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Performative representation

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Lamenting the state of the US presidential campaign in November 2015, Lewis H. Lapham argues that citizens are 'invited to understand government as representative only in the theatrical sense':

> It is a ritual re-enactment of the legend of democracy as fairground spectacle: the proving that our flag is still there with star-spangled photo-ops and bombast bursting in air, the candidates so well contrived that they can be presented as game-show contestants, mounted on selfie sticks until they come to judgement on Election Day before the throne of cameras by whom and for whom they are produced (Lapham 2015, 24, 22).

His is a strongly-worded and explicit example of a common contemporary view. It may not be too much of a stretch to locate Lapham's target in a (very) long and venerable thread of anti-theatrical argument, where drama or theatre metaphors provide a powerful frame within which to criticise political (and other) events or developments as insubstantial, manipulative, or insincere. The persistent power of this 'anti-theatrical' interpretive and argumentative frame [1] requires careful critical appraisal. For all the understandable anger and frustration which it expresses, to position authentic democratic politics pristinely outside a theatrical frame is to miss something fundamental to political life and the nature of political and democratic representation.

At the heart of the 'representative turn' in democratic theory has been the notion that the identities and interests, and the subjects and objects of representatives and represented are largely endogenous to representative politics, be it electoral or non-electoral, 'formal' or 'informal'. In a range of ways they are 'constructed' through such politics (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Saward 2010; Disch 2011). And that ongoing process of construction and reconstruction is *performative* (Rai and Reinelt 2015). Through situated performances – actions, speeches, marches, rallies, parliamentary rituals, etc. - key categories and relations central to political representation are generated or sustained. Representation is not simply a product of what is done, by politicians and others, but importantly of what is demonstrated or *shown* to be done. It is an unstable effect of myriad, more or less productive, performances through which (in a range of ways) an experience of representative roles and relationships is invoked and valorised to audiences. The key purpose of the chapter is to contribute to the descriptive and interpretive analysis of political representation; I have discussed

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[1] A key goal is to move beyond familiar, simplistic views of acting or performing in politics as tantamount to lying, deception, and the dominance of image over substance. Barish (1985) traces a profound and longstanding anti-theatrical prejudice beginning with Plato, for whom all mimesis is flawed by its second order status as a copy. It was reinforced by Rousseau's deep suspicion of theatrical artifice (in particular in his *Lettre d'Alembert*), and more recently in J.L. Austin's exclusion of 'parasitic' theatrical utterances from his conception of performative speech acts in *How to do things with words* (1962).

normative approaches to the assessment of representative claims elsewhere (Saward 2014).

The chapter proceeds by (a) clarifying the concepts of performance and performativity; (b) explaining how all claims of representation; (c) distinguishing 'set piece' performances and 'everyday performances of the self' while noting their relevant overlaps; and (d) focusing on what is, or can be, constituted through the performance of representative claims, and how this may be achieved. Finally, following a brief defence of the performative focus against a set of sceptical arguments, I offer a specific, illustrative example of performance analysis.

Concepts: representation, performance, performativity

Representation becomes manifest through a series of claims and demands to represent and their reception. The representative claim perspective recasts the conventional view of representation as the institutional product of election to portray it as a dynamic, transactional series of contested claims that a person, group, institution, concept, image or material object may act or stand for others. This perspective challenges the standard separation of institutional from aesthetic representation - all political representation contains aesthetic and performative components - and asserts the importance of the productive effects of performance in constituting (not least) relations of representation (Saward 2010; 2014).

As Schechner makes clear, one may analyse an event, or a doing, either 'as' a *performance* or on the basis that it 'is' a performance: 'Certain events are performances and other events less so. There are limits to what 'is' performance. But just about anything can be studied 'as' performance' (Schechner 2002, 38). I mostly focus on events of which one can say that this 'is' a performance, characterised by rehearsed and 'restored behaviour', or 'twice-behaved behaviour' (Schechner 2002, 28). There is 'doing', on the one hand, and 'showing doing' (or performance) on the other (Schechner 2002, 28). The inauguration of a president, Prime Ministers Questions in the UK, or an organised protest rally is a performance in this respect; an unobserved government minister in her office doing paperwork is less so (though her actions can readily be seen 'as' a performance). It is the performance of claims that render them visible, and therefore potentially meaningful. To take performance of representation seriously is to return to the scenes of representation. *Performativity* refers to a range of ways in which actions (including, of course performances) produce effects and affects for subjects, audiences and observers**.** Performances can constitute things – relationships, identities, social facts, and so on – through effects which may be illocutionary (produced *in* claiming to represent) and perlocutionary (produced *by* so claiming) (Austin 1975).

