

PERFORMING NATIONAL IDENTITY

TIM EDENSOR

Cultural Studies, Staffordshire University*

ABSTRACT: *This paper explores how national identities are performed through different national dramas. The metaphor of performance allows us to draw on a series of related ideas around scripts, roles, stage-management, choreography, directing and improvisation to examine how national identity is staged in specific places, in both spectacular locations and mundane settings. Thus a national geography is shown to be constituted according to different spatial scales. The paper argues that the sustenance of identity depends upon unreflexive actions constituted collectively as much as through more overt 'invented traditions' and large ceremonies, and further contends that performances are always in process, and are apt to be contested by competing actors. And while globalising processes appear to threaten the security of national identity through the proliferation of performances both within and beyond the national, it retains a common-sense grounding in the everyday and in the dense accumulation of diverse performances around national themes.*

In this paper, I focus on the ways in which national identities are (re)produced by using the metaphor of performance. I explore how forms of national dramas are organised and enacted, and how the nation – and selective qualities associated with it – are staged and broadcast. I look at both 'official' and popular dramas, but also examine everyday national routines, habits and duties. I thus explore the differently scaled ways in which the nation is (re)produced, from state-sanctioned ceremony and popular spectacle, to quotidian, unreflexive acts.

Performance is a useful metaphor since it allows us to look at the ways in which identities are enacted and reproduced, informing and (re)constructing a sense of collectivity as a dynamic process. By looking at ideas about scripts and

roles, stage-management, choreography, directing, improvisation and reflexivity, we can investigate the parameters of performing national identity. And by conceiving of symbolic sites as *stages*, we can explore *where* identity is dramatised, broadcast, shared and reproduced. In a national context, such stages include landscapes, symbolic sites and the everyday landscapes of domestic and routine life. Spaces are (re)produced by performers as sites of importance, even though they may transmit diverse meanings and enact different performances.

Different performances are carried out on beaches and mountains, in cities, heritage sites, museums and theme parks (for a discussion of national space, see Edensor, 2002). These settings are distinguished by boundedness, whether physical or symbolic, and are often organised – or stage-managed – to sustain common sense understandings about what kinds of activities should take place within them. Following the continuities suggested by performative conventions, particular performances – and particular actors – might seem out of place, revealing the operations of exclusive identities. Thus regular kinds of performance can be identified at most sites. Some stages might be carefully managed, and the enactions of performers can be tightly choreographed or closely directed, whereas the boundaries of other stages might be blurred, cluttered with other actors playing different roles, full of shifting scenes and random, facilitating improvisatory performances. However, whilst the organisation, materiality and aesthetic and sensual qualities of stages may influence actors, they rarely *determine* performance. And stages can change continually, they can expand and contract; contesting performances can undermine attempts to fix meaning and action.

Probably the most influential theorist of performance – *performativity* as she likes to distinguish it – is Judith Butler. Butler has most famously used the metaphor of performativity to identify how *gender* categories are reproduced by actions which are imagined to be pre-discursive, ‘natural’ effects of *sex*. By playing with dolls, wearing gendered clothes, and generally adopting the gamut of attributes assigned as ‘feminine’, girls and women continually ‘perform’ gender (Butler, 1993: 9). Butler usefully discredits essentialist ideas about gender and valuably highlights identity as an ongoing performance. However, in separating *performance* and *performativity*, where performance is characterised as self-conscious and deliberate whereas performativity is understood as reiterative, citational and unreflexive, she fails to reflect the blurred boundaries between purposive and unreflexive actions. For instance, apparently reflexive performances may become unreflexive, ‘second nature’, to the habituated actor, and unfamiliar surroundings may provoke acute self-awareness of iterative performances where none had previously been experienced.

Addressing the division between reflexivity and non-reflection, Merleau-Ponty argues that intellectual faculties are secondary attributes which are “rooted in practical and pre-reflective habits and skills” (Crossley, 2001: 62). Merleau-Ponty used the metaphor of football to explain that much action is practical and engaged rather than contemplative (ibid.: 74-79). Such performance depends on a knowledge of the game, a contextual awareness which for the player incorporates “the schemas, skills and know-how which dispose her to read and play the game” (ibid.: 76) within the relational space of the player’s interactions. This common-sense knowledge is not a self-aware consciousness, which would surely minimise one’s effectiveness as a player, but nevertheless the player’s shared assumptions, skill and use of space epitomises a practical reflexive performance. This, of course, is akin to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*, which functions below consciousness and “produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemas engendered by history” (1977: 82). This also infers that the exclusionary tendencies of national identity can operate to exclude those who do not have a feel for the game, or lead them to self-exclude. Such dispositions are incomprehensible to outsiders who cannot immediately immerse themselves in an unfamiliar field.

