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# Introduction: Contesting Performance in an Age of Globalization

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Performance research has gone global. By this we refer not so much to the cultural phenomena studied – which, it is clear, have long been located around the world – but to the *locations* of researchers themselves. These locations have steadily expanded over the past two decades, whether it be in terms of individual researchers working alone or in small groups on different continents. 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. In addition, a number of transnational scholarly organizations have formed – some with a regional focus, notably the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics and the Asian Performance Studies Research Group, and others with an international scope, such as Performance Studies international (PSi) and the performance-focused working groups of the International Federation of Theatre Research (IFTR). The Centre for Performance Research was established in the United Kingdom in 1988, and in 2005, the Schechner Center for Performance Studies opened at the Shanghai Theatre Academy in China.

If performance research as a recognized area of study and its institutionalization as performance studies have been widely perceived as centered in the United States, there is, also, a growing sense that a profound decentering of the area is transpiring, one that this collection seeks

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to register and document. Performance studies is no longer only about the West – specifically the United States – studying the ‘Rest.’ While performance has for some time been recognized as both a contested concept and a practice of potential contestation, the sites and stakes of those contests have both multiplied and entered into new configurations.

This collection, *Contesting Performance: Global Sites of Research*, has three major aims. The first is to foreground diverse locations of research, offering a partial survey of the globalization of performance research – and we use the terms ‘partial’ and ‘globalization’ advisedly here. The volume is partial for, in the end, there are too many developments and situations to be included in a single volume. Several important geographical areas are not represented, for instance, Canada, China, France, and India, though performance research is produced there. The chapters collected here are also partial in that each embodies particular local perspectives and – even when local complexities justify joint authorship for a single chapter – does not attempt universalizing summations, even of its own situation.

Indeed, while performance research has gone global, this development has not been altogether positive. As several contributions to the volume contend, such research has sometimes coincided in troubling ways with neoliberal economic globalization. Despite the critical attitude toward economic globalization taken by many, if not most performance researchers, the globalizing processes of performance and neoliberal economics are not unrelated or opposed, given the burgeoning global market for cultural performances – and for the research that engages with such performances. Indeed, this relation is reflected in this volume itself. Its publisher Palgrave Macmillan (particularly through its two performance-oriented book series, *Studies in International Performance*, edited by Janelle Reinelt and Brian Singleton, and *Performance Interventions*, edited by Elaine Aston and Bryan Reynolds, in which this collection appears), along with Routledge, is currently one of the leading publishers of performance research, in part because it markets this research around the world. We, the editors, while critical of economic globalization, clearly do not imagine ourselves outside of its operation.

A second aim of *Contesting Performance* is to analyze both the global impact and decentering of performance research, especially given the United States’ so-called ‘imperial’ present (even as that ‘present’ seems undermined by former US president Bush’s disastrous foreign-policy initiatives during his administration) and the widely held view that performance studies is centered there. In the following we use the term ‘performance research’ rather than ‘performance studies’ to mark this

decentering. Performance as a field of study first became institutionalized in the United States, but has since gone global, a process that sounds uncannily like developments in economic and political neo-imperialism. But while cultural knowledge production has been decentered, it has not displaced what might be called the dispersed global West (Wee, 2007: 17–19), a West extended in part via humanities and social science research conducted in British and, particularly, US universities (Appadurai, 2000: 3). Thus it is evident that while familiar models of knowledge production that rest on binaries of center/periphery and inside/outside no longer easily apply, old power relations based on economics and politics have not simply or entirely been replaced by more diffuse cultural forces. To complicate matters still further, one cannot easily separate ‘good’ from ‘bad’ political and socio-cultural ‘influences’ – in fact, the problematic borders between such influences are what need to be better understood. How, then, have scholars around the world variously incorporated, appropriated, decentered, and challenged a ‘Western’ or ‘US’ model of performance research for their own ends, anti-imperialist and otherwise?

The third major aim of this collection is to produce a better sense of the contours of performance research – and its stakes – by foregrounding its local contexts and trying to highlight ‘other’ voices and bodies of inquiry. The ‘local’ here refers not only to non-metropolitan locations, but also to sub-national or regional locations. To foreground the local, however, is not to argue that the local is more ‘real’ or privileged than other contexts, but rather to emphasize the local as a distinct context within which the globalization of Western power and knowledge is mediated, resisted, or appropriated. Indeed, the production of locality itself often occurs within a site traversed not only by the (dominant) US version of the global West, but also by regional powers and cultures. As shown by the chapters in the volume, whether it be Slovenia, Singapore, or Morocco, the local may contest, negotiate, and collude not only or even primarily with the global West, but also with more complex and multiple power relations.

