

Taking Butler elsewhere: performativities, spatialities and subjectivities

Nicky Gregson

Department of Geography, Sheffield University, Winter Street, Sheffield S10 2TN, England;
e-mail: n.gregson@shef.ac.uk

Gillian Rose

Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Drummond Street, Edinburgh EH8 9XP,
Scotland; e-mail: gcr@geo.ed.ac.uk

Received 5 March 1998; in revised form 27 May 1999

Abstract. This paper is concerned with exploring the potential of performance and performativity as conceptual tools for a critical human geography. We begin by emphasising the importance of recognising the different ways in which performance can be theorised, and their very different critical effects. We then argue that, although the geographical literature is apparently characterised by two contrasting discussions of performance (those of Goffman and of Butler), these accounts form a consensus around Goffman. By contrast, and along with Butler, we maintain that performance is subsumed within and must always be connected to performativity—that is, to the citational practices which produce and subvert discourse and knowledge, and which at the same time enable and discipline subjects and their performances. But we also take Butler elsewhere, arguing that spaces too need to be thought of as performative, and that more needs to be made of the complexity and instability of performances and performed spaces. To illustrate our general arguments, but also to show how they work out rather differently in the specificities of particular social practices, we draw on two very different pieces of research which we have separately been involved in: a study of community arts workers and projects in Edinburgh and another on car-boot sales as alternative spaces of consumption. We conclude the paper by arguing for the necessity of extending our arguments to encompass academic performances and performativity, reflecting on our own production, both through particular academic performances of our respective research projects and this paper.

Introduction

The suggestion that social life resembles some sort of performance is one which has been elaborated by many social theorists working within very different analytical traditions. In the 1950s and 1960s, for example, Erving Goffman was arguing that performance is critical to the study of the interaction order (Goffman, 1956; 1963; 1967; see also Burns, 1992; Drew and Wootton, 1988). Not only did Goffman approach interaction through dramaturgical metaphor (stage, zoning, front and back regions, masquerade, and so on), but he saw interaction as an engagement between individual(s) and audience(s), to whom individuals perform and who, in turn, interpret their actions. For Goffman, “the self [is] a performed character ... not an organic thing that has specific location ... [the performer and] his body merely provide the peg on which something of a collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time” (1956, pages 252–253). Thus behind Goffman’s analyses of interaction lies an active, prior, conscious, and performing self. By contrast, several writers considering performance from various psychoanalytic perspectives work with very different notions of subjectivity. Both Joan Riviere (1986) and Luce Irigaray (1985), for example, suggest that femininity is a mask donned for social performances. But Riviere claimed that there is no difference between woman and the mask. She made no assumption that there was an active, conscious human agent behind the mask of femininity, rather that the mask itself articulated feminine subjectivity. Irigaray also suggests that femininity is nothing but its masquerade, but while she too denies that the mask is manipulated by an active subject, as part of her critical project she nonetheless suggests that the subject of mimetic performances of femininity remains partially

'elsewhere', beyond the performance of her self. More recently, a number of queer theorists, notably Judith Butler, have deployed a linguistic definition of performativity, as opposed to a theatrical or psychoanalytic account of performance, but in this case for a specific, critical purpose: to displace the heteronormative alignment of sex, gender, and desire (Butler, 1990; 1993a; 1993b; Sedgwick, 1994; Parker and Sedgwick, 1995).

With the exception of some of the writings of Yi Fu Tuan in the 1970s (for example, 1977), it is only recently that several geographers have begun to draw on these different ways of thinking about performance and performativity in their interpretative work. The motivation for this turn would seem to be that to see social identities as performed is to imply that identities are in some sense constructed in and through social action, rather than existing anterior to social processes. Performance, in short, seems to offer intriguing possibilities for thinking about the constructedness of identity, subjectivity, and agency. And the starting point for this paper is our assumption that a notion of performance is indeed crucial for a critical human geography concerned to understand the construction of social identity, social difference, and social power relations, and the way space might articulate all of these. Along with a number of geographers, then, we agree that both performance and performativity are important conceptual tools for a critical geography concerned to denaturalise taken-for-granted social practices, and concur with their emphasis on the creativity of everyday life. However, as our opening paragraph suggests, it is also important to recognise the very different ways in which performance can be theorised: these various discussions about performance depend on particular, contrasting understandings of agency, subjectivity, and power, each of which have very different critical effects. So, in this paper we begin by examining the differences between the two main discussions of performance current within the geographical literature, ones which explicitly identify with either Goffman's or Butler's account, but which we suggest in fact rely much more on Goffman than on Butler. We then move on to our primary motivations: to disrupt and alter some of the terms of this emergent consensus and to establish the potential of the tools of performance and performativity for a critical human geography. Specifically, our argument is that performance—what individual subjects do, say, 'act-out'—and performativity—the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances—are intrinsically connected, through the saturation of performers with power. Furthermore, we suggest that similar arguments need to be extended to space. Space too needs to be thought of as brought into being through performances and as a performative articulation of power. And, finally, we want to insist on the complexity and uncertainty of performances and performed spaces.

As will be clear from the foregoing, these arguments have a closer affinity with those of Butler than with those of Goffman. But they go beyond Butler too. So, our categorical intention here is not to disrupt geography's emergent consensus simply by offering (yet) another (more authentic) reading of Butler. Rather, we use Butler's representations of performance and performativity as the start point, the bouncing-off point, for thinking about the critical potential of these tools, performance and performativity. And, in order to explore this critical potential, we orient the bulk of the paper around two rather different, and empirical, research projects which we have separately been involved in—one on community arts workers and the other on car-boot sales.⁽¹⁾ In doing this, we acknowledge that we are engaging in a set of

⁽¹⁾ During the course of 1995, Gillian interviewed twenty-four community arts workers involved in projects in Edinburgh. Nearly all of these workers were employed in projects funded by the now-defunct Urban Programme administered by the Scottish Office. This Programme provided funding for projects operating in what the Scottish Office defined as areas of multiple social deprivation, and which were expected to produce cost-effective and tangible results in their area.

practices which are a long way from Butler's own key concerns [sexuality, gender, and heteronormativity (see also Sedgwick, 1993)] and which are empirical as well as theoretical in their motivations. For those whose concerns are with Butler and her theoretical insights, such might seem inappropriate directions in which to travel. But, for us, these two projects have long seemed ideal vehicles through which to explore performance, performativity, and their spatialities. Indeed, each illustrative of the discourses both of theatre and of speech act theory, they enable us to move geographical debate on performance away from what is currently a rather narrow focus on and identification with performing bodies, towards a more expansive engagement with 'the performative'.⁽²⁾ Moreover, working with two very different research projects also enables us to reflect on the different relations each of us developed towards our research; on our own academic performances. So, Gillian decided to work with the accounts of the community arts workers with whom she talked: to take them as they were told and to try to unravel their complexities.⁽³⁾ I wanted to understand their understanding, and my interpretation of their accounts is what I have decided to offer here and, although at greater length and with more complexity of detail, elsewhere. And I did this out of a sense of respect for what they were trying to do: with tiny resources, these projects were attempting nothing less than the reimagining of a city for which a certain image is almost everything. Nicky, however, developed a rather different relation to car-boot sales, one in which she not only worked with and from the accounts of car-boot-sale participants, both buyers and sellers, but participated in and observed these theatrical, staged displays. I was therefore not just understanding and interpreting discursive accounts as Gillian did, but observing and interpreting the visual, aural, olfactory space of the car-boot sale, and participating in its production. And this participation itself inevitably informed, infused, saturated the interpretative repertoires I brought to bear on what individuals said. In short, I shared the same practical knowledges and practices as those I talked with; produced them through participation (see also Gregson and Crewe, 1997a).

