Performance: A Critical Introduction

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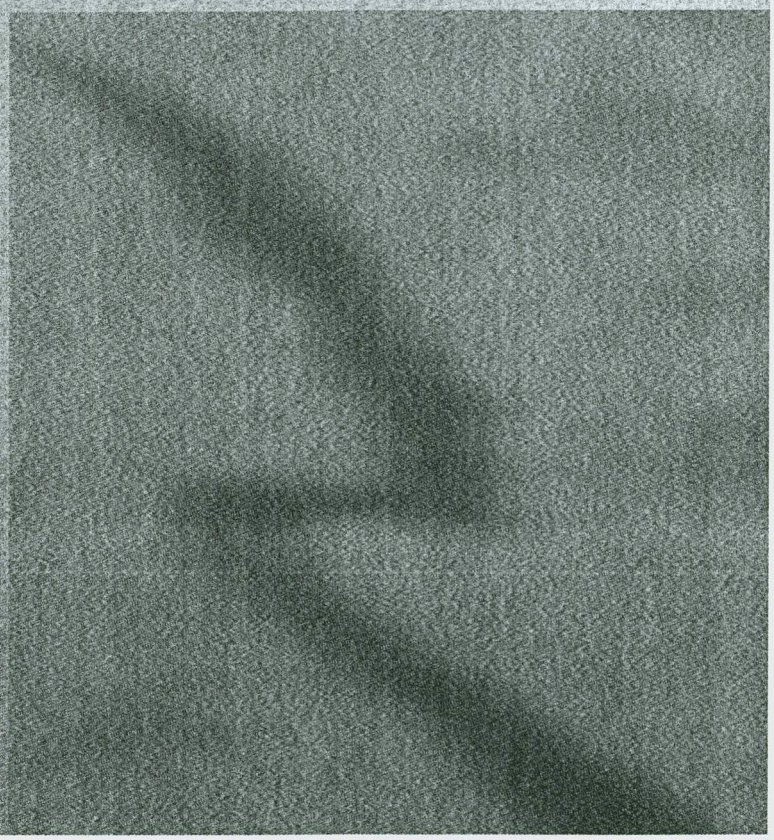

Chapter 1

The performance of culture

Anthropological and ethnographic approaches

The term "performance," as it is encountered, for example, in departments or programs of "performance studies" in the United States today, is heavily indebted to terminology and theoretical strategies developed during the 1960s and 1970s in the social sciences, and particularly in anthropology and sociology. Especially important in making connections across the boundaries of traditional theatre studies, anthropology, and sociology have been the writings of Richard Schechner, coming from a theatre background, the anthropologists Victor Turner and Dwight Conquergood, and the sociologist Erving Goffman. For persons involved in theatre studies, a major statement of these converging interests appeared in the fall of 1973, in a special issue of *The Drama Review* devoted to "Theatre and the Social Sciences." In the introduction to that issue, guest editor Richard Schechner listed seven "areas where performance theory and the social sciences coincide." These were:

1. Performance in everyday life, including gatherings of every kind.
2. The structure of sports, ritual, play, and public political behaviors.
3. Analysis of various modes of communication (other than the written word); semiotics.
4. Connections between human and animal behavior patterns with an emphasis on play and ritualized behavior.
5. Aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person-to-person interaction, acting out, and body awareness.
6. Ethnography and prehistory—both of exotic and familiar cultures.

7. Constitution of unified theories of performance, which are, in fact, theories of behavior.[1]

Schechner's listing is somewhat reminiscent of a similar attempt to suggest future areas of research between theatre and the social sciences published in 1956 by Georges Gurvitch to summarize the proceedings of a French conference on the subject. Anticipating the subsequent research of scholars such as Goffman and Turner, Gurvitch called attention to the theatrical or performance elements in all social ceremonies, even in "a simple reception or a gathering of friends."[2]

Both Schechner and Gurvitch's lists outline a rather broader field than the main line of research has in fact followed, but each may be considered as a whole remarkably prescient about a significant part of modern performance study. Indeed, an understanding of contemporary usage of the term "performance" can probably most usefully begin with an overview of the most influential and relevant writings on the subject in anthropology and sociology. Accordingly, we shall consider, in this chapter, the issues and concerns surrounding performance in recent anthropological writing, and in the following chapter, turn to sociology. The hope in outlining developments in both fields is by no means to provide a general introduction to recent anthropological or sociological theory, but rather to introduce the specific aspects of that theory that have contributed to current thinking about performance, both in the abstract and in practice.