In pursuit of these three aims, we have sought accounts of how performance research has emerged in specific places and solicited chapters from scholars around the world. Among the questions we posed to them: What defines the field, and what types of performances are studied? What constitutes ‘proper’ research, and which methods and theoretical frameworks have been important? Which researchers have been especially influential? Have there been particular performances, artists, genres, or practices that have helped shape the research agenda, and have any served as models for the very definition of performance? What

problems have arisen around language and/or translation – in particular, how important or irrelevant is the English-language term ‘performance’ itself? What is the relation between ‘practices’ and ‘models,’ ‘performance’ and ‘research,’ ‘performance’ and ‘teaching,’ and how well do these distinctions translate or fit into local histories and situations? What critical questions or issues have been crucial, either in performance or research, or both? What institutions have supported and informed research, whether they be universities, governments, funding agencies, or other organizations? What types of curricula or pedagogies have been initiated? What publications have been important for researchers and practitioners? How has the research been shaped by broader social, political, and historical phenomena – for instance, by nationalism, war, genocide, diaspora, or globalization? What regional or international alliances or organizations have been formed? What challenges lie ahead? This collection brings together their responses.

### **Is performance studies imperialist?<sup>1</sup>**

At the center of this collection is the effort to identify alternative genealogies to a research paradigm long associated with New York University’s (NYU) Department of Performance Studies. Widely known as the ‘broad spectrum’ approach, its objects of study range, most famously, from ritual to theatre, and include performance art, dance, folklore, and performative acts of everyday life (Schechner, 1988). This research paradigm was first formally institutionalized at NYU in 1980, when the Graduate Drama Department became renamed the Department of Performance Studies. The department now hosts one of the field’s most respected journals, *The Drama Review*, or *TDR*, and more importantly, has over several decades produced influential research. As argued in Marvin Carlson’s *Performance: A Critical Introduction* ([1996] 2004) and Richard Schechner’s *Performance Studies: An Introduction* ([2002] 2006), the origins of this particular research paradigm reach back to the mid-twentieth century. The breadth of research methods and theoretical frames is as wide as the broad spectrum of subjects studied, being drawn from such fields as anthropology, art history, communication, dance history, history, linguistics, literary studies, philosophy, postcolonial studies, psychology, sociology, and theatre studies. The methods include critical race studies, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, new historicism, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, queer theory, semiotics, and speech act theory. And yet, as Jon McKenzie argues in *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (2001), the NYU paradigm was not totally diffuse: in its formative

years in the 1960s and 1970s, it privileged theatre as a formal model for 'seeing' the broad spectrum of, while also privileging, liminal rituals as a functional model for theorizing the potential for performances to produce social change. Later, during the so-called US 'culture wars' of the 1980s and early 1990s (Graff, 1993), performance art became a paradigmatic performance genre, one that meshed well with emerging theories of subject formation found in poststructuralism and cultural studies (McKenzie, 2001: 29–53).

As some of the chapters collected here suggest, the success of the performance studies paradigm cuts two ways. There is little doubt that it has produced ground-breaking research that has been published and translated around the world. The NYU program itself remains one of the premier postgraduate programs in the field. Further, some of its graduates have gone on to teach in and, in some cases, administer other academic performance studies programs, while other graduates have entered careers in the arts, media, and other professions. NYU's influence extends far beyond the United States, as many scholars and artists have gone to that university from overseas for their training and then returned to their native countries to work. And yet, this powerful set of influences has produced 'blowback,' a critical counter-force against what some feel is the paradigm's dominant status.

One instance where this critical counter-force came to the fore was at the 2004 PSi conference held in Singapore, titled 'Perform: State: Interrogate.' During two of its main plenary sessions, in particular, presenters and audience members alike interrogated the US dominance of performance studies, the relation of this dominance to the American 'global war on terror,' the problematic role played by the English language in performance research, ranging from scholarly publications to academic conferences, and the very term 'performance' itself. The location and timing of these criticisms were significant. The conference in Singapore, where the state plays an active role in cultural affairs, took place in June 2004, just months after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal broke – detainee abuse had been committed by some personnel of the US 372nd Military Police company. Crucial to the critical reassessment of performance studies was the presence of over 130 Asian artists, scholars, and students, whose perspectives on performance research may differ greatly from US and UK artists, scholars, and students, owing both to their different performance traditions and to the legacies of American and British imperialisms in the region. Significantly, this critical force carried over to the following PSi conferences at Brown University in the United States and Queen Mary, University of London, where discussions begun in

Singapore not only continued but also were linked with debates over performance and human rights.

Given the collective weight of such critiques, is performance studies therefore to be considered imperialist? The answer depends both on one's perspective – in particular, on one's relation to the imperialist legacies just cited – and on how one defines or understands 'performance studies' (or 'PS'). It may be useful to see criticisms of the PS paradigm in terms of what might be described as a 'nested structure.' At the center is 'NYU PS,' or, more specifically, the performance studies identified with Richard Schechner's 'broad spectrum' approach. While Schechner has long been criticized on imperialist grounds (Boal, 1970), one cannot simply or at least simplistically dismiss Schechner's work on such grounds, as he has consistently taken positions critical of US policies, both international and domestic. And although Schechner's broad spectrum approach has certainly been influential, it should be stressed that the NYU program cannot be reduced to Schechner's work, as other notable researchers teach there, including Diana Taylor, one of our contributors, whose own Latin American background and training link her as closely to the imperial 'periphery' as to the 'center.' PS courses taught at NYU are, if anything, geopolitically *anti-imperialist* and (it should be noted) Schechner's own approach is itself contested there. Nevertheless, the wide-ranging adoption of the broad spectrum approach, alongside NYU's increasing global visibility – with study-abroad programs in roughly a dozen countries, and even an Asian branch of its Tisch School that opened in Singapore in October 2007 – has produced, at the very least, a palpable perception of NYU PS's dominant presence in the field.

