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University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2052

On Not Performing: Notes on Difference in Retreat

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> "They are destined to decision, that is, to time understood in this sense, which is not that of life." (Stiegler 2003: 156)

> "What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us." (Deleuze 1997: 176)

Why is there such an insistence on "performance" in contemporary social life? What does the contemporary diffusion of "performance" tell us about power today? This article suggests that this diffusion is an important element in an enclosure of the very basics of human experience. It suggests, speculatively, that this enclosure is itself part of an attempt at inaugurating a new kind of feudalism.

The world is now subject to a range of performance measures global and local. Our everyday lives are often lived under the shadow of global measures of economic performance, if with very different degrees of anxiety depending on where you live. There is the occasional counter-measure of a largely ineffective series of national "happiness" indexes that involve performance measures of a different kind. In schools, individual student test scores are often now tied to individual school performance and in turn to national funding (and in turn to measures of economic performance). Individual creativity is tied into creative industry. Thinking and research becomes a matter of measurable outputs, funding success or "measures of esteem". At the same time, there is now an often unmoored theatricality in politics. This is in some ways a different mode of performance to measure. Yet it has a crucial if differential relation to the like of economic performance indicators (and polling numbers) (see also McKenzie 2001: 92 on management and the theatre). The conjunction leads politicians to play their roles very differently, just as teachers and students "act" differently because of the intensity of educational testing. In sum, it is not only that many of us live with increasingly finely tuned demands for *measurable* performance improvements. This is accompanied by a regrettable translation into everyday life of a demand to play roles in certain ways, along the lines perhaps an actor's "motivation" ("what does my character want?" "How do I step into the script?"). "Performance" does not end there. There are many other ways in which performance measures, staging or role play, and many other variations on "performance", come together. "Performance" has become a complex collision of definitions and practices.

This article first describes this collision, while looking for any cohesion across the large

variety of social processes now termed "performance". I will suggest that what brings all these together is first performance's age old intensity of focus on a creation of a "world", as a substitute for, or reduction of, the world at large. The world of the performance measure is as staged in this respect as the world of the theatre has always been. The contemporary form of this focus is different, however. Now the focus within performance increasingly involves a range of *decisions* concerning *performance itself*. The world is reduced to performance. "World" becomes only the ongoing modulation and self-regulation of performance itself. The consequence is a loss of "belief in the world", a world that is beyond this series of systems of rather abstracted performativity. In sum, performance in the contemporary mode quite literally "plays out" a loss of the world itself.

This makes a great deal available to social/political formations. Life as lived can be moulded at a range of levels from the micro to the macro. Life, world, real economic events, alternative forms of community or relation, ecological catastrophe—all these are usefully screened out. As Stiegler puts it, we now live in a "time .. which is not that of life" (2003: 156).

If our lives are infused with a proliferation of structured technics and concepts of "performance", this is perhaps because this conversion of time into a "time of decisions" within performative worlds is "not that of life". Social processes and problems are increasingly defined and worked through the performative. Social struggle—in process—increasingly takes place via an ongoing use and reinvention of technics of performance. This includes both events "backstage" (a struggle over the logistics of performance within the social) and "onstage" (frontline struggles via an ongoing staging and counter-staging of events or roles). Associated media interventions often seem much more performative than they are "informational" or "communicative".

The performative as measure and as theatrical come together with further understandings of what counts as performance. For example, a performance culture converts the very concept of sign or language from reference into *act*. The meaning of a statement or proposition is (only) what it *does*. In general, performance culture is highly inventive when it comes to this kind of conversion. It constantly generates new practices and systems that fold as much as possible into "performance". There is even an ongoing invention of *concepts* of performance itself, as part of the expansion of a "performance culture". It is through all this that a diverse series of commands to perform diffuse throughout much of contemporary culture. This has been discussed at length in important work by a range of thinkers from which this article draws extensively (see particularly McKenzie 2001 and Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick 1995, but also Marcuse 1967 and 1974, Lyotard 1984, Butler 1990, Kosofsky Sedgwick 2002, Ronell 2005, Strathern 2000, Goffman 1967, 1974 and 1990, Barnes 1983, Turner 2001). (As a side note, I want to differentiate at this point between a performativity/theatricality that comes into everyday life and the professional theatre per se. This article is not directly concerned with the latter, although there are obviously a lot of exchanges between the professional theatre and theatricality in everyday life.)

In this article, however, I suggest that all this not only indicates an enduring "performance culture". It also indicates something larger, a dramatic shift, one that is not in the end primarily about performance. Performance in all its forms is, in the end, a highly important and often culturally privileged "go-between" in the transition between different formations of power. On the one side of this transition there is the strange mishmash with which much of the world has lived for quite some time: extreme forms of fractured capital, faltering neoliberalism, triumphalist if bloated neoconservatism, and overly-apologetic social democracy. All of these rely heavily on a variety of practices of performance. Performance serves the variable combination of sovereign, disciplinary and control powers (Deleuze 1997: 177-83) at work within this mishmash (for example in sovereign spectacle, discipline *as* performativity in the sense of role playing within certain "stagings" [the school, the factory, the office], control as micro-performative in its attention to the smallest grains of gesture, thought or feeling). Performance becomes a kind of glue for the social. It substitutes for the actual lack of hold within the mess of the social in other respects. Performance, because it frames and enables action *despite* the world, also becomes the engine for social/political expression within this mishmash.

Yet performance does even more than this. It creates a series of bridges of actions/flexible systems—small and large—that make possible a transition to a new formation of power. It manufactures elements of process within the social that provide the basis for an emerging political formation. Performance is then both full activity or a mode of individuation within one political formation and a kind of pre-individuation, or pre-individual milieu (see Houston 2008 and Simondon 1992) for the development of another. I am suggesting here, speculatively, that the latter is a *neo-feudal* formation. Performance provides a complex series of avenues for a *third enclosure* of the very basics of human experience (action-perception, reflection, decision, movement and time, in their emergence or even before they exist [see Massumi 2002, 2008, and 2011a]). It is primarily this that makes performance an important constituent in an assemblage that attempts to construct a neofeudalism.

I will name this new feudalism *Fractal Neofeudalism*, if only only as a kind of political speculation (inspired by Matteo Pasquinelli's discussion of "digital neofeudalism" [2010]). It is neo-feudal in that it attempts to install a new formation of overarching hierarchical power—in the service of the few. It is "fractal" in that it aims for overarching hierarchy but is simultaneously and successfully diffuse and scalable in its operations—a dense and complex network of flexible forces. I will suggest that although not yet fully arrived, Fractal Neofeudalism has built up a lot of momentum, both as a series of fantasies and actual practices. Its main success so far has been its reinflection of important aspects of the social/political pre-individual milieu (those potentials, processes and elements that come before and after, and feed into, ongoing individuation, see Adkins 2007, Massumi 2005 and 2011b). A significant part of this reinflection occurs via performance culture.

For those who happily move toward fractal neofeudalism, the replacement or abandoning of the world that performance provides is welcome. The world, whether we take this to mean the environment, the social world, or both together, has become too difficult, too

obviously a world of complexity, a world of processes beyond the human which nevertheless demand much of the human. It is a world that produces too much that is different, too much that cannot be easily reconciled to the "ways things are done", to given interests. Yet fractal neofeudalism's rejection of the world fuels a flight into various fantasies and abstractions that are in the end contradictory, precisely with regard to a world that only becomes the more insistent the more it is denied (climate change, global financial failure, etc). This in turn calls for more denial, for more neo-feudal fantasies and abstractions feeding into social practice. It is a dynamic of collapse and denial that energises the like of the ongoing *third enclosure*, which is increasingly called upon to regulate these fantasies and abstractions, *performatively*.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, while discussing Foucault's "microphysics of power", Michel De Certeau long ago opened up the problem we face in such circumstances. Using a striking theatrical metaphor, he suggested that "silent technologies" might either determine or at times "short-circuit" institutional stage directions.

> this "microphysics of power" privileges the productive apparatus (which produces the "discipline") … and shows how, from the wings as it were, silent technologies determine or short-circuit institutional stage directions. If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive [in this article of course I am suggesting that much more than "discipline" is becoming "extensive"], it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it … (2002: xiv)

In short, how might we respond? What "silent technologies" might work in our favour to undo the emergence of a neofeudalism?

Here I suggest the emergence of *ghosted publics* and *unacknowledged collectivity* as possible responses that are already with us. These are ephemeral communicational events or events of community/collectivity that eschew publics and gateways into public access. In eschewing recognition, they avoid the performative in its contemporary mode in several key respects (even if they take it up against itself in other respects). They do so in order to allow for a becoming outside of the contemporary general economy (if not entirely the "ecology") of performance. Ghosted publics and unacknowledged collectivity could be seen, for example, as the polar opposite of terrorism. They seek construction of alternative modes of living rather than all out theatrical attacks on the social that buy into (and indeed fuel) reactionary forms of power. Other possible "silent technologies" I gesture to here include various forms by which we might the re-singularise everyday life (Guattari 1995). A taking back of the basics of experience—of time, of movement, of perception, of response—is crucial here. So might be simple stillness, or just slowing down.

Throughout I will be critical of the command, indeed often the compulsion to "perform". I am not saying that we should never perform, that performance does not have important social functions, that the arguments here are not complicated by a great many productive uses of performance, or even that it would be possible never to perform. I am not saying

that all of culture or social life is performance, or that "performance culture" is evenly spread across the globe. However, the article hopes to suggest the range and purpose of much of performance culture, motivated by a simple question: "Under what conditions or through which (non)actions might we not perform?".