The field of anthropology has been a particularly rich source for the discussion of performance in recent years. Indeed it has become so attractive a subject in that field that some anthropologists have expressed concern about its ubiquity. Dell Hymes, for example, has complained that: "If some grammarians have confused matters by lumping what does not interest them under 'performance,' cultural anthropologists and folklorists have not done much to clarify the situation. We have tended to lump what *does* interest us under 'performance.'"[3]

Hymes makes an attempt to confine the sprawling field of what is lumped under "performance" by contrasting it with two activity categories often confused with it: behavior and conduct. The first refers simply to "anything and everything that happens," the second to behavior "under the aegis of social norms, cultural rules, shared principles of interpretability." Clearly conduct is a

certain subset of behavior, and performance Hymes defines as a further subset within conduct, in which one or more persons "assume a responsibility to an audience and to tradition as they understand it." Yet, in keeping with the essentially contested nature of performance, even this rather specific articulation raises as many problems as it solves, particularly in what is meant by "assuming responsibility." The audience certainly plays a key role in most attempts to define performance, especially in those attempts to separate performance from other behavior, but just how the performer is "responsible" to them has itself been the subject of much debate.

Even more problematic is the idea of responsibility to tradition. There is widespread agreement among performance theorists that all performance is based upon some pre-existing model, script, or pattern of action. Richard Schechner in a useful and widely quoted phrase calls performance "restored behavior."[4] John MacAloon has similarly asserted that "there is no performance without preformance."[5] On the other hand, much of the recent anthropological analysis of performance has emphasized how performance can work within a society precisely to undermine tradition, to provide a site for the exploration of fresh and alternative structures and patterns of behavior. Whether performance within a culture serves most importantly to reinforce the assumptions of that culture or to provide a possible site of alternative assumptions is an ongoing debate that provides a particularly clear example of the contested quality of performance analysis.

Precisely what performance accomplishes and how it accomplishes this clearly can be approached in a variety of ways, although there has been general agreement that within every culture there can be discovered a certain kind of activity, set apart from other activities by space, time, attitude, or all three, that can be spoken of and analyzed as "performance." Folklore studies has been one of the areas of anthropology and cultural studies that has contributed most significantly to modern concepts of performance study, and one of the first anthropological theorists to utilize "performance" as a central critical term, William H. Jansen, employed it to deal with a major concern of the 1950s in folklore studies, that is, classification. Jansen suggested a classification model with performance and participation as two ends of a spectrum, based primarily upon the degree of involvement of the "audience" of the event.[6]

The term "cultural performance," now widely found in anthropological and ethnographic writing, was coined by Milton Singer in an introduction to a collection of essays on Indian culture that he edited in 1959. There Singer suggested that the culture content of a tradition was transmitted by specific cultural media as well as by human carriers and that a study of the operations of such media on particular occasions could provide anthropology with "a particularization of the structure of tradition complementary to the social organization."[7] South Asians, and perhaps all peoples, Singer argued, thought of their culture as encapsulated in discrete events, "cultural performances," which could be exhibited to themselves and others and provided the "most concrete observable units of the cultural structure." Among these "performances," Singer listed traditional theatre and dance, but also concerts, recitations, religious festivals, weddings, and so on. All such performances possessed certain features: "a definitely limited time span, a beginning and an end, an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance."[8] If one were to substitute "a script" for Singer's "organized program of activity," then these distinctive features of cultural performance could as easily be describing the traditional concept of theatre, and Singer's approach and his influence has unquestionably contributed significantly to the convergence of anthropological and theatrical theory in the area of performance from the early 1970s onward. His "features" of performance, especially their emphasis on performance as "set apart" in time, place, and occasion, find countless echoes in subsequent research, and his view of performance as a discrete concretization of cultural assumptions significantly contributed to what might be categorized as the conservative interpretation of performance's role in culture.

During the next decade, the relationship between culture and performance became a matter of increasing concern in both folklore studies and general anthropology. Between his two surveys of the former field in 1963 and 1972, Richard M. Dorson noted the rise of a new orientation, which he called a "contextual approach" to folklore research.[9] The emphasis of such an approach shifts from the text to its function as a performative and communicative act in a particular cultural situation and has looked to the field of sociolinguistics for much of its theory and methodology. Dell Hymes has characterized this blending of communication models

and cultural placement as a new "ethnography of communication,"[10] and Dan Ben-Amos and Kenneth S. Goldstein, in their introduction to a 1975 collection of essays on folklore, suggest that the new emphasis falls not upon "the entire network of culturally defined communicative events, but upon those situations in which the relationship of performance obtains between speakers and listeners."[11]

In their analysis of the component elements of this relationship, contextual folklorists began to converge with performance analysts in other fields. A common source for a number of these was the writings of Kenneth Burke, especially for those contextualists who began to consider the rhetorical function of folkloric performance. Roger Abrahams, for example, in advancing a "rhetorical theory of folklore," claimed that "performance is a way of persuading through the production of pleasure" and specifically recommended Burke as a source of analytic strategies.[12] Burke has perhaps been even more influential among performatively oriented sociologists than anthropologists, but his interest in language and thought as "situated modes of action" and his pragmatic assertion that "every text is a strategy for encompassing a situation"[13] were clearly extremely useful concepts for these contextual theorists. Burke's central utilization in his rhetorical analysis of a whole set of theatrical metaphors further emphasized for anthropological theory that aspect of the performative situation, but his model of action was even more influential in sociological theory, and it will be considered in more detail later, when we turn to that tradition.

