



## VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Being in-between: Performance studies and processes for sustaining interdisciplinarity

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**Abstract:** Interdisciplinarity happens when we commit to staying in the in-between, to staying in process. It is about not-knowing as a precondition for encountering matter/material, about not aiming at knowledge but at ways of knowing as practices of becoming. Interdisciplinary work is necessarily concerned with what is not present or represented in existing disciplines, but felt. It attends to what discourse leaves out, the elements not only outside the rules, bending and breaking them, but those radically *outwith* the rules, no doubt inflected by them but not working primarily in response to them. This essay explores ways of distinguishing between rhetorics of responsiveness and rhetorics of engagement as ways to practice interdisciplinarity. The growth of critical disciplines in the humanities can be traced to a western twentieth-century concern with reflective thinking that questions the assumptive logics of liberal nation states. Critique, as imagined here, happens in process, in the in-between, and its ways of knowing can release emergent becoming. The essay takes Performance Studies as currently an interdisciplinary site. It addresses several of these issues not only as methodology but also as material as it moves from performance to performativity in a manner analogous to the move from the responsive to the engaged, and encourages it to think through strategies that sustain working with the not-known. It is from performativity that helpful contributions toward interdisciplinarity can be made in terms of process, relationality and pedagogy.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynette Hunter's research spans the sciences, social sciences, humanities and the arts, and she has written, co-written or edited over 25 books. Currently, her practical work is committed to research projects involving traditional knowledge in movement and medicine, and her critical work is focused on performance studies and the work of performativity in generating long-term emergent political rhetorics.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The academic world in the Euroamerican west is built on disciplines. Yet it depends for its health on change to those disciplines as new knowledge is generated, and on completely different approaches to knowing that emerge from what Thomas Kuhn called the "pre-paradigmatic". This tension is increasingly mediated by the field of interdisciplinary studies. Interdisciplinarity both fits and does not fit the academy because it challenges its knowledge while giving it its reason for being there. This essay explores some of these tensions through the relatively new field of Performance Studies that is not only interdisciplinary but takes the processes of interdisciplinarity as part of its material. The discussion covers ways that performativity can contribute to the processes of interdisciplinarity more generally, to its relations with institutional and sociopolitical contexts, and to its methods for teaching. Performative examples are taken mainly from the arts, but also from the sciences and humanities.

**Subjects: Interdisciplinary Literary Studies; Literary/Critical Theory; Literature; Philosophy; Theatre & Performance Studies**

**Keywords: interdisciplinary humanities; performance studies; performativity; interdisciplinarity; process-thinking; rhetorics of engagement**

### 1. Introduction

As will become apparent, much of this essay is an attempt to explore my own academic history. I started out as a scientist (biochemistry), have worked in the social sciences (history: of rhetoric, of science, of printing, of women), in the humanities (literary criticism, post/neocolonial studies, critical theory, humanities computing, feminist philosophy) and most recently in the arts (theatre, dance, performance studies, performance art). Those ways of knowing are embraced by a study of rhetorical stance and a practice of poetics that have been with me throughout. My current interment/internship in performance studies has lasted longer than most partly because, as the chair of a graduate programme (2003–2013),<sup>1</sup> I was able to nurture interdisciplinarity. But, more important, the traditions of rhetoric upon which performance studies draws have offered ways of thinking about how to sustain that interdisciplinarity. This essay discusses a few elements I have found key to interdisciplinarity in an academic context, explores performance studies as currently an interdisciplinary site and suggests insights into the processes of interdisciplinarity that may be generated by the ongoing concerns of performance studies.

Interdisciplinarity happens when we commit to staying in the in-between, to staying in process. It is about not-knowing as a precondition for encountering matter/material, about not aiming at knowledge but at ways of knowing as practices of becoming—ontoepistemological. Interdisciplinarity is not a location but a practice with sociohistorically particular strategies. We don't speak about an interdiscipline, but about interdisciplinarity.

Interdisciplinary work is necessarily concerned with what is not present or represented in existing disciplines, but felt. It is often to do with making sense of affect. It attends to what discourse leaves out, the elements not only outside the rules, bending and breaking them, but those radically *outwith* the rules, no doubt inflected by them but not working primarily in response to them.<sup>2</sup> It is possibly helpful to use “inter” for the former and “intra” for the latter,<sup>3</sup> but this essay will use “inter” for both. The prefix “inter” has been challenged by many other candidates. After much experimentation, I now think that “multi” or “pluri” indicate parallel disciplines exchanging handshakes, that “cross” implies points of intersection, that “trans” hints at universals, and “meta” at abstraction. “Inter” is literally “between” or “among”. It's in the space presented by the differences it makes of what it is around. And there is the serendipitous false etymology in “inter”—to bury—as if the inter buries the disciplines, renders them into the earth to decompose, morph, enrich and yield quite other life. Nevertheless, the other candidates gesture toward the messy history of the interdisciplinary. It may signify work carried out when disciplines meet (biochemistry), when they become aware of each other (microbiology), when they collide (English studies), when they oppose or erase (communication studies), as well as when they morph into one another (cultural studies), or when they change (queer studies) or when they de/recompose (anthropology)—among others.

