Chapter 1

Sociology and the rituals of interaction

The various stories about the origins of the concept of performance always tend to share one name in common: Erving Goffman. Goffman was trained in the University of Chicago School of Sociology, founded by Robert Park. The Chicago sociologists used the urban space and institutions around them to develop insights based on close observation of human interactions, a method sometimes called human ecology. But it was Goffman's work in particular that had an impact on the thinking about performance. Most accounts of the development of a non-theatrical concept of performance begin with a work he first published in 1956, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. This was a groundbreaking analysis of the structures and dynamics of interpersonal encounters, which built on an essay published the previous year. We shall look at what Goffman outlines in that essay before moving back to *Presentation of Self*.

'On face-work' appeared in 1955 in a journal of psychiatry. His other essays of this period appeared in journals of sociology and anthropology. It is that disciplinary fluidity which suggests something of the new territory being opened up by research based in observations of the 'glances, gestures, positionings and verbal statements' of regular, continuous human contact. 'On face-work' lays the groundwork for much that was to come, from Goffman and from others, by the simple shift of focus from individual person to group interaction. As he said later, in 1967, 'the proper study of interaction is not the individual and his psychology, but rather the syntactical relations among the acts of different persons mutually present to one another' (Goffman 2005: 2, 1). Needing to forge a new vocabulary, Goffman defined 'face' as 'an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes' and to 'have face' is to present an 'image that is internally consistent': 'At such times', says Goffman, underlining his demolition of the romance attached to that item of the human body which has so often been regarded as most personal, 'the person's face clearly is something that is not lodged in or on his body, but rather that is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter'. Because

https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139600194.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

'face' is dependent on socially approved attributes the individual is locked into a system of social expectation, which means that individuals are as much concerned with others' behaviour as their own, so that a person conducts him- or herself in an encounter 'so as to maintain both his own face and the face of the other participants' (Goffman 2005: 5–7, 11).

On this basis 'face-work' designates 'the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face', such as maintaining poise when under pressure. And in studying those actions one becomes aware of what Goffman calls 'the traffic rules of social interaction': 'Each person, subculture and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices' (Goffman 2005: 11–13). The word 'repertoire' hints at the way the argument is tending, for once one understands the rules of social interaction as something learnt by individuals, as a way of always saving face, then it becomes possible to see face-work as a form of performance. This impression is sustained by the way a subsequent essay, 'The Nature of Deference and Demeanor' (1956), begins to deploy its terminology: 'most actions which are guided by rules of conduct are performed unthinkingly, the questioned actor saying he performs "for no reason"'. But, unthinking though it may be, we are looking at something more than incidental behaviour: 'An act that is subject to a rule of conduct is, then, a communication, for it represents a way in which selves are confirmed – both the self for which the rule is an obligation and the self for which it is an expectation' (Goffman 2005: 49, 51). Rule-bound acts that establish and communicate selves happen elsewhere than in front of painted scenery.

The analogy with scripted theatre that is being gently introduced turns out to have some explosive effects. For, rather than keep in place the idea that a learnt role is fully emotionally inhabited, Goffman's argument suggests that the role is constantly negotiated and is dependent as much on the reactions of others as on individual feelings. Indeed individual feelings are always imbricated with, and constructed by, the apparent responses of others. And these responses are governed by a repertoire that is learnt. In saying this Goffman is in a very different territory from the linguistic philosopher J.L. Austin who, the same year, conceived of the 'performative' utterance as an utterance that gets something done. Goffman might say that a performative utterance does get something done but only because it draws on and recycles elements of the available repertoire. The logic of this argument about the shaping force of the rules of interaction leads Goffman towards a wonderfully provocative attack on a deeply cherished ideological concept, where he asserts that human nature 'is not a very human thing. By acquiring it, the person becomes a kind of construct' (2005: 45).