There is nothing new in regarding performance as important to politics in general and the politics of representation in particular. It has been a rich and persistent, albeit marginal, thread in political science, political theory, anthropology and sociology. Researchers and observers have highlighted a range of concepts which bear upon, or provide resources for performance and its analysis, including: ritual (Turner 1987), spectacle (Debord 1995), symbolic politics (Edelman 1977), rhetoric (from Cicero all the way to recent revivals such as Finlayson 2012), acting (Miller 2001), discourse (Hajer 2009), dramaturgy (Hajer 2009), narrative and storytelling (Salmon 2010) and

theatre and theatricality (Chou, Bleiker and Premaratna 2016). I argue that performance is the concept that can best draw together the components that such work examines – rhetoric, gesture, drama, symbolic representations, and so on. For example, if one focuses on language or discourse, then why not other key components of performance such as staging and acting as well? If on words, then why not bodies as well? If on rhetoric, then why not also the setting or images framing rhetoric's deployment? The concept of performance carries the potential to enlist key aspects of such concepts to achieve wider interpretive purchase, and as such to capture the field's 'multimodality' (Iedema 2003). When combined with examination of *performativity* – 'If performances typically bring new states of affairs into being, it is precisely in this sense that they are performative' (Snow 2010, 83) - it takes us beyond the useful but limited deployment of theatrical metaphors to illustrate political action. The concept of performance is preferred to that of 'communication', a common organisational term in political science, because the latter implies the unambiguous existence of that which is to be communicated.[2]

The centrality of performance to representation

Performance is central to representation in that no claim for a person or group to act for or to stand for another person or group can be established in even its most minimal form without it. Consider the general form of the representative claim – a maker (M) of representations puts forward a subject (S) which stands for an object (O) that is offered to an audience (A) (adapted from Saward 2010, 36). If the efforts of a maker do not reach an audience, there is no representative claim – and there can be no relationship of representation – to speak of[3]. The basic elements of such a claim - subject, object and audience - need to 'fuse' for a relationship of representation to be established, and action or performance is required to bring about that fusion. If for example a would-be political figure proclaims in an otherwise empty room that he speaks for the 'silent majority', no representative claim can be established (though it might be a rehearsal for a later effort to establish a claim). Peter Brook's comment that 'in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation … until an audience is present the object is not complete' (Brook 1968, 142) is true of performance more generally. Institutions, too, in order to be established as representative, require action, claims, and performances such as the rituals and ceremonies of parliament that have live and television audiences (Rai 2010).

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[2] My approach is similar to that of Alexander (2010), though I aim to develop an approach that is focused more sharply on fine-grained analysis of specific performances and performative effects. Other authors have made useful advances in this field in recent times, and I build in part on their insights. Parkinson (2015) notes the importance of 'performing democracy', but arguably places the structures and roles of democracy as fixed constraints on performing, rather than asking if these things are objects that may be performative products. Rai (2014), in constructing a 'Political Performance Framework', notes that performance is 'critical to our reading of politics', and 'how the interactions between performance and its reception generate politics'. Although I outline a more open-ended approach to performance effects and a more disaggregated view of their achievement, there is much that is valuable in her analysis. Hill (2011) does an excellent job of pushing the idea of performance as an interpretive metaphor for examining politics, without quite addressing performance's deeper productive power.

[3] As Rai (2014, 1181) states, 'We become aware of representative politics through the mode of performance in which individuals and institutions (actors) make claims to represent and affect their audience …'

In short, performance is essential to the establishment of relations of representation, not merely one form it may take or an epiphenomenon of constitutionally-mandated representative structures. Even 'given' background characteristics of the polity such as a bordered territory and an organisational structure – the *geographic polity* and the *organisational state* – rely for their recognition and acceptance upon set piece performances. Performances crucially evoke an *experience of polity*, its locale, function and character; such fundamental experience, widely and commonly shared, can establish the polity's shape and character.[4] Written constitutions, visual representations of legislative and other building-based institutions, political maps and so on, can be evoked so as to 'perform' the polity.[5] As citizen or observer, a recipient of governing performances, the character and boundaries of my political community are abstract entities. Communities beyond the immediately proximate need to be 'imagined' (Anderson 1991), which in turn requires imaginative performances[6]. As Hajer (40) argues, 'If it appears that there is a political centre, this is because it is successfully staged as such'. This process may take the form of personification or embodiment. As graphically represented by the book's frontispiece, Hobbes' *Leviathan* argued famously that 'it is the unity of the Represent*er*, and not of the Represent*ed*, that makes the state'; the embodiment of the structure of the polity in one man is what makes the polity one unity, separate from others.[7]

It is critical to note, however, that performance is necessary *but not sufficient* for successful or effective claims or allegations of representation. A representative claim may be established but ineffective. Accordingly below I turn from the importance of performance to the importance of *performativity* or the production of effects and affects through representative claims. This means to turn to 'performance which is performative' (Butler 1988, 528): 'If performances typically bring new states of affairs into being, it is precisely in this sense that they are performative' (Snow 2010, 83).

Set piece and the everyday performances of self

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[4] Dryzek (2010) writes of the roles of bridging and bonding rhetoric in (deliberative) politics, but there is something further and more fundamental behind both of these – namely the kind of 'metabonding' performance that is needed to sustain the experience of polity. Certainly rhetoric is one important element of political performance, among a number of others, which may, or may be intended to, have these various effects.