To mark out a place to work on this essay, I'd first like to consider terms and definitions (interdisciplinarity critiques this process). From my perspective, the impetus for interdisciplinarity is to encourage processes that release emergent ways of knowing. This occurs, e.g. when two or more disciplines come together and their assumptive logics dislodge each other releasing previously unthinkable possibilities, creative insight, lively discussion (humanities computing, biophysics). At times this is not so innocent and functions to eliminate diversity in the name of market focus (pharmacology<sup>4</sup> today). It is often followed by the precipitation out of another discipline (ethnography in the 1980s), or slow sedimentation (cultural studies 1950s onward), or co-optation into economically viable techno-industry (neurobiology in the 2000s) (Rose & Rose, 2012). This fallout into disciplinarity is encouraged and supported by academic institutions, by technology that desires replicability, by

market forces. A central issue for interdisciplinarity is: how to maintain the processes, how to nurture the practices that sustain process, how to keep working on practices that continually not-know the material at hand.

A discipline is a site for learning—*discere* to “see” by taking apart, to learn. It is also a site of seizing by separating: *dis/capere*. It is one thing to learn by experiencing things within a set of boundaries established by an ordering (a logic). It is another to capture through an analytical separation of parts, an anatomizing, a parsing into one by one, a reduction by division. Yet the two are intimately related. The former may simply lack critique of its methodology—a methodology cynically employed by the latter. Yet to learn also has at least a couple of strategies: one is to respond to what is there on grounds of what being responded to, and another is to engage with what is there by being among many grounds. To draw on a critique of disciplinarity (Hunter, 2003a, pp. 233–252) I made many years ago:

Take for example an academic discipline.

It will usually begin from consensually agreed grounds for discussion which quickly, without enough and consistent attention, become systematic.

Cultural studies is largely stuck in the discourse studies methodology within which it was initially formulated.

Rhetoric is necessary to ensure that disciplines seem coherent, that they have disciplines, systematic structures.

So what is disciplinary violence?

when one discipline exercises a rhetoric of power over another?

or disciplinary violation?

when one discipline is being violated?

or when the systematic structure that defines it is ruptured by something from outside the system?

or when that structure is asked to admit to its self-enclosed stance?

and act on it?

enclosure faced by difference, and necessary change?

Is this a rhetoric of change?

or a rhetoric of force,

of violence?

If rhetorics of violence are inveterately disciplinary, in this essay I would like to explore ways of distinguishing between rhetorics of responsiveness and rhetorics of engagement as ways to practice interdisciplinarity.

I once suggested that the three primary classical modes of rhetoric can be helpful to thinking about the interdisciplinarity of disciplines (Hunter, 2003b, pp. 176–179). A forensic or judicial rhetoric is frequently taken as rule-bound. But just as it may lead to a rigid disciplinarity unaware of the man-made constraints of those rules, so it may also be working in a way that is highly attentive to those rules and able, judiciously, to consider and act on their effects. A demonstrative or deliberative rhetoric is context-defined. This kind of disciplinarity may choose to remain non-responsive to context and treat it as determinist, even over-determining, but it may also choose to respond to the often discursively represented contexts with a questioning that shifts and disrupts them. An epideictic rhetoric treats context as impossible to represent. Surprisingly, this can lead to complete stasis and acceptance of disciplinary elements, but it can also lead to radical change that is not primarily interested in rules or representations or discourses—to articulating situations, ways of knowing, alongside those systems. In each of these rhetorics of disciplinarity, a lack of critical work may facilitate disciplinary violence, and awareness of the potential for critique—in responsiveness, and engagement respectively—may enable interdisciplinary movement and process.

Erasmus spoke of the learning in his school being based on *sermo*, a processual rhetoric of conversation among diverse positions, in distinction from pedagogy based on punishment for deviation from a unitary standpoint. To echo Foucault, asking whether there is any disciplinary work without violence, I would suggest, with Erasmus—not unless there is diversity and critique. There are rhetorics for disciplinarity that vary in their extent of awareness of context, of assumptive logics. Rhetorics that sustain awareness of their own formation are always interdisciplinary in mode. Yet there is a significant difference between those that react and respond to, rupture, oppose and challenge other assumptions, and those that are situated outwith and alongside those assumptions, with grounds that are emergent in their becoming, enabling radical critique. I would like to put forward for discussion that the latter rhetorics, those that use engaged strategies for critique, generate practices that sustain the processes of interdisciplinarity.

Hence interdisciplinarity can imply an awareness both of what lies outside and of what lies outwith the discipline, and corollary strategies for responding to and engaging with that awareness. To follow the parallel with rhetoric above: (self-)awareness leads to foregrounding disciplinary assumptions and that foregrounding may occur in distinct ways. Responsiveness to ethics and to the pressures of society leads to building sets toward discursive structures from the outside so that interactions with power and the powerful are enabled, and so that events on the edge of culture (periphery) are brought into articulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1984, 93ff.). Engagement deals with elements outwith society to give density to opaque but intensely felt forms of life and encourage emergent forms to happen. These various strategies can be thought of as different ways that stance nets together affect to generate grounds for ethics or the ethical (Hunter, 2014, “Introduction”). When awareness occurs in interdisciplinarity, the work may be recognized by society as a proto/discipline—or it may simply be ignored, even go unseen and unheard. Responsive work usually achieves the former, and engaged is often met with the latter, but the latter hold more potential for emergent knowing.

The growth of critical disciplines in the humanities from the earth of rhetoric—critical theory, performance studies, critical race, cultural studies, queer studies—can be traced to a western twentieth-century concern with reflective thinking that questions the assumptive logics of liberal nation states. That concern became widespread after the franchises of the early twentieth century put the privileges of these logics into stark relief. The word “critical” in the phrase “critical disciplines” stands in for interdisciplinary strategies. Critique, as imagined here, happens in process, in the in-between, and its ways of knowing can release emergent becoming.