The above discussion also emphasises the relevance of thinking about the body when considering performance, and the need to move away from mind-body dualisms. For consciousness is embedded in the body, not separate from it. Thus the body is a carrier of culture and identity, not merely as embodied representation but through performance – what it does, how it moves, speaks, stands and sits. Performance in this sense is concerned with *becoming* a subject through embodied, affective and relational (to other people, to spaces and to objects) practices. The complex relationship between the body and performance, in which reflexivity disappears and reappears, is particularly evident when we start to consider the ways in which identity is performed. There are roles which we are conscious of at certain times and not others, and we undertake actions which are not governed by consciousness but which might give rise to intense self-awareness in unfamiliar contexts.

In the following attempt to distinguish the kinds of performance which express and transmit national identity, I look at grand formal rituals, popular rituals, touristic staging of the nation, and everyday performances.

Formal Rituals and Invented Ceremonies

The most recognisable way in which national identity is performed is on those grand occasions when the nation and its symbolic attributes are elevated in public display. In highly specified, disciplinary performances, soldiers, police, marching bands, government ministers, honorary officials, members of royalty and functionaries carry out specified, pre-ordained manoeuvres to ensure the effective conveyance of efficiency and majesty. Across the world, Independence Day celebrations, presidential inaugurations, flag-raising, anthem singing, religious occasions, funerals of important figures, military parades and 'archaic customs' tend to follow the same format year upon year, inscribing highly selective histories on space.

Most of these rituals have been devised to appear time-honoured but they are "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983), primarily emerging between 1870 and 1914, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition. By circumscribing the use of specific costumes, imposing a rigid order of events, including pseudo-antique artefacts, they form a pageantry that is saturated with the *gravitas* commonly accorded to ancient rituals.

Certain modes of social performance are subject to a control which minimises the potential for improvisation and attempts to eradicate ambiguity (Edensor, 2000, 2001). Thus the key personnel in the organisation of large-scale national rituals – the stage-managers, choreographers and directors of the event, along with the costume designers and stage-hands – coordinate the sequence of events and train the participants in how to perform appropriately. The 'correct' enaction of these rituals often achieves the illusion of fixity and common purpose, and failure to carry out the necessary manoeuvres, or to adopt the correct disposition or attire, can result in harsh censure. In 1982, Michael Foot, the then leader of the British Labour Party, attended the Ceremony of Remembrance at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, Central London. Much media coverage of the event focused on Foot's dress, which was said to resemble a "donkey jacket", and, as such, showed how little the politician respected the seriousness of the occasion, bringing into question his patriotism and his competence as a potential future Prime Minister.

These grandiloquent pageants frequently inculcate specifiable forms of bodily conduct and comportment by which groups transmit ideals and reproduce memory through disciplined performance. According to Connerton (1989), by demanding stylised and repetitive performances from the participants, memory and identity become inscribed into the body. Since there is no scope for interpretation or improvisation in these enactions, they become part of "social habit memory". One way of conceptualising these 'incorporating'

rituals is to consider them as part of a systematic attempt to channel the energies of popular carnivalesque customs into a more 'civilised' form. The adherence people felt to carnival could be transferred so that the state could project "the paradigm of an ethical citizenry" (Lloyd and Thomas, 1998: 53). The effects of these attempts can be to reduce meaning:

The hallmark of festive behaviour, its superabundance of symbols and meanings, (must) be shrunk as much as possible to a handful of quickly and easily understood ideas ... a borrowed image of difference made to stand for the nation as a whole (Guss, 2000: 13).

Such stagings are likely to erase any reference to conflict and oppression, masking issues of power and domination which may have previously inhered, but imprinting them with different traces of power. Nevertheless, while formal occasions such as these aim at the transmission of orthodox meanings, the forum they afford for convivial, public congregation means that they are rarely unanimously performed but may offer opportunities to subvert or ignore 'official' transmissions, as in those who used the funeral of Princess Diana to enjoy a day out without leaning towards any displays of grief or observance.

In contemporary times, many of the large-scale commemorations that celebrate national identity are increasingly being performed on a global stage, testifying to the increasing *mediatisation* of grand national ceremonies (Thompson, 1995: 179-206). Commentators refer to the televised broadcast of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 as an event that heralded a national communion via the media. The Queen's speech, the Royal Tournament, the Trooping of the Colour, and royal weddings and funerals have been a staple of the contemporary British television diet. Becoming merely part of the annual television timetable has removed much of the mystique and gravity of such events. And such televised events are also accompanied by other, looser, more informal spectacular dramas, ranging from international sporting events to Royal Command Performances and charity telethons which offer more convivial shared theatricals.