Performance as Social Atmosphere

I have begun to suggest that a variety of concepts and associated practices of "performance" are now so deeply ingrained in our ways of living as to sometimes substitute for them. This has different accents. We live via the success (or otherwise) of the roles we play, even perhaps when we play these roles "against the current". Education is overwhelmed by testing. Work too easily becomes the fulfillment of key performance targets and little else. Everyday life is now thoroughly pervaded with numerous, varied, yet insistent commands to "perform": via financial incentives and punishments, test scores, team building and other workshops of all kinds, leadership roles, behaviour modification techniques and drugs, a range of anxieties about performance that must be corrected, personal development, audit and performance development schemes, the modulation of one's web presence, the entire industry of style.

Throughout this there is a general, and often *granular* contestation (that is, at work at the level of the tinier "grains" of experience). This is granular contestation of an increasingly flexible public/private divide. Indeed, the public/private "divide" becomes a porous multiplicity of openings and closures large and small. Public and private spin around each other at many different points, on many different scales. The performativity that in large part *is* the relation between public and private gains energy and variety via this force of distribution. In the process, the private/public becomes the more open to both accident and control, (an obvious example here is one's modulation of private and public within social media).

In short, if we now live the more with "performance" this is performance as a complex and highly charged social atmosphere. In Felix Guattari's terms, it has become an often unfortunate basis for the "ethico-aesthetic" (1995) of our times. An ethico-aesthetic involves the *practices* by which we actually live ("ethico"), as these are intermingled with the *circulations of affective intensities* ("aesthetic"). (Guattari hoped that we might challenge such ethico-aesthetic situations, in favour of something more experimental and socially generous.)

Performance is highly suited to interventions within the ethico-aesthetic (and Guattari often turned to performance as a point of reference with regard to the ethico-aesthetic). Performance *is* firstly a very strong means of combining practices and affective intensities so that they work with, and transformatively on, each other. Via this ongoing transformation, performance is secondly a conduit for further transformations between private and public modes of experience. Performance is therefore a perfect vehicle for intervention in the ongoing production of the social/subjectivity.

In describing the production of the social/subjectivity, Guattari describes the concerns of this article. Performance here will be considered in terms of:

> … the production of subjectivity, inseparable from the technical and institutional mechanisms that support [all the various "models" that are also involved] ... In a more general way, one will have to admit that each individual, each social group, conveys its own system of modelling unconscious subjectivity, that is, a certain cartography made up of reference points that are cognitive, but also mythic, ritualistic, and symptomatological, and on the basis of which it positions itself in relation to its affects, its anxieties, and attempts to manage its various inhibitions and drives. (Guattari 1995: 11)

If much of our social atmosphere is now increasingly imbued with performance, this includes: many of our technical and institutional mechanisms, our modeling of subjectivity and the social, of the good and the bad, of the life worth living, of the ways in which we can/should live a life, our forms of teaching, our media, our "cartography" of "reference points", our cognitive processes and models of thinking processes, our myths and rituals, our symptoms, our affects and anxieties, our management of inhibitions and drives. Indeed, performance is now so pervasive throughout all this that it is largely unquestioned. It is so common a ground for living one's life that it is no longer really seen for what it is. Performance has become the "twentieth and twenty-first century's … onto-historical formation of power and knowledge" (McKenzie 2001: 18), a "performance stratum" (173ff).

Yet I have also begun to suggest that this onto-historical formation itself is transitional—a go-between, between established formations of power and the new formation I have tentatively labelled fractal neofeudalism. I will discuss this in detail later in this article.

Now I will turn more fully to the processual components of "performance".

On Not Performing

By performance here I mean a *varied working combination* of any or all of these elements: testing; the management of social processes (from work to education to love life and lifestyle) not only by testing but by more thorough ongoing evaluation which can easily become the substance of work and education; the like of "performance development systems" and "audit cultures"; various kinds of theatricality, although I would emphasise ritual and theatricality as these come into everyday life; counter-performative acts in an acceptance of performativity via its subversion, perhaps through various forms of masquerade; performance as a "making public" of acts or character, and therefore as breaking down of private and public, again increasing the command to "perform" in many of the senses listed above. In addition, performance would include the awareness of language as something that itself performs rather than just "meaning" or "signifying", as pioneered in J. L. Austin's work (1962), but taken up by a wide range of

thinkers, including Deleuze and Guattari, who write both of "order-words" and of a broader pragmatics of the order-word (and "pass-word") in their "Postulates of Linguistics" (1987: 83ff). One could add that all this finds precursors in the work of "father of spin" Edward Bernays (Tye 1998), one of the first to use the elaborate stagings of social events to reconstitute everyday life, and also the work of author of *Public Opinion* (1922) Walter Lippmann, from the 1920s on. Performance might also include the like of style: dressing up, shopping, cosmetic surgery, or tattoos.

The effect of a performance culture this complex and well developed can be summed up very simply. It is increasingly hard, indeed unacceptable, not to perform. It is hard not to live via performance. This is true *whatever* "performance" means, or in a combination, or a skilled movement between, different modes of the performative.

The attraction of performance is obvious and ancient. All forms of performance allow us (indeed often these days force us) to believe or think one thing and yet do another. Or, as I have begun to suggest, all forms of performance allow us to live in one world, yet manufacture another. Performance's secret of success is the *intensity* of this process, as any actor, shaman or performance development supervisor will tell you. Performance gathers intensities into its creation of seemingly system-enclosed circuits of thinking and feeling (or of action, perception and reflection). So, to take a common example, artistic work becomes "practice-led research", often within a frame whereby creative enterprise is a contribution to state performativity/productivity (a state's "creative industries"). Or play becomes "active learning", even for the very young, and increasingly leads to testing that begins very early in life. The circuits involved, to some extent, move forces inward. They happily seem to evade, as they remake, external concepts and structures of experience. Of course, there will at times be a price to pay in psychic terms—and organisationally—for this inward looking with little anchor in the external world. Of course, the inwardness will not be contained forever (if ever). Performance constantly resonates back out through the external world in the form of the contagion of new habits and "structures of feeling" (as Raymond William called them long ago [2001]).

Performance culture often tries to turn complex structures of "thinking-feeling" (Massumi 2008) into "circuits" of reflection and action. These are then accompanied by, or directed toward another factor: "decision" or intervention. *Decision here means serial performative decision making, in situ*. It is decision *regarding performance itself, according to performance techniques and guidelines*. As such, decision is on the one hand simplified (there are techniques and guidelines after all). On the other hand, this simplicity and removal of context beyond performance itself allows performative decision to be diffused and multiplied throughout actions of all kinds. Elements of the performative attain a kind of portability and ability to adapt, serially, to difference micro-and macro-ecologies (thinking of ecologies in the terms of Guattari's three related types of ecologies, virtual and actual, of the social, self and environment— Guattari 2008). Performance invades the nooks and crannies of living itself.

Of course, when I write "decision", this can mean very different things. Performance systems themselves often conceive of "decision", somewhat traditionally, in the terms of

something like cognitive psychology. "Decisions" becomes the decision of an agent separate to the "circuits" of action, reflection (and symbolic processing) involved. However, "decision" can be seen differently. It can mean a *nudging* (from within or without, from any level whatever of the "ecology" involved) of the processes involved. I have briefly been calling these processes "circuits", although the circulation of affective intensities might be a more accurate description. If so, what is being nudged within performance is not an "agent" but the ongoing contraction of variations within, and syntheses of aspects of experience, *within and as our habits*. Seeing decision this way only allows us to understand how powerful performance is. Performance might well at times build a "decisive cognitive agent" into how it models experience within various assemblages. Or it might model the circulation of affective intensities differently. Yet however it models decision, and however illusory "decisive agency" might be, the technical effect is the same. Via some (any) notion of ongoing intervention and "decision", performance pushes things towards the contraction, variation and synthesiss of *systemically prescribed* habits. These allow for the parameters of actions within given contexts (for example, art making, or play, sales, management, teaching, learning, celebrity).

It should therefore be obvious, for example, why ongoing productivity improvement via performance development is not there only (or even) as an aid to "real work". Such systems are an important process, in themselves, within a formation of power. Via the formation of habit, via persuasion or coercion and enforcement, in performance development a formation of power becomes deep experience, in this case *as* "real work". Or to take a related example, personal "performance anxiety", in a range of contexts, is not just an aberration. It is both produced by and swept up in a political formation, *as* an unfortunate habit within common experience (of those who have difficulty "taking up" or being "taken up" within certain performativities). In both cases, "aid" or "aberrance" is in danger of becoming the event of living itself. We live, love and work performatively. Not performing—in myriad ways—has become a strange new moral pejorative.

Another reason performance has emerged with the cultural intensity it now possesses is its situatedness. Performance presents us with an ability to respond to an increasingly complex set of circumstances, in situ, and, as I have mentioned, to an extent unhampered by beliefs, ideas or given relationships. Performance also knows that the most important and often difficult question in our lives is not "what does it all mean" but "what do we do next?". In short, performance, in all its varieties, has become a simultaneously systemic yet flexible and immanent answer to the problem of being "destined to decision" (Stiegler 2003) within a series of complex situations (Stiegler here suggested that we are "destined to decision" because the human, as technical being, is always capable of avoiding destiny via re-assemblage).

As I have begun to suggest, in the process performance allows us to ignore the world. We merely focus on the question of performance itself and, as in any "make believe", only the world of the performative matters. Here Deleuze diagnoses and prescribes the remedy for the situation—

> What we most lack is a belief in the world, we've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us. If you believe in the world you precipitate events, *however inconspicuous, that elude control, you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume*. It's what you call pietas. Our ability to resist control, or our submission to it, has to be assessed at the level of our every move. We need both creativity and a people. (Deleuze 1997: 176)

I am not of course denying the extensive critical understanding and complex practice regarding this within both performance history and many contemporary performance forms. However, let me crystallise, in Deleuze's terms, some of the questions that have arisen in this critical understanding. Does performance affirm the world or sidestep it? What is the relation between belief and make believe (what Deleuze calls "fabulation", *in a relation to the world*, *can* be a useful thing [Deleuze 1989: 126ff; Bogue 2010])? Can performance, public by definition and well as in practice, accommodate the inconspicuous? Does it always need a public (an old but useful question from performance art)? Does a given performance elude (not just subvert) control? Does it engender new space-times that are non-performative? Most crucially, can we imagine the creation of a people, the precipitation of events, which are not *founded* on performance (even if they might work with it in part).

