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PERFORMANCE STUDIES' EXTERNAL RELATIONS: MARVIN CARLSON'S "ALTERNATIVE VOICE"

This long conversation with Marvin Carlson took place in March 2012 at CUNY (City University of New York), where Carlson is professor of Theater, Comparative Literature and Middle-East Studies. His deep knowledge of the topic "performance" makes him one of the most authoritative voices in the field; yet, at the same time, the fact that he is not a Performance Studies professor, allows him to be a conscious and informed "alternative voice". In this way he can provide a different perspective from another angle, but still deeply aware and expert in the subject matter. The first substantial part of the conversation focuses on issues concerning the ontological definition of "performance", while the second part is dedicated to the analysis of Performance Studies, of the contributions that this new discipline has generated in the field of Theatre Studies, and of its possible interdisciplinary or postdisciplinary connotation, here challenged by Carlson. Thirdly, the attention focuses on the intertwining of theory and practice in the field of Performance Studies, an intersection that was coveted and sought in the early eighties, but that never quite materialized according to Marvin Carlson. Furthermore, regarding the possible lack of importance given to the historiographical component among performance scholars, Carlson considers it as a quite common matter within Performance Studies.

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CC: Thinking about Performance Studies as discipline, I would start talking about its object, performance of course. In your book *"Performance: A Critical Introduction"*, you define performance as "all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself". Richard Schechner uses the concept of "restored behavior" to describe performance. So I was wondering to which extent you feel close or distant from Schechner's idea of performance?

MC: I think that my idea of performance is really quite close to Richard's. The concept of "restored performance" is a very important one; it's a key concept in Performance Studies. Though it's looking at something psychological; it's looking at something very similar to when I talk about activity that is consciously performed; that is, if you are aware of something as activity, that means you have a model in mind and that leads back to restored performance. If you say "I am not just washing the dishes, but I am performing the act of washing the dishes", the very use of the word performance means that you already have an idea in your mind of what that action is, just as an action, and you are doing it again. It's been done before; there is a model. So the concept of "restored performance" is another way around to express that same central concept. It really goes back to consciousness. Performance involves a particular kind of consciousness and restoration is one way of talking about that.

CC: Keeping on talking about performance as restored behavior, when Schechner talks about performance relates to the notion of "restored behavior" and "twice behaved behavior". So performance in the "restored behavior" sense means "never for the first time"

MC: Yes! That's right!

CC: DO you think it is possible to think about "once behaved behavior"? And in this case I am more specifically thinking about some experimentations in theatre during the last century, like for instance Grotowski's work with Afro-Caribbean chants, and the attempt to reach the idea of organicity and spontaneity, interiority, inner act and total act. So, according to you, is it possible to think about behavior as "once behaved behavior"?

MC: I think it is, though as soon as you introduce consciousness to it, you introduce something that leads you to performance, that is to say that a spontaneous act, if it is truly spontaneous, that is not consciously produced, but produced just out of an impulse, seems to me potentially to be not performance. You don't perform a sneeze - to take an obvious example - you just sneeze. Now an actor can sneeze and so perform a sneeze, but he is consciously producing the sneeze. And it seems to me that anything that is spontaneously produced. If as you said, it is a part of a religious chant of whatever, I can imagine someone putting himself into a state where it's like automatic writing, when something just flows out of your unconscious or pre-conscious, or whatever state that you don't control and you don't even know what it is that tells that it has to be done. But as soon as consciousness intervenes, as soon as you are aware of what you are doing, then potentially performance intervenes.

CC: Thank you! Another element is that, according to Richard Schechner, everything can be studied as performance. Do you agree on this? And so do you think that everything can be claimed as an object by Performance Studies?