⁽¹⁾ (continued). These arts workers were therefore working in localities defined as deprived, and these were mostly interwar and postwar council housing estates on the outskirts of Edinburgh: Craigmillar, Muirhouse, Pilton, and Wester Hailes. At the same time Nicky, together with Louise Crewe (Nottingham University) was conducting research on car-boot sales; temporary events located on the urban fringe and characterised by the exchange of primarily second-hand house-hold and personal goods. Involving extensive periods of participant observation alongside interviewing and survey work, this research examined the consumption practices of buyers and sellers which constitute, produce, and shape the car-boot sale, as well as the regulatory context within which they are embedded. For full accounts of both research projects see Rose (1996a; 1997a; 1997b; 1997c), Gregson and Crewe (1997a; 1997b; 1998), Gregson et al (1997), Crewe and Gregson (1998).

⁽²⁾ Of course, this tactic also raises the critical question of the relation between the theoretical and the empirical. Here is not the space to engage in a lengthy exposition of the difficulties of applying theory empirically within the social sciences. Suffice to say however, that the performance here not only exemplifies Butler's notion of the performative (it cites the theoretical yet through citation generates the possibilities for slippage/subversion in this theoretical) but displays the contextual, situated, grounded nature of subversive and reinscriptive acts. The empirical then is, for us, one of the sites, the spaces, through which and in which citational practices are displayed, reenacted, resisted, transgressed. Spaces which matter for a critical human geography.

⁽³⁾ It is important to note the slippage which occurs here, and at various other junctures of the paper: we slip from and between the collective 'we' to the 'I'. Notwithstanding the various discussions and reflections which lie behind this paper, the 'I' is the voice (and the pronoun) reserved for explication of our individual research projects. And, it is retained as some indication of their separate identities and performances. We reflect further on these separate performances in our final section, but for the moment we merely highlight the slippages in voice which occur, and which signify different academic subjectivities.

Performance, performativity, and power: some critical possibilities

Already within the move to performance within geography we can identify two distinct fields where various understandings of performance are proliferating [although, see Rose (1996b) for a discussion of Irigaray's concept of mimesis].

The first of these is a series of studies of the particular practices demanded by specific, usually service sector, workplaces (although there is nothing intrinsic to other forms of workplace practices which would seem to write out an analysis grounded in performance (for example, see Cockburn, 1983; 1985; Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993). Exemplified by Phil Crang's utilisation of Goffman to illuminate waiting work in a diner-style restaurant (Crang, 1994), and including Linda McDowell and Gill Court's work on merchant bankers (McDowell, 1995; McDowell and Court, 1994a; 1995), this research suggests that the labour undertaken in service sector workplaces might best be understood as a performance. It has been shown, for example, that workers are expected to comport themselves in particular ways; that there is a form of script, more or less explicit, which governs the behaviour expected of workers, including their forms of speech and frequently too their specific embodiments, including their dress; and that there are a number of audiences for this performance, including the workplace management, other workers, and the consumers or clients of the service on offer. Conceptualising performance as staged, as played for spectators both behind the scenes and in the auditorium of the marketplace, these studies construe performance as theatrical and dramaturgical, the product of intentional, conscious agents. As such, they have their roots (acknowledged or unacknowledged) in the Goffmanesque tradition (see also du Gay, 1996; Leidner, 1993).

The second area of engagement with performance has taken place mostly in the journal *Gender, Place and Culture*, in several pieces exploring the performance of various sexualities in public spaces. This work has apparently paid most attention to the arguments made by Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), and more recently, the later, *Bodies that Matter* (1993a).⁽⁴⁾ Butler's project is to disrupt dominant understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality, which assume that there are two bodies, two genders, and that heterosexuality is the inevitable relation between them. Where she turns to notions of performance, it is to argue that heterosexuality is a constructed social relation, not a natural one. However, and as she makes explicit in *Bodies that Matter*, her understanding of performance specifically depends on John Angshaw Austin's discussion of performativity, in his *How To Do Things With Words* (1955). Indeed, Butler explicitly rejects theatrical notions of performance (1993a, page 12). Instead, following Austin, she defines performativity thus: "if a word... might be said to 'do' a thing, then it appears that the word not only signifies a thing, but that this signification will also be an enactment of the thing. It seems here that the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting" (1995, page 198). Butler certainly does not work with any notion of a social agent existing prior to its production through enacted discourse. Instead, she argues that the 'doing' of discourse cites already established formations of knowledge and it is this citation which produces social subjects. Thus, for example, "the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (1990, page 24). Butler understands discourse as multiple and contradictory but always productive; it has specific effects, and this is where its power lies.

⁽⁴⁾ It is important to note that it is these two texts, rather than the later *Excitable Speech* (Butler, 1997a) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler, 1997b), which continue to attract geographers' attentions. That this is so is probably indicative of their greater purchase for geographers concerned with strategies of gender critique, sexuality, and the political potential of parodic performances.

Discourse in Butler's account thus disciplines its subjects even as it produces them. The final point insisted upon by Butler is that, precisely because discourse is citational, "constituting the identity it is purported to be" (1990, page 25), precisely because its productivity is iterative, there are possibilities for disruption. There is no guarantee, she insists, that its repetition will be successful; its disciplines may fail. Thus, as Julia Cream (1995, page 39) says, "the notion that identity is performative (and note that this does not imply voluntarism) lends itself to claims about doing gender differently... this provides opportunities for radically redoing gender."⁽⁵⁾

The most sustained engagement by geographers with these broad claims is probably the essay by Bell et al (1994) discussing certain performances by gay skinheads and lipstick lesbians (although see also Lewis and Pile, 1996). And, as Lisa Walker (1995) points out, they offer rather different interpretations of these two identities. So, although it is argued that gay men really are doing skinheads differently, the paper suggests that lipstick lesbians only reflect, rather than subvert, heterosexual images of femininity. This difference hinges on a difference among the authors (which they acknowledge); while some prioritise the intention of the performative act (so that if a gay skinhead intends to parody other, aggressive skinhead identities, parody does in fact occur), others prioritise the reception of the performance (if the audience of the performance does not interpret it as parody then—as parody—it has failed). Now, referring to the intention behind a performative act obviously presupposes precisely the kind of active human agency which Butler is at such pains to deny. Yet a sense persists throughout this essay that performance is what these two sorts of identities (gay skinheads and lipstick lesbians) do: Bell et al tend to suggest that these two identities exist in order to act, rather than, as Butler insists, act in order to exist. The result is a troubling reification of social categories. Another sort of reification occurs as a consequence of the way subversion is theorised in the paper. Subversion here is not, as in Butler's argument, a consequence of the slippages inherent in citation. Indeed, discursive citation in this essay becomes the process of copying previous styles of dress, and little attention is paid to slippages in such styles. Instead, subversion consists of the disruption of other, again already existing, identities by these gay and lesbian ones. In particular, the subversion of heterosexual identity rests on the "active appropriation" of straight space by gays and lesbians, or on the ability to "infiltrate" it (Bell et al, 1994, pages 32, 38). This phraseology suggests that heterosexual space simply exists, always already there, vulnerable only to incursion rather than, as Butler would have it, threatened with its own instability (see also Probyn, 1995). Thus, like this essay's implicit reliance on preexisting social categories, spaces are also assumed to preexist their performance.

