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The stalking ground: Some varieties of human conduct seen in and through a frame of ritual.

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....THE STALKING GROUND:

SOME VARIETIES OF HUMAN CONDUCT

SEEN IN AND THROUGH A FRAME OF RITUAL

submitted by Andrew Travers
for the degree of PhD
of the University of Bath
1981

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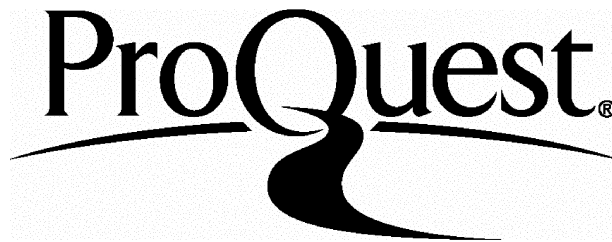
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Summary

Erving Goffman's idea that persons in interaction can
be understood if they are thought to have the property of
"ritualness" is extended. A theory of interaction, that
interactions are interactive to the degree that persons
within them have "ritual power", develops itself. Persons
are then seen as "possessions", and the sociological state,
"rapture", of an audience when it is deeply moved by a
fully possessed performer is taken as one pole of a new
dimension of interaction whose other pole is interaction
at the point of its ceasing to be interaction. Thus, into
the social psychology of interaction is introduced an idea
nowhere else even conjectured, that is, interactional life.
But this life of everyday life – which I call the ritual
realm – is only there through the appearances of life,
though these, I contend, are not properly understood either
literally or reductively any more than words are properly
understood as sounds and letters alone.

Acknowledgements

Professor Iain Mangham and Professor Michael Overington
have been very helpful with this thesis.

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All my life needed was a sense of some place to go. I don't
believe that one should devote his life to morbid self
attention. I believe that someone should become a person
like other people.

> Travis Bickle in Martin Scorsese's film _Taxi Driver_

I'm asking you to please look into your heart and at least
give me the chance with this historical deed to gain your
respect and love.

> John Hinckley, would-be assassin of President Reagan,
> in a letter to the actress who played Bickle's
> prostitute in _Taxi Driver_

For after all, there are no half measures. Either it is
reality or it is fiction. Either one opts completely for
art or for chance. For construction or for actuality. Why
is this so? Because in choosing one, you automatically
come round to the other.

> Jean-Luc Godard

CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis contributes to the sociological study
of interactions, in the belief that, if these are not
understood, all other social groupings will be inade-
quately understood. A large part of my argument is also
directed against the possibility of there being a non-
sociological psychology that could have relevance to
staple social science categories like "person".
Throughout, I ignore the substantive content of inter-
actions and also, very often, their contexts. My
exemplar here has been Erving Goffman, whose work persuades
me that this delimitation of interest may not fatally
damage an analysis. So, my view of the world is eccen-
tric, and, because of that, clearer than one which would
attempt what I regard as an impossible comprehensibility.
The following quotation from Susan Sontag's (1979) book
On Photography, if the words "photograph" and "photographer"
are replaced by sociology and sociologist, sums up my
current views on the activity in which I am engaged:

> The contingency of photographs confirms that every-
> thing is perishable; the arbitrariness of photo-
> graphic evidence indicates that reality is
> fundamentally unclassifiable. Reality is summed
> up in an array of casual fragments - an endlessly
> alluring, poignantly reductive way of dealing with
> the world ... the photographer's insistence that
> everything is real also implies that the real is
> not enough.

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I would add that some part of my motivation in this thesis is the hopeless task of making the real "real enough". At least I shall answer the questions, "Real enough for what?" and "What is 'enough'?".

Style of the Thesis

Most of the writing that follows is in essay style, and my language at times is allowed to become dramatic.

The essay style is the only appropriate one for my dual purpose of developing an argument and mobilising some new concepts, and it is, furthermore, inevitable, given the lack of pertinent data, which lack has thrown me onto my own persuasive resources. Of course, I do draw on a considerable amount of self-collected data, but this, in my view, is quite insufficient to warrant more than guided speculations. In the thesis I use my data for illustrative purposes mostly, though prior to writing I was to some extent enraptured (this is one of my new concepts) by it; also I continually reference - but do not write down - my own experience of interactions, for not to do so in the case of a thesis like this strikes me as purblind.

As for the language, it is sometimes given free rein so that it goes "too far". This is in the belief - variously set forth by very many writers on methodology including White (1978), Roche (1973), Jameson (1972), Brown (1977), Churchland (1979), Gergen (1977), Mills

(1940), and Silverman & Torode (1980) - that the matter of a verbal analysis is often lodged in its manner or style. Accordingly, I assume that new germane matter might be generated by "freeing up" the prose here and there. The cost of this sort of self indulgence unfortunately is that it may at times distract the reader from the main themes, but it is also entirely possible that one or two of the distractions may eventually turn out to be very promising leads into future analyses. The kind of current tradition to which I am intellectually affiliated in sociology, therefore, would be one that could say through a spokesman such as T.R. Young (1980):

> Social science methodology in its quantitative mode should recognise the primitive character of its operations and not insinuate these as superior to folk methods. One should realize that quantification is a process by which the richness of everyday life is made progressively more barren as it proceeds. One discards information (variety) as human behavior is organized into word sets. Still more information is discarded as one trasfers data from words sets into number sets - a number set is simply not as informative as a word set since word sets are not limited by the constraints of number sets - ordinality, intervality, and rationality. One loses still more information as one converts descriptive parameters into summary statistics. Quantification, then, is a process by which information is systematically discarded. One must not assume that, since valuable information is obtained by such distillation, this knowledge surpasses that produced by symbolic interaction using words or by behavioral interaction.

> If the quality of human life is intimately connected to the quality of its symbolic systems (as indeed they are), then passion, anger, joy, disgust, hope and rage should not be excluded from the pages of authentically human endeavor. The languages of business, mathematics, computers and science are too poor a vehicle upon which to place the fate of human society. They are too meagre, too remote, and too barren a soil in which to plant ideas.

New Concepts of the Thesis

My main source of conceptual inspiration has been
Erving Goffman's formulation of persons as ritual beings.
From this I have generated the new concept of "ritual power",
which I argue for in Part Two. Ritual power is akin to the
theatrical notion "presence", and I try to show that presence
is self-possession to a high degree. This leads me to
propose that persons - insofar as they are ritual beings
who may gain or lose ritual power through their performances
in interactions - may be viewed as "possessions". The
new concept of "possession" has several advantages over
that of "role" or "part" or even "self". First of all, it
implies a coherent and conscious being who is not to be
best analysed by recourse to his psychology or physiology.
Secondly, in that possessions disappear if reductively
analysed, they are specifically ritual phenomena, and,
therefore, of all the ways there are of speaking about
persons, this is the one that stays closest to the idea
(drawn from Goffman) that persons are persons because they
have "ritualness". Possession, I shall be arguing, can
be seen as wholly ritual entities whose proper world I
call the "ritual realm". The ritual realm has to be
understood as that projection from a person's appearances
of the intelligible form of his possession. In human
interaction, I suggest, the ritual realm functions very
much as does perspective in two-dimensional photographs:
the ritual realm is a moral dimension of conduct simply
not visible when behaviour is coded literally or analysed
in the absence of value judgements, for instance in the

work of both microanalysts and ethnomethodologists. Towards

the end of the thesis, I set out one more new concept:

"rapture". This is the corollary to possession in inter-

action. It arises if one person's self-possession is

particularly fascinating (by being so well acted that the

ritual realm it appears to originate in is very clear)

when other persons (in their capacity as audience) will

feel rapture at their temporary loss of themselves in

that possession.

Obviously I shall be introducing all these concepts

one at a time and with a fair amount of argumentation, but

it is, I think, at this stage, helpful for the reader to

see that there are not too many of them - "ritual power",

"possession", "ritual realm", and "rapture" - and that they

are closely linked together by their all having grown out

of Goffman's idea of "ritualness" in interaction.

The main argument of the thesis, then, will be that

these concepts are positively demanded for a full under-

standing of human interaction.

At no point in the development of this argument

have I tried to disentangle myself from my assumptions or

from the social context in which I have written and read

and researched. I have settled instead for being as

conscious as I can be, at all times, of what I bring

to the analysis from those selves of mine who are
strangers to sociology. I shall indicate in the methodology
chapter that I think that any other course of analytic
action, given the natures of persons and of language,
would reduce speech to an endlessly self-complicating
apology for itself, which I assume is not the best kind
of speech there can be. A consequence of my ethnocentric-
ity, therefore, is that I occasionally make my position
clear by contrasting it to some other current position
that for the reader may only be a latent, hidden presence
(off-stage, as it were). The hope is that the position
made clear can then stand independently.

Plan of the Thesis

What I term the "ritual code" is discovered by the
activity of researching interactions, and I explain this
process in the early methodology chapter which precedes
a definitive statement, made largely in his words, of
Erving Goffman's ritual frame, the only such frame in
sociology.

Having established the potential of Goffman's
notion of ritualness, I describe two groups of persons,
punks and nurses, with a view to finding out how they
make themselves what they are in their interactions. My
conclusion is that the concept of ritual power is
necessary to a proper description of the conduct of
punks and nurses.

By now, and for the rest of the thesis, off and on,
the idea of fashion is running through the narrative
like a leitmotif. In the chapter "Fashionable Ritual"
I even assert that ritual power is gained by fashionable
conduct, and then, in the first three chapters of Part
Three, I keep returning to this idea while explaining
the concept of possession in some of its ramifications.
Throughout, it is implicit that fashion conduct is
originality on the cheap, that originality is ritually
powerful, that what is morally good is fashionable conduct,
that conduct is modelled after its staged representations,
and that these latter entertain most when their drama is the
resolution of conflicting conduct fashions.

In Chapter IX, I change the perspective and look at
possession from the audience's point of view. Tentatively,
the hypothesis surfaces that there can be no comprehension
of anything without some emotional experience like that
of a theatre audience's when it is being moved or trans-
ported.

Finally the "Summary and Conclusions", though they
do carefully recapitulate the argument of the thesis,
actually read like a parallel narrative. The idea here
is that richer meaning can be created when two slightly
different ways of saying the same thing are placed side
by side. This is perfectly in keeping with the notion
of a ritual realm: the thesis can be interpreted as two
distinct enactments coming from the same realm, which

is the better charted by stereoscopic verbal vision.

I conclude this introduction with a quotation from Feyerabend (in Hollinger, 1980):

> Knowledge is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation, and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness. Nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account ... Experts and laymen, professionals and dilettanti, truth-freaks and liars - they are all invited to participate in the contest and to make their contributions to the enrichment of our culture. The task of the scientist ... is no longer to "search for the truth," or to "praise God," or to "systematize observations," or to "improve predictions." These are but side effects of any activity to which his attention is mainly directed and which is to make the weaker case the stronger (as the sophists said) and thus to sustain the motion of the whole.

From the point of view of Feyerabend, my thesis will seem unnecessarily careful.

Part One

CHAPTER I

RITUAL REASONS FOR A RITUAL CODE

This thesis is "interpretive" sociology as Tudor
(1976) defines this[1] and at times I implicitly ask the
reader to test its assertions against his own experience.
However, I do not mean to be read in a literary way as,
for example, Erving Goffman, who writes better than I
do, has been said to ask readers to so read him (Cioffi,
1971), because if there is such a response as a literary
one to this text (or, for that matter, to Goffman's
texts) it would come about only after cognitive appreci-
ation, which is a reversed route to that noted by Raymond
Williams and F.R. Leavis as the one by which literature
has its effect on readers[2]. Having said this, I must
admit that I do not see language as being ideally suited
to cognitive expression, for reasons that Tyler (1978),
among many others, puts forward. But even when I "swerve"
(White, 1978), preferring an aphorism to stylistic
exhaustiveness, I mean to appeal to the mind ahead of
the senses and the emotions, and only write as I do then
because then I equate analytic exhaustiveness with styl-
istic brevity. Thus, I try to avoid "prattle", which

Barthes (1976) defines as: "An unweaned language -
imperative, automatic, unaffectionate, a minor disaster
of static." I am informed here by the following:

> The intellect is naive and, too often, vulgar.
>   (Bateson, 1978)

> We are scientific because we lack subtlety.
>   (Barthes, 1976)

> Most human communication is incredibly rich,
> closer to poetry than mathematics.
>   (Pittenger et al, 1960)

> Understanding a sentence is much more akin to
> understanding a theme in music than one may think.
>   (Wittgentstein, 1963)

So it is that, no more than I tried to conduct research

in the manner of a Routine Observational Boob (Douglas,

1977) or an Ideal Sentential Automaton (Churchland, 1979),

do I expect the reader to read in like persona.

Any research report is talk about absent others.

Yerkovich (1976) has shown that such talk in a "folk

science" mode (Young, 1980) creates people as moral

characters by concentrating on their sanctionable

conduct. Abstract evaluative categories develop and -

in the talk - a small moral community comes into being.

This is what gossip is, of course, and I suggest here

that reports should not forget that when they are about

people they are a strange variant of gossip. Remembering

this, a writer at least might refrain from the worst

excesses of scientising prose; and if the writer, as

I would, wishes to write as a person rather than as

Douglas's boob or Churchland's automaton he is likely

to be drawn to the topic of good and bad conduct, as

I am.

My choice of moral conduct as an analytic starting

point, of course, shows that a value of mine is that

this is worth studying. A further value I hold is that

one should value one's values, so I ask the reader to

just accept this and therefore save me from pulling

this chapter out of its course by justifying values

whose justifications would have to be justified and so

on.

Writing, too, is conduct, but I have avoided

reflexivity in this text, because even if the text does

write me (Ricoeur, 1976; Silverman & Torode, 1980; Booth,

1961) I would rather be a textual fool than the mass

of my words disappearing into itself that Foucault (1979)

recommends:

> We can say that today's writing has freed itself
> from the dimension of expression. Referring only
> to itself, but without being restricted to the
> confines of its interiority, writing is identified
> with its own unfolded exteriority. This means that
> it is an interplay of signs arranged less according
> to its signified content than according to the
> very nature of the signifier. Writing unfolds
> like a game that invariably goes beyond its own
> rules and transgresses its limits. In writing,
> the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of
> writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language,

it is rather a question of creating a space into
which the writing subject constantly disappears.

I want now to expand on my bald statement in the
"Introduction" that I have not tried to "disentangle
myself from my assumptions," and will do this by
contrasting my position to the one advocated
by Glaser & Strauss (1968) in their book, The Discovery
of Grounded Theory. Glaser & Strauss say that "categories"
and then theories "emerge" from data, into which the
researcher puts minimal pre-emptive interpretation. I find
this nonsensical, because categories can only be named
in the consciousness of the researcher, which is the
more encompassing the more subtly interpretive it is.
As Popper (1977) says:

> We observe only what our problems, our biological
> situation, our interests, our expectations and
> our action programmes make relevant. Just as
> our observational instruments are based upon
> theories, so are our very sense organs, without
> which we cannot observe. There is no sense organ
> in which anticipating theories are not genetically
> incorporated ... our sense organs are products of
> adaptation - they can be said to be theories, or
> to incorporate theories: theories come before
> observation, and so they cannot be the results
> of repeated observation.

What is more, "after the moment of the observer's birth
no observation can be undertaken in all innocence. We
always know something already, and this knowledge is
intimately involved in what we come to know next"
(Kaplan, 1964)[3]. So Glaser & Strauss's "mindless"
collection of data and uncritical immersion in it
repudiates the very means by which there can be any

data at all, or any thoughts about it. This is why I
make a point of saying that when I operate as a researcher
I operate wide awake and in as thinking a mode as possible,
never forgetting that there are no pure data "because
there are only data for some hypothesis or other"
(Kaplan, 1964). In other words, I do my best to develop
my ideas through whatever encountered material they can
use. Silverman & Jones (1976) say such a course is
the only conceivable possibility, since, as there is
no "neutral" ground, bias (as they call it) is the
necessary condition for apprehending reality.

    Much of my thesis, then, is concerned with the
morality of conduct (though not with the morality of
the thesis) and I continually reference what I call the
"ritual code". What is this code? First of all it is
an "occasioned corpus", of which this telling is but
one small part. Even attempts to explain or describe
it are merely peculiar ways of exhibiting it, since the
code cannot be switched off, as it were, during an
operation calling itself explanation. To clarify my
distinction here between "telling" and explaining, I
now give an outline of how telling works in "The Convict
Code: A Study of a Moral Order as a Persuasive Activity"
in which Donald Wieder (1969) discovered a convict code
which is a variant of the ritual code.

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In a halfway house for paroled Californian narcotics felons, Wieder found that he could not practise participant observation because inmates would not let him befriend them:

> It would be an understatement to say that I was
> dismayed by "getting put in my place" by references
> to the code. For a week or so I thought I could
> learn nothing more about the lives of the residents.

It was when he tried to understand his putative failure as a researcher that Wieder stumbled across the convict code. This code includes maxims such as, "Do not trust staff, staff is heat," and these maxims account for the mistrust with which Wieder's attempts to participate were met:

> If you asked a question, as a device to get the
> conversation going, while it was the case that
> you might get a response, the conversation kept
> going only so long as you developed devices to get
> a response out of the resident. If you stopped
> making that kind of effort, the conversation just
> ended. The experience was of not ever getting the
> conversation going. I experienced the conversational
> style as isolating, embarrassing and telling me
> that I was not acceptable - that I did not belong.
> The effect was that of being a stranger among a
> lot of persons that were talking together but not
> letting me in.

Hurt by interactions like these, Wieder began to formulate the concept of a convict code. He is absolutely certain, however, that he needed the code in embryo form in order to create the code he eventually told. For him, the code was an "interpretive device" as it was for residents, because it was consequential within the halfway house, as "instructive oral traditions"

for outsiders could not have been. Used by residents

to interpret their conduct, the code was "a guide to

perception" of reportable patterned conduct:

> The code then, is a title of a normative order
> in search of its component maxims and behaviors
> which it analyses and explains. The activation
> of the search, which the code title suggests, is
> achieved by an observer who actively interprets
> the indexical particulars (the imbedded "bits and
> pieces" whose sense is determined by their seen
> relevance to some content) of talk and action, and
> in so doing constitutes the setting as an ordered
> setting for himself that he can live in and with.

> ... the stable organization of the halfway house
> is the attainment of guided imagination which
> searches for sense through concretely experienced
> scenes.

Wieder was repeatedly offered "moral characterizations

which made reference to the code," and so this code,

although only one of many theoretically possible codes,

acted as "moral persuasion and justification".

Explanation of conduct in terms of the code has to be

moral justification in order to disambiguate behaviours

and place them in an ongoing conceptual structure whose

main clarifying device is to sort conduct into the two

categories of good and bad, good being that which tells

the code and bad being that which goes against it.(Wieder's

participant observation went against it, and so also did

every attempt of staff to therapize inmates by what

inmates called "grouping" - the practice of publicly

looking for motives that were supposed to be hard to

locate.) The code is a moral one because he who does

not orient to it with sufficient competence is defined

as "unserious". Though Wieder does not develop his

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analysis in this direction, it looks as if the code, which uses the categories of good and bad to sort conduct, relies on a fundamental definition of a person as a being who can choose to be good or bad, since those perceived as not being able to so choose cease to be treated as full persons. Indeed, in the halfway house, the reputational sanction of stripping a person of his value and status as a person enforced the code among staff, inmates, and researcher alike:

> [Some staff] were described by the residents as stupid, square, fools, naive, and could not be respected. Residents coined derogatory nicknames for staff members that were particularly troublesome to them. They passed these names on to other staff members accompanied by demeaning stories about the staff member in question's competence. Staff employed these names and stories to degrade each other. Staff would say of each other things like, "John is really a square. He thought he could get these guys to help him set up a play; you should hear what thes residents have to say about him."

Because telling the code is an integral part of the conduct it interprets, any sociological description, including Wieder's, is only one further instance of "the product which results from the uses of practices whereby 'telling the code' is achieved."

From this it can be seen that the ritual code of human conduct, just like Wieder's convict code, can never be completely told, since each telling is a further interpretative act informed by all previous tellings and informing all future tellings. However, if in the telling it is not exhaustively explained or if in the telling it seems to resist a convergent analysis that

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in any case would nail it to nothing more substantial

than pretensions to conclusiveness, it can at least be

isolated and illuminated as an interpretive device.

The ritual code like any other code that would be

told, of course, must be known prior to its exploration.

That this code does not originate in a particular

community but comes instead from the work of Erving

Goffman, who took it from Emile Durkheim, need not

weaken its meaning and credibility, for as Wieder found,

a code cannot be told in detail unless first it is

grasped somehow or other. No code to begin with, no

code ever after. I grasped the ritual code as I found

it in Erving Goffman, but there will be many other

places to find it.

I think it relevant at this point to preface the

"Ritual Frame of Erving Goffman" (which is the next

chapter) with some thoughts on Goffman's own acquisition

of the code. These I derive from observations I made

during one week of the spring of 1980 in the Shetland

village where Goffman, doing his PhD fieldwork, first

hit on the analytical necessity to view interacting

persons as ritual beings.

Goffman first introduces his ritual frame in his

thesis, "Communication Conduct in an Island Community",

where he uses it to interpret the conduct of crofters

and gentry in Baltasound, a tiny settlement and port

which is the largest of three centres of habitation
on the island of Unst, the northernmost Shetland island.
It was in and around Baltasound that Goffman studied
social conduct by "observant participation" (Goffman, 1953)
for twelve months of the seventeen-month period, December
1949 to May 1951.

The first thing to be experienced by the visitor
to the barren island of Unst is the unusual openness to
surveillance of its scattered dwellings. The houses and
cottages in this community of some 300 people (now as then)
are not oriented to a mainstreet proper, and all the
principal gatthering places - village hall, post office,
shop, school, hotel, and so on - are a good walk from
one another. Thus, people in their everyday traffic are
well spread out too, always seeing and being seen from a
long way off. Moreover, there are few occasions when
a person will be seen by someone unknown to him or her,
for in Baltasound, though there may be occasional strangers,
no one could long remain one. In this environment, the
visitor soon begins to feel the need for the "expressive
responsibility" of Goffman's thesis, and this certainly
has to be very great here, for one is always being watched,
if not by other persons then by sheep, ponies, birds, seals,
and, from the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, fishing
vessels. It is only a hunch, of course, but I think
that Goffman in this space that is exposed to every kind
of eye, at a period in his life when for the first time
he was intensely scrutinizing his fellow man, must have

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over-emphasised the theme of mutual accountability in social life.

Because each islander is known to every other islander and because islanders work, play, and sleep on the same nine miles long by four miles wide "piece of rock ... covered by a thin skin of poor soil" (Goffman, 1953), the place almost defines itself as a total institution (Goffman, 1968). This theme Goffman encountered again, but much more thoroughly stated, five years after leaving Unst, in his year-long participant observation study of Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington D.C., but, subtly and unacknowledged, it is present in the thesis. Nearly all the interactions that Goffman studied must have been between people not only well known to one another but also unlikely to ever socially escape one another in the future, as in a total institution, and so all interactions may have been conducted with a greater sense than usual of what they might portend. Given, too, the elaborate background expectancies possessed by islanders in such situations, one can see how conduct could have been often a taxing interpersonal problem even in trivial, routine encounters. This, then, is the basis of my second hunch, that, on the island, interaction is a more serious business than, say, in a city neighbourhood,

However, no one who knew Erving Goffman during his period of study had any inkling of what he was really

up to. He used a cover story as a spy might, telling islanders that his research interest was "in gaining firsthand experience in the economics of island farming" (Goffman, 1953). Thus his participation in social life was not a participation as an islander would have understood that. It was in fact an extremely scientific procedure - in the positivist sense of being emotionally detached, with a strong motivation to be objective - carried out by one man on his fellow men. (It would not be surprising if this experience - of being a successful spy - did not activate Goffman's interest in spying which came to fruition in the first essay of Strategic Interaction) So, on top of the fact that he was in a place where everyday encounters were expressively delicate and demanding to a high degree, Goffman was a person with much to hide, who, as he says, had he been discovered to have been taking an interest in interaction, would not have survived in the setting, since "residents would not readily accept as friend and neighbour someone who asked formal questions about interaction or someone who showed an unnatural interest in matters of that kind" (Goffman, 1953). There must be, then, a strong possibility that Goffman, not only with something to hide but also with an anxiety to keep himself viable in his research site, was abnormally sensitive to the nuances of interaction in Baltasound, quite apart from his scientific interest. So while inevitably sharpening his perception, his own social situation surely led Goffman to overstate the treacherousness of interaction, when he calls it,

for example, a "cold war" (Goffman, 1953), and perhaps

it is because of this that there is hardly anything in

the thesis, or indeed ever after, that dwells on people's

pleasure in sociability, besides a brief mention of

"euphoric interplay", which, described as well-nigh

impossible, is never analytically developed.

The crofters Goffman researched are still, almost

thity years later, a closed culture, distrustful of

outsiders and keeping themselves to themselves by

speaking their own half Norse and half Scots dialect.

Goffman certainly was accepted by them, probably because

his "farming research" cover-story game him pretexts,

but at all times, as a Canadian, he would have been in

the position of having to learn his way in an alien

culture with little help coming from any spoken words.

This, then, might be a contributory reason for Goffman's

decision to analytically exclude the "official" substance

of language in encounters, in his thesis and for the rest

of his career.

In this context that I have described, Erving Goffman's

behaviour as a scientist can easily be seen as showing,

then, a lack of reverence to other people, on two counts.

Firstly, he spied on aspects of their conduct that he

knew they themselves believed should not be raised into

consciousness, and, secondly, he did not tell them that

he was doing this. Consequently I argue that Goffman

arrived at the ritual code by the same route that Wieder

took to get to the convict code; it was his very awareness
that he was committing offences by being scientific that
alerted him to the set of rules that is there to protect
people's ritual worth. A whole complex of uneasy
experiences with regard to the respect that is owed to
people would be - for the young Goffman - explained at
a stroke by a ritual code which then becomes a means
perceiving more yet of persons' ritual conduct.

In the next chapter, before developing it a little
more, I provide a definitive statement of the ritual code
as Goffman - beginning with his research in Baltasound -
has told it.

Notes

1   Tudor (1976) writes: "As long as we can agree with the
analysis, it appears as an unproblematic construction of
reality shared between ourselves and the researcher. When
we disagree, then we must ask why. And in so asking we
find that the only possible reply is that, in our experience,
this particular claim or interpretation does not hold true.
So the very process of writing interpretive sociology
tacitly demands of the reader that he make the test which
will, in its limited way, 'warrant' the account. But
because the process remains an implicit expectation its
status is disturbingly unclear. Only by rendering test
criteria open and explicit can we begin to judge the
characteristics of our knowledge claims." This seems to
me reasonable, so I have been open and explicit.

2   I do not disagree with Zollschan & Overington's (1976)
assertion that the "argumentative form of scientific speech
must attend to what is the most convincing rhetoric" for
a particular scientific public, but rather suggest that the
rhetoric in Goffman's case, with, for instance, its very
frequent use of the first person plural, which enlists the
reader into the writer's company so that both seem to share
the same point of view of the phenomena under analysis,
finds its plausibility less through reports of highly
acceptable tests than by highly acceptable reports that
are their very own tests, which the reader is invited to
make with the writer as each goes along with the other.
   Taylor & Cohen (1980) have remarked that only Goffman
and Simmel, among sociologists, speak to them as persons,
and Harre (1979) says exactly the same thing. So Goffman
does have a recognized ability to take sociology farther
into the lives of his public than any of his contemporaries,
by going directly to experiences he and they have in
common and by writing sociologically about these so well
that his sociology immediately seems to illuminate and
charge with relevance hitherto dim and overlooked areas

of social life. The scientific value of Goffman then is
established by his ability to write for his fellow scientists
as persons, which by the circular argument that their
readership constitutes his authority, must also establish
that it can be unscientific to write as if the reader is
tightly straightjacketed by his consciousness of himself
as a scientist before or in spite of or against himself as
a person.

3   Some of this argument and both the quotes from Kaplan
come from Peter Cumberlidge's "The Derivation of Explanatory
Structures" (unpublished paper, School of Management,
University of Bath).

CHAPTER II

THE RITUAL FRAME OF ERVING GOFFMAN

Introduction

. The ritual frame of interaction, which I call "The
Stalking Ground", is used constantly by Erving Goffman throughout
his whole oeuvre, but it is only one of several different,
merged frames with which he describes and interprets the rules
of face-to-face interaction, and nowhere is it set forth in its
entirety. It is first mentioned in Goffman's Ph D thesis on
page 103, when Goffman casually observes that in interaction a
person may "come to be seen" as a sacred object. On the next
page, below further exposition of what Goffman here, for the
first time, calls a "ritual model", a footnote explains that
this "general view" is based on a section of Emile Durkheim's
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (Goffman, 1953). Then,
three years later, in "The Nature of Deference and Demeanor"
(Goffman, 1972) (his fullest analysis of the ritual frame) he
again references the same book by Durkheim, this time specifically
citing the chapter on the soul, and, at the beginning of his
paper, he says that he wants "to explore some of the senses in
which the person in our urban secular world is allotted a kind
of sacredness that is displayed and confirmed by our symbolic
acts."

What I produce here, as the substance of this chapter, is
an extraction from Goffman's oeuvre of almost every "ritual"

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statement he has made on the subject of human interplay. This is possible because the ritual frame is described as late as 1976 ("Replies and Responses") no differently than in 1953 (the Ph D); a collage of quotations can be organised to display a remarkable internal coherence. Although I actively interpret the ritual frame - by ordering it in the way I think best exhibits it - I keep my linking narrative to a minimum, so that what hitherto has been scattered and without form becomes explicit, as nearly as possible in Goffman's own words. (But one must not imagine that Goffman would want to define his ritual frame or to define it like this.)

I have isolated Goffman's ritual frame to show how impressive it is (more so, I think, than the celebrated drama-turgical frame). Also it seems to me to be the most serious part of Goffman's sociology, as well as the least respected. So I risk thoroughly biasing Goffman's implicit ritual model in order to manifest its arresting power and its subtlety. This I think is worth doing in its own right, but the frame as I present it is, in addition, the background of and starting point for my thesis.

I should justify my selection and arrangement of quotations, so I shall do this by explaining how it came about. I picked every seemingly pertinent comment on ritual life from Goffman's oeuvre and wrote each one on a separate index card. Then I spent a long time arranging and rearranging the order of the cards, until they fell into the groups as they are below. The order they come in is therefore intuitively arrived at and also is the one that - at the time of writing - seems the very best to me for the purpose of demonstrating the ritual frame.

The Ritual Frame of Erving Goffman [1]

Ritual and Interaction

These remarks show Goffman's unhappiness with the connotations of the word "ritual" and this signals his new uses for it, which are here indicated in their full scope.

The adjectives "ceremonious", "polite", and "expressive" less suitably describe interactional conduct in which "the actor portrays his relation to objects of value in their own right" than does "ritual", though this itself has irrelevant connotations of "other-worldliness and automacity" (RR 266n). Ritual acts are those through which a person "shows he is worthy of respect or how worthy he feels others are of it," and a ritual order of expressions sustains his face, that "sacred thing" (E 19). People act not merely by strategically taking into consideration one another's probable responses but also by engaging in mutual worship. Conduct, "when the idol we are ritually careful of is also ritually careful of us," though partly influenced by thoughts of likely responses, is guided by "religious tenets and norms" (CC 173). "Even more than being a game of informational management, conversational interaction is a problem in ritual management" (CC 103). "The ritual frame provides a question that can be asked of anything occurring during talk and a way of accounting for what does occur" (RR 267).

Rituals

The overly calculating theories of Mead and Weber push Goffman to the idea of "considerateness" which in turn pushes him to a view of persons as sacred. So, little behaviours like greetings can be re-interpreted as celebrating big issues, such as the nature of humanness. The very morality of interaction can now be seen as stemming from the ritualness of human beings, and,

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*further, a ritual model of interaction can explain interaction,
especially as the model itself mimics shared conduct ideals.*

The ritual model has been "poorly tested", perhaps because
Mead and Weber tend to imply that when people take each other's
actions into consideration they do so instrumentally. But, if
considerateness rather than calculation is meant by "consideration",
it can be appreciated that people "taking into consideration" must
also "give consideration" (CC 103). The object of greatest
consideration is, of course, a god, before whom rites are performed
"as frequently and compulsively as the sacred value of the object
is great," yet, in so far as people too are regarded as sacred,
piety governs conduct (CC 104):

> .... in the idol's immediate presence we act with ritual
> care, appreciating that pious actions may favourably
> dispose the idol toward us and that impious actions
> may anger the idol and cause it to perform angry actions
> against us.
>
> (CC 104)

Usually, however, only persons of the highest office are as sacred
as idols, and behaviour though often ceremonial is not nearly so
often ceremonious: "An idol is to a person as a rite is to
etiquette" (CC 104). A pious display, furthermore, may conceal
other terms of an interaction, for "how a relationship is portrayed
through ritual can provide an imbalanced, even distorted view of
the relationship itself" (GA 3).

Acts such as salutations, invitations, compliments, and
minor services, "through which the individual makes specific
attestations to recipients concerning how he regards them and how
he will treat them in the on-coming interaction," are "presentation
rituals" (IR 71) while "avoidance rituals" like the use of formal
address instead of first names, prevent violations of what Simmel

called the "ideal sphere" of a person (IR 62). These rituals must

look spontaneous. In total institutions, where they are coerced,

staff recipients protect themselves from the knowledge that they

do not win "natural" respect by defining inmates as "not-fully-

adults" or by rationalizing that it is the office and not the man

who is saluted (A 107).[2] Deference patterns in general are "partly

a matter of changing fashion" (IR 65) and ritual concerns "are

patently dependent on cultural definition and can be expected to

vary quite markedly from society to society" (RR 267).

"Ritually neutral" persons, not being able to give or take

offence, are neither sacred nor profane. Thus children, so far

as they are neutral, are not obliged to conduct themselves in a

socially responsible way (CC 186). And, like children, non-persons

(adults in a segmental society) have little sanctity, though this

may not be thought deplorable (for example, maids in Dixon[3] had

to listen to untactful things that were said in front of them to

convey that maids' feelings need not be taken into consideration

(CC 227-8)). The moral right to be valued has force to the degree

that claimed social characteristics are real; this countervails

the rule that claims "as to what is" are for other people "what

they ought to see as the 'is'" (PS 24). Should unsuitable

valuations be conveyed, a person "is obliged to try to cope ...

by spontaneously treating them as if they had not occurred, or by

integrating them as best he can into the official definition of

the situation, or by merely sustaining tension without departing

physically from the situation" (E 47). This is "the morality of

interaction", which is always open to exploitation by the introduction

of references and acts a victim can manage only with difficulty

(E 47). "A promise to take ritual care of .... face is built into

the very structure of talk" (IR 40), and a person's orientation to

face, especially his own, "is the point of leverage that the ritual order has in regard to him" (IR 40). Not the individual, then, but society, in its social encounters, just to remain what it is, needs "self-regulating participants," who are mobilised through ritual. To perform their rituals persons need "to be perceptive, to have feelings attached to self and a self expressed through face, to have pride, honor, and dignity, to have considerateness, to have tact and a certain amount of poise." This extremely prescribed behaviour, which is necessary for the competent interacting that keeps society going, is repeatedly referred to as "universal human nature" (IR 44).

> Within a ritual model of interaction:
>
> 1. An act is taken to carry implications regarding the character of the actor and his evaluation of his listeners, as well as reflecting on the relationship between him and them.
> 2. Potentially offensive acts can be remedied by the actor through accounts and apologies, but this remedial work must appear to be accepted as sufficient by the potentially offended party before the work can properly be terminated.
> 3. Offended parties are generally obliged to induce a remedy if none is forthcoming or in some other way show that an unacceptable state of affairs has been created, else, in addition to what has been conveyed about them, they can be seen as submissive regarding others' lapses in maintaining the ritual code.
>
> (RR 269)

In addition, a ritual version of social reality allows an act to be seen as "a passing exhortative guide to perception" (GA 3), using those same social appearances an advertiser uses to dramatise his product. Intention displays, microecological mappings of social structure, approved typifications, and gestural externalisations (of what can be taken to be inner responses)claify otherwise opaque social situations (GA 27).