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In the book that followed 'On face-work', *Presentation of Self*, Goffman elaborated the analogies with theatrical performance, again with explosive consequences. The general argument is that a person's management of the impression they give to others may be likened to a performer working on an audience, with a 'front' presented for public view and a 'back' area, in interactions governed by 'dramaturgical' discipline. Early on he defines his use of the word 'performance' as meaning 'all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants'. But he is clear that this differs from a 'theatrical performance or a staged confidence game' where routines are thoroughly scripted in advance. In everyday life the process of socialisation gives individuals the capacity to manage encounters and to recognise rules without necessarily knowing in advance what they are going to do nor how it works, so in that sense their performances are not 'acted'. Nevertheless an incapacity to manage demeanour in advance does not mean that individuals do not express themselves according to their own personal pre-formed repertoire (Goffman 1990: 26, 79–80).

After defining individual performance, the book moves on to look at the dynamics of interactions, taking a particular interest in moments when performance is disrupted or breaks down and the mechanisms used to avoid such moments. These mechanisms involve 'impression management' by both individuals and teams, where a sense of 'dramaturgical loyalty' or discipline has its effects on team behaviour. Taken together these observations could provide, Goffman suggests, a useful new approach to the analysis of social establishments as closed systems. Whereas hitherto establishments were viewed 'technically' (efficiency of the system), 'politically' (efficacy of command), 'structurally' (status divisions) and 'culturally' (operation of morals and norms), to these might be added a 'dramaturgical approach'. This would describe the 'techniques of impression management' that obtained in the establishment, which among other things would provide the basis for an analysis of power: 'Power of any kind must be clothed in effective means of displaying it, and will have different effects depending on how it is dramatized' (Goffman 1990: 232–34). Thus *Presentation of Self* firstly establishes a definition and working-through of what non-theatrical performance is and, secondly, suggests that non-theatrical performance can be used as a way of framing an object of study, offering a 'dramaturgical approach' that makes new sense of existing material. Performance is thus both a particular element of behaviour and a way of analysing. This double function remained associated with the term for ensuing decades, with its analytic capability giving it huge potency. This is illustrated in Goffman's passing note about power,

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which seems to suggest, a number of years before Foucault, that power is a dispersed effect maintained by discourse.

But given the way Goffman's work was used later on, we need to underline two of the early points. First, performance is not just any form of behaviour but is specifically behaviour which works to influence others: communicative behaviour. Second, everyday encounters are not consciously planned deceptions but they do proceed according to protocols deeply learnt through processes of socialisation. The analogy with theatre, instead of invoking an image of an individual in full control of an expressive apparatus that gives them power over others, works to do the reverse. It splits the individual into two parts: a performer, permanently under pressure to manage the impressions given in interactions; and the character, the entity created by the work of the performer. So while 'self-as-character' has been hitherto assumed to be 'housed within the body of its possessor', by Goffman's argument 'this self itself does not derive from its possessor' but is generated within the scene of the interaction with the effect that 'a self is imputed to him' by others. Lest there be any doubt the point is repeated: 'A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation – this self – is a *product* of a scene that comes off, and is not a *cause* of it.' He then screws it home: 'The self, then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited' (1990: 244–45).

Although it has been noted that the dramatic metaphor had limits as a sociological tool (for example, Manning 1991), it also functioned to demolish myths of human nature and organic selfhood, which in turn had implications for hitherto dominant ideas about the nature of knowledge. The world Goffman envisages is one of constant negotiation of positions, always being adjusted. In this world the learnt and expected conventions of social interactions may be thought of as 'ritual order', governed by a ritual code that works to maintain equilibrium. Because this ritual order 'seems to be organized basically on accommodative lines', one has to think about it differently from other types of social order. In particular one has to understand that it is not governed by facts:

> Facts are of the schoolboy's world – they can be altered by diligent effort but they cannot be avoided. But what the person protects and defends and invests his feelings in is an idea about himself, and ideas are vulnerable not to facts and things but to communications.