The flow of global images of self-hood and otherness partially engenders the need for national(ist) guardians to "record, preserve and collect" (Gillis, 1994: 14). For within global culture, there has been a proliferation of memories on offer, including global events such as the assassination of American President J. F. Kennedy, the Moon Landings, events such as Live Aid and the September 11th bombing of the World Trade Centre. This abundance of memories decentres official, national forms of remembrance. We can choose from an

ever-expanding range of memories according to the diverse contexts of identification in which we find ourselves.

In this context, Gillis argues that 'traditional' performances are now less likely to promote memory, for "traditional memory sites actually discourage engagement with the past and induce forgetting rather than remembering" (ibid.). Especially in an era of detraditionalisation and informalisation, remembering is an engaged process which does not merely involve the passing down of 'official' knowledge but also the creative, sensual, expressive arts of narrating and staging improvisations. This is well exemplified in the case of the Welsh Eisteddfod, which, in its modern incarnation, was devised as a spectacular display of Welshness primarily for English people and was initially circumscribed by formal poetry reading and musical performance. More recently, however, it has become an event containing many more performances, ranging from pop concerts and raves to political demonstrations and displays of politically informed art. This decentering of 'official' and 'high' culture is furthered by the television transmission of these contested and heterogeneous enactments (Davies, 1998).

Gillis maintains that by "the end of the 1960s, the era of national commemoration was clearly drawing to a close, but not before bequeathing to later generations a plethora of monuments, holidays, cemeteries, museums and archives" (1994: 14). Thus, these rituals retain some of their power but are merely part of a wider range of ceremonies devised to express identity.

Popular Rituals: Sport and Carnival

What is useful about Connerton's account of disciplined, incorporating ritual, is that it draws attention to *somatic involvement*. However, such embodied action is also apparent during more convivial, pleasurable and playful ceremonies which may be equally memorable and significant for participants in a host of popular sites where less formal, directed rituals occur, places of public congregation such as sports stadia, parks and civic squares. In addition, national festivities are carried out in more quotidian, homely spaces, involving family feasts and communal rituals, such as Bonfire Night, Burns Night and Thanksgiving (see Siskind, 1992). I suggest that the power of disciplinary incorporating rituals is matched by the affective qualities of these more carnivalesque celebrations, where looser, more improvisatory performances are enacted. In this section, I will look at sport and popular carnivals to explore occasions where bodily expression and emotional participation manifest highly charged expressions of national identity.

Probably the most currently powerful form of popular national performance is that found in sport, progressively more a global spectacle: "an embodied practice in which meanings are generated and whose representation and interpretation are open to negotiation and contest" (MacClancy, 1996: 4). Sport is increasingly situated in the mediatised matrix of national life, is institutionalised in schools, widely represented in a host of cultural forms and is an everyday practice for millions of national subjects.

Famously, shortly after its inception as an organised pursuit, sport was used in the English public schools to train pupils to reinforce national superiority and develop the moral manliness deemed necessary to rule in the colonies. Prepared to endure pain stoically, concerned with 'fair play' and team spirit, these middle-class schoolboy exemplars were mythicised as future heroic colonialists, and their deeds were interwoven with imperial conquest and war in poetic and ideological accounts which mapped sport onto empire (Mangan, 1996). Likewise the idealised English batsman in the game of cricket was utilised to transmit ideas about class and nation. Such characters were exemplary "gentlemen", where as "noble and leisured amateurs", they were "elevated into a new civic idea of vigour, integrity and flair" (Holt, 1996: 53) through their conduct on the field, their immaculate white garb. Later, they were iconic *suburban* paragons, "modest, reserved and thoroughly respectable" (ibid.: 68) in another form of idealised Englishness.

These performances of national identity on the sporting field are no less persistent today, for national sporting styles are commonly recognisable. In football, French, German, Italian, Brazilian, English and Cameroonian national teams are easily identifiable by fans and journalists. These performances of 'traditional' national style are expected, even demanded, often irrespective of success on the field, and express particular national qualities which form a common global understanding of where particular sports stars and teams originate. They are, of course, well suited to propagating stereotypes about self-identity and otherness. Whilst these identifiable styles certainly nourish discursive pre-conceptions, they also emerge from cultural contexts – ideas about training regimes, the respective values accorded to hard work, teamwork and individual skill and flamboyance. They are therefore part of a *habitus*, expressing shared dispositions to bodily endeavour, and so conventions of play are shaped by unreflexive, embodied performance and habits. Where these 'natural' approaches to sport seem to be threatened, trainers and fans may protest. For instance, Kuper (1996) writes about the reign of former England manager Bobby Robson, as manager of PSV Eindhoven. Despite the team's

success, winning the Dutch league in consecutive seasons, he was disliked by the fans for altering the style in which the team played, apparently introducing the less artful 'English style' instead of the elegant 'total football' for which Dutch football is renowned.