In making these comments, our aim is not to suggest that Bell et al have misread Butler. Indeed, the difficulties involved in using Butler's account of subversion have been traced by many authors, who concur on the absence of any convincing account in Butler's writings on how discursive failures may be productive of new, subversive

⁽⁵⁾ An interesting point made by one referee on an earlier version of this paper is that there are hints that Butler might be moving slightly on her position on the intentionality of the subject. This is difficult to adjudicate given the opacity of much of her writing. Yet, in referring to "the politicisation of theatricality" (Butler, 1993b) and "hyperbolic displays" of, for example, "die-ins", there is a sense in which she is acknowledging the importance of staged political performances; intentional acts for particular audiences. A slightly different stance on the subject to that articulated above. Contrastingly, the same paper also includes a discussion of melancholia, the loss involved in drag performances. Here it is the interiority of the subject which figures. All of which suggests that there are different 'takes' on the subject present within her writing. The position outlined consistently in both *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, however, is that articulated above.

subject positions (for example, see Copjec, 1994). But nonetheless, even if Butler's arguments about the subversive possibilities of performance rest more on assertion than on demonstration, we would suggest that there are certain aspects of her work that are critical to retain when working with her arguments. In particular, her radical antifoundationalism provides a crucial critical tool for denaturalising social categories and for destabilising dominant forms of social reproduction. As she repeatedly insists, identities do not preexist their performance; and the successful copy can never be relied upon to reproduce faithfully that which it cites. It is, then, the absence of these uncertainties and the return to the anterior active human agent that concern us most in recent accounts by geographers of social performances. Indeed, it seems to us that, in the face of these twists to Butler's arguments, regardless of whether Butler is being cited or not, a certain consensus around performance is emerging in geography, one which is in many ways—notably in its conceptualisation of agency, subjectivity, and their effects—closer to Goffman than to Butler. The sense of anterior agents; the separation of performer and performance; the sense of performances occupying particular pre-given kinds of spaces; and a notion of a (constraining) script: all recur in geographers' discussions of performance.

By contrast, and to open up what is at stake here we turn to a research project one of us undertook in which the politics of performativity were made central. This was a series of interviews with community arts workers undertaken by Gillian during 1995.



The community arts movement began in the late 1960s in Europe, North America, and Australasia. Its early advocates critiqued the mass media and high arts for reproducing only ruling-class ideologies by assuming a consensual set of values, and argued that outside this centre were other groups with different values who were excluded from the means of public self-expression. So, community arts practitioners addressed themselves to such marginalised groups, using arts practices of all kinds to give them the skills and opportunities to articulate their worldview. 'Community arts' now is an umbrella term that can cover a wide range of practices, from 'artists-in-the-community' placement schemes to projects that offer workshop-like training in visual arts skills. In my research in Edinburgh, I concentrated on projects of the latter kind. As I interviewed more and more workers in these sorts of projects, it became clear that many of them shared a set of ideas and practices that I began to think of as 'the discourse of community arts workers': and one of its effects was to produce its speakers as 'community arts workers' rather than, say, social workers or artists. In this discussion here, though, I want to discuss the ways in which these workers described the critical effect of their practices, and I want to suggest that their description relied for its radicalness on a notion of performativity.

I have already commented that the interviewees performed a discourse of 'community arts', and I will return to this in a moment. But that is not the only discourse these workers must cite, and, in particular, they are also caught in a network of power which reproduces certain authoritative definitions of subject positions and of places. The community arts workers I interviewed were quite clear that they were relatively powerless in a *discursive* field. They elaborated that field at length, locating power in a number of institutions, whether named specifically—the district council, the regional council, the Scottish Office, central government, the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Edinburgh International and Fringe Festivals, Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, the Scottish Arts Council—or described more generically—the mass media, the medical profession, schools, universities. The power of these institutions was seen as exercised through a wide range of processes but especially through the budgets and grants made

available to community arts in the city and through the unequal and uneven provision of resources more generally, from housing to jobs. These workings of power were not seen as abstract structures, however; rather, power was understood as a performative agent, performative because its effects were spoken. To these workers, power is powerful because it speaks in particular, authoritative, ways. They were clear that power works in part through its ability to name, to define, and to describe certain people and places both as different from others, and in a way that excluded other definitions. Thus they also emphasised the productivity of performances of discourse. Several were very critical of the local and national press, for example, especially those in Craigmillar, Muirhouse, and Wester Hailes, for the way it gave these places 'a bad name'. Others however commented more generally on the oppressive consequences of attempting to define in absolute ways particular groups of people, either by place or by identity. A worker with people with disabilities, for example, remarked on the problems associated with defining a territorial 'community' on the grounds of its 'deprivation':

"I think there's huge problems in terms of defining geographical communities, because it's, it's, it's, in a way it contributes to the image of that particular area. So if you say well we reserve our resources for the people of Craigmillar, and you build this in Craigmillar, all your way of doing is to participate in—the fact that people from Craigmillar live in Craigmillar, they should stay in Craigmillar and they shouldn't come from anywhere else."

The discourse of community arts workers, then, diagnoses power as itself discursive; its power rests on the performative authority with which it can define, repeatedly, certain places and people in particular ways.

The difficulty for community arts workers, however, is that they must themselves speak a language audible to funding institutions if the grants they need are to continue. They have to re-cite that discourse if they are to win funding in order to continue their work. In their descriptions of their work, then, these workers did use the terms of that discourse. But here, Butler's emphasis on slippage becomes crucial. The arts workers' citations of these definitions are not simple copies; as we argued above, performances are not necessarily replicative events. There can be slippages, and a critical account must insist on these. Thus the workers continually characterised the terms of the dominant discourse as in some way inappropriate or superficial or temporary. A Muirhouse worker commented on his attempts to secure future funding for the Muirhouse arts centre:

"We're selling it on the—the way you have to sell things these days is the numbers, numbers on seats, the percentages and all that stuff."

They refer to "that, buzzword empowerment, y'know", and try to appeal to the "flavour of the month" and deploy "application-speak": "I suppose, to use application-speak, it's like a sort of to portray Muirhouse as a kinda active community." 'Buzzword', 'application-speak', 'jargon', 'spiel', 'catchphrases': all these terms were used to distance the speaker from the discourse of the powerful even as they always also used it. A gap was produced between their discursive practice and that of the funding institutions, a difference asserted between their understanding and those of the funding bodies.

If powerful institutions are defined by their performances of authoritative descriptions of social geographies, community arts workers understand their own performances very differently, and here they draw on the discourse of community arts to produce different critical effects. The aim of community arts projects was repeatedly described to me as enabling another kind of voice to have authority. A project tries "to get folk a place to have their voices", "giving people who don't have a voice, a voice", "to develop their skills, their confidence, their, their voice", to facilitate "kind of powerful statements that

will kind of speak direct to people.” Again, power is being imagined as a voice that can speak. But this speech is understood as being quite different from the pronouncements of powerful institutions in the city. Community arts workers very rarely commented on what that voice might say, for example. An arts worker in an environmental project in Craigmillar was typical when he said that community arts could make statements, but then himself proceeded to discuss something else:

“[the project] seem to fit in a lot of good things. Community involvement, community arts is a viable thing to do in terms of confidence and all the social aspects, but it can also make statements, it definitely can ... erm ... I’m not going to take this as a flagship thing but a small success in a way was when we were at Niddrie Marischal [...]”

There were very few occasions in the interviews when the workers offered interpretations of what they thought the products made through their projects ‘meant’, what they signified in discursive terms. Despite the concern with ‘voice’, there seemed to be a sustained reluctance to turn a community arts project into a speech act with a stable meaning. The act of speaking seemed to be more important to them than what was said.