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> Communications belong to a less punitive scheme than do facts, for communications can be by-passed, withdrawn from, disbelieved, conveniently misunderstood. (2005: 42–43)

In demoting the importance of facts, emphasising their vulnerability to communication, Goffman's argument challenges the basis of the sort of positivist approach which assumes the stability of facts. And instead of 'fact'-based thinking he seems to encourage us towards a mode of thinking that assumes continual adjustment to always changing specific circumstances: relativism. The formulation of a relativist approach to the world has, as an integral part of it, the realisation that everyday human interactions can be described as performance.

But not perhaps as theatre. In the second edition of *Presentation*, in 1959, Goffman inserted a concluding note admitting that his extended elaboration of the theatre analogy was a 'rhetoric and manoeuvre'. His book was not, he clarified, about 'aspects of theatre that creep into everyday life' but instead about 'the structure of social encounters'. That said, the staging of theatrical characters involves 'the same techniques by which everyday persons sustain their real social situations'. To allow it to be imagined that the book was about theatre in everyday life would have the effect of softening the implications contained in the idea that the everyday is itself performed. The unsettling nature of those implications is clear in a slightly earlier passage where Goffman gathers up all his theatrical metaphors, the back region, the front with its props, the onstage team, the audience, all the apparatus of the social interaction, to conclude: 'The self is a product of all of these arrangements, and in all of its parts bears the marks of this genesis' (1990: 245–47). Not only has the self nothing to do with the essence of an individual, but as a constructed entity it always bears the marks of its particular history. On these terms Goffman's particular concept of performance contrasts remarkably with some of the assumptions later to be made by artistic performance makers who assumed that by stepping away from the artifice of theatre and embracing the 'everyday' they would come closer to a mode of performance that could express the real self, where they could escape mediation and illusion to produce authentic emotion. Goffman on the other hand suggests that the everyday is itself a site for the production of impressions and dramatic effects, and that there can be no self outside of mediation. Thus, while artistic performance makers may have persisted in their own particular fictions, Goffman's formulations about performance had their most profound impact and were developed considerably further in the work not of artists but of social scientists.

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For example, Goffman's distinction between 'self' and 'character' was used by Messinger, Sampson and Towne in their 1962 exploration of 'the uses of the "dramaturgic approach" to social experience', which is, they say, 'a mode of analysis finding increasing use in social-psychological circles'. They describe 'a perspective that renders life a kind of "theater"', as a mode of analysis, but they are also interested in where this places the analyst. As they see it, 'the actor's view of what he is doing, is not relevant to the dramaturgic analyst', whose job instead is to focus on the impression the actor is actually making. It's a model of analysis that, in contrast with what ethnographers in this period thought they should be doing, consciously keeps a distance when it reads social performances. Indeed this 'dramaturgic approach' is a long way removed from theatre dramaturgy. Certainly Goffman's influence is there but Messinger and his co-authors say that their approach specifically draws on Kenneth Burke's 'dramatism'. This term was coined by Burke as a name for the method he employed in his book *A Grammar of Motives* (1945). The book does what it says, in that it is an attempt to provide a 'grammar' of the 'basic forms of thought which . . . are exemplified in the attributing of motives'. To produce this 'grammar' Burke adopts some overarching terms that will enable him to describe a range of examples. These terms are 'act', 'scene', 'agent', 'agency' and 'purpose', and he explains their function: 'In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (agency), and the purpose.' Although there may be disagreements as to their interpretation, these words allow him to answer questions about what, when, who, how and why. But his interest is in the 'purely internal relationships' between the terms, seeing how they 'figure in actual statements about human motives'. And although his terminology, being derived from analysis of drama, intends to treat language and thought as 'modes of action' (1945: xv, xxii; my elision), the work is explicitly philosophical and based in analysis of written texts and words such as 'constitution'. As Elizabeth Burns says, Burke is not primarily concerned with social action 'but with basic forms of thought which underlie it' (1972: 20). In that respect it was to be Goffman who would be much more influential on modelling a concept of performance.