NYU is itself 'nested' in a larger formation – 'US PS' or more broadly US/North American performance studies. Just as NYU PS is not reducible to Richard Schechner, US PS is not reducible to New York University. As Shannon Jackson's chapter in this collection argues, another performance research tradition – one based in oral communication – has contributed much to the field. Institutionally, Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, in particular, has produced many influential researchers, and over the last 15 years, many other performance studies programs or departments have emerged in North America. Some of these new performance studies programs are located at major research universities such as Brown, Stanford, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Texas at Austin. But again, the very prestige of US performance studies and the sheer quantity of publications

and presentations, while in one respect laudatory, nevertheless contributes to the sense of an American dominance of performance studies.

The political and social aspects of this dominance may surprise some scholars in the United States, who have long been accustomed to thinking of the field of performance studies as both deeply critical of hegemonic power formations and as itself *marginal*, barely recognized institutionally, and always searching for new methods and subjects to address central political questions of cultural identity, power, and resistance. However, what might be overlooked is the cultural specificity of US notions of cultural identity, power, and resistance when they are packaged as a seemingly universal form or format for multiculturalism. It should be noted that other fields, such as American and English literary and cultural studies, face similar dilemmas as their research and pedagogical approaches have also gone global (Gunn, 2001; Chen, 1998; and Pease 2002).

What further needs to be brought in here is a general thrust toward the marketization and commodification of higher education in parts of the world, in which the desire to have competitive development has meant that US research universities have become models through which 'innovation' and 'creativity' can be fostered for the 'new competencies' thought to be essential if less-advanced societies are to become knowledge nodes in the global circulation and production of information. Given this development, even apparently 'contestatory' fields of study such as performance studies or, for that matter, gender studies or postcolonial theory, can become suitable and commodifiable fodder for capitalist development, as their content becomes less important than their being part of the curricula for 'creative' tertiary education (Delbanco, 2007; Wee, in press;). For instance, we see in Uchino Tadashi and Takahashi Yuichiro's chapter on Japan how if, on the one hand, a specific national-cultural development trajectory has made it hard for performance studies to gain academic legitimacy, on the other hand, a certain performance studies model has become a pedagogical tool through which individuals can make better socio-economic impressions on business audiences – that is to say, performance studies has been 'embraced' by Japan's service-oriented, late-capitalist market economy.

Moving outward once again in the 'nested' structure of the imperialism of performance studies, we can focus on the *combined* American and British dominance of the field: 'US/UK PS.' As in the United States, the number of performance researchers and courses of academic study

in the United Kingdom has increased in recent years, a development Heike Roms addresses in her chapter. Also important here has been the role of the Centre for Performance Research and of the journal *Performance Research*. As significant research has emerged from the United Kingdom, British scholars often explicitly contrast their research and pedagogy to that found in the United States, stressing in particular their emphasis on practice. However, for many scholars outside the United States and the United Kingdom, such distinctions are less important than these countries' perceived dominance, taken corporately as a kind of Anglo-American 'axis.' The leading publishers of performance scholarship – Routledge, the University of Michigan Press, and now Palgrave Macmillan – are based in these two countries. Their books are sold around the world, but marketed with an eye to US and UK readers. Further, of the 15 PSi conferences held thus far (1995–2009), two have been in the United Kingdom, and eight in the United States. There have been only five other host countries: Germany, New Zealand, Singapore, Denmark, and Croatia. Like the United States, New Zealand and Singapore are former British colonies, so from another perspective, only three PSi conferences to date have been held outside the Anglo-American sphere.

This point leads us to the last, but most vast, realm of the projected 'PS empire.' At the nested structure's outermost ring, we find 'Anglophone PS': the role of English as the lingua franca of performance studies. This dimension becomes clearer if, to the US and UK programs, one adds the study and research undertaken in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Nigeria, Kenya, Hong Kong, South Africa, and English-speaking Canada. At this juncture, though, we should note that performance research, broadly taken, follows a more general pattern. English has become the 'world language' in many fields of knowledge, as well as in the realms of international trade, finance, and transportation. But given the critical function of much cultural performance research, the global hegemony of English cannot be ignored.

The matter of translation arose at some PSi conferences; both the 1999 Aberystwyth and 2001 Mainz PSi conferences provided multilingual translations, while one plenary of PSi in Singapore was devoted to the topic of the power of English vis-à-vis other languages, especially those in Southeast Asia. However, at both Mainz and Aberystwyth, only a few plenary sessions were translated, while all the others were held in English. The entire discussion on language in Singapore occurred – not surprisingly – in English. On the one hand, these cases reveal that English provides a way for people whose primary language is not

English to communicate with someone for whom it is, and it also allows non-primary English speakers to communicate with one another. On the other hand, as was discussed at the Singapore PSi session, the predominance of English informs and deforms the concept of 'performance' and, by extension, the very phenomena studied 'as' performance. Several questions arise: How is this term 'performance' translated? When and why is it frequently left untranslated? And how do 'performance' and its translations resonate with other terms and usages? Lada Čale Feldman and Marin Blažević address issues of translation from a Croatian perspective in their chapter here.