Such questions become more urgent as public/private divisions break down, and we become more uncertain of the ramifications of our actions within a diffuse and shifting public. We all seem to take more tests, with greater import, that evaluate our performance. Or consider again teaching. It is now often both an intensified and often controlled performance in front of an audience (that is, students) and, at the same time, performance in the sense being evaluated as a teacher, perhaps via the same students' test scores. Or consider the increasing ambiguity of putting a video of ourselves on YouTube, or for that matter putting our medical records online, of commenting on Twitter or "liking" on Facebook. We workshop and hone our performance skills, often in order to re-align our production of subjectivity (our own, that of others, or group subjectivity) with cultural and corporate norms (or sometimes against these). We stage and restage roles, including those of "performer" and "evaluator". We learn to self-consciously make performative statements and to "align" these with broader aims. Alongside this, we become are highly skilled at performing, for example, the "good shopper". We know where and how to shop. We get the best deals in order to perform in better costume (clothes) or on better stages (homes, lifestyle). We are always, if flexibly, "in character". As suggested earlier, we are seldom far from a version of Stanislavski or Lee Strasberg's "method acting". We always need to know the answer to the question: "what's my motivation?". Yet we don't just get applause. We get paid, or evaluated by others, according to our fulfillment of performance aims and objectives. This becomes the main focus of our work and of our organisation of others, of politics and social life.

Another way of putting this is that "performance", in all its flexibility and all its modes, becomes a kind of currency. Performance becomes a valuer of other values within various industries and social contexts. It also becomes a large industry itself: a kind of quasi-conceptual, practical, and vertically integrated cartel in the realm of the social.

Performance is so open to simultaneously becoming currency and industry because, before anything else, even before it becomes a performance system or a set of guidelines or a method, performance is an *amplifier without content* (what better nonsensical example could there be than the empty word "excellence" as it is used in so many contexts of performativity today?).

We know what it is to perform, generally. It is to do something with more intensity, or a more obvious intensity, or with the right, or even simply a different, intensity, *in public*. It is to have this intensity captured and transformed by others. Performance is a *modulator* of other content, of "content to come" perhaps. It aims to begin with what theatre director Peter Brook called "empty space" (1968). Performance begins with as empty a space as it can muster (although no space is ever empty—no space is even "a space"). Performance then sets itself up to change the nature of the "signal" with which performance will work, when any signal emerges.

What is this work? In performance, the general circulation of affective intensities is modulated by specific affective loops (between performer and audience, worker and performance evaluator, or action and reflection on action and decision or intervention). The way events both affect themselves and emerge with their contexts *via resonance*—is transformed. The whole assemblage is transformed into "public and/or audience". Or it is led towards the sticky affective webs that capture circulations of affective intensities on behalf of the institution or the corporation. In the process, particular affective loops are amplified or diminished (both in Massumi's sense of the modulated intensity of events [2002: 80, 198] and Tomkins sense of amplification and attenuation of drives within the psyche [1962: 88]). Their "volume is turned up or down". They become more or less audible. They become more or less visible. They are more able to run interference with other affective loops or with the general circulation of affective intensities. They are folded over each other and "remixed".

In the process, performance provides enabling but also often regulatory filters between the vagueness of powers and the specificity of situated actions. Performance provides an ongoing diagram by which we find guidelines for what to do next (or a "mise-en-scène", with attendant "involuntary but elicited" "biograms"—see Massumi 2002: 189). Although this is never exact. In performance what to do next becomes a matter of experiencing, literally feeling, moment by moment, the ongoing tensions within performance; our performance, that of others. In response to these tensions, we amplify or otherwise *modulate* our performance. There's often no time for much else. There is perhaps not much left of whatever it was (even mistakenly) we took for our own will.

Indeed, we find that the production of our subjectivity occurs within something like a counter-détournement, a counter-subversion of alternative living or working by authoritative institutions and powers. Performance then can act as a co-option (see Thomas Frank 1998, on *The Conquest of the Cool*) of alternative modes of living. Or it works as a reversal of the like of the Situationism of the 1960s (Wark 2011), or the Autonomist movements of the 1960s on. In short, performance easily becomes a strategy of power. We find that the performative demands of our situation rewrite us back into the

institution or corporation. We get swept up by, or our actions are "pre-captured" within, relatively controlled performative loops. Jon McKenzie writes extensively on feedback loops within performance, including the:

> … strange loop connecting the metamodels of rites of passage, feedback, and missiles, and through it, the paradigms of Performance Studies, Performance Management, and Techno-Performance and their respective challenges of efficacy, efficiency, and effectiveness. (2001: 135)

Here I mean "loops" here firstly in the sense of "scripts" that program action (again see McKenzie 2001 for a general discussion of scripting and program). This has a technical sense. In therapy this is often as a re-programming of another existing action, script or behavioural "loop". An example would be the use of scripts by a Gregory Bateson derived Neuro-Linguistic Programming to alter behaviours ("NLP" itself is now sometimes part of the "mechanics" of performance culture). Silvan Tomkins (1987), who had an "adolescent dream of becoming a playwright" (Tomkins, 2008: xxi), also thought of behaviour and affect regulation in terms of loops and scripts. Yet we can add another sense of "looping" to this. Loops can have a more direct "asemiotic" component. They are loops made up of real forces of different kinds, coming together. They work without having to "make sense" or tell stories. They simply makes something happen by the way they link things up—literally. Gary Genosko (2009: 89ff), writing about Guattari and the asignifying semiotic, points to the automatic bank teller and electronic access card as literally allowing for the real forces that link up myriad financial events, but we could also think of loops in electronic music and the forces they gather, the way that these forces literally travel through and link up hardware, cables, software, codes and dancers' bodies (not to mention the like of, for example, audio-video cross-signal processing). In all these senses, loops cycle through abstract diagrams of power and back through the energy we commit to work, to living, to love, to friendship.

Performance culture is not all this bad, of course, but it is now so prevalent and powerful that it does mean it's increasingly unacceptable *not* to perform. At best, in queer performance (and in fact often beyond this), we learn that politics (whatever *this* means from the perspective of performance) is counter-performative (or, if I can be permitted to say so, counter-counter-performative). Take on a different role. Stage things differently. Get involved in a general (and often of course useful) détournement of performative norms and oppressions.

Can we step outside performance's often fairly blank but nevertheless intense affective loops? Or, as Jon McKenzie puts it, must we "perform or else" (2001)?

Am I overdetermining all this? I hope so. However, drawing on McKenzie's work, Nigel Thrift comments:

> From the mobilisation of political will to new kinds of state form, from the construction of a different and more pervasive kind of celebrity to new forms of capitalism, affect is a vital part of current social constructions, one which makes it

possible to talk of a performative principle whose goal is to harness affect to power in ways hitherto unthought of. (Thrift 2003: 2020).

How did we get here?

Infinity and the Temptation of Performance

Here's our situation in a nutshell: "Our minds are finite … we are surrounded by possibilities that are infinite." Or so Alfred Whitehead put it. For him, within this situation, "the purpose of life is to grasp as much as we can out of that infinitude" (2001: 160).

The trouble is that sooner or later infinitude scares us. Or perhaps it just tires us. It scares us in a way it does not *appear* to scare the shifting network of powers greater than our own. Or maybe, finite as we are, we just get tired of all the "grasping" (although for Whitehead of course this grasping is, in many important senses, impersonal or pre-personal, ongoing, which doesn't make it any less tiring). We stop acting. We slow down. We become still. We make a cup of tea (a more satisfying grasping of infinitude as finitude). Perhaps we think to ourselves, "maybe infinitude will come to me, without so much work, without so much grasping." These can be peaceful moments, just another part of life. Yet, framed the wrong way, they can also feel like moments of weakness with regard to our own powers. At such moments, especially when we are just too tired, too overwhelmed, or too confused to deal with infinity, we are vulnerable. We "should be working". Or perhaps we "should be improving ourselves".

It's at such moments that *performance* comes upon the scene, like a contemporary Mephistopheles. Just like Mephistopheles, it offers us a deal we almost certainly should not take up. It whispers to us that it knows the solution to our weakness, to our tiredness in the face of the infinite, simply to a complex world, even our very own complex world. And just as with Mephistopheles, performance' solution is a deal with the devil, now the blank devil of performance itself. The promise is that, via performance, the right performance, we will be one with the power that scares us, or that our chasing after power will no longer exhaust us. Via performance, we will ritually channel and finally control the infinitude that feeds power. Yet we know what happens via the terms of the Faustian bargain.

Let us think about this from the perspective of the power we think we are aligning with.

Infinity and Power

Power has complex relationship with infinity. For power, in whatever definite forms it appears, infinitude is a proposition that becomes what Whitehead called a *lure* for feeling (1978: 186). For power, the *proposition of infinitude* is perhaps *the* lure to feeling. The proposition of infinitude fuels and expands the limits of powers (it promises *to unbound*

these, precisely to infinity). Infinitude, as a proposition, promises the biggest stage there is, the most diverse costume wardrobe, any kind of audience. It's any technology you can think of. It's venture capital. Endless growth or increases in productivity. Charisma. "It's all going to be mine". We can perhaps think here of Jimmy Cagney's criminal character, Cody Jarrett, in the film *White Heat* (1949). "Made it, Ma! Top of the world!", he says famously, as he blows up the gas tanks on which he stands. As another character comments, "He finally got to the top of the world... and it blew right up in his face".

