

Parody as a Performative Analytic: Beyond Performativity as Metadiscourse

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Abstract: Various domains of inquiry have engaged a shift to the concept of *performativity* as an organising principle for how forms of life are performatively brought into being. What appears surprising is that this move towards a performatively emergent world is displayed insensitively through metadiscourse practices inherited from positivist science. Performative inquiry locates "the performative" as a domain of phenomena "out-there" in the world, preceding it but only made available by it. This mode of metadiscourse practice is a strategy to authorise the prior existence of a performative world, which then sets specific boundaries within which "the performative" can be known. This approach to inquiry does not so much exemplify a performative world in its own performance of it, as describe it, offer accounts about it and remarks on it. Here, the domain of the performative becomes another naturalised object. This article proposes that, if this performative turn wishes to take seriously and engage a performative world, then it must reconfigure its own modes and forms of practice such that they too are performative of that world. It develops some sense of how the concept of performativity has been adopted in contemporary discussion, setting out some of the conceptual features of performance. Then, it introduces *parody* as an alternative, reflexive form of performativity that opens inquiry into those possibilities of analysing the world by performing it.

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1. Introduction

A range of disciplinary concerns has invoked "the performative" as a way of understanding and thinking about how particular forms of life might be conceived as "performatively" instantiated. The concept of the performative has emerged with such presence that it represents a phenomenon to the extent that it demands a reorientation in how we conduct disciplinary practice. Thus, it has been argued that we are undergoing—or have already undergone—a paradigmatic shift; this

marks the arrival of a "performative turn" (CONQUERGOOD, 1989; DENZIN, 2003a, 2003b; LINCOLN, 2005; SZERSZYNSKI, WATERTON & HEIM, 2003). The sub-discipline of "performance studies" has emerged as a branch of inquiry *into* the performative (e.g., SCHECHNER, 1985; TURNER, 1986). [1]

What we see here, on the one hand, is a shift to *performativity* that introduces a domain of phenomena to be investigated; on the other, the assembly of a body of theory and practice that sets about investigating that domain. As I will discuss later, although the "separation" of performativity and the description and analysis of performativity has been a feature of the literature on performance, its character needs to be teased out further in terms of the implications for a performative social science. Importantly, these debates signpost valuable points of entry into how we can explore performativity, as a category of practice *and* a form of analysis (ASHMORE, 1989; LYNCH, 2001). [2]

The concept of the performative has expanded from performing arts and theatre contexts, into a heterogeneous range of sites of practice, which recognises performativity in all expressive forms of behaviour and gesture (SCHECHNER, 1985). The theatre metaphor, it will be argued in this article, reduces the possibilities of the performative, condensing it into "performance" and erecting a priori borderlines between "performers" and "non-performers". Spatially and conceptually too narrow, the term "performance" obtains merely through the dramaturgy imparted "on the stage", including "actors", "scripts" and "props". Everything that "exceeds" the performance—for instance, those extraneous "objects" which do not have a "part"—is assigned no significance in terms of its accomplishment. [3]

On this account, performance is the successful coordination between different actors; should an actor fail to play a part, or if the props are only partially assembled and the stage not set, there is no performance. A performance arises out of a tightly codified understanding of *what* performs, *who* performs and *when* a performance can be said to "take place". However, it does not follow that this same coordination in other contexts, with the same actors and props, will issue the same performance. Thus, it does not account for the variability of context in which the status of "actors", as well as what constitutes a "performance", may at times be vague and unspecified, part of the practical activity of the situation, not the cause of the performance (cf. BENNINGTON, 1988; MOL, 2002). [4]

An important consequence, it will be argued, is that the augmentation of "performance" into "performative" has not brought about any general account of action (cf. PARKER & SEDGWICK, 1995). Of course, the interdisciplinary character of performativity forms part of its scope as a conceptual, analytical and practical category, but as such, it resists any working agreement regarding the status of the performative. Its location, boundaries and temporal character do not (only or simply) designate its domains of practice so much as form part of disciplinary discussion about its *potential* domains. For instance, the performative is considered in terms of felicitous speech acts in linguistic theory and language philosophy; it also forms part of an ongoing field of cultural practices in

anthropological and ethnographic study. In literary theory it features in the realm of literature and poetry; in performing arts it is displayed as the domain of painting and theatre. Thus, one critical feature of the performative turn is that it has introduced a new context for discussing what *ought* to figure as a common point of reference. However, although specified at each point of discussion, performativity, in theory if not in practice, still figures at a level of generality, pointing to nothing specific. One consequence is that it features as a set of overarching propositions, a "grand theory" to encompass "The Performative World" (JACKSON, 2004). [5]

2. Performativity: An Origin Narrative

Given the unwieldy status and ambiguity in locating the performative, it seems necessary to recall part of its genesis, by returning to the performance context of the theatre. This will allow us to attain some temporary purchase on what it means to say that a performance has "taken place". But what makes for a "performance" in the theatre? Of course, one can say that acting is required, playing a part, even impersonation; but more is involved. Aldo TASSI (1998) suggests that:

"... the goal to be achieved in the theatrical performance is one where the character in the play appears onstage not as someone the actor refers us to, but rather as someone who has come to full-blooded presence in the actor's body". [6]