[5] Butler (1997, 78) describes how '[t]he difficulty of describing power as a sovereign formation … in no way precludes fantasizing or figuring power in precisely that way: to the contrary, the historical loss of the sovereign organisation of power appears to occasion the fantasy of its return – a return, I want to argue, that takes place in language, in the figure of the performative'. Emphasis on language and the performative here is 'driven by a wish to return to a simpler and more reassuring map of power, one in which the assumption of sovereignty remains secure'.

[6] Of course different territorial and functional communities may be appealed to, and in that process perhaps constituted, through political performance. The notion of 'dog-whistle politics' is one instance of multiple appeals occurring through a single (perhaps repeated) performance. See Goodin (2009).

[7] In complex ways through history, symbolic embodiment of the polity in a human body (the king) has been profoundly important. Friedland (2002), for example, notes the ways in which challenges to the French king as an actor embodying representation of France were crucial in the French Revolution. Much more recently, Raphael (2009) notes the importance of the body to Ronald Reagan's power as president. According to Hinckley, US presidents have offered similar forms of presentation of self to the public: 'They are alone in government, equivalent to the nation, religious and cultural leaders who shun politics and elections' (cited in Burnier 1994, 245).

In exploring the performance of representative claims, I focus in particular on *set-piece performances*: specific, designed and contrived acts or events targeted at particular audiences or constituencies. Representative claims are primarily made in and through set-piece performances. Set piece performances are visible, public, and distinctive; they are recognisably delimited 'moments'. They tend to be 'explicit' (Mason 1996) or 'conspicuous' (Stephenson Shaffer 2016) performances. Where effects are produced, whether concentrated on one body (e.g. the constitution of the speaker as 'leader') or on audiences or observers, they tend to the more immediate and traceable. Potentially, set piece performances have great reach, spatially and temporally. An *everyday performance of the self* (after Goffman 1990), on the other hand, consists of mostly 'mundane and repeated acts of delimitation' (Butler 2010), 'discreet performative behaviours' (Mason 1996) which by mundane repetition establish or reinforce a social persona (such as the myriad, disparate Bulterian (1990) performances of the gendered self, best seen primarily 'as' performances). The effects of such performances may be cumulative, diffuse and less readily traceable. Several such discrete performances may in turn constitute aspects of a community's social fabric (cf Fenno 2003); the multiple and routine character of such quotidian performances may underpin their performative potency.[8]

The centrality of performativity to representation

I noted above that performance is necessary to establish a relation of representation, but also that it is not sufficient to create an *effective or productive* relation of representation. Accordingly, I turn now to the centrality to performativity to representation, focusing in turn on (1) what can be produced by effective performance, (2) means or processes by which it is produced, and (3) the techniques involved in this production. Though there is considerable overlap between effects, means and techniques, it will aid clarity to break the analysis down into these components of performativity. This field of concern is rich in variation, and my account here is indicative rather than comprehensive.

What can be produced by effective performance?

The effects of performances of representative claims, in all their great empirical variety, can be profound – they change what people think is the case, what they perceive as fact and fiction, and as a consequence can drive individual and collective behaviour. I note in particular three critical and interlinked products or effects that are distinctively linked to representative politics.

Social realities can be constituted through performance. Performances may often be (derided as) make-believe, but more significantly they can 'make belief', meaning on the strongest interpretation that they can 'create the very social realities they enact' (Schechner 2002, 43; see also Hill 2010, 382). Performances can involve 'rites of institution' (Bourdieu 117) – they bring about a state of affairs. They may also enact 'alternative realities' (Kelleher 10), offering visions of change that lead or inspire action. These social realities can be many, highly varied, and so consequential that

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[8] The distinction between these two types of performance, and their potentially distinct though interlinked performative effects, is not black-and-white. The two share a range of attributes, and in practice may interact in a range of ways. The distinctions drawn between the two serve to illuminate how they work both in tandem and in tension with each other.

they frame significant aspects of individual and institutional lives. I have noted above the ways in which (for example) 'we-talk' by political figures and others plays a role in constituting or sustaining the sense of a singular policy, community or group – geographical or organisational. Donald Trump in the 2016 campaign for the US Republican Party nomination proclaims constantly that he will 'make America great again'. The sense that America was great; that it is great no longer; and that it must be made great again establishes in the minds of Trump's supporters a temporal story of past, present and future which makes a powerful framing device for interpreting a range of social, economic and personal circumstances. Performances can produce credibility as if it was always there (Butler 2010,153); they sustain a series of social categories by which people live and believe, however fixed or natural the common experience of them may be.

Effective performances also establish representative *roles and identities*. The performance of representative claims centrally involves establishing the claimant (or the subject of the claim) as a certain *kind* of representative, e.g. a trustee of long-term interests of a constituency, an impatient and populist insurgent, or an engaged local relationship builder. The roles follow the claim; they do not, in principle, prefigure or constrain its forging in the performance except that certain conceptions of social and political roles are available for emulation or reiteration through performance. Indeed, claimants can often shape-shift, moving strategically between different culturally available subject-positions in order to create or forge their representative roles (Saward 2014).