As Cody Jarrett discovered, real infinity (as opposed to the proposition of infinitude) is complex and difficult. This does not suit any one formation of power. From a Whiteheadian perspective, infinitude itself can accommodate all "wills to power" (Nietzsche 1968). The "decision" of an entire, infinite ecology can nudge things one way at one moment, and another the next. Or, infinitude can accommodate all wills to power as mutually abiding differential "contrasts" (Whitehead 1978: 228). Different powers are treated like colours in a painting, rather than combative totalities. Infinitude is creative or generative, and playfully so. As such, infinitude cannot accommodate the persistent desire of any one will to power for total control. Instead, it constantly and playfully divides different wills to power against themselves, or finds new "contrasts" between one will to power and others.

When this becomes too much for any one assemblage of power—and it is always too much for those powers that want infinitude for themselves—infinitude becomes the *wrong kind* of infinity. Power must now defend itself against that by which it was lured, and which it still desires. It perversely delimits this as "outside," as the "wrong infinity". The wrong infinity becomes a threat to the established assemblages through which this particular power is more properly supposed to move. Infinitude suddenly has good guys/girls and bad guys/girls. The stage is set for performance guidelines and techniques to guide the action, for "heroic" actions at the junction of infinities and powers, for investigations of the nature of action itself, of what is "best performance" in paradoxical situations, for large bonuses at the end of the financial year.

Michel Callon calls the threat involved—the wrong infinity—"overflow" (1998). For Callon, the specific response of power to this is "framing", simply, building a wall against infinitude. All power frames or reframes: the power of large assemblages of think tanks and corporations, the diffuse powers of an episteme, even, simply, your power, my power, our power. This to some extent sacrifices the world. Yet, the whole point of framing is not in fact a complete shut out. It is rather to try to construct a certain kind of "performability", one that suits framing and might still allow a profit from overflow. Callon points out that this framing then plays a kind of double game. A good framing is made in the realisation that, as effective as it might be for a while, it's bound to fail. No framing is perfect or unchangeable. There are always overflows. Frames and overflows, powers and infinities are in ongoing tension.

> .. the heterogeneous elements, that are linked together in order to frame the
> contract and its performance, in reality take part in its overflowing: and it is

precisely because they are sources of overflows that they make the contract productive (1998: 255)

The response to this overflowing, however, is a further, more effective, if more flexible framing. This is measurement. "In order to be framed, overflows must be made measurable" (Callon 1998: 255). Measure allows overflows to be evaluated, brought into the realm of value and exchange. This is done via a framing of "contract and its performance".

Summing up most of this article so far, we can think of performance from three perspectives. First, performance—of all kinds—allows a very good *felt understanding, or better, what Massumi calls "thinking-feeling"* (2008) of tensions regarding infinities and powers. Second, performance—differently for different kinds of performance—forces a feeling for the tensions between infinities and powers into a further series of tensions, now with events of structure: framing and overflow. Third, and less remarked, performance does all this in another series of tensions—with non-performance.

It's also important to note that we live in a culture in which it is not only increasingly unacceptable not to perform, to be swept up in a performative principle in order to "harness affect to power". It is almost as increasingly unacceptable not to *in*form on the performance of others. If I was to turn anywhere for a slicing and dicing of these two together, it would probably be the recent film *Up in the Air* (2009). Or, we could again think of audit culture—research excellence evaluation and ranking, learning objectives, quality assurance, KPIs, KPTs (Key Performance Indicators, Key Performance Targets). I have previously termed the culture involved "auditland", after Anna Funder's book on the Stasi and it's effects, *Stasiland* (2003).

> …the "Auditland" I am posing is indeed a much softer place than *Stasiland* - with a much gentler process of information, performed by good people, who often mean well (or perhaps just as often do not even care about the processes involved one way or the other). However, if cultures such as *Stasiland* thankfully mutate into the much softer cultures such as Auditland within global technics, it is also true that by doing so they extend their reach. However soft a landing, Auditland is a land where audit is increasingly gathered by *all people, about all people*. (Murphie 2008a)

Auditland is, of course, all about performance (indeed often an audit of performance *systems* themselves). Within systemic or institutional performance frames, and even often outside of these, we have to be active, positive, getting things done. We also have to be busy *planning* to get things done, to meet our objectives, including the objective of a series of successful audits. Our own life must become exemplary in this respect. This becomes of kind of "meta-role" encompassing other roles, performed for others, for "the public", often in carefully aligned and measured alignment/exchange with the exemplary conduct of others (to the point that 5 year old children now casually talk about their "LOs", or learning objectives).

Again, how did we get here? A little history of accounts of how it happened follows, building largely but not only on McKenzie's comprehensive account (2001).

Performance, Shock and the Extent of Transformation

In 1959 Erving Goffman, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* and *Frame Analysis*, famously brought together theatricality and the broader notion of performance in everyday life. Performance systems work to increase performance, but they do so by setting a frame in which one presents oneself, or through which one can effectively perform. This is a frame like a staging, with scenery, costumes, props, manners of movement, of speaking and scripts. One frames behaviour so as to extract from the situation what one wants. Or this is framed for one, and the situation does the extracting. As Butler and Sedgwick and so many others following them point out, this can be put to good use, "experimentally".

Performance anthropologist Victor Turner (2001[1982]—see also McKenzie 2001: 33ff on Turner, liminality and performance) has given a different, if largely complementary, perspective on the meeting of performance and the everyday. He described the importance of ritual, of which the "performance arts" are only one of the "progeny" (1986: 43). For Turner, ritual creates a liminal zone of possible transformation by which "social dramas" or crises might be resolved. For example, in tradition rituals, girls can become women and boys can become men. He and others extend this relationship between social dramas, ritual and liminality to everyday life in so far as all can take place within everyday life. Following this, I would extend the notion to the contexts that I am discussing here. Just as, historically, the performing arts are the "progeny" of ritual, all performance begins in a ritual marking out of some kind of liminal zone. I would suggest that all the different kinds of performance I have discussed here involve complex relationships between social drama or crises, liminality and their own series of rituals (the examination as a special site, the performance development meeting or workshop as a liminal space). In ritual, "the structures of group experience … are replicated, dismembered, re-membered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful—*even when, as is so often the case in declining cultures, 'the meaning is that there is no meaning'*" (Turner, 1986: 43—my emphasis).

This can occur across broad social events. Mihai Coman has suggested that "the mass media creates a liminal, subjunctive framework .. for symbolically experiencing possible ways of articulating social life" while Simon Cottle has argued that "contemporary public rituals are 'enacted on the media stage .. performed within differential and globalising media ecologies'" (both in St. John 2008: 20). In the light of all this, it is perhaps not surprising that contemporary social crises seem ongoing. Naomi Klein has suggested that much recent politics is based on a "shock doctrine" that engineers the social via manufactures and/or exploited crises. Avital Ronell has suggested that testing, while sometimes trying to actually improve things by constantly testing it, actually ends up creating an "endless erasure of what is" (2005: 8) via this constant testing (for example,

when teaching becomes "teaching to the test" and little more). In short, the liminality that Turner saw in ritual responses to social crises is more common in everyday life now, even induced *as* social crisis *by* performance culture, and this, of course, suits performance culture very well. There is an ongoing opening of a liminal zone for transformation and this feeds performance culture's more frequent disruption of "what is".

It is here that we can begin to think through the intense effects of performance culture on the human body. Here we can turn to the work of José Gil who, in his book *Metamorphoses of the Body*, draws in part on Turner's work. Gil suggests that ritual disrupts everyday mediations, "the life of a community … specific ways of doing things, daily events, coded know-how, communications" (1998: 138). In the liminal contexts of ritual, "the body acts according to unusual rules". Crucially, in ritual, everyday mediations disappear "at the same time as the transformation of everything supposed to be mediatized". I will suggest here that many performance systems, precisely by sidestepping existing "mediations" at the time of "transformation", ongoingly, aim to *keep one within perpetual ritual transformation*. One is increasingly separate from the given-ness of everyday life, from even those aspects of working life not deemed relevant. One is removed from productions of subjectivity that are not part of those of the system. As systemic performance attempts to become what work *is*—what literally counts as work—and as work becomes life for many people, this means that all of life becomes liminal, ritualised performativity. The aim is to set up"'the maximum intensity of forces circulating in the body" (Gil 1998: 39). This is in order, of course, to redirect these forces. In many rituals, this can be healing, a real form of magic, but in the wrong kind of ritual it can also be extremely destructive. Thus performance systems as a tool of change management, perpetual restructuring and so on. It doesn't stop here. This quite ancient power of the liminal, reframed and intensified as performative as it comes into the workplace, is then sent back out again into culture at large, as a *general performativity*.

This general performativity was perhaps first described in Marcuse's "performance principle … stratified according to the performance of its members" (1974: 44). Anything that disrupts the performance principle, especially any kind of *eros*, is not permitted. Lyotard called "performativity" that in which "the goal is ... the best possible input/output equation" (1984: 46). This goes back to at least Descartes, in that, "Descartes is already asking for laboratory funds" (44). In so doing, a "… new problem appears: devices that optimize the performance of the human body for the purpose of producing proof require additional expenditures. No money, no proof—and that means no verification statements and no truth" (45).

"Truth" becomes only a controlled and well-financed verification of certain frames of interest, that is the interests of profit. In this, "since performativity increases the ability to produce proof, it also increases the ability to be right" (46).

Ronell's book *The Test Drive* suggests, however, that the "test drive" goes beyond this. It can variously take the form of a trial (and let us not forget than even an "essay" is a kind of trial), testing, torture or a (in her book somewhat favoured) experimental testing. The

test drive is also extremely varied.