## 2. Interdisciplinarity in the institution

The work of interdisciplinarity is to base knowing in not-knowing. Its concern is with what is left out or not re-presented by representation and/or discourse, and with material of the world alongside the human, including sentient beings some of which are disciplinarily classified as human and some as inhuman and some as nonhuman. Interdisciplinarity nurtures practices that are continually changing in process to sustain the non-knowing of the material of the world. This is both vital to academic work and simultaneously anathema.

Interdisciplinary work does not fit the current angloamerican university model: in the way academics are trained, the way students are exposed to multidisciplinary pedagogy, the way courses can be listed or credited or the way graduate students can be supported. We know this yet interdisciplinary initiatives occur all the time: from radically new points of view such as women’s studies in the 1970s, from politically motivated initiatives such as Canadian Studies in the 70s–90s, from new technologies such as computing replacing machine printing in the 80s and leading to digital media, or in response to gaps in other disciplines, e.g. performance studies in the 90s–2000s. But the interdisciplinary, however well-meaning or inspired, all too often reduces to a group of people from diverse disciplines meeting, discussing, perhaps gaining some different insight, but being unable to sustain the exchange as in-between. All too familiar is the difficulty that academic institutions usually have with interdisciplinary initiatives that generate new areas of knowledge. Once coalesced

into a disciplinary form, such as Cultural Studies, an institution can cope. It can assign fee-paying students, pay faculty and staff, calculate allocation of space and materials. But before that moment of definition, the interdisciplinary can seem too nebulous to have an institutional location.

Students are frequently subjected to interdisciplinary courses in which 10 weeks of teaching may include (a postcolonial course on which I taught) an introduction, three of literature, three of geography, three of politics, or (an early modern course which I examined) two of social history, two of art, two of political science, two of science, two of medicine. Each section to be taught by an expert in that field yet no one providing any theorization or methodology or rhetorical structure through which to critically engage—the key to interdisciplinary work—on the bringing together of the discrete elements. I have sat on assessment boards where faculty, including myself, responded in two of many other ways: either nonplussed because none of the students seemed to be able productively to work across disciplines or with more than one—when in practice they have not been taught how to do so, merely exposed to different disciplines as if exposed to radiation—or let down because students did not “measure up” in our own particular discipline. In effect, they literally cannot be measured by those particular tools and techniques. If we cannot recognize value in their work, it is difficult to tell if they are doing something interesting that is not in our field but in someone else’s, or whether they are doing something interesting in a genuinely interdisciplinary emergent field, or if they are simply unable to produce anything of interest at all. And whose responsibility is that apparent lapse, or failure? could it be turned inside out to feel it differently? could we re-think the failure of interdisciplinarity as critical work?

Engaged interdisciplinary practice is by definition impossible to re-cognize as knowledge. Because angloamerican institutions, at the least, only recognize knowledge rather than processes of knowing, many of the issues that arise in pedagogy continue on into the larger academic world of research, publication and dissemination of work. We can only “know” interdisciplinary work by feeling its affect or becoming cognitively aware of an event or structure to which we did not previously attend. In Latin, *cognosco* (*cum + nosco*) means “to learn” in the present, imperfect and future, and “to know” in the perfect, pluperfect and future perfect. If the action is in process, re-cognition, to know something again has to be a form of learning, yet if that action provides a distinct set responding toward normative assumptive logics then recognition is primarily about knowledge. Learning can also be thought of as “becoming through knowing”. Perhaps we need to think of engaged interdisciplinarity as an aesthetic, with embodied affect and traditional practices that alerts us to the ontoepistemological processes of awareness?

Here is one example from my personal experience. I was working with a colleague to produce an edition of *Romeo and Juliet* for the Arden Shakespeare 3. The colleague was a theatre director I had known for years who was bringing the theatre knowledge encouraged by Arden, and I was bringing the bibliographic training. Both of us had a background in editing, they as a dramaturge and I as a literary scholar. Both of us had some training in the early modern period. We were looking forward to working together and learning about each other’s discipline—theatre and literature—even though we were confident that we knew quite a bit already. After several months of pursuing the agreed-upon first stage, we discussed our individual work and came to an impasse. Unbeknownst to either of us, I had no clue whatsoever about their vocabulary nor they about mine. The words we were using were similar, sometimes identical, so we were encouraged to think that we were talking about the same thing. At first, because we did not understand each other’s field—but did not yet know this—we violently disagreed but kept our mouths shut. However, things came to a head over the word “character”. I would hear a statement such as “this phrase can be helpful for the actor trying to own a character”, and translate in my head “this phrase can help an actor put on a stereotype they know”. The word “own”, with its luggage of capital and reductionism, immediately laid out an assumptive field of character psychonaturalism, which I detested—and thought my colleague did too, so there was great surprise. My colleague heard me talk about character as “subject-position or subjectivity determined by nation state ideology (this was the early 1990s)” and translated “this academic doesn’t understand theatre”.

Ever polite, it took us four or five years of meetings to begin to comprehend the other's use of disciplinary language. We came to understand that we would never fully do so, and this not-knowing became a source of strength and energy once we embraced it. It was, and still is, exciting to recognize that we are on the edge of not-knowing what the other person was feeling, let alone meaning. Sometimes we crossed the bridge, sometimes we did not, but working in-between was exhilarating. When the bridge did get made we found we could repeat it for others, but unless they also embraced the possibility of a gap between theatre and literature that meant re-thinking their languages for the disciplines, they found it difficult to recognize what we were doing. In the end, we had to withdraw from Arden and publish the scholarly edition online, accompanied by a book published by Ashgate, a press that takes on a number of adventurous commentaries on early modern scholarship. The responses have been largely positive, from reviewers and people who have contacted us by email, but disconcertingly each response tends to focus on either the edition, or just one chapter, or just one part of the book. It seems that the readers have not had enough help getting in-between. Given that when we speak on these issues, or teach about them, the people listening and participating have little problem getting the point, I have often wondered if this is because in the book we felt we had to present our solutions rather than our engagements, our knowledge rather than our ways of knowing.<sup>6</sup>