Representative claims constitute the subjects and objects of the claim, and are addressed to constituencies and audiences (inviting would-be constituency and audience members to identify themselves as such). In this respect, any one, discrete performance that has productive effects is in fact a 'double performative' – a performance of the self in order to be an effective set-piece performance. A political figure making a set piece performance performs a role that helps to constitute his or her persona or identity (such as 'one with the right to represent', a 'champion'). On the other hand, as a set-piece performance that is productive or constitutive for others, it may offer a copyable exemplary persona. And importantly, it may provide different citable resources – a sense of collective striving or belonging or redemption, perhaps. So, a single set piece political performance may be performative on different scales at once. In such a case, the actor (a) performs herself as the right type of person (not least a 'representative') to (b) performatively constitute and propagate understandings of citizen and polity (such as representative relationships). [9] On a strong interpretation, one can argue (with Butler 1997, 5) that 'One comes to "exist" by virtue of this fundamental dependency on the address of the other'.

Representative relationships may also be produced through effective performance of representative claims. Performing representative claims can create 'leaders', 'champions', 'followers','audiences', 'publics', and so on, and in addition the fusion between such assumed characteristics which create effective bonds between them and

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[9] Rae (2002, 2) captures well this complex process: 'State-builders must establish their right to rule, as well as the legitimacy of the political order they seek to establish or consolidate. This involves two tasks: the construction of a unified political community within the bounds of their territorial rule – a community with a single, cohesive identity – and the identification of the monarch or the national government as the political embodiment or representative of that unified community'.

people positioned socially by them. Performed claims invoke and render visible and audible the very notions of representative, represented, and a sense of the dynamic or relation which simultaneously distinguishes and unites the two. The experienced, and often powerful, sense of a real relationship is forged: 'When the word representation no longer separates actor and audience, show and public: it envelopes them; what is present for one is present for the other' (Brook 2008, 156). Such performances create the relationship, or sustain a previously relationship, providing a reason to be represented (in this way, by this person or party or movement), the terms of the relationship, a sense of the collective it belongs to, and reasons to invest emotionally and intellectually in the relationship.

Means or processes by which effects are produced

How do performances have the potential to be productive of social realities, roles and identities and representative relationships? By what 'mechanisms, processes, practices' might these social achievements be realised (Butler 2010, 147)? A particularly rich and open-ended field of means or processes is implicated in the production of performative effects from representative claims. I note each of the following only briefly, and will not explore the complex mutual implications and overlaps which they often manifest in practice.

First, effective performance produces *'appearance'*. Visibility and appearance is crucial. Consider a null hypothesis: what if politics was merely *done*, and not (also) performed to wider audiences? Officials, for example, in ministries of state in Washington, Paris or Beijing might get on quietly with refining laws and regulations, out of public sight. What they do is routine, and to a degree technically inaccessible to those outside their profession or milieu. Another possibility would be backroom (in the old days, 'smoke-filled rooms') politicians dealing and trading, sorting things out behind the scenes. Performance may be involved, not least everyday performances of the self, but with no wider audience the potential performative effects in principle available through effective set-piece performances are not producible. The simple fact of the activity of rule – the doing of it – cannot readily be sustained *as* rule without being shown to be done.   Rendering the quiet bureaucrats or the backroom political dealers credible, and their actions explicable, requires presentation and justification – performance - to at least some subjects of this ruling activity[10]. Performance may not succeed in producing clear narrative and credibility, but these effects cannot be produced *without* performance, without visibility via 'showing doing' (Schechner 2002, 28).

Political performances play into, and in some ways seek to reinforce or alter, the complex 'distribution of the perceptible' which they both confront and are a part. Who appears as 'representative', who appears as the 'represented', for example? Following Jacques Ranciere, the distribution of the perceptible ('Le Partage du sensible') is 'the system of self-evident fact of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it…This apportionment of parts and positions is

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[10] Note that a small circle of elites outside the expert milieu might be sufficient to sustain a certain political legitimation. This fact is less likely to hold in a context that is, or regards itself as, democratic, where the performance of explanation and justification of actions needs to reach a wider span of 'the people' in whose name rule is conducted. See Barker (2002).

based on a distribution of spaces, times and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participations and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution' (Ranciere 2006, 12). Political power, on this view, is importantly aesthetic – it is about perceptibility, in terms of what is visible, what is audible, what can be said in a given regime or order of perceptibility (Ranciere 2006, 85).