“So whereas y’know, a positive image [of Wester Hailes] for some folk might mean everything’s rosy, for us it means exhibiting the talents, exhibiting a critical view of the world that folk can develop, and it’s showing that the folk have a voice in a way, that’s another than the, y’know, kinda tabloid coverage which tends to happen.”

This suggests that the importance of ‘voice’ was less in what might be said than in the process of its emergence. And indeed, much emphasis was placed by the workers on an arts project as a performed practice, one of the effects of which was to bring participants into public speech. The term used to refer to the performativity of community arts projects was ‘process’. ‘Process’ refers to how participants learn skills and create art when they become involved in a project. Process is understood as something dynamic that depends not on traditional forms of pedagogy in which the worker tells project participants how to do something, but rather on participants learning through doing it themselves. “The issues that matter aren’t really the ones that we pose”, in the words of a youth video worker. And there is also a sense that participants become themselves, both individually and collectively, through the process of group project work. Several workers commented that process could help to articulate a sense of shared identity through shared practice, for example. So for the worker with people with disabilities, “the main focus is on the common process of being involved”, and other workers concurred. A video worker in Pilton described one of his projects:

“Now the video was a means of identifying what the problems were, but it was also a means of creating solidarity amongst the group, so, so it had like two, at least two different effects, and the group grew bigger and bigger by involving people in the actual video, so that you had a production which is gonna say certain things about er what the group’s needs are but it’s also drawing people in in terms of participation.”

The process of participation then is itself productive in its creation of group identity. That understanding of identity suggests that its particular form will depend on the particularity of the issue addressed and of the process performed, rather than on preexisting social identities. Moreover, this performance of subjectivity was not seen as a process with a stable end-point. Many workers commented that the point of process is to produce more process, more participation. The tape-slide worker said:

“If you get them to a point [...] where they go ‘oh so that’s what it was all about, oh, right, now we are beginning to understand’, then you’re doing quite well [laughing]. ‘Oh yeah, well so maybe we could do another one’. And then it’s just really a start.”

Process thus entails more of itself. It regenerates itself, and this is its purpose. The process of participation is therefore never complete.

“There was about seven or eight of them, the group had really, had really gelled and wanted to go on and do more, and that, y’know, it was, there was no stopping them after that.”

Participants in projects therefore continue to change through their continued involvement. The Wester Hailes worker talked about people “who are with us every single day of the year, and moving on, in terms of their own development.” Participants do not remain as they were, and the process of developing a voice is thus also a process of developing a different self.

For community arts workers, then, subject positions—whether those of ‘community arts worker’, ‘powerful institution’, or ‘project participant’—are constituted only through performances. The practice of performances differ, however, and it is through the difference between the definitional pronouncements of powerful institutions and the elusive and processual identities of project participants that these arts workers describe the radicalness of their work. For them, it is critical that the repetition of performances serves not to replicate the effects of more powerful discourses but to change them. They can be performatively reconstituted.



So, and as the community arts study illustrates, we want to argue, along with Butler, that thinking about social practices through performativity is categorically not reducible to thinking about them in terms of Goffmanesque performance. Rather, for us, performance—what individual subjects do, say, ‘act out’—is subsumed within, and must always be connected to, performativity, to the citational practices which reproduce and subvert discourse, and which at the same time enable and discipline subjects and their performances. Performativity then, involves the saturation of performances and performers with power, with particular subject positions. For a critical human geography concerned with the constructedness but also with the provisionality of social identities, social differences and social power relations, it is vital that we conceptualise performers as in some sense produced by power, and not—as in most current geographical accounts—virtuoso, theatrical, anterior agents at one remove from power’s social script.

But, and at the same time, we also want to push further the radical antifoundation-ism of Butler’s arguments, to make more of the instability and uncertainty of performances and the power which infuses them. We want to argue, for example, that since performances of subject positions are iterative, slippage is always possible, and that this applies too to the spaces produced through them. We want to argue that it is not only social actors that are produced by power, but the spaces in which they perform. Contra many of the geographical accounts discussed above, we maintain that performances do not take place in already existing locations: the City, the bank, the franchise restaurant, the straight street. These ‘stages’ do not preexist their performances, waiting in some sense to be mapped out by performances; rather, specific performances bring these spaces into being. And, since these performances are themselves articulations of power, of particular subject positions, then we maintain that we need to think of spaces too as performative of power relations. So, for example, the community arts workers who Gillian spoke with used their distinction between different kinds of performances to map the space of Edinburgh in two very different ways. Briefly (for a fuller discussion, see Rose, 1997a), the powerful institutions were placed at the centre of Edinburgh and were mapped as large and high up, while the places in which the community arts projects were located were seen as small and low, on the margins of the city. These different geographies are obviously not completely distinct, though; the marginality of the arts projects is understood as an effect of the centrality of powerful institutions. So we are also interested in exploring the relationality of performance (the issue raised but not

resolved by Bell et al). We want to examine the social relations of performances and the relationality of their spaces, and to suggest that another source of performative instability is the blurring of clear distinctions between positions and spaces. Performed spaces are not discreet, bounded stages, but threatened, contaminated, stained, enriched by other spaces. As are performers. So, the kinds of performances which we are interested in here are those where the distinction between 'actor' and 'audience' is displaced, fuzzy; which is not to say that certain performances elude power relations, but rather to suggest that power operates in a rather different, altogether less predictable, manner than that implied by the reading of Foucault's account of power which currently dominates the geographical literature. To illustrate these arguments we now turn to Nicky's research project on car boot sales as alternative spaces of consumption.⁽⁶⁾

The complicated relations of performativity⁽⁷⁾

Car-boot sales are events which have grown markedly in both visibility and popularity in Britain through the 1990s. Occurring primarily on Sunday mornings on various grass fields, playing fields, areas of hard-core standing such as car parks and school playgrounds, racecourses, and so on, these are events which are characterised by the exchange of what in the main are vast quantities of used, second-hand goods between buyers and sellers, the majority of whom are buying/selling for their own consumption purposes rather than dealers/traders in second-hand goods. Here one finds then piles of clothing (children's and adult's), household goods aplenty, toys, books and magazines, garden plants and seeds, audio tapes, compact discs and videos, unwanted electrical items; indeed, virtually anything one can think of, from furniture to facecloths, fencing to fireguards. But it is the transitory, temporary, and above all performative character of this phenomenon which I want to emphasise here. In part indicative of the limitations imposed by planning regulations, which generally restrict the use of specific sites to fourteen events in any one calendar year (Gregson et al, 1997), this transitory and temporary character means that car-boot sales can never be thought of as a fixed, preexisting stage in the way that department stores, restaurants, banks, and so on have been represented thus far by geographers engaging with performance. Rather, these are events which depend for their very existence, for their bringing into being, on specific performances: promoters, marshals, vendors, and buyers are all critical to the transformation of field-into-car-boot-sale which occurs in countless locations across Britain on Sunday mornings from Easter through to September/October. So, in many respects this phenomenon is ideally suited to illustrating some of the critical possibilities suggested by our theoretical arguments concerning performance, performativity, space, and power. More specifically, I want to focus here on the two facets of our abstract formulation which I think this research exemplifies most clearly. These are the relationality between subjects within performance, and the effects which these produce—largely, as I shall argue, ones saturated with power—and the relationality of performative space.

⁽⁶⁾ Turning to Nicky's work at this stage of our argument in order to raise 'complications' might suggest that the performances and spaces of car-boot sales are indeed more complicated than the performances and spaces articulated by community arts workers. We want to insist that this is emphatically not the case. Rather, it seems to us that the different ways in which we performed our projects open up different possibilities for development here. So, whilst both studies exemplify our readings of performance and the performative, it is the ethnographic performances of the car-boot sale study—recorded in research diaries—which enable us to explore more fully the messy, fuzzy relationality of performance and to sketch out what we mean by the performative qualities of space.