MC: Well, everything is a big word! Can a chair be studied by Performance Studies? It's a thing. And I think the answer is no, that chair is not performing. Even if I put that chair on a stage is not performing. I perform when I go on stage. In semiotics studies we used to say that everything can be studied by semiotics. I think everything can be studied by semiotics, everything can be a sign, a chair can certainly be a sign, but I don't think Performance Studies can study everything. I think Performance Studies can study every kind of behavior, but it is connected with behavior, and it is a particular way of looking at behavior. I don't see that Performance Studies can look at objects like chairs in a way. Of course a chair can be part of a performance, but that's something else. So not everything, but I think every behavior, every human activity, and many people would say not even human activity, they would include certain animal behavior as capable of being a performance. But I think once you move beyond the realm of behavior, then I don't think that Performance Studies in the normal sense of the word really works. It's still a very broad field and it does arise the question "can people be performing even if they don't know they are performing?". And of course the answer is yes. As long as their activity has been analyzed with a performance consciousness. I started to say as an example politicians, but of course politicians know that they are performing. Let's stick with Erving Goffman, of course a classic of modern Performance Studies, and "*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*", at the very basis of Goffman's theory is that people play roles; they might be not fully conscious of the fact that they are playing a role, but it is. When I am playing the role of a professor interviewee, I know I am playing a role, but that's because I am conscious of Performance Studies. I am wearing the proper costume, I am using the proper gestures,

and so on and so forth. I know I am performing. Now somebody else might come in and say: “No, he is not performing. He’s just been interviewed!” Do it depends on what grid you put on it, but the grid of Performance Studies can be out on any behavior, either by the being that is doing the behavior or by an analyst who is looking at the behavior, whether the person who doing it is conscious of being in performance or not.

CC: I feel quite close to what you have just said in terms of what Performance Studies can study or not, but then, as you know, Schechner in *“Performance Studies: an Introduction”* writes about the possibility of analyzing a map as performance, and there are classes about fetish in performance (thought by Barbara Browning). So I guess in these cases we can assume that even an object can be analyzed as a performance if you put that object in relation to something else...

MC: ... you see what you have just said... if you put an object... that is that the object is not performing. You are creating a performance environment. We talk about performing objects or a fetishized object, but any such object is converted into a performance by human agency. The object doesn’t perform. The object can’t perform because it is a restoring behavior. I mean that chair is not thinking: “Oh! I was in that same position yesterday!” No, no! No, no! Now I can certainly take that chair and convert it into a performing object, but I create the performance. There is a wonderful scene at the beginning of *“Mnemonic”* by the *Theatre de Complicite*. At the beginning the director comes out and there is a chair on the stage and he says: “I want to introduce you to this chair! This chair has appeared in a number of *Complicite* productions; some of you might recognize it!” And I recognized it. I had seen it in other productions. And he goes on and says: “Actually this chair began its career as a domestic object. It was in my father house and I inherited it... and so on”. Well, that chair had now got layers and layers of performances, but it’s all imposed on the chair by human consciousness. The chair is not performing. Now I think you might argue that not everybody believes this, but a monkey can perform or a bear can perform, and I believe that, but not every performance theorist does. But I don’t believe that a chair can perform. I think you can take any object and use it in a performative way, but it’s not performing. We use the term performing objects, but we mean really something else... when you say “fetishized”, the object does not know it is a fetish. It’s some human being that has made it into a fetish, by their thought processes. And of course it’s not just a matter of agency; we left out an important part of Performance Studies. Performances consciously produce behavior for somebody to have a particular kind of effect. I mean I can sit here and perform being a professor as much as I want to in the quiet of this office, but in order for it to be what I think it was a full realized performance it has to be for somebody: you have to come and film me or watch me or whatever. Again you can take a chair, as they do in *“Mnemonic”*, and say: “Look! I want you to look at this chair; this is a chair that had this experience and this life and so on”. They see it as a performing object. We have a number of artists in the city that perform with objects. The telling stories use objects like puppets, and they move them around. The objects do not perform.

CC: In the Harding and Rosenthal book *“The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner Broad Spectrum”*, you analyze how the development of Performance Studies has profoundly affected and enhanced the field of theatre studies, and you focus in three areas: internationalization, democratization and contextualization. Then you close your essay by saying

that you did not want to try to even suggest the wide range of impact that modern Performance Studies has had on the intellectual map of the last twenty centuries. Actually my next questions are now going to that kind of direction. And so that first question in that direction is: “Do you think that by studying something as performance we can actually understand something new or something more about our object of analysis?” By saying this I mean, do you think the Performance Studies perspective can always reveal something new about its object of analysis, apart from what you said about theatre as object?