Interdisciplinary research will “make sense” only to a few. It is classic situated knowledge which generally works outwith discursive disciplinarity, on ways of knowing that attend to elements that are vital to the lives of some groups of sentient beings. That these lives are often obscured, evaded, hidden, erased or invisible to dominant hegemonic norms and assumptions is not the primary concern. The conversations that make up situating processes call on sensory, somatic and affective events—phenomenological experience. Making these intimately felt events present to other people is a big risk (comments that arise: weird, funny, not serious, flaky, dilettante, etc.), and we tend to do so within communities with common purposes, even communities of trust. Even Nancy's “inoperable communities”, Yuval-Davis' “advocacy” (Nancy, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 1997)—both of which I would argue are still in responsive mode—can only flourish in groupings of sentient beings who are able to risk/trust each other. These communities are vital to interdisciplinary emergence, and their strategies could help to distinguish their rhetoric from interdisciplinary responsiveness.

### **3. Interdisciplinary emergence**

I would like now to turn to Performance Studies as currently an interdisciplinary site because it addresses several of these issues not only as methodology but also as material. Performance studies begin with the insight that different kinds of process lead to different ways of knowing and being. Conventionally, these are the performative and illocutionary speech acts suggested by J.L. Austin in 1955 (Austin, 1962) which have provided the focus for much theoretical discussion. Realizing that performance is based in context, there has been a development of the illocutionary from the constructed (that explains performance) to the constitutive (that articulates performance),<sup>7</sup> to an understanding that context is situating (Haraway, 1988, pp. 575–599) and therefore continually practising and a(resting (finding repeatable forms that carry energy),<sup>8</sup> and further that it is ecological and in constant morph, flux, affect and materialization (Manning, 2013; Massumi, 2011) This development moves performance studies from performance to performativity in a manner analogous to the move from the responsive to the engaged, and encourages it to think through strategies that sustain working with the not-known. It is from performativity that helpful contributions toward interdisciplinarity can be made. If the idea of performance as constructed, even as constituted, allies it to a discipline that carries with it a discursive technology, then the movement to the situated and the ecological brings out performativity and the work of practice that carries with it an engaged learning/becoming.<sup>9</sup>

A great deal of effort is currently being deployed in the name of not-knowing and its affect: Object Oriented Ontology, Deleuze and Guattari studies, Vibrant Matter, Manning and Massumi, the anthropocene, Haraway, Barad—but what is the phenomenology of interdisciplinarity? What is the difference between the affect generated by working on radically erased points of view such as those

experienced when opening up women's history in the 1970s, and the affect generated by often politically motivated initiatives in postcolonial studies in the 1970s–90s? (and the difference between, say, the politics of Canadian Studies and those of Diasporic Studies?) what is the difference between the affect generated by the insertion of new technologies, and that generated by the need to work with e.g. African-American fungibility and an alterity upon which the western liberal state is founded? What's the difference in affect between knowing/becoming a thing or an animal or a plant? And what practices do we already have, or need to devise and develop, to engage with the erased, the marginalized, the novel, the alterior, as materials we cannot "know" in different ways—practices that lead to the ontoepistemological ways of knowing/becoming that respect both the not-known matter and the changes which happen to us when we open ourselves to the effects of not-knowing?

Performance studies relates to a need to account for performance in gender, culture, society, politics, ethnicity, class, ability, the arts. It fills a gap in western philosophy and critical theory left by the reduction in rhetoric studies hard-hit by the global spin of WW2, the rise of advertising media and the growth of awareness of explicit manipulation brought by the Internet. It responds critically both to the sedimentation of Theatre History in the 1960s and 70s, and to the growth in Dance studies in the same period. In a curious way, it also addresses a wider need to defend the arts as a socially powerful activity in the face of a broad public franchise questioning the value of privileged art-making—aka Art. Most pointedly, it emerges in response to a twentieth-century philosophical concern with processual knowledge, or knowing, yet it has also begun to be the place where emergent politics can work on positionality. Hence, Performance studies in its concern with both the processes of performativity and with the conditions of performance faces similar issues as interdisciplinarity in a disciplinary context.

An immediate and practical contribution to interdisciplinarity may be found in what performativity can offer as strategies for not-knowing, as processes for sustaining these practices and guidelines for recognising (learning) forms for emergence. Performance studies as a discipline has several histories derived from specific sociocultural and economic contexts. What surfaces with each history is a concern with not only performance but also performativity. Performance is the public presentation of work with material carried out by people who are trained in a practice for not-knowing—both artists (creative workers in the neoliberal state) and art-makers (creative workers not actively participating in global capital). Performativity is concerned with the processes of that practice, in sustaining the not-knowing and recognising the moments where the practice can rest the process in a form that can be repeated for a public audience—or a(rest. Analogous to the relation of interdisciplinarity and disciplinarity, performativity maybe focused on rehearsal, but it is also keenly interested in how to sustain the not-knowing within a performance. The audience experience is directly related to the different kinds of critical awareness: responsiveness and engagement, enabled by the non-replicable but repeatable moments of a(rest that generate the form of performance.