> Whether you mean to prove that you can do it, or we are driven by what Maurice Blanchot calls 'the trial of experience,' … or she is a runaway replicant whose human factor is being scrutinized ... it seems as though everything - nature, body, investment, belief - has needed to be tested … yet, what has allowed acts and idioms of testing to top out as an essential and widening interest, as a nearly unavoidable drive? (Ronell 2005: 1)

McKenzie's work answers this. He suggests that power has now almost fully installed "a performance stratum" (2003: 117), in which there is a "machinic performance". Crucially, this machinic performance arises "when different processes 'recur' or *communicate* across diverse systems, thereby creating performances that escape subjective control and even objective analysis…" (McKenzie 2005: 23—my emphasis). So performance, even in the context of performance systems, is *communicative, often across systems*. In fact, many contemporary performance management systems seem strangely ambivalent about, if not outrightly destructive of, the idea of really doing much beyond the reinforcing of the performance system itself, keeping it's communication channels alive.

Let me just hint at another side to this story of a general cultural performativity, found in the long development of PR, Public Opinion, and operators such as think tanks over the course of the twentieth century (to which I gestured previously in referring to Edward Bernays and Walter Lippmann). This has resulted in a very complex series of "stagings"of the public, often in relation to the like of PR and even performance systems (see Murphie 2010b).

A recent example of the coming together of a staging of the public, PR and more specific performance systems has been the disaster at Fukushima. Writing about the framing of the Fukushima disaster in *Le Monde*, Isabelle Stengers comments—

> As explained by Walter Lippmann with the cynical lucidity of "those who know" … when the "public spirit" materializes, restless, demanding accountability, it is for governments to give them the signs that reassure—"the question is understood and under control, we will do an audit"—in order that the public can find the peace to which it aspires. (2011)

Fukushima highlights many of the problems of performance culture. As regards the actual disaster, there is the problem of actual occurrences. As Stengers sums it up, the question is: "How could they not have foreseen this?". As regards the framing of the public, the powers that be risk "a depletion of the capital of [public] confidence they have and use in" giving us the reassurances they give. These reassurances turn out so often to be self-serving, or worse, clearly contradicted within subsequent events or revelations (such as the spread of radioactivity… another example might be the recent failure of the radical transformation of US schooling, using a powerful system of testing [Ravitch 2010]). No doubt we will see a great deal more of this depletion of public faith, as climate change, peak oil, food shortages and economic circumstances go the way they are looking like

going. Yet this does not mean the end of performance systems. With this depletion of a certain compact of public opinion, and with the failure of technical performance systems to deliver, the framing of the public, of life itself, is forced to turn to brutal powers (the last frantic gasps of performance systems' alignment with an outmoded notion of "economic growth" perhaps). Stengers notes that "we sometimes underestimate what the unleashing of the capitalist logic that is called neoliberalism means." It is extreme. "Our leaders," and this perhaps accounts for their own increasing strange performances, must

> … accept slogans that involve some form of heroic anaesthesia …[and] Everyone now is subject to the imperative not to think, including those working in industry, forced to do what they know to be undesirable, blind to the consequences in order to satisfy shareholders that the only good signal is the reduction of production costs …

In the process, subjectivity begins to become exhausted in its unceasing production along the very narrow lines of performance systems (see Virno 2004). For Stengers, the end result is "the devastated landscape of our imaginations".

The Retreat from Difference

A large part of this devastation of imagination is due to a retreat from difference, although I am not the first to suggest that within many performance systems (although of course not all performance) we are in retreat from difference.

Let me suggest that it is important to understand that this retreat from difference occurs in performance systems whatever is privately believed (or researched or taught) by those involved. Indeed, at first, few "believe" in such systems, as much as they might comply with them (only as much as they have to). Yet such systems construct new beliefs in constructing practices (if indeed beliefs matter at all). In a different context, Zizek suggests that:

> When Althusser repeats, after Pascal: "Act as if you believe, pray, kneel down, and you shall believe, faith will arrive by itself," he delineates an intricate reflective mechanism of retroactive, "autopoetic" foundation … in short, the "external" ritual performatively generates its own ideological foundation. (Zizek 1994: 12-13)

The central proposition of many performance systems is: *difference must be turned and tamed, even if it is exploited along the way*. One will "pray, kneel down, and .. believe" in the system. Not only deviant existing differences must be tamed in this way. More than this, performance systems are generative, future directed. They seem to be pitted against any ongoing differentiation, any generative differential, that might not produce a direct return on investment. My feeling is that many performance management systems (at least) would love to avoid both actual (what actually happens) and virtual (real relational

potential that passes through this constantly). Or, to put this differently, they love to avoid what's really being done in workplaces or in life in general, even real "quality" if you like, on the one hand, and any kind of real problematising concept or idea on the other. The ideal world for a performance system is a semiotic world of indexes pointing to nothing at all, except perhaps each other, or at a financial profit, at that the profit of a select few.

It is here that we come to what I have hinted at as a *third enclosure*.

The Third Enclosure

As it undoes beliefs in favour of action useful to the institution or corporation, re-directs the circulation of affective intensities, or remixes specific affective loops, performance culture plays a large role within a new version of an old struggle over ownership. It's not a trivial struggle. I propose that much of the contemporary performance culture I have described here is either enacting a new development of enclosure, or at its margins perhaps trying to struggle with this, perhaps via a counter-performativity as per Butler (1990). This enclosure is what I am calling the "third enclosure" (Michel Bauwens [2006] also uses this term in a slightly different context. See also Chabrak, Copper and Catchpowle 2009 and Hyde 2010).

The first enclosure, in which commons land for sheep grazing and the like was privatised, occurred from around the 12th century on in England and elsewhere. It was eventually justified by many versions of what was called the "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin 1968 but see also Wikipedia on "the tragedy of the commons"). The well-known idea is that, if everyone gets to share the land, it ends up misused. So the land had better be taken over, given a value, exchanged according to value—in other words, brought into the circuits of Capital (this is the history of the enclosure of lands, although Hardin's ideas moved towards sustainability). Something like a series of "tragedies of the commons" has become a major justification for everything from private ownership to sustainability to perhaps the like of fame—in all of this there is only so much to go round. It has significantly but only recently been challenged by the first woman to win the Nobel Prize for economics, Elinor Ostrom (stockhomresilience 2009). Ostrom won the Nobel Prize for research that showed that many communities are well able to manage common resources, often indeed better than they are managed in individual, private ownership (Ostrom 2010).

The second enclosure concerns intellectual property and creative work. It draws from and it often overlaid on the first enclosure. It's a little different to the first, however. Unlike pasture or forests or fisheries, ideas, inventions and creativity are not limited resources. They can be reused without exhaustion. So the second enclosure, more even than the first, has had to manufacture a tragedy of the commons. It has done this with a lot of work on framing overflows, and on material ecologies of practice. The music industry, for example, puts a lot of work into the framing, via "copyright" and "creative ownership" of the overflow of "piracy". Others extend these framings into new territories, to nations

such as Brazil with open intellectual property regimes that need to be closed in order to make a profit. The rise and capitalisation of copyright academic journals would be another example (see Monbiot 2011 on the "feudal powers" of "academic publishers").

What I am calling the "third enclosure" is an enclosure building on but *massively expanding the first and second*. It involves a complexly nested and overlaid series of sometimes proprietary systems of gated demands for performance. It places everything you do into an equivalence by which subjective production becomes more open to forms of exchange. The third enclosure encloses previously free social exchange, free work, play and the open production of subjectivity that these involve. As I suggested earlier, it encloses the basics of human experience, the relations between action, perception, reflection and decision (or it attempts to enclose these). Under the sign and practice of satisfactory performance, or performance development, and much else discussed so far in this article, the "third enclosure" carefully constructs, through the practice of the test, a tragedy of the commons of affective intensity, of the free, open production of subjectivity. Affective intensity, the production of subjectivity, as Marcuse noted, eros, "experience" in general, are all permitted within the third enclosure, but only to a limited extent, and *only when they serve a general productivity*.

In practice, however, for any individual or group it is perhaps never easy to attain the right kinds of affective intensity within the complex of contemporary performance, to participate in the correct production of subjectivity. It becomes just as difficult to make sure one "enjoys" the right kind of "experience". A new kind of scarcity is created—an opening for new systems, consultants, workshops, etc (for "virtuosity", in Virno's terms [2004: 61]). One pays for these new scarcities, in order to development the right affective intensity, the correct enjoyment of the right experience. In order to pay, one spends the money one earns trading one's current productivity and performance.

Once one can deliver elements of the right kind of affective intensity, or better, have, or perform the having of, the right kind of experience, one can better participate in the new markets of the third enclosure. These include but are not reduced to traditional labour markets, bringing into this third enclosure what has become known as immaterial, cognitive, or affective labour (Pasquinelli 2010) within the "experience economy" (although I mean much more than even this by the "third enclosure").

The third enclosure is robust, but it must avoid what might be called "weeds". Too much of the wrong concept (too much "theory" for example), too much of the wrong kind of feeling or structure of experience, too much open interchange of feeling, learning that goes off objective, performance that is off target, or is not "key performance", or worse, that is not even "indicated", are all weeds within the third enclosure. A careful and ongoing tending of culture will allow the newly enclosed commons to be populated differently, this in order for the first two enclosures (of land as property, of the commons of intellectual property) to survive and be massively extended.

Within the third enclosure not only existing differences but ongoing differentiation are harnessed to work against themselves. These are literally folded in, closed in on

themselves, forming the "predictable as it is possible to make them" variations of the third enclosure. Of course, the third enclosure has very many folds. It's a new, conservative baroque, if with a constant return to both prediction and predication. It's not only found in the ongoing extension of the reach, power, variety and interlinkage of performance and audit systems. It's also found, for example, in the now well-documented imperative to self-development, psychological maximisation, even what Chogyam Trungpa has called "spiritual materialism" (2008).

I shall suggest that if neoliberalism is dying, perhaps dead, or, as is sometimes said, "dead but dominant," it's zombie hand is found in the power of performance systems and related technics of the third enclosure. Yet the third enclosure, like performance, has two masters, only one of which is neoliberalism.