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"Whether we pose for a picture or execute an actual ritual
action, what we are presenting is a commercial, an ideal
representation under the auspices of its characterizing the
way things really are" (GA 84). In real life, for instance,
a man lighting a woman's cigarette proposes to himself, to the
woman, and to any onlookers that "females are worthy objects,
physically limited in some way, and that they should be helped
out in all their transactions" (GA 84). Similarly, in Dixon,
salutations "seem to confirm and symbolize the right of all
islanders to have certain kinds of access to all other islanders"
and "these salutations provide an opportunity of acknowledging
allegiance to the island and to the commoners, in general, who
live on it" (CC 183).

Some Rules of Interplay

> Using his ritual conceptions, Goffman is able to interpret
> very many interactional regularities, including whole etiquette
> systems and even, lately (in "Response Cries"), the forms of
> solitary but public exclamations.

The principal guide for conduct in interplay is "an image
of what might and might not give offence to another" (CC 336). A
person will know "how to behave" by "repeatedly and automatically
asking himself the question, 'If I do or do not act in this way,
will I or others lose face?'" (IR 36). He will not, for example,
break the "strong taboo" against withdrawing attention, since
interplay cannot survive the disinterest of its participants (CC 145).
He will not "improperly" change a topic too abruptly, for that
would convey too little interest had been taken in the previous

topic (CC 145). Happening unseen into situations where he might

overhear remarks to his detriment, he "ought to warn them (the

overheard) in some way by means of a tactful cue" (CC 94n) lest

they are allowed to unwittingly give offence. However, self

profanations, such as those of modesty, do not injure a person

"qua object of ultimate worth" unless he is forced to treat

himself this way against his will, when he will be seriously

threatened. "The licence to accept mistreatment at his own hands

that he does not have the right to accept from others" ensures

it is not abused (IR 32), though, in mental hospitals, "the kind

of information that the patient is likely to try to hide" is

systematically circulated and "used daily to puncture his claims"

(A 148). Sanctions of moral disapproval in conversational

order, unlike those of other social orders, are expressed

immediately in ways that do not destroy the order they are designed

to maintain (CC 34).

> Rules are effective (in so far as they are) because
> those to whom they apply believe them to be right
> and come to conceive of themselves both in terms of
> who and what it is that compliance allows them to
> be and in terms of what deviation implies they have
> become. The sanctioning system associated with a
> rule is effective (in so far as it is) because it
> proclaims the individual's success or failure at
> realising what he and others feel he should be,
> and, more abstractly, proclaims the individual's
> compliance with or deviation from rules in general.

> (RP 127)

Thus encounters are much more than arbitrary periods during which

messages are exchanged. They are "a coming together that ritually

regularizes the risks and opportunities face-to-face talk provides,

enforcing the standards of modesty regarding self and

considerateness for others generally enjoined in the community"

(RR 268). (By identifying the ritual in social situations it

becomes possible "to think in terms of general rules for the management of conversational interplay" (RR 268).)

Seemingly trivial interchanges like greetings and farewells "are expressive of the conceptions people have of one another" (and so by being performed in a "snide or fawning fashion" can express these quite subtly)(CC 66). The right to enter interplay or to bring another into interplay is likewise hedged about by ritual concerns, and is only given "to the degree that ... action cannot be construed as an effort to reduce social distance or improperly acquire strategic information"(CC 159). Persons, having once been "introduced", must thereafter engage in interplay with each other or else offend, and, similarly, a partygoer does not have the right to not be spoken to by other partygoers. These arrangements show a ritual respect in the former case for the introducer and in the latter for the host (CC 160). Talk itself must have a ritual warrant for "silence, after all, is very often the deference we owe in a social situation to others present," and "without such enjoined modesty, there could be no public life, but only a babble of childish adults pulling at one another's sleeves for attention. The mother to whom we would be saying 'Look, no hands' could not reply, for she would be saying, 'Look, no hands' to someone else" (RC 813).

Rules of conduct are guides for action recommended because it is suitable and just, not because it is "pleasant, cheap or effective" (IR 48). These rules are obligations and expectations that ensure the sort of accommodative consideration within interplay, where persons are "opened up" to one another, that is likely to be absent between its same participants when no longer face-to-face (CC 158). Here "territorial preserves" may play a dual ritual role, with "comings-into-touch" used as a means of

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establishing regard or avoided "as a means of maintaining respect"
(RP 87). Etiquette is the name of the general code governing these
ceremonial rules and expressions. The forms of etiquette and
courtesy are "model interchanges" that recognize people as sacred
objects in an environment of potential offence (CC 191). In a culture
that values high standards of mutual concern, elaborate politeness,
then, may as easily evince concealed hostility as mutual regard
(CC 181n), while courtesies performed at high cost are gallantries,
showing a respect for ceremonial order over and above personal
welfare (IR 200). But even the blurting of a response cry like
"Ouch!" is "a claim of sorts upon the attention of everyone in the
social situation - a claim that our inner concerns be theirs, too"
(RC 814), yet at all times the gestures "which carry an actor to
a recipient must also signify that things will not be carried too
far" (IR 76).

Manner and Appearance

> Goffman is very precise about appropriate levels
> of involvement in interaction, even to specifying how much
> seeming "unthinkingness" there should be on certain occasions.
> He shows how the involvement norms that derive from ritual
> concerns facilitate orderly communication, as do the
> ritually appropriate appearances of decorum, manner, front,
> demeanour, deference, body gloss, and clothing. His
> concentration on the importance of appearances inevitably
> leads him to raise the question of how they are trusted.

A person in interplay is ruled by involvement norms of
two opposing kinds. Inhibitory norms limit the feelings he may
express and keep him from inappropriately involving himself in
competing events, while a second set of norms obliges him to be
"sincere and unaffected in an expressive way" as well as to show
some real feelings. "These two sets of norms were found to be

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operative wherever, whenever, and with whomsoever spoken

communication occurred on the island" (CC 350).

A social situation therefore can be defined as "that

entity neatly matching the area within which the individual's

regulation of involvement is perceptible" (BP 194). Conduct

therein obeys the norms of involvement that apply to intensity

of involvement, distribution of involvement between main and side

activities, and the tendency of involvement to bring an individual

into engagements. In a multi-person situation, further rules

against becoming externally preoccupied or, alternatively, over-

involved with oneself (or with just one other person) oblige

a person to demonstrate his "involvement in a situation through

the modulation of his involvements within the situation" (BP 196);

however, involvement levels do vary from interplay to interplay,

as they do between roles in any one interplay (CC 247). Lacking

its requisite human involvements "the minute social system that

is brought into being with each encounter will be disorganized, and

the participants will feel unruled, unreal, and anomic." Indeed,

a person habitually "thrown out of step with the sociable moment"

can become "alienated from things that take much more of his time"

(IR 135).

Interaction is most successful when persons scale down

their own expressions and scale up the interest they show in

those they are with. This suppression of self in favour of

"other" is "the bridge that people build to one another, allowing

them to meet for a moment of talk in a communion of reciprocally

sustained involvement. It is this spark, not the more obvious

kinds of love, that lights up the world" (IR 116-7). Involvement,

however, ceases to be involvement the moment it is seen as

premeditated: "The requirement that persons be impulsively

involved in interplay in which they participate is borne out by
a very significant rule, namely that interplay must not be staged
or worked out beforehand" (CC 249). All persons demand "that
when an individual speaks, his bodily expression will provide
easy access to all the information needed in order to determine
how much self-belief and resolve lie behind his statements.
Differently put, we demand of an individual that he not be too
good at acting" (SI 44). "It would seem that the unthinking
impulsive aspect of interaction is not a residual category that
can be appended as a qualification to a rational model of
communication; the spontaneous unthinking aspect of interaction is
a crucial element of interaction" (CC 242). "Most actions that
are guided by rules of conduct are performed unthinkingly" (IR 49).

Ritual facilitates communication. By conducting themselves
with ritual care in regard to interruptions, leavetakings,
inattentions, and the like (signs well designed "for expressing
the judgements that participants make of one another") people
cannot help but act so that messages "flow in an orderly fashion"
(CC 354-5). "The satisfaction of ritual constraints safeguards
not only feelings but communication, too" (RR 267). Participants
"motivated to preserve everyone's face .... end up acting so as
to preserve an orderly communication" (RR 267). Moreover, unlike
simple grammars, ritual constraints "open up the possibility of
corrective action as part of these very constraints" (RR 269).
Thus any rational model of communication reciprocates perfectly
with the ritual model.

But interaction easily goes awry. If an "untoward event"
occurs in a public place persons must establish a "viable alignment"
by choosing from "the corpus of quick displays" that "by and
large [are] a given of the culture" (RP 225). There is a

"deterministic" need "to take some kind of stand to the deficiency
in question" (RP 225). In Dixon, islanders acted under "conditions
of great expressive responsibility" but everywhere "in our society"
people are "trained to employ a somewhat common idiom of posture,
position, and glances, wordlessly choreographing [themselves]
relative to others in social situations with the effect that
interpretability of scenes is possible" (GA 21). Two aspects of
this kind of "personal front" are decorum and manner: "Decorous
behaviour may take the form of showing respect for the region and
setting one finds oneself in" while "the part of personal front....
called 'manner' will be important in regard to politeness" (and
politeness of course is only expressed in interaction) (PS 111).
"Performers can stop giving expressions but cannot stop giving them
off" (PS 111), and what is given off is demeanour:"That element of
the individual's ceremonial behaviour, typically conveyed through
deportment, dress, and bearing, which serves to express to those
in his immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable
or undesirable qualities" (IR 77). Deportment and bearing in their
turn constitute at least three types of "body gloss": orientation,
circumspection, and overplay (RP 162-9). When these are used as
"corrections for infractions" of a "multitude of minor territories
of the self" they are "the indignity of overacted gesticulation"
(RP 171). However, a gloss such as the "delinquency strut" may
be adopted to convey both a challenge to authority and the fact
that the challenge has not been faced up to (IR 252). "The
gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps the fullest things
of all" (IR 33). "An unguarded glance, a momentary change of
voice, an ecological position taken or not taken, can drench a
talk in judgemental significance" (IR 33). In any situation a
person is obliged "by sustaining a publicly oriented composition

of his face" to show that he is "in play", ready for interaction
(BP 193-4) within which he must give frequent "takes" (CC 168)
since attention signs "are a minor but significant communication
courtesy" (CC 199). Composure is valued for itself because all
tasks performed in social occasions demand it. (Discomposure
in a person breaks rules protecting the selves of his coparticipants,
who have no choice, if this happens, but to forbear (CC 38).)

"Undirected communication" like demeanour and appearance
conveys less a specific message than overall conceptions concerning
the sender and his others, and about these "participants have strong
feelings" (CC 117). Clothing too is a kind of continous transmission,
so incorrect attire can affront (CC 120), but since demeanour
indexes a person's respect for the region of a social occasion and
its participants (CC 117), it can also be established by acts
"through which [a person] gives or withholds deference" (IR 81).

Revealed here is a "fundamental social dialectic." To
behave properly, people need to know the facts of a situation, but
must rely on appearances. The less sure they are of the facts the
more they must look to the very appearances that may have
encouraged their uncertainty. A "gentleman" will seek to influence
others' treatment of himself by acting straightforwardly to confirm
the impressions he gives. "Merchants or morality", on the other
hand, under "the very obligation and profitability of appearing in
a steady light, of being a socialized character," will amorally
perform their moral appearances (PS 241-4). So it is that a person
"may be led to seek the safety of solitude rather than the danger
of social encounters" (IR 39), or else put his trust in appearances
that he knows can always be untrustworthy.

Trust

> *Trust is necessary, Goffman has to assert, else society*
> *would regress into multiplying paranoia, but it is broken for*
> *convenience and given, often enough, on the understanding that it*
> *will not be taken at face value.*

Inasmuch as words are regarded as expressive they are
taken seriously, and generally the social utility of not becoming
known as a liar prompts people to say what they mean. Because
"we cannot build another into our plans unless we can rely on him
to give his word and keep it" the virtue of honesty that is demanded
"is made out of organizational necessity" (SI 128,130). In any
situation, signs of trust must be conveyed since "only when these
signs are received may the individual feel secure enough to give
himself up to the merely-situated aspects of his involvements"
(BP 197). In all relationships "as evidence of trust and mutual
commitment" persons are obliged "to exchange an appropriate amount
of intimate facts about self" (S 108). However, the trust of a
prepatient passing down his "betrayal funnel" into a mental
hospital is systematically abused. At each interactional step in
his betrayal, consideration is shown to him as if he had finally
reached bottom, but only to win his reciprocated orderly behaviour
(A 130-1). This kind of cynical consideration is akin to the
"phantom acceptance" normals give to a stigmatized person, and the
worst of it is that this is the best the stigmatized person can
hope for, because "the degree to which normals accept the
stigmatized individual" is directly related to "his acting with
full spontaneity and naturalness as if the conditional acceptance
of him, which he is careful not to overreach, is full acceptance"
(S 147). But phantom acceptance is a condition of all relationships:
"Any mutual adjustment and mutual approval between two individuals

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can be fundamentally embarrassed if one of the partners accepts in full the offer that the other appears to make; every 'positive' relationship is conducted under implied promises of consideration and aid such that the relationship would be injured were the credits actually drawn on" (S 147). Trust, therefore, is a kind of expediency that must not look as knowing as it is.

Place

Place is a wider term than status, and Goffman uses it a lot, meaning by it, I think, the total possible social environment of a person. He also seems to define place as the amount of ritual respect a person should know that he merits. Goffman is often at his most eloquent when discussing the fate of people who do not keep their place, and he is quite clear that the social improprieties of not knowing one's place arouse deep negative emotions that almost seem designed to keep everyone in their correct social places.

People are trusted to know their places, and it is his particular place that gives a person his particular face. Thus "charm and colorful little informalities" belong not so much to the self of a high-ranking person as to his office, because social distance between two people is of different extent "depending from whose place one starts" (E 114). The situation of western women illustrates this. As depicted in advertisements, their place is on beds and floors, behind objects, and always below men. They are shown snuggling and nuzzling, averting gaze, and staring at objects while hanging on to men. Not infrequently they are being spoonfed and, much more than men, they smile and clown or stand with head or body canted and knees bent. When they are not ritualistically touching their own bodies or objects (sometimes with their faces) they may be shown (in holiday scenes especially) being mock-assaulted by husbands; and in family groups, while their

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sons struggle to emulate father, they passively descend to the level of the daughters (GA 28-83). All behaviour confirms or disconfirms that a person "knows and keeps his place" (RP 399) and strong confirmation comes through displays of proper deference, deference being the "symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed to a recipient of this recipient" (IR 56). Therefore, interaction between two persons is never so simply symmetrical as a Meadian mutual taking into account of other's attitude, for the deference image given is not identical to the demeanour image taken, and each person comprises both images (IR 84). Rather than strategic calculation, what occurs when persons meet is "joint ceremonial labor" with demeanour showing interaction status and deference pointing out of the interaction to societal status (IR 83). (Deference, of course, is as often shown by equal to equal and subordinate to subordinate as by subordinate to superordinate (IR 58-60).) The "status bloodbath" of a party, where contamination and sacralization are the order of the day, succeeds so long as the requisite spontaneous involvement is not killed by officially irrelevant attributes intruding and thereby destroying the identities on which sociability is organized. People in gatherings can become "uncomfortable" when they have "nothing in common" (in this case their statuses are so far apart that the attention "status" draws to itself reduces official involvements to zero) and can become "bored" when those present are "the same old people" (in this case they are too similar to enable the worship and sacrilege that would generate involvement) (E 71). Parties can be left, but, locked in a ward of a mental hospital, a patient may find that the only way he can demonstrate to himself "that he is not to be judged by his current setting, nor is subjugated or contaminated by it" is by projecting

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a crazy self (knowing he is not that crazy) (BP 225). For most
people the rituals of avoidance and presentation "provide a
continuous symbolic tracing of the extent to which the recipient's
ego has not been bounded and barricaded in regard to others"
(IR 71) but in a tough punishment ward the inmate with very little
more to lose might create his very own self through ritual insub-
ordination, conveyed by a stance that "combines stiffness, dignity,
and coolness in a particular mixture.... and expresses that one is
entirely one's own man." Some patients in these wards "not going
out of their way to make trouble" manage to convey "unconcern and
mild contempt for all levels of the staff, combined with utter
self-possession" (A 278-9). Such persons, locked in the worst
of social places, yet succeed in putting a staff person in what
they see as his place.

Sexual intercourse can be employed by two persons to show
each other their places for it too is "part of the ceremonial system,
a reciprocal ritual performed to confirm symbolically an exclusive
social relationship" (PS 190n). In these sexual rituals proper
involvement should be shown since "the engrossing power of such
encounters can become a crucial test of the relationship" (E 47).
If such involvement is missing, the "subvocal tracking of sexually
climactic experience" is a "display available to both sexes" whose
sound "can be strategically employed to delineate an ideal development
in the marked absence of anything else" (RC 804).

Emotion in encounters may be closely linked to ritual
concerns. Thus, when a person is caught acting improperly or
catches others doing so, his embarrassment "can be surprisingly
deep" (BP 248). Any offender against the conversational order
feels shame (CC 36), and when a face is lost, a witness to the
event might feel an anguish as deep as the anger that would accompany

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his own loss of face (IR 23). Audiences, too, are always in awe

of performers. The more awe they feel the more they would feel

shame if the performers' secrets were disclosed (PS 76). Feelings

are so closely related to ritual concerns that those spontaneously

expressed, rather than "consciously designed ones," fit best into

ritual interchanges (IR 23). For this reason, shamelessness is

a rare state which may only be achieved by unusual persons who

choose to no longer project a self: for example, right at the end

of their moral careers, some mental patients, having had their old

selves destroyed, simply do not seek a new one, and, instead,

unconcerned with their own or others' sacred worth, "practise

before all groups the amoral arts of shamelessness" (A 155).

Proprieties

*The proprieties are not rules per se but those creative,
even apparently rule-breaking forms of conduct that understand
the rules very well. Proprieties issue exclusively from ritual
concerns.*

It follows that those who "actively dispute the proprieties"

respect a gathering and its encompassing social situation more than

those who give it no attention (BP 226). Likewise the "unserious

ritual profanation" of joking, which is resorted to when people

used to one kind of relationship are thrown into another, indicates

respect for the left-behind selves that an absence of joking would

not (CC 213). Innuendo, however, is an impropriety that must be

overlooked because it implies disagreement, whereas the unseriousness

that expresses disagreement signifies underlying agreement.

(Communication arrangements such as unserious innuendo give some

idea of the possible complexities of interaction (CC 89n).)

Offence may be given by conveying expressive behaviour in a way calculated to look calculated (CC 86, 87) but in the dark of a film-show expressive offences like weeping are permitted because "presumably at these times there is no interaction that can be embarrassed"(CC 288). Joking behaviour, falling short of offensiveness, can often be "seriously necessary to keep the peace" (CC 214n), the joker not being held responsible for his words; but, should his attempt at maintaining an unserious situational definition fail, he will be blamed for a breach of good taste (CC 79). So, rather than make jokes, a person may direct dangerous remarks not to their recipient but to a third party (even an animal or an object) or into the air (CC 159), and many are the unsuspecting high-status persons who in interaction are profaned behind their backs:

> ....when Mr Allen could come to the pier to check
> up on the rate of work or to talk to the foreman, a
> worker located behind Mr Allen's back would sometimes
> make profanizing gestures. On one occasion, a worker
> took up an empty bag of lime and whirled it about
> his head, testing the limits to which derogatory action
> could be carried on behind the back of the boss without
> the boss seeing it.
> (CC 240)

Nonetheless, there do take place interactions in which a person talks about himself and invites others to talk about him in a way that sacrifices his self-respect; if others join in and also profane themselves, "backstage solidarity" and "team spirit" may be built up. This practice of sharing secrets is common in group therapy (PS 200). Mostly, though, in everyday life, it is necessary to be ready to say pardon at all times, "exorcising possible slights" (CC 191), and there is a duty (which engages honour) to insist on the right to be given the right place "lest

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the whole pattern of rules deteriorate" (IR 242). Some unruly persons,
daring from their point of view and foolhardy from the point of
view of the undaring, will exploit these very considerations in
order to stage a "character contest" (the moral game of establishing
strong character at the expense of an opponent's)(IR 240). Or
else, "in an unconscious desire to keep amusement and interest in
the interplay from lagging" a person might ritually profane himself
by sacrificing his own dignity (CC 324-6). But, when bending
the rules of interaction, the greatest care must be taken because,
sanctions being immediately applied by the offended, "those who
break the rules of interaction commit their crimes in jail"
(IR 116-7). "The scene of the crime, the halls of judgement, and
the place of detention are all housed in the same cubicle; furthermore,
the complete cycle of crime, apprehension, trial, punishment, and
return to society can run its course in two gestures and a glance"
(RP 137). But, in spite of this, persons can create "unauthorized"
distance between themselves and their allotted place "through
direct insolence that does not meet with immediate correction, or
remarks passed half out of hearing of authority, or gestures
performed behind the back of authority" (A 276). And when a
person dons a particular style of clothing,such as the black shirts
in the thirties, he proclaims distance not only from situational
life but from civil life (BP 222). Distance may also be expressed
by "tight" behaviour in "loose" situations and "loose" behaviour
towards those persons and objects who are owed tight behaviour.
(BP 198-216, 229). Such distancing can strike "at the syntax of
conduct, deranging the usual agreement between posture and place,
between expression and position" (RP 424). In fact,"the most
disruptive thing a person can do is fail to keep a place that others
feel can't be changed for him" (RP 449). Many mental patients do

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just that, and once in hospital duly find themselves "graded according to the degree to which they violate ceremonial rules of social intercourse" (IR 92). In a mental hospital persons may "collapse as units of minimal ceremonial substance and ....learn that what had been taken for granted as ultimate entities are really held together by rules that can be broken with some kind of impunity" (IR 94). (Knowledge of this kind is for both staff and inmates "undesired".) So, if a person does not express a definition of himself that his familiars can confirm through their regard of him, his effect is:

> ..... to block and trip up and threaten them in
> almost every movement that they make. The selves
> that had been the reciprocals of his are under-
> mined. And that which should not have been able
> to change - the character of a loved one lived
> with - appears to be changing fundamentally and for
> the worse before their eyes. In ceasing to know the
> sick person, they can even cease to be sure of their
> way of knowing. A deep bewilderment results.
> Confirmations that everything is predictable and as
> it should be cease to flow from his presentations.
> The question as to what it is that is going on is not
> readily answered at every turn but must be constantly
> ferreted out anew. And life is said to become like
> a bad dream - for there is no place in possible
> realities for what is occurring.   (RP 424)

Essential Human Nature

> *Goffman makes no bones about his feeling that people are*
> *only their appearances, and that these are more often boring*
> *mimeographs than priceless first editions. He has said (in his*
> *introduction to Interaction Ritual) that his psychology is a*
> *deliberately minimal one to facilitate his sociology. But I*
> *do not think he means this. Often his sweeping away of psychological*
> *man is powerfully rhetorical. No psychologist that I know of has*
> *yet noticed that if Goffman is right the discipline of psychology*
> *is founded on illusions.*

If, then, there are no such things as "relationships,

feelings, attitudes, and the like" and if "various acts and postures" do not provide evidence of them, "the position can be taken that in the main what exists are doctrines regarding expression, gestural equipment for providing displays, and stable motives for encouraging certain imputations" (FA 462). Similarly, "natural expressions" of gender are portraits that "naturally express" only the capacity and inclination a person has to portray a certain version of himself. What is really essential to human nature is "the competency to produce these portraits, and interpret those produced by others" (GA 7).

> The commonsense assumption that emotional expression
> is a reliable index to the state of mind of the actor
> appears to be partly valid, but perhaps not for the
> reasons commonsense would supply. In this study it
> is assumed that the emotional expression practised
> by the members of a particular group is determined
> by the moral rules recognized in the group regarding
> social interaction. The member must not only learn
> when and how to express his emotions, but is morally
> obliged to express them in this approved way. Further,
> the member is obliged to obey the rules of expression
> once learned, in a sufficiently automatic and
> unselfconscious way so that observers will in fact
> be partly justified in their assumptions that the
> emotion conveyed to them is a dependable index of
> the actor's emotional state. It is suggested here
> that emotional expression is a reliable index because
> persons have been taught to act in such a way as to
> confirm the fiction that emotional response is an
> unguarded instinctive response to the situation.
>
> (CC 59-60)

Therefore, since "we are socialized to confirm our own hypotheses about our natures," (GA 2) "universal human nature is not a very human thing" (IR 44), and a person is a construct built out of externally imposed rules. The particular set of these rules that "transforms him into a human being derives from requirements established in the ritual organization of social encounters" (IR 44). So, even in the closest relationship, the "indication that each party provides the other that nothing whatsoever could

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break them apart is itself the substance, not the shadow" (FA 463).
By the same logic, a person among strangers in public places "must
come to be for himself .... someone whose appearances are ones
his others can see as normal. His show of being safely
disattendable is deeply him; he has no self that is deeper"
(RP 328). It is through deference and demeanour that "the world
tends to be bathed in better images than anyone deserves,"
because within interactions all persons offer the precise excess
of deferential indulgence good demeanour consists in declining
(IR 83). In the fields of Dixon, too, workers took frequent
breaks which "seemed to express the fact that they were not
merely animals engaged in routine labour all day long but were
persons, capable and desirous of conducting social interaction
with other persons" (CC 190). Deference cannot be self-served;
therefore, people who would achieve humanness are tied together.
"If the individual could give himself the deference he desired
there might be a tendency for society to disintegrate into islands
inhabited by solitary cultish men, each in continuous worship
at his own shrine" (IR 58). In mental hospitals these ideas seem
to be well understood. For example, assignment to a ward expresses
a person's "general level of social functioning". "Given the
fact that the worst ward levels provide a round of life that
inpatients with organic brain damage can easily manage, and that
these quite limited human beings are present to prove it, one can
appreciate some of the mirroring effects of the hospital" (A 139).
Here in a hospital a person can learn that by being moved from
ward to ward his self in a very short space of time can be built
and lost and built again:

The setting ... seems to engender a kind of cosmopolitan
sophistication, a kind of civic apathy. In this unserious
yet oddly exaggerated moral context, building up a self
or having it destroyed becomes something of a shameless
game, and learning to view the process as a game seems
to make for some demoralization, the game being such a
fundamental one. In the hospital, then, the inmate can
learn that the self is not a fortress, but rather a
small open city; he can become weary of having to show
pleasure when held by troops of his own, and weary of
having to show displeasure when held by the enemy. Once
he learns what it is like to be defined by society as
not having a viable self, this threateneing definition
- the threat that helps attach people to the self society
accords them - is weakened. The patient seems to gain
a new plateau when he learns that he can survive while
acting in a way that society sees as destructive of
him.

(A 151)

So the self arises not merely within interaction "but also out of

the social arrangements that are evolved in an organization for

its members" (A 138).

"Character", though, is not the same as self. It

comprises, besides the "primary properties" of ability, "maintenance

properties" that have a person "standing correct and steady in

the face of sudden pressures" (IR 214-239). Weak character is

revealed by incorrect behaviour during the stress of fatefulness

in "action" (action being problematical and consequential

activity undergone for its own sake). Possibly because of the

high costs for individuals and for society of an incessant

establishing of character among its members, one significant

expression of character "tends to be taken as an adequate basis

for judgement". (Various blends of courage, gameness, integrity,

and self-discipline will be expressed). Character has a dual

nature. It refers not only to what is characteristic of a person,

("essential and unchanging") but also "to attributes that can be

generated and destroyed through fateful moments" (IR 238).

Actually it is a "fundamental illusion". Persons ever encounter

possibilities that seem to encourage them to renew their efforts

at establishing character, and by so doing only succeed in

sustaining society's routines: "We are allowed to think there

is something to be won in the moments that we face so that society

can face moments and defeat them" (IR 239).

What then of self change? In total institutions successive

abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations cause

"progressive changes ... in the beliefs that he [the inmate] has

concerning himself and significant others" (A 24). These changes

constitute a "moral career" that can lead to a fully institutionalised

self:

> It is .... a tribute to the power of social forces that
> the uniform status of mental patient cannot only assure
> an aggregate of persons a common fate and eventually,
> because of this, a common character, but that this social
> reworking can be done upon what is perhaps the most
> obstinate diversity of human materials that can be brought
> together by society.
>
> (A 121)

But the moment in interactions when a person destroys himself by

"flooding out" is also socially determined: "The individual's

breaking point is that of the group to whose affective standards

he adheres" (IR 103).

Within organizations, social arrangements imply a conception

of a person not only as a member but as a human being and therefore

an organization can be viewed "as a place for generating assumptions

about identity" (A 164, 170). Because the activities prescribed

within an organization prescribe a world, "to dodge a prescription

can be to dodge an identity" (A 170). A person will always hold

himself off "from fully embracing all the self-implications of his

affiliations, allowing some of his disaffection to be seen, even

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while fulfilling his major obligations" (A 161). Frequently, though, it might be something other than disaffection that is shown; in interaction a formal role might be put in its place by behaviour that implies a larger or different self:

> In performing a role, then, the individual is likely to take minor liberties, ducking out for a moment to stretch or apologize. These fleeting derelictions are but shadows of acts, very easily unseen; certainly sociology has managed for long to ignore them. That a stage performer must disavail himself of these lapses when presenting a character (except when they are scripted) should quicken our interest in them and lead one to appreciate more clearly that although the social world is built up out of roles sustained by persons, these persons have, and are seen to have a right to have, a wider being than any current role allows. These very small acts celebrate very large issues.
>
> (FA 544)

> ..... if an individual is to show that he is a "nice guy" or, by contrast, one much less nice than a human being need be, then it is through his using or not using role distance that this is to be done. It is right here, in manifestations of role distance, that the individual's personal style is to be found.
>
> (E 134)

But the self that a person "shows through" his "official guise" is as prescribed by culture as is the official guise (FA 573-4). Every person falls short of the ideal images provided by his culture, and as often as he tries to show, in and around his roles, that he embodies these he is "likely to find himself being apologetic or aggressive concerning known about aspects of himself he knows are probably seen as undesirable" (S 153). "More than to any family or club, more than to any class or sex, more than to any nation, the individual belongs to gatherings, and he had best show that he is a member in good standing" (BP 248).

Social Order

Here are the remarks by which Goffman builds up the structure of society from a basically ritual structure of interaction. Society is what we tell one another it is, and our acting as if it is as we are told it is makes it so.

Social order is defined as "the consequence of any set of moral norms that regulates the way in which persons pursue objectives" (BP 8), and "the rules of conduct which bind the actor and reicpient together are the bindings of society"(IR 90). Since acts guided purely by these rules are infrequent and take time to conclude themselves, opportunities to affirm moral order are sought in other acts that "last but a brief moment" and "involve no substantive outlay" and "can be performed in every social interaction" (IR 91). Typical small acts are "remedial rituals" ("Excuse me" and "Think nothing of it") that are a"constant feature of public life" and in these rituals is expressed the "official moral ideology" of the culture: "We must see that the historical centre [moral ideology] and the contemporary periphery are linked more closely than any one these days seems to want to credit" (RP 222). Everybody feels a need to supply remarks or gestures that repair "the discrepancy another might see between their practice and their values" (RP 222). A person's performance "will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society" (PS 45). And, because every kind of transaction is "opened and closed by ritual", social life is infused with a "constant checking back to, and reminder of, a small number of central beliefs about the rights and character of persons" (RP 172). In a mental hospital, more than anywhere else, probably because of its reflection on his status, the patient will concoct

a "sad tale" - a lamentation, and also an apologia for his

presence in the setting - which "brings him into appropriate

alignment with the basic values of his society" (A 139). The

condemned man, too, on his way to death will want to demonstrate

good character by "smoothing" the social situation, comporting

himeself with good grace in "the final and awful socialized act"

(IR 232). It is, then, to the "flimsy rules" that manage

engrossment, not to the unshaking character of the external world,

that we owe our unshaking sense of realities" (E 72). So compelling

are these rules that even on occasions of extreme deprivation "it

is thought praiseworthy to joke about the situation and demonstrate

that one still has a self free for interaction (CC 283).

Rules as strong as these point to a structural explanation

for even so deconstructing an event as loss of face in embarrassment

displays. A person, placed in a social situation in which to be

the self it demands would destroy the self that brought him to

it, can keep open his options to be both selves at different

times in the future by ceasing entirely to be a viable self (IR 111).

(Thus society suffers no loss of roles even though the individual

has his face temporarily wiped off his existence.)

No escape from society is possible. In the most intimate

interactions "we will find that the finger tips of society have

reached bluntly into the contact," for even at the centre of a

category like "wife" the husband will meet "a full array of socially

standardized anticipations" so that "it is scandalous to speak of

marriage as a particularistic relationship" (S 70). Even the formal

signing of a contract implies a host of non-contractual but societal

assumptions abou t the signer: that he, for example, thinks contracts

are legal, has legal competence and good faith, and understands

unstated limits of trust (A 159). Even those who merely join an

organization take on a "conception of a person not only as a

member but as a human being" (A 164), and an organization "involves

a discipline of being - an obligation to be of a given character

and to dwell in a given world" (A 171).

Nevertheless, social life has more affinities to worlds

of make-believe than to facts. The scenes of advertisements, for

example, though rare in life "may yet be commonly part of the ideals

and fantasies of many actual people" (GA 22). Everyday life "often

seems to be a laminated adumbration" of folk tales, characters in

novels, advertisements, myths, movie stars and their roles, the Bible,

and so forth:

> Life may not be an imitation of art, but ordinary
> conduct, in a sense, is an imitation of the
> proprieties, a gesture at the exemplary forms,
> and the primal realization of these ideals belongs
> more to make-believe than reality.
>
> (FA 562)

Persons, telling their tales, since they "do not have a cast of

trained actors at their disposal or much time to polish a script,"

fail to be as lifelike in interactions as interactions are on

stage (FA 559). A machine such as television is quite natural to

people because it does what they do (much worse) in their own

interactions: "There is one thing that is similar to the warm

hours we now spend wrapped in television. It is the time we are

prepared to spend recounting our own experience or waiting an

imminent turn to do so. True, we seem to have foregone some of

this personal activity in favour of the work of professionals.

But what we have given up thereby is not the world but a more

traditional way of incorporating its incorporation of us" (FA 550).

The "excitement without cost" that comes of identifying with TV

characters passing through a play of events that can be fully

witnessed, now performing dangerous tasks, now engaging in

character contests, now involved in serious action (IR 262-3),

is what was hitherto sought and found in live interactions, that

is, dramatized life, not the drama of life, though that in its

turn tends to be lived with an eye to its future dramatic rendering:

> They develop a corpus of cautionary tales, games, riddles,
> experiments, newsy stories, and other scenarios which
> elegantly confirm a frame-relevant view of the workings of
> the world ... and the human nature that fits with this
> view of viewing does so in part because its possessors
> have learned to comport themselves so as to render this
> analysis true of them. Indeed, in countless ways and
> ceaselessly, social life takes up and freezes into itself
> the understandings we have of it.
>
> (FA 563)

Rather than conclude this chapter with a summary, I have

created an autonomous and expanded version of what such a summary

should be and set it apart as a chapter on its own, which now follows.

Notes

1. The following abbreviations are used:
    CC   Communication Conduct in an Island Community (1953)
    PS   The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life   (1956)
    A   Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients
          and Other Inmates (1961)
    E   Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction (1961)

S <u>Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity</u> (1963)

BP <u>Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization</u>
  <u>of Gatherings</u> (1963)

IR <u>Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour</u> (1967)

SI <u>Strategic Interaction</u> (1969)

RP <u>Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order</u> (1971)

FA <u>Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience</u> (1974)

GA <u>Gender Advertisements</u> (1976)

RR "Replies and Responses" (1976)

RC "Response Cries" (1978)

The dates are those of first publication, and so do not necessarily correspond to the dates in my bibliography.

2. Along with works by Szasz, Laing, and others, <u>Asylums</u>, in having
   had an ameliorative influence on the phenomena it reported, has
   to some extent gone out of date.

3. "Dixon" is Goffman's pseudonym for the settlement where he
   researched his Ph D.