A range of critical means or processes are closely linked to appearance. Thus, second, something thing offered in and by all potentially productive performances – everyday performances of selves, or set pieces - is the 'performative call' – an *interpolative or hailing* which summons observers, recipients or audiences into its ideational orbit, and invites sharing of what it invokes and values. Third, set-piece performances involve a capturing/constituting of a 'moment', a period of time (such as that of a significant political speech) whose 'before' and 'after' are respectively are moments of awaiting or anticipating, on the one hand, and reflection on the other hand. In other words, performance carries the capacity to institute shared experience of a specific and consequential temporality. Fourth, and again closely linked, there is a heightening of intensity or attention in this moment, involving a sense of (shared) significance or import. Performance can make moments *mean* something, make them stand out from other more routine moments, to impose their content as more consequential.

Fifth, performance has a strong 'in the now' quality which conveys a sense of *immediacy* (Hill 2010, 379) which in turn carries an often compelling sense of indeterminacy and even danger – it is happening now, it is unpredictable, it needs to be watched or heard. A sense of 'liveness' of performance adds to this dimension – even when an event is recorded and not 'live', the experience of it may include an experience of liveness by virtue of the fact of performance[11]. Sixth, performance can – not least through the share experience of a 'moment', immediacy and significance - involve a considerable degree of social and political 'editing'. The inessential is pared away to bring issues into tight focus and to concentrate attention. There is a process of 'selection, elision and exclusion' (Butler 2010, 149). And finally, performance produces affects; it impacts on the bodies and emotions of participants and observers. It may generate emotional solidarity and commitment (Juris 2008). Relatedly, the performative may be, in Diana Taylor's (2013) word, 'animative'; it may inspire or require or prompt emotion and action. Through the potency occasioned by their visibility and availability, certain set piece performances can create powerful feelings, moments and events. They may seek through suggestion and 'contagion' to call on and to move audiences in particular ways (see Thrift 2008).

The techniques involved in producing effects

It is crucial that analysis attends to the *technologies* that can be effective components of (in particular) set piece performances. I discuss briefly some key components: roles, scripting, staging, choreography, plotting and framing (cf Rai 2014; Parkinson 2015).

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[11] 'Liveness' is a crucial element in the success of a mediated sense of immediacy. Liveness, as Auslander (2008, 112) suggests, is not so much a product of temporal simultaneity or spatial co-presence as a quality of affect: if an event or performance 'feels live', or evokes liveness, it can carry similar power for non-present audiences as for present ones.

Playing a role is a technique, in addition to the establishment of a persistent social role being a potential outcome of performance. Roles (or parts) are performed in political life with the aim of creating certain effects, often by fostering certain emotions in audience members[12]. These roles can be understood in different ways. There are formal political positions – president, prime minister, monarch, parliamentarian, councillor, chief advisor, and so on. Public or semi-public performances *in* these roles are also performances *of* them. There will often be a perceived need to look, sound, act like a president, councillor, etc. This need may or may not coincide with formal occupancy of government posts. Presidents may appear, according to prevailing perceptual frames, to be 'unpresidential'; unelected or informal actors may (strive to) perform 'presidential' attributes.

On the other hand there are more informal and fluid roles, which may be closer to the sense of 'persona'. Heilemann and Halperin's detailed insider account of Obama's victories in 2008, for example, describes Hillary Clinton during the Democrat primaries as having 'discovered a new persona: the fighter, the populist, the resilient underdog' (Heilemann and Halperin 2010, 232). We might include ambiguous roles such as 'leader', and 'dignified loser'. Analysts of democratic representation focus on a different but overlapping set of roles: representative, agent, delegate, trustee, politico, surrogate, spokesperson, advocate and champion (see for example Pitkin 1967; Eulau and Karps 1977; Mansbridge 2003; Rehfeld 2009). One actor and different times, or different actors at the same time, may play a range of these roles, mixing and matching them strategically. Actors (and their backers, advisors, parties etc.) will want to adopt roles in public performances which have salience or resonance for their target audiences. The roles are taken very seriously. For example, in preparation for televised presidential and vice-presidential debates in the USA, there are not only rehearsals but also rehearsals of rehearsals (Heilemann and Halperin 2010, 406). A performer acts 'as' someone who can perform (this task, or role), 'as if' he has that persona.[13]

If roles are the 'who' and the 'what' of political performances, then scripts and stages are the techniques of 'how' and the 'where and when'. In media-saturated political campaigns of today, for example, scripting of speeches and choreography of appearances is done with care and in detail[14]. Often, the scripting will be designed to appeal to a 'narrative' about the candidate and how they symbolise something good and deep in the nation's history, hopes and values. Salmon argues that storytelling or narrative has become the dominant mode of presentation and representation in politics and other fields, citing such examples as President George W. Bush's triumphant

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[12] Alexander, commenting on elections, writes that: '…the struggle for power becomes theatrical. Candidates work to present compelling performances of civil competence to citizen audiences at a remove not only geographically but also emotionally and morally. It is the success of these performances that determines [votes]' (Alexander 2010, 9). Not only civic competence, though. Certain attributes that in a given culture count as 'charisma', for example, may deliberately be mimicked or played out, in order to contribute to a role (such as 'potential senator'). In such instances we may distinguish between the two closely linked notions of character and role.