In common with interdisciplinary work, performativity moves from somatic change through attentiveness, which can be thought of as a phenomenological event of not-knowing something in the material world, to embodied practices that have been built over millennia that enable art-makers to engage with the event of not-knowing and to embrace change with varying degrees of vulnerability and risk. Performativity also opens the door to group processes, particularly in collaboration which sustains the practices engaged in not-knowing, and trains us to recognize medium-particular moments for not-knowing that can be repeated in a public performance. In performance, the art-makers turn that form into an ecology in which the audience can practice not-knowing the material, be affected, and change.

For example, a performer or art-maker in any medium from clay to music to digital theatre often speaks about the strangeness of working with that medium, that they do not know what the medium will do next or the affect that will occur. Each performer will train for lengthy periods of time to get the practice they need "into their body". But no performer or art-maker works alone, and as

practice deepens so does the work within the group enabling the made-art: call it studio, rehearsal, lab, ensemble or workshop. Each element of that group has its own practice that contributes to the group processes that sustain the affect of not-knowing. Those collaborative practices also guide the group toward the recognition of moments when the process rests, forms, a(re)sts the not-knowing in the medium so it can be repeated—in a bowl, a concerto, a hologram—for a public group.

Performativity can also hint at various kinds of pedagogy that could be helpful to interdisciplinarity. Many of us who have experience of interdisciplinary work know that often it “just happens”. It can be difficult to plan for precisely because it is in practice not-known. Yet teaching in the arts often deals with the not-known and with the importance of process. In some ways the arts, which focus on practice, inexorably foreground group work even if students are at times not trained to value it. And group work means working with the practices of other people, which are never quite your own. An actor works not only with other actors who are necessarily different in training from their own, but also with the designer, the technical staff, the director and so on. Every piece of group work is a potential moment of collaboration, of engagement out of which the energy of a production will come. But students in the arts have to learn how to collaborate, and they do so on the basis of thousands of years of traditional knowledge in their practice. Collaboration, or as Ilya Noé puts it, co-labouring,<sup>10</sup> delineates a particular kind of group work that builds an engaged rhetoric on the differences between various practices. It is distinct from collective work that attempts to find similarities from which to respond to specific sociocultural elements. In short, collaborative work focuses on the not-knowing and collective on fulfilling an aim. Both are important, but have quite distinct political effectiveness.

Just as arts students need to learn collaborative work to materialize creative insight, I suspect that interdisciplinary students also need to learn how to collaborate. Interdisciplinarity does not have the same history of traditional practices in the arts on which to draw—so we could borrow from the sciences, we could borrow from the arts. While there is much to learn from collaboration in science, on the whole science is not interested in teaching about its processual elements that enable critique. The arts definitely are and have developed ways of insisting on process. This shows up markedly in the vocabulary of performance studies. For example, in the term “score” can be used to outline a group of suggested processes that art-makers in any medium, from dance to music to sculpture, can participate in (Halprin, 1970/1969). A score has a suggested shape to which each collaborator brings their practice. Peter Lichtenfels describes the use of score in ensemble theatre, specifically collaborative, by Tadeusz Kantor in the following way:

there may be a score of two twins misunderstanding each other... The director works with them to ‘keep missing each other’. There’s humor. He’ll not tell them what to do so much as the energy, the speed, the heightened sense that he’s looking for... he seems to tell them what he wants, shows them the energy he wants, but does not necessarily show them how to do it, unless they are offering something that doesn’t go along with the spirit of what he is proposing. And if they don’t, they are not being difficult, not trying to impede the process, it’s trial and error. And then what Kantor will do, having experienced whatever he and the actors did in rehearsal, those moments that maybe alter from the score or go in another direction, he’ll go back that night and write it up as part of a script [that will be repeated in performance] and then come up with further scores. (Lichtenfels, *in press*)

This analysis suggests that there’s a practice that involves a director in providing scores and attempting to find repeatable moments. This practice meets the practice of the actors and when the collaboration is kept engaged, a lot of energy gets released. Later on in this article, Lichtenfels talks about the difference that occurs when the performances start, and the relationship between actor and director changes, with the actor leading the enacted score for performance. This example is offered as a way of thinking about how “score” could be used in teaching or training interdisciplinary techniques by drawing an analogy, however misleading, between a director and a teacher, and suggesting ways that learners can take the experience of interdisciplinarity into wider discussion.

The example highlights one of the wider issues interdisciplinary pedagogy needs to address: the academic status of collaborative work in the humanities. As we all know, there has been extensive research in education on how joint projects, collective projects and collaborative projects can offer different approaches to learning and knowing. As we also all know, the humanities regards joint publication far less highly than sole. Yes, something different is being evaluated, but some solid work on welcoming these various modes of knowing needs to be undertaken throughout the western academic humanities system. While disciplines tend to work within their own medium, we need to acknowledge various media for assessment because the medium itself poses different communicative challenges. And we could borrow some of the many approaches to the evaluation of creative work: assessing preparation, research, imaginative structure, craft competence, critical abilities, self-assessment, joint assessment, group procedures....

#### **4. Interdisciplinarity and capital**

The form a(rest) takes performativity into performance, into the public space of sociocultural fitting. Just as interdisciplinary work can settle or sediment into disciplinary fit, so performance can lose its performative energy although it may acquire cultural and financial success. Yet performance in the arts depends upon sustaining at least some performativity—the latter pinpoints why we want to watch one actor as they walk across the stage while we couldn't care less about another. I suspect that disciplines also need to sustain interdisciplinarity to give them energy. And it is instructive that performance is valued not only through the affective changes that happen when audience members engage, but is also legitimated through market worth. Frequently the replicable event that satisfies an audience member's sense of getting "what I paid for", started out as a non-replicable but repeated moment of a(rest). Indeed, some audience members committed to engaged participation may be able to re-engage—this is a critical move that depends on their practice as an audience. For example, just as the MacDonalidization of the Broadway musical uses replicable events to satisfy market expectations of enormous audiences worldwide, an engaged audience member may still be able to pick up on the initial energy of the form generated by the rehearsal. In contrast, work such as Ilya Noé's surrogate/erogate project sustains affective engagement as its main task by continually generating the particular non-replicable ecology that happens around those who participate.