CHAPTER III

THE STALKING GROUND

This chapter is a statement of my theoretical starting

points, almost all of which are taken from Erving Goffman's ritual

frame. Through this statement the reader can see my "world view"

as this exists at the outset of the thesis. Thus, the sense

the chapter makes in terms of my whole narrative, is that of   ·

a background or sociological ambience, which is the context for

my concerns in ensuing chapters.

General statement: Society has need of moral people who

unthinkingly employ a ritual code to regulate the way they treat

one another in interactions. People's estimation of themselves

as sacred leads to a morality in which even the feigning of

presentation, avoidance, and remedy rituals is offensive, and, to

maintain this morality, an obligation lies upon the offended to seek

the kind of redress that does not further offend. Moral order, then,

is affirmed or threatened in every social encounter, but all social

life is conducted with more reference to a very few beliefs -

dramatized in myth, entertainment, and talk - than to the ritually

neutral concerns of purely instrumental exchanges.

Ritual offence: In the company of others a person will try hard not to give offence and if he succeeds will seem like the sort of person - a proper person - compliance with ritual rules allows him to be, for offenders, even if they have broken a ritual rule only once, may be attributed a full-blown deviant self. Behind one another's backs, however, people are the less ritually careful of one another the more they expect to keep their offences secret. But, face-to-face, it only takes the display of a seemingly genuine mutual interest, overriding self presentations, to "light up the world".

It is the duress of having to seem continually what cannot be lived continously that gives rise to the "merchant of morality" who, especially in his intimate circle, can find himself putting more effort into engineering a front than into carrying out the acts that would give him the front incidentally. Frontwork, however, must not be seen for what it is lest attention be drawn to this demeaning faculty - the faking of humanness - so frontworkers perform anything but an emotionless calculation. There arises, then, a very deep relation between ritual concerns and feelings[1] so much so that a person may hate those who have defiled a proffered self, or, on the other hand, love others who with satisfactory accuracy see him as what, at his most optimistic, he can scarcely be for himself. But a person's sacredness is not entirely his to give to himself. He must receive it from others by risking it in those activities he performs to earn it. (Perhaps a person who does not feel, just by virtue of being a person, that he has ultimate worth cannot be a person. Such people are rare, for even imprisoned criminals, for example, while they may accept that they deserve punishment, have great difficulty in accepting that, as a punishment, they should be "treated like dirt" or that such treatment could be

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meted out by punishers claiming to be human. From this it follows

that those persons who would offend at will, and not suffer from

any consequences, must be in a position to coerce the offended

not only into behaving as if they deserve to be offended but

also into looking as if they accept the offence as just,

otherwise the response to offence, of counter-offence, would

threaten the original offender. Staff in total institutions,

who very often fail to elicit "genuine" acceptance of their

contaminations of inmates, therefore may have to define inmates

as subhuman, and, by then treating inmates as subhuman,

inevitably receive further cause to so define them.

Self: A person playing a role actually juggles many subsidiary

roles, and if he does not will be regarded as a machine rather

than a person, yet though no less prescribed than a relinquished

official role, his contrapuntal roles may be very distant from

it, but, if that person does not nevertheless show requisite

ritual respect for his official role, he will be seen as being

disruptive of social arrangements, drawing himself closer thereby

to the legal sanction of confinement under lock and key.

The fragile nature of selves, their easy reconstitutability,

the knowledge that life without a self is not the end of life,

are widely denied beliefs. Those who hold them are removed a little

from the rest, for whom they may feel the indulgent pity that is

the reciprocal of pompous alarm. The unpalatable view, indicated

here, of persons as "dramatic effects" rests on the assumption that

if there is an essential human nature it is nothing other than the

competency to perform what is customarily seen as essential human

nature.[2]

Interactive man: Only in interaction can a person receive deference

which can never be given in as full measure by himself to himself

(for a person who would take it upon himself to give himself due
deference is not a proper person and so could not invite deference,
and, then, not being worthy enough to receive deference neither
could he, being the same person, give it). Only in interaction
can "character" be created or destroyed at a stroke, for it must
always be sought at the expense of someone else's and won by a
superior showing of courage, gameness, integrity and self-discipline
(the"good loser" is a new character won the moment another is lost
in contest). And only in the interactions opened to him by virtue
of his membership of this or that organisation can a person have a
chance to show that he is the "kind of person" such membership
defines him as.

A person is the creation of his interactions before he
is, for example, a parent, a Marxist, a boss, a male, or a Briton,
and yet all these things that he is not, and the degree to which he
succeeds or fails at being every one of them, may compare, when he
is being sociable with others, to a sort of composite ideal person.
Comparing unfavourably, the person in question will want to hide
his discreditable self, and the more successful he is at this the
more his others' acceptance of him is not of him. Thus his promissory
acceptance of their similar phantom normalcy is not payable in full,
not only because he himself did not promise it but also because
they themselves were not the persons they presented as deeming it.
Interaction, then, sometimes may be seen as a stalking ground of
culturally approved ideal persons. Therein people go in fear,
alternately, of not being taken for the best selves they could be
and then of being mistaken for those very same selves.

However terrible his circumstances, a person's first duty
to those with whom he is face-to-face is to be an inoffensive

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interactor, which means that he must not fail to interact (though some allowances are made in the cases of persons suffering extreme physical or emotional pain). It is as though the webs of society are too weak to support the dead weight of a truly autistic person, whose little hole that he makes in social reality is yet seen as infinitely deep and beckoningly vertiginous to his closely enmeshed familiars. Poised on its brink they maybe feel that, if they too fall down the hole, they will take with them all their familiars too, who will drag theirs down after them, and so on until nobody is left in society to do what George Eliot (1957) in Daniel Deronda called "keeping up the forms of life" (Ch IV). The reason for keeping up the forms in Daniel Deronda was the beauty, the rarity, and"decision of will which made itself felt in the graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones" of Gwendolen Harleth, who might be one example out of many millions providing similar reasons for honouring the human as a sacred being.

Sources of respect: The ubiquitous rituals, through which people show respect to one another and also to their relationships, do not model relations held across time and space and in and out of encounters so much as dramatize approved orientations to approved shared values. Persons in interaction, then, demonstrate how they relate to moral ideologies that also prescribe the forms of such demonstration, and spontaneous and interpretable behaviour must be provided to allow others to know where a person stands in relationships whose mutual involvement must be of the kind that does not forget to appear to forget itself. (In the extreme, lovers should try to also forget not to forget to appear to forget, because forgetting this could be a falling out.) Since social life would grind to a standstill if every appearance had to be checked out, trust is a societal necessity[3] that straightway opens the possibility of its betrayal. The

more sacred the betrayed person the more serious is the betrayal;
conversely, lowly persons like children and mental patients can
expect frequent betrayals. So, when a Tsar is shot or the wife
of Chairman Mao put on trial, one might connect such desacralizations
to complete reversals in official moral ideology. The extent of
ritual reversals might be then one index of the distance travelled
between old and new orders. In an order that is unchanging, betrayal
funnels everywhere can only operate, therefore, by reversing instead
the character of the betrayed person. Thus the practice of obliging
a convicted criminal to wear demeaning attire is one method of
compelling him to demonstrate the fall from civic respectability
that is presumed to have been devised from within himself and not
issued to him as a uniform.

Certain notions of human worth can become the point of
leverage for the turning round of an entire society, for a society that
condones inhumane treatment of any of its citizens can lose the
commitment of its humane citizens, and ultimately come to suffer from
their opposition. The central issue for any society, organisation,
or group may be, then, its tolerable level of inhumanity. At a
certain point of perceived intolerability, a group, though possibly
locked together by economic, racial, historical, and other considerations,
can radically split on this issue, though of course a split group may
not be dysfunctional for some higher order goal than humane life for
all. But life in most places is not so thoroughly policed that there
is not plenty of scope for disrespecting offenders to get off scot
free as they carry their jokes a little too far, press their
profanations a little too hard,refuse a courtesy too pointedly, or
conspicuously fail to exorcise offences by apologising. Yet these
petty desacralizations more penetratingly than the most repressive
regime pierce to the heart of a person's sense of his ultimate

worth, and more than grosser, vaster, and more lifelong injustices

can fill him with a destroying rage against the perpetrator, who

merely treated his victim as less than his victim's cultural

definition of a man.

Ritual model of interaction: Coming together involves people in

a "joint ceremonial labor," and this is a lively fraternisation if

compared to the symbolic interactionist model that would have persons

on first meeting merely working out how to "fit their acts to one

another in orderly joint actions" (Blumer, 1970). Where some

symbolic interactionists imply a scrupulous mutual appraisal which

when it goes wrong only adversely reflects on a person's intelligence,

the ritual model, in contrast, does breathe life into interaction

and give some hint that there do exist, everywhere, singular and

deep relationships that can only begin in and be sustained by reciprocal

conduct. More importantly, symbolic interactionism, for example,

fails to acknowledge that what must be going on at all times[4], as

the necessary and sufficient basis for anything else that might be

going on, is proper conduct with its constant referencing of relevant

moral ideologies. Somehow the symbolic interactionists have not

allowed for this fact that interaction can cease or change course

if offence is given; they have by implication swept away the mainstay

of interaction, ritual concern, into a residual category, as if

politeness, for example, were mere embellishment of more serious

"business" (Blumer, 1972), and not the prerequisite, continually, of

any social conduct whatever. (Though Blumer is right to say that

the business may have brought the persons together in the first place,

it cannot follow that business will easily continue however rude

persons are to one another, for as soon as rudeness emerges it becomes

the business.) Furthermore, since it is unlikely that the sanctity

of any two interacting persons can be precisely the same, there

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will be discrepant ritual care of one person by the other. This
means that the more sanctified person will have, for example,
greater territorial rights than the other, and will be able to be
more personal, invading the other's privacy with greater impunity.
Thus, even if both persons are consciously engaged in mutual
calculation of other factors in their relationship besides the
ritual ones - as symbolic interactionism proposes - their very
calculations are dependent on their relative ritual statuses. Inter-
action seen in ritual terms, then, is no longer a game in which the
stakes hardly concern the actors; at every instant what is at stake
before all else is the very self of each actor. As McDermott (1976)
says, people are always playing out "intense identity struggles" even
though they may not think that this is what they are doing.

The ritual model also possesses this advantage, that it
includes under its rubric both unthinking activity and raw emotion,
the former if too unthinking causing the latter and so revealing the
transgressed rule so peremptorily as to require instant order-restoring
redress. Thus embarassment, for instance, seemingly disorder at its
most convulsive, is perfectly accommodated by the ritual model in whose
terms the person acting in an embarrassed fashion is not only the
structural abeyance of two faces that cannot coexist but also an
experience of intense discomfiture where relief ensures the rapid
remedial action that keeps interaction in order.

Conclusion: Without doubt, the exemplary forms that guide behaviour
are themselves vigorous creations of people, and their adoption as
religious conviction, fashionable conduct, political stance, or
style of relating may be vigorously prosecuted in the face of
apparently contrary forms. The forms are given, but they do not
have to be taken, and they may be changed. However, change is
inevitably very slow, since the interlocked structures of interaction

that are social life contain, in every word, gesture, expression and glance, a check against any original form that, in causing difficulties of ritual interpretation,and for that reason alone, can be offensive. Even so simple an innovation as the divesting of swimming costumes on beaches will arouse violent reactions to the extent that Douglas et al (1977), researching a nude beach in California, have been moved to coin the category "creative deviance" for bathers, who, in challenging old forms, create new ones whose strength, like that of their predecessors, will be proportionate to the ritual importance of the form, itself derived from the dominance of a new sort of ideal person. For the nude bathers this ideal person freely accepts and glories in his physical self while the antagonistic ideal person has a decent reserve regarding parts of his or her body that connote private acts. Interaction, then, viewed ritually, tends to enforce its perpetuation along established lines. The costs of transgression are various kinds of ostracism. In the stalking ground, the stalking horse must be oneself doing the "done" things, even if the ultimate intent is to do different things.

Note

The foregoing chapter will have served its purpose if it has oriented the reader to the possibility and even desirability of viewing persons as ritual beings. In what follows I am less interested in the rules of interaction (which are the main interest of Erving Goffman) than in the ritual meaning of persons conceived as beings who cannot be disposed of analytically once an interaction has been explained in terms of its organization. Where Goffman has used the ritual frame in order to explain interaction per se, I am tending, therefore, to take the opposite tack of using interaction to explain the ritual frame.

Notes

1   Shott (1979) explores how role attribution can come to
define and name "raw" emotion states; Kemper (1978) similarly
shows how power and status differentials in interaction
activate emotions; and Hochschild (1975) argues that rational
interaction requires emotional expression. None of these
writers speculate about what it is about persons that makes
them so vulnerable in social situations to feelings they
often cannot contain.

2   Accepting a similar hypothesis, Trilling (1972) suggests
that the contemporary search for what is authentic in
persons (triggered by the knowledge that sincerity need
not be authentic) is responsible for Freud's heavy em-
phasis on the power of the unconscious - "It was his pur-
pose to keep all things from becoming 'weightless'" - and
Laing's intimation that madness - or total denial of the
social world - may be the one guarantee of authenticity.

3   Luhmann (1979) says that society's rationality depends
on its ability to reduce complexity with mechanisms like
law, organization, and language. Trust replaces missing
information with internal security, and "the rational basis
of a system of trust lies in the trust placed in the trust
of other people." Trust is definitely not a reasonable
assumption on which to decide correctly, because it is
necessary precisely when decisions are to be made in the
face of those uncertainties whose very condition is the
lack of available reasonable assumptions. Distrust burdens
the distruster with the problem of establishing what he
can trust in exactly those situations where he needs to
trust in order to escape such complexity. No complex
society could be established without trust. However, trust
of the kind that has the truster stabilizing his feelings
towards those he trusts is not useful in a highly mobile,
strongly differentiated social system, when he who has a
capacity for "far-reaching indifference and readiness to

substitute" will fare better. Cathectic trust, that would
make feelings "immune from refutation," must break down,
and the fear of this causes anxieties that do not trouble
those who rather than strengthening their internal security
contrarywise increase "bearable insecurity at the expense
of security."

4   Blumer's (1972) assertion: "People in association do not
go around with their attention constantly focused on how
they are being regarded and on how they can influence the
way in which they are regarded," has not been substantiated
in the work of McQuown et al, Birdwhistell, Scheflen,
McDermott, and many others. For example, the microanalysts
Pittenger et al (1960) write: "No matter what else human
beings may be communicating about, or may think they are
communicating about, they are always communicating about
themselves, about one another, and about the immediate
context of the communication."

Part Two

CHAPTER IV

RITUAL POWER: PUNKS AND NURSES

I wish now to introduce the concept of fashion,
which, despite that it is very flimsy and only fleetingly
connected to hard data, has inspired sociological passages[1]
that direct attention from what cannot be seen under the
surface of social forms back to the surface, in a fuller
consciousness that many surface phenomena are neither
superficial nor readily accountable in any frame.

Having very briefly summarised a particular tradition
in the sociology of fashion, I shall use the concept in
order to bias the reader's understanding - in the ensuing
discussion of punks and nurses - towards those aspects of
their conduct that are adapted in the pattern of external
exemplars.

I have chosen punks and nurses because each group
lends itself to ritual explication in a way that is
clarified by that of the other, and because both are
Weberian ideal types that stand at the opposite extremes
of tendencies to contaminate and to sacralize that I

think most persons display.

Although there is some carryover of fashion ideas
into Chapter V and beyond, they will not be there further
elaborated. I stop working the concept almost as soon
as I pick it up because its main purpose here is to pull
the psychological rug out from under would-be sociological
portraits of individuals who may be grouped by the name
they are called, as are punks and nurses. In keeping
with this purpose, I shall also write of punks and of
nurses as though there need be no commonalities between
members of each group except that they can be called by
the name of their group.

Of course, punks and nurses only make sense to those
who share their ritual code, which they both share with
each other. For example, when I note that a punk does
not mind being spat on by another punk, I assume that
my readers, like me, will think that this is not usual.
Similarly, when I note that a nurse puts on plastic
gloves before inserting a suppository, I assume that
readers, as I do, will feel that this is suitably
decontaminative behaviour. It should not be thought,
however, that all possible readers will share these
assumptions, for, as Mary Douglas (1966) suggests,
"our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns
any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict
cherished classifications" (p. 36). Douglas, in fact,
is quite insistent that "uncleanness or dirt is that

which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained"
(p. 40). Pullutants, she says, only pollute in so far
as they can be read as upsetting a given symbolic order.
By implication, therefore, one order is logically on a
par with any other, and so the idea that spittle or human
excrement contaminates comes not from the nature of the
substance but from its ambiguous status in a pollution
system. The punks, as will be seen, eloquently speak
for the power of such a system, since much of their conduct
is deliberately polluting, in the system's terms, with
the more general aim of polluting the political order
that upholds the pollution system.

Nurses need no introduction to the modern reader,
but punks do need introducing because they are a very
recent youth culture, originating in Great Britain
towards the end of 1976. At the time of writing, 1981,
there are still a few punks in all the major cities of
Great Britain, though the fashion has softened considerably
since its inception. In what follows, those who have
only come across punks in the latter part of the last
five years might think, therefore, that I am exaggerating
the power of their conduct. Also, it should be born in
mind that, though I talk of punks' conduct in the present
tense, much of it is now no longer seen, being out of date.

The purpose of this chapter is very simple. I
examine the "ritualness" - as that is understood in
Erving Goffman's ritual frame - of punks and nurses, to
see how they increase it for themselves by their inter-
action conduct, especially through their manner of
handling pollutants. The chapter will conclude that
ritualness is not a fixed quantity for a person but is
his degree of "ritual power" as this can be acquired
by his conduct.

The Concept of Fashion in Sociology

Blumer (1969) says that fashion operates in nearly
every social world, and "may influence vitally the
central content of any field." Konig (1973) thinks that
fashion influences a diverse range of social behaviours,
from human posture, gait, movement, and expression to
attitudes, interests, ideas, and occupations. The Langs
(1961) claim that voice and manners are as susceptible
to changes in fashion as women's apparel; and Sapir
(1931) notes the same seeming inutility of fashion
changes in amusements and furniture that Robinson (1958)
comes across in cars and buildings. With formidable
confidence Simmel (1957) asserts that human expression,
the social forms, and aesthetic judgement too are carried
on under the rule of fashion, while Sumner (1959) lists
all human conduct, particularly nominating diseases,
trading methods, logic, philosophy, and science as
fashion-governed. Even a contemporary journalist, Tom
Wolfe (1973), defines certain styles of political

radicalism as "chic", meaning that they are donned with
as little or as much thought as fashionable attire.
The social ubiquity of fashion, moreover, has the cautious
Blumer (1969) not only reflexively commenting that
"contemporary social science is rife with the play of
fashion," but also advocating that "fashion should be
recognised as a central mechanism in forming social
order in a modern type of world, a mechanism whose
operation will increase." However, there seems to be only
one common denominator of all of these fashion analyses:
the baffled definition of fashion as a peremptory,
widespread change in outer forms, whose societal causes
can only be guessed at.

No studies have connected changes in fashion to
societal changes, but, on the basis of an impressionistic
historical survey, Bell (1947) thinks any such corre-
lations are obscure. Robinson (1976) does establish
that fashions in men's facial hair have no apparent
relationship to major historical events, though obeying
a cycle strikingly similar to the one Kroeber (1919)
detected in a study of women's evening wear over a 75-year
period, but this cycle does not appear to match any
known socio-historical cycle. Apropos of the difficul-
ties of finding a "law of fashion", Kroeber (1919)
writes that "a geologist could as usefully set himself
the task of explaining the size and shape of each pebble
in a gravel bed," for in the play of fashion, "we are
but such stones." Blumer (1968), Konig (1973), and

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Robinson (1958) conclude that fashion is an arbitrary
law unto itself, but considered in the context of the
"mores" (also called "custom" and "culture") fashion
might (1) have an experimental function (Blumer, 1968);
(2) provide a link to the "Zeitgeist" (Meyersohn & Katz,
1957); (3) be a means of changing culture (Sapir, 1931;
Sumner, 1959); and (4) create stimulation (Park, 1921).
Tarde (1903) interestingly associates a strong feeling
for custom with an attachment to nation and a weak
attachment to nation with a strong feeling for period,
in which it is fashion that rules. Polhemus (1978),
idiosyncratically, would designate "custom" clothes
"anti-fashion", a term he also ascribes to body decor-
ations such as tattooing, scarification, cranial deformation,
removal of body parts, circumcision, subincision,
clitorectomy, tooth filing, and ear, nose and lip
piercing, and in driving a wedge between slowly changing
forms and rapidly changing forms he seems to want to
identify anti-fashion with custom, from which Sapir (1931)
says fashion disengages itself to show a sort of societal
role distance. The Langs (1961), too, in claiming for
culture the ability to set limits to fashion, confine
the concept of fashion to what is changing relatively
quickly, as if in the hope that what is changing relatively
slowly will be tractable to the rational explanations
that fashion confounds.

There is, however, a consensus that fashions are both
dictatorial - Park calls them a "ceremonial government"

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and Sumner thinks they are "stronger than autocracy" - and whimsical, simultaneously defying and enticing easy rationalizations[2]. Fashions, it is agreed, are called fashions if it is thought or hoped that they will die. Those fashions that do die are then exposed as having been fashions all along, because it is in the nature of a fashion to have not looked like one when holding sway (Simmel, 1957). Fashions die suddenly (Robinson, 1958) and the new is always driven in by the old (Meyersohn & Katz, 1957). So fashion, then, is always partly out of control (Park, 1921), and carries its own death sentence; and perhaps that is one reason why the word fashionable is derogatory, even though the rejoinder unfashionable is also a put-down.

Fads stand to fashions as fashions to customs, and even from fashion-apologists like Blumer draw the sort of venemous attributions of irrationality that fashion fashionably attracts, sometimes being called "crazes", as if their failure to fit into neat societal theories was their fault.

Simmel originated the trickle-down theory that has been taken over by marketing researchers and endorsed by Fallers (1967), Barber & Lobel (1952), and Robinson (1960, 1963). The theory holds that since the lower classes are always emulating higher classes, the higher classes to avoid identification with their imitators must be forever altering their styles. Blumer (1969)

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has an excellent rebuttal of this. He says that, because the central imperative of fashion is to be in fashion, it must be the fashionable who are emulated; the rich, then, are not copied because they are rich but because they have afforded themselves fashionable appearances. However, I think Blumer's impeccable argument that there need be no relation between the status of a fashion itself and statuses as they exist in that fashion's surrounding culture need not reflect the truth.

Blumer (1969) speculates that the societal function of fashion might be to free energies from outmoded forms in a "collective groping" for future forms, providing, through uniformity, a continuity that prevents anarchy, while Fallers (1967) says that fashion for the individual allows him to share a success that is not his. But fashion's adherents, asserts Polhemus (1978), only advertise their freedom from existing groups, and Sapir (1931) is reduced to claiming for the fashionable, in the absence of any other significance, a "symbolic significance".

Perhaps, however, there is no simple purpose for fashion because all it does is provide dominant conduct models for those aspects of behaviour that feel free to choose their own forms. Conduct with no social reference will have no need for fashion, since such conduct cannot convey anything, and conduct that is not free to choose, of course, will not be able to change its forms in any

direction whatsoever. Fashion conduct, then, will not

be pronounced in repressed societies or in societies

where people are relatively uninterested in one another.

However, contrary to present fashionable views of

"fashion's slaves", it will be just where there are

opportunities to change (with no fear of sanctions)[3]

and just when people are very interested in one another,

that fashion conduct might become all the conduct there

is.

A Note on Studying Fashion

Fashion is a field in which there has been very

little empirical study. Kroeber (1919) and Barber &

Lobel (1952) have measured the dimensions of women's

clothes in pictures. Horowitz (1975) has elucidated

some relationships between designers, communicators,

and consumers between 1964 and 1967 in Britain.

Mueller (n.d.) has compared the repertoires of symphony

orchestras. Robinson (1976) measured men's facial hair

in pictures from the Illustrated London News from 1842

to 1972.

So far as I know, there is no study of the conduct

of fashion adherents done by participant observation of

the type that I practised with punks and with nurses.

·The aspect of fashion conduct that has drawn my

attention bears closely on its morality, in which

connection Park (1921) has written:

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There is no rebellion against fashion; no rebellion
against social ritual ... There are breaches of
etiquette that any ordinary human being would
rather die than be guilty of.

Bell (1947) too, connects clothing to morals:

So strong is the impulse of sartorial morality
that it is difficult in praising clothes not to
use such adjectives as "right", "good", "correct",
"unimpeachable", or "faultless", which belong
properly to the discussion of conduct, while in
discussing moral shortcomings we tend very
naturally to fall into the language of dress and
speak of a person's behaviour as being shabby,
shoddy, threadbare, down at heel, botched or
slipshod.

And Sapir (1931), noting that fashion is related to dress

by its symbolism, describes art, morals, and thoughts

as "costuming of the ego". Bearing this in mind, one

can appreciate that fashion as a concept to be researched

may be as well explored, at this time, by textual as

by more obvious fieldwork methods.

It should be clear, as a starting point at any rate,

that fashions against which "there is no arguing" unless

one wants to be sanctioned with "ridicule and powerless-

ness" (Sumner, 1959) can thoroughly take over their

adherents to the point that good behaviour is to be

fashionable and bad unfashionable, whatever the fashion.

And if fashion is truly ubiquitous, and if it is as

autocratic as many sociologists believe, one already

has to concede that to be a good person it is only

necessary to do what every other up-to-date person

is doing. I feel safe in saying that, at the time of

writing, this, in my culture, is an unfashionable

proposition. It seems to mock a person's pretensions
to moral seriousness, what I have called his ritual
self. I found, for example, in the course of my
research, that punks - supreme "slaves" to fashion -
reject such a view by constantly asserting that a punk
as it were inevitably expresses his "punkness" by his
appearance. What a punk would never do, say punks, is
cynically copy other punks in order to suggest that he
might possess underlying "punkness". I cannot help
wondering what a state of affairs, in which it was
fashionable to say that one was only and completely a
creature of fashion, might be like. Perhaps it would
presage a sociological era when people would cut them-
selves free from fixed relationships and concentrate
on playing all their present interactions for the pay-off
of continually altering identities. In that case, it
would structurally resemble life in Queen Elizabeth's
Hospital, Washington D.C., where Erving Goffman,
pretending to be an assistant to the athletics director,
observed the conduct that he reported twenty years ago
in Asylums - with two main differences, that there would
be no dossier (clinging to each person like a "paper
shadow") from which antagonistic persons could select
information with which to puncture claims, and there
would be no possibility of release into a different
world.

In the light of the above, and before moving on to
the specific case of the punks, a second note on fashion's

unfashionability now seems called for.

A Note on the Unfashionability of Fashion as a Concept

Why should fashion be a far more unfashionable

concept to take seriously than, for example, class?

When Guy de Maupassant (1971) writes, "The ladies

uttered shrieks of joy, and then examined the samples

with that seriousness which comes naturally to women

as soon as they lay their hands on an article of clothing,"

he is surely confident that his male readers, at least,

will share in his bemused condescension, and many, of

course, will. Likewise, George Eliot (1958) must have

expected sardonic appreciation for her observation about

Dorothea Brooke that "she could not reconcile the anxieties

of a spiritual life, involving external consequences,

with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protusions

of drapery."

Thomas Hardy (1980), more strongly still, in <u>Tess</u>

<u>of the D'Urbervilles</u>, describes Angel Clare's two brothers

in terms that leave no doubt as to his disdain for their

fashionable conduct:

> ... non-evangelical, well-educated, hall-marked
> young men, correct to their remotest fibre; such
> unimpeachable models as are turned out yearly by
> the lathe of systematic tuition. They were both
> somewhat short-sighted, and when it was the custom
> to wear a single eyeglass and string they wore a
> single eyeglass and string; when it was the custom
> to wear a double glass they wore a double glass;
> when it was the custom to wear spectacles they
> wore spectacles straightaway, all without reference

to the particular variety of defect in their own vision. When Wordsworth was enthroned, they carried pocket copies; and when Shelley was belittled they allowed him to grow dusty on their shelves. When Careggio's Holy Families were admired, they admired Careggio's Holy Families; when he was decried in favour of Velasquez, they sedulously followed suit without any personal objection.

The effect of this passage by Hardy, as of the others, is to slight fashionable conduct by insinuating that it lacks any personal volition beyond that necessary to choose to follow it.

If it is the case, as I now suggest, that Western societies are becoming more fashion conscious in every social activity, then it must equally be the case that individuality is becoming more a matter of choosing which fashion group to belong to than of defying all fashions, which as I have quoted Sumner saying, invites ridicule, powerlessness, and ostracism. From this perspective, there would seem to be every reason to take fashion seriously. After all, Angel Clare's brothers were only different from Angel Clare and Thomas Hardy in isolating more transient customs for emulation, and, between a number of customs, who is to choose but by reference to other customs? Recently, the social psychologist Gregory Stone (1975) has spoken up for the most derided aspect of the derided concept of fashion, which is clothing:

> ... clothing represents our action, past, present and future, as it is established by the proposals and anticipations that occur in every social transaction.

> By appearing, the person announces his identity, shows his value, expresses his mood or proposes his attitude.

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> The meaning of appearance, therefore, is the
> establishment of identity, value, mood and attitude
> for the one who appears by the coincident programs
> and reviews awakened by his appearances.

Perhaps this recognition of the crucial importance to
interactions of actors' attire can give a lead as to
how to put the volition back into fashionable conduct.
Received wisdom on the subject has fashion adherents
cast in the role of passive victims or dupes, who will
wear or do anything if they think it is the fashion.
Look at it from Stone's point of view, however, and one
can see how great is the care that people must exercise
to control their appearances, so as to integrate their
self-conceptions with those of their others. Social life
thus demands the existence of a readable sartorial code.
Given that such codes already do exist, it is simply
impossible for a person to go codeless, for that too
would speak volumes of contempt in the sartorial idiom.
Faced with having to put on an identity in a culture
where idiosyncratic attire is ungrammatical, a person
has no choice but to look to prevailing fashions. As
Simmel (1957) has shown, fashion at once differentiates
and collects its adherents; so it is the means by which
the person can lay claim to personness without paying
the costs of eccentricity. And even within a tightly
prescribed fashion like punk, there is considerable
room for variation: individuality may be contrived
between certain parameters.

One of the techniques for devaluing fashion is to

define the fashionable into a separate group from the
rest of humanity ; this comes, I think, of imputing one
set of motivational relevances to phenomena that are taken
for granted and another to those which shock. It is
my view, however, that the pernickety fashion care at
work in persons picking over a pullover counter in Marks
and Spencers is no less open to the charge of being over-
concerned with appearances than the care exercised by
a punk in a pet-shop choosing a dog collar to fasten
round his neck. The one is just more familiar than the
other, but both speak the same language. Punk, by its very
nature, of course, is not just lowly because it is a
fashion, for it is a low fashion, even seeming to disobey
Simmel's trickle-down theory, except if looked at ritually.
This is because it began among working class youths (the
only groups it has been emulated by are the ultra-fashion-
conscious beau monde of capital cities, who have improvised
a sort of haute couture punk). There is no question of
an Etonian, for instance, ever having stuck a safety
pin through his cheek: so punk fashion can only be said
to trickle down if it can be allowed that it possesses
high ritual power, which would then cause it to be
followed so that followers could acquire some of that
power. What Tom Wolfe (1965) said of the mods is as
true of the punks:

>High styles came from low places, from people
>who have no power, who slink away from it, in
>fact, who are marginal, who carve out worlds for
>themselves in the nether depths, in tainted
>"undergrounds".

> It is the style of life that makes them unique,
> not money, not power, not position, talent,
> intelligence. So like most people who base their
> lives on style, they are rather gloriously unaffected
> cynics about everything else.
>
> (Wolfe, 1968)

If my suspicion, that social life is tending to become more and more "fashion life", is correct, one can see from commentators like Wolfe how the sixties phrase "life-styles" portended this. At no other time in European history had it become acceptable to think of ways of living as so many styles to be selected from, and, indeed, changed at will. But one can anticipate, if this sort of orientation were to take hold in sociology, a vigorous backlash against it by all those who would jump to the conclusion that the "real" facts of social situations can never be signalled by "mere" appearances. This would be in keeping with a very long-standing European intellectual fashion of compulsively ignoring surfaces for what is below them, before beginning any analysis. Fashions might never be allowed to be seen as autonomous movements of change that have the power to mass-produce lookalike humans in almost any imaginable form. There will be a great deal of effort devoted to tying them to persons' psychologies, for example, but, as Blumer (1968) has argued, no psychological explanation of fashion conduct can say why a psychological process gives rise to the conduct that is fashion conduct, because all psychological explanations presuppose the existence of fashion.

Punks[4]

As in the section on nurses which concludes this chapter, I introduce my metaphor of the stalking ground very sparingly here, and use the idea of persons as ritual beings with circumspection. In the whole of this chapter, I have remained "close to the data," which, as I have indicated in Chapter I, is possible precisely at the expense of theoretical expansion. The main purpose of this chapter is to justify the concept "ritual power," but it is also inevitable that the chapter will contribute to an understanding of nurses and punks as substantive topics in their own right.

General Introduction to Punks[5]

In any sociological study some of the phenomena has to be spirited into the account in a state of analytic undress before the analyst can quickly garb it in his terms so as to eventually prove that it does indeed look its best wearing those. Put differently, I cannot talk of punks ritually unless I first produce them unritually; I must speak the language of everyday to begin with, or not begin. Thus, I now provide a few remarks about punks that suffer from the fate that as much as they are effective, they will detract from the value of later ritual remarks.

Either gender can adopt the punk fashion once into

the teenage years, though attendance at school works

against a punk's credibility. An upper age limit would

seem to be the early or middle twenties, but most punks[6]

are in their late teens, as far from educational insti-

tutions as from adult institutions like marriage. Many

punks are unemployed and express a feeling of being on

the outside of what they call society: off-the-peg

occupational identities are either unavailable or

demeaning.

A punk can only become a punk by wearing the punk

fashion and the first time he does this is a "coming out"

(Warren & Ponse, 1977; Becker, 1970; Matza, 1969). Punks

are highly conscious of their appearance and not only

carefully fake the details of its ravagement and apparent

ill-use, but also taboo any but general comments about

it, preferring to try to fathom whatever it might be

beneath the appearance that, in their view, causes it.

This emerges in the process of "fantasy chaining"[7] when

it is frequently asserted that it would be possible to

be a punk without wearing punk gear. Those who are

thought of as the real punks, however, are scornful of

"Friday night" punks who put on the fashion just for an

evening out and take it off before applying for a job.

Yet even the full-time punks I interviewed confessed to

wearing non-punk fashions when appearing in courts on

assault charges, but were apologetic about this in one

another's presence. A punk who finally discards his

punk attire is said to "go smooth", and this is not
regarded as a moral progression but as a backing down, a
chickening out, a betrayal, and a defeat.

Rather than be "nobodies" with little sacred
value, punks, relatively unqualified to sanctify them-
selves by the acquisition of wealth, power, status,
talent, title, or whatever, can go only in the direction
of profanation if they would come into possession of
what is ritually beyond their achievable social deserts.
A punk must profane himself, then, to the point of
threatening all those who see him and interact with him
with a contagious contamination. Of this threat, Mary
Douglas (1966, p. 113) writes:

> A polluting person is always in the wrong. He
> has developed some wrong condition or simply
> crossed some line which should not have been
> crossed and this displacement unleashes danger
> for someone ... Pollution can be committed
> intentionally ... The power which presents a
> danger for careless humans is very evidently a
> power inhering in the structure of ideas, a
> power by which structure is expected to protect
> itself.

So the punk attacks the society that he feels has rejected
him, by putting himself in the wrong, so as to give
himself an aura of danger. The avoidance by other
people, then, of his polluting self, is to the punk
proportional to a greater ritualness he thereby comes
into. Just as a celebrity walks on hallowed ground
and may be jokingly referred to as "his highness" (and
may work in the seclusion of what his aides call the
"holy of holies") so the punk with every step he takes

seems to be descending into a realm of evil which is

known to be that both by his others and by himself, just

because there is a common pollution code. The punk is

one with Baudelaire's (1964) dandies:

> All partake of the same characteristic of
> opposition and revolt; they are all represent-
> atives of what is finest in human pride, of that
> compelling need, alas only too rare today, of
> combating and destroying triviality.
>
> Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid
> decadence ... glorious, without heat and full
> of melancholy.

