



Performativity (The New Critical Idiom)

By James Loxley

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Do our writings and our utterances reflect or describe our world, or do they intervene in it? Do they, perhaps, help to make it? If so, how? Within what limits, and with what implications? Contemporary theorists have considered the ways in which the languages we speak might be 'performative' in just this way, and their thinking on the topic has had an important impact on a broad range of academic disciplines.

In this accessible introduction to a sometimes complex field, James Loxley:

- offers a concise and original account of critical debates around the idea of performativity
- traces the history of the concept through the work of such influential theorists as J. L. Austin, John Searle, Stanley Fish, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man and Judith Butler
- examines the implications of performativity for fields such as literary and cultural theory, philosophy, performance studies, and the theory of gender and sexuality.
- emphasises the political and ethical implications that its most important theorists have drawn from the notion of performativity
- suggests ways in which major debates around the topic have obscured its alternative interpretations and uses.

For students trying to make sense of performativity and related concepts such as the speech act, 'ordinary language', and iterability, and for those seeking to understand the place of these ideas in contemporary performance theory, this clear guide will prove indispensable. *Performativity* offers not only a path through challenging critical terrain, but a new understanding of just what is at stake in the exploration of this field.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

James Loxley is senior lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of several books and articles on seventeenth century drama and poetry and on literary theory and philosophy.

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