Contemporary with Goffman's attempts to describe the syntax and dramaturgy of human interaction other scholars were trying to apply the mathematical theory of games to analyses of human, and specifically economic, behaviour, as in von Neumann and Morgenstern's *Theory of Games and*

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Economic Behavior (1944) and Martin Shubik's *Game Theory and Related Approaches to Human Behaviour* (1964). Shubik has said that in the fifties he put too little emphasis on 'conversational game theory' and that the actual activities of human beings don't easily admit of mathematical modelling (Shubik 2011), but it nevertheless held a promise of being able to describe the mechanisms of human interaction which stripped away traditional assumptions about character and interaction and thus appealed, if briefly, to those exploring new modes of performance. Philip McCoy did groundbreaking work on theatre and games theory, which came to the notice of theatre academic Richard Schechner. At the same time performance artists such as Vito Acconci and Anthony Howell developed performances based on rules of interaction, as an alternative for example to character motivation. When they appeared in published texts for performance by those associated with Fluxus, these rules took the form of enigmatic and all too brief instructions: 'Arrange to observe a sign / indicating direction of travel / travel in the indicated direction / travel in another direction' (George Brecht); 'drink from a baby bottle and pee' (Walter Marchetti) (in Stegmann 2012: 377, 380). In this form they became a sort of challenge to the imagination of performers, or perhaps an invitation, and in this respect they tied in with another popular topic of the period: play. Studies of 'play', following on from the work of the Dutch sociologist Johan Huizinga, became interesting as another instance of identifiable forms of human behaviour that seemed to be governed by agreed conventions and indeed rules. In a work originally published in 1938 Huizinga suggested play is 'productive of culture' but that this is threatened in 'highly organised' society by the operations of religion and science (Huizinga 1949: 75, 119). This model, in which the role of poet remains in touch with play, was attractive to those who made aesthetic performance but it was criticised in 1958 along lines characteristic of the period. Roger Caillois said that play produced nothing, that its place in ordinary life was demarcated by 'precise limits' and that it had a range of its own rules, observable in games (Caillois 1961: 7). In his suggestion that the analysis of rule-bound games gave insight to the shapes and pleasures of social interaction, Caillois was in similar territory to Goffman. But Huizinga's original formulation became highly influential on the thinking of political activists, as we shall see in Part II. For them play was related to another activity which both Huizinga and Goffman invoked as a model, namely ritual behaviour. Although ritual had for a long time been studied as a way of understanding religion, following the work of Marcel Mauss in the early twentieth century, ritual came to be seen as a form of social activity that produced religion. When culture emerged as a specific category of analysis, ritual activities became particularly important for study,

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as seen in the work of Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach and Marshall Sahlins (see Bell 1992: 14–15). Taken together, face-work, game, play and ritual all seem to be modes of human behaviour that are somehow intensified beyond the accidental or casual. The sense of intensification comes from the fact that these modes of behaviour all have understood, if not necessarily conscious rules, and second, they all operate as modes of communication. What they communicate is the sense of the selves of those participating in the activity. Because these are modes of communication which work specifically to communicate ideas of self, it seems reasonable and convenient to group them as forms of non-theatrical performance.

A further elaboration of this concept came from a different direction when in the mid-1960s in Birmingham, UK, a group of scholars whose disciplinary origins were mainly in the analysis of literary text picked up on Goffman's general sense of human interactions as 'syntactical'. They began to read as 'text' social interactions and cultural display, in all their modes, even between football fans: 'The aggro fans talk of is in effect a highly distinctive, and often ceremonial, system for resolving conflict.' Observing match-day behaviour in 1978 Peter Marsh gives as example an interaction between Sheffield and Oxford fans in which there's a provocation to fight. Rather than leading automatically into actual physical conflict the stand-off is defused by those involved. What goes on, says Marsh, is typical of football grounds everywhere: 'the patterns of conflict and hostility . . . are so routine and commonplace that they are taken-for-granted and unremarkable. The apparent inconsequentiality, however, masks the fact that it is in these rituals that "honour" is satisfied.' They provide 'useful pieces of self-presentation' (Marsh 1978: 65, 67; my elision).