A function of performance, then, is the activity of bringing a character to light, rendering an identity present as that performance. In performing that part, person or character on stage, the actor is not performing simply by *doing*. The theatre invokes something more embodied, more encompassing; the onstage/offstage demarcation is rather unhelpful here. Instead, what is involved is not so much a performance of some prior phenomenon as rather what the performance makes present in its enactment. In this sense, a performance "is" to the extent that it is not a referral to, or conditional upon, that which exceeds its present inscription. With respect to being "present" at a theatre performance, being part of an audience to whom the performance is being addressed, we see that the performance structures and orients that presence in specific ways. Part of this specificity is, of course, the atmosphere and the suspense (what will happen next?); another part is the immediacy of the performance, being recruited into the emerging activity as it is being enacted in/as our presence to it. There is "directness", an unmediated "contact" of the audience to the performance whose "live" and embodied presence is critical for its invocation. [7]

GOFFMAN's influential work on performance is relevant here. Expressing oneself in everyday life, GOFFMAN (1959, p.14 original italics) says, takes two forms: "the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*". It is this "giving off" which is critical, for it immediately detaches the expression from ontological entities, structures and intentions, and opens it to the circumstances under which it is produced. Thus, GOFFMAN (1959, p.26) has outlined the basis of performance, which "may be defined as all the activity of a given participant [in

the presence of other participants] on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants". Again, a performance is not connected to "the solid world" (GOFFMAN, 1959, p.78) because "its" status becomes performative to the extent that "it" too is enacted, expressed. GOFFMAN provides good evidence to support my argument that a performance is not "acting" inasmuch as it represents some external world to which it points and from which it derives (cf. SCHECHNER, 1998). [8]

In summary, the argument here is that performance is an act of "presencing", making visible what was not there before. It is the domain of those situated scenes of action, by those "actors" concerned *during* the performance, which accomplish what it means to evoke presence. This is a process, an action, not a product, something done. The sense of a performance is part of the practical business to which those involved orient themselves as they assemble local sense making procedures, patterns and methods of "bringing things off". What is "given off" here is a function of those "materials" provided through the performance. In respect to this orientation to the accomplishment of performance, whose character is neither "set out" a priori nor "put on" so as to be "insincere", it is as if what is being performed is being done for "another first time" (GARFINKEL, 1967, p.9). [9]

3. Performativity as Metadiscourse

There are important consequences for the social sciences by taking the view of performance that underscores the constitutive nature of all modes of action. Do we simply reveal the performative through our methods of reading, observing and reporting it? If so, what status would we then assign to uncovering such performances through those practical actions of "reading", "observing" and "reporting"? Are these methods not also occasions of performativity? These questions have been part of an important debate across the social sciences (e.g., CONQUERGOOD, 1992, 1998; DENZIN, 2003a; DIAMOND, 1996; SCHECHNER, 1982; TURNER, 1982). A central issue, again, is the epigraph remarks with which I began, on the "separation" of the performative and those contexts of its inscription, or what GARFINKEL (1991, p.11) calls "the vexed problem of the practical objectivity and practical observability of practical actions and practical reasoning". [10]

Theatre scholar W.B. WORTHEN (e.g., 1995, 1998, 2003) provides a number of accounts for how we might characterise and engage this conceptual "free play" between "doing" and "discussing" the performative. The thrust of his argument rests on a specific relationship between texts and performances, which is "deeply inflected by notions of authority—not so much professional authority, but the stabilizing, hegemonic functioning of the Author itself" (WORTHEN, 1995, p.14). In theatre studies the salience of this relationship emerges in how—and to what extent—a stage performance is seen to be a "realisation" of the playwright's scripted text. There is an implicit assumption that assigns to theatre the duty of reproducing the playwright's script, faithfully *re-enacting* the text and capturing its

original—which is to say, intended—meaning. What is left intact is the notion "that there *is* a text to produce onstage" (WORTHEN, 1995, p.15, original italics). [11]

WORTHEN (1995, 1998), following DERRIDA, suggests that we relinquish "text" as a singular entity, whose meaning is deferred *unless* attached to its original context of production. Instead, we need to substitute some sense of its continual emergence and disappearance through acts of intertextuality, whereby it constitutes its own identity while dividing it as part of those circumstances of performance. Not only is this meaning or identity an emergent event of iterative processes, but those acts of "meaning-making" forge the performative mechanisms by which we render visible the "text" in the first instance. Here, textual meaning "turns out not to be the origin of the text, but its effect, an effect of a panoply of performances, textualizations" (WORTHEN, 1995, p.16). The "proximity" of performance to text is created through those strategies and procedures that "give off" the origin—the features of their relationship, identity. WORTHEN (1998, p.1102, original italics) affirms the point thus:

"A performance of *Hamlet* is not a performance of a text. Instead, it uses a text [...] of *Hamlet* within a specific selection of available regimes of production (acting style; set and costume design; the representational rhetoric of stage, film, or video) to perform a new iteration of *Hamlet*, an iteration that—though it may be encoded with signs of fidelity or resistance, to an 'original,' to *Hamlet*, to Shakespeare—is finally a surrogation of the work". [12]

WORTHEN's remarks, on the relationship between text and performance, can be extended in further support for the argument of this article, on the relationship between a performative social science and the domain of the performative. Thus, the methods of social science (the stage performance) are not simply reproducing a performative world (the dramatic text), faithfully recovering those features whereby actors infer, negotiate, account for and make available the details of their performances. Performative social science shares this performative condition, performing that which it names (LAW, 2004; LAW & URRY, 2002). This places performative social science in a recursive relationship with its domain of inquiry, for it must also be inferring, negotiating, accounting for and making available that performative world, as part of its own performance. If this is correct, then certain questions obtain: "What realities do the current methods of social science help to enact or erode? What realities might they help to bring into being or strengthen?" (LAW & URRY, 2002, p.5). [13]