Despite our interest in presenting alternative genealogies of performance research, this collection on performance research can itself be criticized for contributing to this 'PS empire.' One highly regarded scholar declined our invitation to contribute an essay precisely on these grounds, arguing that our attempt to survey the global growth of performance research would very likely extend the hegemony of the dominant PS paradigm, rather than truly offering and exploring alternative approaches. The editors recognize this risk. This collection is published in English by a major British academic press; we all work within the Anglophone network – Wee in Singapore, Roms in the United Kingdom, and McKenzie in the United States – and one of us not only trained at NYU but studied under Richard Schechner and sees him as a mentor.

Yet we believe the risk entailed is worth taking, for we strongly sense that the time has come for more open discussion and debate. Our sense of the collection's timeliness is grounded in a series of events that we have organized over several years, including a workgroup organized by McKenzie and Jessica Chalmers at the 2003 Performance Studies Preconference of the Association of Theatre in Higher Education; a three-day working session organized by McKenzie, Roms, and Wee at the 2004 Singapore PSi meeting; and a seminar organized by Roms and McKenzie at the 2006 American Society for Theatre Research conference. More recently, *TDR* responded to our question of performance studies and imperialism with a series of commentaries.<sup>2</sup> As we learned most keenly from the 25 participants at the Singapore workshop, many scholars feel a strong desire to 'tell their stories,' to relate local histories of the events and people, as well as the methodological tools and institutional challenges that inform and shape performance research. There is also great interest in simply learning what others are doing elsewhere. A critical mass has emerged that needs representation and analysis, despite the risk of expanding the alleged PS empire.

## The West and the Rest?

But perhaps there is another danger lurking here. By posing the question of a PS empire in this Introduction, might we be reasserting and consolidating the oppressive notion of center/periphery – ‘the West and the Rest’ – that has long informed cultural and humanistic research? The foundational logic of historicism, in which modernity and modern research trends are seen to emanate from the center and then proceed to the world’s ‘hinterlands’ (Sakai, 2006, pp. 170, 174), is hard to escape, despite the cultural-critical arguments made in the past 20 years or so regarding postcolonial hybridity and resistance, the colonial contact zone, alternative modernities, and so forth.

We believe that the chapters in this collection, taken together, indicate some form of an alternative. What emerges strongly from the collection as a whole is that the research – and indeed cultural and intellectual relationships between many of the non-American and non-Western European writers here – cannot be reduced to a dichotomous relationship between the globalized metropolitan West and the non-Western writers’ specific localities. What the chapters of this book reveal is some displacement of the ‘West and the Rest’ paradigm, where the ‘West’ refers to NYU PS or, more generally, to the agendas of humanistic Anglo-American scholarship.

Certainly, in many respects, researchers around the world have to contend with the research agendas set in the ‘center.’ As prestigious UK and US academic journals and university presses have circulated critical and cultural theory dealing with issues of political transgression – such as race, gender, and postcolonialism – around the world, these models now shape non-Western performance research. But these paradigms can also overlook significant trends in cultural production and the production of cultural knowledge best understood from a local or regional perspective. For example, the term ‘postcolonial’ does not precisely describe the particularities of, say, post-apartheid or current Australian artistic critique. Edward Scheer and Peter Eckersall observe in their discussion of Australian PS’s constant need to refer back to England and the United States as points of origin for cultural practices that there is a ‘broad failure thus far to engage meaningfully with indigenous performance forms.’ Loren Kruger’s chapter on post-apartheid South African theatre argues that dominant performance studies models that stress the transgressive character of live performance miss the subversive local uses of commodified media forms.

The point here is that some research locations, though highly influenced by cultural-research developments in the 'advanced' center, also manifest distinctive national concerns and challenges. Sal Murgiyanto's chapter, for example, looks at collaborative performances within and between different Indonesian dance traditions as a way of affirming national, traditional, and contemporary art forms. Research in other locations manifests a strong set of relationships both to the West and to their immediate region. Bojana Kunst's chapter stresses the collaboration among performance researchers in Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade as a way to counter Western European and American understandings of regional cultural production. The researchers' voices in this collection do not always just talk back to the center, but speak for and among themselves, or to regional concerns and identities.

The importance of regions and regionalization have come to the fore in recent years for political and economic reasons (Katzenstein, 2005; Pempel, 2005). Regions have entrenched histories, with their own interior struggles between centers and peripheries that individual researchers often want and need to address. East Asians, for instance, need to deal with a triadic 'Japan-Asia-West' imaginary, rather than a simple West-Rest binary (Sun, 2007). In another example, the relationship within the European Union between its newer and more established members forms a complex set of intra-regional relationships that do not fit easily into a West-Rest paradigm.