However, though the punk speaks the same ritual idiom

as his audience, he speaks it better, for if he would

stay in circulation by living between the limits of

propriety and legality he must have an enhanced sensitivity

to both.

I shall now describe how punks desacralize them-

selves, and, since their doing this plays so large a

part in the creation of their fashion, I shall also be

giving, by the way, a fairly comprehensive account of

the punk fashion. This is an ethnocentric account because

it relies on readers appreciating, without having to be

told, that acts like vomiting on stage are not "normal".

What I hope to show through this account are not the

reasons why punks feel they should have extra ritualness,

but rather how they go about getting it, and in what it

consists. (Nonetheless, the ritual code, which they

share with all those readers this narrative would make

sense to, is so pervasive that, when I describe how

ritualness may be lost by their desacralizations, an
immediate reaction is to take the prevention of that
loss as a fully sufficient reason for acquiring more
of what would be lost.)

The Physical Self

Hair: Hair is dyed by both sexes, usually the arti-
ficial colours of peroxide blond, pink, lime green,
and jet black. Several colours can be combined on
one head, and into closely-cropped scalps might be dyed
patterns such as a spider's web or a question mark.
Male punks' hair can also be completely shaved, or,
if very closely cut in the neo-Skinhead style, have
patterns shaved into it (the wavy seam of a tennis ball
was popular during the Wimbledon summer of 1979).
Alternatively, hair may be tousled up into unkempt
spikes and then frozen into place by spray-on starch.
Improvisations on these themes are not unusual; for
example, one Bath punk has a mohican cut, with the
variation that the long central strip of hair is drawn
up into six-inch long spokes that give him a cockatoo
look.

Several violations are at work here. Punk hair
is always visually prominent to a degree not seen in
Britain since the advent of long hair in the sixties.
Thus, the treatment of the hair proclaims that it is
there purely for decorative purposes and that it is raw
material for often violent chemical experiment (Bath

punks, for example, used to splash Woolworths' peroxide onto their heads, and when the hair, attacked at its roots, began to fall out, they shaved it off completely). The forms of the decoration, moreover, are outlandish. Punk hair, then, is always designed to be bizarre and outrageous so that it must not only violate modesty norms, but also violate norms against violating these. So by the purchase and application of dye a person transforms himself into a double offender, for, not showing shame for one offence, he offends again, and thus is on the way to his classification as an "animal" or a "mindless moron" by those he offends.

Mutilations: The early punks who set the fashion wore several rings in each ear and often had rings or studs in their noses too. Safety-pins were the rage in 1977: these would be pinned into the face and sometimes a chain would connect the safety-pin[8] to an earring. This kind of adornment offends, as does the hair, but with additional force since it is brought about by painful self mutilation. Through his safety-pins, the punk says that even if it hurts him, he will hurt you.

Where the flesh of the body shows, tattoos are usually in evidence, often of home-made manufacture, as if to say that both design and irreversible physical change are matters of indifference to a punk. The argument once again is very simple. He who does that to himself is seen as not caring about himself and so

disqualifies himself as a proper person twice over, by
not caring and then by not caring about looking as if
he does not care.

Another mutilation of the self is the frequently
seen cutting of the forearms - with razors ot jacknives -
in herring bone patterns; this combines the flagrancy
of self-injury with the casual irreversibility of the
tattooing.

Make-up: The make-up of punk girls is usually a whitening
of natural tones, made more masklike still by the painting
of lips with "dead" colours like mauve or brown. Heavy
black lines emphasise the eyes, and early punk girls
would use, in place of a beauty spot, little swastikas.
Punk girls often have a startling, aggressive femininity
as if they belong to a tribe living on in the rubble
after a nuclear holocaust. (Boys rarely wear make-up,
but when they can, cultivate spots and pimples.) The
overall impression one gets from some of the punk girls
is of 1930s Berlin night-life designed by Edgar Allen
Poe, which is quite antithetical to current "educationalist"
and liberal dogma about the wholesomeness of healthy
sex, for instance.

Clothes and Ornaments
Punk clothes are usually old, and are always torn
carefully. T-shirts especially are ripped, but jackets
will come in for this treatment too, unless they are

old leather motorcycle jackets, when slogans, logos, and caricatures will be painted on their backs. Boys wear "bondage trousers" which are trousers whose legs are attached to each other by straps, and some of the girls have revived the mini-skirt, which they wear so as to expose the tops of stockings, held up by suspender belts. The rejection of "liberated" tights in favour of soft-porn stockings is then reversed again by the wearing of baseball boots on the stockinged feet. At concerts some girls are clad in plastic bin-liners and very long T-shirts instead of dresses, and a proportion of the boys always make sure to wear their "bum-flaps" (a nappy that hangs over the seat of the trousers) for these occasions. In some areas kilts worn over trousers are as popular as the bum-flaps, but for footwear, the boys usually choose boots of the kind that the skinheads wear.

Favourite patterns are leopard spots and tartans, which together with the bum-flaps and kilts convey a sort of kitsch atavism, a connection to tribal behaviour that reaches no further back than to pictures in old copies of the <u>National Geographical Magazine</u> that may once have been thumbed through at school. So if the punk does want to look like a savage, he would prefer to be an ignoble one, who is only really at home in scenes of urban squalour, or in the comic strip jungle of Tarzan.

Both T-shirts and leather motor-cycle jackets (punks
will not own or ride motorcylces) are hand-decorated.
Names of favourite punk groups such as the Sex Pistols,
Sham 69, Adam and the Ants, are frequent slogans on
these, as are the titles of and lines from famous punk
"hits".

Both sexes like to fasten round their necks either
dog collars or the padlocks and chains that are usually
used to secure bicycles. Here again, as with the safety-
pins, by singling out not only extremely cheap ornamen-
tation, but ornaments that have a degraded social function,
the punks score twice: cheap and low at the same time.

Combinations and variations of their clothes and
ornaments, in addition to styles of hair and body
decoration, are multifarious, and those elements that
I have enumerated are neither all-inclusive nor are
meant to suggest relative frequencies of each, for I
am concerned here to give a general description of a
diachronic fashion by a synchronic resume that captures
what, on the basis of my research into punk taken as a
whole, seems to be its best representation.

Thus, by deliberately flaunting himself in attire
that is old, torn, sloganised, and misappropriated,
the punk breaks the rule that normal appearances should
not alarm. His tied-together legs, his bum flap, his
girl friend in baseball boots and fishnet tights, do

succeed in appearing to many non-punks as both deliber-
ated and alarming, at any rate until the fashion is
neutralized by being recognised as a fashion. The effect
of these clothes, worn with the dyed hair and the safety
pins, may be imagined when it was seen for the first
time along the Kings Road in the Autumn of 1976.
Commentators yet again mistook a fashion for a revolution,
because it was a fashion that seemed to hate fashion,
as fashion was then fashionably understood.

Movement

Punks have evolved their own style of dancing
called the pogo, and it informs many of their non-
dancing movements as well. To perform it, you jump
up and down on the spot either with both arms held
stiffly to the sides or, if at concerts, with one arm
punching a fist into the air at the height of each leap.
Punks at concerts usually pogo in a mass, crushed against
the stage, and they are never quite in rhythm with one
another. If a punk, while pogoing, wishes to show
appreciation of the singer on stage, he will spit at
him, timing his release of the gob of spittle to take
place at his apogee, from where he will help the gob
on its way with a flick of his head.

This kind of dancing, which minimizes skill, grace
and invention, is performed with a zombie-like facial
expression that further creates the impression of limited
personality. It is a style of dancing with practically
all that one associates with "dance" removed.

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By never dancing in two-sexed pairs, punks convey
not only their indifference to the execution of dance
steps but also a refusal of prescribed courtship rituals,
for which paired dancing is commonly an important
transition stage. But a punk can succeed in throwing
himself into the activity of dancing as well as any
other person; he does this by increasing both his
tempo and the height to which he leaps. A subtle variant is
to refuse to leap at all but to root the feet to the
floor and wrestle the upper torso in imitation of the
writhings of a man in a straightjacket. This suggests
even greater energy by its painful inhibition. Such
disciplined simplifications of movements match the
moron masks, and go well with the bondage trousers
that suit a pogoing style and the connotations of
strapped-in insanity.

I always used to notice that, whenever and wherever
and for whatever purpose a punk moves, he tends to
evoke the pogo, his dance of complete self-involvement
that jumps up and down on any idea that dancing should
be gracious or should be part of a love relationship.

In dancing his way, punks can powerfully convey
the contempt they feel for that sort of youthful conduct
their elders could look at with indulgent approval.
It is as if punks intend to be their own marionettes,
pulling their own strings.

Punks generally move about as if recovering from accidents that nearly crippled them, and they try to make it plain at all times that the accident was that of being born amongst non-punks. With every step they take, they try to walk away from their environments and thus, while trying to upset those who think that punks should be grateful for their environments, begin to take on the ritual look that can be had by seeming to be in touch with non-temporal events. Their physical awkwardness can almost suggest a lost utopia where they might have felt at ease, but they will try to capitalise on this suggestion by a nihilistic dismissal of its possibility in reality or in dreams. They want to be the twice dispossessed, so that their selves here on the streets of the cities, like so many pricks, as it were, will puncture and let the air of conviviality out of all possible social gatherings, and they are this way vengefully, because they see so little conviviality in the first place.

Physical Unconcern

1. Losing a fight, to a punk, is no less honourable that winning, because he has lost anyway in any wider sense, and believing this, the punk raises himself above those who would fight him, since the other's victory or defeat is beneath his contempt.

2. The practice of spitting, which waned early, was for a time a form of greeting between punks, and as such,

of course, was an almost exact reversal of conventional greeting protocol within which a gob of spit would be goodbye rather than hello.

3. Masturbation has won the approval of punks; one early fanzine, indeed, was called <u>White Stuff</u>. It is easy to see that by celebrating single person sex, the punks can show their disrespect for conventional couplings, the pleasures of which they will show no signs of appreciating. As a corollary to this, the punks also affect disinterest in copulation, tending to bracket it with functions like urination.

4. Punks try to ignore the cold, the wet, the wind, and other environmental discomforts. Those who bother about such things in their view are over-concerned with the welfare of selves that they cannot see as being worth protecting. Knowing life is uncomfortable, a punk attempts to feel more comfortable by doing nothing about it.

Self-Stigmatization

Taylor (1976) notes that football supporters on the terraces have recently taken to chanting "Hooligans! Hooligans!" Similarly, punks give themselves a bad name as if to deride those to whom it is bad, and the badness is a negative ritualness deriving from the label, which, says Rotenberg (1974), sticks from the inside because it is both "autosuggestive" and "transformative".

Punks also refer to themselves as kids, on the
grounds that adults have no moral integrity, an argu-
ment which they choose not to turn back on their own moral
manoeuvre of covering themselves in shit in order to
smell for themselves like roses. Some latter-day
punks, to dissociate themselves from hangers-on, have
coined a new lable, "wimp", for punks who, too wet to
be fully-fledged punks, are not wet enough to be non-
punks. (Only the rock signer, Gary Numan, seems to
have stuck this to himself so far.) This eager adoption
of a derogatory label must work in the same way as the
physical and sartorial self-profanations. I abuse
myself before you can abuse me, and, what is more, I
have the courage to abuse myself more thoroughly than
you would, and therefore, possessing this superior
courage, I do not deserve to be abused. So my being
a punk proves that I am not a punk, so long as I am a
punk.

A self-stigmatizer, then, says that stigmas matter
less to him than to his audience, and they can only
matter less to him if he is more worthy to begin with.
In practice, the stigma and the presumed worth must
arrive simultaneously, but either way, the stigma by
its being worn with pride, increases ritualness.

So I have now enumerated how punks desacralize
their physical selves, their clothes and ornaments,
they physical movements, their bodily welfare, and their
generic label. Each single self-profanation is easily
comprehended only if the punk is seen as profaning
himself to cause those around him to be "taken aback",
as they would not be were he not so profaned. I suggest
now that what the punk is doing, by suffering his own
ritual degradations with perfect sang-froid, is raising
himself above those who feel he has lowered himself.
The logic is: I have torn down my respectability and
am unperturbed, therefore I have more ritualness than
you, because you do not believe my contaminations could
not decrease ritualness, and so, when you call me an
animal, I, knowing I am not that - being just anybody
who has put on a punk appearance - know I am more than
you who would be an animal if you degraded yourself as
I do, and my coolness about your name-calling is what
provokes it and what proves that you feel my superior
ritual power.

        Since this is the case, it is appropriate now to
christen the ritualness that punks increase for themselves
"ritual power". I contend that "ritualness" is not a
simple "given" for a person because he is a person and
is not in any simple way connected to formal societal
statuses but can be profoundly altered in interaction
by conduct alone. It makes sense to call such an
interactional property a "power", when it can have the

effect punks' ritual power has of completely removing them from the normal realm and investing them with something that, if it does not command awe in its onlookers, commands a sort of respect that behaves like respect, even though it longs to be disrespect. Once the concept "ritual power" is in use it becomes much easier to grasp my argument that ritualness may come and go for a person in interactions, and this I believe is a line of thought never pursued by Erving Goffman, despite his being the one social scientist to be keenly aware of the importance in interaction of ritual concerns.

Now I want to answer an obvious question that arises at this point: why choose to profane oneself by taking on the punk fashion when there are any number of different ways of achieving personal degradation. After that, I wish to contextualise the punks by considering their music and their concerts and then their behaviour in public places, before finally looking at their ideology, such as it is. Each of these latter sections will add to an understanding of how punks go about increasing their ritual power once they have got themselves up to look like punks.

Why Punk in Particular?

Since there are many other ways of profaning oneself than by becoming a punk, how is it that punks are a recognisable group whereas, for example, some

categories of mental patients, such as indecent exposers, are not? The only answer I think lies in the fact of punk being a fashion. Since fashions, as Simmel (1957) said, differentiate their followers at the same time that they group them, the follower of a fashion is not alone. So fashion legitimates by multiplying its instances. This of course provides a deplorably thin justification of action for anybody, that it is right because others do it, but I think this is a fairly universal self-justification. As I have said, it may be, too, that a real fashion cannot know itself for that until it is over, so punks, for example, are just the most recent group in a long line of groups that each thought it was the end of the line. This would also account for its followers uniformizing themselves: they are not, so far as they are concerned, following a fashion, but joining a sort of sect.

It should be said here that punks so far have successfully brought down on their heads just the kind of treatment they want. A review of press reports over the last five years reveals an unremitting attitude to them as being folk devils (Cohen, 1980), but the difference between punks as folk devils and Cohen's Teddy Boys as folk devils is that punks have consciously sought this attribution. I would expect this to continue until the fashion dies, when those who would then be folk devils will have to assume another guise whose terms again will be set by the wider society. Many

writers using a subculture perspective, however, often

imply a model in which a new subculture grows out of

the old, as if isolated from non-youth ritual idioms,

but punks themselves are incurious about earlier fashions

and, being very young, usually have come of age directly

into their fashion, so there is little sense of their

having themselves matured through successive fashions

into the punk fashion. In fact the only fashion punks

actively decry is the hippy fashion, and it is easy to

see how the hippy over-sacralization of everything from

personal relationships to the planet itself presents a

clear antithesis for the punks to revile. (Punks would

not pick fights with hippies any more than they would

fight normals. I think this is because fighting is an

intimate form of interaction which relies on shared

ground rules, as these are known by neo-Mods, Skinheads,

and the like, who have frequent run-ins with punks.)

Thus far, it should be noted, punks have masked

their self-consciousness very effectively, not that I

do not think Simon Frith (1978) to be exaggerating when

he writes: "What's going on here is not the spontaneous

confirmation of subcultural theory, but the deliberate

use of subcultural ideology by young sophisticates who've

read their Stan Cohen and Jock Young and understand

deviancy theory as a neat form of legitimation."

Nonetheless, when the leading punk rock group, the

Sex Pistols, issued an L.P. without songs, comprising

recordings of interviews given by the group on British

and American radio and TV, all interpolated with a voice-over declaring their manager, Malcolm McLaren, to be an exploiter, the punks took it in good part, buying it, not as sucker consumers, but as members of a group in on a "sophisticated" joke against the commercialization of rock-and-roll. (Naturally that joke is "contained" (Goffman, 1975) by their buying the record being seen as a joke, and that containment is further contained if the dupe knows he is a dupe and still buys because that is the punk thing to do.) Very few of the punks I have spoken to, however, had the formal education to understand the possible significance of McLaren's[9] alleged activities with the Situationists' International of Paris in May 1968, nor could they appreciate the Garfinkel-style methods this group employs to "breach" spectacles so as to visibilize their "repressive" rules (in the same way that Baader-Meinhoff effectively used terrorism in the belief that this would expose West Germany as a police state). But the spirit of breaching is readily appreciated and endorsed by punks.

The Music and the Concerts

Like the rhythm of most other rock music, punk's is a repetitive equal-weighted beat, but punk is harsher, denser, and more chaotic in the mix than any rock-and-roll that has preceded it. Its lyrics, drawing on a nihilistic rhetoric of squalid metropolises, are hardly sung; rather they are scrawled across a surface of rough electronic sound as violently as obscene graffiti

on slum walls. The musicians who have taken up this

style of playing are the first in Britain for more than

ten years to graduate , without the aid of talent scouts

and A and R men, from pubs and clubs to nationwide

marketing networks. They have been quick to turn their

disadvantage of musical incompetence into a moral

superiority, showing it off as evidence of an authentic

will to express essentially inexpressible boredom and

frustration. Of course, they are not the first to be .

opportunistic about their lack of talent:

> Perhaps the whole alienation atmosphere of our
> times - from Dada's rejection of high official
> art, through Surrealism's taboo on reason and
> the formal plot, to existentialist disillusion
> with all idealistic morality - has finally led
> film Undergrounders ... to repudiate their own
> technical tradition as artifical and formalist.

Thus Parker Tyler (1974) on the precursors of Andy

Warhol's casually careless film constructions.

The exemplary group was the quickly disbanded Sex

Pistols, who stand to punk as the Rolling Stones and

Jimi Hendrix did to the heavier hippies. Sometimes

their songs exactly articulate a bitter, vengeful emotion

of wantonly despoliated hope:

> When there's no future
> How can there be sex
> We're the flowers in the dustbin
> We're the poison in your human machine
> We're the future
> Your future.

One cannot do justice to the ecstatic recognition that

punks show when they hear that song which, despite being

banned by the BBC, went to Number One in the British

charts. The Clash did less well with another seminal

punk song, "White Riot":

> Black men have got a lotta problems,
> But they don't mind throwing a brick,
> But white men have got too much school
> Where they teach you to be thick.

The Buzzcocks also catch a typical punk attitude of

slovenly dismissal in their song "Sixteen", which ends

with this appraisal of the then available teenage sound:

> And I hate modern music
> Disco boogie and pop
> They go on and on and on and on and on
> How I wish they would stop.

Sexual love is extolled, typically, as follows, by a

group called Alternative Television:

> I never want to find out who the girls have been servicing
> I never want to know who the guys have been doing
> It's a mess up
> It's a fuck up
> 'Cos fucking anybody always knocks me out quite a lot
> I never care who I go to bed with
> Male or female, there's never any sense in it
> It's a bother
> It's a cocker
> 'Cos cocking anybody always bothers me, my love lies
>   limp, limp, limp.

None of this, of course, is of a different ritual order

to Elvis Presley, twenty-five years earlier, of whom

Thom Gunn (1962) wrote then:

> Distorting hackneyed words in hackneyed songs
> He turns revolt into a style, prolongs
> The impulse to a habit of the time.

To make a mark, the groups, who inherited a tradition

in rock-and-roll of some of the most outrageous stage

conduct ever seen, found it necessary on stage to shout

obscenities, to spit, to vomit, and to urinate. Concert

hall managers did not understand, and groups were banned

from venues, this becoming an affidavit of authenticity.

Those that could get "gigs" then often incited fans

to smash up halls. One singer (from the group Chelsea)

I personally saw shouting repeatedly: "This place is too

clean, let's smash it up." That was as late as 1980 in

the Locarno Ballroom in Bristol, a hall thronged with

large anxious-looking men in dinner suits. Being banned

from stages, like being banned from the airwaves,

guarantees that no "selling-out" can occur. So the

groups and the punks can play at feeling as if they are

really dangerous people, because they are treated as if

they are, even if at their own prompting, which they give,

they say, as a result of being born into a society that

uses them for its dirty jobs, if there are any. Distrust

of idols who might sell out runs rampant among fans

whose attitude to the big names of yesteryear is summed

up by this diatribe of an "angry rock fan" in Hennessy

(1978):

> This is what it was like, right? If you wanted
> to see the Who or Bowie or Dylan you had to queue
> up for days to get a ticket. You'd go to the Isle
> of Wight and there's mud everywhere and no bogs
> and people pissing all over your sleeping bag and
> everyone's starving hungry and getting ripped off
> 50p for a hard-boiled egg. There's empty beer
> cans and garbage, and it's raining and you're so
> far away from the stage you can't even see it,
> let alone guess who's on it. When the groups come

on, the amps distort the sound and what comes out
is a mangled version of your favourite number.
Then, afterwards, the stars zap off in their Rolls
Royces with all their beautiful trendy pals while
we have to hitch home. And it's us who've paid big
money for the tickets and bought millions of their
records and made them the rich, untouchable bastards
they've become.

Punk singer Jimmy Pursey of Sham 69 puts it more

succinctly in one of his lyrics:

It's a rip-off for you
It's a Rolls Royce for them.

The gobbing of singers becomes intelligible, seen in

this light, as a desacralization that collects the singer

to the punk group, allowing the group to then share in

some of the ritual power the singer has by virtue of

being on stage.

Many punks are sufficiently "into" their music to

cut their own records in the growing number of small

hire-by-the-hour recording studios. They then carry

these about with them like unused passports to stardom.

The record creates an "I could if I wanted to" possi-

bility for its owner, and this enhances his worth.

However, punks do not listen to their music for its

music, but for its punk. So long as the music can

create the feeling that something powerful and inchoate

is struggling to express itself, it is heard in much the

same way that the St Matthew Passion would be heard by

a member of the Christian faith. As a secular aesthetic

experience punk, of course, is not to be compared with

Bach, but to experience punk music as music is for a

punk a desecration, in the same way that punk music heard
as music is just that for a musical sensibility.

The dominant punk group was the Sex Pistols, who
constantly broke taboos, writing lyrics like "the Queen
ain't no human being," swearing on television[10] and so
forth. Their bass guitarist, Sid Vicious, was charged
in New York with stabbing his girl friend to death in
the Chelsea Hotel, and, released on bail from Ryker's
Island after a suicide bid, he died not long after of a
heroin overdose, and so became a punk martyr. "Sid
lives", is a repeated logo on T-shirts, motorcycle
jackets, and walls. If a martyr is someone who dies
to preserve his believing self, then what Sid Vicious
believed in, as do his followers today, has to be his
superior ritual power.

Punks at all their concerts are searched at the
door for weapons. I have watched several thousand
individual searches and never once seen any objection.
Perhaps punks feel complimented by being suspected of
going armed.

Concert behaviour is standardised. Punks dress
up in their most punk clothing and adornment, arrive
early, and, crushed by one another against the front
of the stage, pogo to every song. At moments of high
excitement fists punch into the air, and from the edge
of the pogoing mass some punks ride others pick-a-back

into the crowd, where they fall off and disappear from

sight. There are scuffles in bar areas and toilets.

Eyes everywhere are dangerously on the alert for signs

of disrespect, and many punks are so drunk that they

give these signs inadvertently. After the performances,

a few punk girls and boys will hang around, hoping to be

invited backstage by the group, but most disperse into

neighbourhoods where police patrols will have been stepped

up for the occasion. Punks at concerts, then, strenuously

affirm their punk commitment, and concerts massively

confirm that punk is not the fiction of each individual

punk.

The centrality of music to subcultural life has been

extensively noted by Fine & Kleinman (1979), who regard

it as a type of information, by Martin (1979), who thinks

concerts "liminalise" adolescents, and by Willis (1974),

who has demonstrated how "bikers" live their musical

styles. However, I do not choose to call punks a sub-

culture, even though they may often be a "near-group" as

Yablonsky (1970) defines this or a "contra-culture" in

the sense that Yinger (1970) gives to that term, because

punk seems to be mainly alive at the level of iconography

(Brake, 1973; Taylor & Wall, 1976) rather than in its

class and economic references. Hall & Jefferson (1973),

however, would insist that punk must be explained as part

of an economic system, since, in their view, it must be

a response of working class youths to external political

conditions. As should be clear by now, I am arguing that

there is very little conditioned response about the

punks' conduct and much more frequently there is, instead,

their determination to condition other people's -

including Hall & Jefferson's - responses to them.   This

is not a fashionable view among subculture theorists

because of their typical reluctance to accept that conduct

might be principally expressive, and only residually

practical after the manner Marx defined as real.   But

Rom Harre (1979) thinks, for instance, that "in general,

for most social forms and at most historical epochs

the expressive is dominant over the practical," and,

"the system of production is pressed into the service

of expression, and does not function autonomously.   Hence,

it could not be a cause of expressive social forms and

practices."   So, when Peter Marsh (1977) writes of punk,

"It's dole-queue rock, and the only way to really make

sense of it is through some awareness of the kinds of

lives which the kids who have become punks are leading,"

I would contend, contrarywise, that a good way to make

sense of the lives of the kids is to look hard at what

they want to show their onlookers.

Punks in Public Places

Stone (1975) theorises that a person's appearance

simultaneously conveys identity, value, mood, and attitude.

A punk therefore would instantly be seen in his "identity"

as a punk, who has punk "values", along with a "mood"

of deprived nihilism and an "attitude" that society is

his enemy.   "Reviews" (Stone's term) such as these are

expressed by proprietors of clubs, discos, pubs, and cafes, who bar punks from their premises[11]. However, in streets, squares, parks, bus stations, shops, and other urban public places, punks are merely looked at with alarmed glances that do not make eye contact (though the police are apt to chivy punks along). A punk walking down a street passes through a fine mesh of glances coming from every direction, so his appearance, then, is like a patch of interference in the midst of normal appearances. It is too eye-catching, by design, not to be caught by too many eyes. And as if to control for being so closely attended to, a punk deadens his facial and gestural expressions and affects the same clinical stupidity his music celebrates ("moron" and "vacant" recur in the songs as terms of praise), often walking in the "invisible straightjacket" style of his pogo dancing. This further catches eyes.

But to appear to normals as if they do not understand normal appearances, punks must employ conceptions of proper ritual demeanour sharper than normal, and totally belied, of course, by their own appearances. The punk girl who plaits a tampax into her bright pink hair is carefully profaning herself, so that, going beyond the outer limits of propriety, she does not quite reach the inner limits of illegality. Therefore, though she might be considered to have so far removed herself from concepts of female delicacy as to warrant the anti-honorific "Slag" (a word I have seen painted on motorcycle

jackets of punk girls), the precise distance of the removal

is calculated and travelled by her alone.

The stalking ground of punk, then, is the territory

between normal appearances and illegal appearances,

within which punks profane themselves with an inventive-

ness that is checked only by the requirement that they

can always be labelled punks by one another and by normals.

In their chosen stalking ground, punks do achieve an

untouchability equal and opposite to high status persons

in the same wider culture. The attributions a punk will

be subject to, moreover, of stupidity, immorality,

sickness, childishness, laziness, unsavouriness, are

seized upon, being so wide of the mark (and wide

because they hit the very stalking horse of punk that

punks construct), as evidence of the stupidity in normal

society that was a reason for the taking on of a punk

appearance in the first place. (This process does not

unfold in time as stages in moral career, but is better

seen as a homeostatic system operating at any time.)

Once more, the question arises as to why the conduct

of punks should standardize itself into a fashion. Again,

the only answer I can give is that for the punk there

is safety in numbers, but this "fashioning" of punk

is precisely what defuses its revolutionary potential,

for punk, as soon as it is recognised in every instance

as punk, must become the normal appearance called punk.

Punks, then, in spitting on society, spit on themselves

because to be punks they have to betray what they say

punk stands for. A real punk, one might argue, will

not look like a punk; he will more closely resemble

Kim Philby or Richard Nixon. So it is quite in keeping

with the punk's election of a stalking ground that does

not reach into illegal areas that he should also want

to provide himself with the permanent alibi that his

doings are punk doings and not his own doings. Punk,

for all its profanations, actually respects many aspects

of societal order, and the punk must spend his life

oscillating between the ignominy of not being noticed

and the recognition of being noticed to be ignominous.

What is more, the punk's back and forth moral movement

faithfully mirrors the same movement of a normal from

being anyone to being someone, but at the other side of

the line which separates profane from sacred.

The punks I interviewed refused to accept that their

appearances constituted a first provacative step in

any interaction, and were inclined to complain of what

they described as harassment. I think this was

because they had arrived at a view of punk not unlike

the one above, which only makes those who think punk

is dangerous as dangerous as punks are imagined to be.

However, now (January 1981) that punk in London is

showing a greater interest in Nazi costume and fascist

ideas, commentators will once again take its fashion

followers seriously, but I do not think they need to,

since these latter day punks have chosen to give the

Sieg Heil salute at "Rock against Racism" concerts and to wear National Front insignia precisely because they have identified these as acts that will be taken seriously, and not for the sake of reviving old meanings. (But, of course, it could be argued that that would not prevent a clever organiser bureaucratizing the fashion and then coercing everybody else into following it, as if it were not a fashion but were some divinely guided form of conduct, which is what I think Hitler did, and is certainly what luminaries of the National Front are actively trying to do at present.)

The Ideology of Punk

Punk ideology, a name I give its declarative moral statements, is found in the songs, in the fanzines, and, sloganized, on walls, T-shirts, and jackets. The first reports of punk, perhaps because they were written by journalists attuned to the political rhetoric of the hippies and perhaps, also, because these journalists were sensitive to those theories of subculture that suggest subcultural members can be grouped in economic and political languages (explaining the fact if not the form of the subculture), tried to foist an anarchist credo on the punks. The punks did actually play with this for a while, in as much as it could be used to give expression to a style of urban despair; but they were never really interested in political theories or in founding an enduring "counter culture", since they said they did not think there was a tomorrow. Their primary interests were

never anything but being punk. Thus, at the same time
as the Sex Pistols sang "Anarchy in the UK" punks painted
swastikas on their faces, because for a punk, doing is
being. But a rough ideology true to the phenomena would
go as follows: the present is intolerable and there is
no future, so society which believes otherwise is
insincere, as well as being, in any case, boring and
suffocatingly conformist, and punks, being the only ones
who dare see this, are the only realists alive. As I have
shown, such an idelogy, practised as appearance, is
self-validating.

It is worth repeating here that the fashion of
punk is of the same order as the fashion of normalcy,
and that neither, considered in the terms of either one,
can be said to be deeper than the other. Also, both
fashions need the other in order to be discernible at
all. Perhaps the punks who were mystified as to why they
should have seemed provocative had reached the point
reached here, that punk and normal are both as empty
or as full as each other, but only if punk and normal
do not think this.

Some Conclusions

The following points are incidental to the only
conclusion I need to have made by now, that punks are a
group of persons who increase their ritual power by adop-
ting a desacralizing fashion, but I list them rather
than leave them buried as implications within my narra-
tive:

1. The systematic desecrations practised by punks are
a measure of the "give" in their society's system of
proprieties. Where there is no give, there would be
no room for legal impropriety. (A society without give
would be China during its Cultural Revolution or Cambodia
under the rule of the Khmer Rouge. A society with a
great deal of give would be the Haight Ashbury quarter
of San Francisco in the late 1960s.)

2. That punk can come to be the main interest in life
of some of its adherents is an indication of the power
of the ritual code in a culture that tends to conceive
of itself, officially, as productive, rational, and
utilitarian.

3. The outrage some punks have been seen to be also
indicates the power of the ritual code.

4. Punk is only possible insofar as it is contained.
Were it to take over the other side of its dialectic
with normalcy, it would be normalcy and therefore,

according to punk ideology, boring.

5. Affiliation to the punk fashion is a deeper affiliation
to the prevailing ritual code than affiliation to non-
punk forms.

6. The rhetoric of punk does not fuel the necessary
organizational engines to change society.

7. Punk, like other visible subcultures, cannot be
revolutionary just because it is visible. Testing the
limits of the permissible in the way it does can only
alter the permissible in permissible ways.

Nurses

My argument throughout this section is that nurses
go after ritual power because they are pursued by contam-
inants. Thus, they travel in the opposite direction to
punks, who pursue the contaminants in order to acquire
ritual power.

Nurses bear comparison to punks in other ways besides
their unusual concern for contaminations and sacralizations.
They also wear a costume that immediately identifies
them, serving the dual fashion function of simultaneous
collection and individuation, and, furthermore, though
they may not see it like this, they can find their lives
revolving round this costume.

An important apparent difference, that nurses are
governed by the formal organisation they belong to,
obscures the fact that nursing rhetoric claims for its
members a "vocation"[12]. The rhetoric says that nurses
are called to their work not by money but quite altruis-
tically by the need of the sick for cure and care. A
nurse is encouraged hereby to believe that she works
because she is called - as nuns are called to religious
orders - and if she believes this, as many of them seem
to, she is just as remote from concerns of career and

remuneration as any punk.

An analysis of nurses seen in and through the ritual
frame, like the foregoing analysis of punks, gives far
less than a total picture but the image it produces
does, I think, restore importance to activity that is
often overlooked, and in the only way that makes sense
of it. Naturally, what I have to say about nurses can
only apply to my first-hand knowledge[13], but there are
two reasons why my findings may not be completely bounded
by the setting I researched. Firstly, many of the nurses
I worked alongside had experience on other wards, and
felt that the one where I was working was typical.
Then, the fact that nursing activities are extremely
standardized argues against the possibility of my having
happened into an extremely atypical ward.

A punk, of course, must find his stage in the inter-
stices of formal organizations, usually in the streets,
but a nurse can only work within a hospital[14]. Since
hospitals are institutions that invest themselves with
ritual authority (Freidson (1970) says "the hospital is
succeeding the church and the parliament as the archetypal
institution of Western culture."), nurses enjoy elevated
status simply by being associated with them. Nurses,
moreover, are members of a medical profession that a
polemicist such as Illich (1976) can argue is in the
business of "appropriating health" by reinterpreting
human conduct in the rhetoric of sickness and cure, for

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the purpose of colonialising passive citizens. So in
this way too nurses can share in the overhigh ritual
status of healers that is acquired, Freidson (1970)
says, by extending medical jurisdiction "far wider than
its demonstrable capacity to 'cure'." Thus, although
my analysis is only meant to show that nurses procure
ritual power to prevent their contamination, it can be
seen that they begin with more than they perhaps might
deserve. Instances of their extreme care with regard
to pollutants, from this perspective that defines the
medical profession as being ritually self-serving,
therefore will be more readily understood.

Within the hospital, it is the nurse whom the
patient meets more than any other staff person, so it
is mainly in her person that hospitals define themselves
for patients. However, the nurse does not nurse as a
typist types or a seamstress sews; somehow all her
conduct, instrumental, expressive, or even role-distanced,
must look like nursing conduct. She is not a worker like
other workers, and this difference is well pointed up
by the title of Ruth Pomeranz's (1973) book on student
nurses: The Lady Apprentices. Nurses in hospitals,
then, are persons such as do not exist anywhere else,
whose very labour is conduct and whose conduct for that
reason can be their work, and their conduct must conform
to prevailing ideals of the nurse[15].