For some writers, for example LINCOLN (2005, p.10, my italics), the "performative turn *is* [...] upon us, although *it* was prefigured for a half dozen decades before we recognized *it* for what *it* was", while others, for example DENZIN (2003b, p.187, my italics), suggest this paradigm "attempts to show how terms such as "biography", "history", "gender" [etc.] *have always been performative*". This is puzzling: Given the produced, accomplished and reflexive character assigned to the performative, as part of its own discourse, it is nevertheless commented on as an entity, a "thing"; it is that to which commentary and discussion refer. It is made visible through a mode of realist discourse. To fulfil

its category membership as a "turn" in social science, it thus "breaks" from that which preceded it—those other "interpretative", "textual" and "linguistic" paradigms—and instates a different phenomenon. However, the instantiation of the performative turn arises not out of the emergence of a *new* phenomenon, but an *existing* phenomenon. Those older paradigms had mistaken the performative for something else, considered it as textual or interpretative for instance; they had not "recognised it for what it was". [14]

Is this a narrative of performativity whose domain has not hitherto been able to perform, obscured by disciplinary confusion over its recognition? If this were the case, then the performative has announced itself as a reportable phenomenon preceding its own contexts of discovery. This might be seen in terms of methodological shortcomings in social science inquiry—improper or inappropriate applications of Method—resulting in a failure to identify the phenomenon despite its (yet to be revealed) presence. How, given this task of identifying the "proper" methods for finding the object under investigation, does this assemble the performative? Relatedly, where is the performative being located? [15]

I introduce the term *metadiscourse* as a useful strategy with which to spotlight the argument undertaken in this article for a performative social science. Meta, from the Greek, meaning "beyond" or "after", is a prefix to indicate a concept that is abstracted from another concept. Metadiscourse is discourse about discourse, or about a discourse exceeding its own discourse. Importantly, it is *about* but not *on* its topic of concern; it specifies another discourse but does not specify itself (CRISMORE, 1990). Social science has inherited certain metadiscourse practices from the older, natural sciences, which assume that its topic is an independent, more or less definite set of processes existing "out-there" in the world. A social science which endeavours to "capture" the performative, as it is currently being articulated, arises out of a metadiscourse which only recognises performativity by its own "distance" from it. Rather than closing that distance, or even interrogating "distance" as an adequate characterisation of its commitments to it, current moves to a performative social science actually increase the aperture, privileging the space between performativity and a description of performativity. It emerges as an "outsider discourse" whose claims are made as though they existed "outside" of performativity (cf. ASHMORE, 1989, p.95). [16]

The appearance of this metadiscourse is of a conventional form "the performative *is* ...", or some derivative thereof, which locates performativity "beyond", or better "before", the discourse in which it is described. For instance, STRIFF (2003, p.1, my italics) sets out the performative framework when he says "[p]erformance *is* often perceived to be ..."; JONES (2006, p.71, my italics) similarly makes the domain of performativity exterior to his claim in saying "[f]rom a wider perspective, "performative" social science *is* conceptualised to include ...". Other writers on performance also invoke the spatial metaphor; for example, DENZIN (2003b, p.191) states "[w]e cannot study experience directly. We study it through and in its performance". Here, the performative is a phenomenon that is situated in another location, not currently occupied by those commentaries that chart its coordinates in terms of their (dis)location from it. It is this distance that enables

the visibility of the performative, for it sets a clearing for social science to "place" its phenomenon. [17]

This "metastatus" of the performative, in which it features *only* by commentary that exteriorises it, talks *about* it and reports *on* it, is one strategy with which to authorise the "practical objectivity" of the performative. It speaks through the "rhetoric of essence" (WORTHEN, 1995, p.13), which forms part of the institutionalisation of performativity as the domains for disciplinary inquiry (cf. LYNCH & BOGEN, 1997). The performative continues to exist out in (as) the world, which can only be identified by disciplinary inquiry, whose criteria for recognising it derive from specialised forms of Knowledge, granting social science certain "interpretative" privileges. This "slippage" of the performative into metadiscourse becomes problematic specifically due to the sentiments of the nature and scope of performativity, making the "gap" between performative social science and the performative world noticeably transparent. As the "meta" acts that are authorising the performative world are also performatively instantiated, they can no longer be granted the authoritative privileges of referring beyond themselves. Thus, if they do not refer to a performative world but instead perform it, then one of their effects is of pointing away from this self-referential occasion of performativity. In a reversal of claims made, a kind of "anti-performativity", the performative (as social science) once again becomes performance; doing is concretised in the done, active process is immobilised as passive product. [18]

A performative social science with no reflexive *awareness* of its own performativity becomes a re-description of "the world", simply produces another analytic term with which to inquire how that world might be known, understood. Here, the performative remains crystallised as something that only features beyond the realms of social science itself, but which can only appear in terms of social science inscription. As a metadiscourse—a discourse about some *other* discourse not belonging to or part of its own form—the performative world fails to be self-exemplifying, to perform that which is oriented to as being performative. In these terms social science is unable to comment on the construction of a performative world as instances of *its* performativity. In its current re-description, the reorientation of social science as performative is an empty gesture, unless it can be done as performance of that world. What this means is that what can be considered to be performative—in the case of social science, a world *beyond* social science itself - needs to be *shown*, not *told* (ASHMORE, 1989). In other words, it needs to be performed with an immediacy whose authority emerges from *within* those performative boundaries, not beyond them. The performative world needs to be configured as occasions of its presencing, whereby performative social science speaks its name as an "in-here" object *and* an "in-here" context in its own inquires (LAW, 2004, pp.70-73). [19]