A shift in attention from the folkloric text to the performative context involved, as in Burke, a shift from traditional content to the more "rhetorical" study of means and techniques. In a 1986 study of oral narrative, Richard Bauman attempted to define the "essence" of performance in terms that clearly echoed the earlier formulations of Hymes, but equally clearly incorporated this new orientation. The definition began with a paraphrase of Hymes: "the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill," but significantly continued "highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, *above and beyond its referential content*" (emphasis mine).[14] In an earlier study of verbal performance, Bauman suggested that performance was "marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display," and

also "marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself."[15]

Despite their apparent emphasis upon the "how" of performance, Hymes and Bauman remain firmly "contextual," giving much more attention to the total performance situation than to the specific activities of the performer. Yet another "essentially contested" aspect of performance involves the question of to what extent performance itself results from something the performer does and to what extent it results from a particular context in which it is done. When Bauman speaks of performance as being "marked" in order to be interpreted in a particular way, he is assuming, as most anthropological theorists have done, that it is this "marking" that permits a culture to experience performance *as* performance. The operations of this "marking" have been a particular concern of Gregory Bateson, whose writings, especially the 1954 essay "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," have provided several extremely important concepts and terms to performance theory.[16] Bateson is concerned with how living organisms distinguish between "seriousness" and "play." In order for play to exist (and Bateson cites examples of it among animals and birds as well as humans) the "playing" organisms must be "capable of some degree of metacommunication," to signal to each other that their mutual interactions are not to be taken "seriously."[17] For the metacommunicative message "this is play" to operate, some mental operation must establish what is and is not included in "this." In Bateson's words, "every metacommunicative message is or defines a psychological frame" within which is contained the total subject of that message.[18] These closely related concerns of metacommunication and psychological framing have been of great importance in later thinking about performance, even though the conflation of "performance" and "play" raises problems of its own, to which we will later return. Anthropological and folklore theorists, as well as psychological and sociological theorists (in particular, Erving Goffman), have built upon these ideas to develop a view of performance that owes more to context and to the dynamics of reception than to the specific activities of the performer.

A very different orientation is found in the work of the performance theorist who has most closely associated himself with an anthropological approach, Eugenio Barba. In his various writings,

but most extensively in what Barba terms his "Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology" in *The Secret Art of the Performer*, co-edited with Nicola Savarese (1991), Barba focuses upon the "socio-cultural and physiological behavior" of the performer across various cultures.[19] The distinction made by such theorists as Hymes and Bauman between an enjoyment of the content of verbal performance and an enjoyment of "the relative skill and effectiveness of the act of expression," and its own "intrinsic qualities" as an act (see note 14 above), is essentially a restatement in performance terms of the traditional artistic division of form and content. Semiotician Jean Alter has suggested a similar understanding of performance as involving two "functions," which he calls referential (content) and performant (virtuosic display).[20]

Barba suggests a different paradigm, dividing potential bodily activity into three types: 1) daily techniques, which are concerned primarily with communication of content; 2) virtuosic techniques, such as those displayed by acrobats, which seek "amazement and transformation of the body"; and 3) extra-daily techniques, which seek not to transform but to "in-form" the body, to place it in a position where it is "alive and present" without representing anything.[21] Barba places the foundations of performance not in the situation of its enactment (its cultural "frame" or marking), but in a basic level of organization in the performer's body, at the "pre-expressive" level, the operations of which cause the spectator to recognize behavior as performance. The spectator (about whom Barba says relatively little) responds to performance not due to operations of some cultural "frame," but because of a pre-cultural set of universal "physiological responses" to such stimuli as balance and directed tensions.[22] Barba postulates that the pre-expressive level underlies all performance, Eastern and Western, providing a transcultural "physiology" independent of traditional culture and involving such matters as balance, opposition, and energy. The transcultural study of this physiology, seeking the general physical principles of pre-expressivity, Barba proposes as the mission of theatre anthropology.[23]

Probably the most important contributor to the recent convergence of anthropology and theatre was Victor Turner, beginning in the late 1950s with his *Schism and Continuity*.[24] In this study of the Ndembu people, Turner first set forward the concept of "social drama" as a tool for social anthropologists. Turner's "social drama," like Singer's "cultural performance," developed a

model from the specific cultural form of theatre to apply to the analysis of a far larger body of cultural manifestations, though Singer's model drew more directly upon the performance situation of theatre, Turner upon traditional structures of dramatic action. Thus Turner's concept is defined not by its frame or marking, nor by its particular physical dynamics (the focus of Barba), but by its organizational structure.