Now I shall simply list the possible profanations

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met by the working nurse - at least in the setting I researched - together with details of how these are risen above. Then I review some of the nursing literature in order to broaden the narrative and to show the conceptual utility of the ritual frame. A more general discussion of ritual and nursing follows that, before the brief closing section entitled "Nameless Interaction". The purpose throughout, as it was in the punks section of this chapter, is to expose the ritual code by exploring relevant stalking grounds, staying close to the phenomena rather than elaborating theory. Naturally, as I argued in Chapter I, describing and theorizing can be inseparable modes of apprehending reality, so inevitably the reader will keep coming across passages of high generality that in the interests of continued "rolling analysis" are left where they are as intellectual outcrops and not brought together as the foundations for a verbal monument. So it is my principal intention in this chapter to strongly make the point that ritual conduct in the sense Goffman gives to it is more than a heuristic expedient, and I make this point by concentrating on how two apparently dissimilar groups of persons concern themselves with ritual power. In Chapter V I shall have more to say about ritual power, and in Part Three I proceed to a higher level of abstraction, using there the very necessity of maintaining narrative coherence to verbally create realities that ought to be tested, in the way advocated in Chapter I, against the reader's experience. (As in the punk section, many of the

profanations listed below can only make sense to members of the wider culture to which both the nurses and punks belong.)

Profanations by Persons

1. Nurses work in the same setting as less skilled workers like cleaners, domestics, and porters. Continually rubbing up against menials, nurses prevent anything rubbing off on them by keeping contacts to a minimum. If unskilled staff are talked to familiarly, it is to make the point that the nurse is not the low kind of person who would keep her distance from the low. The making of this point, of course, increases the distance for the parties if they know it to be the point being made, as the nurse, at least, always does.

2. High ranking nurses are locked into routines that are effortlessly performed by lower ranks, and so the routines raise the status of the latter while reducing that of the former.[16] It consequently behoves a novice to be less skilful than her senior; a show of evidently superior skill would be tantamount to insolence. In her turn, the senior nurse will try to perform with practised dexterity. So both nurses try not to let their status differences disappear into identical routines - which would be a mutual contamination - and work the routines in order that the differences appear to arise out of them.

3. There were no deaths on the ward I studied, but
nurses in geriatric wards frequently handle corpses.
Nurses rely heavily on the vocational account of their
work when discussing death. A nurse in this account is
the opposite of a person who makes money by washing and
wrapping dead bodies: she is the nearest possible human
stand-in for an angel of mercy.

4. Agonised patients doubly insult a nurse because
they show the medical profession to be ineffective and
also, by their complete self-involvement, interactionally
offend in depriving the nurse of a purchase for recip-
rocal interaction status that can then be used to talk
the patient out of his conduct of moaning and screaming.
Nurses duly avoid agonised patients. Paralysed patients
also offend by not being able to make requisite deference
signs with their bodies and limbs. This offence is
usually overglossed by the nurse, in her interactions
with the paralysed, carrying on a monologue in the first-
person plural in which the silent partner is spoken
for as if he could not conceivably offend. (Telles
(1980) observes in this connection that, "the effort
required on the part of critically ill patients to
manage their failing and unpredictable bodies leads to
improper behaviour, such as urinating in bed. Patients
sometimes apologise for this, and staff typically react
with understanding, by indicating that, given the patient's
conditions, such delicts are excusable." Here one can
see that patients try hard, and are expected to by the

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nurse, not to be contaminative.)

5.   Patients who force nurses to clean up after them
whether because their wounds have bled or because they
have lost control of their bowels are never accorded
full interaction status unless the cleaning is done
with such bravura that the nurse seems no longer to be
wiping up blood and shit, but rather bringing off a
complicated trick. Secure in her role of medical magician
she can then afford to trade banter with the patient in
question, the contaminative details having been pushed
out of a frame that now contains only her cheerful and
dedicated skill.

6.   When nurses received the day's notes in the sister's
office or the treatment room, the sister would use
euphemisms for the words arse, genitals, penis, and
urine, calling these, respectively, "bottie", "bits and
pieces", "waterworks", and "wee". At first, I thought
this was because of my presence, but nurses I later
befriended assured me that the euphemisms were routine.
Since these euphemisms are somewhat infantile, I suggest
their purpose may be to unsex aspects of male patients'
bodies that otherwise could be seen as contaminative.

Profaning Relations to Persons
1.   Nurses touch the flesh of opposite-sex strangers
quite often, for instance when they shave or wash a

face, or when they bath a patient, or when they dress
him, or when they attend to his wounds, drips, or catheter.
In the Urology ward these strangers were old and unattrac-
tive for the most part, and contact with them was
"selfless" indeed, a phrase that in the ritual idiom
can only mean not to do with a presumed real self who
would think well enough of herself to recoil from such
contact.

Nurses did not surround their touchings of patients'
sexual organs with the taboos described, in connection
to vaginal examinations, by Emerson (1963) and by
Henslin & Biggs (1978), though during these touchings
breath is bated on both sides. However, nurses are very
careful not to skimp operations in the taboo areas of
the body, as carrying these out with unsullied demeanour
is a test of nursing calibre, which the true nurse
passes because true nurses are sacred enough not to be
touched by these sorts of touchings. Nursing logic has
it, then, that a nurse rises above profanations, because
she has a calling, but equally well it could be said that
a nurse has a calling so that she can rise above profanations.

2. Patients are always being lifted: up their beds
so they can eat, or onto their sides to prevent bedsores,
or out of bed into chairs and onto commodes, or into and
out of baths, or they are lifted simply by being supported
in gentle exercising walks up and down the ward. Since
many patients are very weak or are paralysed, the work

is heavy. Young girls find themselves bearing with

care and respect burdens strong men would find tiring

and, especially in geriatric wards, much of the daily

round is an endless humping of ageing flesh. So here,

in addition to contaminative contact, there is the

contamination of weight that ever threatens to reduce

the nurse to the role of labourer. From this role she

only really escapes by looking like the demure young

female she usually is.

3. Some contacts between nurses and patients take the

form of intimate services done by the former for the

latter. (These will include measuring blood pressures,

injecting drugs, administering suppositories, taking

temperatures, and wiping bottoms.) The term intimate,

used of a relationship, normally, of course, denotes

a pair of persons who love each other, but nurses are

being intimate with strangers, so against this they

must arm themselves with brisk, functional behaviour

designed to look impersonal. The nurse then keeps her

ritual self's virginity by approximating herself to an

automaton in contexts of intimacy and may like some

prostitutes give to patients a look of being withheld.

4. Nurses cede medical authority to housemen and

consultants. They give her orders, and she must do as

she is told. This desacralization of her judgement is

compounded by the unstated requirement that, doing as

she is told, she must not look as though that is what

she is doing. Interestingly, both Katz (1969) and

Mauksch (1972) refer to this physician-nurse relationship

as a caste relationship closely resembling the nineteenth-

century relation of Southern whites to blacks, and the

differentiation is reinforced by the gender division

of male physician over female nurse. In response,

nurses try to look as though they have absolute confidence

in this sytem of their subordination, and this is the

only possible way they can save themselves from looking

as if there is another possible system, for expressed

criticality would imply that they felt demeaned. Theirs

is the desperate strategy of decreasing the offence that

is done them by accepting it as if it were a compliment.

5. The nurse works as a waitress when she serves drinks

and meals to patients and when she afterwards clears

up the dirty cutlery and crockery. On the Urology ward

patients were required to drink large quantities of

liquid to irrigate their bladders, so here the nurses

had the additional and frequent waitress duty of topping

up patients' measured water jugs. The waitress role

was often medicalized by the nurses' technique of showing

a "professional" interest in food and liquid consumed,

and indeed a nurse was expected to report refusals to

consume, as on the ward, these were medical events.

But one should not forget that a nurse's waitress

offices helps her execute her "bedside role", deprived

of which, Malone et al (1965) found, she feels less of

nurse than she would like to be. Possibly the bedside role is a harkening back to earlier times, if, as Brown (1966) suggests, the model of nursing, for most nurses, is borrowed from the private sphere. Naturally, as Brown points out, the more waitress duties are devolved onto aides by nurses seeking to upgrade their professional status, the less bedside nursing is possible for nurses. Here the nurse, as in so many of her instrumental functions, is caught between the virtual self of a profaning activity and the ideal self of an aspired-after role.

6. The nurse also waits on the sister who is in charge of her ward and, more abstractly, on the ward itself, running errands to the "path lab" and the laundry in the outer hospital, as well as keeping various supplies in good order, none of these activities drawing on specifically medical expertise. In recognition of this demeaning "waiting", it is the practice to only send junior nurses on errands. Selection for such jobs is a means also of telling the nurse that the break in routine that she is being allowed signifies her inability to yet take routine in her stride.

Profaning Substances

One afternoon I was shown round his geriatric ward by a Charge Nurse who had joined me while I was drinking coffee in the canteen. The smell, of disinfectant and shit combined, was one to gag on. At the end of the tour, the Charge Nurse asked me this rhetorical question:

"What other profession handles untreated sewage?" Nurses

are the only persons in Anglo-American culture under

an obligation to take care of the excretory functions

of strangers, yet neither do they usually define themselves

by this function, and nor are they defined by it. They

"rise above it" because it really is for them "unmentionable",

and in any case someone has to do it, and it might be

that that someone is a better person than one who would,

for example, rather touch nothing less sterile than the

keys of a cash register.

Not only raw sewage must be handled but so must dirty

laundry and soiled bandages and dressings, and in Britain,

delapidated conditions and inadequate equipment[17] can be

felt to further defile the nurse. The only way she

can salvage self-respect for working with filth in

inadequate conditions is to think of herself as being

the rare person with sufficient inner worth to overcome

these.

Usually hospital wards are never free of disquiet-

ing sights and smells - that the analyst cannot call

"bad" without pre-empting his conclusion - yet, as the

Goncourt brothers wrote on 18th December 1860, after a

visit to M Velpan's ward at the Hopital de la Charite in

Paris: "The horror of it all is ... well covered with

white sheets, cleanliness, neatness, and silence"

(Goncourt & Goncourt, 1962). The Goncourts persisted

in studying their ward so as to write their realistic

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novel <u>Soeur Philomene</u>, and they were particularly affected

by the smell: "It is horrible, that hospital smell that

follows you around. I do not know if it is real or

imaginary, but you constantly feel the need to wash your

hands" (27 December 1860) and, the day before that diary

entry, "Melancholy floated within us, a breath of hospital

air which we had absorbed."

It is against nursing regulations for a nurse to

odorize herself but she reacts to smells by constantly

deodorizing, which in practice involves a slight odorization

with anti-septic aromas[18]. Her most noticeable reaction

to other unpleasant conditions is one of not appearing

to notice them, as if they are not only beneath her in

fact but as if it is also beneath her to act as if they

are beneath her. Once again it is the contaminants

that allow the equal and opposite compensation of conduct

whose ritual power would needs be less without it.

<u>Profaning Labour</u>

There are four ways in which nursing conduct

considered as labour is a kind of labour usually reserved

for low status workers:

1. Heavy lifting. This I have already described in

its connection to contaminative body contact.

2. Repetitiveness. Bed-making, meal and drink serving,

the taking of temperatures and blood pressures, bathing

patients, emptying catheter bags, and so on are performed

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in the same way every day, and comprise much of the day's work. In an effort to square this with an image of the nurse as a women sensitively oriented to patients whose grosser wants are attended by domestics, nursing rhetoric is forced to overlay the instrumentality of these tasks with the idea that their performance is really a ruse by which nurses gain medical information about the unsuspecting patient.

3. Triviality. From my first day on the ward, I was well able to carry out very nearly all the tasks of my fellow trained nurses, and this was not thought remarkable. Student and pupil nurses for whom the triviality is putatively decontaminated by being defined as a necessary part of "training" often see through this definition, but not to its sacralizing purpose as described here.

4. Long hours. Not only do nurses work long hours but they work these hours in shifts that are often "unsocial", and they must, of course, work them in the single context of a ward, without remission. The only way to work long hours as if this working is not a reflection on one's status is to do so uncomplainingly. And very few nurses complain about the hours. Characteristically, this absence of complaint like many other instances of nursing reticence, is often cited as signifying no cause for it. By my analysis it could better signify so great a cause that its expression would hopelessly desacralize the nurse. (Not many nurses complain about their low pay

either. The argument here is that, if nurses were given
more money, patients would have to go short. So a good
nurse cannot agitate too much about money. Similarly, if
a nurse were to work shorter hours, patients again would
suffer. So the profanation of low income can be overcome
by pretending it is a sacrifice, and not an injustice,
for she who sacrifices is the more by the extent of the
sacrifice.)

General Responses to Profanations in General

I have described how nurses neutralize their profana-
tions not only by silently conducting themselves as if
they were enhanced by their overcoming of these profanations
but also by their acting as if nothing difficult had to
be overcome.

The main weapon a nurse wields against contamination
is her uncontaminated appearance. It is not surprising,
therefore, that defects in the highly prescribed costume,
make-up, and demeanour of a nurse should induce severe
sanctions from her superiors, as if each nurse - every
one of them the embodied persona of a "good nurse" - must
be made proof against filth that would attack nurses in
general the instant it gained ground on one in particular.

For example, the Senior Nursing Officer of the section
of the hospital containing the Urology ward where I worked
was said to "pounce" on nurses - who might be quite
unknown to her - if she caught them in slip-on instead

of lace-up shoes. This conduct can be interpreted

easily if one remembers that laces are traditional,

look functional, and need tying (so showing that the

wearer is not lazy). A slip-on shoe is obviously the

"wrong" image - if my image of a good nurse is the right

one.

Fine prescription of appearance also fixates on

ornaments, which are forbidden, with the exception of

wedding rings, presumably because these rings are tie-

signs (Goffman 1971) before they are jewellery. Sleepers

may be worn in pierced ears if they are gold, which is

of course hygienic, though it also may be thought that

a less precious metal would cheapen the nurse appearance.

Make-up is absolutely forbidden, as is nail varnish,

and hair, if long, must be worn up. The same fineness

of prescription applies to all nurses in Britain and

the USA, though there are slight regional differences in

actual uniform.

There is no doubting that failure to conform to the

regulations of appearance is read as a serious lapse, and

thus the smoothness of a nurse's outer shell is taken

as a deep indication of her fitness for the calling.

One crack, furthermore, is sufficient to let in contamina-

tions that would profane the calling as a whole. And

just in case the off-duty nurse would be tempted to

desacralize herself, the "International Code of Nursing

Ethics" tells her that "the nurse in private life adheres

to standards of personal ethics which reflect credit upon the profession." (Extracts from this code are given to every nurse on her being employed at the hospital where I researched.)

Other Research on Nurses that Bears on Aspects of Ritual Conduct

Mauksch (1966) observes that the nurse alone of all health-care workers has continuous contact with patients. For this reason the demand on her for nurselike comportment - demure, efficient, cheerful - is heavy, and she does not have time to develop a different style of conduct. Basing his research on interviews with nurses, Skipper (1965) says that, contrary to received opinion, the nurse role combines what he calls instrumental and expressive functions. In other words, by discerning aspects of her conduct as purely expressive, Skipper confirms my view of the nurse as one who has to look like a nurse before she can nurse. Schulman (1958) interestingly calls nurses "mother surrogates" but by 1972 (Schulman, 1972) he has decided that patients less strongly desire to be mothered even if their nurses could reverse their process of drift toward increasingly technical equipment. Schulman's nurses may not be typical, however, in this country, where there is not a flow but only a trickle of modern machinery into hospital wards.

Glaser and Strauss (1965), in their study of Californian hospital wards, note that an important nurse function is to preserve the "sentimental order"

of the ward, and Victoria Wilson (1971), from a feminist point of view, bemoans the fact that in the doctor-nurse-patient triad it is the nurse who is expected to exhibit an impossible mixture of responsibility, initiative, and passivity, with the doctor, as Wilson puts it, "on top". As far as being cheerful goes, Glaser and Strauss (1965) define an unexpected chore nurses might have to take on: "If the patient's morale is good ... he becomes the pacesetter for the morale of the ward, for it would not do for a nurse to be less cheerful than a patient. Nurses are literally forced to 'one-up' the patient by having higher morale" (p 245). So nurses must lead the expression of approved attitudes to sickness or else lose their medical authority, which often, Freidson (1970) says, "teeters between glory and ruin, and is prone to claim its glory because of the risk of ruin rather than because of its accomplishment" (p 170). Here again, it can be seen that nurses are obliged to use forms of conduct that are more easily explained by reference to their presumed ritual power than to their official instrumental tasks.

In the ward, then, patients can come to be seen by nurses as audiences for performances. Along these lines Wessen (1958) says: "For hospital people, the patients are not so much a part of their social system, as a vital reference group in the midst of which the personnel operate, which they serve, and toward which they orient many of their actions and attitudes." And Emerson (1963)

in California describes a phenomenon very similar to one
I often observed: "Everyone has a special manner of
talking to patients - a polished extroverted, well
enunciated, friendly impersonality" (p 79). This
"impersonality", that I have interpreted as a flight
into ideal role, is called a "coping mechanism" by
Coombs and Goldman (1973) in their study of an Intensive
Care Unit; there it takes the forms of humour, escape
into tasks, over-use of technical language, and ration-
alization.

Turning from patients to the doctor and the consultant,
a nurse finds herself suddenly cast in the role of
votary that formerly she required the patient to play
in relation to her. Many consultants are said by the
nurses (those who talked to me) to think of themselves
as "gods" and their power is commensurately great even
over medical students whom Becker et al (1961) report
as judging consultants by how well they treated students,
"that is, according to how little they take advantage
of their opportunity to embarrass or humiliate students"
(p 290). But many consultants, Emerson (1963) says,
have merely learned "to perform the miracle of walking
on the waters by stepping on the stones hidden beneath
the surface" (p 340), and Goldie (1976) has found that
psychiatrists who, for example, imbue routine activities
such as diagnosis "with a certain mystery and mystique,
calling for 'intuition', 'accumulated experience', and
'clinical judgement', can by claiming to set such

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activities above the comprehension of the non-medical

staff ... maintain the subordination of the latter."

Mystification is also practised when a patient dies

unexpectedly, for Sudnow (1967) notes that doctors

always redefine his medical history so that death can

become "an outcome of dying." All this is to suggest

that the analogous ritual power doctors and consultants

have to nurses that nurses have to patients is, no more

than is that of nurses, not effortlessly created as a

by-product of superior scientific knowledge, but instead

accomplished by purely ritualizing conduct.

Ritual Power from a Clockwork System

Nurses' decontamination conduct gives new sense to

Robert Wilson's (1965) assertion that "ill persons

have to learn how to be patients, for being sick and

performing adeptly in the role of hospital patient

are not at all the same thing." Being a patient in

many cases means being as uncontaminative as possible,

and this theme, that the patient needs to take care

with a nurse if he wants her to take care of him, recurs

in many studies. Thus, Emerson (1963) says that "patients

should minimize their requests and not treat nurses as

servants. If the ideal patient does occasionally ask

for something, it should be done in an 'ask-a-favour

style'" (p 77), and Tagliacozzo & Mauksch (1972) found

that most paying patients they interviewed had quickly

learnt that nurses expect co-operation, respect, and

consideration. Freidson (1970), who thinks "the community

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is not truly served" when service to citizens is defined
by a profession, notes that the sick citizen, giving
himself into the care of medical persons, "is expected
to take a role which is akin to that of a house pet or
a child" (p 355). Sudnow (1967), moreover, found that
"every effort was made" to classify patients so that
they could be treated in "organisationally routine ways"
(p 172) and Zborowski (1969) established that, though
expressions of pain vary from culture to culture, these
are sanctioned if they do not conform to the nurse's
cultural expectations.

Glaser and Strauss (1964) even link the degree to
which the patients' deaths grieve nurses to patients'
social worth in terms of the culturally valued attributes
of youth, talent, and money and Rosenhan's (1978) experi-
ment of placing nine sane persons in psychiatric hospitals,
with instructions to act sane, proves the point - that
patients are only honorary persons - by showing that not
one was assumed by nurses to be sane - for the reason that
they were "patients". According to Tagliacozzo (1965),
furthermore, "good patients" try to "save the bell",
hiding their real problems "behind a cloak of conformity".
And the lot of patients contaminating nurses by not
conforming to the definition of a good patient is personal
destruction, as Emerson (1963) discovered: "When a patient
is clamoring to be treated like a person he is bucking
the system; anyone bucking the system is most likely
defined as emotionally disturbed and therefore not

entitled to be treated as a person" (p 83). Telles (1980)
reports, in this connection: "In ICU, we observe force,
subtle or blunt, used against the patients to maintain
their well demeanored appearance by eliminating their
ability to present themselves in other ways. Nurses
spoonfed them to prevent their spilling of food or drink
onto their bedclothes. Their hands are tied to prevent
their movement, bedsheets are tied to rails to prevent
nudity, and their incontinence is contained by catheters.
When a patient began shouting at random, the resident
commented to the nurse that they may "have to kick her
out in spite of her condition because we can't tolerate
that kind of noise here.'"

Patients, being the source of so many contaminations,
prevent nurses relaxing, except when unobserved in what
Rosengren & Devault (1963) call "interstitial areas";
here "the most blunt questions can be asked without
prestige and esteem becoming serious considerations."
Coser (1961) suggests that "the determination of who can
hide from whom may be as essential to the workings of
a social system as determination of who has power over
whom." In a ward, patients - even if they sleep or
refuse eye contact - can hide from no one (it would be
unthinkable, for instance, for a patient to draw the
curtains round his bed), while nurses can hide only
for short periods from their sister, and the sister
can hide from everybody but not for too long. Unable to
hide from one another, persons in a ward, therefore, fall

into stereotypical roles which when played well make
the place go like "clockwork", which is a word used
by nurses as superlative praise of a ward's organization.
Those very few patients who do not know their place in
a ward are "disturbed", if only because only they seem
unaware of the kinds of places to which disturbed
persons are sent. So, in a clockwork system, human
conduct that is not geared to it cannot be countenanced,
and those who constitute the main parts of the system -
the nurses - must be in proper working order. A ladder
in a stocking, a hint of eye shadow, a single bloodstain
on a blue cotton dress, an obscene word playing on the
lips, a slouching walk, a coquettish strut, too loud
a laugh, all these flaws in the ideal nurse can be seen,
every one, as the first cracks of ultimate fissures
through which would pour all the pain, disease, and filth
of the world. The shell of a nurse needs to be armour
and a nurse has ritual power to the degree that she and
others see her armour as being as natural as her skin.

Of course, my argument should be that a nurse is
nothing but her armour, because nurses play what Elizabeth
Burns (1972) describes as "total roles". Players of
total roles, very much less than other role players,
practise the role distancing that Goffman (1972) has
argued is a ubiquitous humanizing social strategy. Nurses
in this respect are identical to Gonos's (1976) go-go
dancers, and of the context of the ward can be said
exactly what Gonos says of a go-go dancer's platform:

> ... the present frame for go-go dancing is essen-
> tially non-dissociative in that no character is
> created for the dancer to step in to. Hence, what
> is perceived as the dancer's "true self" remains
> inextricably linked to the meanings of the activities
> involved in her performance.
>
> (p 201-2)

Of nursing as of go-go dancing, it is true to say that:

> ... its [go-go dancing's] audience is inclined to
> understand the action as self-expressive and further,
> that the social meanings carried on in its performance
> will be attached to the self of the dancer by the
> audience, and appropriated as part of her self-
> conception.
>
> (p 209)

> ... in the go-go frame, self, role, and gender
> become concurrent determinants, bound up together
> in the action, a particularly insidious identi-
> ficatory formula.
>
> (p 210)

> A first possibility is that these women sense no
> distances from their roles as dancers, that is,
> that their activities as dancers near perfectly
> match their ideal images of themselves.
>
> (p 215)

Gonos's dancers, like nurses, are seen to be through and

through what they appear to be. That is, underneath

the costume and the conduct of a nurse should be some

embryonic proto-nurse, and this it is that animates the

rhetoric of "calling" and "vocation", for only what is

already there can be summoned. Nursing, then, is not

any job, but is a way of life, and this way of life

entails doing the job of living a way of life, a double

yoke, usually worn with no less apparent insoucience than

the white paper hats nurses must pin into their hair.

But role-distancing practices do increase up the

nursing hierarchy; sisters tend to be looked toward as

persons, to see how they will play their role, and senior
nursing officers assured me that management was "all
personalities". Besides the usual reason, of senior
persons having more personal autonomy, it can be appreci-
ated that the further from a ward a nurse rises, the less
pressing is her need to self-sacralize, the reason being
that a senior nurse can acquire ritual power from her
seniority whereas the ward nurse only ever stands to lose
hers. But in friendly wards, described to me as those in
which "the kettle is always on," nurses nevertheless
sometimes co-operate to get the work done so as to leave
time for relaxation and sociability. "When the hierarchy
arrives" (as it was put to me), cups of tea are poured
down the sink and informality vanishes. What had been
going on, however, was not role distance as Goffman
defines it, but a kind of role suspension.

A more transient type of role suspension is laughter,
when a person becomes a being who appears to be choking
on an unassimilable concept, but it should not be thought
that in a "clockwork" ward laughter is not the sound of
some of its gears meshing. Patients, for example,
nervously engage one another in jocular talk which, as
Coser (1965) points out, relates to the anxieties of
both having to adjust to alien and rigid routines (patients
are made to get up two or three hours earlier than the
rest of the population, so as to fit into nurses' shift
systems) and having to submit to unchallengable authority.
Emerson (1963) actually says that humour attaches to

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recurrent situations when, in telegraphed form, it is
used primarily to repair indignities. One such recurrent
situation in the Urology ward was the emptying of plastic
catheter bags. The urine contained in these had to be
measured then and there at the bedside so that a new
figure could be entered on the patient's fluid chart.
Invariably jokes would cluster around this activity, but
not quite in the way Coser sees as containing an unresol-
vable conflict. Structurally, the humour bracketed the
bags as being too funny to be taken seriously by nurse
or patient, yet, since the colour of the urine clearly
indicated the degree of recovery from an operation, the
bags were serious indeed. The joking thus served to bring
their prognostic significance back into the realm of
routine as well as to trivialise the contaminative
potential of the urine by ridiculing it. So here joking
was essentially decontaminative, both of potentially
threatening significations and of a polluting substance.
The clockwork needed the laughter as lubrication to
prevent its jamming.

Of course, no one ever laughs at a nurse, but
frequently patients are used as butts. For instance,
messy lockers would occasion huge laughter from the
nurse opening their doors, at which others would gather
round the laughing nurse to swell the mirth. Culprits
usually grinned sheepishly as their pathetic attempts
at anarchy were mocked out of court. Once again, the
clockwork performed its waste disposal function -

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grinding contaminations to nothing - so that the nurse

could look like herself.

Nameless Interaction

Because their shifts do not often coincide for long,

because they frequently change wards, and because all

their interactions are always being interrupted by the

demands of other persons or tasks, nurses do not get to

know one another very well. The impersonal cast of ward

life is further ensured by the taboo on mere sociability

as a form of nurse interaction. First-names are used

without warmth, between nurses who have worked together

for relatively long periods, but otherwise even same-rank

nurses in the presence of patients or sisters will attract

one another's attention with the call "Nurse!" Sisters

are always addressed as Sister by all nurses. Patients

are called "Mr," their names not usually easily associated

with their faces since patients like nurses are coming

and going continually. (It is very common for a nurse

to flick her eyes to a patient's bedhead where his

name is displayed before she addresses him as if she had

known his name all along; she can also read his name on

the plastic bracelet he must wear even in the bath.)

The use of "Mr" as an honorific is so routine that on the

Urology ward - while I was there - a Brigadier and two

Reverends were also always called Mr and nurses complain

good-naturedly about getting patients' names mixed up,

as if this is inevitable. People in the environment of

nameless interaction that is a ward, then, are unusually

sociological beings, easily substituted for one another.

On the ward, nameless men and women confront one another as members of very broad categories of human classification (this is the point Gonos makes with regard to the meeting of go-go dancer and her customer), and neither nurse nor patient seems uncomfortable about this. It is fascinating to quote Simmel (1971) on the subject of nameless interaction: "The most diverse personalities can engage in it and all individual differences appear to be of no importance." Here Simmel is speaking of prostitution, adding that its debasement "lies in the fact that the most personal possession of a woman, her area of greatest reserve, is considered equivalent to the most neutral value of all [money]." So the caring nurse, not only by the profanations I have listed but also by virtue of the structural impersonality of her situation runs a risk there too of debasement, and it is in just those activities where this kind of debasement is most possible that her conduct is most prescribed. The bathing of patients, for example, is carried out in a routinized sequence (one that is in fact a "practical" in the examinations a pupil nurse must pass before becoming a qualified State Enrolled Nurse). So in nameless inter-action there may be found routines prescribed to the degree that the interactions are nameless, and these are passages of frozen ritual conduct embedded in an improvising stream of behaviour always alive to conditions of sacrality and contamination.[19]

Conclusion

I have described some of the ways nurses cope with profanations by persons, substances, and labour, and I have shown how nurses are driven into a "pure nurse" image that fits into the organization of ward life like a figure in a clockwork scenario. Throughout, I have argued that the nurse becomes as she is in response to a variety of contaminants that, if she did not act "nurseness" to the hilt, could so contaminate her as to stop her being a proper person of any description. However, her working amongst these contaminants in her fresh, clean uniform and with a cheerful, brisk demeanour, suggests that, even more than her being equal to pollutants, the nurse is above them. And it is to the degree that she is above these pollutants, which her calling brings her into touch with, that, I contend, she has ritual power greater than she would have as a non-nurse. Perhaps, in its way, this is as great as that of punks, who, as has been shown, achieve their ritual power by seeking out pollutants just as if it was the ritual power that overcame self-desacralisations, whereas, for them as it is for the nurses, it is the "overcoming", by simply maintaining certain appearances, that brings into being the greater than normal ritual power. Thus ritual power can be created in interaction by conduct alone, and is by no means an invariant quantity of ritualness.

In the next chapter, I shall consider how conduct in general is either fashionable or unfashionable, and I shall draw the conclusion that ritual power - as it certainly does for nurses and punks - accrues to fashionable behaviour.

Notes

1   Sociologists who have addressed the topic of fashion
    head-on are few and far between, but the following have
    had stimulating thoughts on the subject (usually conjectural):
    Roland Barthes, Herbert Blumer, Rene Konig, A L Kroeber,
    Robert Park, Edward Sapir, Georg Simmel, William Graham
    Sumner, Gabriel Tarde, W I Thomas, and Thorstein Veblen.

2   Robinson (1958) is even moved to personify fashion
    as "she".

3   Sometimes, in pre-revolutionary France for instance,
    even the wearing of certain materials (such as silk) by
    some categories of persons (peasants) has been forbidden
    by law.

4   Anscombe (1978) assembles a number of song lyrics and
    newspaper items and photographs into a punk manifesto;
    Hennessy (1978) reports punk by comparing photographs of
    punks with photographs of "primitive" tribes; and Coon (1977)
    supplies documentary details of many early punk rock
    groups. All these sources give an undisciplined rendition
    of the punk phenomena which, longer than most youth fashions,
    still, at the time of writing, 1981, retains its integrity
    enough to prevent itself from being treated with respect
    in the press and on television. Though punk is British
    in origin, there are punks now in New York, Los Angeles,
    Berlin, and Paris. Los Angeles punks have only a loose
    orientation to "punkness" while New York punks have ad-
    opted the sado-masochistic fetish ornamentation (leather,
    straps, chains, studded belts, and so on) more enthusiastically
    than other punks and therefore are perceived as sexually
    dangerous to boot.

5   The data on which this analysis is based is of an im-
    impressionistic kind, being acquired through (1) interviews
    with punks and groups of punks, (2) some twelve months of
    weekly or twice weekly "passing encounters" with the six
    members of a loose group of punks in Bath, (3) some twenty

attendances at punk rock concerts in the West Country and in London (once in the capacity of "Security" working for the promoter), (4) a few visits to punk shops in London, Bristol, and Birmingham, (5) the scrutiny of any punks I happened across at any time, (6) listening to many hours of punk music, (7) reading journalistic punk coverage in publications ranging from the Sunday Times to the New Musical Express. Aside from the concerts, the only large gathering of punks that I attended was the funeral of one of the Bath group, who had been stabbed to death in a back street.

6   Statements like "most punks" must be read with extreme caution as being conveniences of style to enable an exposition that were it so fastidious to hedge every generalisation with caveats would comprise very little else but caveats.

7   Bormann (1972) speaks of fantasy-chaining as follows: "People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self-consciousness. The tone of the meeting, often tense and quiet prior to the dramatising, would become lively, animated, and boisterous, the chaining process, involving both verbal and nonverbal communication, indicating participation in the drama."

8   Bell (1947) has these pertinent thoughts about safety-pins: "Crude but recognisable safety-pins can be found at a very early period of history; at this stage the thing is both useful and ornamental, being frequently made of bronze or gold. It has subsequently developed in both directions; first into the conspicuous broach which commonly has no safety guard, secondly into the very practical safety-pin; this latter is hidden away from public gaze, and to wear it upon the person as a fastening to the dress is thought very ignominious."

9   McLaren who discovered the Sex Pistols while managing a sex shop in the Kings Road of London, now manages a group

called Bow Wow Wow. Still an innovator, he will not issue
their music on 45 r p m records, but sells tape cassettes
with three songs on each side. This way he maintains the
exclusivity of his product from the "air play" that is
thought indispensable to making a record a hit. (With the
Sex Pistols, he used obscenity to ensure their records
were banned; but without air play, they still made the
Number One slot.)

10 Bill Grundy, of the BBC programme "Nationwide", held
responsible for the swearing of the Sex Pistols during an
interview, was actually suspended by the BBC for a period
of three weeks.

11 In fantasy-chaining interviews, punks vyed with one
another about how many public establishments they were
banned from. Some Bath punks had tallied these very ex-
actly, which would indicate that their score was at least
one measure of punkness. A good score was in the region
of 20-30 for a town whose population is under 100,000.

12 The rhetoric of "vocation" is not unanimously espoused
by nurses, a proportion of whom are members of unions.
Union members tend to promote themselves as workers like
any other workers, but they are less numerous than members
of the Royal College of Nursing, the nurses' main pro-
fessionalising body.

13 This analysis is derived from data collected over a
three-week period during which I carried out participant
observation in a male Urology ward, where I was permitted
to work as a Nursing Auxiliary. Nurses are not often studied
by sociologists in their place of work; usually they are
given questionnaires to fill in or are interviewed when off
the ward. Notable exceptions to this rule, in Britain, are
some of the accounts in Davis & Horobin's (1977) Medical
Encounters and, in America, the research by Glaser & Strauss
and Julius Roth as well as by Coser (1962), Emerson (1963),
Sudnow (1967), and Telles (1980).
     The Urology ward was a long room with twelve beds down

each side. It had a day-room off to one side at the far
end, and offices, bathrooms, and so on flanked the narrow
corridor that led into the ward proper. A ward like this,
still called a "Nightingale Ward", is aptly described by
Stelling & Bucher (1972) as a "fishbowl".

14 Obviously, peripatetic nurses like District Nurses are
not ecologically contained by a hospital organisation, but
they are as tightly contained by the organisation of health
and care within which they operate.

15 The Committee on Nursing (1972) summarises very many
popular conceptions of the nurse, but then goes on to
minimise the role these play in her life.

16 It might be thought that I am using status as another
word for the phrase "ritual power". This is true up to a
point. Status, however, carries too many connotations of
being fixed and of having been conferred from outside.
Ritual power, on the other hand, being a form of power,
is something that can increase or decrease, and, being
ritual, in its essence is connected to that part of persons
which resists - but does not forbid - translation into
formal social terms. Ritual power, unlike status, can be
won or lost at any time, and must be continually maintained
through conduct. To explain further: saying a sister is
superior to a staff nurse because she has a higher rank
begs the question of wherein lies that superiority, because
it is far more than a formal convenience of organisation.
The superiority issues not from appurtenances of rank but
from what the rank supposes merits rank, and ritual power
is ritual power so long as persons are supposed to be
beings who are analytically separable from their multi-
farious appearances. Later on I come close to saying
that all that can be separated is the actual life of a
person, and, therefore, that it is life that is respected,
though some lives are treated as more valuable than others.

17 On the Urology ward, the paint in the bathrooms, toilets,

store rooms, and kitchen was flaking off the walls.
Portable commodes were substituted for the wheelchairs
that cost too much to buy. And so on. These environmental
shortcomings were all too easily defined by nurses as
signifying societal indifference to the welfare of the
sick, and, by extension, to those who nurse the sick.