Sporting performance frequently expresses particular forms of embodied capital and cultural value. Stokes discusses the symbolic importance of wrestling in Turkey as a hegemonic assertion of masculine values. Grounded in Turkish history as a "theatrical enactment of the struggles and contests of everyday life" (1996: 24), wrestling also allows for a subversive acknowledgement that craftiness and deceit, rather than merely brute force, are also part of the constitution of keeping face and maintaining a masculine status. Tellingly, Stokes compares enthusiasm for wrestling with that for football. Whereas wrestling is seen as definitively and traditionally Turkish, football is conceived of as progressive, modern and European, highlighting the Janus-faced nature of national identity which asserts both tradition and modernity.

These metaphorical codes are most pertinent where representatives of different nations meet in sporting competition. Rauch (1996) shows how, for the supporters of French boxer Georges Carpentier, his bout with the American World Heavyweight Champion Jack Dempsey theatricalised the supposed qualities of each nation, the brutish American against the skilful, cultivated French boxer. The French fighter was endowed with various attributes, epitomising family values, rurality, honour and sophistication, and this was conceived as being embodied in his distinctive boxing style which was distinguished from the purely brutal style of Dempsey.

There are other threats to the nation from sporting participants who do not perform 'properly' as national representatives. In international sporting endeavour, national identity is the uppermost identity on display. This was graphically illustrated by an event during the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico. Two Black American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, after winning the gold and bronze medals respectively in the 200 metres athletics final, performed a protest against American racism: in support of the radical Black Power movement they raised black-gloved fists as the US flag was raised and the anthem played. This astonishing performance was televised across the world, interjecting racial protest "into a ceremonial system that quite literally had no place for representing non-national collective identities such as race, class, religion or ethnicity" (Hartmann, 1996: 550-551). So far beyond the pale was the act believed to be, that it resulted in harsh censure from the American media and the two protesters were debarred from future contests in the USA. But national identity may also be challenged through sporting contests, notably

the symbolic role of Catalan and Basque teams in Spanish football competition (Walton, 2001).

Like sport, dance is a form of popular embodied performance where particular styles are believed to embody national characteristics. Desmond suggests that social identities are “signalled, formed and negotiated through bodily movement” (1994: 34) and indeed, dancing is invariably culturally located as a specific affective expression of identity. Normative embodied performances are evident in the ways in which boundaries around identity may be drawn by identifying national styles, for instance, through the articulation of the Anglo-American conception that Latin dance styles evince a primitive and dangerous sexuality in contrast to the refined movement of European dances (*ibid.*: 47-50). Dancing performances are especially evident on public display during carnivals where bodies are displayed in expressive ceremonies that tend to be fluid and concerned with a politics of pleasure.

Rather than fixing identity through rigorous stage management and disciplined acting, these popular festivals are more protean, adaptable and can be the site of divergent performances and change from year to year. David Guss’s marvellous study of popular festivals in Venezuela highlights the multiple ways in which festivals may be interpreted and contested, varying from global, nationalistic, religious, ethnic and local celebrations. Since the 1950s, many Venezuelan festivals have been drastically transformed by their adoption by the state, which has resituated local traditions in national contexts, through the setting up of a state-funded infrastructure central to the project of establishing a shared national identity. These desires to record and curate performative rituals highlight a nostalgic disposition towards tradition which becomes manifest in their incorporation into national(ist) projects. No longer expressed solely in local contexts, they are “suspended between the worlds of ritual obligation and national spectacle” (Guss, 2000: 20).

As Guss argues, “anthropologists and folklorists have ignored the pluralistic nature of cultural forms, preferring to characterise them as the uniform expression of a collective consciousness” (*ibid.*: 3). Functionally described as rites devised to maintain social solidarity or articulate shared cultural norms, such views proffer static conception of culture and erase agency. Yet Guss convincingly shows that the development of Venezuelan festivals has placed them within wider matrices of signification. Now, they are more widely contested by “local factions, political parties, commercial interests, government, church, media and tourism all tearing at the meaning of these events” (*ibid.*: 21), not to mention ethnic groups of pre-colonial Venezuelans and Black groups.

Staging the Nation

In the atrical terms, tourism encourages the production of distinct kinds of stage and is an activity which sustains a host of competing performative norms (see Edensor, 2000, 2001). National tourism strategies increasingly seek to carve out a unique niche that might attract the 'golden hordes', which depends on both advertising generic landscapes and attractions, and promoting particular symbolic sites and events. Part of this imperative to entice tourists and to reward their choice of destination with memorable experiences involves the staging of the nation.

The staging of the nation for education and entertainment is a long-standing feature of national culture, but it has primarily been devised to appeal to and instruct domestic visitors. For instance, large showpieces such as the Great Exhibition in 1851 and formal attractions such as the museum were contrived to convey particular attributes and inculcate a specific kind of regulated performance from the museum's visitors, to attain "new norms of public conduct" (Bennett, 1995: 24).

