallacy because

the present is what passes, the present comes to pass, it lingers in this transitory passage, in the coming-and-going, *between* what *goes* and what *comes*, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself

and what presents itself . . . Presence is enjoined, ordered, distributed in the two directions of absence, at the articulation of what is no longer and what is not yet. To join and enjoin. (25)

The present, or, here-now, must be reconsidered in light of such an articulation of presence as singularities of experience. Singularity is a concept that comes out of deconstruction and *différance* specifically. From *différance*, “the here-now unfurls. Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity, singular because differing, precisely, and always other, binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and in urgency*: even if it moves toward what remains to come” (31). A singularity is a collection of difference(s) held together by the here-now. However one must rethink the concept of “held together” not as a solid or stable unit, but a loose collection of differences held in sway, (dis)united in its “identity,” or presence. Derrida uses the here-now to talk about singular moments of experience without resorting to the language of the present as presence.

The differences of a singularity are held together in the moment of the experience of the here-now and labeled as a “singularity.” A singularity could contain a host of traces “inside” itself. There could be a community of people that makes up a singularity, all differing, watching a performance. Let’s call them the audience. The moment that all eyes witness the first movement of a body onstage would be a singular moment of the here-now that Derrida and Nancy write about. The singularity is made up of different people, different histories, and different perspectives all experiencing the performance in the here-now. Even “together” in this way, no two subjects in the audience experience the show in precisely the same way, thereby ensuring that multiple flows of difference(s) emerge. For example, the term “audience” is often analyzed in performance studies discourse as an ontological category rather than as a singularity as described here. Rather than understanding the audience as a united whole to whom we bear a responsibility for their “getting” the performance, we argue for the creation of performances that formally experiment and play with their structure(s) or composition so that multiple paths into the performance are provided—an ethics of composition.

For Jean-Luc Nancy it is the (non)togetherness of different singulars that makes up singularity “itself.” Singularities are assembled insofar as they produce space between them; they are linked only as far as they are not unified (33). Derrida uses the here-now as an example of a singularity of experience which illustrates the spacing as “the passage of this time of the present [which] comes from the future to go toward the past, toward the going of the gone” (Derrida, *Specters* 24). In a singularity of the here-now there is only difference that draws from traces of the past and future. The here-now draws from the past because it contains traces (marks and erasures) in its iterations. It also draws from the future, according to Derrida, because it is in the future that the behavior of individuals living in the here-now will come to be judged. In order to ethically treat the other, subjects must live for future generations. For Derrida, the heterogeneous nature of the “now” constantly opens

things up and lets itself be opened by the very disjunction of that which remains to come, from the past and future, singularly from the other (33). Put another way, the temporal disjunction of the ghost becomes both repetition and inauguration, since the ghost always begins by coming back. As the ghost reappears, it appears to us for the first time but has already engaged in a repetition by coming (back) one more time. The repetition of the ghost *is* the repetition of performativity. Derrida goes further to describe the performativity of the ghost saying that “the experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into frequency: number (more than one), insistence, rhythm (wave, cycles, and periods)” (107). For Derrida, the process of repetition and iteration are important when engaging the ghost. The importance lies in how the ghost is asking us to experience life, not in what it is saying itself.

Because the ghost always begins by coming back, the haunted subject has the responsibility to wait for the ghost. As stated before, the ghost is the closest manifestation to a figure of the other. Because we cannot control its comings and goings, we must not seek to appropriate the ghost, or the other, by conjuring it into existence. By trying to control the coming of the ghost, one assumes dominion over the ghost, and consequently the form that the ghost might take. According to Derrida, ethical treatment of others depends on allowing them to take whatever form they please in order to permit the possibility of difference(s) to manifest. The ethical thing to do is to allow the other, or ghost, to manifest by waiting for its arrival, openly and without expectation. In practical terms, then, we might stage multiple iterations of the other rather than offering a unified representation. In addition, we should be open to the myriad unanticipated others who might make themselves manifest. Derrida positions this absolute law of hospitality as the law of justice and responsibility to the other. One must always remain open to “what is coming, that is, to the event that cannot be awaited *as such*, or recognized in advance therefore, to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or him for whom one must leave an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this is the very place of spectrality” (65). Of course, true hospitality is impossible. However, an individual concerned with living hospitably will nonetheless attempt to provide it. Ghosts are always out there waiting to (re)appear. The task then is to remain “open, waiting for the event as justice, this hospitality is absolute only if it keeps watch over its own universality” (168).

Another way of looking at hospitality is to look at the moment a performance starts. Derridian ethics demand that, in order for justice to emerge, the audience and performers must engage each other openly and without expectation, in the here-now of the performance. Experience of the other, as other, must happen if a performance is to be ethical, according to Derrida. In such a case, the audience would need to allow the performance to dictate their experience by remaining open, and not allowing preconceived ideas about performance stand in their way. Similarly, the performers must allow the audience to be other by not constructing the performance for any particular audience out of respect for the potential difference(s) of the audience as a singularity.

We have named the ghost, temporality, and an ethics of hospitality as the main characteristics of haunting. Taken together, they create a new, or different mode of experiencing performance. They loosely form a hauntology rather than an ontology. Within this hauntological frame “each time it is the event itself, a first time and a last time. Altogether other” (10). Put simply, Derrida says that hauntology supplants ontology as a mode of experiencing life. Each event should be approached as a singular event, repeating again for the first time in its performativity. Concern for the other dictates that the event must also be experienced out of a concern for future generations of others. By using hauntology as an epistemology and even methodology of performance, a logic emerges that “points toward a thinking of the event that necessarily exceeds a binary or dialectical logic . . .” (63). We embrace the logic of the ghost in order to find a productive, open-ended, and experiential experimental mode of research and practice in performance and performance studies.

Our project in this essay is not to critique why questions of ontology or the need for ontological categorizations have been employed by various scholars throughout the last thirty years. The need for the discipline to be able to identify what it is that we do is not only important for those of us at work within it, but also for the very survival of the discipline at the institutional level i.e., administrators, deans, or department heads. Of course we need to be able to accurately and efficiently make arguments as a discipline that what we do is as worthwhile or “scholarly” as the work of a biologist or engineer, and therefore need to be able to define what performance is or what it does. However, we have argued throughout this essay that we also need to examine the assumptions at work within the arguments and how those assumptions about knowledge, language, or truth diffuse and spread throughout the discipline in different ways.

In *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions*, Della Pollock calls us to move beyond subject-object distinctions, and more importantly the tricky notions of presence and absence that all too often bog down conversation into binaries or categories of truth as knowledge. Haunting enables us to heed this call. More specifically, haunting contains a wealth of potential strategies within itself to (re)orient the praxis and research of performance studies discourse to itself. If performance is an essentially contested concept, then we need to continually (re)investigate the various ways with an eye toward increasing the productive capacity of the term *performance*. In looking at and experiencing performance hauntologically, as opposed to ontologically, a (non)space of critique and practice emerges and allows for the contested status of performance to actually contest—contest and perform through the performativity of performance.

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