Fundamentally, what many chapters in *Contesting Performance* indicate is that while performance research does emanate from an intellectual center in the Anglo-American West, and while the various culturalist agendas of that center have been globalized, such concerns are not always central shaping forces. Thus, the concerns of performance research scholars working around the world are not *inevitably* focused on disputing the global center's hegemonic status. While this does not mean that this volume collectively escapes the West-Rest or center-periphery set of binary oppositions, it at the least does suggest that the goal may be less to eliminate these binaries altogether than to *multiply* and *complicate* them in order to reveal a more complex analytic field.

## Global sites of research

In an effort to give a vivid and nuanced sense of the ways that performance researchers around the world are grappling with problems of globalization, US hegemony, and the institutionalization of performance studies as a discipline, we are convinced that it is crucial to stress the

'situatedness' of local sites of research. It is in the dense particularity of specific places and times that the variety and subtlety of contemporary performance research emerges.

The collection is divided into three parts. In the first section, we track the experiences of scholars who tell different stories about the contextually situated institutionalization of performance studies. All narrate struggles over problems of language, disciplinarity, and academic institutionalization, though in intriguingly different ways. The second section underscores the importance of performance practice as a challenge to institutionalized understandings of performance, and suggests that it would be a mistake for academics not to take account of the ways that distinctive, local practices shape the possibilities of thinking about performance. The final section develops this point by bringing together scholars who argue that artists actually do the kind of productive and critical thinking about performance that we usually associate with critics and academic writing. The last chapters hence focus attention on artists who generate provocative, searching, and innovative performances, suggesting that through embodied, particular performance experience we may grasp genuinely distinct approaches to performance.

### **Part I Institutionalizing performance studies**

Our first group of chapters relates stories of successes in terms of where the academic discipline of performance studies has been planted and taken root in a divergent range of venues.

Diana Taylor in Chapter 1 traces the founding of the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, 'a collaborative, multilingual, and interdisciplinary consortium 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.' Transnational and trilingual, the Institute grew out of a desire to bring together archives of performance practice that had been far-flung and elusive. Deliberately refusing to call itself a 'center,' the Institute embraced 'a decentering project' that would attract scholars and artists from Canada to Patagonia, including 'scholars who do not usually consider themselves part of the hemisphere.' Cultural formations in the Americas themselves are often deeply transnational: 'Youth gangs span the Americas, transmitted by the Latino youth who grew up in the United States and deported for immigration reasons to a "home" in Latin America they never knew.' Confronting challenges of language, translation, limited media, and

unequal distributions of power that sometimes threatened the notion of transnational partnership, the Institute has done well, with over 25 member universities and cultural institutions, thousands of participants at their *'Encuentros,'* a physical archive, and a huge online repository of digital materials, including a digital video library with 500 hours of streaming video of performance work. Taylor thinks of the Institute not as 'a thing' but as a performative 'practice.'

Gay McAuley takes us in Chapter 2 to the University of Sydney, where she narrates the history of the institutionalization of performance studies as a discipline. Neither isolated nor derivative, McAuley works to show how 'the Sydney-based scholars engaged with work being done elsewhere as they developed their own distinctive approach to the emerging discipline.' What emerged included a focus on regional performance practices, especially those in Indonesia and Japan, an insistence that students engage 'with contemporary performance practice via performance analysis and observation of rehearsal process,' and an interest in 'traditional text/narrative/character-based theatre' alongside non-theatrical and experimental performance practices. While optimistic about the fact that performance studies continues to grow in recognition in the Australian context, McAuley nevertheless foresees no escape from 'a field dominated by northern hemisphere institutions and perspectives, reinforced by a market economy within which the Australian experience is so often seen as utterly marginal.'

In Chapter 3, Heike Roms identifies two features that characterize performance studies in the United Kingdom: 'firstly, its attention to artistic practice, whether manifest as a renewed focus on the materiality of theatre or as the expansion of creative modes of investigation; and secondly, the tension between its close association with and frequent deliberate dissociation from its US-counterpart.' Contrasting with US approaches, Roms locates a possible 'British' concern with the study of performance within the recognition of creative practice as a form of research that possesses validity in the university. She proposes that '[w]hat may appear at first as a reversal of performance studies' focus from an extended consideration of cultural practices back to a narrow notion of performance as aesthetic production, in fact presents a profound re-evaluation of the nature of practice itself and our study of it.' Her chapter outlines what is at stake – institutionally and epistemologically – in such a re-evaluation for the researching and teaching of performance in the United Kingdom.