This reconfiguration does not result as an exercise in self-destruction, enclosing oneself within the discourse one produces. It does not follow that engaging the reflexive features of performativity will lead to an infinite regress, in which nothing actually gets done, nothing is said. But neither does this mean that the reflexive application of relativist discourse becomes just another "convention" or "style" of

writing, reifying the discourse again (KNUUTTILA, 2002). Instead, it opens up precisely those opportunities of engagement with performativities that allow us to understand how the world is rendered as an embodiment of those local, intertextual modes of performance through which it gets brought into view. This opens, rather than closes, the potential of reflexive discourse practice, creating moments for us to explore, work with and develop the performative as a topic *and* as a resource (ASHMORE, 1989, p.88). [20]

If social science wishes to fulfil the promise of a performative approach to forms of life, and inquire in performative terms, then its inquiries must change the modes in which it states its claims (cf. LAW, 2004; DENZIN, 2003a). The argument being pursued in this article is about making worlds out of those local circumstances, celebrating how those senses of "presence" appear as effects of those contingent consequences of performance. Thus, what might be profitably pursued is an *adoption* of those forms of performativity through which our topics are enacted. This involves social science moving beyond telling, directing, informing—all those modes of description—towards displaying, enacting, showing and being; in other words, performing that which it claims *is* performative. [21]

As a case in point, can we attain a form of performativity in which it does not always have to be only the author, Scott CHERRY, who is performing? Instead, can the contents of the academic publication domain—as *one* mode of performance—become a wider field of performativity, allowing the appearance of "the world" to perform in its name? [22]

4. Parody: A Performative Analytic

One way of conceiving performativity is as an analytical discourse; broadly, it may be argued that all modes of discussion that set out, move towards and inscribe a performative social science are themselves forms of analytic practice. The structure of the performative works to bring some part of the world "out-there" towards a performing context "in-here", as an unfolding and emergent presencing of that which is named in its performance (cf. LAW, 2004). This work is productive—it *makes* realities. I have argued that, in many of its current forms, the development of a performative social science denies its own performativity, being driven by an empiricist discourse whose interpretative dominance privileges its own status over its "topic". This generates a wholly inadequate way of understanding how performativity arises at the intersection between sites of practical activity and forms of analysis of such activity. It denies the ways in which our own performances rely on, make use of, and overlap with our interpretive work of the analysed object/text. The object and our performance of it are so intimately related that we cannot 'author' it in any definite sense. To deny one's own performance is to deny that dependence on this other domain (out-there) in the very appropriation of speaking or saying anything. It is to break the tether that links the word and the world—a world beyond a performance that refers only to itself and achieves nothing analytically interesting. [23]

Michael MULKAY (1985) makes a compelling argument for reconceptualising the way in which social science inquiry is arranged and disseminated by, for instance, the use of "parody". MULKAY makes the bold proposal that all (sociological) analysis is a form of parody, and therefore parody is a form of (sociological) analysis. The meaning of parody here orients to specific ways of doing analytical work. The etymological root of parody is the Greek noun "paraodia", meaning counter song; the "odos" part of the word, meaning song, and the prefix "para", has two meanings. One is counter or against, where parody becomes the contrast between texts; the other is "para", to mean beside, an intimacy. It is this second meaning of the prefix that broadens the pragmatic scope of parody. Thus, "in its ironic trans-contextualization and inversion, [parody] is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work" (HUTCHEON, 1985, p.32). [24]

Textual forms of analysis build on "original texts", texts that precede and are necessary for doing analytic work. The original text is "reconfigured" in various ways by a second, analytical text to show how it is to be understood; in this sense, it *differs* from the original. Thus, it "selects from the original text, summarizes it, ignores parts of it, rephrases it, puts it in a new context, identifies its important and unimportant features, simplifies it, and so on" (MULKAY, 1985, pp.237-8). The analytical text creates an ironic relationship with the original text: although it claims to operate "beside it", to convey its "meaning", it changes it in order to bring about its identity. It claims an interpretive privilege over the original text; it speaks on its behalf, with its own performative criteria. The analytical text is a parody of the original text, a "repetition with difference". Here, analysis no longer renders the original text, but enacts its own, new text (itself an original text). However, what I am underscoring is the (re)connecting work that the analytical text is being asked to carry out. When we consider the analytical text performatively, then, it does not exemplify the original text, but only points to its own performance, which, as I have argued, points away from this performativity. Here, performativity is concealed, so to speak, twice over; the original performance has been superseded by the analytical performance, which in turn treats itself non-performatively, as merely a pointing device to the original performance. [25]

Importantly, what MULKAY has underscored is that parody could be embraced more expansively such that the "original" work does not get shadowed analytically. In short, parody can be used as an analytical form to explore new modes of performativity as analytical discourse which orients to its

"own textuality [and] emphasize[s] the interpretive exchange through which texts are given meaning and [which] draw[s] attention to the multiplicity of potential meanings. These things *are done by the form itself and not by any particular statements that the author [or analyst] makes*" (MULKAY, 1985, p.252, my italics). [26]