⁽⁷⁾This section owes much in its specifics to my lengthy discussions with Louise Crewe on car-boot sales. The broader theoretical reflections contained herein though are the product of the reflections behind this paper. I would not want to commit Louise to them in any way!

At one level there is little doubt that for many car-boot sale participants part of the attraction of these events lies in the premium which they place on, and the scope which they offer for, theatricality. These are spaces in which vendors are to be found styling themselves on a wide range of models: the 'roll up, roll up' of the fairground, the hawker-cum-peddler; the 'dodgy dealer' variation on television characters Arthur Daley/Del Boy, and indeed a late-20th-century version of the flâneur, gazing out over their goods, those of others and at participants:

.. the 'shady' boys, to a man standing by their Ford Transit or Bedford vans of ancient vintage (C registration or older) are all trading in stuff which is off the tip, but unlike X, they are not 'totting' for the classier type of household chuck-out, but old micro-waves, electric ovens, vacuum cleaners, stereos etc, none of which they've made the slightest effort to recondition ... In between the genuine booters and the shadier element are the self-styled Daleys and Del Boys of the ven ... the guy selling the combat gear; ... the sweet stall ...; the knock-off trainers van ...; the sock stall ...; and the ubiquitous guys selling sunglasses ... both stripped to the waist [they] were doing a storming trade ... and were well into the banter of sales, modelling their sunglasses and accosting punters with "you too can have a tan like me! All you need's the glasses!" sort of line. Others though are much more mute—the tip boys tend to sit at the back of their vans, apparently completely unfazed by whether they sell anything or not. In fact, it struck me afterwards that their modus operandi is completely in the mould of what goes on at the tip—sitting in the hut at the back of the site, eyeing up what people are chucking in the bins and hot-footing it out to snatch whatever's in 'their' line of 'totting'.

(site A: Northeast England)⁽⁸⁾

Most of these dealers are middle aged guys, "mine's a pint" and heavily tattooed. But there was one grouping which really had me laughing to myself. They were positioned about two thirds of the way down the left hand side perimeter; three of them in their late twenties ... Their van was one of those small Escort jobs—red/orange and they were selling stationery ... The van door was open and on it was a poster styled on the 'No smoking' lines. But written on it was 'STRICTLY NO PHOTOGRAPHS'. And stencilled on the side of the van was a little logo of the three of them with the tasty phrasing, 'The Bad Boys Club'. The three were standing by their van, behind the flash, all stripped to the waist and with shades on, and from their van emanated various rave mixes. Oh how I wished for a camera in disguise! Did anyone go near? Not that I saw. Did it matter? Probably not! They were getting their pleasure from the pose and watching out on the ven.

(site A: Northeast England)

Similarly, buyers frequently utilise a range of dramatic props in their bargaining/haggling forays, from the small scale such as baseball caps, through to entire modes of dress, typically 'dressing down' in what is tantamount to the unofficial boot-sale uniform of scruffy trainers, old jeans or tracksuit bottoms, and baggy T-shirt. Frequently, too, they often work from a sketched-out type of script in attempting to secure particular purchases at what they deem to be a realistic price. In this respect, then, it is hardly surprising that a number of experienced car-boot sale participants regard themselves as the equivalent of virtuoso theatrical agents; authors, producers, and performers of their own scripts. But to see things entirely in this light would be something of a misnomer: one of the critical characteristics of boot sale performances is that they are always aimed at, and a response to, particular audiences, who not only interpret but respond to them, to the extent that the result is frequently an impromptu, 'off the cuff' set of rejoinders and

⁽⁸⁾ For discussion of specific language and terminology, see Gregson and Crewe (1997a).

ripostes (verbal and visual) between vendors and sellers. The following constitute just two of the many examples encountered of precisely this type of performance:

'The patter': two guys (A and B) doing a double act with a large (and growing) audience. A: This is the coat Prince Charles wore on his bachelor night! Oh, it's got a label inside. What's this? M. Shinwell!' B: You sir (addressed to a large guy with a beer gut), you look like a fitness type! [much laughter from crowd]. A squash racquet? (B picks up squash racquet from flash and proffers to punter). Punter: The only fitness I do involves a pint glass!' A: "Glasses ten pence!", said picking up a pint glass from the flash. Another punter quickly jumps in to get the glass. B: "You've got to keep ahead in this game!!" The pair (A and B) laugh; the crowd laughs and grows, and A and B set off on another improvised routine.

(site A: Northeast England)

A woman looks at the things on the flash and then asks the vendor (a genuine booter) if his hat's for sale! (He's wearing this at the time and it's windy and raining. The hat is also a stylish Stetson model). He stops to think. Obviously this isn't part of the anticipated script! "What'll you give me for it love?" he asks. She thinks, and then offers £1.50 (This is quite a bit for a boot sale, but then she's probably quickly weighed up quality, prevailing weather conditions, her desire to get the purchase and his evident uncertainties, and opted to go slightly over the top in price). Sold! And she buys a small decorative ornament for 50 pence too; probably as a pseudo gift to the guy behind the stall as a token of appreciation.

(site D: Northeast England)

Within the space of the car-boot sale then, the distinction between actor and audience is distinctly fuzzy; performers lose control of their scripts, whilst the plot to buy/sell gets disrupted by unpredictable interjections, be these those of other potential buyers, the vendor, or, indeed, casual onlookers. Given this, it is more appropriate to see car-boot sale performances as the interrelational products of particular subjects, rather than as the creation of autonomous, intentional, knowing agents.

But, at the same time as these performances are produced interrelationally by performers, they themselves, and their performers are saturated with power, in particular by the citational reproduction and reinscription of dualistic models of gender, and in a very different, altogether more disruptive, way, by the subject position of 'the consumer' and the power relations of consumption. As I have argued elsewhere, one of the most apparently contradictory facets of car-boot sale performances is the way in which, alongside their admittance of multiple identities, these performances see men and women engaging in highly gendered patterns of buying and selling. In short, women and men are to be found not only buying and selling for the most part amongst themselves, but exchanging typically items of clothing and do-it-yourself goods, respectively (Gregson and Crewe, 1998). The explanation for this lies in the emphasis which car-boot sale participation places on specific knowledges about particular goods: without the guarantees and securities offered by exchange in conventional retail outlets, car-boot sale participants are forced to rely on their own, already-established knowledges about particular goods to secure the desired bargain. Correspondingly, women and men tend to fall back on the purchase of things which they feel competent and knowledgeable about; where they can control the risk associated with second-hand purchasing, rather than maximise it by being duped by sellers with potentially superior and/or different knowledges. So, men typically end up looking at and buying items which are readily associated with the masculine in the domestic, items which they are assumed to know about—such as do-it-yourself tools and consumables—with women concentrating their efforts on commodities which tend to be identified with women

(clothing, household items, and so on). The result, however unintentional, is the reinscription through practice of highly traditional and dualistic conventions of gender, with femininity being associated with the caring and nurturing of children, men, and households, and masculinity being identified with do-it-yourself, the car, and the garden. Caught within and reproductive of the hetero norms and dominant understandings of gender which they cite; these practices exemplify what we mean by performativity.