MC: I think certainly so! I always get a little nervous if someone says “always”, because usually you can find some cases when this is not true. But let me say “almost always”, usually applying performance analysis to any activity opens up different perspectives, though I think this is true of any fruitful theoretical construct; for instance applying feminist analysis to any human activity opens up perspectives that you did not have otherwise, or applying Marxist cultural materialism to any activity opens up aspects you might not otherwise notice; so this is true of Performance Studies. Let’s take an obvious example, and I am saying “obvious” because I think that everybody now realizes, but there might have been a time, 30 or 40 years ago, when this was not the case, and that is, as I already mentioned, politicians. This is not theatre exactly, not traditional theatre, but we all recognize that politicians are performing. They are following the scripts; they are settling themselves inside theatrical settings with American flags in the background, and wearing the proper costumes and making the proper gestures... and acting a role. So, performance analysis exposes that, and it’s not a great surprise with politicians, but can apply it to many other things. A certain amount of work has been done on sports for example. We have a student in the program who is doing a dissertation on professional wrestling as performance, and this not theatre obviously, but it certainly is a part of a cultural entertainment; you can go on with many other kinds of activities and apply performance analysis to them. I guess the only reason I say you can always apply and open up new perspectives is not so much a problem with performance analysis, but maybe a problem with the person who is doing it. It might be that performance analysis can be applied to some situations and it doesn’t open anything up because the analyst is not clever or ingenious enough to see what prospects it opens. But I think any activity, any behavior potentially opens new perspectives, new layers of understanding of the behavior.

CC: Thanks! How would you define Performance Studies as an academic field?

MC: As an academic field... Well, let me think about that a moment. Let me try... I haven’t thought through that question. The study of the operations of repeated behavior in human culture. I say repeated rather than restored because I think people understand repeated better. That’s a very vague and general definition. I think you have to say something about human culture, and that does exclude animal performance. But I think it is true that more and more the field of animal performance is now becoming an important part of Performance Studies. But I think the focus is still on human behavior. I think you have to say behavior in culture, because it is a social cultural activity primarily. And I think you have to say something about the kind of behavior you are talking about, and repetition is probably the easiest and quickest way to talk about it. There are other ways you can talk about this. You can say the study of the operations of symbolic behavior in society; symbolic would be pointing to the fact that it isn’t just random or spontaneous behavior, but it is

behavior that is intended to create an effect. I don't say that it's behavior that is intended to communicate a message, because that leads to semiotics and I am not sure that you want to be that restrictive. But you could say something like the study of behavior and its effects in human society or something like that. It has to be very general, but it has to be talking about behavior, it has to be talking about social or control behavior. As I said, you always have to go back for the real essence of Performance Studies; you have to go back to behavior that is consciously produced for somebody. Unless you have that triangle I don't think you really quite have the core of Performance Studies. You can say, I suppose: "What if I am brushing my teeth in front of a mirror?" And I am aware that I do this in a certain way and I have done this before, and I always brush on the left side first and so on. Am I not for myself performing there? And I would say: "Yes! But you can only do that by doubling yourself. And the language gives you a way when you say: "I am performing this action for myself. You are the somebody you are performing for. You haven't destroyed the triangle. The consciousness has to be there.

CC: In terms of methodologies Performance Studies combines approaches from different disciplines, including performing arts, ethnography, anthropology, theatre studies, gender studies, feminist studies and much more. BKG says that "Performance Studies is more than the sum of its inclusions". Do you think that this interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary approach is working well in the field of Performance Studies?