The musical "The Phantom of the Opera" (Hart & Webber, 1986) primarily establishes reliable, replicable emotions—although this is not all it does. A successful production manages, often by way of a song, to bring a form into play that responds unpredictably to cultural norms, a disruption that generates a rush of adrenalin and often a recognizable emotion. But when I leave, have I changed? perhaps. More likely, I feel that my own grounds about humanity, care, personal suffering, have been magnified and reinforced by the challenge to cultural norms. That rush of adrenalin is released by the aesthetic event of the form "fitting" cultural shape, fitting being a concept that refers to the play that goes on when norms are disrupted and have to respond. It sustains the rush through the process of fitting, and stabilizes once it fits.<sup>11</sup> There is a subtle rhetorical force that discourages me from a supplanting of cultural norms, or, if I do, complains that I am not allowing myself to be entertained. It coopts me into discourse even if as opposition.

In Ilya Noé's "surrogate/erogate" project, "Becoming With", I do not get a sense of adrenalin rush. The "success" of the piece feels differently to the "success" appreciated when attending a well-produced musical. To attempt to be more detailed about the aesthetic engagement, I'll slow down my "reading" of this piece. "Becoming With" took place in a gallery space that used to be filled with pigeons, and the erogate artist (who never comes to the place of performance) decided to bring back the pigeons through the embodied work of the surrogate artist (who is in the place of performance). This can only happen now on "human" terms, so in its 25-minute length there is a large cage containing the birds, a meal on a table within the cage, a person trying out how to "become with" a pigeon who eventually comes in direct contact with the birds when entering the cage. One question asked is: "What would a modest game in which people and pigeons tangled together look like? What will a multispecies worlding story (re)-enact? (O'Connor)"<sup>12</sup>

The performers' main work is to make a form that can be per-formed. The erogate/surrogate, Kevin O'Connor, is a vertical dancer, used to heights, and an eco-activist, the surrogate/erogate, Moritz Geiser, is an actor/performer, psychologist and agoraphobic. Their practices inform the movement, sound, space of the form. The work in rehearsal is to encourage these two quite distinct practices to release ways of not-knowing the pigeons in a cage in a loft in Berlin (Figure 1). The curatorial notes read:

BECOMING WITH attends not only to a connection between North America and Europe via human and non-human mediation, but to the space where genuine collaboration and shared authorship between strangers can emerge.

And:

*Becoming with* is the name of this game.

*Becoming with* is how partners are rendered capable.

In a sense Noé, as the curator of the piece, is another erogate/surrogate. She works both to keep the ecology open and porous, encouraging differentiation and to recognize moments of a(rest, forms that can be repeated to generate ecologies of emergence for the audience. An audience member could rely on expectation and find the piece sentimental, but it would be difficult. The affect is un-grounding, a response elusive. The piece is difficult to “make sense” of but it can open to feeling happening, to subtle changes as we engage with its strange ecology. Something in my coextensive somatic self comes about that was not there before: anxiety (someone balancing on high beams), absurdity (knowing/not-knowing the familiarity of pigeons eating from a dinner table), strangeness (of both birds and humans). Feelings yielding up to an awareness of the ethics, worrying about an agoraphobic performer trying to balance on heights pigeons find comforting, and being concerned about pigeons in a human cage, a cage that it seems humans have built also for themselves so that getting rid of the pigeons to open an art gallery is also getting rid of something in human lives that we can only re-engage on anthropod terms. By way of engaged performativity, a differentiating happens that means I see the world as I have not before, and from this emergent position I can critique.

These two examples of performance have been detailed to highlight the distinctive ways that performances can encourage responsive stances and engaged stances, and to underline that an understanding of performativity helps to generate forms that are more likely to sustain the phenomenology of engagement and the emergence of critique. But I would like to note that these kinds of performance are only, in my opinion, more or less likely to encourage either responsive or engaged

**Figure 1. Moritz Geiser inside the cage with pigeons.**

Note: Photo credit: Ilya Noé.



stances within particular sociohistorical contexts. I imagine that performing *The Phantom of the Opera* to a sixteenth-century English audience would encourage a much more engaged than responsive stance in both performers and audience members.

Both interdisciplinarity and performativity have the issue of sustaining emergent forms for the responsive all too easily slides into cooptation and/or violence. The problem for each is that sociocultural success is measured by the extent of discursive fit. While responsive interdisciplinary work is welcomed as a proto/discipline into academic fit, the emergent form, dependent on energy released by the repeatability of not-knowing, can also be seduced into replicability. Someone pays you \$20,000 for that ceramic bowl, so you make another one to pay the rent/feed the family—and another. You may be able to keep the energy going for a while but it tends toward replicable habit. This is just as seductive for someone in the Humanities with an idea—such as interdisciplinarity—in which publishers want to invest,<sup>13</sup> or a scientist who wants to fund a laboratory (see e.g. Stengers, 2007, pp. 7–15). And just as performativity can be coopted into performance, so the diversity of emergent interdisciplinarity may be subjected to eliminatory devices, reduced to replicable, market-stable, if not investible proto/disciplines—with their potential for strict boundaries and punishments and violence.