As Turner explains at some length in his *From Ritual to Theatre*, his concept of social drama was based upon the early twentieth-century work of Arnold van Gennep, especially upon his 1908 classic, *Rites de Passage*.[25] Van Gennep was interested in developing a model to analyze the organization of ritual ordering the transition of individuals or whole societies from one social situation to another. He concentrated on ceremonies by which individuals passed from one role within their society to another, and the phrase "rites of passage" has become commonly associated with this process, especially with the puberty rites marking the change from child to adult. Turner points out, however, that van Gennep originally spoke of rites of passage as including any ceremony marking individual or social change—from peace to war, from plague to health, even regularly repeated calendrical or seasonal changes—and it is this more general type of transition that Turner seeks to analyze. Turner's intellectual debt to van Gennep has had major implications for subsequent performance theory. Despite their very different orientations, Singer, Hymes, Bauman, and Barba all generally view performance as an activity somehow "set apart" from that of everyday life, an orientation also of the "play" theorists we will consider presently. Turner, looking to van Gennep's rites of passage, emphasizes not so much the "set-apartness" of performance, but its "in-betweenness," its function as transition between two states of more settled or more conventional cultural activity. This image of performance as a border, a margin, a site of negotiation, has become extremely important in subsequent thinking about such activity: Indeed, in the opening address to the First Annual Conference on Performance Studies, held in New York in spring 1994, Dwight Conquergood cited performance's location on the borders and margins as that which most clearly distinguished it from traditional disciplines and fields of study, concerned with establishing a center for their activity.[26]

Van Gennep suggested that rites of passage normally involved

three steps, with particular types of rite involved in each: 1) rites of separation from an established social role or order; 2) threshold or liminal rites performed in the transitional space between roles or orders; and 3) rites of reincorporation into an established order.[27] Van Gennep's terms are *rites de séparation*, *marge* or *limen*, and *agrégation*, translated by Turner as "separation, transition, and incorporation." But Turner also makes important and original use of M. B. Vizedon and G. L. Caffee's translations of van Gennep's terms: "preliminal, liminal, and postliminal."

The use of drama as a metaphor for non-theatrical cultural manifestations continued to mark Turner's work as he studied a wider variety of such activity. In his 1974 *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, he explained how in his early attempts to analyze social activities among the Ndembu of Northwestern Zambia he combined the process-based structure of van Gennep with a metaphorical model derived from the cultural form of the stage drama,[28] and subsequently expanded this analytic strategy from the village level of the Ndembu to complex sequences of events on the national level, such as the conflict between Henry II of England and Thomas à Becket or the Hidalgo Insurrection in early nineteenth-century Mexico. In each of these "social dramas," Turner traced the same pattern: First a breach in an established and accepted norm (corresponding to van Gennep's separation), then a mounting crisis as factions are formed, followed by a process of redress, as formal and informal mechanisms of crisis resolution are employed (these two phases corresponding to van Gennep's transition), and finally a reintegration, very likely involving an adjustment of the original cultural situation (corresponding to van Gennep's reincorporation) or, alternatively, a recognition of the permanence of the schism.

No theatre theorist has been more instrumental in developing modern performance theory nor in exploring the relationships between practical and theoretical work in theatre research and in social science research than Richard Schechner, and the interrelationship between Schechner and Turner was a particularly fruitful one. When Schechner in 1966 first called for approaches to theatre theory more informed by work in the social sciences, he suggested as possible sources cultural historians such as Johan Huizinga or theorists of social psychology such as Erving Goffman or Eric Berne. Later, however, he turned more toward anthropological work, and his investigations began to converge

with those of Turner.[29] The two collaborated on a workshop exploring the relationship between "social and aesthetic drama," an experiment that, Turner reports, "persuaded me that co-operation between anthropological and theatrical people was not only possible but also could become a major teaching tool for both sets of partners," and that central to this cooperation were the concepts of "performance" and "drama."[30]

Schechner was especially interested in Turner's model of the "social drama" and drew upon it in a variety of ways as he was seeking to develop a theory and poetics of performance during the 1970s. He argued that Turner's four-phase plan was not only universally found in human social organization, but also represented a form discoverable in all theatre. At the same time, Schechner sought to explore both the similarities and the differences between the performance and cultural placement of "social drama" and that of "aesthetic drama." In his essay "Selective Inattention" (1976), Schechner proposed a chart of this relationship, which he and Turner both utilized in later writings. This chart represents aesthetic drama and social drama as the two parts of a figure 8 lying on its side, with social energy flowing around the figure. The theatre person uses the consequential actions of social life as raw material for the production of aesthetic drama, while the social activist uses techniques derived from the theatre to support the activities of social drama, which in turn refuel the theatre.[31]

This diagram, and other insights from Schechner's work, are used extensively in Turner's 1982 book *From Ritual to Theatre*, in which Turner, while expressing great admiration for his work, diverges from Schechner in several ways. He does not agree that traditional drama normally echoes the four-stage pattern of his social drama, but it tends rather to concentrate on the third phase, the ritualized action of redress. Turner also suggests that the figure-8 diagram is "somewhat equilibrist in its implications for my taste" since it suggests cyclical rather than linear movement. Nevertheless, he continued to cite Schechner's model in later essays as an important attempt to demonstrate the relationship between social drama and "expressive cultural genres" such as traditional theatre.[32]