MC: Well, it is a very large field, though I don't think it is in anyway unusual among disciplinary fields, that is to say something that has happened in the last fifty years is that almost any field you can think of has become more interdisciplinary. It's expanding out... take the two most traditional well established and dominant fields in the humanities are English and History. Now everything you say about performance you can also say about English and History. If you study English now you might be studying all manner of things: feminist work, anthropology, sociology, ethnography, and the same in History. All the fields have become more and more conscious of their interconnections and overlaps. And I think in that way, Performance Studies, although it is a new field, is no different from any field in the humanities, and for that matter in any field in the sciences either. You talk to a physicist and you find out the field now overlaps with everything. Talk with a chemist; certainly talk with a biologist. And obviously this is true with the social sciences. What is psychology now, or sociology, or anthropology? They have moved down, blended, connected with many many other fields. All fields are interdisciplinary now, or trans-disciplinary. So I think Performance Studies may seem special because it's relatively new, but I don't think it's at all special in that way. Those people who say "what is the essence of Performance Studies? What is that really makes Performance Studies a discipline?" are asking an old-fashion question? It's a high modernist question. We used to spend a lot of time at the end of the 19th century saying "what is the essence of theatre? What is the essence of music? What is the essence of painting?" We don't talk about essence much anymore. And the reason is that we are not modernist anymore, we are post-modernist, and an important part of post-modernism is the recognition that all boundaries leak, that is a hopeless test to try to essentialize any discipline. Performance Studies is not at all unique in this. The most interesting works are on the boundaries; it's checking where you overlap with other things, and things are mixing, because that is where the action is. You talk to a psychologist and he will say the same thing: "The important work is on the boundaries". If you talk about identity and

the construction of identity, which is a concern of maybe philosophers or maybe psychologists, they will say that all we are gonna look is the boundaries, this is where the interesting things are. But even they say not to define the boundaries, they just what are the negotiations going on. So I really cannot answer a question about what is Performance Studies essentially. There are certain questions that are very close to the way that Performance Studies works in terms of operations, and this is where we started today. But it is a very fluent open ending field, but my point is that doesn't make it in any way special; it just makes it a very contemporary field.

CC: And so, in relation to this, do you think that Performance Studies scholars achieve their aim in terms of really understanding something different about what they study, and by using this post-disciplinary approach they are able to get something new?

MC: I known that at the beginning Performance Studies often talk about itself as being and inter-discipline or a post-discipline, but I did not believe that at the beginning and I don't believe that now. And I remember once saying to Richard Schechner: "OK! You say you are an anti-discipline or post-discipline. Come back to me in five years, and if Performance Studies has not established annual conferences, has not established professional journals with peer-reviews, has not established departmental disciplines with that name, then I will say that you are not a discipline!" You know the American joke about the duck? If it walks like a duck, and sounds like a duck and look like a duck, it's a duck! Similarly, if it acts like a discipline and sounds like a discipline and performs like a discipline, if we talk about performance, it's a discipline! Performance Studies is a discipline. There are departments of Performance Studies, there are conferences of Performance Studies, there is an International Organization of Performance Studies. How is that different from English or History? By a subject matter? No, no, no! The subject matter, as you pointed out, is shared with others. Is it interdisciplinary? No, no, no! That's a common point! Now, is Performance Studies in its totality putting a different grid on human activity? Yes, but in that sense it is not different from women studies. Is Women Studies a discipline? In some universities it is. But I think Performance Studies is not post-disciplinary, really. Do People use Performance Studies to accomplish things? Of course they do! Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider, Richard Schechner himself, Dwight Conquergood, Joseph Roach, I can go on and on... you know all these people. Of course they have illuminated, made a better understanding, opened new perspectives on a range of contemporary and historical subjects, using material they learnt out of Performance Studies. So, fine! People are also doing the same thing in Physics. Performance Studies gives us a set of tools that we did not have before, just like semiotics did. And it's wonderful; I am glad I have them; I use them all the time. But it's not special. People we are in might feel it special. I don't consider myself a person who is in it. After all I am a professor of (to talk about categories) theatre, comparative literature and Middle Eastern studies. That's how I am defined by my Institution. I am not a professor of Performance Studies.

CC: ... but you know about performance very well...