While this reference to 'ritual' might throw back to Goffman, the interest in ceremonial 'system' and 'pattern' of conflict is typical of an approach that was developed in the early seventies in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (hereafter CCCS). Founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, who wrote *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), CCCS had its roots in a socially aware literary studies. While some of its academics were also influenced by American studies of social interactionism, with an essay on Howard Becker appearing in a Centre publication (CCCS 1975), the interest in literary and cultural objects gave CCCS both a direction and a method. The mode of literary studies done by Hoggart, F.R. Leavis and Raymond Williams was one that in different ways – for these people had different political positions – commented on class division and cultural segmentation, and it did so from a position that was actively opposed to the dominant order. That same opposition was vigorously displayed by the young academics of CCCS

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when they participated in student actions against the University, for example the sit-in of 1968. And it also directed their selection of objects of study which were, in the main, the operation of the news media and popular television as sites of ideological production and, second, the activities of groupings who were outside the dominant and often seeking to resist it, such as youth subcultures. All of this cultural work, we should note, was regarded by sociologists as being 'unscientific' (Dworkin 1997: 117).

In attending to both the media and subcultures the preferred method was to analyse them as 'texts'. But in the case of subgroups, the 'text', rather than being a written cultural product, was more likely to be the clothing worn by members of the group. The adoption of particular modes of dress and preferred pastimes came to be seen as constituting 'code' and 'style', and by reading 'style' members of CCCS were able to analyse the outlooks and values of such subgroups as bikers, skinheads, teddy boys and punks. The job of the academic researcher could thus be summarised as being to 'discover the hidden meanings inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style' (Hebdige 1979: 18). Such reading of the code of the subgroup styles was formulated first by Phil Cohen in 1972. His innovation was that, in Dick Hebdige's words: 'Rather than presenting class as an abstract set of external determinations, he showed it working out in practice as a material force, dressed up, as it were, in experience and exhibited in style. The raw material of history could be seen refracted, held and "handled" in the line of a mod's jacket, in the soles of a teddy boy's shoes' (Hebdige 1979: 78).

The activity of reading subculture as 'text' had more behind it than the traditions of literary study. There was also borrowing from anthropology. Anthropologists proposed that they could understand more about the people they studied by learning to identify and interpret their symbols and sign-systems. For example, in his study of the hippy subculture Hoggart's deputy, Stuart Hall, referred to Victor Turner's work on the sign-systems of the Ndembu tribe. But perhaps the more significant influence was that of Claude Lévi-Strauss, from whom scholars of CCCS took the term 'bricolage', the word Lévi-Strauss gave to systems of classification and connection by which so-called primitive peoples made sense of their worlds. The term was adopted by John Clarke to enable sense to be made of discursive systems such as fashion: 'Together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the *bricoleur* re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse . . . a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed' (Clarke 1975: 177; my elision).

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In reading subcultures the scholars of CCCS were doing something more than simply analysing how particular groups behaved. The work of reading was important to them because it could explain the operations of ideology and thereby reveal how dominant social structures maintained themselves in being. And this in turn could reveal how they might be resisted. Precisely by positing cultures as texts, social analysts opened the way for de-familiarising that which had seemed hitherto natural or commonsensical. Finding the text and then reading it had a political imperative. In the case of subcultures a CCCS reading could complicate the simplistic terms of media condemnation and demonstrate instead what the activities of a subculture indicate as to the operation and efficacy of dominant order.

One of the best known, and most extended, of the CCCS readings is Dick Hebdige's book, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979). Here Hebdige proposes that a subculture's choice of clothing and commodity objects, its 'style' can be read as a language. This works to a specific purpose: 'The communication of a significant *difference*, then (and the parallel communication of a group *identity*), is the "point" behind the style of all spectacular subcultures' (1979: 102). Behind that formulation lie the ideas contained in Roland Barthes's 1972 book *Mythologies*. Here Barthes sets out to describe the mechanisms by which the meanings and values specific to a particular social group are generalised in such a way that they come to seem like 'common sense' and 'natural'. In short the argument displays how a dominant ideology is sustained and reproduced. But it was the method that demonstrated this argument which had the lasting influence. What Barthes was doing was to show that any cultural phenomena, whether 'low' or 'high-class', whether art or rubbish, could be read as a language. Applied to subcultural groups, then, the language interpreted from their clothing and objects could be shown to be speaking back against dominant society, deliberately enacting their difference.