Parody is a reassessment of the process of textual production and performativity more generally. There is a need to posit a concept of performativity to account for self-reflexiveness of all forms. The investigation of a topic requires that the object

determine the analysis it wishes to bring forth. Therefore the topic should be relied on to reveal the methods of analysis needed for its comprehension. I support recent research that has adopted a reflexive, parodic approach to forms of analytic practice. Particular examples, here, are the use of reflexive interviewing and the prioritisation of innovative styles of presentation of interviewee talk as analysis (DENZIN, 2003a, 2003b; JONES, 2006); and second, ethnodrama, whereby ethnographic material is re-enacted and disseminated back into those domains of practice from which it emerged (MIENCZAKOWSKI, 2001; MIENCZAKOWSKI & MORGAN, 2001). I am proposing parody as a form and an analysis of performativity. It is a mode of literary mimicry that retains the form of the original work, reserving the stylistic features of its form, but introduces new subject matter, places it in a new context. In the parody, "[t]he parodist ... using an established mode lays bare the conventions that individual works of the mode share (which therefore define it) and fuses them with each other to extrapolate an 'essence'" (WAUGH, 1988, p.78). [27]

5. An Exemplar: Performing a Self-Help Book as a Literary Genre

The use of parody in analysis of performance can be exemplified in the study of self-help books. My research arises out of several preliminary questions: "What is a self-help book?" "Do self-help books share a common literary status or are they unrelated, individual texts whose collection under the category "self-help" is merely arbitrary?" Put simply, does the self-help book designate a genre, and therefore a distinctive textual form? Analytic interest is oriented to those features through which a collection of writings is displayed. It leaves open a set of empirical questions about what is being produced under the generic category "self-help book". The concept of genre has been discussed by SWALES (1990, p.58) and is instructive:

"A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived focused on comparable rhetorical action. In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience". [28]

Beyond the particular generic features of self-help books as "communicative events", is there something that organises these events, a rationale that shapes their structure? Of course self-help books comprise a heterogeneous set of topical concerns, span across many areas of practice and move between book marketing genres. Thus attempting to justify the claim that self-help books constitute a distinctive literary genre can present analytical problems. For instance, efforts to convey the self-help book with any overall "rhetorical action", "schematic structure", "style", "content" and "intended audience" represent a substantive task, both practically and analytically. The task of selecting what

features of books to focus on, and how to adequately and faithfully reproduce them, can render analysis incoherent and unwieldy. However, these practical problems are addressed by "default" as a function of parody. In mimicking the target work as its duty and privilege, analytical parody is form *making*, concerned with the formation of the phenomenon from within the performative conventions of its target. My parody work will, then, *become* a self-help text—the *phenomenon on which I wish to bring to bear through analysis*—by assuming its form. [29]

As an aside, one of the more remarkable features of the self-help book is its prevalence as a popular cultural phenomenon (DOLBY, 2005; MCGEE, 2005; RIMKE, 2000). It is fair to say that the self-help book is celebrated as an icon of popular culture, distributed across multiple domains of practice. Its cultural significance pivots on its appeal to a mass market. It acquires its "iconic" status through its interpretive "free play" as a literary form; it appeals to the "unique" individual who represents *any* individual who selects it. Thus, the self-help book has continued to appear on bestsellers lists for the last seventy years (HANSEN, McHOUL & RAPLEY, 2003). [30]

Analytic considerations emerge from the preliminary insight that "self-help" is the act of "help from within", the performing of some task by utilising those capacities that fall within the domain of the "self" (SMILES, 2002, p.1). To follow a line of inquiry set by many of the commentators on the self-help literature, then, reading a self-help book will enable the reader to develop, strengthen and generally uncover this internal capacity in his/her quest for self-help. However, the key feature of the self-help book - its *ever-present* popularity, its *repeated* reading, its *continued* publication and its *new* editions—does not adequately explain its place in culture. On the contrary, the phenomenon is decidedly opaque; surely its place as a cultural mainstay identifies "help from without" (SMILES, 2002, p.1). If anything, the popularity of the self-help book should, to follow this narrative, indicate a failure to accomplish self-help—it is no longer (only) the "self" that is doing self-help. [31]

It is the *return* of the reader *back* to the self-help book, on a cultural scale, that is the source of bewilderment. We can speculate that either the self-help book is not getting its readers to complete their quest of self-help, by going *beyond* reading, or readers are "using" the self-help book "improperly", such that they do not "detach" themselves from it. In any event, this situates a number of interesting openings to engage the self-help book analytically. What if readers were able to access a different self-help book, read something that would help them to stop reading self-help books? Would this enable readers to transcend the pages of a book and pursue a life of self-fulfilling, self-directed action—to fulfil the aim of self-help? If this appears to reiterate the same confusions, stating the same unresolved tensions and ambiguities as seems to be present in the self-help book, then it is deliberate; it is exposing the richness of the form which it assumes. [32]

In setting out parody as an analysis of the self-help book I am constructing a new text, a "fictional" self-help book that is a parody of the self-help book genre. The parody mimics its target, a genre of writing, by bringing together in a single text a synthesis of multiple, heterogeneous texts. Pragmatically, it achieves this by juxtaposing various quotes from across the target texts, placing them in quotations marks, keeping to a minimum my own "input" into the text so as to retain the "purity" of the form. Where necessary, I will insert "connecting" text, notably non-quoted fragments and subheadings, placed in brackets, to guide the reader from one section to the next, so as to offer a smooth, tightly organised analysis. By deploying the performative features present across the target texts, such as recurring tropes, devices and textual common places, the parody self-help book gives you, dear reader, a sense of the wholly generic nature of the genre in a single example. In underscoring the argument of this article, the parody self-help book points to its target by performing it, literally making it present through the immediacy of its performance. [33]