The stage management of symbolic national spaces and events is now principally directed to less didactic forms of instruction, where affective, sensual and mediatised stagings combine with a culture of instruction to produce a synthetic form often termed *edutainment*. In particular tourist settings, and across the cities of the West, there is an ongoing proliferation of what Gottdiener (1997) calls "themed spaces". In such encoded spaces, stage managers attempt to "create and control a cultural as well as a physical environment" (Freitag, 1994: 541). The extension of these themed spaces into shopping centres and high streets includes such institutionalised theatrical settings as themed pubs and restaurants. The most (economically) successful form of the over-coded pub is, of course, the Irish theme pub, which has been exported to many areas of the world. The staging here involves the creation of a dramatic space in which Irishness is constructed by the inclusion of actual and simulated artefacts and designs which accord with media representations. These shorthand signs proliferate across cities and so expressions of national identity become more promiscuous, colonising spaces beyond the nation from which they originate.

In addition to these spectacular and mundane themed spaces of national identity, the tourist industry stages identity in the production of 'indigenous', 'folkloric' customs where tourists may collect signs of local or national distinctiveness. Typically, tours and hotels organise displays of 'native' dancing and music, selecting which aspects of ritual are 'accessible' to tourists. By charting a course between 'exoticism' and comprehensibility, performances are typically devised to titillate tourists without alienating them by sticking too

closely to complicated cultural meanings. This cultural staging inevitably raises problems about the reproduction of stereotypes associated with primitivism, exoticism and eroticism.

To discuss how these performances can be fraught with controversy, I want to focus on the display of *sega* dancing for tourists staying in large hotels in Mauritius. The 'traditional' dance of the Creole population of the island, *sega* dancing accompanies a folk percussive music which has recently developed to embrace an electronic pop musical form. The dance is widely performed on beaches by Creole groups during holidays and at weekends, and is understood as a symbolic form of resistance to the brutalities of the slave plantation system which their antecedents suffered, through which East African and Madagascan people were enslaved and imported to work on Mauritian sugar plantations. Since the 1980s, a large and lucrative tourist industry has generated enormous economic development in Mauritius. Aiming at the exclusive end of the market, large 'international standard' hotels cater for wealthy Western tourists, forming enclaves that minimise contact with Mauritian people and non-tourist space. Because of the dearth of evident Mauritian culture in these self-contained holiday venues, music and dance shows have been imported into hotels to provide a 'taste of Mauritius'. Inevitably, tourist managers have alighted on *sega* as filling this gap in the tourist experience.

According to many Mauritians, the erotic nature of the dance has been adapted so that instead of a celebration of virility and vitality the performance of *sega* has become a spectacle designed to titillate. Compressed into floor shows, glamorously aestheticised and accompanied by Westernised versions of *sega* music, locals complain that the meaning of the dance has become cheapened and diluted for tourists, so that Mauritians are now sexualised objects rather than convivial participants in their own dance. In addition, it has been necessary for *sega* musicians to be flexible and learn a range of Western 'standards' to induce a sense of semi-domestic comfort for hotel guests. Thus they have become skilled in shifting between *sega* and Western pop performances. Whilst concerns about the lack of 'authenticity' are widely shared by Mauritians, the employment and skilling of musicians has regenerated *sega*. Supplementing the folk performances which concentrate on the traditional music – based solely on percussion – the musical form has developed with the integration of Western instruments such as guitars and keyboards, and has become popular amongst Mauritian youth. Various forms blend *sega* with African, jazz and reggae musical styles, serving as contemporary expressions of Mauritian and Creole identity. Although the staging of forms of 'traditional' or

'folk' national culture for tourists may be presented in 'inauthentic' and spectacular fashion, 'reconstructing' ethnicity and national identity, it also has the potential to replenish moribund traditions and thus feed into new expressions of identity (Wood, 1998).

Everyday Performances: Popular Competencies, Embodied Habits and Synchronised Enactions

Having discussed the consciously collective, official, popular, commodified and touristic forms of national theatricality, I now look at how national identity depends for its power upon the habitual performances of everyday life. A focus on quotidian enactions develops Billig's point that much national identity inheres in the 'banal' and the everyday. The continuity and reliability of familiar enactions contribute to a sense of security "grounded in our experiences of predictable routines in time and space" (Silverstone, 1994: 7).

Such performances are shaped by unreflexive assumptions and dispositions as often as they display calculated intentionality, revealing kinds of habitus that evolve within a national field. Usually, discussions about culturally coded patterns of behaviour focus upon dispositions that evolve around class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality, for instance. Yet notions of national forms of habitus have barely been discussed. Moreover, I argue that the centrality of class, ethnic and gendered forms of habitus intersects with national dispositions. For instance, distinctive ways of drinking alcohol, cooking, child-rearing and home-making are inflected by class, ethnicity and gender as well as by national identity.