I use the phrase 'deliberately enacting' deliberately. In Hebdige's model the adoption of subcultural style involves conscious choice and activity: 'It is basically the way in which commodities are *used* in subculture which marks the subculture off from more orthodox formations.' In case studies of punks or teddy boys or rastas, Hebdige argues that subcultural style is seen as part of a 'struggle' between competing discourses, 'a struggle for possession of the sign'. Within this struggle ordinary commodities are 'open in a double inflection: to "illegitimate" as well as "legitimate" uses. These "humble objects" can be magically appropriated; "stolen" by subordinate groups and made to carry "secret" meanings: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which generates their continued subordination' (1979: 103, 18).

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Against any notion that a subculture is something to be read, a passive text to be opened up by the activity of the scholar, Hebdige's argument is that members of the subculture themselves have agency. They actively use commodities, exhibit style and relocate significant objects. They do things with clothes and objects as part of an activity of negotiation, indeed struggle. Goffman might have seen this as a negotiation around self-presentation, conceived in terms drawn from drama, and twenty years or so later he turns up in a Hebdige footnote: 'there is also a more mainstream tradition of research into social encounters, role-play, etc. which proves overwhelmingly that social interaction (at least in middle-class white America!) is quite firmly governed by a rigid set of rules, codes and conventions (see in particular Goffman, 1971 and 1972).' Referring here to a re-publication of Goffman's *Presentation of Self* and *Relations in Public*, Hebdige steers clear of terminology derived from drama but notes instead the importance of 'rules, codes and conventions' that govern 'social interaction'. For him, as we know, the codes are those of 'style', and the rules and conventions relate to choices within a system, 'the conventional modes of sartorial discourse' (Hebdige 1979: 161, 101). These are all elements of which members of a subculture make a language. The function of that language within their social interaction, while it is not seen as the text of a 'drama', works nevertheless, as Hebdige sees it, to 'express . . . a form of resistance'.

Alongside Hebdige's expressive codes and communicative 'style', CCCS scholars had other favoured words that denoted forms of behaviour which, while not being recognisably dramatic, were rule-bound. We met these in the stand-off between football fans recounted by Marsh: 'ceremony' and 'ritual'. The function of the football rituals, Marsh suggests, is not only to construct, and then defuse, actual violence but also to offer opportunities for individual display: 'Fans demonstrate aspects of character which meet with acclaim and social approval within their social world. Fighting and being part of any aggro that's going on are useful pieces of self-presentation in this respect because, whatever else his failings, a fan who stands his ground is one of the boys' (Marsh 1978: 67). These ritualised interactions, like style, function to communicate group identity. But they are also 'pieces of self-presentation'. Marsh's phrase lets us know that, not very far behind his modelling of football fan interaction, stands Goffman's account of everyday human mechanisms for presenting self. But the language has altered.

In 1964 Peter Worsley had criticised the effect of Goffman's 'dramaturgical' metaphors:

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> The concept of role is the central concept of the social sciences. Its analytical utility is immediately obvious . . . As in the theatre – from whence the metaphor is taken – the script is written for the actor: he does not invent the role. Yet it is precisely at this point that the limits of the analogy reveal themselves. Too often the social role is conceived of as absolutely fixed. (in Burns and Burns 1973: 23)

For those in CCCS the cultures they were looking at involved negotiations, appropriation of meanings, so they looked for language that would not bring with it the associations of the theatrical role. Like Goffman, however, the project was to find a way of making supposedly natural everyday behaviours available for analysis. Rendering these behaviours as text or drama or ritual is a way not only of de-naturalising them but also, in consequence, of opening them up to a form of scrutiny which can reveal both their values and the nature of their interactions with their contexts. This is where such words as 'style', 'ritual' and 'ceremony' enter the frame. While remaining clearly outside established art practices, they aim to confer on certain sorts of everyday behaviour a sense of that which is rule-bound, learnt, imitable, deliberate, functional and expressive. In doing so, the work of cultural studies was in effect making these behaviours available for reading as performance.