[13] Arguably, all such acting is acting 'as if' (cf Wedeen 1999), though I would not want to collapse the performance and the performer entirely.

[14] Hajer, for example, takes the view that contemporary circumstances demand certain performances: '…our mediatised society requires a different, arguably more complicated, way of performing politics to be persuasive and engaging; it calls for new political responses and new repertoires' (Hajer 2009, 3).

arrival by military helicopter aboard the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln to pronounce Mission Accomplished after the toppling of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The event actually occurred 40 miles off the California coast (Salmon 2009). Plotlines are thought through, leading some commentators to see political narratives in terms of soap opera plots (van Zoonen 2004). Sets and backdrops are profoundly important for political performances (Salmon 2009, 137). Flags, evocative national monuments, attractive, enthusiastic and attentive constituents are among the backdrops to major political set-pieces[15].

In scripting, staging and choreographing political performances, actors and advisors attempt to draw on a range of resources to achieve resonance: cultural, symbolic, factual, material, temporal, rhetorical, gestural, and so forth. The rapid technological advances in digital media, in particular Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are transforming issues of the potential reach and impact of performances. Formal and informal would-be representatives have multiple new channels through which to present images, provoke responses, generate support, and generate publicity (Gurevitch, Coleman and Blumler (2009)). They have in principle new ways to engage with specific groups and communities through imaginative targeting of messages and appeals, artfully tailored and calibrated as media fragment into more personalised digital streams. New ICTs allow multiple modes of interaction with actual and potential audiences and constituents, and a more constant process of responsiveness in a complex two-way process, than the old model of broadcast media. As a result there appears to be a multiplying of scales of performative effects that can be achieved – and indeed ridiculed or undermined – through an outlet such as You Tube, for example. The deployment of performative technologies and strategies needs to be in a constant mode of adaption to this rapidly changing media environment.

Performative success and failure

The work of performing representative claims tends to be difficult and unpredictable. Set piece performances, staged with varied technologies, using varied means, may or may not succeed in constituting social realities, representative roles or relationships as performative effects.

The success of political performances depends, as Derrida (1988, 15-17) points out, on successful 'citation' or 'iteration' of cultural codes or signs. Failure is a 'necessary possibility' (Derrida 1988, 15); performatives must, in other words, draw on cultural resources with their own instabilities, conflicts and weaknesses – iterability 'is at once the condition and the limit of mastery' (Derrida 1988, 107). The provisional success of a performative gains authority 'through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices' (Butler 1997, 51). Depending on their contexts,

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[15] Framing too is an important technology; in western culture at least, the device of the rectangular frame (the framed paining, the cinema and television screens, the shape of text in a book) symbolises significance, defining an inside that matters and conveys meaning and an outside that is cast as irrelevant (Barthes 1985, 90-1). Spaces can be treated more or less as political stages – consider for example the White House press room as political stage (Cooper and McKinnon 2005).

performances may achieve their intended[16] performative effects through invocations of sincerity, authenticity, truthfulness, and so on. Such performances may effectively 'hail' members of publics through the performative call: through such interpellation 'the act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence' (Butler 1997, 25). It can be critical to the success of a set piece performance that the performer or speaker be (seen to be) the appropriate or authorised person. Bourdieu (1991, 111) for example writes that: 'Most of the conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for a performative utterance to succeed come down to the question of the appropriateness of the speaker – or, better still, his social function – and of the discourse he utters'.

There is a view that revelation of a representative claim as a performance – as 'acting' – will undermine its chances of success. According to some observers, rhetoric in democracy needs to come across as an 'artless art', the danger being when 'the veil of artlessness' is 'suddenly lifted to reveal the artful machinery at work beneath' (Kane and Patapan 2010, 386). Alexander (2010, 12) likewise notes that 'Politics is signifying, but if it appears to be symbolic action, it is bound to fail'. But the picture is not that straightforward. It may not be so easy to distinguish performance of constructed persona from non-performance, or performance of something perceived as more genuine or authentic; performance, as in the actors' craft, may be more about finding or heightening truths than disguising them[17] – this is the way prominent actors such as Glenda Jackson and John Hurt have seen it[18]. Certainly any set piece performance both (1) creates something, and (2) hides or masks something. One of the things it may (attempt to) mask is its character as a performance, but this may not be the key example. We, as spectators, may be so used to public performance that we accept it, sometimes as part of a complex suspension of disbelief. UK Prime Minister David Cameron has, interestingly, expressed such a view when reflecting on Prime Ministers Questions (PMQs): 'It is a very confrontational theatre … for half an hour [MPs] effectively go to the Colosseum. They go to see, are the Christians going to be eaten by the lions …when we've tested this, the public actually expect PMQs to be robust, they know there's a bit of acting, they know there's a bit of theatre involved, and some of the best throwaway lines have been dreamt up hours before, they know all this …' (David Cameron, 'The Agenda', ITV, 7 October 2013).