I argued earlier that rather than distinguishing between self-aware performance and iterative performativity, it is better to conceive the two modes as imbricated in each other. This is especially pertinent with regard to unreflexive performances. For instance, a theatrical performer may be so used to playing out the same role that it becomes 'second nature', becomes so sedimented in the habitual bodily enactions required that reflexivity and self-monitoring are no longer necessary. Equally, habitual performances which have been performed unreflexively for a lifetime may suddenly be revealed to those performing them as social constructions. A confrontation with different cultural codes can reveal that others act differently, inducing a heightened sense of awareness towards what seemed common-sense enactions. Reflexivity and unreflexivity are not properties that are associated with particular kinds of enaction, but depend upon the contexts of performance.

Habitual performances are constituted by an array of techniques and technologies, practical, embodied codes which guide what to do in particular

settings. Where these are communally shared, they achieve a working consensus about what are appropriate and inappropriate enactions, and are part of a “discrete concretisation of cultural assumptions” (Carlson 1996: 16). Culturally bound procedures are enmeshed in diverse embodied dispositions, organised around which clothes, movements, modes of looking, photographing and recording, expressing delight and communicating are ‘proper’ in particular contexts. Internal and external surveillance restricts the scope of performances and underscores communal conventions about ‘appropriate’ ways of behaving. Such shared norms thus instantiate a way of being a national subject. But while they need to be learnt, often in youth, they typically become unreflexive, habitual, ‘second nature’. This is why it is so difficult for those unfamiliar with national cultures to simply learn them and ‘pass’ as national subjects unproblematically.

The everyday can partly be captured by habit, unreflexive, inscribed on the body, a normative unquestioned way of being in the world: “from the embodiment of habit a consistency is given to the self which allows for the end of doubt” (Harrison, 2000: 503). The repetition of daily, weekly and annual routines, how and when to eat, wash, move, work and play, constitutes a realm of ‘common sense’, offering a deep understanding of the link between culture and identity. Habits organise life for individuals, linking them to groups so that “cultural community is often established by people together tackling the world around them with familiar manoeuvres” (Frykman and Löfgren, 1996: 10-11). These shared habits strengthen affective and cognitive links, consolidate a sense of shared action and *doxa* [a strict belief system] to constitute a habitus, including acquired skills which minimise unnecessary reflection every time a decision is required. Habits are “a way to economise on life” (ibid.: 10) and are forged by doing things rather than thinking about them.

Crucially though, habits are not static. The habitus is the practical basis for action, but consists of “forms of competence, skill and multi-track dispositions” rather than “fixed and mechanical blueprints” (Crossley, 2001: 110). Nevertheless, the popular saying, “old habits die hard”, is also partly accurate, since the familiar social world consists of enduring contexts and habits which depend upon each other.

Whilst the shared norms of actors help to consolidate norms of everyday performance, so does the regulatory framework of the state. Through surveillance, laws, broadcasting policies and economic management, the state provides a regulatory apparatus which informs many quotidian actions. The nation is thus partly sustained by the mundane machinery of the state. It is also

significant that the state, or certain reform-oriented sections of the middle class, are apt to identify 'bad habits' that are degrading the 'fabric' of the nation. Government campaigns focusing on 'good' health, parenting, hygiene, diet, financial management and driving continue to champion 'good habits' (see Frykman and Löfgren, 1996: 7-9).

It is likely that friends and family share this practical knowledge, so that it may rarely be challenged, but everyday ways of doing things are also conveyed through popular representations in soap operas, magazines and other cultural forms. So dense are these references to habitual performances, and so repetitive are their enactions by one's intimates, that they acquire a force which mitigates against deconstruction.

In order to convey the entrenched nature of such performances, I want to discuss three forms of quotidian, habitual performances which consolidate a sense of national identity.

Popular competencies are those forms of everyday practical knowledge which enables people to accomplish mundane tasks. The ability of citizens to carry out the formal requirements necessary to get things done is a form of practical knowledge partly inculcated by the infrastructural requirements of the modern state. For instance, the state requires that people learn how to drive, and determines the range of specific skills required of drivers and car owners: what side of the road to drive on, how to license, tax and service the car, where to park (and avoid fines), how fast one can drive and where particular speed limits pertain. Likewise, the citizen must learn how to pay bills to the appropriate agencies, know how and where to post letters, vote, dump rubbish, apply for welfare benefits and register with the health services.

In addition, there are a host of other popular competencies that facilitate the running of one's life. We know where to take public transport from and how the driver or conductor is paid, where to buy certain things, where to enrol at local libraries, where to go to and how to worship. As well as demanding intimate local geographical knowledge, these tasks also require a practical ability to carry out these tasks with a minimum of fuss. Such competencies also tend to be duplicated across the nation since an infrastructure of recognisable venues and institutionalised settings provides shared sites in which to perform familiar actions.