And yet, this is not the only example of the workings of power in the car-boot sale. As with the community arts workers, the citational practices which reinscribe as they cite dominant understandings of gender also open up the space for slippage and subversion, for disruption. There is then another, more resistant, expression of power here. But, and this is a big but, this slippage is to do with the development of critical understandings of the subject position of 'the consumer' and the power relations of consumption within conventional spaces of exchange such as the high street, the mall, and the department store, rather than with the development of alternative understandings of gender. Now, amongst the most progressive possibilities of car-boot sale performances are the contrasts which these inevitably invite with first-cycle exchange. Indeed, it is through these infinitely variable performances that the comparative rigidities and the limitations of conventional retailing are exposed. In the social relations of exchange, for example, which constitute consumers first as buyers, whose only choice is either to pay the price stipulated by the retailer or not, and, secondly, and at one and the same time, as both 'the consumer who knows best' and the seducible dupe of every latest retailing trend, whim or turn. In the pervasive 'sameness' of it all, a predictability which encompasses high streets and retail parks as far apart as Metro Centre (Northeast England) and Thurrock Lakeside (Essex), Blackburn and Sheffield, and the type, range, and price of goods found therein. And in its understandings of newness, difference, and distinction, which, with the exception of independent retailers and second-hand outlets, is defined by retail capital and its alliances with manufacturing capital. So, for example, in clothing, newness gets to be defined by the seasonal dictates of the fashion industry and their interpretations by the big retailers for the high-street market; whilst in the toy sector it is increasingly the creations of the mass media and their reinscription for big high-street retailers by specific manufacturers which drive the market. In so doing of course, what the car-boot sale, and in particular the performances which bring it into being, exposes is the power relations of conventional retailing. Correspondingly, the car-boot sale itself and its performances, need to be seen as a temporary inversion, and indeed, subversion of the normative construction of retailing in Britain. Alongside the car-boot sale's saturation with and reinscription of dominant conventions of gender, then, lies a much more resistant and critical understanding of power, one which infuses the majority of car-boot sale participants and which has the potential to influence individual subject's future negotiations of the subject position of 'the consumer' and their consumption practices.

What I think the above example highlights about performance, performativity, and power can be summarised as follows: that to see performances simply as the theatrical products of knowing, intentional agents at some remove from their other selves, other performers, audiences, and power is misplaced. Rather, these performances are at all times interrelational between individual subjects and performative. They are saturated with power, bound up within and enmeshed within in very complex ways, the already-established knowledges which they cite. But, and this to me is the critical point of this example, these particular interrelational performances—whilst certainly simultaneously citational, reinscriptive, of normative conventions, and displacing, resistant, potentially critical—are not simply reiterative and subversive in the ways Butler and so

many other theoretical writers on power suggest (and see, too, the community arts example above). Far from being confined to the workings and potential disruption of one (citational and therefore fragile) form of power (in this case dominant discourses of gender), these performances open up the scope for slippage in an altogether different direction. They produce a space in which, and from which, to question the power relations of consumption. The implications of this seem to me to be considerable: notably that when we start to examine the intricacies of particular grounded performances, they manifest themselves as citations infused simultaneously with multiple subject positions, rather than as an individual subject located within, or in response to, a single subject position. For me, this multiplicity in turn implies that the possibilities for slippage, subversion, disruption, and critical reworking of power through practice are messier, fuzzier, and just far more unpredictable than current theoretical arguments—including Butler's—pointing to the citationality of discourse and power begin to suggest.

Finally, I want to turn briefly to the interrelational nature of space as illuminated by the car-boot sale and—relatedly—to its performative qualities. As we argued previously, much as performances are interrelational, then so too is space, and in the paragraphs above I have already begun to hint at the interrelationality which infuses the space of the car-boot sale and the practices which bring this into being. This is centred around the contrasts drawn by car-boot sale participants between the car-boot sale on the one hand and conventional spaces of exchange, high streets, malls, and so on on the other. However, to couch things exclusively in these oppositional terms would be to miss the degree to which the space of the high street, and the power of retail capital, infiltrates that of the car-boot sale. Here, for example, pricing strategies, haggling decisions, and, indeed, the very definition of the coveted 'bargain' are all constructed in relation to the prices demanded by retail capital and by the caché of particular high-street brands and labels: notably, Marks and Spencer, John Lewis, and Fenwicks, all forms of department store readily identified in the United Kingdom with particular interpretations of quality goods at affordable prices. By contrast, the extent to which the car-boot sale is present in the high street is more open to question. In the course of this research, we did encounter a few individuals who had so altered their consumption practices that they now visited the high street simply to establish the size of the saving they were capturing through purchasing at car-boot sales. But these were the exception rather than the norm. More common were those who either bracketed-out the car-boot sale experience altogether from their forays to the high street and the mall, regarding the car-boot sale therefore as little more than a game, and others who used its possibilities to prohibit or restrict conventional shop-based purchasing of particular categories of goods, most notably children's clothing and toys, and to a lesser degree books. What this reflects of course is the relative and relational power of both spaces of exchange: the dominant space of retail capital is present in a far more pervasive sense in the alternative space of the car-boot sale than the more partial, more variable, altogether more fragile presence of the alternative in the dominant. And interestingly, too, this mutual yet unequal infusion is at a considerable remove from the dualistic separation suggested by the physical location of the car-boot sale as a temporary presence on the geographical margins of exchange, with malls and high streets as permanent features of the centre. Instead, what we have here is as good an illustration one could hope to find of the way in which the hierarchies embedded in physical location, in absolute space, can be challenged through the working out in practice, through performance, of metaphors of margin and centre, margin-in-centre, and centre-in-margin. Much as with the community arts workers, then, we see how particular performances articulate their own spatialities, as opposed to being just

located in space. But, and what we can also see running through the above discussion is hints of what we mean by the performative qualities of space. We see this at various junctures but most notably in relation to the performances of car-boot sale participants. In which the interrelational performances of participants themselves produce the space of the car-boot sale; in which the subject positions cited therein—particularly heteronormative conventions of gender—attempt to control the risks in such performances, yet which iteratively produce critical possibilities in different directions (with respect to understandings of consumption). These performances then open up the space to develop relational understandings; to acknowledge that this space of the car-boot sale is different, is itself critical, subversive even of other (first-cycle) spaces of exchange and consumption. But they also show that the space of the car-boot sale is produced through the citation in performance of particular subject positions, and that—precisely because of this—that it, this space, is citational, and itself iterative, unstable, performative.

Reflections

Finally, by way of conclusion we step back from our theoretical arguments and their elaboration, to reflect further on the performativity of our own research practices. We have already commented on our different ways of performing the research projects we discuss in this paper, and we now want to consider two further aspects of our work: some other performances of our respective research projects in the academy, and the performance of writing this paper together. This is not just an argument for greater self-reflexivity in academic work (although we both hold to the importance of such endeavours); neither do we wish our arguments here to be interpreted as supportive of an advocacy of naive versions of positionality and/or experience (Rose, 1997c). Rather, what we contend here is that the execution of research projects, their writing, and their dissemination are supreme examples of academic performance and performativity, and need to be recognised as such. Riven with power, including the citational reinscription and disruption of established academic knowledges; produced, received, and interpreted interrelationally by networks of academics; and themselves constitutive of spatialities of knowledge, these ‘performances’ seem to us to be little different in their fundamentals to the very different sorts of social practices which we examined above. And yet, there is a remarkable reluctance on the part of academics to acknowledge this. Silences such as these have some very serious consequences: notably, they permit the representation of academic activity as the performance of intentional, knowing, anterior subjects; able to interpret and represent a vast range of other social practices for academic audiences to interpret in turn, yet being themselves somehow immune from the same process; in other words, outwith academic power’s script. At odds both with the ‘take’ which we have developed in this paper in relation to performance and performativity, and with the type of academic knowledge which we wish to produce, we turn therefore to some more disruptive performances to close.