Fractal Neofeudalism

> "Who ever said Feudalism was eclipsed by the modern state system?" (Neilson and Rossiter 2005)

Let us now speculate fully about the feudalism that appears to be arriving (if indeed it ever went away). Performance and the third enclosure move us beyond the limits of a contradictory, or ill-defined neoliberalism. Indeed, if neoliberalism is dying or "dead but dominant", it can afford to be so. According to the speculation here, at least, aided by the third enclosure, neoliberalism is now being superceded by a *neofeudalism* (Stephenson, *The Diamond Age* (2000), depicts a future neo-feudal planet; see also Pasquinelli 2010, Johnson 2010, Médaille 2010, Khanna 2011, Robb 2011, Hedges 2011, Holmes 2011).

Johnson argues that the term "neofeudalism" first arose in Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1998 [1957]), although it seems rather to have arisen in a right-wing critique of this book (Reisman 2006 [1961]). Langthaler (2010) suggests that the concept arose in 1960 with regard to the third reich, when "political scientist Robert Koehl (1960) developed a more explicit concept of the 'feudal aspects' of National Socialism" (165). Here, and significantly for our own times, and especially when considering a networked culture, "'neo-feudalism' is an attempt to reintegrate a society that underwent extreme disintegration, due to a dispersal through personal relationships of power formerly attributed to the state".

Neofeudalism, as always with feudalism, is command of the many by the few, with little in the way of this command (or rather, now, everything more able to be swept up into very adaptable systems of command and control). As I stated at the beginning of this article, for me our recently arriving neofeudalism would best be described as "fractal". It aims for overarching hierarchy but is simultaneously and successfully diffuse and scalable in its operations. For me, the concept and its practices arise within the meeting of the kind of performance culture described in this articles, and a development of recent work by Pasquinelli on "digital neofeudalism" (2010).

Pasquinelli also calls "digital neofeudalism" a "liquid neofeudalism" or a "cognitive neofeudalism". It describes a new form of largely immaterial economy, including new forms of labour (the "new topology of rent"). Here Pasquinelli draws on David Harvey's "Art of Rent" (2002) and recent discussions of cognitive and immaterial labour (such as Virno 2004). Pasquinelli proposes a contemporary digital, networked "technosphere" in which "atemporality and aspatiality are the dimension[s] of the universe of the liquid democracies", "locked by corporate networks and the conformism of social networks" (unpaginated). With the internet as the key set of circuits, or as Pasquinelli calls it, a "liquid pyramid", digital neofeudalism involves a—

> … polarised scenario where few landlords owns the whole infrastructure of communication (hardware layer, protocol layer, meta-data layer, social network layer) and face a multitude of cognitive workers forced to 'creativity'. In the middle, indeed, the crisis, the shrinking of the middle class of the digital age.

Crucially, for Pasquinelli, the digital networks that enable digital neofeudalism are "liquid, flexible and stretchable".

Enabled by Pasquinelli's flexible concept of neofeudalism, here I develop the concept of neofeudalist practices across an even broader range of contexts and actions (beyond the internet and cognitive labour to a more direct intervention, alongside these, within the basics of experience). In short, I bring the idea of a neofeudalism together with the third enclosure. Assisted by a performance culture, this produces what I have been calling a fractal neofeudalism.

Fractal neofeudalism deploys more flexible diagrams of intervention and control across even more than cognitive or immaterial labour or digital networks (after Deleuze and Guattari, or Massumi 1998 or 2002, when this becomes "biogram" [190ff]). The diagrams involved are crucial. Erin Manning writes, in the context of art, that the "diagram is defined as the conjunctive force that in-gathers an artwork's intensity .. a technique or series of techniques for the open conjugation of intensities" (2009: 126). Yet the diagrams of neofeudalism conjugate open intensities into more closed assemblages or "agencements". The latter are the arrangements of relations of forces by which events are constituted as they come into being (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: see also Manning 2009: 237 on "assemblage/agencement"). Agencements are in a sense proto-performative. Neo-feudal agencements bring together a dynamic that set up two-way traffic between virtualisations and actualisations. This allows for a future-directed feudalism, a "becoming-feudal" or, more accurately, a *becoming-ever-more-feudal*. This points to a surprising (well not perhaps to Marxists) dynamic within which Capital is only a very complex moment in cycles alternating with periods of feudalism. This is why I also think the third enclosure goes far beyond the commercial/legal impediments, claims and impositions of first and second enclosure, as important as these are.

Something like a *fractal* neofeudalism, then, would use incredibly powerful, dominant, but *highly flexible* chains of command in the service of a very narrow group of individuals. It would deploy agencements that scale well—that are self-similar in their

galvanising of the necessary neofeudal dynamics, if still flexible and adaptable to different points and levels within a social context.

I will tease this out briefly. What complicates neofeudalism, and differentiates it from previous feudal forms, is its very effective "grasping" of complexity (in Whitehead's terms but not perhaps in a context Whitehead might have chosen). For Guattari, following Whitehead, grasping, like fractals, creates a kind of cohesion within chaos: "Each new phase in the conscrescence [coming together of evens] means the . . . growing of real unity of feeling" (Guattari 1989: 82, quoting Whitehead 1978: 224). Within the performance systems of neofeudalism, the final result is the literal creation of feeling within the performative. There is the sudden adjustment of the nervous system, a unity of feeling that goes far beyond a logical outcomes (Murphie 2010: 287, see also the previous discussion of Gil). This adjusts the entire feeling and its assembled intensities to servitude, within habit and the basic potentials for experience. Yet "grasping" here means finding some coherence in complexity or infinity, without necessarily having to tame that complexity in order to put it to good use. How does the fractal fit into this?

As most people will know, in general a fractal is what we see in the infinitely complex breakdown of dimension across levels (most famously represented in the forces that form the patterns of snowflakes). However, it's also a little known term in Guattari's work, however. Guattari writes of "fractalisation" to describe the "texture" of "intermediate temporalities." The fractal effect is that of the "in-between," the not yet fully formed (Murphie 2010a: 296). Yet it describes a force that is able to create highly complex structure. The fractal occurs within mixed temporalities—durations and syntheses—in "becoming." For Guattari, then, the fractal is a way of understanding that the complex breakdown of dimension—of given structures across and between dimensions—is something immensely functional. It allows adaptation within ongoing transformation, across levels or dimensions or systems, *in process*. Guattari writes of fractalisation within the brain and nervous system's complex connections, or in the creation of time and space, or social life. In short, not only can fractalisation make snowflakes. It can also create other powerful, extremely flexible and adaptable structures, for better or worse. Here I'm suggesting that when performance is used to "communicate across diverse systems" (McKenzie 2005: 23), it can cause a fractalisation of those systems, one by which it can also work within this fractalisation. So how does this relate to neofeudalism?

In *fractal neofeudalism*, the chains of command involved can splinter into fractal elements, work in "becomings", in spaces and durations of the "in-between". In doing so, fractals remain serviceable. A little like packets of information on the internet (thus the power of Pasquinelli's perception of the digital or liquid neofeudal), they can reassemble themselves in a infinite number of different ways. They are, in the process, very effective at colonising our individual and group productions of subjectivity—by assembling with them, *in process*.

Fractal neofeudalism, then, forms a highly diffuse, coherent, *cloud* of *agencement*. In some ways this is so effective because it's simply so overwhelming, not only from the top down, but in every nook and cranny of experience. It's incredibly complex—a kind of

infinity of authority, command and communication.

The actual pragmatic "formation" of fractal neofeudalism has three aspects: increasingly hierarchical chains of "decision"; the "fractal" production and reproduction of decision within these chains, often via performances that bring into being events of "alignment" or resonance; and, via this, the active replacement or abandoning of belief in the world ("as if there's no tomorrow", as they say).

Fractal neofeudalism aims to reform human relations with a very broad sweep that nevertheless scales well across different levels of the production of subjectivity and "world" (if against the real world per se). It emerges as an "event" within institutions (those such as universities, for example, that increasingly abandon democratic boards and councils) and corporations. It is also found in national and global forms of the imposition of powers (a national takeover of a curriculum for example; or a set of international links between think tanks). It can, indeed must, invade individual modes of relation. At the same time as it does this, as I have mentioned previously, it is necessarily found within the "pre-individual milieu" through which all these individuate. It is an increasingly successful social/political formation in this respect at least (if still only as series of prototypes of a power that at least hopes for an ongoing becoming-ever-more-feudal). However, fractal neofeudalism also aims to reform human relations in active denial of the claims on the human by the complexity of the world. It emphatically looks away from a world that is increasingly demanding. It does thrive on the social tension that surround the complex claims of the world, but it also falters in the face of the basic and overwhelming reality of these claims.

As I began to suggest at the beginning of this article, to a large extent fractal neofeudalism is fed by, and feeds, a fantasy. It may indeed *be* a fantasy in itself, although an active one that becomes the political process. It's dynamic is predicated on the fragile —because so tenuous—fantasy grounding of an ongoing "no" (no to climate change, to environmentalism in general, a disbelief in environmental catastrophes of any kind, no to scientists, to social welfare, to taxes but also to debt,, to immigrants and refugees, to liberals, to social democracy, to "lefties" and "communists", to students, to unions, to intellectuals, to teachers, to politicians, a no to politics itself, etc, etc). Despite its operational flexibility, it has almost no positive political program aside from the hardening of the arteries of current powers and situations (the extension of mining industry and restriction of renewables, the undermining of workers' rights, etc) in so far as this hardening benefits these current powers. It becomes neofeudal as it restricts access to the benefits of current powers and situations to the few, even and especially as many of the existing resources and social structures that support current powers play out their end games.

Fractal neofeudalism has to work hard, however, to maintain the tenuous fantasy of denial of the world involved *at the level of the production of subjectivity*. Again, performance is ideally suited to the purpose—although often a performance without meaningful content beyond the affective affirmation that serves the imposition of hierarchical powers.