18 Largey & Watson (1972) make the point that the language
of odour is often used as a moral calculus. Bad behaviour
stinks. Ritually lucky people come up smelling of roses.
From this perspective good nurses will have to smell nice.

19 I am avoiding calling these stylized forms of interaction
by the name "ritual" as do Sudnow (1967) and Mauksch (1966)
because in this thesis I want to stress the idea that
ritual conduct is far from being the enactment of auto-
matic deference routines and more often is behaviour that
in closely recognizing possibilities of sacralization and
contamination is especially constructed by persons. But
it is possible that ritualized (in the sense only of
routinized) conduct will arise where the contact is be-
tween ritual selves who neither of them want to make a
ritual contact, and here it would be more appropriate
to call it de-ritualized.

CHAPTER V

FASHIONABLE RITUAL

In this chapter I lead up to the idea that ritual power not only can be acquired by systematic orientations to societal pollution codes, as I have shown in Chapter IV, but, more commonly, derives from (and is) the interactional phenomenon "presence" as this is understood in the theatre.

Presence is not a mysterious quality that some people have more of than others; it is nothing else but self-definition by acts, expressions, and words. When the definition is sharp and a person is very clear to other persons in interaction, I say that he is possessed, but actually all persons can be seen to be possessed, though most of them, neither sharp nor clear, are blurred copies of vital societal images. Possession is a difficult notion because Anglo-American culture wants to believe that someone, a person perhaps, is possessed, whereas here I am pushing towards the idea that a person is his possession - or collection of possessions - through and through, and nothing else.

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My reorientation to human beings thus requires that
they be seen as mediums of flesh caught up in acts
perceived to be of ritual beings. The perceived person
is like an envoy, from a ritual realm, using the only
means at his disposal - a body, a voice, a dramaturgical
talent, and so on - to open this realm, or even close
it, to others. A person, I shall argue in later chapters,
is there when you look at him because he is a fine actor
of this societal notion "person", through whom nothing
except what is shown can be seen, just because it is
through the behavioural straws in his ritual wind that
you come to see, with his help or despite his hindrance,
the particular straw man that is his person. A person,
therefore, is not a projection of some lantern-slide
of self so much as his audience's projection, the other
way round, into him, who dwells, in fact, anywhere
but "within" his behavioural manifestations and whose
only significant relationship to his body and his mind
is that he, the possession, must always be a function
of his dramaturgical ability in interaction, though this
too in part will be a function of the precise form of
his possession. I leap ahead of myself here, for these
are some of my final conclusions.

The first section of this chapter enlarges on my
analytic decision to regard conduct as subject to changes
in fashion. It is the case, I shall propose, that proper
conduct is fashionable conduct. But, since fashions
conceal their "fashionableness" from their followers,

persons have difficulty in seeing that they sail before

some other wind than that of their own autonomous will,

however they may sail and wherever to. This idea that

"good" behaviour (which will be conduct of acceptable

ritual power) is fashionable conduct, dispels what

Goffman has called "The Doctrine of Natural Expression"

and acts as a wedge to open the theoretical door that

is thrown wide in Part Three. (There, the fully inter-

active interaction is defined eventually as a maelstrom

of interchangeable possessions, whose only law is its

own revolution.)

However, before I move on to presence and then from

presence to possession, I need to establish that conduct

is not only fashionable but - because it must be form -

is also always aesthetic. Geertz's (1975) analysis of

Balinese social life is useful here, partly through

Geertz's own revealed ethnocentricity. After showing

how aesthetic Balinese life is not logically different to

Anglo-American life, I then meet the objections of

"authentic man" by arguing, with reference to Antonin

Artaud's (1958) manifesto for theatrical cruelty (or

truth to life), that a man who would tear his conduct

off his body can only perform the conduct of a man doing

just that. My argument here is a little like Berkeły's

when he criticises John Locke's view that objects

"cause" perceptions of themselves. Berkeley asked how

it could be seen that what give rise to perceptions are

objects if only the perceptions of the objects can be

seen, and he concluded that objects must be "constructions".
(I go further in the case of people, and say that they
construct themselves.) Recently Locke has been
reinstated because his illogical epistemology honours
everyday language practice, but in this thesis I am
trying to dishonour language practices that would locate
the "true" person in his innards (where, I say, he can
never be seen to be except as an introjection from outer
manifestations) for I feel that the inner view of man
dishonours him, and so I enact my "ritual reasons" as
described in Chapter I.

It emerges here that selves may be possessions
of self by self, and possessions that are done well
become interactionally "present", I now hypothesize,
because he who would be "himself" is the conscious
pilot of his vessel rather than a vessel trying to become
conscious. Stages, I then note, are the places where
dramatic enactments are clearest and where, for that
reason, I suggest, conduct fashions may be explored,
and in safety, moreover. So it is fitting to now enquire
how actors, the practical scientists of conduct, go
about their work. It would seem that they are neither
purely technical nor purely expressive: between these
two limits they obey rules for conduct whose full
formulation would be impossibly cumbersome and whose
partial formulation, if followed faithfully, would
result in eccentric performance. Also, actors do the

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best they can to keep "theatricality" out of their conduct, and theatricality is nothing other than old-fashioned acting. (That there are conduct fashions on the stage of course supports my view that everyday conduct is fashion-governed.)

Now, since the stage is the one place where the ritual code operates to the exclusion of everything else, it becomes hallowed - for being that place where specifically human and somehow valuable conduct is enacted. It is also a fact that while most people are oriented to dramatized ritual conduct, the profession of actor is still regarded as fairly lightweight. Putting these two facts together produces the conclusion that status life is not a true match of ritual life, and this is born out by the use of phrases like "you look the part" as compliments (it only helps to look the part). Goffman, I conclude, who sees ritualness as relatively fixed and as positively related to status, misses the important interactional variable of ritual power, which is a variable because not only is it altered by pollution conduct, as I showed in Chapter IV, but also is altered by fluctuations in dramatic competence. (So, though Goffman thinks that performers' secrets are "petty", I have arrived at an opposite opinion.)

Finally, I suggest that it is not enough to be fashionable if you want to be social. Some originality

of conduct is necessary and this necessarily brings on

new fashions that may well first surface on stages. It

is so because life that only replicates what has gone

before, inventing nothing new, is not perceived as fully

alive or human.

Conduct as Fashionable Conduct Modelled by Actors

I have described punks as young persons who adopt

a fashion in music and clothes that, only appearing to

emanate from a deeper profaning self, still gives them

an inverted ritual power greater than the power they

would have if they did not follow their fashion. I have

also described how nurses systematically regulate their

conduct in order to control the contaminations in whose

midst they work, and how this must take the form of

self-sacralization when the contaminants will not go

away. In so doing, I have asked the reader who might

grant that costume is always dictated by fashion (nurses'

costume would be a very slow-moving fashion compared

with the fast-moving punk fashion) and who would also

grant that costume and interaction are inseparable,

to see forms of conduct as being fashionable or unfash-

ionable, which is to say, fashion-governed. It would

follow that the rules of conduct, insofar as conduct

should be fashionable conduct, operate only within their

own sphere and cannot be related to anything but their

own evolution, however zig-zag that might be and in

whatever direction. (But I am not answering very

important questions that are begged here, such as how

a fashion of conduct might be related to other human activity - if there is any such - or how changing events in the human universe might have effects on conduct fashions.)

I look at examples of conduct from this one angle and in this one light, preferring to paint a partial picture that makes sense than to botch an exhaustive portrait. I do this to see what this allows me to see, which otherwise would remain hidden. My procedure is not dissimilar, then, to that of someone testing a theory, the theory in this case being Goffman's ritual frame.

Where punks and nurses are obvious choices of fashion-controlled persons who actively exemplify the ritual code, actors are, as obviously, I feel, a good choice of persons who have a highly developed competence to appear like persons, because they can play many persons convincingly and are not confined to the playing of a single role like "punk" or "nurse". Thus, towards the end of the chapter I draw on the data source of complete tape transcripts of a three-week rehearsal period in a leading British provincial theatre[1] and in Part Three I repeatedly refer to observations of my own made during a nine-week period of intensive participant observation in a repertory company. In addition I constantly use the insights of stage performers

and their commentators to help propel my argument. Why
I do this will emerge as the narrative proceeds, but one
of the most important reasons for my singling out actors
as persons of interest to anyone who would study inter-
action is that a great number of people spend great
amounts of time watching them. Althiede & Snow (1979)
quote the figure of six hours each day for the time each
American TV is switched on and, seven years ago, Williams
(1974a) quoted three hours per day for British TVs.
Williams (1974b) has this to say:

> It seems probable that in societies like Britain
> and the United States more drama is watched in a
> week or weekend, by the majority of viewers, than
> would have been watched in a year or in some cases
> a lifetime in any previous historical period. It
> is not uncommon for the majority of viewers to see,
> regularly, as much as two or three hours of drama,
> of various kinds, every day. The implications of
> this have scarcely begun to be considered. It
> is clearly one of the unique characteristics of
> advanced industrial societies that drama as an
> experience is now an intrinsic part of everyday
> life, at a quantitative level which is so very
> much greater than any precedent as to seem a
> fundamental qualitative change. Whatever the
> social and cultural reasons may finally be, it is
> clear that watching dramatic simulation of a wide
> range of experiences is now an essential part of
> our modern cultural pattern.

Not only have dramatic enactments become a staple social
diet of Anglo-Americans[2], but understandings of social
reality may be being subtly restated in a logic that
borrows from (dramatic) entertainment formats, so that
the infusion of dramatization into society is at two
levels, the immediate one of visible presentations and
the hidden one of issue-dramatization. Both Williams
and Althiede & Snow advance this view that the criterion

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for all TV representations of all human social realities

is becoming entertainment. (Entertainment they both

define as mundane behaviour with the mundanities removed

and so structured as to encourage vicarious involvement.)

Althiede & Snow, at some length and with convincing

thoroughness, also argue that there has grown up a

"media logic" that is now learnt from "entertainment-TV"

and applied to all social phenomena (from sport to

religion). Big institutions, say Althiede & Snow, are

definitely beginning to shape their forms to fit this

logic. I invoke these points here only to emphasise

that people may be judging conduct by television's

standards, and thus I think my choice of actors as

persons worth studying by the observer of ritual conduct

is justified, since these are the people who, for vast

numbers of TV viewers, embody the forms of intelligible

conduct, not only in their micro-behaviour but in their

narratives. Actors, furthermore, suffer a process of

natural selection. Only those recognised to be performing

conduct as it "should" be performed can stay alive

professionaly; those who act badly - or too imaginatively

for the average viewer - will not be seen. Televised

actors, then, model the latest fashions of conduct which

far less competently are variously adopted by their

viewers, the whole symbiosis operating under a contrary

rhetoric that persons are really, for example, the social

flowerings of their chromosones and genes.

So, if present-day conduct may be disposed to be

fashionable in its ritual forms and fashion is visible

form, what of the forms? I now put forward the view that,

since the logic of form for form's sake is aesthetic,

conduct is considered good when it looks right, not if

it is right by standards that are outside fashion. Thus,

if conduct is fully aestheticized, it must be fashionable

ritual. To explain this notion of aesthetic conduct

more fully I examine the Balinese through Geertz's (1975)

account of their social life, because perhaps more than

any other society the Balinese "stand on ceremony". I

come to the conclusion that the Balinese are their forms,

as must be all other social persons, and that the

aesthetic nature of conduct may be hidden from most

understandings of conduct just because most conduct does

work aesthetically.

The Balinese[3]

Geertz (1975) characterises Balinese social life

as one whose "obsessing ideal" is with conventions and

proprieties that are exaggeratedly ceremonious conduct

designed to prohibit spontaneity, emotionality, and

individuality. Manners are a matter of "deep spiritual

concern" and interaction is informed by a "playful

theatricality" which is, however, grave in its performance.

"Balinese social relations are at once a solemn game

and studied drama." The formally ceremonial ritual life

of the Balinese is as relaxed as civil life is formally

ritualistic, and the two forms of conduct commingle:

"Etiquette is a kind of dance, dance a kind of ritual,

and worship a form of etiquette." The courtesies of the
Balinese, says Geertz, express sensibility rather than
rectitude; people please one another "to please as
beauty pleases, not as virtue pleases."

In this life of aesthetic conduct, the most intensely
emphasised "affective regulator" is what the Balinese call
"lek", a kind of stage fright. Lek is the worry that
aesthetic illusions will collapse and that the part each
person is playing will be suddenly exposed as a part
being played by an entity who, having no part or form
itself, will grotesquely mar the composition of Balinese
society. Geertz also says that lek is the anxiety
that the forms of conduct will no longer hold at bay
those behaviours in which "the immediacy of the moment
is felt with excruciating intensity," and, as if at the
dictate of lek, social life in Bali is free of quarrels
and open confrontations, and conflictual issues are
blunted or dropped. Possibly this provides a reason
why unaccomplished and frustrated tasks are abandoned,
sometimes never to be resumed, and why the formal ritual
that functions to summon down Balinese gods consists
mostly in "getting ready and cleaning up". The Balinese,
in all these ways, show one another - and this is Geertz's
ethnocentric view - far too much respect. (It is
interesting to compare the non-events of Balinese
rituals to another "solemn game and studied drama", the
English sport of cricket, which, in my view, quite
appropriately has given its name to a moral code.)

All I want to suggest here is that Balinese conduct,
as Geertz interprets it, has much more in common with
Anglo-American conduct than at first appears to be the
case. The Balinese are no different from other people,
I am saying, in always trying to be for one another the
best selves that they can be considered to be. It is
just that their stalking ground, in proportion to its
unusual freedom from direct threats to ideal impersonations,
is as a whole vulnerable (and this is why lek is so
pervasive). One false move in Bali and, for those
witnessing it, the entire Balinese society is likely
to disintegrate, leaving those Balinese people where
people without society are always to be found, scrambling
desperately to start a new one. But gaffes and embarras-
sing acts similarly anomize Anglo-American culture,
because of the basic human predicament that, when persons
are face-to-face, whatever they do must confirm, threaten,
or create a form of conduct that fits into a moral
ideology, even if what they do is nothing (an act which
suggests an evaluation of social life and of other persons
as valueless). Conduct, then, is inevitably aesthetically
judged, even when it is considered ugly, and so far as
it is effective in aesthetic terms it is seen as separate
from and different in nature to some unseeable being who
might be said to perform it, but whom, I argue, is not
visible except through his performances.

But it could be objected here that aesthetic conduct
in the Balinese style, with its attendant and constant

risk of rupture, does not allow of the easy innovation

one associates with Anglo-American behaviour. To answer

this it is only necessary to account for the "ease"

of such innovations. Riezler (1943), in this connection,

observes that friendship cannot be friendly without the

constant exercise of tact, and he says that tact is the

diligent indulgence one person gives to the nascent

Meadian "me" of another's "I". No indulgence, no tact,

and, therefore, no innovation. The mosaic of "mes" that

form a society are preserved by tact so that their "Is"

do not suffer shame, and in Bali, where the "me" predom-

inates over the "I", tact seems to be built into the

social system as a whole, whereas, in Anglo-American

culture, tact is in part exercised at the discretion

of individuals (so that it is possible to describe a

person as tactless). Innovation, then, must rely on

tactful forbearance, as well as on the willingness to

risk being untactful, so that in the realm of aesthetic

conduct the ritual self is as much in play as in more

obvious fields of honour. This is the crucial point,

that the growths of personality tact protects must be

items of conduct, and just those items most ritually alive

to persons. Societal tact in Bali (plus a seeming

societal dislike of changing the prevailing fashion

conduct) conceals its constant employment (tact,

reflexively tactful, is not tactful if it can be seen

for what it is) and thus it is that where the Balinese

"really are" is in their non-abrasive social interlockings.

Similarly, for Anglo-Americans, the parts of the self

that have most social life are just those that are most

exposed to others. So the ritual self is as it were

triangulated into a formal biographical definition from

a host of small behaviours that can only be assessed

by their comparison, in terms of form, with other

behaviours, that is to say, aesthetically. In Part

Three, I shall show that the most real person is he who

has more concentrated and organized surfaces, not he who

would disown his conduct as though, by doing so, he

would release into the presence of other people a being

who is essentially "him" and who, moreover, could somehow

be seen by other people through some other medium than

his appearance in gesture, expression, costume, words,

and movement. Such "conduct-less" conduct might well

be called de-aestheticized conduct, whose possibility I

want now to explore. If it is impossible, then the

necessity for conduct to be aesthetic conduct - fashionable

ritual - is further established.

De-Aestheticized Conduct

In the theatre, the aspiration to rip conduct to

shreds so as to release the person before he has a

chance to play himself, has been best expressed by

Antonin Artaud (1958) in The Theatre and Its Double,

where he writes: "If there is still one hellish, truly

accursed thing in our time it is our artistic dallying

with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the

stake, signalling through the flames" (p 13). He compares

his ideal theatre to a crisis like the plague: "It

invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its

energies; and we can see ... that from the human point

of view, the action of theater, like that of plague, is

beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as

they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie,

the slackness, baseness, and hypocrisy of our world ..."

(p 31). By definition, this kind of theatre must destroy

whatever social institution could incubate it, but

theatrical followers of the Theatre of Cruelty, which

began with Artaud, have shrunk from Artaud's conclusion

that theatre should be, as Derrida (1978) says: "Life

itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable"

(p 234). Derrida describes Artaud's stalking ground

thus:

> A closed space, that is to say a space produced
> from within itself and no longer organized from
> the vantage of an other absent site, an illocality,
> an alibi or invisible utopia. The end of represen-
> tation, but also invisible representation; the
> end of interpreation but also an original inter-
> pretation that no master-speech, no project of
> mastery will have permeated and levelled in
> advance. A visible representation certainly,
> directed against the speech which eludes sight ...
> but whose visibility does not consist of a spectacle
> mounted by the discourse of a master. Represen-
> tation, then, as the autorepresentation of pure
> visibility and even pure sensibility.

This pursuit of the nascent is also carried on by Derrida

in his writing, except that unlike Artuad he does not

have a vision of what his words would look like if they

overcame their verbality. However, once such a project

is undertaken, forms of conduct cease to be anything

but successive betrayals of what is dumbly implied to be

their actual life, and the result in language can be,

as Jameson (1972) observes of Derrida, a "philosophic

language that feels its way gropingly along the walls

of its own conceptual prison, describing it from the

inside as though it were only one of the possible worlds

of which the others are nonetheless inconceivable" (p 186).

But Artaud and Derrida who would strip conduct of itself

must forever fail at the instant of revelation, when what

would be revealed reveals only that it was already

revealed, and both Artaud and Derrida, to a marked degree,

are in the predicament of Hamlet, as Rosenberg (1970)

states it: "Hamlet is obsessed by the sense of being

an actor, that is to say, of falsifying himself through

what he does and says. His self-consciousness exceeds

his role and blocks his performance of it." But where

Hamlet searches for a better performance of a richer

aprt, Artaud would attack the part itself, only, of course,

in my view, to find himself playing the part of a man

attacking himself. In his fury to murder his falsifying

outer selves, I feel, Artaud fails to give expression

to Artaud; he becomes instead a particularly understandable

human passion, which victimizes him. Raging against what

to him was aesthetic conduct of an insipid and mediocre

kind, nonetheless, in his writings, Artaud conducted

himself with admirable aesthetic verve, and there, rather

than in the mental asylum of Rodez where he was confined

for much of the latter part of his life, did he, I feel,

release his realest self.

So conduct can only be sloughed off by conduct,
and a person has to suffer his characterization by others
out of the behaviours he, like Artaud, might want to fling
in their horrified faces. But, if he is not like Artaud,
how is he to take his place as an acceptable member of
society? Actors, here, I think, can show how "acting"
is made to disappear from view and how conduct can be
passed off as inevitably expressive. I now discuss
how I think actors bring this about, and finally I come
to the idea of presence.

Life in Everyday Life

An actor, while being someone he is not, can perform
so well that his audience will forget he is an actor and
engross themselves in the part he plays. I argue in
this thesis that persons who would look most like persons
in interaction similarly act, and that the kind of part
played is of less relevance to its being taken seriously
than the competence in playing it. It is of course
evident in contemporary Anglo-American culture that
persons are asked to only play one part, their own.
(Perhaps a societal reason for this is to prevent confusion,
just as a reason for styles of conduct being uniformized
into fashions may be to decrease ambiguities.) Persons,
then, possess themselves with recognizable social identities,
though most of them are taught to regard their own and
others' identities as modelled after inner propensities.

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The possession of self by self is very well described

by George Eliot (1957) in <u>Middlemarch</u>:

> Every nerve and muscle in Rosamond was adjusted
> to the consciousness that she was being looked
> at. She was by nature an actress of parts that
> entered into her physique: she even acted her own
> character, and so well, that she did not know it
> to be precisely her own.

This is a little like the admired social faculty for

self-possession. A contention that I shall later amplify

will be that highly self-possessed individuals, like

Rosamond in the above quotation, are seen to be that

because of their particularized definition, which gives

them more ritual power than less self-possessed persons.

Most actors, and many other people besides, call this

quality of particularized self-possession "presence",

which I think is the equivalent of ritual power, lending

a high interactional status to he or she who has it,

regardless of all other statuses. (Chaikin (1972) says

that actors have presence where ordinary persons do not

because they are especially sensitive to their immediate

situations.)

Possession of this sort seems to be what the actors

I studied were striving to engineer for themselves on

stage. It is often as if actors want to be taken over

by their parts and yet remain fully alert. Playing the

part is then rather like manoeuvring a strange being from

the inside. (Taking over a part, on the other hand, by

imagining oneself to be the part and then trying to

change, from inside out, does not seem to work so well.)

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This is the moment, I think, to be more specific about

actors and their techniques. Drawing from my own partici-

pant observations and from the transcripts I mentioned,

it is possible for me to tentatively develop some data-

based generalizations.

Actors seem to operate between pure technicality

and mindless emotionality according to rules they hesitate

to put into words. It is as though verbal reification

of techniques is seen as containing the possibility of

ossifying performances that will go out of date. Further-

more, the fact that in the theatre certain stage conduct

is criticized for being "theatrical" suggests that

professional stage acting is fashion-governed.

Certainly actors are reluctant to become conscious

of how they act, and John Gielgud (Funke & Booth, 1961)

is typical in defining the process not only as "secret"

but also as one that would not work for the actor whom

it preoccupied. The fear seems to be of getting caught

in verbalizations (of artistic techniques) that would

be bound thereafter to crank out the same kind of perform-

ance in every play, always stuck in an old fashion of

acting. Thus the theatre director of the transcripts

would object to theatrical or "bogus" acting, contrast-

ing this to acting that was "truthful" and "absolutely

right and natural," and there are no signs that the

actors did not know exactly what theatrical meant. But

there are actors who rely on or think that they rely on

technique alone. Helen Hayes (Funke & Booth, 1961)

describes these as "mechanical marvels", implying that,

unless the marvellous eclipses the mechanical, audiences

will not be tricked into seeing a "real" stage character.

In other words, technique and technique alone is a hard

route; some guidance from unformulated understandings

is more likely to take the actor to the audience as a

person. (And in the same way that the technical body

can obstruct the body of a real person, so words too

can be a barrier to their meaning. The director of the

transcripts is always against this verbalising of lines;

high praise from him for an actor whose speech is effect-

ive would be "every word was a though" and "you were

really thinking every word.")

It seems probable, from what the microanalysts,

on the behavioural side, have discovered and from what

textualists, on the verbal side, have found in words

alone, that any rote technique for speech making would

be impossibly cumbersome to articulate. An actor, then,

needs to keep his very complex and far-reaching under-

standings of his acting methods subverbal so as not to

come under the biasing influence just a few of these would

exert if they were preferred to a verbal level. Notably,

the director of the transcripts, as well as the director

of the company I researched, refrain from telling actors

in detail how to make moves and intonations: overall

"blocking" parameters are laid down within which it seems

to be the actor's responsibility to find the "right" move

or tone or expression. (When, however, an actor does not fulfil this responsibility, he calls down on himself - in the transcripts - this comment: "You make me feel like a puppeteer this morning, which is not what I see my function as being really.")

But human meaning is not only lost by mechanical enactments; it also departs when high emotion is represented in a one-to-one match, so to speak. The director says: "Bits which work least well are roar and rant, sound and fury, because then it is just meaningless and any direction in a sense disappears," and, "if you blow your rag, then actually we don't have anywhere to go." So the reverse of over-technicality is not right either. Removal of the control of the character removes the character too; something needs to be left to be shown to be gripped by emotion, or the emotion, gripping nothing, is nobody's and therefore dramatically meaningless.

Thus, from two directions, what a person might be on stage is hinted at here. He is not a machine and he is not undisciplined expression. Between these two extremes he steers himself by reference to rules he dare not formulate for fear of always thereafter being no more than the repetitious product of these formulations, an old-fashioned theatrical. The same, I suggest, may be true for persons in everyday life, simply because they must recognise life-like conduct on stage in the

same way that they recognise it off stage. Persons,

then, control themselves the better to be themselves

and try not to think too much about their doing so or

about how they do it lest they seize up like a motorist

who cannot see the road he is driving because he will

not take his eyes out of the engine. But that there

is an engine which has to be driven on a road is the

point.

Williams (1974a) says:

> The drama of any period, including our own, is
> an intricate set of practices of which some are
> incorporated - the known rhythms and movements
> of a residual but still active system - and some
> are exploratory - the difficult rhythms and
> movements of an emergent representation,
> rearrangement, new identification.

So the stalking ground of a theatrical stage is one place

where, perhaps more than anywhere else, new fashions of

conduct, if enacted through new fashions of its staging,

can emerge in legible form. Stages and not everyday

situations are reserved for conduct that is understood

to be more selfconscious than usual, and they are where

experiments are performed with the ritual code, which

there operates to the exclusion of almost everything else.

Possibly this accounts for the hallowed nature stages

are attributed in the literature of the theatre. Funke

& Booth (1961) talk, for example, of "temples", while

Segal (1978) says a stage is a "consecrated place", and

refers to the playing out of a drama in front of an audience as a "communion". There seems to be no escaping the fact that just where ritual conduct is fashionable it is an aesthetic performance or, as I shall show in Part Three, a controlled possession.

Conclusion

That people do go to theatres or watch drama on television and will accord respect to performers along a scale of lifelikeness, does suggest that, in Anglo-American culture, lifelike conduct in its most pure and heightened forms is dramatized conduct, that is, the ritually live conduct of knowing possession. However, the actor cannot be the ideal type of a person simply because, although more than any other person he is able to be effectively possessed, he has no societal role but that of "actor" by which to be possessed off-stage. Off-stage, his trained talent is of little benefit to him just because it is known to be trained in a culture which wants to believe that natural possession is a form of expressed innerness and that ritual power can be any person's if he is given a high enough status. Later I shall expand on this theme but for now I would point out that it can be said of a high status person, "He looks the part", and, that it is not said too often of these persons, argues that the particular kind of ritual power I am busy defining here is not obviously connected to societal position.

Goffman has frequently said that what is essentially

human is the competence persons have to look human in

approved fashion, but he has never gone on to consider

competence as a variable capacity or to consider what

this implies for interactions. (His work on "faulty

persons" (Goffman, 1953) and on stigmatized persons

(Goffman, 1968) does not touch on the issue of competence

in this sense, for these persons, because of a fault

or a stigma, are placed in a position of being deemed

incompetent, even though they may have no less competence

than normals.) My suggestion in this chapter is that

power of a ritual kind accrues to competence in inter-

action, and, conversely, that incompetence decreases

worth, and my criticism of Goffman is that, by sometimes

not incorporating his ritual in his dramaturgical frame,

he has unfortunately diminished the role of awe in

interactions. And when he says, "The audience sense

secret mysteries and powers behind the performance, and

the performer senses that his chief secrets are petty ones"

(Goffman, 1971, p 76), he surely slights the degree of

transportation a person can feel in the presence of

good acting or even in the presence of those persons

who are described as "larger than life." Goffman's

reduction of the theatre to a trick played by "mechanical

marvels" directed by puppeteers, and his consequent

draining from the dramaturgical frame of as-yet ill-

defined sociological notions like "being moved" or

"purged", though it frees his readers from the doctrine

of natural expression, still discounts the everyday

knowledge that some people and not others can "get through"
to other people. (This was an inevitable result of a
necessary analytic division of dramaturgical from ritual
frame, and the fact that some elements of interaction
were lost thereby is, of course, as nothing to the gains
made by Goffman's sociology, but what was lost is enough,
I feel, to make it worth my while trying to effect some
recoveries.)

Cless (1979) quotes Herbert Blau as saying that the
supreme ability of an actor is "to bring out of nowhere
an action that is incredibly strange and perfectly right,
so that one feels, after it is performed, that he has
witnessed an enchantment, and can only ask in admiration,
'Where did that come from, it was so true?'" This is the
recognition that if a person is to invest himself with
ritual power he must behave in an original way that
connects appearance to meaning so that there could be
no other appearance for no other meaning. And, if it
were not possible for persons to endlessly create new
forms of conduct, social life would quickly assume a
stilted, mechanical aspect in which it would become hard
to imagine that persons are really alive. The living
dead, of course, are everywhere, but most people do not
feel they could be befriended. Spontaneity, originality,
alertness to the situation, the ability to unambiguously
enact apposite meaning, these are the marks of life,
and it is impossible to imagine any interaction that
lacked at least a modicum of such life being properly

termed a human interaction. Goffman, I feel - fortunately

for me else I would not know what to write about - has

never turned into this side road, the role of life in

everyday life. In Part Three, I clarify and sort out

the ideas from this chapter relating to that theme. In

the "Summary and Conclusions" I finally get to the point

of suggesting that the side road is a freeway.

Notes

1   These transcripts were very kindly made available to me
by Professor Iain Mangham.

2   I repeatedly use the category "Anglo-American", and
always do so only negatively to indicate in the loosest
possible way the group within which I should be considered
to be ethnocentric. It is not a term I like using but all
the possible alternatives seem even worse.

3   It does not actually influence my argument either way if
Geertz's Balinese are merely his projections of them (and
I do not think they are that). The Balinese here serve as
"ideal types" and have equal relevance to my argument whether
they are as Geertz describes them or whether they are purely
the construct of a respected anthropologist.

Part Three: Possession and Rapture

CHAPTER VI

POSSESSION

This chapter provides a more solid foundation for the
idea of possession than the few remarks on the subject in
the previous chapter, and so the reader may feel he is mark-
ing time, and, indeed, until Chapter IX, there will be no
significant theoretical expansion on any of the points so
far raised, though all these will be dealt with at greater
length. Possession, I have said, is not possession unless
it is controlled. However, I defer any discussion of the
control of possession until the next chapter, so as not to
complicate the simple assertion I put forward here, that the
idea of possession in interaction is a ritual idea following
naturally upon Goffman's appreciation of persons as ritual
beings. Some of the consequences of this view are examined
now, and others later on.

To begin with, I adapt David Cole's (1975) thoughts
about the "illud tempus" to show that his is a useful rhetoric
for actors in particular and persons in general, and then I go
on to note how some theatrical gurus already behave as though
there is no doubt for them that there is an illud tempus.
This leads me to suggest that the life which the "theatre of

possession" wishes to impart to audiences is the life of

interaction when interaction becomes fully interactive, and

I reflect that this life is infused as if from an illud

tempus, or ritual realm, by cues that imply the realm as a

more probable origin of the person than any other.   (It goes

without saying that the ritual realm is only "there"in as much

as it is effectively evoked by conduct.)   So what I am pro-

posing is a sort of dominant "frame" for interactions, outside

which, I contend, they scarcely merit being termed interaction.

"Camp", as I interpret this, vouches for my ritual ideas, for

I see camp conduct to be the response of actors to their pre-

dicament, as ritual specialists, of not being able to stop

becoming over-charged with meaning: actors burlesque the

human to "earth" their ritual power.   A new concept, "narrat-

ibility", emerges now.   Persons must have narratibility or

feel worthless.   This is because life is essentially ritual

life that, in its turn, is effective dramatic life which -

when its episodes are strung together into a biography - is

not dramatic unless it is in its overall pattern intelligible

or, as I have called it, "narratible", and narratible, moreover,

as the person's life and not the life of some other person or

ritual force that was more important to him than himself,

whoever he was in that case.   So people often try to make

sense for themselves (in Chapter IX I show how they make ritual

sense for others too) by pulling out of the thickly woven mat-

erial of their lives long strands of narrative they claim as

being their lives entire, and, I conclude, they do this because

they are ritual beings who, to be those, need to be possessed

by themselves.   Finally, I introduce Chapter VII, by letting

into my discussion the deferred idea that possession must be

controlled.   I give the example of tact as the control exerted

by a better self (who protects others) to be a better self (who

does not untactfully show himself as that), and also the example

of the psychopath to convince the reader that, if a person will

not control himself at all, nonetheless society will see his

uncontrol as a species of conduct highly controlled by a path-

ological condition.   So, having shown that "possession", as I

receive it, is a viable concept and that it admirably suits a

ritual theory of persons, I arrive at a position from which I

can explore, in the next chapter, some of the ways possession

is controlled so as to be itself.

In some cultures the "shaman" has inspired awe by jour-

neying on behalf of his audience to a realm David Cole (1975)

calls the "illud tempus", and the "hungan" in some Haitian

cultures returns from that realm as one of its personages for

an audience.   The illud tempus is a spirits' stalking ground

where the dead, too, commingle, and it is more powerful by far

than quotidian reality.   (Freud called it the unconscious.)
Not anybody might visit it and those who do are endowed with
a special status, neither wholly symbolic nor wholly poli-
tical but always imbued with magical power.   In Anglo-
American culture, says Cole, it is the actor who more than
anyone else combines the roles of shaman and hungan.   If
he performs well on stage he is "seized by the revelation
of fate" (Frobenius) just like a "primitive ritualist" from
the remote past of the human race.   Frobenius (quoted in
Huizinga, 1976) adds:

> The reality of the natural rhythm of genesis and
> extinction has seized hold of his consciousness,
> and this, inevitably and by reflex action, leads
> him to represent his emotion in an act.

In cultures of excessive liminality (Victor Turner's word
for social forms that are ambiguous, dissolving, and
nascent), a true actor, who would travel to and from the
illud tempus, might find himself, in the absence of either
appropriate institutions or adequate conduct fashions,
enacting the seizures of an epileptic, as did Dostoyevsky,
suggests Shusterman (quoted in Turner, 1975) so as to per-
form a true act in a social life he did not believe in.
In Anglo-American culture, the temper tantrum might be an
equivalent demonstration by a person that he is other than
the self that had a temper to lose, having become the temper,
someone seized, who, unlike those who cannot lose their tem-
pers, can be seized from beyond himself by forces that use
him to loudhail and semaphore to the world that they wish to

enter their audience. Here Sartre (1963) gives a reason for
the conduct of anger - and one that I think implies an under-
standing, like mine, that social life is constantly in need
of dramatic simplifications that will reinvest it with ritu-
ality - when he says: "Anger is merely a blind and magical
attempt to simplify situations that are too complex." And in
Anglo-American cultures, as in the primitive cultures Coles
alludes to, the idea that an excellent performance, not just
on stage but also in music and literature, has been "inspired"
needs no explanation, and inspired performances are recognised
as far more valuable than those that are uninspired, so much
so that the word uninspired is used of performances barely
registering as performances.

My purpose here is neither to establish the possibility
of an illud tempus nor to analyse it, but to indicate that
persons do behave as if it is there. We do not need to
believe that an excellent performance is a kind of seizure
by persons or forces unknown, merely to note that that is how
one is often viewed, being evaluated along a scale that runs
from non-seizure to total possession, at whose limit epilep-
tic performances, for instance, can be frightening to the
degree that possession seems total, when the convulsing
person seems to have gone away completely and to have been
replaced by bizarre conduct whose gestures cannot be inter-
preted. Thus Otto (1965) obviously feels confident that he
will be understood when he says that madness touches he who
wears the mask of Dionysus:

> The whole splendour of that which has been submerged
> draws imperatively near at the same time that it is
> lost in eternity. The wearer of the mask is seized
> by the sublimity and dignity of those who are no more.
> He is himself and yet someone else.

So the idea that persons are possessed by their everyday
roles might be closer to everyday understanding than that,
for example, persons take roles (Turner, 1962) that leave
their players essentially unchanged.