But they went a step further than developing a vocabulary for describing, and thus reading, everyday behaviours as a form of performance. CCCS scholars were also interested in the contexts of the performance, where such contexts may both give the performance meaning and extend it, where it is the relationship between performance and context which is the object of knowledge. Thus, in the study of football fans, it was not simply a matter of identifying the ways in which their interactions were ritualistic. It was also productive to look at their behaviour in relation to the game itself. A properly socially engaged study of football fans thus meant developing an awareness of the relationship between the formal rule-bound activity – the football game – and the less clearly rule-bound activities that surround it. The way of proceeding was mapped out by John Clarke in his suggestion that, in order to explain why football hooliganism happens, we have to formulate a more complex understanding of where it happens, a context

> in which there are connections between the game, how it is watched, who it is watched by, and the activities of football hooligans. This involves taking the way in which football is organised and played, and the ways in which football is watched as *social* activities. This means being sensitive to two main aspects of social activity. First, it means looking at the types of social relationships involved in how the game is organised and

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> watched: the connections between the game itself and the society of which it is a part (eg. why football has come to be such an important part of the country's leisure time); the connections between the game and those who watch it and the sorts of relationships among those people and groups who form the audience. Secondly, it means looking at the *meanings* of these relationships – at the traditions and values around which football and being a football supporter are organised. This is to say, that watching football involves certain unwritten codes about what football 'means', about 'how' to watch it, and about how to behave at football matches, and so on. (Clarke 1978: 38–39)

In effect the cultural researcher here is taking the analysis into the domain of what we might call spectatorship or audience studies.

But it moves audience studies further on when the analysis suggests that the audience – the fans – were themselves doing a mode of performance. That move establishes that what we are looking at is a series of interrelated performances, from the clearly rule-bound one of the football game itself through to those which are less explicitly rule-bound, the ritualistic encounters of the fans. And from here one can now envisage an even less apparently rule-bound activity, the assumed behaviours of watching, with all its unwritten codes. These interrelated performances are conceived as a set of 'connections', to use Clarke's word, where a proper reading only comes from discovering what the connections are. The analysis of football thus proposes that we see its 'performance' not as a singular activity but as a set of performances. These can be arranged on a spectrum from the most intensively rule-bound to the least rule-bound. Elsewhere, as we shall see, a similar approach was proposed to the study of drama.

While Clarke focussed mainly on the game at the centre, in the work of his contemporary Dick Hebdige there was a move beyond the study of the rule-bound performance together with a development in understanding how performance works socially. A look at this will provide a summary of the various elements that comprised the CCCS thinking about role and ritual and ceremony.

Hebdige's publication came out in about 1974 as one of the (often undated) 'stencilled occasional papers' which CCCS used as a cheap and flexible mechanism for disseminating its ideas. The project was called *Sub-Cultural Conflict & Criminal Performance in Fulham* and its aim was made clear in its subtitle: *Towards a Radical Theory of Role*. As a basis for re-thinking the by-now problematic sociological concept of role, Hebdige studied the behaviour and interactions of one of the deprived areas of post-war London. It was chosen in part because of the status it

https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139600194.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press

had acquired in the popular press: 'Fulham . . . provided the backdrop against which the British media played out its vicarious fantasies of violent crime in the sixties, and the local population was not unaffected'. To find out how far, and in what ways, the population was affected by their characterisation in the popular media, Hebdige observed interactions in public spaces, particularly in the pub, 'the single most important area of play available to the working class individual in this country' (Hebdige c.1974: this publication has no page numbers; my elision).

The population of Fulham was particularly susceptible to media representation because they found themselves in a state of cultural crisis that had persisted since the war:

> The community as a whole faced peculiarly complex problems of self-definition, but solutions to the problems were most urgently required inside the deviant group which had to draw up fairly rigid lines of demarcation between itself and the outside world, between acceptance and denial if it was to retain any clear sense of identity at all. Unless the contrast between the criminal actor and his public was continually ratified in his everyday interactions with 'straights' and 'fellow crooks' nothing could make sense and the credibility of his performance was thrown into jeopardy.