MC: Well, I do! I have written a book on Performance Studies, which is one of the standard books in the field. I teach Performance Studies, but that's fine. I teach Shakespeare too, but I am not an English professor; I don't consider that in anyway makes me unfit to teach Shakespeare. I teach

Brecht, but I am not a German professor, though I am a professor in comparative literature so I guess that would count.

CC: You have just said that you learnt some tools from Performance Studies. Which ones do you consider the most important to you in terms of new tools to use for your own studies?

MC: We can go back to the piece you quoted earlier of what do I think the major contributions of Performance Studies have been to the field of theatre, because I came out of the field of theatre, as Richard did. There are three things that need to be talked about. Let me start with the contextualization, because that's the biggest one. Theatre started really as a branch of English or speech and oratory, but theatre was missing something at the beginning, and this something was the stage history of these plays. Only texts were thought. This is when theatre professors started asking questions about how has Hamlet been performed in different historical periods, how has he been conceived on stage? Or indeed even in the original production, how did Shakespeare stage it? What kind of a stage was he on? What was the costume like? What was the architecture like? Now these seem obvious questions, but people in English did not ask these questions. Now theatre began to ask these questions. These were new questions. When I started studying theatre and there was not such a thing as Performance Studies, what we studied was those questions, what we studied was plays and how they have been staged. And when I say plays I don't mean all plays; we studied what's called the canon. We studied Shakespeare and Molière and so on. We didn't study musical theatre or popular plays, vaudeville, burlesque, any of that kind of low class entertainment. The other thing to say is that we did not study anything around the theatre. We studied the text, the play, the theatre, but we did not study the society, that is... what is the theatre position? I wrote a whole book called *"Places of Performance"*, just about things like "where is the theatre located in the city? What does that mean?" It is really a semiotic question, but it involves performance too. Richard Schechner has written very interestingly about the whole theatre event, that is not just a matter of the event starting when you enter the door, the event starts when you go to the theatre, what kind of neighborhood you are going through, what does that mean. And Performance Studies encourages the opening the doors of the theatre and the looking around; what's going on? What's the economics? What's the social background? What's the whole picture? So that's contextualization. The next most important thing, and that changes the way I look at theatre certainly, is that it has opened up the kind of things we study in theatre. We used to just study great plays. Now we study insignificant plays and even things that are not plays at all. Now we study popular culture; theatre has never studied popular culture; we never studied circus. So Performance Studies has opened all that up. And finally in theatre we studied not only the great plays, but the European and the American great plays. If you go back and look at the history of World Theatre so called, from 1940-50, it would be Europe, the United States, Japan and India and maybe China: that was the world. Now Performance Studies has said that there is a world of performance that includes Africa, Latin America and so on and so forth. Theatre never used to study anything like Africa. Performance Studies says that it's not just plays. There is a great tradition of shadow puppet theatre, of story-telling theatre, of ritual performance. All of these are not plays, but Performance Studies has opened my eyes to the importance of that. Now maybe anthropologists might have been studying some of this material, but theatre people never did.

CC: So, maybe nobody or almost nobody in theatre studied some subjects, but maybe somebody else from another fields, maybe an anthropologist, studied the same object. So I am wondering in this case the difference is again the Performance Studies perspective... because otherwise I would say why don't we look at the work done by an anthropologist?

MC: We do, but each grid, each interpretive theory that you put on a material shows you different things about it. People have been writing about Shakespeare for hundreds of years, and then the feminists came along and look at the same plays and found totally different things in them. Or the Marxists, or the Freudians. *Hamlet* means something very different from a Freudian point of view. So, yes, we can and we do go through anthropological reports on let's say ritual performances in Africa, and they tell us things, but they don't tell us everything and we ask other questions that tell us other things.

CC: Thanks! Another element of Performance Studies should be, according to Richard Schechner, the relationship between theory and practice, between studying performance and doing performance. Do you think that this element exists in the field or do you think that Performance Studies is more about a theoretical investigation?