If performance research in such diverse sites as the Hemispheric Institute, Sydney University and the United Kingdom have flourished in part by contesting and reworking the dominance of US performance

studies, Chapter 4 argues that even US disciplines and universities have had to resist and elude the oppressive techno-bureaucratic processes of globalization and of 'Americanization' itself. Shannon Jackson tells a story about the institutionalization of the 'other' tradition of performance studies in the United States – the oral, rhetorical tradition that came to be most famously housed at Northwestern University. Led in large part by Dwight Conquergood, the oral interpretative strand of performance studies stressed 'a particular kind of conversation between ethnography and performance – one about narratological politics and about cross-media translation' – and led to new methods in the field. The institutionalization process, though, did not mean that a contestatory and non-conformist edge was lost in pedagogy because of the pressures of techno-bureaucratic accounting and the pressures of the bottom line: 'performance pedagogy [...] is also terribly inefficient, requiring enrollment limits that do not make financial sense, requiring extended hours that challenge the classroom schedulers. [...] Indeed, it is a brand of performance that refuses to be measured by the system of inputs and outputs that structure the "performance evaluations" of academic departments with increasing frequency.' The rhetorical tradition of performance studies continues to be 'a relentlessly illegitimate, if undernoticed, discipline.'

The final chapter by Uchino Tadashi and Takahashi Yuichiro draws our attention to an unexpected institutionalization of performance studies, alongside a simultaneous deep resistance to performance studies as an import from abroad. Since Japan is often cited as a site where performance art itself originated, and since critical theories about performativity – for example, the work of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick – have been popular among Japanese academics, why, they ask, are there no performance studies departments at all, and only 'a handful' of Japanese books on performance art, experimental theatre, and cultural performance? Uchino and Takahashi point to long traditions of thought and institutionalization that led to a strict divide between academics – who study 'fixed' objects such as literary texts from empirical and historical perspectives – and journalists – who have cornered the market on contemporary, ongoing, and influential cultural experience. If performance studies has sometimes broken down such divisions elsewhere, it has not done so in Japan. Chapter 5 offers the instructive story of one academic, Sato Ayako, who was trained in NYU's Department of Performance Studies and returned to Japan to popularize the idea of 'performance-*gaku*' (performance 'scholarship' or 'discipline') as one embodied illustration of the situation analyzed. Sato deliberately turned

away from the liminal and subversive model of performance, which she took to be characteristically ‘American,’ and instead formed her own model which stressed the effective playing of social roles. Uchino and Takahashi conclude that Sato’s influential ‘performance-*gaku*’ is ‘prescriptive,’ reinforcing nationalist, class, and gender norms. With the translation from NYU Performance Studies to Sato’s performance-*gaku*, then, came a profound transformation of methods and goals that has alienated progressive academics in Japan.

## Part II Contesting the academic discipline through performance

This part contains chapters that suggest that performance practices and institutions *outside* of the university can productively drive thinking about performance. The contributors to this section discuss approaches to performance that are not strictly disciplinary or academic. Typically linked to the university’s study of performance but inventive, unruly, and conceptual in their own ways, the chapters gesture to strong links between creative practice and critical reflection which have the capacity to transform performance research both within and beyond the university.

Edward Scheer and Peter Eckersall in Chapter 6 point to the value of experimental performance practice in disrupting the entrenched binaries that have shaped the adoption of US and European models of performance studies in postcolonial sites. Their context is Australia, where US hegemony and Australia’s marginalization as the Antipodes – perpetually understood through its ‘geographical oppositeness’ – reinforce an oppressively colonizing sense that scholarship on performance always takes place in relation to Europe and the United States. Scheer and Eckersall favor moving beyond antipodality to a specifically regional understanding of Australian culture – reaching out to Japanese and Javanese performance practices, for example, to generate a sense of ‘Australias beyond the antipodes.’ They describe one performance, *Journey to Con-fusion*, as a crucial experiment in such regional collaboration, joining the Melbourne-based experimental performance group Not Yet It’s Difficult (NYID) and Gekidan Kaitaisha (Theatre of Deconstruction) from Tokyo. Such performances embrace intercultural regional collaboration and the ‘art of improvisation’ (Meaghan Morris) as a ‘usefully disruptive’ approach to the antipodean logic of Australian performance studies as it is often conceived and practiced in the university.

In Chapter 7 Bojana Kunst discusses the Slovenian magazine *Maska*, which reflects in critical and in interdisciplinary ways on the question of performance through an ongoing engagement with ‘the live practice

of art.' *Maska* emerged as a dialogue between art and theory, and also as a give-and-take between local and global contexts. It created international visibility for Slovenian artists in the 1990s, who were developing new ideas about performance, but it also introduced theoretical approaches from around the world to a Slovenian audience, and broadened the conversation about performance through translations and visiting lecturers. Kunst argues that *Maska* can also help to reorient global understandings of Slovenian art. Widely misunderstood in Western Europe and the United States, Slovenian approaches to performance in the 1980s and 1990s did not always adopt 'dissident' attitudes; nor did they all strive to catch up with capitalist Western Europe, as the conventional teleological story about the transition from communism to capitalism assumes: *Maska*' has always tried to think the processes of art through more complex connections and has problematized the mirrors that we hold in front of each other during these processes.' The magazine is intended to act as a complex and dynamic 'platform for the production of knowledge' that works outside of academic institutions while drawing on ideas from globalized performance studies and from local artistic practices.