Now Artaud did not doubt that the lifeless decadence
of the theatre of his day came of its breaking away from
"gravity, from effects that are immediate and painful - in
a word, from danger," and he associated this lack of raw
experience in the theatre with the alienation of populations
in general. He thought that theatre would never again
become "a means of true illusion" until it offered audiences
"the truthful precipitates of dreams." The appeal would be
to the public's taste for crime, eroticism, and savagery
(this taste, of course, is met now by the gutter press and
by television, with its concentration on violent action even
in news reportage). Very recently Cless (1979) reports
alienation of the type Artaud reacted against as still being
normal in contemporary American theatre:

> While the rehearsal and development of the play should
> be a thorough meeting of the actor as a person with his
> character and the script to enable rich full communica-
> tion of the play with other actors and the audience,
> rehearsal is most often either the technical labor of
> assembling the parts of the play through mesmerization
> and stylization, or at an even more estranged, but
> deceptively subjective level, the effacement and denial
> of person through character presentation (i.e. a way of
> hiding from the audience is to fake subjectivity).

Cless goes on to accuse theatre in America of reifying experience, prohibiting occasions of transcendence and "spiritual communion". Whether or not this is universally the case and whether or not a wholly alienated actor nevertheless could fully "move" an audience, Cless is still an example of someone like Artaud who believes in a kind of possession that is truer to life than merely technical enactment. Indeed, possessed by this idea, the theatrical guru, Lee Strasberg, influenced a generation of leading American actors, notably Brando and Dean. Possession, then, makes sense to a number of people whose vocation is to make characters palpably sensible to audiences, and it seems that theatrical experts in social life know very well that enactments can reach a much more humanly involving level than the cognitive. These enactments "come to life" on stage when the human part of human beings somehow intensifies itself, as it was the purpose to so intensify it, to the point of its destruction, of Antonin Artaud and the regret that this is not done of Downing Cless.

In everyday life, it must be allowed, persons are said to become "enthusiastic" or to get "carried away" or to "fly into a temper" or to be "inspired". So it is that, even informally and without the framing protection of staging devices, persons are seen to bring into their interactions energies that in some degree take them over, and, when "infectiously", others too. Moreover, the person consistently failing to be taken over, to be seized, to be

possessed, is dismissed as "unprepossessing", someone rather

less than a full human being.   There does exist, then, a

way of discussing persons in interaction that uses terms

from theatrical experience which have less reference to role

playing (and to performing in the sense of making the moves

of a formal game) than to possession by spirits and to per-

forming in the sense of being an intermediary in an essen-

tially supernatural ritual.   (And it is precisely the

failure of populations to accept this in practical terms

that fires Artaud and more recently both the Pole Grotowski

and the English director Peter Brook with the missionary

zeal to create theatrical events that would make partici-

pants into genuine communicants.)   An article of experient-

ially-grounded faith for these missionaries is that persons

are larger, stronger, more mysterious, and less controllable

than they might feel they are if they do not get the chance

to witness actors living intensely in a dramatic realm,

where the possibility to be good and the possibility to be

evil coexist in close proximity to the consequences of choos-

ing to be either.   This realm is understood to be a true

stalking ground of the soul.   So Cole's illud tempus is the

place where people, in disengaging from temporal roles,

experience with unusual concentration what it is to be a person.

And wherever people are, in whatever interaction, they must,

however incompetently and unwittingly, come in and out of the

illud tempus as they conduct themselves, or else seem to be

possessed by nothing more transcendent than the idea
that social life is a series of quick calculations
unproblematically acted upon with no emotional sense of
being alive in the present.

Thus, when a woman wears diamonds round her neck,
in her ears, and as a tiara on her head, she tries for
a resplendence that must seem to come from some other
place than the jewel box on her dressing-room table and,
before that, from the shop window in the high street,
and this other place is a ritual realm such as might take
away the breath of one so socially accomplished as George
Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth: "It was a new kind of stage-
experience to her to be close to genuine grand ladies with
genuine brilliants and complexions, and they impressed her
vaguely as coming out of some unknown drama, in which their
parts perhaps got more tragic as they went on" (Eliot,
1957, p421). This same "unknown drama" or ritual realm is
perceived by the narrator of Proust's A la recherche du temps
perdu when, nearing death, he attends a society gathering
where there are women he had once admired: "There was no
limit to their efforts to fight against age; they held
the mirror of their faces towards beauty, vanishing like a
setting sun whose last rays they passionately long to return."
Here, the narrator evokes a neo-platonic stalking ground
in which the capture of and possession by the ideal form
of beauty itself is the serious sociable game that is nearly
over for the players. But the punk girl with a dog-collar

round her neck, as much as the bejewelled society belle or the nurse with her white paper hat, seeks, too, to bring into her interactions ritual power from realms that only exist because she originates them through appearances. By the same argument, every person in his or her every interaction to some degree brings himself or herself from a world he or she creates, from which he or she is the only envoy, appearing to be that, I am saying, by being possessed. Two illustrations (from the repertory company) of the ease with which realms can be created follow here. In the first instance, a perfectly English actress creates the "wild west" by her posture and costume combined, and, in the second, the realm of <u>Waiting for Godot</u> is brought effortlessly into an office by the "acting" of just one line:

> Candy Starr has put on her hooker's gear for the first time. She comes out of the ladies' dressing room and stands in the kitchen doorway with one hand on her hip. Immediately the men in the kitchen see her, they start cheering and whistling. "Now, now, boys, one at a time," she drawls, smiling and making as if to chew gum.

> Pozzo has shaved his head, since the stage directions require him to be bald. The administrator looks up from his desk and is visibly taken aback by Pozzo minus his thick brown hair. Pozzo draws himself up and puffs out his chest and places an imaginary monocle in his eye. "This office is a tip," he says, in his Pozzo voice. "Well sir, it's not me but the other fellow who's left it in this terrible state," says the administrator in an Irish accent.

Now sociability seen in this rhetoric must be a special problem for professional actors who know only too well one another's unknown realms and who, moreover, are blessed with rare vocational capacities to detect dramaturgical insincerity.

What do they do when they get together for socialibility?
I used to accompany the actors I was researching to the club
where they met after giving their evening performances, so I
was able to see at close range the practice of "camp". Camp
behaviour is a self-mocking burlesque of the professional
theatrical manner. An actor being camp presents a grotesque
of the worst possible professional self that could be attri-
buted to him by those who are watching. Thus, by "camping
it up" actors can vie with one another to be ridiculous beings,
there for amusement only. Interaction, then, is made unser-
ious by persons making themselves unserious; what could have
been a deadly stalking ground becomes a coconut-shy with each
thrower of a ball taking his turn as a coconut. Camp is also,
interestingly, a common interactional style among overt
homosexuals (Newton, 1979, provides a very detailed ethnography
of this) who like actors are very familiar with one another's
secret selves, yet prefer to enjoy sociability than turn it
into a continuous encounter group. So camp is a broad protect-
ive parody of the self, deliberately contrived to seem to be
coming from the vanity and technical virtuosity of its performer
rather than from any type of illud tempus. The fact that camp
is quite demanding of its performers of course further argues
the omni-presence of an illud tempus; it requires much effort
and skill to evoke laughter by the camp conduct that works
inasmuch as it turns the person before one's very eyes into
merely that being who is before one's very eyes. And that

camp is a behavioural _lingua franca_ of theatrical people
can only, therefore, bespeak their deep sense that persons
are sacred. The following fieldwork note of an episode
shows how "B", the director and lead player of _One Flew Over_
the Cuckoo's Nest, keeps out of a difficult ritual realm by
a timely resort to camp - when he heads off Martini's
request to look at interpretation - and then how camp can
restore good humour by earthing an interactional "atmosphere"
before it can build up too much charge. (In this and other
fieldwork illustrations I refer to actors by the names of the
characters they play.)

> They now do the scene in which Bromden has to deliver
> his "That ain't McMurphy" speech. B, at the end,
> asks, "OK, OK, do you want to run this scene?" Martini
> says, "I don't like this." B ripostes in an affected
> voice, "Don't you like it darling?" and so avoids
> finding out what is making Martini unhappy. They
> start again. Big Nurse has a very powerful line early
> on. She has to say to McMurphy, "Isn't it past your
> bedtime?" This line, given disingenuously calm
> elocution, can be a sarcastic taunt that reminds
> McMurphy of Big Nurse's institutional power. For
> some reason Big Nurse cannot get the line right. She
> keeps saying, "Isn't it time..." She tries it and
> fluffs it three times. B grits his teeth and says in
> an undertone, "Record's stuck." Eventually they take
> a break and, on their way out to the kitchen, Cheswick
> and Martini dance across the set together. B catches
> sight of this and calls out, "You two - it'll end in
> tears." Laughter all round.

Theatre will decline, says Artaud, when it presumes
that conduct can be fully accounted in other than ritual
terms:

> Psychology, which works relentlessly to reduce the
> unknown to the known, to the quotidian and the
> ordinary, is the cause of the theater's abasement
> and its fearful loss of energy.

I myself think that psychologizing is not the enemy of
ritual life so much as is the assumption that what is known
exceeds the unknown, an assumption not held in the social
sciences when these were the product of a materialist-
positivist drive that expressed a sense of enormous ritual
confidence that the known should imperialise the unknown,
now alas tending to divide and subdivide into a prolifera-
tion of internecine texts that, for fear of committing
inadvertent heresies, dare not turn their backs on the
literature to face the phenomena at the frontiers. Whether
or not there is more to social life than is thought to be
known about it is, however, not at issue here, since the
point I make is that this can be thought and is definitely
thought in the theatre world, where the language of appre-
ciation - "being moved" and so on - suggests a widespread
acceptance that a great performance is virtually quite
beyond, say, the conduct of a subject watched by a psycholo-
gist in a laboratory. In this text I only say that this
is a thinkable position, though, as I explained in Chapter
I, that I say it involves my saying it ought to be thought
(but not saying it could say that it ought not to be thought,
which I regard as a less scientific stance). The belief
that there are supernatural possibilities in human inter-
action (which may be attenuated to the belief that there
might be many as-yet unknown factors in play therein) entails
another, that a person's life should make sense as a drama or
a narrative history does (which may be attenuated to a

formulation like "be satisfactorily analysed").   When this

second belief is shaken, a person is as disoriented as when

he is desacralized.   Thus, Joan Didion (1979):

> It was a time of my life when I was frequently "named".
> I was named godmother to children.   I was named lec-
> turer and panelist, colloquist and conferee.   I was
> even named, in 1968, a Los Angeles Times "Woman of the
> Year" along with Mrs Ronald Reagan, the Olympic swimmer
> Debbie Meyer, and ten other Californian women who seemed
> to keep in touch and do good work.   I did no good works
> but I tried to keep in touch.   I was responsible.   I
> recognised my name when I saw it....This was an adequate
> enough performance as improvisations go.   The only pro-
> blem was that my entire education, everything I had ever
> been told, or had told myself, insisted that the produc-
> tion was never meant to be improvised.   I was supposed
> to have a script, and had mislaid it.   I was supposed
> to hear cues, and no longer did.   I was meant to know
> the plot, but all I knew was what I saw: flash pic-
> tures in variable sequence, images with no "meaning"
> beyond their temporary arrangement, not a movie but a
> cutting-room experience.   In what could possibly be
> the middle of my life I wanted still to believe in the
> narrative and the narrative's intelligibility.

What has happened here is that narratibility has vanished

and with it the sense of intelligibility without which

dramatic enactments are seen to lose their ritual power.

Having lost ritual power, Joan Didion feels "absurd".

Yet this "cutting-room experience" of life is the pro-

fessional fate of an actor whose "working" reality must

always be radically shifting as he goes from drama to drama.

Particularly striking, to their observer, is how actors make

use of their current dramatic worlds during their everyday

conduct, which they will richly season with borrowed lines,

adopted accents, remembered gestures, as though relishing

the fact of living in discontinuous realities.   At first

this might seem puzzling, but it is explained, I think, in terms of the actor's self as an actor. The more he is a performer, of whatever bits and pieces, the more he is an actor. So his discontinuities actually affirm his career continuity. Similarly, though she does not say it, Joan Didion's career continuity of professional writer is affirmed by her conduct of writing about her sense of personal dis-continuity. She invents a narrative to her life by narra-ting the lack of one and so testifies to the social compul-sion to make sense in those terms.

Narratibility of self creates for a person a sense that he and not some other agent is the hero of his life. Whatever this "hero" is, he it is, of all a person's selves, who, in possessing the person, most personifies him, and for whom the person feels a very deep affinity that in unalien-ated periods can approach complete identification. However, inability to narrate self, for example, by being at the mercy of unpredictable and powerful persons, who are able to command any performance they like, can make a person feel that he is the satellite of an agent more important to him in the end then he is. The hero stops being oneself and becomes someone else in the face of unnarratibility. For children this someone else is the parent; for a soldier, the general; for a madman, perhaps the psychiatrist; and for Freud, the unconscious. The narratives these people would tell would only be their own incidentally, and their ritual worth would only be a function of their hero's, and

so one strategy for restoring or increasing ritual worth
might be the self-construction of an autonomous narrative,
as Charles Dickens realised at the beginning of his auto-
biographical novel <u>David Copperfield</u> when he wrote: "Whether
I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether
that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must
show." Paradoxically, then, disorientation and confusion
and loss of ritual self (the varieties of "rapture" that
I analyse in Chapter IX) can be the prelude to new
performances or possessions that are richer than the old,
and this is what I shall argue at length in Chapter IX.

So far I have spoken of possession quite loosely, in
order to introduce the concept in general terms before
going on to refine it, and I have not paused to consider
how a person might control his possession or how possession
might be seen to be what it is, but it is the case that
possession must always be controlled, for, even in the extreme
instance of epileptic seizure, the convulsions are shaped
by the contingent facts of human physiology.

The exercise of tact is an example of an ever present
control of possession in interactions. Tactful persons,
when they save faces that are in danger of being lost, must
become possessed by their "better selves" at the same time
as they control this possession in order not to untactfully
show their tact. In some social situations, moreover, not
only is the better self required to control its possession
(by possessing its control of tact) but the whole self might
need to be in such a relation to control. Thus Genet (1967)

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observes that "in prison you cannot afford to be casual,"
and Allerton (Allerton and Parker, 1964) relates that a
prisoner's first appearance on his wing in the period call-
ed Free Association is known as "going on stage". Genet
and Allerton are writing of prison life where convicts are
the only resources for the ritual survival of one another,
and obviously in these conditions it will be necessary to
always be so socially legible that neither threats nor
promises are offered unless they are to be "honoured".
But prison life is perhaps only an intensification of
everyday life, in which, if a person should do something
his others regard as uncharacteristic or unusual, he is
likely to be faced with some such question as: "Whatever
possessed you?"

To conclude, the case of the psychopath might be
cited to show how the control of possession is not only an
inevitable condition of possession but is also positively
demanded by society which, not given it, casuistically
confers it. Thus, when a person's control of possession
is persistently weak and seen to be so, he is said to be
a "moral imbecile" or a "psychopath" (Eysenck, 1971, p54).
In this extreme example of a person who, as it is said,
(regardless of the damage this causes himself as well as
others) finds it impossible to substitute deferred for
immediate satisfactions the clinical psychologist such as
Eysenck encounters the phenomenon of uncontrolled conduct
in its rawest state. Accordingly, the psychopath is

clinically defined as one who has "emotional poverty", who

is "undependable" and "irresponsible", who, unable to plan

ahead, yet "over-reacts" to stimuli, and who, furthermore, is

not perturbed in the least by his "social maladjustment".

This person, the psychopath, because he cannot be proven to

be brain-diseased or neurotic or psychotic or defective in

intelligence, and, despite that he can "verbalise all the

social and moral rules", while not being able to "obey them

in the way that others do" is nonetheless very definitely not

deemed a case of uncontrolled possession. He is, by nominalist

magic, for Eysenck and his colleagues at any rate, _ipso facto_

a psychopath, which word explains everything: the less control

he has the more will he be this clinically-defined possession,

"psychopath". Thus, a person approaching the societal limit

of uncontrolled conduct can be seen as an example of a very

precise type who the more confirms himself as that the more he

is in reality no type whatsoever. In Anglo-American society,

therefore, even completely uncontrolled possession, by being

regarded as "psychopathic" can be and is recovered to the rubric

of "control", and this fact must argue a general reluctance to

see conduct as dispossessed by virtue of being uncontrolled.

The message is: you will be a person, even if we have to write

textbooks demonstrating the internal coherence of miscellany.

Now that I have established possession and its control

as terms in my discourse, I can move on, in the next chapter,

to tighter, more controlled definition of possession, precisely

by explaining some of the means by which it is controlled.

It should be remembered that I am using the concept of possession not only because it is current in everyday language and in the theatre but also because it offers the analyist of interaction a series of "ritual" connotations (around persons' performances in everyday life) that formulae such as "role-playing" singularly lack.   However, I am not defining possession in so many words because I think that would prematurely pre-empt any explorations of its possible uses.   Here I take as my counsellor Lev Vygotsky (1962): "The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realisation in speech."   And Popper (1973) too would endorse my procedure: "The precision of a language depends. . . upon the fact that it takes care not to burden its terms with the task of being precise."

CHAPTER VII

CONTROLLED POSSESSION

In this chapter I show how possession becomes itself
through some of the varieties of its control. I begin by
restating the case that all conduct is performance, then
I consider   natural conduct as being the performance
"that dare not speak its name." This leads me to briefly
note that the morality of performance resides less in the
"contents" of a performance than in its competence, natural
conduct being conduct that must not betray its competent
performance. (The contents of performance, I speculate, may
be nothing other than workings-out of competence problems.)
Two forms of control have now been discussed, the control of
having to look as though control is not required and the
control brought to bear by a moral demand that in performance
control be as much as a person can exercise. Now I look at
how performances are controlled from outside by different
sorts of framing devices, and then the temporal frame of
"rehearsal" is considered on its own. From here it is an
obvious step to the subject of professional actors and how
they actually work. I conclude that actors are societally
controlled because their possessions are too good. After
this, I look at David Cole's concept of "rounding",
applying it to those possessions whose control is greatest.

I finish the chapter by arguing that live control - liter-
ally "live" in the entertainment world and figuratively
"original" in everyday life - is a sign that possession is
being actively controlled and therefore is a live possession
and as such truly human.

Conduct as Performance

Although I have established that conduct may be read-
ily viewed as possession, I have yet to fully substantiate
my claim that all behaviour is performance, not only from
the point of view of a person's audience but also from his
point of view, when, I shall suggest, he unknowingly or, in
some cases, very knowingly is a person for other people.
It is worth labouring this point, because, once it is
granted, it is that much harder to view persons as being
somehow behind and somehow bigger and stronger than their
appearances. Such a view is part of the Anglo-American

heritage and thus not easy to forget, but it can easily

distract the reader from the image of a person that I

am promulgating, as being a possession, not to be

understood as having been "caused" from within, or even

by an interaction between outside and inside. The

possession as it goes along creates itself anew, draw-

ing into itself its own consciousness that is not borrow-

ed from an already existing consciousness but is created

by itself over against the physiology it possesses. This

is the meaning of possession, conjured out of conduct in

every kind of interaction, even, as I shall show, with

itself (Chapter IX). So such a being is much more than a

congeries of Goffman's "dramatic effects" (his definition

of selves in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life) for

Goffman's being creates no ritual realm, because Goffman

does not allow that it can accrue ritual power by the

exercise of dramatic competence. Yet a person is still no

more than his performances, as Goffman declares - so far

as he is social - even when nearly all of these may rely

on indulgent audiences who are content to give him the

benefit of the doubt at all times, simply assuming he is

"really" the person he may be only ever sporadically hint-

ing at in his conduct.

Charles Darwin (1904) thought that "the far greater number of the movements of expression, and all the most important ones, are ... innate or inherited ... and ... cannot be said to depend on the will of the individual" (p. 375). People, he said, are born with their codes, and these have evolved in the species from three vocabularies: the habitual expressions of gratification, these gratification expressions reversed, and the reactions like blushing that seem to be involuntary. The overall code is effortlessly understood, while being very hard to describe (this, as Hymes (1975), following Labov, has pointed out, is a common problem of many human behaviours; it is easier to repeat conduct than interpret it, and easier to interpret than to report it). Darwin is often understood as saying that, since persons inherit a lexicon of facial and gestural expression, they are not free to improvise new variations on atavistic themes. But his own argument, that the code has evolved, implies that it is still evolving, and is therefore still changing. Darwin's interest, I think, was with the repertoire of signals rather than the use to which they may be put socially, and he must be right in thinking that no person could reinvent the whole code any more than he could devise a new verbal language that had no old elements. As such, however, he is really more concerned with the parameters for conduct, and the histories of these, than with conduct styles and their meanings for persons. So Darwin, who, more than any other writer on expressive

behaviour, is considered a proponent of the "instrinsic" view (Davis 1975), that outer forms are given by inner causes, is not logically presenting a position that would exclude the possibility that conduct can be original and at the same time meaningful.

Recently Hymes (1975) has made distinctions - between behaviour, conduct, and performance - which depend on how much deliberated expression goes into one or other. Behaviour, such as lying down because one wants to go to sleep, is "behaviour" plain and simple. Conduct is the body "under the aegis of social norms", and the behaviour or conduct of one who "assumes responsibility for presentation" is performance. This taxonomy of conduct has the double attraction of releasing little involuntary behaviours like coughing or scratching from the duty of being significant expression for others, and then of re-investing conscious action with a consciousness that is in danger of being forgotten when performance is called behaviour. But it might be expected that in most social interactions all three modes will coexist with just one emphasized at any given moment, and the nearer one gets to seeing behaviour as performed the more will it be necessary to consider that the expressive idiom is controllable. So what Hymes does is grade conduct from relatively uncontrolled to highly controlled, or, in my terms, from unpossessed to totally possessed.

It is interesting to note here what the costs might be

for being uncontrolled when one should be controlled or

possessed. Ernest Becker (1962) indicts depressives, for

instance, for not "putting forth a convincing self" that

would oblige others to show deference, since "power over

others consists in presenting an infallible self and in

commanding dextrous performance of deference." Depressives,

then, and other mentally ill persons, for whatever reason,

may abandon the control of their social conduct; and so

one would anticipate that this could bring in its train

multiple interactional sanctions that, to be coped with,

would require an increased level of the control whose lack

invited the sanctions in the first place. It is not hard

to see, then, how persons in this predicament might seek to

regain control in interaction by refusing to play a reciprocal

self to those of others. So loss of control may have far-

reaching effects, and similarly its maintenance may be all

that allows a person to remain the person he could be.

Yukio Mishima (1979) states this latter position from the

completely different perspective of the samurai warrior's

ethical code, when he writes of the seventeenth century

samurai, Jocho Yamamoto:

> Belief is resolution. Resolution must be tested daily
> over many years. Apparently, Jocho makes a distinc-
> tion between major beliefs and minor beliefs. In
> other words, one must nurture major beliefs in one's
> daily life so that at the moment of decision to act
> they may be carried out effortlessly, spontaneously.
> Minor beliefs are the philosophy that governs the
> trivia of day-to-day existence. Prosper Merime ....

Once remarked that "in fiction there must be a theoretical basis to the most minute details. Even a single glove must have its theory." This is true not only of novelists. While we live and enjoy life, we must always approach even the smallest matters theoretically, exercising our judgement and making decisions. Otherwise, the framework of our life collapses, and sometimes even our greatest beliefs are violated.

This is a call for the "great expressive responsibility" of Goffman's Shetland islanders, one which is re-echoed in yet another realm by Stanislavsky with his idea of the "subtext" that works as a clear but hidden theory informing every element of stage conduct.

I have now shown how conduct is able to be far more voluntary than some of Darwin's readers have led themselves to suppose, and also how some passages of conduct can be regarded as performance, and I have found another way of approaching my central proposition that a person becomes himself in his clearest definition only when his performance is highly deliberate. Deliberation, or control, is the other side of the coin of an (inconceivable) amuk possession. First of all, a person must be taken over by himself, but at the same time he will only carry himself across to others if his possession is in his full control, and what does the controlling is the possession, who is, therefore, the person.

Now the microanalysts Birdwhistell and Scheflen, who have spent the major part of long and distinguished scientific careers analysing filmed interactions, go much further than Hymes. Neither have any doubt that behaviour at all times is not wholly interpretable in terms of its reciprocation with other behaviours in whatever social system it is observed in.

This behaviour includes coughing, scratching, and lying down to sleep. The extreme alertness and rapidity of synchronic integration - as displayed in Birdwhistell's and Scheflen's films - is ample evidence to support an assertion that all behaviour is performance. There is simply no doubt that the communication system of an interaction is of great cybernetic subtlety. But most of the conduct is nearly always out of its interactants' awareness: the control is unknowing control. Control by enacted subtext or by theory, then, must be categorized as conscious control, whose possibility is of course vouch-safed by the existence of huge control to build on. Pure uncontrol, in this light, is controlled behaviour informed by "incoherent" theory and the microanalysts doubt its possibility. Thus Scheflen's (1973) film of a schizophrenic girl and McDermott's (1977) film of "disorderly" school children do not show an absence of organised self presen-tation but rather the presence of disorganisation in terms of the rules of the given interactional system. The so-called disorganised conduct is in fact very finely dovetailed into reciprocal interactional conduct, so my notion of the control of possession should be amended to mean "consistent" and "appropriate" control of possession which is, of course, fashionable control.

Notwithstanding findings such as I have cited, many people strongly resist the idea that the behaviour which

would be most true to the behaving person is the most per-
formed, for Anglo-American culture generally condemns per-
formers on the grounds that they disguise their real selves,
and the idea that honesty and tact depend heavily on the
skill to perform is likewise anathema in some quarters.
This nexus of attitudes, hostile to performers, I associate
with the doctrine of natural expression that Goffman so
effectively exposes in Gender Advertisements. The self,
according to this doctrine, cannot help but express itself
how it must, according to its nature, and if there is any-
thing that can be done about it then this should not be done,
for the purpose of expression is to convey a "real" self that
would be violated in performative "translation". This ultra-
psychological or biological view of persons, of course,
is diametrically opposed to the radically sociological view
set forth here, that if there is a real self it is conjured
into existence by the competence of its performance.

My own view is that those who would be more controlled
in their conduct will tend to weigh their actions with
significations that go beyond them, which means that the
performer takes his social life more seriously than the
more serious psychological person who has no time for theat-
ricality. The performer, therefore, must be a more comp-
letely socialised person than he who refuses consciousness
of his performances, and the nature of this socialization
is always, as it was in the cases of Yamamoto and Mishima,that
it strives to design life to be worthy of its designer,

an endless cycle of creation by self to create self that, in the Samurai's case, and in Mishima's too, comes to perfection in ritual death.

Possession for Yamamoto meant possession by the samurai spirit, and this was not only easily prevented by any lapse of conduct but was only possible if the performance was severely correct, whatever the inner emotional state. For the English gentleman, too, there is an analogous possession, by the spirit of the "gentleman", whose playing of honourable games is more important than his other conduct, and for whom the softening of his stiff upper lip would be a moral detumescence. In both these cases and in all other cases where the stress is on expressive responsibility, the kind of the possession is totally dependent on the manner of this possession. But there are persons who stubbornly refuse to give their performances of themselves a central place in their own worlds. Mystics and other inner-oriented individuals - at least the sincere ones - would be of this type. Of them it might be said that they are looking for sources of possession by some other means than by becoming possessed, from which it inevitably follows that, in bumbling, abstracted fashion (dependent for its continuity on the tact of those who must experience it) they seem to be possessed by a role such as the "searcher", who in this world is not of it. An extremely sociological being like Yukio Mishima, on the other hand, is of this world entirely, especially when he takes leave of it.

Natural Conduct

Andre Gide (1967) describes a friend:

> He expresses himself so well that one is suspicious;
> his voice takes on just the inflection he wants; his
> gestures are never involuntary; it took me some time,
> I confess, to admit that it could all be genuine.

Here Gide registers a common suspicion of a naturalness that

looks too performed, but I think this suspicion actually

lends force to my proposition that effective dramatization

in interaction is the same as ritualization by possession.

This is because possession, to look like what it is, must

give itself away as a state whose control reauires constant

vigilance, for the possession that seems to be in full

possession of itself is rather too easily only seen as poss-

ession by a self who would act self-possession. (When one

can see the vigilance like an aura, around the possession,

one gets a sense of the vertiainous drop that is possible

into uncontrolled behaviour. Janis Joplin and Maria Callas

never failed to electrify audiences perhaps just because

they walked their respective high wires with ever such a

slight suggestion of imbalance.) So being natural - or

being socially literate to a hiah degree - is, as Evreinoff

(n.d.) recognized, "a science necessitating long years of

trainino, experience, and education ..." Elizabeth Burns

(1972) is also quite clear that naturalness is not natural:

"Natural behaviour in any period is judged not by any

criterion of spontaneity but by its conformity to norms

that have been learned" (p.162). So this natural conduct

is actually performed in accordance with complex rules, and the very difficulty of this performance is acknowledged by the belief that if the conduct is flawless it must excite suspicion.

Naturalness, however, is not identical to other forms of controlled possession. It is that kind of self possession in which the self, that in possessing is possessed, is nonetheless thoroughly in thrall to the rules of its social context. This, then, is the one creative form of conduct in interaction that seeks to create nothing new: the natural person in being possessed by his ideal of naturalness is only natural to the degree that he competently controls his conduct to conform to the received rules for naturalness. Yet, even for the extraordinarily socialized and constructed person who is natural, it is the precision of control in the possession that permits that precision of his definition. It is very difficult to be natural, then, and that this is so must be why the term is singular praise for an individual's conduct, which is not made any easier to perform by the cultural myth that natural means unforced, free and easy, and spontaneous. (The tense would-be performer of naturalness - because of this myth - must find also that his very tension is dissuasive of his ability to be natural.)

As I remarked in Chapter V, Goffman has repeatedly said that what is essentially human may only be the competence to look human. For the purposes of his analyses he has regarded

such competence, or acting ability, as an evenly distribut-
ed capacity throughout interactions. But, of course,
abilities vary, and, in Anglo-American culture, those who
become possessed in an especially controlled and creative
way stand out from the crowd. This is true in the acting
profession, where the laurels go to the virtuosi, as well
as in everyday life, where the personable person is valued
more highly the person who "does not know how to behave."
But it is possible to learn how to behave, and, though
there is a reluctance to concede that worthy humanness can
be inculcated into persons by training alone, institutions
like boys' preparatory and public schools, girls' finishing
schools, Borstals, and mental hospitals, for instance, are
all built on an accepted premiss that behaviour can be trained
to look bred or well-bred. However, the very unwillingness
to admit that persons can be coached to look human may issue
from an excessive deference to ritual worth, with the
deference being given here specifically to what is taken to
be the part of humanness that fees cannot buy. In practice
too, ritual worth is often rescued for the trainees by the
adoption of the notion that only suitable persons will
benefit from training. Thus U.S. Marine neophytes have the
Marine ideology drilled into them by ritual insults (Flynn,
1977) but only because "really" they were Marines since their
conception. Any training then, is likely to be premissed
on the assumption that persons can be remade, the faces of
the remade persons being saved by a complementary assumption

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that all along they were, "underneath", what they end up
as. In this way Anglo-American culture seals naturalness
from charges of unnaturalness even as it goes to work at
manufacturing natural soldiers, natural nurses, or, even
more radically, born gentlemen.

So if naturalness is a performance of not-performing,
which as Elizabeth Burns says would be "devalued" (Burns 1972)
were its "composition" detected, as it always is by the
microanalysts, what do interactants feel about it? When the
tone of an interaction is "natural", the interactants them-
selves may feel, I think, that what they are not doing is
performing. So in a "natural interaction" persons are a
part of social life, not apart from it. They will be involved
with one another so harmoniously that they may not know them-
selves to be physically separated. They may "lose them-
selves" so completely in these interactions as afterwards to
be able to say that they forgot themselves. But in unnat-
ural interactions they will feel awkward, out of place,
uncomfortable, strained, bored, put upon, and always acutely
aware of their own presence, which awareness is precisely
what can disable a natural interaction, coming as it does
from elements in the interaction which would not have been
perceived if it had succeeded in becoming natural. In
unnatural interactions, then, people know perfectly well
that their attempted naturalness is totally performed. Burns
(1972) describes the elements that bring on unnaturalness as
those which are "entirely unprecedented and fraught with

consequentiality." In this connection she advances a most

persuasive reason for the fashioning of conduct that I dis-

cussed in Chapter V: conduct has to become patterned in

order to relieve interactants of the task of continuously

interpretina the "unprecedented" into the "acceotable". So

it might be concluded that, when patterns coincide or are

mutually understood, naturalness is a possibility, but that,

if they jar against one another, unnaturalness is almost

inevitable. Thus from another direction yet there emerges

once again the notion that naturalness has nothing to do

with the nature of specific units of behaviour as such, and

everything to do with its interpretation as natural.

Now follow three examples of natural conduct, taken from the

repertory company. The first two show how "perfectly

natural" behaviour of the actors is both verv complex and

specific to their culture. The last example shows how

easily an outsider can misunderstand what is natural to

other people:

> The first time the DSM produces the cleanina mat-
> erials for "Work Time", Martini and Billy begin
> to act the fool with the Jay Cloths. Martini
> holds his cloth over his middle and mimes the
> pelvic grinding of a striooer. With a voiceless
> cry he flicks the cloth away and up, and this sets
> Billy off waving two cloths above his head like a
> cheerleader at an American football match. Big
> Nurse laughs at these antics. Now that he has
> her attention, Martini advances on Bia Nurse with
> his cloth draped over his upraised right hand.
> Like a conjuror he casts a spell over the cloth
> before smatching it off his hand which holds a
> cigarette packet. Martini, Billy, and Bia Nurse
> seem very relaxed together. All this took place
> in the five or six seconds that elapsed while B
> checked the loose head of a broom.

In the studio all the cast are spaced out in a
circle and B is giving them some elaborate timing
schedules. Harding pulls a cigarette out of his
pack and then sees that Big Nurse wants one too.
He puts his cigarette in his mouth and pulls out
a second one which he throws to Big Nurse who
catches it without withdrawing her attention from
B. Candy notices and makes a gesture with her
hand to her mouth. Harding throws her a cigarette
right across the room. Others too now look
briefly to Harding, who ends up feeding the whole
company cigarettes. At no point, however, is B
interrupted in his instruction-giving.

Two social workers arrive in the office with three
youths whom they are hoping to place with the
company for a number of hours of "Community Service",
It is striking how automatically the actors
identify with the youths and take up a critical
attitude to the social workers. In response to
being asked what jobs there are for the youths to
carry out, the administrator says, "Well, to begin
with, there's selling the programmes...." The
female social worker jumps at this. "Ian, you'd
like to sell programmes, wouldn't you?" she asks
one of the youths. He looks noncommital but the
social worker turns from him back to the administra-
tor as though a knotty problem had been elegantly
solved. After the social workers have gone, much
disgust is expressed about the way the youths had
been treated. The business of telling someone to do
something with only the merest pretence at involving
them in a democratic decision is singled out for
loud censure. What seemed to have been most annoy-
ing was the social worker's assumption that she
was in harmony with the actors.

No one is more of a specialist in the job of seeming

for other people to be a natural person than an actor. So

I close this section with a note from my observations of

actresses in their after-hours club. The first thing the

outsider notices is the insistent "unnaturalness" of their

behaviour. Why is this? I think that, as in the case of

camp conduct, this apparent unnaturalness protects these

actresses from their trained perceptiveness. Actresses'

voices are often coated with a sugary, husky, theatricality
in which vowels are drawn out and all the tones are given
a mock melodiousness that would ape elocution enunciation
were it not done with a winning smile. The word "Darling"
is a universal term of address that might be intimately
whispered or shrieked the length of a crowded, drunken
room, and it is used as much as is the word "Sir" in milit-
ary organizations. These and all sorts of other behaviours
which together exaggerate and mock with a flagrant falsity
of manner can be seen as deliberate self-parodies not
unlike "camp", offered up for the fun of sociability to
those who know very well from which realm comes the actress
and how perfect (or not so perfect) can be her control of
possession. Here is a social use of an almost "naturalized"
type of unnaturalness, resorted to, as it were, to avoid the
embarrassment of natural conduct between professionals who
know conduct cannot be natural.