Turner also continued to develop his own complex elaboration of van Gennep's concept of the "liminal" and eventually opposed to it a related concept of his own, the "liminoid," both of which

terms have been widely used in subsequent writings about performance. In his 1969 book, *The Ritual Process*, Turner called liminal activities "anti-structure," opposing the "structure" of normal cultural operations, a concept also indebted to van Gennep. Such situations provide a space removed from daily activity for members of a culture to "think about how they think in propositions that are not *in* cultural codes but *about* them."[33] Although at this time Turner did not stress the subversive potential of the anti-structural, this aspect was subsequently emphasized by Brian Sutton-Smith in his studies of child and adult games. Sutton-Smith suggested that the "disorderly" quality of liminal activities sometimes merely involved "letting off steam" from an "overdose of order" (the conservative view) but could also be undertaken "because we have something to *learn* through being disorderly." What we have to learn is precisely the possibility of alternate orders. As Sutton-Smith argues:

> The normative structure represents the working equilibrium, the "antistructure" represents the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it. We might more correctly call this second system the *protocultural* system because it is the precursor of innovative normative forms. It is the source of new culture.[34]

Turner dealt much more extensively with the social functions of this performative process in the essay "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual,"[35] an essay which also showed Turner moving more toward the innovative possibilities of performance stressed by Sutton-Smith. Turner indeed here remarked that "what interests me about Sutton-Smith's formulations is that he sees liminal and liminoid situations as the settings in which new models, symbols, paradigms, etc. arise—as the seedbeds of cultural creativity in fact."[36] Turner continued to accept the position of theorists such as Singer that performance remained a culturally conservative activity in tribal and agrarian societies. Although such performance, which Turner styled liminal, might seem to mark sites where conventional structure is challenged, this structure is ultimately reaffirmed. Liminal performance may invert the established order, but never subverts it. On the contrary, it normally suggests that a frightening chaos is the alternative to the established order. In complex modern industrial

societies, this sort of general cultural affirmation is no longer possible, and here we find instead what Turner called "liminoid" activities, much more limited and individualistic, devoted to play, sport, leisure, or art, all outside the "regular" cultural activity of work or business. Liminoid, like liminal, activities mark sites where conventional structure is no longer honored, but being more playful, more open to chance, they are also much more likely to be subversive, consciously or by accident introducing or exploring different structures that may develop into real alternatives to the status quo. This emphasis on the potential of liminoid activity to provide a site for social and cultural resistance and the exploration of alternative possibilities has naturally been of particular interest to theorists and practitioners of performance seeking a strategy of social engagement not offered by the more culture-bound structures of the conventional theatre.

Turner's association of cultural self-reflexivity with cultural conservatism in traditional liminal situations and with the operations of cultural change in more recent liminoid activities continues to be much debated, as does indeed the whole question of the relationship between performance and cultural critique. Clifford Geertz has suggested a distinction between "deep play" and "shallow play" in performance, a distinction recalling Turner's liminal and liminoid, but seemingly reversing Turner's speculation about which sort of activity is radical and which conservative. According to Geertz, only those performances involving the participants in "deep play" are likely to raise real concerns about the fundamental ideas and codes of the culture.[37] Bruce Kapferer, on the other hand, seems closer to Turner, arguing that in "deep play," both performers and audience may be so involved in the activity (perhaps at the level of "flow") that reflection does not occur, and that paradoxically, it may be in the more "distanced" experience of "shallow play" that cultural self-reflexion is most likely to occur.[38] Clearly, the question of the relationship between performance and its culture is another aspect that demonstrates the essentially contested essence of the term "performance," with some theorists viewing it as reinforcing cultural givens, others seeing it as at least potentially subversive of these givens, and still others seeing it working under some circumstances in one way and in some the other, as in MacAloon's definition of cultural performance as "occasion in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize

our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others."[39] Even those who agree with MacAloon disagree on what stimulates some customs to change while others remain the same. Naturally these debates are of central concern to theorists and practitioners of socially and politically oriented performance, and we shall return to these concerns in that context.