The extent to which this is grounded in a national habitus becomes clear when we move abroad and are dumbfounded by the everyday competencies which we lack. Our limitations as practically competent human beings in these settings require a rapid retraining in how to get things done. The effect can be

similar when we meet visitors from other nations and try to explain how to accomplish missions when such explanation has rarely been required before. To acquire the second nature embodied in practical habit is difficult to achieve purely by cognitive application, but instead requires a sustained immersion in everyday life so that common-sense enactions become ingrained and unreflexive.

Embodied habits are the forms of bodily disposition and social interaction, often criss-crossed with class, gender, ethnicity and age, which are closest to Bourdieu's notion of habitus as practical, embodied knowledge. I am referring here to normative kinds of manners or etiquette which instantiate what forms of conduct are appropriate in particular contexts, but also the embodied habits evident in ways of walking, sitting, conversing with friends and other modes of conviviality which constitute shared worlds of meaning and action.

Craib (1998: 173) points out the (enormously culturally varied) forms of unconscious emotional communication – gestures, smiles and body language – which are often ignored by cultural and social theorists. Integral to the unconscious ways in which identity is performed, these culturally located unreflexive enactions help to constitute a sense of belonging. Again, an unfamiliarity with cultural contexts can reveal the situated nature of such forms of embodied knowledge. We can identify “the small differences in style, of speech or behaviour, of someone who has learned our ways yet but was not bred in them” (Williams, 1961: 42). In unfamiliar settings, ways of talking to other people may seem too loud or direct, too self-effacing or timid. Alsmark observes how conflicts around everyday habits arise in ethnically mixed Swedish housing estates around “how green space should be used, how peace and quiet at night should be observed, how rubbish should be disposed of, how stairs should be cleaned” (1996: 90). The same applies to ways of wearing clothes, the kind of small talk to engage in, how loud to laugh, the gestures one uses to convey irritation, welcome or a host of other intentions, and all the small gestures within a repertoire of what we might describe as *expressive competence*. As Spillman considers, in unfamiliar contexts the inhabitants’ “easy way of dealing with shop assistants may be a puzzle”, or “the proper tone of debate amongst friends” may be baffling and difficult to achieve, so that a sense of being apart is difficult to ameliorate (1997: 6).

Furthermore, there are a host of everyday practices that are concerned with the (re)production of social spaces. Thus there are proper ways to behave in

public spaces such as cafes, gardens, parks and bars, and domestic spaces like kitchens, meeting rooms and bedrooms. There are, of course, national stereotypes which are formed around these spaces and activities – Italians are ‘good lovers’, the French are ‘excellent cooks’ and the English have a skill in gardening. This not only testifies to the easy constructions of others as a means of drawing ethnic and national boundaries but also identifies how certain activities are valued more highly than others. Whilst perhaps more heavily marked by class and gender, embodied competencies also inhere in evidently national performances.

Synchronised enactments are the quotidian rituals and routines of everyday life. The complicated construction of national time includes the important element of cyclical time, the enduring repetition of daily, weekly and annual routines, and entrenched notions about *when* particular actions should be carried out. More broadly, repetition is essential to a sense of identity, for without recurrent experiences and unreflexive habits there would be no consistency given to experience, no temporal framework within which to make sense of the world. Daily experience comprises simultaneous performances in the pursuit of work, leisure and reproduction, which compose distinct kinds of cultural rhythmicity or social pulse. At an institutional level, this takes the form of attending school between particular hours, shopping and drinking at certain times, and working according to a schedule. Thus state regulation ensures that there are conventions about when a whole variety of activities are carried out. And this is supplemented by an assortment of other popular practices not subject to official regulation but which follow conventions about when and where specific performances should occur, during circadian, weekly, monthly, annual and life cycles, constructing forms of collective temporality. For instance, in Morocco and in certain other Mediterranean countries, large numbers of people congregate on the streets between 5 and 7 p.m. to shop, socialise and walk. Moreover, in the sphere of leisure there are many allotments of routinised time when, for instance, sporting or theatrical occasions can form part of weekly or monthly timetables: football matches are apt to take place at particular times, as are bullfights, and likewise, a multitude of political and social meetings are stitched into collective schedules. These rhythms vary enormously according to different national customs.