But there is a difference. If performativity can contribute ways of beginning to think about interdisciplinarity, it is based on practice rather than discipline.<sup>14</sup> The arts are primarily about not-knowing the world and bringing that affect into the audience, and in performativity they are about what materials enable us to learn through not-making sense until we morph into an ecology and differentiate out—in other words we are different after that “not-knowing the material” than before. On the one hand, the arts are also about interacting with discursive culture and capital and the structures that facilitate the making and circulating, the production and consumption, of the made work into the audience through performance. On the other hand, art-making happens all the time in less subject-based and more co-extensive parts of our lives from playing with colour on a crayoning pad, to tapping out a rhythm on a desk, to dancing in a jam.

The interdisciplinarity is similarly wrapped up in not-knowing the world and bringing that affect to an audience, but the institutional structures facilitating that dissemination/consumption are more constrained. The root of not-knowing in a liberal polity is not owning, yet interdisciplinarity is bound up through the disciplines with capital/non-capital. Unlike the arts, which happen all the time in all communities, interdisciplinarity happens in an academic context of disciplinarity. It is not usually thought of as an everyday event like art-making. There are ways it could be considered the institutional “unsettler”, but unless we extend the idea of disciplinarity so it overlaps with ideological representation (which, with Foucault, we could), interdisciplinarity occurs in the context of capital-funded education—and could be cast as the entrepreneurial aspect of disciplinarity rather than the performative unsettler outside or outwith the disciplines.

A telling difference is to look at the struggle of the arts within academic institutions as opposed to the embeddedness of science. For all that the sciences can work in similar ways, they have quite different institutional contexts to the arts. Their embedded location in the academy, with demanding and lucrative ties to the military/industrial complexes of global capital, means that they are perforce both an art and a discipline, whereas a department such as Art Studio is usually thought of as an art and a practice. Indeed, science becomes an art when it enters the interdisciplinary but it seems it cannot stay there long despite its roots in performance. When modern science surfaced in the seventeenth century in England, two aspects of its performance allied it with the arts. First, it was frequently conducted at home, increasingly in well-fitted laboratories but still partly in working kitchens. Second, to “prove” an experiment a scientist had to conduct it as a performance. The Royal Society expected members to come to London to demonstrate proof as embodied performance, after which there was a written report (see Hunter, 2005b, pp. 123–140).

I have argued elsewhere that the written textuality of science is second order, it is related to representation and replicability (Hunter, 1999, chapter five). But the experiment is a repeatable form in the performative sense. The real stuff goes on in the laboratories where you touch the not-known materials directly. The performance of the written report, or scientific article, has little performativity. There is even a distrust of its possible performativity because the discipline's borders become porous and vulnerable in its presence. In contrast to the published scientific report, laboratories are usually private, off limits to casual visitors, and not only for health and safety reasons. A casual visitor might ask questions about the assumptive logic of the science. Aristotle once defined "science" or knowledge more generally, as needing enclosed communities with specific disciplinary grounds, open communities based on probable grounds were the remit of rhetoric (Hunter, 1999, pp. 4–5).

Most scientists keep the situated textuality or performativity of their work to themselves, although it crops up in memoirs as felt experience or affect or occasionally as surprise—such as Poincaré's comment on Fuchsian functions (Poincaré 1908/2010, p. 55), known for his respect for "intuition", narrated, "At the moment when I put my foot on the step the idea came to me, without anything in my former thoughts seeming to have paved the way for it, that the transformation that I had used to define the Fuchsian functions were identical with those of non-euclidean geometry". I remember years ago in an organic chemistry class being introduced to a visiting scientist from Ghana. He entered with a wooden box, shaped like a cube about 10–12" in dimension. He then opened the lid, with all the suspense of a Pandora's Box, and revealed rows of test tubes with apparently active chemicals in each that were used to treat a range of diseases and illnesses in his indigenous village. When asked how the compounds had been isolated, he explained that the medical herbalist of the village would in some cases take a liquid from the sick person and go out into the adjacent fields. There he would select leaves from various plants and, moisturizing his hands with the person's liquid, would place a leaf between his fingers and blow. This way he would listen to the resonances of the plant leaf with the sick person's liquid and assess the treatment. To me at the time, this was a profound example of one of the arts of science. Today I would associate it, e.g. with the polyphonic singing of shamans finding resonances with a landscape. The test tubes contained purified compounds obtained through statistical analysis of the various treatments that the scientist was attempting to verify in North American laboratories, but the science for me was in the practice of resonant sound. I have enormous admiration both for him (possibly...) and for the organic chemist at Queen's University, Canada, Professor Saul Wolfson, for daring to bring the storied box into the analytical domain of the academy when all we might have discovered was an investment opportunity.

There has been a 30 or more year history of feminist science and technology studies that have opened out the practices of the laboratory, including the well-known account by Donna Haraway of Jane Goodall's fieldwork affects (Haraway, 1989). One of the more recent offshoots is an article by Natasha Myers and Joe Dumit about a microbiologist who spent hours studying a particular organism under the microscope (Dumit & Myers, 2011). He began to move, to dance, with the organism in order to understand its functions. When he felt he had a form that would bring that affect to a larger scientific audience (aka: when he thought he had a breakthrough in understanding how the organism worked), he attended conferences and danced the dance. This was, not surprisingly, offensive to disciplinary decorum. The dance had to be rewritten as mathematics, rendered into the second-order textuality of disciplinary representation, and then it was acceptable.