In addition to the rite and ritual studies of van Gennep, Turner, as well as most other cultural anthropologists who have dealt with performance, has been much influenced by earlier research on human play. The two most widely known and most influential studies in this field are *Homo Ludens* by the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga and the closely related study, *Man, Play, and Games*, by Roger Caillois. The aim of both theorists was to analyze the function of play within human culture. Huizinga concentrated on culturally constructed and articulated forms of playful activity, such as performances, exhibitions, pageants, tournaments, and contests, while Caillois cast a broader net, including even the "playful" activities of children and animals. Caillois indeed proposes a continuum of playful activity extending from such spontaneous manifestations as an infant laughing at his rattle or a cat with a ball of yarn, to which he gave the term "*paidia*," on through increasingly institutionalized and rule-bound play structures that Caillois called "*ludus*."[40]

This difference aside, the six essential "qualities" of play activity according to Caillois (that it is not obligatory, that it is circumscribed in time and space, undetermined, materially unproductive, rule-bound, and concerned with an alternate reality)[41] are basically identical with Huizinga's "characteristics" of play. The first quality of play according to Huizinga is that it is a voluntary activity, freely selected and capable of being suspended at any time. It is thus closely tied to "free time," or leisure. This connection is particularly important to Turner, who argues that the concept of leisure itself is one that arises with modern industrial society, which clearly divides human activity into periods of work and non-work. The activities of the non-working, leisure periods, play activities, are precisely those that Turner characterizes as liminoid. The association of liminoid with such circumscribed periods also recalls Huizinga's second characteristic, according to which play is set apart from ordinary

life, occurring in a "temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own."[42] Clearly this involves the process that theorists speak of as "framing."

Both Huizinga and Caillois see battles or contests as one central preoccupation of play. Caillois uses for this a term with a long history in theatre theory, "*agon*," a concept which is also central to Turner's model of the "social drama." Another Caillois category, "mimicry," is perhaps even more central to traditional theatre, but both "conflict" and "mimesis," particularly the latter, have played a much less central and more problematic role in modern performance theory. Probably this is in part due in fact to their close association with the theatre tradition, from which modern performance has often tried to distance itself. Caillois' further two categories, though seemingly less familiar, in fact relate much more closely to common concerns of modern performance. The first of these is "*alea*," or chance, a concern that entered the tradition of modern performance partly from the theatre experiments of dada and surrealism earlier in the century, partly from developments related to happenings and chance theatre in the 1960s, and partly from the writings and work of a key figure in modern performance, John Cage. All of these developments will be discussed more fully in the context of performance art itself, but here we might only note that Caillois himself sees "*alea*" as in a sense the opposite of "*agon*." In the latter, the emphasis is upon clever planning, logic, ingenuity, and control, all elements that Caillois sees in some measure opposed to the freedom and spontaneity of the play instinct. Performance theorists and practitioners have similarly looked to chance as a means of breaking free of the normally highly codified structures and expectations of the conventional theatrical experience.

Caillois' final category, "*ilinx*," or "vertigo," performs a similar subversive function. Caillois describes this as "an attempt to destroy momentarily the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind."[43] The emphasis here is upon subversion, the destruction of "stability," the turning of "lucidity" to "panic," brought about by a foregrounding of physical sensation, an awareness of the body set free from the normal structures of control and meaning. In a sense, vertigo is to the body what chance is to the mind, a casting loose into free play, there of elements, here of sensations. Huizinga speaks, in distinctly more positive terms, of a similar freeing from

normal structures and constraints, which he describes as a sense of "enchantment" or "captivation" that is felt in play.[44] Turner also speaks of this sense of "enchantment," though he favors the more familiar term "flow,"[45] derived from such psychological theorists as John MacAloon and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. During "flow," which these psychological theorists associate not only with play but also with creative and religious experience, reflexivity is swallowed up in a merging of action and awareness, a focus upon the pleasure of the present moment, and a loss of a sense of ego or of movement toward some goal.

Caillois does not specifically oppose vertigo to mimicry as he does chance to conflict, but it is striking that one of the major fault lines in modern theory runs down a divide that can be considered in precisely these terms, that is in the division Bert States makes between semiotics, based upon a model of mimesis, and phenomenology, based on one of physical sensation, or the model proposed by Jean Alter opposing semiosis to performance on essentially the same grounds (both the Alter and States models will be discussed in more detail later). To the extent that modern performance has defined itself in opposition to traditional theatre, it has largely followed these theoretical divisions, championing the operations of chance and the physical awareness of the performative situation against the control and the mimetic distance of conventional theatre.

Huizinga, in considering the cultural functions of play, sees them as primarily conservative, providing through the deepening of communal experience and the ludic display of communal values and beliefs an ultimate strengthening of cultural assumptions. Indeed the development or reinforcement of a community spirit or consciousness, "communitas," Huizinga considers one of the basic features of play, and he suggests that its effects often continue on beyond the actual play experience. Thus cultural play, like Singer's cultural performance, provides a solidifying of the community, and the "actualization by representation" of the hidden values, assumptions, and beliefs of the culture.[46] This becomes particularly apparent as Huizinga explores the close relationships between play and ritual. Nevertheless, building upon the emphasis both he and Caillois give to the absolute freedom necessary for the functioning of play, there is clearly room for a much more subversive function, congruent with that suggested by Sutton-Smith and later Turner, particularly when