Performing concession ('nothing is inevitable here')

I will conclude with a brief illustrative example of performance analysis – Republican presidential candidate John McCain's concession speech made on the evening of his loss in the US presidential poll of 2008 to Democratic candidate Barack Obama. I have emphases throughout the great variety of representative claims, and likewise the variety of performances through which those claims may come to be established and,

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[16] Intentionality of performatives is itself a controversial issue (Derrida 1988, 73). There are intentions of an embodied subject, but these may be significantly cultural products, not consistently or successfully carried through, and perceived or not from the 'outside'.

[17] Consider the comment of Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury: "there's plenty in Shakespeare about the gulf between the robes and the reality …. You're playing a role, but that does not mean you are falsifying. It just means, 'this is what I have to do to keep this community fulfilling its purpose'" (*The Guardian*, 27 December 2014).

[18] 'It's a strange thing that actors do: people often connect it with deceit and lying and actually it's exactly the opposite, it is essentially connected with the truth' (John Hurt, *The Guardian*, May 2009). See also Saward, Jones, Ogilvie and Carr (2010).

sometimes, achieve a degree of performative effectiveness. In this field of study, specific examples matter; all performance is situated and particular, and the study of performance and performativity is necessarily the study of actual performances. Performing *concession* after losing an election is one important example of a type of political, set piece, performance, one that centrally involves complex claims of representation. It tends to come at a crucial time of desirability of a degree of re-weaving of the divided polity. This fact makes effective set piece performances particularly important, given the potential reach and immediacy of its performative effects.

'Thank you, my friends. Thank you for coming here on this beautiful Arizona evening'. So John McCain began his concession speech on 3 November 2008 in Phoenix. The speech was delivered on a raised outdoor stage, with an audience standing facing the stage. McCain, flanked by Sarah Pain, Todd Palin and Cindy McCain, stood against the backdrop of a huge US flag (one small part of which formed the entire backdrop for TV images of the speech). In the wings were shooting star banner symbols and around them palm trees. In the speech, McCain congratulates Obama generously, stresses his blessings as an American citizen, and lauds Sarah Palin. In the light of the concepts discussed above, I would highlight the following features of this event.

1. That it is a dramatic set piece performance, and a 'showing doing'. McCain could have simply phoned Obama and conceded. He could have merely 'done' the concession. But instead it was highly prominently, publicly performed concession, centrally involving a claim about what he, his audiences, and Obama represent. He would have had little choice but to publicly perform his concession; the concession speech has become an expected ritual of American election night politics, with a range of historical markers available for citation or repetition. Such expected public performances 'are inherently dramatic because the stakes are high and the behaviour of the participants is so well established that it is as if a script is being enacted' (Schechner 2002, 207).

2. McCain is in an ambiguous, liminal position as speaker. His is neither a formal nor an informal representative status – defeated presidential candidate. If it is the case that greater legitimacy can be generated through (staged or other modes of) formality, as Bourdieu (1991, 70) argues, then the technical formal and ritual staging, reiterating a history of past such speeches is a key technique. Despite that ambiguity, McCain is the person authorized to deliver this performance – as Schechner (2002, 91) comments, 'in rituals, the meaning and consequence of the ritual action, as authenticated by the presence of the actual person authorised to enact the ritual, are what count'. Embodiment matters; there is still power in the echo of the historical idea that the king's body in some literal way embodies the nation. As such a potential embodiment, on the cusp of *ceasing* to be such a potential embodiment, the presence of McCain's body carries a transformative capacity due to its temporarily ambiguous positioning.

3. At the core of McCain's performance is a healing – a reassertion of common and meaningful identification with 'America', despite partisan divisions and battles. Although in practical terms what has happened is that partisan votes have been counted, he says that 'the American people have spoken'. He

congratulates Obama on 'being elected the next president of the country that we both love'. Obama has done 'great things' for his country. McCain stresses 'our country', 'our prosperity', 'our security', the challenges 'we' face, even 'our differences' – a performative call to audiences to identify, and a formulation which subsumes the difference under what is held in common. He asserts: 'Whatever our differences, we are fellow Americans'. He contrasts the surface role of 'candidate' with the deeper, underlying role of 'servant', in a context where (for him, and by implication others watching) the latter trumps the former: 'I would not be an American worthy of the name, should I regret a fate that has allowed me the extraordinary privilege of serving this country for half a century. Today, I was a candidate for the highest office in the country I love so much. And tonight, I remain her servant. That is blessing enough for anyone…' He transforms himself from representative to represented, and also asserts Obama as representative to whom an encompassing 'we' now have a representative relationship.

4. The 'today' and 'tonight' points to one of the key performative techniques deployed by McCain: a temporalisation that establishes a 'moment' of heightened intensity. In the past, he was a combatant; tonight and tomorrow a servant. He says that 'it's natural tonight to feel some disappointment, but tomorrow we must move beyond it and work together to get our country moving again'. He adds, in the past tense, 'we fought as hard as we could', to say in effect that the fight is over. He likewise places Obama in the past and a radically transformed present and future: 'I wish Godspeed to the man who was my former opponent and will be my president'. These formulations perform a revised temporality – up to now we have fought, Obama our opponent; but that is, suddenly, the past, now is the future where we think, act, and regard Obama very differently.