One example might be the sad "ethico-aesthetic" of the performances of Christopher Monckton, 3rd Viscount Monckton of Brenchley, Monckton is a prominent climate change sceptic. His achievements are not at all based on science but rather on his very strong performance skills (see Lambert at <http://scienceblogs.com/deltoid/global_warming/monckton/> for the problems with Monckton's science; see also Cook 2011 and Sourcewatch n.d.). Monckton constantly circulates around the world—along with his befuddled and befuddling but comforting pseudo-science, his nevertheless high level debating skills, the mutual affection he enjoys with a series of think tanks and fellow sceptics (Desmogblog n.d.), his constant but purely theatrical threats to sue those who disagree with him (Bickmore 2010, Readfearn 2011—to my knowledge at least Monckton has not sued any of those he has threatened), his use of visual aids such as the swastika in powerpoints and referencing of Nazism in order to demean his opponents (Weber 2011; SustainUS 2009; NewOnABC 2011). All this, along with the staging of the Monckton tours and events, and the organisation of media contexts for these events, is a perfect example of performance's carriage of the ethos (an atmosphere of practice that perfects new forms of performative controls at the level of the social), and the circulation of affective intensities ("no!" "nazis!") that define fractal neofeudalism. Of course, it is no accident that so much of the work of fantasy maintenance by fractal neofeudalism goes into denial of the claims of climate change and other ecological catastrophes. For climate change scepticism is necessarily one of the pillars of the denial of the claims of the world. Fractal neofeudalism therefore funds front groups and media control on this issue. It develops and circulates tactics, along with false statements as cultural performatives that undermine the science. It then builds on the climate change scepticism it carefully constructs, deploys the affective intensity in other areas (for example, in Australia the "no to Carbon tax" campaign, the "no to mining taxes" campaign, leading to the possible downfall of a centralist government).

Fractal neofeudalism's other pillar of the denial of the claims of the world is a rather more confused half-denial of the ongoing failure of global capital. This failure is complex for fractal neofeudalism. Here fractal neofeudalism attempts to position itself within a second fantasy—not this time the denial of the world, but a fantasy of a substitute imaginary world beyond both the environment and a failing global capital. Yet, as can only occur in a fantasy, this world is simultaneously beyond and under the aegis of the remnant powers of this failing global capital itself. These are remnant powers that involve the strategic use of existing capital (funding the like of think tanks, astroturfing, national and global media control). These remnant powers, via their control of politics, are also able to carry out an exploitation of global capital's failure (in bailouts of the financial industries, along with supposedly "necessary" cuts to social welfare, with a concurrent rejection of tax rises, even and especially for the very wealthy).

Much of this is obvious. Yet it is perhaps less obvious that, as it has emerged with clarity as a political formation, it is fractal neofeudalism has long worked hard (although not always succeeded) to demolish much of the social. Here I will only assert that it has worked to undermine a range of more general, often successful, concepts, philosophies, practices and modes of living. A long list might include: universal health care, social

democracy, renewable energy, new forms of collaboration organisation, even one might suggest the various philosophies and now sciences of complexity and process, anything that suggests the mutual entanglement of the human and non-human, of living and not. Nothing should be left standing that might challenge the structures, knowledges and expertise, the basic denials, the tactics, or financial returns, of diminishing and sclerotic "powers that be". Let us remind ourselves that we are only speculating.

Although it is somewhat ironic perhaps that the first enclosure, with all its problems, led us out of the feudal, while the third enclosure might lead us back into it. What can we do about all this?

Some suggestions.

How do we rekindle imagination?

Within theories of queer (counter)performativity there is now almost a "tradition" in which the double-sided nature of what Judith Butler calls "fabrications" is useful. In short, one uses what is made available by performativity to other ends. On the one hand, fabrications can allow escape, counter-performativity, tactical calculation within a strategy of appearance or disappearance. As such, fabrications can be used by individuals, and in community organisation, but of course, they can also be found in larger corporations, think tanks and other vested interests. On the other hand, a fabrication "becomes something to be sustained, lived up to. Something to measure individual practices against …" (Ball 2000: 9). It is recorded. Repeated. New fabrications might be needed to resist performativity once more. This is, however, difficult, as any ongoing repetition of performance sets up what Barry Barnes has suggested as "self-validating … feedback loops" (1983: 524).

Butler's work, which began in the context of what she called "gender trouble" (1990) has been questioned in other terms within the context of feminism but with clear implications for politics and social life beyond this. Diprose (2002) suggests that "my body identity is transformed in this performance through the world of the other … not by simply donning the garb of a foreign body and playing on the difference between that performance and the sex of my body but by implicitly incorporating that foreign body, its gestures, movements, and habits, into my performance" (70). Colebrook (2000; see also 2003) contrasts Butler's work with that of Lloyd, Gatens and Grosz. She notes that the "the becoming of feminism can be understood in two senses: as less than the real or as more than the given". Colebrook suggests that Butler's approach to "instability as the motor of political change, her attention to the positing power of identity alongside its failures at full realisation, stresses the disruptive power of feminist becoming" but this still leaves things as "less that the real"—I might simply say still relying heavily on the performative. Colebrook prefers Lloyd, Gatens and Grosz' "more than the given", or "becoming as an enrichment of being" (2000: 90), in which life, contra performance based on given elements, does not consist of a playing out of tactics directed towards controlling the future.

> … life and duration, and this history and politics, are never either a matter of unfolding an already worked out blueprint, or the gradual accretion of qualities which progress stage by stage or piecemeal over time.. (90-91, quoting Grosz 2000: 230)

All of this complex work from within feminism applies to performance in general. It suggests at least a subversion from within performance, although this is perhaps the weaker response. Better, it suggests an affirmative movement "beyond the given" (even if this given becomes only a particular system or event of performance itself) in so far as this "given" attempts to contaminate living via performance.

There is another problem to be overcome or sidestepped, however. Performance systems do not just engineer, or even re-engineer, the world. They pull it apart. For all kinds of reasons that I sketched out here, performance systems are not the friends of a flourishing culture (as the recent Excellence in Research for Australia journal ranking debacle demonstrates [Rowbotham 2011]). In fact, we might suggest that the more interesting things are happening, the more modes of living that are being invented, the more likely it is that a performance system will arise to pull them apart, and to get things back under control.

I have already suggested that at the extreme end of this, performance can become a substitute for any kind of real work/living outside of them. So we might not really be doing much even while dramatically overworked. Ivor Southwood calls this "non-stop inertia" (2011). In modern life everyone faces impossible demands and or is forced to assume *unassumable responsibilities*. One result is perhaps a *forced incompetence*. In this situation, where does one turn, for example as a manager, if not to the system that will guarantee that something at least has been fulfilled, and that this something has been guaranteed by an appropriate measure, such as the satisfactory hit of a Key Performance Target (see Weber 2005, on "targets of opportunity")?

Yet the result is that relationships become often faulty circuits, or at best alliances, as there is a new competition over access to these circuits. Mentoring is about how to beat the system by playing it. Community becomes a new tribalism. I might even suggest that in performance culture the fear of death is replaced by something more immediate—*the fear of a lived destruction*.

In the light of all this, one can perhaps remain thankful for the like of Butler, Kosofsky Sedgwick (who I will discuss shortly), McKenzie, Stengers, Colebrook, Diprose or those such as Richard Sennett for the beginning of remedies.

Ghosted Publics and Unacknowledged Collectivity

Another possible series of responses to the third enclosure and fractal neofeudalism might be found in what I call "ghosted publics" and "unacknowledged collectivity". These

refuse, rout around, rather than court or demand, systemic recognition and alignments (not that I am against recognition *when it seems strategically valuable*). I will suggest that ghosted publics and unacknowledged collectivity evade forms of "in-fact-never-the-recognition-that-was-promised", predicated on the now multiple systems of performance and audits and so on. Subsequently, a ghosted public or unacknowledged collective might unfold collective life differently, working toward affirming the "more than given", re-enabling a freer production of subjectivity.

"Ghosted publics" are acts of community—often media-assisted—that are simultaneously in and not in the public sphere (see also Murphie 2008b). They are translucent 'figures' of direct relationality and immediate communing that by-pass certified public acts, or regulated "communications" of performance recognised by established powers. From the point of view of established systems they are both present and absent, precisely because, although they are real, they do not fit, or even desire or struggle to obtain, standard forms of recognition. This makes them hard to see. They nevertheless haunt and trouble both mainstream media events (early amateur radio is a great example but so is a reading group, or more famously, in a complicated way, Wikileaks). They also haunt mainstream, publicly "certified" models of, and controls over thinking processes, affective intensities, and the production of subjectivity. Like ghosts that one only thinks one might feel, perhaps with an unexpected chill, ghosted publics disrupt and trouble the given without necessarily "appearing".

If then, ghosted publics are precisely those events of community that evade the desired stability and established models of a recognised "public", then they evade a "public" that has become the central defining problem of much of traditional media events, media theory and media disciplines for a hundred years. In the process they suggest a different understanding of thinking processes, one in which thought is not taken to consist of neat and recognisable forms of communication either predictably or perhaps "fractally" spread through the social. They certainly suggest something much more contingent than inputs and outputs, or symbolic processing according to a stable system.

Throughout the 20th century there has always been a series of ghosted publics moving through the more acknowledged and controlled public. Locally, on the ground, they might form pockets of "unacknowledged collectivity" (there are infinite forms of this but a simple example might be community gardening), by which I mean collectivity that again does not care about recognition, stability of models or access to central controls. They take up the practices of the "public" like ghosts, appearing only fleetingly here and there in the acknowledged public (for example, as "anti-globalisation activists" on the nightly news), and then only out of the corner of the acknowledged public's eye. Yet these unacknowledged collectives seem to possess strange new powers of communality. They hint at public uncanny relations because their own relations come first. They seem in tune with the ongoing shifts, the convergences and divergences, of network ecologies. Again such unacknowledged collectivities were seen in the communities that found expression through the early days of amateur radio before the airwaves were regulated (or the later free radio in Italy, France and elsewhere [Goddard 2011]).