5.1 The self-help book

5.1.1 *[Establishing the reader as problem and solution]*

"Whenever we're dealing with" [any kind of self-help,] "most us get into certain habits, ways of reacting to" [ourselves] "that don't serve us very well. We fail to recognize that the way we relate to" [our problems] "has a lot to do with how" [self-help abuse begins]¹. [Wanting to read a self-help book] "is like an alarm system that tells you to deal with a specific problem. However, if you find that" [reading] "does not lead to" [self-help, with] "decisions and actions", [instead resulting in more reading], "you might want to consider what effect this is having on your health"². "[S]ymptoms of" [reading self-help books can become] "so severe and persistent that they become disabling. People with such intense" [behaviour] "often are suffering from" [self-help abuse]³. [34]

"Many people are either unwilling or unable to" [...] "giv[e] up" [self-help books], "which need to be forsaken. Consequently they cling to" [old] "patterns of thinking, thus failing to" [act on them and successfully pursue self-help]⁴. "So goes the logic: no pressure, no pain, no fear; just don't do it, and the problem goes away"⁵. "If you have been long defeated by" [your failure to stop reading self-help books], "it is" [...] because you told yourself for weeks, months, and even years that there is nothing you can do about it. You have emphasized your inability to yourself that your mind gradually accepted the conclusion upon which you have insisted"⁶. "[Y]ou're living in a comfort zone: You're avoiding reaching for a level of achievement or accomplishment that is not already comfortable.

1 CARLSON (1997, pp.1-2)

2 TALLIS (1990, p.13)

3 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, pp.5-6)

4 PECK (2006, p.59)

5 MCGRAW (1999, p.142)

6 PEALE (1952, p.115)

While comfortable", [continuing to read self-help books] "can be no more than stagnant"⁷. "It is important to confront the reality that although" [reading self-help book after self-help book, visiting the bookshop everyday etc.] "may make your life more 'comfortable', in the long term such restrictions are very disabling"⁸. [35]

[Constant reading] "is done because" [you] "choose to do it"⁹. "[Y]ou cannot *not* choose. Even not choosing is a choice. Therefore, you cannot say, 'I don't want this responsibility of" [reading self-help books]¹⁰. [Therefore], "[w]ho decides whether you shall" [stop reading]"? The answer—you do!"¹¹ [Do not forget this single fact: you have powers of which you are unaware]. "Compared to what we ought to be", said the famous professor William James of Harvard, 'compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake. We are making use of only a small part of our physical and mental resources. [T]he human individual thus lives far within his limits. He possesses powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use' "¹². "Acknowledge and accept accountability for your life; you have always been accountable; you will always be accountable"¹³. [You] "can solve a problem only when" [you] "say 'This is *my* problem and its up to me to solve it'"¹⁴. [Being accountable for your own self-help] "means that you can no longer dodge responsibility for how and why" [you are not converting your theory of self-help into the practice of self-help]¹⁵. [36]

"Believe me when I tell you that if you don't step up and" [address your self-help abuse], "no one else will"¹⁶. "Remember [i]f you want change, you're the one who's got to take action"¹⁷. "You've got to acknowledge" [your self-help abuse] "and recognize that it has distorted your outlook, your perceptions and your experience"¹⁸. "No matter who you might want to blame:

You made the choice" [to read self-help books]

"You said the words" [and read the pages]

"You got mad" [at you inability to stop reading]

"You chose the feelings" [that arose from this constant reading]¹⁹ [37]

7 McGRAW (1999, p.180)

8 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, p.48)

9 PECK (2006, p.95)

10 McGRAW (1999, p.67)

11 PEALE (1952, p.66)

12 CARNEGIE (1981, p.xix)

13 McGRAW (1999, pp.57, 59-60)

14 PECK (2006, pp.20-1)

15 McGRAW (1999, p.57)

16 (Ibid., pp.11-2)

17 (Ibid., p.180)

18 (Ibid., p.156)

19 (Ibid., p.64)

"Something wonderful begins to happen with the simple realization that life, like an automobile, is driven from the inside out, not the other way round"²⁰. "50 percent of the solution to any problem lies in defining the problem"²¹. "This means" [...] "that admitting to yourself that" [you need to stop this abuse is] "a positive"²². [By recognizing these powers you fail to use, you] "can actively, purposefully choose to change what results and experiences you" [want]²³. [38]

5.1.2 [*Locating the solution (Part one): Changing the reader's thoughts*]

"You can actually think yourself into or out of" [effective self-help]²⁴. "The truth is, in order to experience a feeling, you must first have a thought that produces that feeling. Unhappiness is the feeling that accompanies negative thinking about" [your ability to help yourself]²⁵. "When you choose the thoughts, you choose the consequences"²⁶. "[J]ust by" [thinking that you need to read another self-help book], "you increase the risk of" [reading again] "and you become convinced that" [reading] "is unavoidable and uncontrollable"²⁷. "The first step must be to identify these" [thoughts] "and bring them fully into our conscious awareness so that" [you] "can then take appropriate action to make sure that they are replaced"²⁸. [Try to identify your negative thinking.] "Some typical negative statements include:

I'm not smart enough" [for a life without self-help books]

"I'm not as good as the rest of these people" [who don't need self-help books]

"I cannot and will not succeed" [in overcoming my excessive reading]

"I'm just going through the motions;" [I'm not able to help myself]²⁹ [39]