5. Watching the speech on the TV or computer screen, we are shown cutaways of the faces of audience members looking up at McCain as he speaks. They are listening intently. It is dark in the audience, but we see faces by the light of the stage, the light in which McCain is bathed, the light they look towards. Looking toward the light is a metaphor for looking forward to a (different, better, brighter) future. The performance requires a proximate audience to more effectively show remote viewers that this is something, someone, to watch and listen to intently. The intent proximate audience helps to establish the performance as significant (to make it 'signify significance'); in responding to appeals for recalibrated national unity, they perform visually some of the speech's key performative effects for the cameras, and therefore by proxy and by example for remote viewers beyond this point, and this moment, in Phoenix. [19] The light on McCain and the darkness of the (actual, and proxy) audience, the stage elevation of McCain and the lower audience, the speaking McCain and the (mostly) quiet audience, reinforce the sense of 'authorisation' of this person, at this moment, to perform this ritual. What had happened was that one candidate had garnered more votes than the other. It took performances like this to invoke the fact that, in McCain's words, 'the American people had spoken, and they have spoken clearly'.

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[19] McCain's concession speech is live and mediated; the experience of its liveness may be gained even from an umpteenth viewing on YouTube. Repetition through media repeats can reinforce and widen the speech's performative call. Part of the speech's potential power may derive from the combination of (1) an atmosphere of a single, charged, passing moment, allied with (2) its constant repetition.

6. Television – and, especially later, the internet - matters hugely to the staging and effect of McCain's speech. Hajer (2009, 3) may well be right in arguing that 'our mediatised society requires a different, arguably more complicated way of performing politics to be persuasive and engaging; it calls for new political responses and new repertoires'. But the weight of history in defining the US concession speech's role as an election-night ritual is profound. Resonating with Peter Brook's (2008, 110) view of the theatre, the staged concession speech acts both as a 'magnifying glass' (for the healing effects) and a 'reducing lens' (gathering partisan complexity into unitary simplicity). McCain is iterating and citing tropes from many previous concession speeches. One clue to its ritualised character may be that the *New York Times* - which never knowingly sidesteps pedantry in such things – reported on 'John McCain's Concession Speech' using upper case. The power of this very contemporary, highly staged, media event derives from its historical roots in an age of very different, slower, media. It is a performance that 'accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior and authoritative set of practices' (Butler 1997, 40). The highly contemporary media performance does not call attention to its technological sophistication, nor to the fact that it could *only* appear in this way, in repeated fashion, to so many so quickly, with contemporary technology and organisation. Quite the opposite, it seeks to *efface* its own sophisticated production values, highlighting instead its deep roots in pre-mass media rituals (cf Hajer 2009, 39).[20]

7. There is no inevitability about the performative success of McCain's speech. In terms of more immediate impact, the *NYT*'s transcript of the speech records the following: 'A little while ago, I had the honor of calling Senator Barack Obama – (boos) –to congratulate him – (boos) – please – to congratulate him on being elected the next president of the country that we both love'. A similar thing happens at two other points in McCain's speech. The video of the speech shows that McCain might not have been in full command of audience reactions (and this was an audience of his loyal supporters). As Butler (1997, 15), referring to different but still relevant contexts of performativity, notes, performances can be greeted by 'a counter-speech, a kind of talking back'. Even ritualised and carefully controlled performances carry no guarantee of success.

8. The concession speech performs 'America', 'our country' – the geographic and organisational polity and identification with it. Listeners are called, interpellated – you are of this, join it. Offering a way for audiences to recognise themselves and their identities is 'a larger part of social rituals of interpellation' (Butler 1997, 26). And the nation is unified symbolically; in an expression of citizen self-perception McCain's proxy audience chants, at the end of his speech, 'USA! USA! USA! USA! USA!'. The individual is fused with the collective by the force of a higher power ('God bless you, and God bless America').

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[20] '… to see performances simply as the theatrical products of knowing, intentional agents at some remove from their other selves, other performers, audiences, and power is misplaced. Rather, these performances are at all times interrelational between individual subjects and performative. They are saturated with power, bound up within and enmeshed within in very complex ways, the already-established knowledges which they cite' (Gregson and Rose 2000, 445).

In McCain's concession we can see how key aspects and techniques of role, staging and scripting are deployed to achieve performative effects, and how means such as defining 'moments' and offering performative calls are enacted. We can see the substantive unifying effects of establishing representative roles and relationships out of a transitional or liminal moment. We begin to see, in a specific context, the crucial nature of 'showing doing', and the precarious business of achieving performative effects which centre upon claims of, and about, representation.[21]

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[21] Clearly specific political cultures will influence hugely the way in which such showing doing occurs, and what may count as 'success'. The US example here implies nothing about the relative character or importance of performative politics in the US as compared to other countries or contexts.

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