Anderson's (1983) emphasis on the rise of printing and the subsequent distribution of national newspapers in the construction of the *imagined community* identifies the extent to which national routines are enmeshed in media consumption. Daily newspapers are consumed by large sections of most

national populations, and, even more, the synchronicity of television-viewing habits ensures that particular schedules are followed by vast numbers. Moores has described this mediated timetabling as the “domestication of national standard time” (1988: 67), and Barker considers that “television sustains routines which are significant aspects of the reproduction of social life... it organises and coordinates a national public social world” (1999: 66): television schedules reproduce the structure of the household’s day. The repetitive enactments of viewing are experiences embedded in biography and the life-cycle, in institutional time. Television is, therefore, a means by which viewers in local contexts can feel part of a shared national experience which chimes with their own routines. It links “the national public into the private lives of its citizens, through the creation of both sacred and quotidian moments of national communion” (Morley, 2000: 107). This temporal structure is divided up into daily routines, annual events and special events. And despite the advance of satellite and cable television, most television schedules remain organised on a national basis, and the most popular programmes are still those which are shared by huge numbers of the national viewing public. Hence participation in familiar broadcast schedules informs an understanding of what it is to be a member of the nation, and those unfamiliar with such experiential, shared routines can experience an outsideness that excludes them from national belonging.

Conclusion

In order to retain their power, performative norms need to be continually enacted, whether these are the spectacular disciplinary performances of national identity or the unreflexive habits of everyday life. And prescriptive conventions and common-sense values are rarely disrupted if they are performed unreflexively and uncritically. The continuance of normative performances reveals the ways in which power can define and inscribe meaning and action on bodies. Yet the world is increasingly full of diverse performances which spark competing notions about what actions are ‘appropriate’, ‘competent’ and ‘normal’, and also may produce a reflexive awareness of the habitual performances which are so integral to individual and group identities.

In addition, despite the prevalence of codes and norms, conventions can be destabilised by rebellious performances, or by multiple, simultaneous enactments on the same stage. Also we might consider cynical performances – akin to what Feifer (1985) calls “post-tourism” – which stop short of rebellion, and are

typified by a 'role-distance' engendered by an awareness of the constructed nature of a role but an unwillingness to challenge it overtly. Rather than enacting an overt challenge, enjoyment is gained from a knowing participation in the artifice of identity. There are opportunities for people to escape the constraints of national identity when travelling abroad. However, more likely is a recourse to the known, to the acting out of familiar routines to encompass otherness, or an escape from such *terra incognita*. Thus expatriate communities frequently recreate familiar stages which reinstate a sense of belonging, both participating in spectacular communal events and performing everyday routines to tether national identity in unfamiliar surroundings.

Yet in an increasingly informalised world, previously tenacious traditions, rituals and everyday routines can be contested. As disciplined ceremonies are becoming less sustainable and more heterogeneous expressions of (national) identity are emerging, so it becomes increasingly difficult to extend the life of formal behaviour and supposedly 'good' habits. In contemporary times, global processes increasingly penetrate everyday life "through the objects we use, the activities and routines we enact, the places we inhabit, the relations we have and/or seek". Accordingly, as Frykman and Löfgren assert,

In a mobile culture where people constantly meet otherness, habits are brought to the surface, becoming manifest and thereby challenged. It is precisely because people in their everyday lives meet different habits that they are forced to verbalise and make conscious the things that are otherwise taken for granted and thus invisible. Once a habit has been described, it has also become something on which one must take up a stance, whether to kick the habit or to stick tenaciously to it (1996: 14).

Patterns of performance are undoubtedly becoming more "varied, differentiated and de-differentiated" (Rojek, 2000: 9), "performative and counter performative cultures abound" (ibid.: 17) and stages multiply, including 'mundane' sites. Yet through the global expansion of habits and enactions, as well as representations, identities, objects and spaces, aspects of the national are simultaneously decentred and multiplied. In other words, national identity is redistributed, multiplying the possibilities for making extensive and complex connections between the elements of national identity within an ever-more complex cultural matrix. Concentrated and localised expressions of identity may be diluted, but opportunities exist for more hybrid and complex constellations of association to be wrought; opportunities for expressing and performing national identity that expand in space and over time. As do the possibilities for performing alternative and contesting identities.

Although forms of performance may be increasingly diverse, and ambiguities always exist, I have tried to show that there are identifiable ways of performing national identity. These range from the old disciplinary (usually invented) 'traditional' rituals which marked the birth of modern nations, to looser, more popular events such as sport and carnival; and from carefully constructed enactments and staging of the nation in the tourist industry, to the innumerable habits and unreflexive rituals of everyday life which secure us in place and provide a temporal structure for (imagined) collectivities and individuals. And because so many of the performative elements I have discussed are outside the channels of consciousness, they constitute doxic beliefs, being sedimented in embodied dispositions, manifest in everyday and spectacular actions, giving a temporal and affective order to life. Despite the global multiplication, fragmentation and dispersal of elements of identity based on, tangential to and opposed to the national, national identity does not seem to be in decline. For the totality of these increasingly diverse performances of national identity still sustains a common-sense understanding that the nation is important and central to belonging, and provides a practical orientation to the nation as the contextualising field which bounds these actions.

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