Huizinga notes that in "more advanced civilizations" the great cultural play periods of "savage societies" leave their traces in "saturnalia and carnival customs" characterized by disruptive and disorderly behavior.[47] The theorist most associated with the concept of carnival and carnivalization in modern literary and performance theory is Mikhail Bakhtin, whose comments on this subject, particularly in his study of Rabelais,[48] bear a remarkable resemblance to Turner's discussion of liminal phenomena within a culture. During carnival, notes Bakhtin, "the laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended," making carnival "the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals*, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life" (emphasis in original).[49] This vision of carnival as an open testing ground for new social and cultural structures clearly marks it as an example of what Turner would classify as a liminal or liminoid activity. Bakhtin lists the categories of carnival as: free and familiar contact among people, the free expression of latent sides of human nature in eccentric conduct (recall the emphasis on freedom in Huizinga), profanations, and carnivalistic misalliances, allowing the combining and uniting of the most disparate and ill-assorted things. He stresses that these categories are not involved with abstract thought, but with the sensuous playing out in the form of life itself, that is, by cultural performance. This leads in turn to a consideration of specific carnivalistic acts, the most important of which is the mock crowning and decrowning of the carnival king, a ritual deeply imbricated with the pathos and emphasis on change, the concerns with death and renewal that lie at the base of the carnivalistic experience itself.

Like Turner, Bakhtin distinguishes between the carnivalization available to earlier cultures and its more mediated, truncated, and scattered modern descendents, a shift that Bakhtin feels begins as early as the seventeenth century. Theatre and spectacle are of course one of the offshoots of this once mighty cultural force, and Bakhtin notes that "It is characteristic that the subculture of the theatre has even retained something of carnivalistic license, the carnivalistic sense of the world, the fascination of carnival."[50] The high point of carnival's interpenetration of the literary tradition, Bakhtin feels, occurs during the Renaissance, and his

concept of the carnivalization in Renaissance literature has been very influential among recent studies of Elizabethan drama.[51] But the concept of carnival as a site for the playful exploration and possible challenging of traditional cultural assumptions and roles has also attracted the interest of performance artists and theorists concerned with precisely these matters.[52]

An important critique of both Huizinga and Caillois was presented in 1968 by Jacques Ehrmann. In the theories of both of these authors, as well as in those of the linguist Emile Benveniste, Ehrmann finds an assumed cleavage between play and seriousness, with play linked to dreams, imagination, gratuitousness, and such "free" phenomena, while seriousness is linked to such concepts as consciousness, utility, and reality. In addition to creating what is in any case a highly suspect division, this strategy also simultaneously privileges the second term as the ground of the first, a neutral and objective referent needing no discussion.[53] In Huizinga's terms, "Play always represents something."[54] Ehrmann's argument suggests the common strategy of Derrida, who has similarly exposed the strategy of creating a false "grounding" of a binary by making one of its terms the axiomatic base of the other. Derrida's critique also has important implications for performance theory, to which we will return in exploring the relation between performance and postmodern thought. At this point, I wish only to emphasize that Ehrmann, like Derrida, resists the model that derives play from a fixed, stable reality that precedes and grounds it. In this more modern view, play, reality, and culture are all involved in a continually shifting pattern of concepts and practices that condition each other, and rather than attempt to separate or privilege any of these terms, the critic or theorist of human activity should have as a goal the explanation of "how this nature–culture manifests itself in different historical and cultural contexts."[55]

A closely related concern and analytic strategy has been offered by Marshall Sahlins, who suggests that anthropologists tend to think of cultures as being modeled by both "prescriptive" and "performative" structures—the former the relatively stable institutional forms of a society, the latter operations that evolve in response to contingent circumstances. Clearly there is a parallel here to the "play" and "reality" of Ehrmann, especially when play is associated with the cultural changes or adjustments opened by Turner and van Gennep's liminality. However, like Ehrmann,

Sahlins cautions against so clear a dichotomy, and even more important, against the priority normally given in the social sciences to the prescriptive over the performative, clearly parallel to the priority Ehrmann finds given to the stable "reality" from which play derives. Certainly a cultural act can and often does arise from a social form, but all societies also continually improvise social form by means of acts, and the mixture of these strategies and the levels upon which they operate vary greatly from society to society.[56] The cautions of Ehrmann and Sahlins are extremely important in broadening the scope and the significance of liminal and performative activity. Indeed in considerations of the social functioning of performance, even Sahlins' flexible definition needs to be qualified, since it reinscribes the fixed/fluid dichotomy on another level, with "performative" acts associated, as always, with the fluid part of this familiar binary, dissolving (at least temporarily) the "prescriptive" already existing structures of the culture.