The humanities on the whole recognize the vital work of textuality, not the least because they work with human-made forms in the media. Yet there are commonalities with the practice and communication of the sciences. Take, for example, literary criticism. A scholar reads a poem, which deepens with the years of embodied practice and training in traditional knowledge about reading. The performativity of the practice of how that person engages with the medium will affect them, and the differentiation that occurs will spur their attempt to perform the change in an essay or a monograph. Even though the essay/essai has within it the sense of rehearsal or experiment it is often considered more as a predictable generic structure like the scientific report. As a result, the performative change

is made often public as knowledge, rather than as a way of knowing carried by the textuality of the essay's medium.<sup>15</sup> Despite humanists' critique coming from the differentiation they have felt being with the not-known in various textual media, they tend to talk, write letters, blog, hold seminars, give presentations with an implicit acknowledgement of experimentation but no direct foregrounding of practice. Hence just as many people think of the sciences as reductive, hard-and-fast knowledge producers because they confuse the scientific report (the performance) with the experiment (performativity),<sup>16</sup> so social scientists often have fundamental problems with the humanities because they confuse the written essay (the performance) with the practice of engaging with the medium (the performativity).<sup>17</sup>

The critical fields, the interdisciplinary places among the humanities disciplines, including performance studies, offer or enable a training in stepping outside and even outwith the grounds of cultural representations and discourses into performativity. Critical fields have become the places where the disciplines allow themselves interdisciplinary critique. Most critical theorists do not know but are engaged in knowing, which is why they are often difficult to read. They trust that how they speak will at least resist making sense, possibly begin to articulate something unrepresented in discourse, or at best, offer a form to the public in which the reader can per-form an engagement with not-known material. The foundation of interdisciplinarity on the not-known leads directly to the difficulty of performance: how to perform for a public the process of the performativity of not-knowing.

The arts have traditionally avoided presenting their critical and creative insights as only worthy or legitimate if they are performed as academic knowledge. To perform made-art as knowledge coopts its emergent knowing. Yet to sustain its performativity as responsive or engaged, in other words to sustain its processes of knowing, locates it outside or outwith discourse, and either on the way to fitting in with discourse or not recognizable as knowledge. Nevertheless, with the current attack on the arts in angloamerican universities, also being felt by the humanities, the field of practice as research has emerged. As it happens, practice as research is central to performance studies, and in my opinion, at a crossroads. While some development of practice as research has moved toward accepting the practice in itself with descriptive containers but little critique, I believe that it is precisely the presence of critique that makes practice politically unsettling and can help generate the emergent knowing that leads to creative insight and radical positionalities. One question that arises for practice as research that is central also to indisciplinarity: what is an acceptable performative medium for the emergent knowing of arts practice that foregrounds the critique enabled by the made-art? Does the standard doctorate or book run the risk of humanities performance and obscure the affective energy of the experience—as the edition of *Romeo and Juliet* detailed above seems to do? How can the critique enabled by performativity be sustained for the academic audience of the made-art? Does the practitioner turn to the science report?

While performance studies can help to think through some of the ways that interdisciplinarity can sustain its processes, and help to distinguish kinds of relations with the disciplines, and even help to think through a pedagogy, it cannot currently help contribute to the problem of what medium counts as academic worth. If interdisciplinarity were not “academic” that would solve a lot of problems: or perhaps “academic”, historically signifying “skeptical”,<sup>18</sup> could begin to embrace its roots.

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#### Notes

1. The Performance Studies Graduate Program at the University of California Davis.

2. "Outwith" is a good Scots word meaning not so much the opposite of but something not in relation to "with". It indicates a radical difference, perhaps close to Derrida's *différance*.
  3. Although this is not quite what Karen Barad seems to have in mind with "intra-" but close, see Barad (2003, p. 814).
  4. Dumit (2012); this book explores the increasing marketization of pharmaceuticals and the growth of related clinical trials and the supporting science in the United States.
  5. Whether that "self" be lived as "subject", "subjectivity", "singularity", "non-autonomous", "infraindividual", "transindividual", "multitudinous" or "coextensive" (among other current castings), will have distinct effects on the "self" becomes aware.
  6. For a later and more detailed discussion of problems in mediating editions of theatre texts, see the conclusion of Hunter and Lichtenfels (2014, pp. 171–197).
  7. Jacques Derrida engages in a discussion with Austin about the need for a wider understanding of context in Derrida (1977/1988). Judith Butler uses this insight to spur her book (Butler, 1990).
  8. Hunter (2011, pp. 11–22); the concept is further developed in Lynette Hunter, *Disunified Aesthetics*, as above, chapter one.
  9. Ancient rhetoric distinguished between a discipline and a practice in the concepts of *techne* and *phronesis*, respectively; see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6.
  10. Noé (2013) pointed out to me the problems in European English of "collaboration", a word associated with working with the Nazi party in WW2. Instead she uses "co-labouring", a founding element in her *erogate/surrogate* series. See <http://www.ilyano.com/category/works/collaborating/>
  11. For commentary on Nicole Brossard's distinction between "cold" and "warm" beauty, see Hunter (2005a, p. 225).
  12. See curatorial notes by Noé (2012).
  13. Any number of fields, such as posthumanism in the 2000s, and anthropocene in the 2010s, sediment around a single word that helps publishers locate interested audiences but can also trap writers within specific boundaries.
  14. "Discipline" itself connotes both system and practice *OED discipline* n., etymology.
  15. See, the physical and virtual book, Lynette Hunter, *Disunified Aesthetics*, cited above, for a study in a variety of media for essay performance.
  16. Leading to what is known in Science Studies as the "public understanding of science".
  17. For example, Massey's (2005) otherwise brilliant associates words with "text" and "textuality", and all three with reductive second-order language, wiping out the engaged performativity of words and texts to which her own writing attests.
  18. Plato's "Academy" was founded on skeptical thinking and questioning.
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