First, and in relation to our respective research projects. Academic power structures have infused the formulation and production of the car-boot sale research in multifarious ways. Conceived explicitly as a counter to what was seen as a worrying tendency within existing consumption research, one which seemed to celebrate rather than question the reworkings of the spatial organisation of retail capital, particularly in the form of the megamall, the research set out to establish the limitations inherent in such representations of consumption; to resist prevailing academic knowledges. At the same time, in focusing on a phenomenon which is clearly located within mass popular culture and concerned with second-hand goods, the research has always seemed ‘risky’; in the sense that the car-boot sale is precisely the sort of phenomenon which many geographers tend to dismiss as marginal, ephemeral, insignificant. At least, that is how

this has sometimes seemed performing this work, explaining it from the basics and in the sense of translator to geographical audiences, many of whom (tellingly) have never been to a boot sale, who were (and are) sceptical of (the academic worth of?) popular culture, but who (significantly) found participation levels of over one million of some importance. Just being involved in this research then, reveals much about academic power structures within geography. And performing it to seminar audiences presented other problems too: just when, for instance, did you last laugh, as in laugh properly, at an academic seminar? Laughter though is central to car-boot sale performances (Gregson and Crewe, 1997a), and inevitably featured in seminar performances. Yet one of the most striking things about this was the way in which, whilst some of our seminar audiences felt they could share in this experience, others were either uncertain about this or found such performances quite unacceptable. It was as if to laugh, in presentation and with an audience, was to exceed the acceptable parameters of the academic seminar performance. To perform in this way was disruptive, excessive; to introduce an uncontrollable, bodily emotion into an arena reserved for the cerebral, rational, controlled display of intellect was to commit the ultimate transgression. Finally, I want to point out that doing this research has undoubtedly changed me, as car-boot sales have altered many of their participants. Along with many of those I talked to about these events, my patterns of purchasing, my resistance to retail capital and the subject position it produces have intensified through the production of this research. This does not mean that I have dispensed with the high street, the department store, and even—occasionally—malls. Far from it. But it does mean that I will engage in seemingly bizarre behaviour, such as to visit the January sales solely for the purpose of mocking the ‘bargains’ presented therein; that I will go through phases of buying fiction only from boot sales; that I will buy commodities (primarily material and wool) to make things from, because the eventual creation means more than something which one buys complete, packaged, pristine...and worn by everyone else one sees. So, the academic performance has produced, affected, a change in this subject and my social identity as constituted through consumption. Not confined to reflecting on academic power, its performance and my production through this, this performance has demonstrated the interweavings, the inseparabilities, and the uncertainties of academic and everyday subjectivities.

Like Nicky’s research on car-boot sales, Gillian’s work on community arts projects also set out as an explicit challenge to some of the assumptions that seemed to be structuring a body of academic work: notably the tendency on the part of the new cultural geography and cultural studies more widely to focus on the cultural work of social elites or of capital, and thus to refuse to acknowledge the cultural creativity of marginalised groups. So I planned to interpret images produced by community arts projects as a counter to this tendency. As I spoke with arts workers and watched videos and tape-slide shows and looked at photographs produced by participants in their projects, though, it seemed to me that it was the precise form of the radicalness of their politics that was most interesting and not simply what those visual images ‘meant’. And that radicalness seemed to rest—as I have suggested above—in a certain refusal of interpretation, a refusal to render everything legible and assimilable and knowable. Interpretations were refused, the facility of project products was celebrated instead of their message, the practice of the projects was celebrated more than the statements that were produced through it. All this as a strategy to resist the discursive power that had repeatedly labelled, categorised, and either sanctified or demonised these people and places. As if language was so dangerously productive it was better left alone. But presenting this sort of argument about these projects to academic audiences—an argument that focused on their politics of discourse more generally rather than on the particular

meanings of particular pieces of work—was challenging in ways I had not expected. In particular, suggesting that these projects were dealing with such a ‘big’ issue as the discursive construction of knowledge about place and subjectivity was often greeted by seminar audiences with a general scepticism about whether that was really possible. I was frequently asked, for example, about how many people actually got involved in these projects—as if the fact that the numbers were small somehow made the arguments of the projects less important (just as Nicky found that telling academics a million people go to car-boot sales was a useful way of persuading audiences of the importance of her research topic). There was also a general conviction that the arts workers I talked to were really, despite their grand talk, authoritarian despots ruling their groups with rods of iron. Certainly an ethnography of an arts project that looked at the power relations between workers and participants would have made an interesting elaboration of my research, because the projects do discipline even as they facilitate; indeed, on the basis of our arguments about discourse they can do nothing else. When I talked with participants in community arts projects about what they felt they had got out of them, their answers echoed the many of the phrases used by the arts workers to elaborate the value of community arts: gaining self-confidence, gaining skills, pleasure in meeting other people, winning more resources for their group and to share with others. Thus the projects’ participants are also produced through the discourse of community arts, which is not to argue that they are not empowered in any way through their participation, only to note that their sense of empowerment is of a particular kind. But the general suspicion among academic audiences of these workers’ motivations and actions struck me as interesting. I wonder if many in those audiences were feeling threatened by even the suggestions that interpretation might be oppressive, that leaving something illegible in an academic account might be necessary in certain circumstances, and that they might learn something about these possibilities from a nonacademic practice. Finally, of course I had to ask myself the same questions. Why had I been so keen initially to interpret images rather than evoke practices? Because it was safer? I think that was the case. Indeed, I found the ‘practice’ of this research project—working with interviews, both as they were happening and when they were transcribed—extremely difficult. Although I enjoyed many of the interviews enormously and learnt a great deal from them, I was uneasy doing them and remain uncomfortable with them, still puzzled by them and uncertain of my own role in relation to them. As a research practice, they remain stubbornly recalcitrant to my interpretation, so much so that I am not planning any more interview-based work. So, having set out to challenge ‘the academy’ in different ways, perhaps what I have learnt, among other things, is that I remain, in some ways at least, very much part of that institution; indeed, in many ways it made my subjective investments in a certain sort of interpretive academic work painfully evident. This is a very different conclusion from Nicky’s above; but what we both insist on is the importance of considering the particular subjectivities produced through specific performances of knowledge production.

So, second, and in relation to the writing of this paper, the points which we want to make are to do with the interrelationality of authorial subjects, and the importance of the form of the creative process to enabling this development. This paper has been hanging around between us for a while now, but it took each of us a long time to ‘face-up’ to it. Then, when we finally began producing it, we spent a fairly extended period thinking independently; through our ideas about performance, our ideas about key theoretical traditions, and through our responses to those geographical accounts utilising performance. We then wrote these thoughts down, sending them independently to each other. The degree of commonality between them was considerable; facilitating a

drafting process which has been sequential, rather than a division of labour; which has been characterised by dialogism (Pearce, 1994); and in which erasure has been a response to dialogism, as opposed to insurmountable differences. The result, we feel, is one where—with the exception of those places where we discuss our independent research projects (and even then the separation is to a degree false)—it is hard for us to attribute specific thoughts and words to either one of us. Rather, this is a genuine relational production, with similarities to the productions of Julie Kathy Gibson-Graham (1994). More broadly, what we suggest this trajectory represents is a move from working as relatively independent, autonomous (albeit situated) subjects, to working as interrelational, dialogic, subjects, in which what we each say and/or write both infuses and necessitates a response from each other. Yet, lurking within this shift, and indeed in the lengthy gestation of this piece is, of course, power; specifically academic power, and the way it produces its performers. Our initial avoidance of this piece then, whilst legitimately explicable in terms of very real competing, prior, claims on our time and so on, is also indicative of our responses to the production of each other as public academic performers. Different theoretical positionings, different degrees of empirical engagement, different authorial styles, and so on, all suggested that productive collaboration might be difficult to achieve. Hence, we guess, our deployment of consensus-seeking tactics at the outset of this performance. But, seeing the possibilities for productive collaboration as about degrees of accord, of overlap and co-incidence, between individual subjects, is itself indicative of established academic conventions—particularly the privileging of the single, intentional, authorial voice, be this the product of one or several subjects—and our degree of internalisation of this. Like all power structures however, the citationality of academic discourse carries with it the possibility of disruption: and in this case the establishment of consensus led somehow (unfortunately, like Butler we are unable to pinpoint precisely why this ‘failure’ or slippage came about) to an interrelational, dialogic performance which, in process if not in final stylistic form, is disruptive both of accepted academic convention and our previous academic performances.⁽⁹⁾