If Australian artists have reconceived their practices in relation to regional rather than colonial powers, and Slovenian artists and thinkers have reacted in a complex set of ways to the collapse of communism and the impact of commercialization and globalization, academics and performance artists in the city-state of Singapore face yet another set of political circumstances: a highly centralized state which issues powerful performative declarations and uses carefully staged public performances – such as National Day Parades – to shore up its own power. In this context, according to Ray Langenbach and Paul Rae in Chapter 8, none of the institutionalized approaches to performance – 'whether internationally produced theoretical perspectives, local research commissions, or "objective" academic scholarship; whether "thick" or "thin" analyses – has yet proved capable of modeling an appropriate relationship between cultural performances and their researchers [...].' The authors pick out a number of fruitful new directions in scholarship, such as densely researched studies of local traditions – for example, Margaret Chan's *Ritual is Theatre, Theatre is Ritual* (2006) – and attempts to contextualize Singaporean performance in a regional context – for example, Jennifer Lindsay's edited *Between Tongues: Translation and/of/in Asia* (2006). But they place their highest hopes in ongoing performance practices and artistic networks, such as a roundtable called 'Panic Buttons: Crisis, Performance, Rights,' where artists, activists, and academics from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand developed an ongoing

and dynamic network for dialogue and exchange that would have been impossible, according to Langenbach and Rae, if located wholly within the university setting. Privileging such regional 'hybrid events,' they call for a wide, regionally based understanding of the field of performance research that reaches beyond the walls of the academy.

Sybille Peters then turns our attention in Chapter 9 to the German context for performance research, which, she suggests, is defined neither within the dominant Anglo-American institutionalization of performance studies nor in opposition to it. Here, Peters argues, the future of performance research relies on the development of hybrid formats 'that allow transitions between research on performance and performance-as-research' and thus challenge the strict separation between theory and practice that has defined the German scholarly tradition. Like Langenbach and Rae, Peters locates such hybrid formats both within and outside of the academy. She offers an overview of a variety of different approaches, from well-funded, university-based interdisciplinary research programs to independently curated and produced interventionist performance projects. These approaches have the potential to 'lead to a different understanding of research, which regards it no longer as the privilege of the specialist fields of science, theory, and art. Instead, the role of these fields would be to help organize and make visible the collective research that is undertaken by everybody, every day, making use of a wide range of procedures and integrating all forms of knowledge.' By thus questioning the dividing lines that currently separate the institution of the university from art and politics, such non-specialized hybrid research, Peters proposes, may ultimately lead to a form of egalitarian politics in our knowledge society. But she also expresses doubt over the future likelihood of such transitional performance research – in a time of increasing economic pressure on academic institutions, '“performance”,' she remarks succinctly, 'may simply come to stand for “output” and “research” for what economists do when they analyze markets.' This is a fear that has resonance with Uchino and Takahashi's concerns with the commodification of performance research and pedagogy.

In the last chapter of this section, the difficulties of translating not only the practices of performance studies but the English term 'performance' itself become clear in Chapter 10 about Croatia by Lada Čale Feldman and Marin Blažević. Academics in Croatia work under the constant pressure to translate texts and traditions from elsewhere, and what Anglophone scholars call performance in Croatia joins together a complex amalgam of many cultural and intellectual traditions, some in

conflict with others: German historically oriented traditions of *Literatur- und Theaterwissenschaft* and *Volkskunde*, Russian formalism and Prague structuralism; French structuralism, narratology, and the Tartu school; Eco's semiotics and theatre studies; and the translation of excerpts from such works as Schechner's *Performance Theory* (1988), Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1989), and Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre* (1982), among others. In this complex, multinational context, Feldman and Blažević argue that contested terms and multiple conceptual traditions characterized Croatian scholarship on theatre, folklore, folk drama, and performance art for many decades. In the mid-1990s the magazine *Frakcija* 'introduced a comprehensive generic term – "performing arts" (*izvedbene umjetnosti*) – to bring theatre and performance art closer to each other within the sphere of theory and criticism.' While this concept of performance has broken down traditional boundaries and brought together an array of practices under the umbrella of 'performance,' Feldman and Blažević too stress that it is aesthetic performance practices rather than academic criticism that have offered the contestatory reflections and done most to disrupt old binaries and to generate a lively Croatian culture of 'performance.'

### Part III The power of performance practice

If some of the previous chapters mark how scholars can embrace local artistic practice as 'a material practice of thinking' (*Kunst*) that connects with the academic discipline of performance studies in ways that may reinscribe it, the final section offers chapters on how artists themselves may offer productive thinking about performance in specific sites. The scholars in this section study artists whose performances help us to grasp and think through the political, social, and cultural contours of their local contexts, suggesting that artistic performance *itself* may resist and help reconfigure global performance research.

Khalid Amine argues in Chapter 11 that Moroccan theatre has often oscillated between an embrace of Western proscenium theatrical models and a fierce rejection of European paradigms in the name of a return to 'indigenous' performance traditions. Contemporary experimental theatre practices, according to Amine, explore a 'liminal space' that fuses Western theatrical traditions and local Arabic performance traditions. Deliberately hybrid and self-reflexive, Moroccan artists draw on long local traditions, such as the contemporary street performances known as *Al-halqa*, subversive comic theatre, and improvisational performance, to disrupt the hegemonic practices of politics and official cultural institutions, while also contesting legacies of colonial rule. And it is in these

hybrid performances that 'liminal third spaces' emerge, spaces 'that transform, renew, and recreate different kinds of writing.'