"Having identified your negative thinking" [...] your next step is to learn how to change those thoughts to more positive, appropriate ones. This involves critically examining" [your negative] "thoughts and considering how accurate they really are"³⁰. "If you are having" [negative] "thoughts, remember—this is" [your] "negative self-talk speaking"³¹. "[Y]ou must try to challenge" [this] "rationally"³². "An inflow of" [positive] "thoughts can remake you regardless of every difficulty

20 CARLSON (1997, p.134)

21 McGRAW (1999, pp.122-3)

22 (Ibid., p.123)

23 McGRAW (1999, p.61)

24 PEALE (1952, p.169)

25 CARLSON (1997, pp.227-8)

26 McGRAW (1999, pp.66-7).

27 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, p.90)

28 LINDENFIELD (2000, p.110)

29 McGRAW (1999, p.70)

30 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, p.93)

31 GILBERT (1997, p.172)

32 TALLIS (1990, pp.58-9)

you may now face, and I repeat—*every difficulty*³³. "Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities" [to stop reading self-help books]!"³⁴ "Use empowering and motivational *self-talk*³⁵. "Words have profound suggestive power, and there is healing in the very saying of them."³⁶

"I am a positive person"

"I am in control" [of myself]

"I choose" [not to read self-help books]

"I enjoy" [life without self-help books]

*"I am a survivor" [of a self-help abuse]*³⁷ [40]

[This way,] "when the old fears, hates and" [guilt surrounding your reading abuse], "that have haunted you for so long try to edge back in, they will in effect find a sign on the door of your mind reading 'occupied' "³⁸. [41]

5.1.3 [Locating the solution (Part two): Demarcating thinking and acting]

"You recognize that it's time to begin translating your" [positive thinking] "into purposeful, meaningful, constructive actions"³⁹. "[I]t is not sufficient to apply to the mind even such an important affirmation therapy" [as positive thoughts] "unless throughout the day you also base your actions and attitudes upon fundamental principles of" [positive thinking]⁴⁰. [Self-help] "is" [thinking] "of sufficient intensity that it *is* translated into action. The difference between the two is the difference between saying 'I would like to' [stop reading self-help books] "and 'I will" [stop reading self-help books]⁴¹. "Sheer effort of will without the skills to apply" [positive thinking] "unfortunately does not automatically guarantee success"⁴². "One of the great benefits of a well-planned, well-programmed strategy is that it liberates you from" [...] "reliance on willpower" [alone]⁴³. "If you cannot name, and name with great specificity," [how you are going to actually stop reading self-help books], "then you will never be able to step up and" [do] "it"⁴⁴. "[F]orm a picture in your mind of circumstances as they should be," [without self-help books.] "Hold that picture, develop it firmly in all details, believe in it, work at it, and you can

33 PEALE (1952, pp.176)

34 (Ibid., p.13)

35 LINDENFIELD (2000, p.60)

36 PEALE (1952, p.30)

37 LINDENFIELD (2000, pp.60, 69, original italics)

38 PEALE (1952, pp.29-30)

39 McGRAW (1999, p.130)

40 PEALE (1952, p.71)

41 (Ibid., p.71)

42 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, p.52)

43 McGRAW (1999, p.258)

44 (Ibid., p.211)

actualize it according to that mental image emphasized in your positive thinking"⁴⁵. "If you" [...] "truly want to" [stop reading self-help books,] "program the environment in every way possible to avoid" [your excessive reading] "behavior"⁴⁶.

"Rid your house of all" [self-help books]

"Stop carrying change" [...] "that allows you to purchase" [self-help books]

"Ask all co-workers and friends to help you by not giving you" [recommended reading], "no matter how passionately you beg"⁴⁷ [42]

[Did the] "strategy you selected" [prevent you from reading a self-help book] "? If the answer is yes, then well done. It's always a good idea to give yourself a 'pat on the back' when you have achieved something"⁴⁸. "[Y]ou should also plan to do some positive activities—simple rewards that give" [...] "you pleasure. For example, if you like sitting in the garden" [on a sunny day], "going to visit a friend or taking a walk, plan to do these activities"⁴⁹. "Anything that involves physical activity—digging the garden, aerobic exercises, decorating—can be helpful"⁵⁰. "Rewards work by reinforcing" [non-reading] "behaviors"⁵¹. "Suppose you want to" [decorate your living room over the next few weeks.] [T]his is a workable goal: it's specific, it's measurable"⁵². [You can chart your progress as you go]. [43]

"Now that you have worked through this self-help book, you are in a better position to take charge of your" [life]⁵³. "You are now equipped to make a life strategy that allows you to begin changing your life, one step, one goal, one priority at a time"⁵⁴. "Emotional control" [to stop reading self-help books] "cannot be gained in any magical or easy way. You cannot develop it by merely reading a book. The only sure method is by working at it regularly, persistently"⁵⁵ [,] "traveling the old road of observation, attention, perseverance, and industry. The possession of the mere materials of knowledge is something very different from wisdom and understanding, which are reached through a higher kind of discipline than that of reading"⁵⁶. [44]

45 PEALE (1952, p.170)

46 McGRAW (1999, pp.260-1)

47 (Ibid., p.261)

48 TALLIS (1990, p.39)

49 GILBERT (1997, p.71)

50 (Ibid., p.72).