Such collectivity involves a question of "simply being able to live or to survive in a particular place, at a particular time, and to be ourselves". However, this "*has nothing to do with identity*" (Guattari in Guattari and Rolnik 2008: 94—my emphasis). Guattari notes that "every time the problems of identity or recognition appear in a particular place, at the very least we are faced with the threat of blocking and paralysis of the process" (102). What do we perform in this situation? If we perform at all, it is perhaps as ghost with regard to publics, as unacknowledged collectivity with regard to each other. These perhaps become a kind of counter-fractal within performance.

Unacknowledge collectivities also teach us a new principle with regard to the third enclosure. *We need always to re-singularise the situation*, to use Guattari's term .

How would this work? In terms of examples one could point to, for example, the Senselab project, "Technologies of Lived Abstraction" and its work on re-singularising "research creation" and transdisciplinary encounter (see <http://senselab.ca/>; the online journal *Inflexions* gives several accounts and related discussions of this at <http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/>; the best account of this, however, along with principles for re-singularisation, is Manning and Massumi forthcoming). In these events, for example, there are no performed papers, and participants are asked to come with techniques for relation but not finished work. Encounter and creation is emphasised rather than performance. Failure is common, whatever that means outside of a performance environment. A different example, this time of a simultaneous resingularisation of the social, technical networks and action on climate change is the Coalition of the Willing Project, dedicated to open culture climate solutions (<http://coalitionofthewilling.org.uk/> and <http://cotw.cc/wiki/Coalition_of_the_Willing>. Another good set of examples of work in this vein could be found at the P2P foundation site (<http://p2pfoundation.net/>). Again this whole discussion is haunted by the autonomists, the Situationists (Wark 2011), and all that has followed these two movements (for related events and ideas in the context of network culture see de Peuter and Dyer-Witheford 2005, Bauwens 2009, Lovink and Rossiter 2005, Goriunova 2011, Moore 2011).

How would this work in terms of techniques, practices and concepts?

First, when performance begins to work with Guattari's processes of re-singularisation, events look somewhat different. They perhaps look like what he calls a "kind of molecular wave" (76). This molecular wave provides an alternate history, and a different contemporary problematic, to that of the public sphere, or the three enclosures. It may be true that this might look like a history of events that still need to find ways of being acted out, but more correctly it might be a matter of *allowing an emergence of relations that are non-performative*.

Second, crucial to this might be a reworking of the meaning of action. Here simply one has to remove actual activity, activity of real value, to yourself or your community, from the generalised circuits of performance systems. This is to say, recreate the possibility of action outside of performance systems.

Third, there is the *resingularisation of time*. Somewhat ironically we can turn to Benjamin Bloom in this respect. Bloom was the founder of the notion of a taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom et al. 1956) within education—and these are at the heart of performance culture. Yet Bloom went on to develop "mastery learning" (1984). The most significant shift in this is the deregulation—and re-singularisation—of time. Students take the time they need to master objectives before they have to move on. Objectives remain but now interaction/relation with the teacher on a more one-to-one basis begins to take objectives out of a draconian test-based system, and therefore out of a general subjective equivalence. As education, it works. Although you can imagine how well one-to-one teaching and taking one's time go down with funding bodies. It's also been in trouble with the Christian Right in the US, largely because it affirms the child, rather than breaking their will (Berliner 1997). They are right. The control of time is crucial if you are going to force people to perform in a certain way. The single biggest factor in the softer forms of control over life such as performance systems is the fact that they take up so much time, and create "time" in a certain way. Bloom's inversion of the connection between time and progress is therefore very important.

Fourth, there is something else hidden here in Bloom's work, alongside the flexible time to master objectives. This is *variation*. Individual variation becomes a plus (although Bloom was keen to bring the virtues of individual teaching into group work). Ideally, there would even be time for non-action, for open thought, even for more flexible educational relations between students, between teachers. The question becomes one then of reintroducing a flexibility and openness of tasks and relations between, for example students, teachers, colleagues, while minimising performance. "Impossible", I hear funders say. However, it is of course what is already happening in learning and teaching in almost any informal setting, including much of informal learning online—a gigantic ghosted public if ever there was one.

Fifth, I will suggest a counter-movement to performance systems is perhaps found in Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of "periperformativity" (2002: 5). Her definition is striking in the context here. A "periperformative" is an utterance "whose complex efficacy depends on their tangency to, as well as their difference from, the explicit performatives" (5). Periperformatives ghost performatives. Periperformatives live in the neighbourhood of performatives but fragment them, take them somewhere else. They disrupt a system's smooth fractalisation. We might think of Bartleby the Scrivener's famous "I would prefer not to" (Melville 2004[1853]), or, as a colleague recently advised me to say in relation to further requests for administrative work "it can't be done". These seem to me to be almost *un*-performative assemblages, more perhaps than counter-performatives. Periperformatives open up time again, open up possible relations and potentials, allow for new ecologies of practice, of performance and just as crucially, non-performance.

These periperformatives perhaps need to be accompanied by Félix Guattari's metamodeling. Normal modeling and framing involve a series of frozen representations, operating to channel experience into narrow forms of performance. Metamodeling frees things up, moves not above them, but between them, a kind of counter to the

communicative or even fractal aspects of performative systems as these construct frames and models. Metamodels "introduce movement, multiplicity and chaos into models" (Genosko and Murphie 2008). A metamodel "ensures precariousness, uncertainty and creativity over fixity, universality and automatic articulations" (Genosko 2003: 134-135). Shake the frame, undo prescriptive actions. Or, better sometimes, just don't subscribe to the frame, especially not in practice. *Just don't do it*. Unswoosh.

The psychic system, or better the world itself, might be on your side. Kosofsky Sedgwick, writing with Adam Frank about Silvan Tomkins' work on cybernetics, discusses the psychic system as fundamentally out of tune with the kinds of assumptions you need for neat inputs/outputs, alignments, and so on. In short, there is no neat alignment, or, we might say, even fixed allegiances within the field of the psychic system, or within this system relations with other systems (that is, the world from which something like the psychic system ongoingly emerges). There is, in a sense, nothing with which to align. It's certainly not a question of the defined and unshiftable "object" within the "objective". Rather, it's a matter of complex assemblages, or what they call "co-assemblages" with an affect system "encompassing several more, and more qualitatively different, possibilities that on/off". Kosofsky Sedgwick and Frank therefore share an attraction to "the image of an undifferentiated but differentiable ecology [along with an ability to] discuss how things differentiate" (in Kosofsky Sedgwick 2002: 106).

This attraction would be the key point of difference when thinking through the ethical constitution of performance in all its forms.

I'm ultimately arguing here for a commitment to a "differential life" (Murphie 2005). This is life which brings together concepts of different/ciation with pragmatic techniques of living. However, I want to finish with that which I have been suggesting might sometimes seem to be a missing ingredient—*non-performance*, that is, *not performing in any sense of the word*.

Not Performing (Non-action)

I have written elsewhere on the desirability of de-leveraging performance in stillness, silence, non-action (Murphie 2010b). I have also suggested above that we might look to Bloom's re-singularisation of time, Kosofsky's Sedgwick's periperformatives, Diprose's incorporation or Colebrook's affirmation of the "more than the given" as ways of intervening in the action-commands of performance culture. Or we might look to Guattari's metamodelisation as a way of moving between the frames and models so important to the narrowness of performance cultures. Of course, performers and queer theorists know all about stillness, silence, non-action, when to speak and when to remain silent, when to appear and when to remain in secret. We have much to learn from them.

We also learn by paying attention to what we pay attention, and how we do this. If you can indulge me, I'll finish with a personal story. Throughout probably 47 of the 52 years

of my life I have been at school, in some form or another. I was a vague kid in primary school, until year 5. I really didn't know what was going on. It was then that standardised testing arrived. I did well. I've always, so far anyway, done really well in tests and exams. I'm only telling you this to frame the fact that I've also always hated tests, exams and performance measure. At first it was just a person coming to school to ask me questions. Soon, however, the better I got at tests and exams, the more pressure there was to be better at them. I became better, but with my high scores came increasing levels of stress. I made it through the Higher School Certificate, like so many students I suspect, on sleeping pills. And on it goes. This is all background to my quick story.

I love writing, but in the current circumstances I also hate it. I particularly hate writing under pressure, and while constantly interrupted. Recently I was writing away, feeling a little stressed as is often the case. I stopped, and paid attention to my attention. You could say that I interrupted the whole performance assemblage, in full flight. As it happens, on this occasion I realised that I had been writing away, as quickly I could, as if my life depended on it. Sometimes I guess it does, in a funny kind of way. This time however, it didn't. I had plenty of time. Nothing was interrupting me. It was nice day. I was enjoying what I wrote. I realised that, despite all this, I—well to be more precise, my hands, my posture—still lived in the habit of years of exams and tests, of cramming, of having to perform under pressure. I realised that this alone, even in relaxed times, was destroying the enjoyment of writing. The solution was simple. Take my time. Slow down. Leave the habit of the test behind. The transformation was amazing.

Slow down. For those still anxious about leaving the test behind, however, here's a test from Isabelle Stengers.

> Slowing down is not only about capitalism. It is about giving a chance to the event, to the encounters which have you feeling and thinking … we must utterly disentangle [progress] from mobilisation, when you quietly destroy what you define as an obstacle to progress. And this is the test for everybody. (Stengers 2002: 252-3)

Stillness—real stillness, stopping, slowing, non-action. All of these are an opening out from narrow channeled life. They are simple techniques. They are literally things you can do.

Yet even in these, we can still ask, what is it not to perform? This is the question we are no longer supposed to ask, yet it is an extremely powerful question. It is also a question we can ask often. I'm sure the answers will appear if we do.

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