MC: I think that as it has been developing it is more about a theoretical investigation. There was a great deal of interest in the early days of Performance Studies in introducing a performance element into the research itself. Not just a performance consciousness, but an actual performative element of doing performance as you were reporting on performance. And I remember seeing at conferences a number of attempts of people to perform... I mean everybody performs... but not performing in a traditional way of giving a paper, they would dance a paper or something like that. You still occasionally see that. Susan Foster, who is a great dance scholar, is an example. I have seen and greatly admired a number of presentations she has given at academic conferences. You remember her presentation at Princeton; you were there too... that is a good example. Then she was really performing a research project, and research and performance are really part of the same thing. That does not happen very often unfortunately, partly because there are not so many people as talented in performing as Susan is. Most of the work done in Performance Studies is academic, or academic based; it's mostly published or given at an academic conference, and really it is not, except for the subject matter, phenomenologically different from English presentations. I think you have a few exceptions, like Susan, and I guess on the other side you have a few people who are primarily performers, or very occupied with working out theoretical material in their performances... performance material you might say. These are mostly off-off-Broadway people. There is no anybody in the mainstream. There is somebody like Richard Foreman who works back and forward between theory and performance. It is not entirely performance theory. There is quite an important movement in England that is I would say related to Performance Studies, and a lot of people who are involved in it are connected with Performance Studies, and that's *The Device Theory Movement*... their work is consciously created out of the experience by the company. It's close to what we used to call collective creation. And there is also, and again this is much more important in England than here, something which is called "applied theatre", and this also has some overlaps with Performance Studies. So there is a certain amount of connections in that way. But I think that if you actually just say things that are done in the name of Performance Studies, I would say about

90% of that, it might be inspired by performance, it might be writing about performance, but it is really academic. It is either academic papers or it is presentations of papers at conferences.

CC: Marco De Marinis, who is the advisor in Italy for my PhD, defines the New Theatrology as a discipline relying not on two levels, theory and practice, but on three levels, history, practice and then theory. He highlights the importance of historiographic knowledge and of the historical dimension as a necessary base for any strong theatrology, and talking about performance he writes: "I find that the Performance Studies relation to the historical dimension and the historiographical knowledge lacks clarity and direction, risking radical relativism and excessive subjectivity". So I was wondering what's your opinion on this.

MC: I agree with Marco, but that might partly be my theater history background. I mean I started as an historian; I think history is absolutely essential; that's why I like *"Professing Performance"*, because it talks about the history of the discipline, how that has effected certain things in the discipline. Let's talk about Marco De Marinis for a minute. Because here again history is very important... Marco, as you know, started as one of the founding members of modern semiotics, though the Italian semioticians were particularly aware, as not everybody was, of the prove people who came before them, that is they were aware they were carrying on a certain historical projects that then informed some of the questions that they ask. One of Marco's greatest contributions from my point of view is that he was one of the very first semioticians to really look at reception, to really talk about the audience. That really changed semiotics; it made it a different discipline, and changed something of the history of the discipline. But semiotics always as a discipline was historically oriented. I remember people going back and talking about the medieval use of signs, and knowledge of signs, and the classic use of signs and knowledge of signs. Performance Studies has not done that. Certainly individuals, Richard obviously, who knows history very well, is aware of an historical progression, but I really think that the way that Performance Studies developed, it developed in America, it developed in a particular American consciousness, let's say a modernist or post-modernist consciousness, and part of that is a denial of history, or, let's say, a privileging of the new, the innovative, something that nobody has never thought of this before, we are going to revolutionary things. Around the early years of Performance Studies, in the 1967s, one of the effects of this was that particularly the NYU branch of Performance Studies worked very hard to be revolutionary and to say: "We are not theatre. We are going to replace theatre. This is something new". And this costed a lot of argumentation and a lot of deviousness between theatre people and performance studies people, most of which has gone away now. But there was a part of the rhetoric of Performance Studies that it didn't have a history; it was something that was new; it was asking questions that people had never asked before. That meant they have reinvented a lot of things, unnecessarily I think, but it might have been necessary in order to make a mark on the profession. Let's talk about the lack of direction; I think that's a feature of this as a post-modern discipline, that is from the very beginning, especially at NYU, not quite so much at Northwestern, but especially at NYU there was a pride in the fact that there was no core to this discipline; it has no settled at all boundaries, there was no reading list, there was no standard set of books that everybody read. The students at NYU, and I think this is less true now, but it has been true pretty steadily, had very different reactions to this lack of a center, and I would say that on the whole the better students responded well to, and said: "Ok! I'll put together my own thing; Performance Studies will make