51 TALLIS (1990, p.39)

52 McGRAW (1999, p.260)

53 SILOVE and MANICAVASAGAR (1997, p.128)

54 McGRAW (1999, p.26)

55 PEALE (1952, p.89)

56 SMILES (1859, p.218)

6. Conclusion

The call towards a performative social science brings with it the prospect of entering new modes of investigation, exploring new forms of life in and as our embodied connections and responsive engagements. It is clear that extensive discussion has taken place on the project of performativity; at times within and between disciplinary boundaries, but increasingly across boundaries, blurring those distinctions that insist on separating forms of knowledge according to theoretical or other commitments. Here, transdisciplinarity is certainly welcome as an opening into new and creative styles of research practice. However, this focus on methods of practice, although important for discussion and debate, identifies a number of central issues, notably conceiving the performative as a disciplinary phenomenon. What conceals the performative from view are questions of finding the correct method for making it present; performance and performativity are engaged (and remain) at the level of epistemology (LAW, 2004). This is made transparent by the way in which disciplinary discourse adopts the paradigm-bound position of the natural sciences, in which dualistic thinking (the performative/a description of the performative) prevails. [45]

Wishing to embrace the openings and forms of intertextual practice that the promise of performativity makes possible, but being dissatisfied with current efforts at fulfilling that promise, I have pointed to a more reflexive, playful and self-exemplifying basis on which a performative social science might be assembled. I have introduced parody as a performative analytic as a candidate for this assemblage. Analytical parody announces itself at the intersection of social science and the domain of the performative, bringing into question the whole representational process therein. It does not seek to close that which separates past from present, or social science practice from the performative world. It underscores that we are inevitably always in a state of separation and alerts us to the "impossibility of finding any totalising model to resolve the resulting [...] contradictions" (HUTCHEON, 1989, p.95). Instead, analytical parody undertakes to provide a mode of relationship between the two—whereby one is not concealed or made available in terms of the other—but without invoking a transparency of representation. [46]

I have argued that this "gap" signals trouble for the prospect of a performative social science, but not because it presents itself as a generic, all-encompassing point of separation in various places and in various forms. Rather, it is because of the specific character of *this* type of gap, the problems of *this* kind of separation for performative inquiry. The problem can now be stated more clearly. It is the visibility of this absence of performativity of a performative world, in those accounts of that world in social science inquiry, which is problematic. This is a specific matter of reflexivity more than any general discussion of a separation or gap. The claims of a performative social science to convey a performative domain beyond its own claims-making practices do not exemplify that domain. When we deconstruct its performance we see that performative social science brings into view the performative world by gesturing *beyond* its own performative practices. Thus, the problem of separation is due to a lack of reflexive sensitivity to its own

claims of performativity. Performative social science should be self-conscious and self-referential; it should point to its own nature whereby the authority of such performativity is located in the performance itself. [47]

In using parody for my analysis of self-help books, as an example, I have been deliberately very specific with my analytic goals. Parody has been used to demonstrate the analytic power of its form, which, importantly, both inscribes and subverts that which it parodies. It does not merely name its target, simply revealing it as it is. For then its "performance is relegated to the status of interpretation, a means of echoing meanings which already exist elsewhere rather than being a site for the production of meaning, a site where the ways in which meaning is produced can be interrogated, inspected, performed" (WORTHEN, 1995, p.20). Rather, it transgresses from it inasmuch as the task of parody is to play with it, to open its form in ways that allow the parodist to say certain things with it, drawing attention to how it performs and sets its boundaries as part of its enactment. [48]

If I have fairly captured the genre of self-help books with my parodic treatment, by allowing you, my reader, to "experience" the contours and movements of that textual form, as it is being performatively instantiated, then I have reached my goals. That is to say, I have accomplished my central aim, which, as HUTCHEON (1989, p.114) makes clear, is to "evoke what reception theorists call the horizon of expectation of the spectator, a horizon formed by recognisable conventions of genre, style, or form of representation". I have rendered a form of presence, giving not so much a "spatial closeness" to what it means to read a self-help book, but the feeling of "sensory" and "embodied" contact. I am reminded of how FREUD (1966) characterised the exchange between he and his patients. A doctor has no problem in

"[m]aking him [the patient] a supporter of some particular theory [...] but this only effects his intelligence, not his illness. After all, his conflicts will only be successfully solved and his resistances overcome if the anticipatory ideas he is given tally with what is real in him" (FREUD, 1966, pp.562-3). [49]

The patient, then, in overcoming his/her conflicts, needs to be "touched"; s/he needs to be "effected" in some specific way before we say he has been "moved in his/her person". The same obtains, I will argue, for performance—for us to "get it", it needs to embody us so as to allow our recognition of it. Parody as performativity suggests that our topics become our resources, informing us of those styles, modes and forms with which we can begin to say something about them by performing them. Here, it is a dialogically structured unfolding of itself *and* its target that renders parody an economical strategy for engaging phenomena and pursuing analytical work. It provides two texts within one work. A synthesis is therefore offered; on the one hand, a careful parody of the original work, and on the other, some sense and exposition of the original (ROSE, 1993). And importantly, it makes clear the continual displacement of any "final" meaning or narrative closure to performance. It claims no interpretative privilege over its topic to the extent that it seeks for its own inscription the dialogical involvement of

additional ways of inquiring how it too might be deconstructed and new performances explored. Doing analysis by performing the analytic object works to incite a force, to ensure that the focus on our phenomenon remains the priority when it is disseminated into those performative networks of new readers and new readings (ROTH, 2004). [50]

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<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/postgrads/Cherry.htm>

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Cherry, Scott (2008). Parody as a Performative Analytic: Beyond Performativity as Metadiscourse [50 paragraphs]. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 9(2), Art. 25, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0802258>.