Aside from opening up the uncertainties, the instabilities, of our own and others’ academic performances, and the citationality of the power structures which produce these, what we would like to think is that others too might begin to reflect on academic subjectivities and performativities in their written performances. Only then will what we have identified as a worrying separation between academic practice and its discursive products begin to be addressed.

Acknowledgements. Financial support from ESRC for both the pieces of independent research cited here is acknowledged (grant numbers R000221288 and R000235698). Nicky would like to acknowledge her indebtedness to Louise Crewe in conducting the car-boot sales research, and Gillian to thank her interviewees.

⁽⁹⁾ We would emphasise that, although both of us have engaged in coauthored academic performances previously, this is not necessarily equivalent to the form of dialogic exchange which we are discussing here. Indeed, we would suggest that coauthorship is itself a mask which obscures multifarious ways of writing and working, some of which may be dialogic but which can include others which are more rigid divisions of labour. Now, divisions of labour in academic practice, much as elsewhere, entail the separation—as opposed to interrelationality—of subjects; particular subjects are responsible for the production and/or execution of particular tasks. Such modes of working, quite apart from signalling economies of scope and scale in academic publishing, seem intrinsically linked to the production of the autonomous, independent academic subject and, as such, are very different to the interrelational practices underpinning our performances here.

References

- Austin J L, 1955 *How to Do Things with Words* Eds J O Urmson, M Sbisà (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA)
- Bell D, Binnie J, Cream J, Valentine G, 1994, "All hyped up and no place to go" *Gender, Place and Culture* **1**(1) 31–48
- Burns T, 1992 *Erving Goffman* (Routledge, London)
- Butler J, 1990 *Gender Trouble* (Routledge London)
- Butler J, 1993a *Bodies that Matter* (Routledge, London)
- Butler J, 1993b, "Critically queer" *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* **1**(1) 17–32
- Butler J, 1995, "Burning acts—injurious speech", in *Performativity and Performance* Eds A Parker, E K Sedgwick (Routledge, London) pp 197–227
- Butler J, 1997a *Excitable Speech* (Routledge, London)
- Butler J, 1997b *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA)
- Cockburn C, 1983 *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (Pluto Press, London)
- Cockburn C, 1985 *Machinery of Dominance: Women, Men and Technical Know-how* (Pluto Press, London)
- Cockburn C, Ormrod S (Eds), 1993 *Gender and Technology in the Making* (Sage, London)
- Copjec J, 1994, "Sex and the euthanasia of reason", in *Supposing the Subject* Ed. J Copjec (Verso, London) pp 16–45
- Crang P, 1994, "It's showtime: on the workplace geographies of display in a restaurant in South east England" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **12** 675–704
- Cream J, 1995, "Re-solving riddles: the sexed body", in *Mapping Desire* Eds D Bell, G Valentine (Routledge, London) pp 31–40
- Crewe L, Gregson N, 1998, "Tales of the unexpected: exploring car boot sales as marginal spaces of consumption" *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series* **23**(2) 39–53
- Drew P, Wootton A (Eds), 1988 *Erving Goffman: Exploring the Interaction Order* (Polity Press, Cambridge)
- du Gay P, 1996 *Consumption, Identity and Work* (Sage, London)
- Gibson-Graham J K, 1994, "Stuffed if I know: reflections on post modernist feminist research" *Gender, Place and Culture* **1**(2) 205–224
- Goffman E, 1956 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Doubleday New York)
- Goffman E, 1963 *Behaviour in Public Places* (The Free Press of Glencoe, New York)
- Goffman E, 1967 *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behaviour* (Doubleday, New York)
- Gregson N, Crewe L, 1997a, "The bargain, the knowledge and the spectacle: making sense of consumption in the space of the car-boot sale" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **15** 87–112
- Gregson N, Crewe L, 1997b, "Performance and possession: rethinking the act of purchase in the light of the car boot sale" *Journal of Material Culture* **2**(2) 241–263
- Gregson N, Crewe L, 1998, "Dusting down Second Hand Rose: gendered identities and the world of second hand books in the space of the car boot sale" *Gender, Place and Culture* **5** 77–100
- Gregson N, Crewe L, Longstaff B, 1997, "Excluded spaces of regulation: car-boot sales as an enterprise culture out of control?" *Environment and Planning A* **29** 1717–1737
- Irigaray L, 1985 *Speculum of the Other Woman* translated by G Gill (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY)
- Leidner R, 1993 *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinisation of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA)
- Lewis C, Pile S, 1996, "Women, body, space: Rio Carnival and the politics of performance" *Gender, Place and Culture* **3**(1) 23–42
- McDowell L, 1995, "Body work: heterosexual gender performances in city workplaces", in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* Eds D Bell, G Valentine (Routledge, London) pp 75–95
- McDowell L, Court G, 1994a, "Missing subjects: gender, power and sexuality in merchant banking" *Economic Geography* **70**(3) 229–251
- McDowell L, Court G, 1994b, "Performing work: bodily representations in merchant banking" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* **12** 727–750
- Parker A, Sedgwick E K (Eds), 1995 *Performativity and Performance* (Routledge, London)
- Pearce L, 1994 *Reading Dialogics* (Edward Arnold, London)

-
- Probyn E, 1995, "Lesbians in space: gender, sex and the structure of the missing" *Gender, Place and Culture* **2**(1) 77–84
- Riviere J, 1986, "Womanliness as masquerade", in *Formations of Fantasy* Eds V Burgin, J MacDonald, C Kaplan (Methuen, London) pp 35–44
- Rose G, 1996a, "Community arts and the remaking of Edinburgh's geographies" *Scotlands* **3** 88–99
- Rose G, 1996b, "As if the mirrors had bled: masculine dwelling, masculine theory and feminist masquerades", in *BodySpace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* Ed. N Duncan (Routledge, London) pp 56–74
- Rose G, 1997a, "Spatialities of 'community', power and change: the imagined geographies of community arts projects" *Cultural Studies* **11** 1–16
- Rose G, 1997b, "Performing inoperative community: the space and the resistance of some community arts projects", in *Geographies of Resistance* Eds M Keith, S Pile (Routledge, London) pp 184–202
- Rose G, 1997c, "Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics" *Progress in Human Geography* **21** 305–320
- Sedgwick E, 1993, "Queer performativity: Henry James' The Art of the Novel" *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* **1**(1) 1–16
- Sedgwick E K, 1994 *Tendencies* (Routledge, London)
- Tuan Y F, 1977 *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Edward Arnold, London)
- Walker L, 1995, "More than just skin deep: fem(me)ininity and the subversion of identity" *Gender, Place and Culture* **2**(1) 71–76