what I make it. I will create something to Richard, or something to Peggy Phelan, or Barbara... whoever is, but it will be mine. And everybody in Performance Studies creates their own way of working, their own discipline, if you like. On the whole weaker students just went crazy, because they kept saying: "Where do I find books I have to read?" And nobody can tell them. And it would be a different five books if you went to find different people. And the people at NYU were proud of that and I think justly so, I think that was in the nature of what they were doing. Again, that is a very post-modern idea. There was a cluster of someone overlapping ideas. Have you read Deleuze and Guattari? Well it is rhizomatic the way the department is organized, and that is very contemporary, that is: "This is now the way that everybody is called to think. So, yes, it is true that there is no center, but it is also true this is a calculated thing. To say that there is no center does not mean there is no discipline. Again, it's a rhizomatic discipline. Now, does that mean that it is subjective? Well, yes! Everybody creates his own discipline. Peggy Phelan Performance Studies is quite different than Richard Schechner Performance Studies, which is quite different from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. And you can say: "What do they all have in common?" Well, not that they have a lot, and that's not the most important thing what they have in common. It was the most important thing in a traditional discipline, that is back in the 1950s; you could say: "Professor X, Professor Y and Professor Z all teach theater; they are very different in their specialties, but what do they have in common, and that's what we examine people on PhD exams. They all have read Aristotle, and Aristotle in theater is a kind of founding text; there is no founding text in Performance Studies; it's not Richard Schechner's book or one of his books, presumed everybody reads those, but that's not; it's not Victor Turner's book, well books but in particular his last book, and so on. Yes, it's subjective; yes it doesn't have a center. Yes, so what? I mean these are legitimate complains if you think that a program cannot be subjective or a program ought to have a center. Let me just say one more word about subjectivity, and that is, we now live in a very subjective world. Let me go completely outside of Performance Studies and just talk about Anthropology for a while. You have done some work in Anthropology I suppose. Well, what would you say it's the major change in Anthropology in the last 15-20 years? Well no, it's not fair from me to turn back the questions to you. Let me just say that to me the biggest change in Anthropology of the last 15-20 years is the recognition that you cannot be an objective observer. The discipline has become subjective. It used to be the model of the anthropologists... the European or American outsiders... when anthropologists go into a culture they really try to go into the culture, they learn, of course they speak the language or try to, but try to in fact participate in the rituals and understand them. The Mayan anthropologist Tedlock became a shaman. He has to become a shaman; he is a shaman. He felt he could not really as an anthropologist understand what a shaman was unless he actually became a shaman. Well, 50-60 years ago, what you were taught Anthropology was "the worst you can do is go native; you have got to keep your objectivity". I mean even in the humanities I learnt that, that is: always, whatever you are studying, be objective, never let your own feelings get into it. Now we know that it is impossible; we really know that's impossible. Not everybody believes that yet, but basically the academy has accepted subjectivity and certainly theater and performance studies have. Look at the writing of someone like Jill Dolan or Peggy Phelan or Rebecca Schneider. It is all I, I, I, I; and they are not ashamed of that necessary. Do you know Rebecca's new book about memory and battlefields has a finger on the cover? Think of how much of that book ... think about when she's talking about picking up that finger... that is totally subjective and totally right about performance studies. I do think that Performance Studies is one of

the main reasons that much more subjectivity has entered into all forms of writing. Women's writing has been notoriously subjective; and that's a part of what makes what it is. People write under their own experience and indeed have nothing else to write out of. So I agree with Marco De Marinis, except to me it is not a criticism, it is just what the discipline is.