Indonesian dance offers some of the same dynamic theoretical possibilities as Moroccan theatrical practice, according to dance scholar Sal Murgiyanto. Indonesian artists deliberately fuse innovative, contemporary practices with a vast array of 'traditional' dance forms from different ethnic traditions in order to contest both colonial cultural power and any single, official version of Indonesian culture. Dance, in Murgiyanto's account in Chapter 12, begins to erase the boundaries between performance and performance research, since it can be considered in itself a species of 'research.' First, by privileging collaboration among ethnic groups and traditions, Indonesian dance becomes 'a significant means for "thinking" and "imagining" a contemporary dance' that draws on both 'established "national traditional dances" and "classical dance" training.' Secondly, performance practitioners here, as in Morocco, develop their resistance to colonial legacies by deliberately exploring a heterogeneous range of traditional forms to make contemporary art works. Contemporary Indonesian dance, then, offers not only a body of performances to study but itself constitutes an 'approach' to performance, fusing complex national, traditional, and contemporary strands 'in a practical act of research.'

In another national context, Sharon Aronson-Lehavi and Freddie Rokem urge us in Chapter 13 to see contemporary Israeli theatre as a productive response to Israeli politics, with its vexed and double identity as both oppressor and oppressed. They claim that the transformation from Hebrew as a language of religious practice to an official language of state power has been '*the* most significant performative act of Israeli culture,' and argue that Israeli performance is now playing a crucial role in unsettling the hegemonic power of Hebrew in constructing a monolingual Israeli identity. One example is Ilan Ronen's polylingual production of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952): 'When the performance played before Arabic audiences, Didi and Gogo spoke in Arabic, and when the play was performed for predominantly Jewish audiences, they spoke in Hebrew with a marked Arabic accent. Pozzo always spoke in Hebrew, while Lucky spoke in a distorted Classic Arabic.' Israeli playwrights and performance artists have insisted not only on multiple languages but have also adopted critical performance paradigms from around the world, including feminist and postcolonial critiques, and so 'have gradually enabled non-hegemonic bodies to voice themselves [...], deconstruct[ing] the relations between word and action and enabl[ing] the re-examination of Israeli identity by exploring the performer's culturally

multi-layered body.' Aronson-Lehavi and Aronson conclude by praising the increasing reliance on the human body in Israeli performance: 'The body has a different presence than words, since it is the action itself, not an additional layer of commentary and reflection.' And it is the specificity of this located performative embodiment, they suggest, rather than abstract commentary and critique, that could help to usher in a better future.

Concluding this section, Loren Kruger in Chapter 14 calls attention to another 'failure' of performance studies' translation into a new context – in this case, post-apartheid South Africa – by arguing for the capacity for multimedia and commodified 'performances' to be subversive. While the live stage of Johannesburg's Market Theatre once provided a safe haven for anti-apartheid protest drama, South African theatre now competes in a profoundly transformed cultural landscape with the performance sites of a profit-driven leisure industry on the one hand, and the well-funded products of television and other multimedia forms on the other. Criticizing the 'theatrical exceptionalism' that has dominated theatre scholarship as well as performance studies approaches, which privileges live performances as the most authentic forms of resistance, Kruger urges a different, more mediated model that relies on a Brechtian notion of 'stealth.' Rejecting the 'heroic realism' that marks traditional protest theatre in favor of a 'critique by cunning,' she proposes an approach that reveals the subversions of commodified and multimedia art forms. Kruger asks performance researchers to attend to 'the cunning mode of critique under cover of commodity production which might characterize public/private museum practice that encourages tourist consumption as well as edification, or of television series that address viewers as agents of their own education *and* as consumers of sponsors' products.'

As this survey of the chapters in *Contesting Performance* suggests, the breadth and contrast of perspectives found across contemporary performance research caution us against holding an overarching notion of exactly what this research 'is,' even while also indicating that its institutionalization as – and in some cases *against* – performance studies will continue to take a variety of forms, forms shaped by a complex mix of local, regional, and global forces. Amid these forces – cultural, historical, political, economic, technological, environmental – performance will no doubt continue to contest socio-cultural injustice, even while its very concept and understanding remain contested, and even if the very notion of 'contesting performance' contains within it certain cultural and historical tensions that may not always and everywhere be relevant. This volume provides a global snapshot of performance research in the

early twenty-first century and opens up new perspectives on the relation between performance and performance research.

## Notes

1. An earlier and more extended version of a part of this section previously appeared in *The Drama Review* (see McKenzie, 2006). In another issue of *TDR* that addressed this question, Janelle Reinelt (2007) argues for the need to develop international performance literacies. For more responses to the question, 'Is performance studies imperialist?,' that appeared in *TDR*, including responses from Richard Schechner, Diana Taylor, and Takahashi Yuichiro, among others, and an editorial cartoon by Diana Raznovich staging the question 'And We are the Imperialists?????', see Raznovich et al., 2007.
2. See note 1.

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