Turner's own explorations have been carried on by Colin Turnbull and others in directions that overlap in striking ways with performance theory of the 1990s, as Turner's did with performance theories of the 1970s and early 1980s. In a 1990 essay, Turnbull specifically speculates on how his own theories seemed to be evolving in parallel directions with Turner's last work (he died in 1983). These new directions involved a shifting understanding of the nature of cultural performance, and particularly of the performative nature of anthropological work itself. While the young Turner had applied a theatrical model to certain phenomena in a culture being analyzed, Turnbull saw its potential relevance to the process of analysis itself.[57]

The anthropological process and performance, suggests Turnbull, have many points of correspondence, since the fieldworker is fulfilling the "role" of anthropologist expected by his society and also "performing" to achieve specific goals. (These concerns echo those of Goffman and will surface again in the next chapter.) The fieldworker is also a spectator in a cultural performance, and in a more subtle sense within the specific context of a study this spectator is forced to modify normal behavior, giving it special significance for others. The next step in Turner's project, argues Turnbull, must involve dealing with the recognition that liminal phenomena cannot simply be objectively studied, but must also be understood by participation, informed

by the sort of rigorous preparation and training that leads back to the disciplines of theatre. In short, the fieldworker can no longer rely upon the traditional methods of "objective" reporting of performance, not because objectivity is impossible (though it is at best extremely difficult), but because performance cannot really be understood in this way. Entering the liminal or performative situation requires, among other things, discipline and concentration, a clearly defined goal, or perhaps the negation of all goals and a surrender of the inner self to become something else. The first two of these demands, says Turnbull, present no problem to most anthropologists, but the third, calling into question traditional academic objectives, inner beliefs, and the sense of identity, presents a far greater challenge.[58]

The shift in emphasis Turnbull suggests in fact represents a major shift in modern anthropology, from the model of the neutral objective reporter of cultural customs to that of a native from one culture observing natives from another, creating a complex interplay of influence and adjustment. Dwight Conquergood in 1985 suggested that five types of attitudes toward the ethnography of performance could now be charted out, four of them morally problematic. The suspect stances were that of the custodian, the enthusiast, the skeptic, and the curator. The custodian collects examples of performance, interested only in acquisition or exploitation. The skeptic, like many traditional ethnographers, stands aloof from and superior to the performance being studied. The enthusiast goes to the opposite extreme, seeking an easy identity in quick generalizations. The curator takes a tourist's stance, seeking exoticism or spectacle. Against all four of these, Conquergood champions the fifth stance, a "dialogical" performance, which aims "to bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another." The result sought is an open-ended performance, resisting conclusions and seeking to keep interrogation open.[59]

The role of the "reporter" is a less central concern when we move to performance study outside the traditional area of anthropology (although it has stimulated some important theoretical speculation, which will be examined in a later chapter). In more general terms, however, performance, critical and theoretical, underwent a parallel and doubtless related development during the 1980s, moving from an almost exclusive preoccupation with

the performer and the performative act to a consideration also of who is watching the performance, who is reporting on it, and what the social, political, and cognitive implications of these other transactions are upon the process. Moreover, a closely related concern has proven one of the most stimulating areas of theoretical speculation in both ethnography and theatre studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The move from a model of a fieldworker as a neutral observer to that of a fieldworker as a participant in performance, both in initial experience and in subsequent relaying of that experience to others, means moving into the complex field of intercultural performance. In the modern world of easy transportation and communication, not only anthropologists, but all sorts of cultural performances or parts of cultural performances, can and do circulate with relative ease about the globe, weaving complex patterns of contact with other cultures or other cultural performances.

A number of European theatre theorists, most notably Patrice Pavis in France and Erika Fischer-Lichte in Germany, have provided important studies of interculturalism within the context of theatre studies. But although this work is very much informed by anthropological models (Pavis, for example, bases his cultural analysis largely upon the work of French anthropologist Camille Camillieri), it has not been, at least so far, involved in the sort of direct, ongoing, mutual exploration and influence that has characterized, for example, the work of Schechner and Turner in the 1970s. Nevertheless, an important element in recent anthropological studies shares with recent theatre studies of this sort a common interest in how cultural performance is affected by the increasing intercultural borrowings of the modern or postmodern world; and so quotations from current anthropological theories often show up in studies of a more traditionally theatrical nature. *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), by ethnographic historian James Clifford, is an important example of such theory, with its argument that modern-world societies have become "too systemically interconnected to permit any easy isolation of separate or independently functioning systems" and that everywhere individuals and groups "improvise local performance from (re)collected pasts, drawing on foreign media, symbols, and languages." Clifford and others have spoken of this new interculturalism as "creolized,"[60] in reference to the mixed and layered culture of regions such as the Caribbean.[61]

The function of performance within a culture, the establishment and use of particularly designated performative contexts, the relation of performer to audience and of the reporter of performance to performance, and the generation and operations of performance drawing upon or influenced by several different cultures —all of these cultural concerns have contributed importantly to contemporary thought about what performance is and how it operates. The emphasis of culture theories, however, remains focused primarily upon performance as an ethnographic or anthropological phenomenon. Equally important to modern performance theory has been consideration of performance from a social or psychological perspective, and to such theories we shall now turn.