That formulation 'criminal actor' is not a loose metaphor. It recurs in Hebdige's analysis of a fight that took place one Boxing Day: 'I postulated the existence of four separate codes of honour which had dictated the initial choices made by the actors in the Boxing Day fracas . . . The various actors organised these codes in hierarchies which corresponded to their needs at the moment of crisis' (my elision).

This is something different from the academic outsider simply reading the codes of the subculture. Certainly Hebdige has postulated these codes, but his sense is that the people he is watching are not so much responding passively or merely instinctually as taking decisions, at some level, about how to handle the situation in which they find themselves. And the acting here is more than a temporary management of a crisis. As Hebdige sees it, acting, or indeed performing, is a constituent factor in the identity of those he was studying: 'The "performer" defines himself against the reaction of his public – he *is* only in so far as he is *seen to be* and he must find his self image reflected in the eyes of his spectators'. Far from being the adoption of a fixed role, the personal performance is seen to be both provisional, dependent as it is on the responses of others, and yet necessary, as a way of establishing self-definition in an alienated society.

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The interest in this sort of performance took Hebdige into analyses of smaller constituent elements. He describes the conversational wind-up as a type of speech act, drawing here on the work of Gregory Bateson. And to specify the particular activity of the 'social deviant' who 'performs the clownish functions' of the 'in-group deviant', he uses Goffman's book *Stigma*. In the case of one of his subjects, a man called Frank, Hebdige found himself dealing with a personal performance that doubled up on itself: 'myth (and dramaturgical metaphors!) are unavoidable in Frank's case for he had invested in his own alienation, and had appeared in several films'. Frank becomes an example of Goffman's explanation of how a 'private person' transforms into a 'public figure', but he does so in a way which shows that he is in control of the process. And here is where we have to note the departure of Hebdige's version of role from that which had previously obtained both in sociology and in theatre studies. Worsley, we recall, said 'the actor does not invent the role': it is written for him (or her). This implies a passive sense of inhabiting role, fitting in with what is, sometimes literally, pre-scribed. By contrast Hebdige sees the criminals in Fulham in a continual process of negotiating their role, making choices about codes and speech acts, looking for their image to be affirmed. Of course in a different respect they are also fixed somewhere, within an area of London hit by a chronic social and cultural crisis of identity, which determines how they act. But in dealing with the conditions in which they find themselves they have a certain amount of agency. The 'radical theory' of role is coming up with a dialectical concept of social performance.

That radicalism Hebdige felt really resided in his choice of methodology. He explains, later on, that his preferred methodology 'retains, in marked contrast to conventional structuralist techniques, a commitment to qualitative and evaluative distinctions (i.e. a moral commitment), and . . . it remains undisguisedly subjectivist and is therefore ultimately fallible' (my elision). Further, 'it was by dealing directly with the question of aesthetics, that I hoped somewhat paradoxically to prevent this thesis from degenerating in to the aesthetic game towards which the "science" of structuralism seems naturally inclined.' The use of the methodology therefore 'was also meant to be concerned *directly* (i.e. to be *about*) the problem of meaning which the phenomenological study of subcultures habitually raises'.

Despite what he and his colleagues say elsewhere about reading the 'texts' of subcultures and interpreting their 'codes', Hebdige is clear that the study of subcultures has to be 'phenomenological'. A proper method for dealing with their everyday performance has to be aligned with the qualitative and subjective. And, perhaps precisely because it is dealing with real, as opposed to aesthetically scripted, identities, there is an ethical urgency to understanding

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not just the mechanisms of role negotiation but also why, qualitatively, they matter. An awareness of the elements of performance has helped Hebdige do, as he sees it, better and more necessary sociology. But in developing this awareness of performance, within a non-theatrical everyday context, Hebdige has in fact added substantially to what performance might be understood to be.

https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139600194.003 Published online by Cambridge University Press