Morality of Performance

Natural behaviour is always good behaviour and all
performances necessarily create moral situations. "What is
expected is the intelligible representation of moral situations
which are usually private," says Barthes (1973) but only of
theatre and wrestling matches, whereas I consider this to
be also true of many everyday interactions. (Nevertheless,
it is on the stage that performances may most easily be
experimented with, because there, having been stripped of
what Goffman calls the "dull footage", they have no practical

consequences and are also easy to aestheticize, which is, perhaps, one reason why they are there.) A good performance, says Barthes, involves an "emptying out of interiority to the benefit of exterior signs," which implies the responsibility to an audience that Bauman (1975) notes: "Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communication competence" (p 293). The performer, then, not only creates a realm in which good and bad can be seen clearly but he is also good or bad as a performer. These two things are connected but for the moment I wish to concentrate on good or bad performing.

Abrahams (1974) constructs a typology of ghetto performances in everyday life, and it includes styles such as "talking smart" (serious conflict talk), "putting down" (aggressive talk), "putting on" (manipulative talk), "playing", "sounding", and "talking shit" (non-serious contest talk). Those performers who excel in these modes, who "walk their walk" and "talk their talk", enjoy the highest social status or "rep". Here the "good" of performance is lodged less in its content (so far as that can be separated) than in its competence. "Talking shit" and talking that talk" build up a street image, and in the street "one must dramatize constantly." The reward of high rep is to have many friends, upon whom one can call for goods and services. In the British West Indies, too, Abrahams (1970) observed that all public activities were regarded as performances and

"evaluated as performances of varying appropriatenes and effectiveness." Again, the highly competent performer is the moral exemplar of his community. Similarly, it could be argued, accomplished playwrights and novelists in Anglo-American middle-class culture are accorded the respect due to morally worthy persons because they have the capacity to seriously entertain, the entertainment being the more serious the more it opens up questions of right and wrong, approaching at the far end of a seriousness spectrum the genre of tragedy, in which men and gods (or godlike forces such as desitny) come into direct interaction. Respect is earned, then, by performance.

In an interview, Lynn Fontanne (Funke and Booth, 1961) explicitly says that there is no qualitative difference between performance in everyday life and performance on stage: "Sociability is composed of the very essence of what you give to the theatre, what you give to a part. For instance, this interview is going to take it out of me for tonight." Bearing this in mind, one can now see that the strong rule among actors that it is wrong not to give your all to an audience might also be a rule of everyday life, where, when another person withholds his self in interaction, this can be taken as a snub, an offence, a slighting of ritual worth. It is good, then, to perform well (and performance raises quest-ions of what is good and bad). So the morality of inter-action holds that persons should give themselves to one another to the best of their abilities. Poor performers mean poor

people.   From my fieldnotes I extract the following para-

graph which makes this point:

> Giving his notes about the previous night's performance,
> B admonishes Billy for having insufficient strength, and
> Billy just nods. Then B says that Nurse Flynn was read-
> ing the report on McMurphy as if to morons, and that
> this was embarrassingly bad. Finally he accuses him-
> self of leaving Harding "drowning in the shallows"
> because he mixed up some lines and gave Harding ambig-
> uous cues. At no point during these criticisms, or
> during any others that are given in all three productions,
> is there every any suggestion that poor or inadequate
> performances must not be improved so far as is humanly
> possible.

Yet, even if they are not representing conduct that goes

against prevailing moral ideologies, do good performances

inevitably mean good people?   Genuine performance, I think I

have established, is often seen as being far more than the

behavioural manifestations of a "mechanical marvel".   But

there are persons who, apart from life, never become a part

of it.   Robert Service (1980) wrote: "The world has been a

stage for me, and I have played the parts my imagination con-

ceived.   Rarely have I confronted reality: it seems as if I

have never lived at all, just dreamed and played at living."

And Marianne Faithful (in an interview with Mick Brown,

Penthouse, Vol 14 No 12) tells an interviewer: "I would have

loved to have been a great actress but I realise that I act

all the time anyway.   I even act with people I know very well."

The difficulty for these two people is that they cannot get

themselves possessed by people with whom they can identify.

(I say much more on this subject in Chapter IX.)   From this

it follows that the actor who never loses consciousness of

himself acting will never, if this consciousness shows, seem
to be alive, and, since he will always appear to be role-
playing, he will be perceived as failing to be his "genuine"
self, and therefore amoral, and if the consciousness does
not show he will be amoral to himself alone, to whom, of
course, the consciousness does show. So the morality of
performance is that it should not only be the best that a
person can put on but that it also should seem to be "owned
by" or to be the "personal possession" of the performing
person. Moral realms are opened up in performance, and I
suggest now that, since morality is about "how to behave"
these realms are constituted by the dramatic renderings of
competence problems, or the performance morality at a meta
level.

The Framing of Performance

I have shown that conduct is performance and that the
possessions by which people perform themselves - opening
up thereby ritual realms which in turn have interest inasmuch
as they deal with questions of performance - are controlled
into being what they are, in the case of natural conduct, by
having to appear as needing no undue control, and, in the
general case of deliberate performance, by the moral rule
that a performer ideally should give his all. Now I shall
change the perspective, to note and comment on some of the
"frames" that are put upon possession.

The framing devices of performances in theatres are easy

to list: raised staging, unobstructed visibility, favour-
able lighting, curtain or black-out "brackets" (Goffman 1975),
acting conduct of an aestheticized kind, separation from
auditorium. These are found everywhere in social life. The
pulpit, the lecturer's podium, the judge's bench, and so on,
all borrow from the staging norms of the theatre so as to set
off and exalt the leading performer even before he opens his
mouth. But framing devices may also be found in less staged
social situations, and it could be said that their design is a
limit on the performative conduct. Bauman and Sherzer (1974)
insist, in this vein, that everyday performances are highly
dependent on their situations and Abrahams (1972) says that
"the energies of the performer must be matched in great part
by the responsive energies of the audience." In other words,
the audience is a further framing device; an attentive aud-
ience obviously would encourage performances that would be
discouraged by groans and yawns (in Chapter VIII, I say more
on this topic). Bauman (1975) actually adopts Goffman's
concept of frame and his review of folklore literature turns
up a wide variety of metacommunicative keyings that serve
to separate performances from non-performances. These include
special codes, special openings and closings, special lang-
uage, special style devices, special prosodic patterns, and
special vocalizations. Carey (1976) has further found that
a very large number of modulations take place in their para-
linguistic channels when Presidential candidates make tele-
vision broadcasts, and these changes consistently occur when

candidates go from "Off-Mike/Off-Camera" to "On-Mike/On-Camera" and vice versa.   It seems safe to say, then, that frames for performance are multiply-cued in interactions, and that a performance cannot happen unless it is framed, for without a frame it will be regarded as uncontrolled behaviour, though he who performs may actually frame himself, by voice alteration and so on, as he goes along.   The more formal the performance the stronger the taboo against breaking into it from outside the frame.   In a theatre, for example, a person persisting in talking across the show will be asked to leave and, if that fails, will be bodily removed. But right down at the level of ordinary conversation, he who interrupts without "good" reason is considered rude, and poor performers, unless their ritual worth is bolstered by externally applied statuses, need not expect to be heard out every time they begin a peroration.   (Poor stage actors, too, perforce watch another show besides their own, of the audience filtering away through the exits as the play goes on.)   Rules against interruption and non-attention are very well explained by Erving Goffman, yet it might add to an understanding of the sense a person has of more than interactionally utilitarian forces upholding such rules to see that performance, even of the lowly type called for in "making conversation", is not only communication of lexical items, voice qualities, gestures, expressions, posture, costume, physical character, and so on, but, more than that, the creation of a world in which the audience might lose itself as it never could in interaction

viewed only as a communication system. So it may be that

attention in interaction honours framed worlds rather than

persons, though it will have to be to their envoys that

appreciation is shown. The following two examples from the

theatre, I think, show how it might be the "realm" and not

the person that is deferred to:

> While rehearsals were in progress, visitors such as
> poster designers and lighting technicians would lower
> their voices or stop talking altogether when they
> entered the auditorium, even though they never looked
> directly at the stage.

> If people wished to speak to the director when he was
> in the stage area, they would wait at the edge of the
> area for him to walk to them, whereas, away from the
> stage, it would nearly always be the other way round,
> the "supplicant" approaching the director.

The framing of performance is one of the most obvious

features operating to control possession. That it is found

at every level of conduct argues that orderly performances

are protected from disorderly interruptions, but only in such

a way that what is framed does not itself look like supra-

interruption, on the order of, say, sudden epileptic seizure,

whose very unframed suddenness might be a part of what

affrights its audience. The shock of unframed performance

is reported by Sudnow (1967) who, during a period of

hospital research, saw 200 deaths, only one of which was not

a "hospital death". This exception was a shooting in the

Casualty Department. Sudnow says that, after the shooting,

nurses, well used to unconscious, dying, and dead persons,

stood stunned and apparently helpless around the shot

victim, and this could only be because the victim was

improperly framed and therefore uncontrolled.

Not all frames are immediately apparent around the performance. The frame of rehearsal is one that is less obviously a frame than, for example, a raised stage, but it does serve as a buffer between the performers in a relatively uncontrolled state and the same performers after being controlled by their rehearsal.

Rehearsal for Possession

I shall now discuss some of the characteristics of theatrical rehearsal, which is the period between no-possession and full-enough possession, into which unknown persons must venture with special care, since here they are in the presence of selves in disarray, which must be looked at without too much judgement, or too little apprec-iation, or too much interest, and with the right amount of respect, as it is outside rehearsals but at a lesser pitch.

Many actors are unhappy being watched while rehearsing and those powerful enough within the profession usually refuse outsiders permission to sit on rehearsals. Zalk (1972) calls rehearsal an "intensely private phenomenon," and perhaps this is because the process by which an actor makes contact with a character who is not there depends upon such delicate adjustments to normal interactional attention structures that these latter risk being upset completely by strange pairs of eyes. The complicated work of feeling

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a way into a part involves the actor in exposing his actor's
mind as he experiments with gestures and inflexions, so it
is not surprising that he hesitates to welcome witnesses to
this exposure, the very one his whole professional life is
about not showing to audiences.   Preparation, then, apart
from the hard physical labour required, is a testing time for
an actor's self.   Furthermore, if Evreinoff is right in
asserting that "the main thing for us is not to be ourselves.
This is the theatrical imperative of our souls", it can be
appreciated how worrying the period of preparation can be for
an actor who, for long working hours, is hovering between
several selves, not really able to be any one of them.   Prep-
aration in the theatre is not taken lightly.   The constant
call for longer rehearsals and more thorough training shows
that possession is not thought, by those that know it profess-
ionally, to happen at a throw of a switch.   The control of
possession,then, begins long before it can occur, and perhaps
this is why most persons only ever learn to be one self,
because they lack the time and application to multiply their
selves.

Rehearsals in the theatre nearly always follow the same
schedule.   After an initial directorial introduction to the
playworld, the blocking is gradually gone through, before
the speech is internalised by the actors.   Then scenes are
repeated and repeated until acceptable performance standards
are reached.   Finally, run-throughs of separate acts and then

of the whole play smooth out discontinuities, so that, in

miniature, the rehearsal period resembles a socialization

process, but into a playworld, within which the actors

must come to feel at ease before they can perform. Even

through a "run", just as in the course of a professional

career, the feeling of coming to be "at ease" may go on

increasing, and this feeling actually assists in the

elaboration of conduct that in its turn assists the poss-

ession the coming into which brought on the feeling of

ease in the first place. Thus:

Rutley's fellow catatonic, who told me after the first
night that he "did not know what he was doing half the
time," has now taken to writing in the ward book during
those periods when he is stood by the Nurses' Station.
He writes abusive comments about Big Nurse, totally in
character, and tells me, after one week of this, that
he now finds it impossible not to write in the book.

During the second week of the run, Bromden starts act-
ing in just his bare feet. B asks him how he feels about
this. Bromden replies that he does not understand how
he ever felt right wearing shoes and socks "in the ward."

McMurphy has added a new refinement to the exercises
sequence at the beginning of the first Group Therapy
session. He looks around, open-mouthed, at his fellow
patients, incredulous at their pathetic movements, and
he slowly mimics them as if he cannot believe in what
they are doing. Then he finds himself facing the orderly
Warren, at whom he now directs a big insincere smile.
Warren frowns, so McMurphy begins to do a sort of twist
dance step with his face slackened off into an expressive
parody of "being sent". I ask B about this later on,
and he says he just found himself doing it one night.

From the kind of high-speed socialization a rehearsal

is, I think two themes common to all socialization processes

can now be abstracted: that new roles are difficult to learn,

and that, nonetheless, new roles can be learnt. The control

of possession, then, is usually guaranteed for a given person

by lengthy procedures of increasing familiarisation with a

new self. It is inevitable, in a society where the division of

labour is very fine, that all kinds of training periods will

be allotted to neophytes everywhere. In this way, the dram-

atic abilities of persons are implicitly recognized, and

those persons who make their various grades are allowed to

feel that they are different people on graduation.

Looking the part and being the sort of person who ought

to play the part can be convergent demands on a person, so

that, as I showed in Chaper 1V, a nurse who disobeys any of

the minute presriptions that govern both her dress and her

demeanour will not be allowed on a ward, and one, who, as it

is said, "naturally" obeys the rules of conduct, gives all the

evidence that ever can be obtained that through and through

she is a nurse, until at the maximum of "naturalness" she

will be referred to (as I have already noted of such persons)

as a "born nurse".

Thus formal possession of self in both small and

large society is treated as hard to control, but as con-

trollable, and the process of this control is rehearsal.

Following on from these ideas about the rehearsal

frame, now come some rather more different observations

about the working life of professional actors. These lead

to a general suggestion about controlled stage performances

and everyday life performances, that both should control
any signs of their being controlled.

The Everyday Life of Actors

It might be thought that actors, who must show to
audiences persons who can be effortlessly interpreted,
would study people who are not actors. This is recommended
in a few drama schools but the norm of the group I researched
was that such study is voyeuristic. In fact, the director
of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, which is set in a lunatic
asylum, explained to me that the cast would not be visiting a
mental hospital because the patients "have enough on as it is".

On the basis of my limited data, I can say that a signif-
icant number of actors (at least) learn most from fashionable
and successful actors, in particular the ones with whom they
have a chance to work. As I said in Chapter V, a natural
selection is going on here. Actors who do well with the
public are emulated. So the public sees not so much studies
from life as copies of vogue styles, and this of course is
true of any artistic field in which the dominant fashion, just
because it is a fashion, is the only fashion, until replaced
because it has begun to look like only a fashion.

Modelling themselves on successes, to whom do actors
turn for evaluation of their efforts? Directors much less
than instructors in drama schools offer skilled criticism,
and this is taken very seriously; the remarks influential

directors have made about an actor are quoted in almost
reverential tones. Criticism through reviews, though, is
perfunctory, dealing out shorthand praise or damnation,
and laudatory mentions make only temporary impact. So
actors are without the kind of intelligent and loving
mirror that would guide them to better acting, for the
applause of audiences is the crudest and least particular
response by which to measure dramatic effectiveness. In
this respect, actors share the fate of other members of
the wider culture, that tact allows them their faults.

So it is necessary for the actor who would improve
(and he will not survive in the profession unless he does)
to become ever more discerning of himself. This sets him
apart from non-actors, as does the further requirement,
should he wish to be a serious performer, that he explore
his emotions and sensations as near their limit as he dare,
sometimes a requirement incompatible with one no less
stringent that he take the utmost care of his artistic
instrument, his body.

In general, stage actors work in comfortless rooms for
long concentrated hours in the company of other actors. They
lead careers that have neither security nor continuity,
and if they are successful they work in the unsocial evening
hours. They are only ever as good as their last performances,
and must compete in a labour market where the majority at any
one time are out of work. Their main employers are the
repertory companies, and (in Great Britain) these are a

reservoir of talent for the TV companies, yet are not

financially reimbursed. The actor's threadbare existence

in repertory, then, usually can only be exchanged for the

joyless, factory-produced acting of TV, or the occasional

short period of the shooting of a film. (And, as the years

of his career go by, the actor will find it harder to re-

join everyday life.) These are the conditions that prevail

behind every performance an audience warms to, and, such is

the actor's art, these conditions are rarely guessed from

the performances.

So, just as the idea of possession can be hidden behind

cultured myths of naturalness, so are actors' possessions,

those of a race apart from everyday life, controlled, like

all possessions, I suggest, so as to look before they look

like anything else, as if they are not controlled. Any

possession, then, just like the natural possession should

look like an expression whose form is given, even as it is

given this form.

Now I come to perhaps the most important kind of control

in interaction, the one that actually determines the form

of the possession, and I discuss this with reference to

David Cole's (1975) concept of "rounding" (the bringing of

maximum ritual presence into an interaction).

Rounding and Control

A controlled person is not a person in interactional

abeyance as it were - an absence of a person - but a person

whose manner of control precisely shows his matter. This can be illustrated by imagining a person as tightly controlled as he can be. Even he conveys a person, generally in Anglo-American culture described as straightlaced or uptight. Among friends this "cold fish" is likely to receive gentle encouragement to let go a bit or to let his hair down, with assurances that "we don't need to stand on ceremony." If he fails to do so, or to not seem as if he wants to do so, he will not long have fellow interactants calling themselves his friends. This clearly shows that to all intents and purposes the person controlled is actually a function of the control a person has. Unyielding control goes with a thoroughly rigid person and is control in the sense of strength, not of flexibility and sublety.

John Gielgud (Funke and Booth, 1961) says that in a perfect performance a person is conscious both of the person he would be possessed by and of how he should control this possession: "The mind is clearly divided between the imaginative impulse and the deliberate execution of the part, with nothing allowed to distract one from these two processes, which should be complementary - the one feeding and sustaining the other." So it can be understood how uncontrolled people in having an insufficient faculty of control also lose commensurate personness up to the point where a completely uncontrolled person is not a person. Having no self-control is not different to having no self to control. The possession of control, then, is always the control of possession.

Possession at its height consequently requires the most

expert control. Cole (1975) says that when these heights

are reached performers "round" on audiences, that is,

having shamanistically gone to the illud tempus, they come

back as hungans. The truest of all theatrical events are

constituted by roundings, Cole believes, and these are

those encounters between performers, for audiences, when,

as Sidney Poitier says (Funke and Booth, 1961,) "There is

not a theatre and there is not a stage," and then the

realm the actor comes from is there for the audience to

enter. An example of rounding, taken from my own field-

work, follows:

> This afternoon, during repeated run throughs of the
> group therapy scenes, B, playing the recalcitrant
> McMurphy, did not seem very involved in the proceed-
> ings. One result of this was that a note of frust-
> ration entered into Big Nurse's coaching of her pat-
> ients, so that her bland patter began to sound quite
> oppressive. While she was coming to the conclusion
> of one speech B pulled a pack of cards from his
> pocket, and I do not think anyone who glimpsed this
> was sure that he was fully inside the play. Big
> Nurse paused. B was holding the cards in both hands,
> bending them back ready for a zip shuffle. He looked
> up at Big Nurse, at this moment either as the direc-
> tor of the play - and as such unimpressed by Big Nurse's
> playing - or as McMurphy showing Big Nurse that he had
> no respect at all for her psychiatric theories. There
> was a confused silence. It occurred to me that B
> had used the cast's uncertainty as to whether or not
> he was in character to create the very feeling of
> uncertainty that should be in the air at just this
> moment on stage. And as this occurred to me I real-
> ised that the very same thought would also be occurr-
> ing to the others. But before I had a chance to relax,
> and before the actors could release the tension that
> had just crept into their playing, the cards in McMurphy's
> hands suddenly all flipped into the air and cascaded
> to the floor. Big Nurse suppressed her reaction of
> flinching and Cheswick, on B's left, pulled away from

him with a start and then froze, in character for
the first time that afternoon. B got up and walked
towards Big Nurse with a faint smile on his lips.
It was still possible to see him both as McMurphy and
as the director, in the latter case compelling the
cast to register that he had jolted them all up to a
more intense level of acting. At this point, however,
the distinction vanished, because if B was the director
the director was also McMurphy at all times. Big
Nurse was obviously unsure of what B would do, as she
and everybody else knew that he was quite capable of
hitting her hard. Her professional training won out
and she stood her ground, but in such a way that it
was obvious she was thinking that if she did not block
McMurphy, here and now, she would go down herself. B
had clearly summoned a deep response from Big Nurse
who had incorporated her response directly into the
character she was playing, thereby intensifying it so
that it now seemed to have its own life, one that was
stronger than that of the actress supporting it. For
a few seconds, then, everybody in the room was lifted
out of the rehearsal studio and transported to Ken
Kesey's ward, and in the process the tiredness of the
day seemed to be completely dispelled.

It is probably true to say, then, that rounding is only poss-

ible for persons who have the dramaturgical talent to so

revise their appearance as to fit perfectly into an intell-

igible ritual realm.

All art of course rounds on persons who lose themselves

in it (I enlarge on this in Chapter 1X) and in everyday life

people continually achieve art-like status for one another,

becoming worlds effortlessly entered, and sometimes mutually,

as happens for Rosamond and Lydgate in George Eliot's (1958)

Middlemarch:

> Lydgate was quick in anticipating her. He reached the
> whip before she did, and turned to present it to her.
> She bowed and looked at him: he of course was looking
> at her and their eyes met with that peculiar meeting
> which is never arrived at by effort, but seems like a
> sudden divine clearance of haze. I think Lydgate turned

> a little paler than usual, but Rosamond blushed deeply
> and felt a certain astonishment. After that, she was
> really anxious to go, and did not know what sort of
> stupidity her uncle was talking of when she went to
> shake hands with him.

Such mutual roundings are like sudden glimpses into unsus-

pected vastnesses, and it follows from this that the person

who makes a strong impression on others does not do that so

much as create a larger world for them to enter. Thus a

woman who looks as if she comes from a world no more myst-

erious than a television soap-opera will not round on

people with such power as, say, Jane Austen, when she seems

in her ritual realm to make behaviour explain itself in ways

that set the reader free from stupidity and confusion, as,

it eventually turns out, Rosamond Vincey could not for Lyd-

gate.

Among actors on stage rounding can call forth other

roundings, as happened in the fieldwork example above, and

such roundings are totally involving for audiences. Poss-

ession at this level of near-perfect execution seems on the

verge of getting out of hand as it escalates in these inter-

actions, and the actors' ritual power may become awe-inspir-

ing at the limit. Then the watched physical protagonists,

having refined their conduct into a series of iconic images,

can seem to be encountering each other as if they only

stand in for absent giants, so that a couple's argument,

for example, might look like a fundamental quarrel between

men and women, which is how such arguments often seem in

the novels of D. H. Lawrence.

So when - safely outside its frame - people watch

conduct in stalking grounds charged with danger, they enter

into other people who seem capable of stalking one another

to the death. What is happening here for audiences may be

very similar to what happens for a writer of fiction:

> Writing becomes a search for a poly-personality, a
> means of living several destinies, of penetrating
> into others, of communicating with them. The writer
> becomes conscious of the world he brings to life, he
> is its consciousness and he thus escapes from the
> ordinary limits of the self, something which intox-
> icates his spirit while enriching and sharpening it
> at the same time.
> (Serge, 1972)

Some actors, however, may never round,

and different plays will afford different opportunities for

performers to round. In everyday life, too, there are those

who never succeed in "rising to the occasion" and also those

for whom there are very few occasion to rise to. But I am

proposing that human attention will not be able to help

itself gravitating to such people as Barthes' (1973) wrestlers,

because, as he says, "they are, for a few moments, the key

which opens Nature, the pure gesture which separates Good

from Evil, and unveils the form of a justice which is at last

intelligible." Persons who have the very high degree of

control that permits this kind of "rounding possession",

moreover, may be said to triumph in their interaction, and

for them there is no sense whatsoever of their having gone

through an ordeal. But, at the opposite extreme from

rounding occasions, there will be those which severely test

self possession, when a person only just manages to convey

himself as a minimally intelligible ritual being, and
these are often interviews or any sort of trial.   The
interactional scale suggested here, of ordeal to triumph,
was one I saw operating very clearly in the theatre.
Not only two consecutive nights, but two consecutive acts
or even two consecutive scenes could be the one ordeal and
the next triumph.   I think in everyday life, too, persons
are now barely surviving their exposure to others and the
next minute coming through encounters, as they say "with
flying colours".   Control of possession then needs to be
very fine, and the minutest adjustments can make the ritual
difference between an almost dispossessed ordeal and the
triumph of rounding.   With this in mind I want to now
consider the topic of "live" control and originality, which
will conclude this brief review of some of the ways control
is applied, and some of the results of it being so applied.

Live Control

With the safety-net of editing techniques and re-run
capabilities removed, the live performer, who cannot lose his
mistakes, can only lose his performance, but may thereby
win an involvement by virtue of this alone.   So, although
a taste for live performance in preference to recorded
performance may reflect the high value placed on immediacy
and sincerity, perhaps, also, audiences of live shows want
proof that the playworld in which they are asked to lose
themselves is also worthy of its performers' engrossment.
Only the live performer, therefore, so long as he maintains

his control, gives continuous evidence that what possesses
him can be possessive.

Distaste for the bogus, the theatrical, the over-
rehearsed, the obviously-scripted performance may be the
emotion of a presentiment that such performance gives no
world to enter through the mechanical movements of a man-
ipulator unless it be a world he does not believe in, or
come from, or care about, or want to be involved in himself.
If muzak is music without music, then this deadhanded con-
trol of routinized possession is the muzak of social life,
instantly recognisable in the tired patter of salesmen,
politicians, disc jockeys, and hacks of every denomination.
Audiences both of professional shows and of less professional
everyday life performers may put up with dead conduct but
will know live persons when they see them. From this there
follows an absolute dictate in social life, that there ever
be new forms of conduct, just because the old ones, having
been seen before, are not responses to the present. And a
person who becomes entirely predictable ceases to qualify as
a person, just as, for example, a novelist who starts to
repeat himself is said to have lost his inspiration or to
have been deserted by his muse. To go further, any science
of persons that would aim at exhaustive explanations of
conduct under the auspices of determinism might from the fore-
going point of view open itself to the charge that in focuss-
ing on what can be reduced to the predictable it misses the
point that what is most characteristic of persons is their

capacity to transcend themselves.   Simmel (1971) elaborates

this dialectic in his essay "The Transcendent Character of

Life", where he says he had made the "attempt" to conceive

of life as:

> ... something which constantly reaches beyond limits
> towards its beyond and which finds its essence in
> this reaching beyond. [This essay] is an attempt to
> define life in general by way of this transcendence,
> where by the closure of its individuality form is
> maintained, but only in order to be broken through
> by the continuous process. Life finds its essence,
> its process, in being more-life and more-than-life.
> Its positive is as such already its comparative.
>
> I am well aware of the logical difficulties involved
> in the conceptual expression of this way of viewing
> life. I have tried to formulate it, in full presence
> of the logical danger, because perchance the level is
> here attained in which logical difficulties by them-
> selves are insufficient to impel silence - because it
> is here that the metaphysical root of logic itself
> draws nourishment.

My own rhetoric of possession can be reduced to a single axiom

that is in harmony with the above passage.   It would go: "I

perform, therefore I am more than what I perform."   Always, I

am suggesting, the possession, in so far as it is controlled

in an appropriate manner, opens a realm which is other than

the "figure" cueing it into being and which, in the case of

rounding at least, must be beyond any current conceptions of

what a person should be.   This is a realm that Erving Goffman

(1975, p 523) has only approached:

> A puppeteer works his strings a yard away from the doll
> he brings to life. A ventriloquist works his puppet
> close by so that it can be manipulated from behind and
> appear to be the actual emitter of sound. A chess
> player is within easy reach of his pieces, his men, his
> figures. A stage performer works closer still, since
> he manipulates his own limbs and his own lips - as, to
> a degree, we also do in quoting someone during ordinary
> talk. Where we work in everyday life when speaking
> for ourselves remains to be considered.

Throughout this thesis I have been engaged in considering

"where we work when speaking for ourselves", and I have said

that the "place" is a ritual realm whence possessions seem

to originate.   I have also put forward the idea that a person

is a possession, and definitely not a performance played by

any other agent than the substance of this performance.   His

person, the possession, takes its consciousness, then, from

human raw material, and outside the possession's consciousness

there is no other consciousness, unless it be that of a new and

different possession which, as they all do, comes into being

by sweeping through all those human appearances the possession

can be constituted by, and gathering these to itself, so to

speak, in order to transform conduct so that, just as a two-

dimensional picture may yield the third dimension of perspective,

there may be yielded a ritual realm.   My rhetoric of possession

thus dispenses with "inner men".   What then of the stream of

thought that a person keeps to himself?   This I term a private

possession, whose particular nature is that it feeds on its own

consciousness of being unseen: the more conduct gives nothing

of a private possession away the more that appearance of giving

nothing away is the possession unto its private self.   But if

the private possession would communicate itself, then it must

make public sense, and, more than that, be interesting, if it

would be attended to, and if a possession does not make sense,

despite that it wishes to, it will be taken as some symptom of

some "madness", the label a possession has when it seems def-

icient in inner reason.   (Obviously, a whole social psychology

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could be developed out of the idea of possession and its

reciprocal "rapture" (which is explained in the chapter after

next), and this really ought to be combined with a history of

self conception, but in this thesis I have only had time to

launch the concepts on their way.)

CHAPTER VIII

THE POSSESSED

Possession has now been defined from several different
directions, but before I fit the second half of my theory
of interaction, "rapture", to this the first, it remains
for me to add some explanations of assertions left dangling
in the previous three chapters. Therefore my treatment of
rapture is postponed to the next chapter.

First of all I shall return to the seminal idea of
ritual presence and this time devise a scale that would
measure it from "parroting" at the zero end to "loving" at
the fully possessed end, and I do this by referring back to
the acting experiences of stage actors. Then I amplify my
ideas on the consecrated nature of stage space, which I
term "ritual space", and this properly follows from presence
since I say that ritual space, and even territory, is as
it is so far as it is the site of ritual life.

In previous chapters I have tended to slight the
role of the audience in possessions, almost implying that
a person who would be possessed must, as it were, pull him-
self up by the bootstraps of his own self consciousness.
But of course interaction is not interaction if it is not
interactive, and so I note that audiences which are specially
attentive will enable performers to enrich their actions
while (but I do go into this) disinterested audiences may

diminish or kill possessions.

Presence, then, is not confined to the possessed
person, because it can diffuse itself into spacial areas
as well as nourish itself on attention. Now I go on to say
that occasions themselves, those, that is, which frame ritual
life, also become imbued with presence, and these framing
occasions are "the rituals of ritual life," such as church
services and court hearings. The rituals of ritual life
are deferred to in their own right, regardless of their
content, and this content may be full ritual life or the
opposite when the framing ritual of the ritual life can
aptly be described as an "empty ritual". People too, I
conclude, can be emptied of their ritual life, so to speak,
if - particularly when they are professional actors - they
are considered to have only "framed" it. Thus, on stage,
actors overmaster the audience but off-stage, having shed
their stage possessions, they walk relatively small in con-
temporary status life. In this sense, they are the dis-
possessed, but, I argue, so is anyone who will not act.
Possession, I imply, is the sign of the human, and all
humans are possessed.

Presence

In Anglo-American culture only a few actors are
revered as artists; most enjoy no higher status than that
of skilled craftsmen, and their performances are not ex-
pected every time to create rapture in an audience, but
something less religiously toned, appreciation. In the same
way, very few people in everyday life awaken one another

to the miracle of existence, but, nonetheless, they are

not gladly received if they breathe death into their inter-

actions by behaving in ways that demand no more appreciation

than the voice of the speaking clock. Thus, at the begin-

ning of Under Western Eyes, Joseph Conrad's narrator, a

teacher of languages, is rueful when he reflects that his

lifelong professional orientation to words has made him

view humankind as "not much more wonderful than parrots",

and the impression of parroting lines on stage would seem

to be at an opposite pole to the one of acting well. Conduct,

as I have shown in earlier chapters, should be seen to

issue from the inside of a person and not look like a

superimposed irrelevance. This, I have argued, is difficult

to bring off, precisely because "possession by" is

necessarily an "imposition on". But, if imposition were

all that possession seemed to be, human parrots would not

be as chilling as are for example The Mummy and the Old

Man of Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata. In these cases the

"possession by" a low form of life causes horrifying

diminution just because the possession as imposition is

nonetheless regarded as essentially the being who is so

possessed. And human parrots are seen as being worse than

parrots because they represent the substitution of the human

by some lesser life, as does an actor who "sells himself".

To reverse the human entropy that leads to the human parrot,

Grotowski (1976) advises an actor to free his body "from

every resistance to any psychic impulse", when "he does

not sell his body but sacrifices it" and "repeats the

atonement", coming "close to holiness".

So it is bad acting that has given acting a bad name,

for acting is the absolute requisite for being human at all,

and through it only the consummate stage actor can distil

what for John Gielgud (Funke and Booth, 1961) is "the essence

of important moments". Acting which is good, moreover,

creates the ritual presence that is emphatically human.

For the same reason that good acting reaches back to

commanding ritual realms, truth itself has greater ritual

presence than propaganda, hypocrisy, circumlocution, and

so on, whose words in not being meant seem to come from a

source that in not meaning what it says does not want to

say what it means or be what it is, and that, therefore,

is nothing but its own negation. A ritually present person,

then, is difficult to overlook when all about him are

hedging their selves. So, in a culture where the hedging

of selves is a structural necessity (Luhmann, 1979),

institutions like theatres, which house and frame perfor-

mances of ritual presence, might serve as a compensatory

device, reminding people both that selves do not always

have to be hedged and that an unhedged self is an awesome

entity. Conversely, where social selves are meant to be

as nearly holy selves as possible, as in England when

Oliver Cromwell was Lord Protector, theatres are closed for

trivialising life, and, when holiness is owned by

institutionalized religions, the professional actor might

expect a lean period, as Benedetti (1976) notes:

> The Council of Laodicea (343-381AD) required all
> clergy present at a festivity to leave the room
> before actors were allowed to enter. This
> ecclesiastical antipathy toward actors lasted for
> over seventeen hundred years; even as late as the
> fourteenth century Thomas a Becket, who had been
> friendly toward minstrels while he was Chancellor
> of the Realm, banned them from his palace once he
> became Archbishop of Canterbury. Moliere was denied
> Christian burial in the seventeenth century, and
> the church ban against actors in France was not
> lifted until the Revolution.

But ritual presence like any other form of conduct can

become stereotyped muzak. To prevent this, an actor, says

Grotowski (1976), "must be able to construct his own

psychoanalytic language of sounds and gestures in the same

way that a great poet creates his own language of words".

The demands that Grotowski recommends an actor to make on

himself, so as to always be ritually present, are morally

stringent:

> One must give onself totally, in one's deepest
> intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives one-
> self in love. Here lies the key. Self-penetration,
> trance, excess; the formal discipline itself - all
> this can be realised, provided one has given oneself
> fully, humbly and without defence.

Abrahams (1972) also calls the act of creative performance

- but this time in everyday life - "an act of love", the

stress being on a giving of self (sharing of possession)

which can only be called giving if there is no thought of

return. But "giving" is not quite right; rather, energetic

competence is fed into interaction so that a world is

generated that leads out of the interaction into exactly

the same interaction but now charged with ritual presence.

Presence, then, is that type of ritual power which seems
to overflow itself.

Ritual Space

Cole (1975), I think, captures the idea of spilled
ritual presence when he describes stage space as "the
extent of an uneasiness". Thus the space "claimed by any
group of people for a particular activity" (Scheflen 1976)
may have a different quality to that of a mere "orientational
field" as Scheflen designates it.

Scheflen (1972) has observed how a person crossing the
territories of a strange group lowers his head, curls his
shoulders, unprotrudes his chest, holds his hands close to
or in front of his body, and keeps his eyes to himself.
But Scheflen has not considered that this "behaviour of
territorial passage" might have less to do with the act of
stepping onto a piece of geography that is formally owned
by strangers than with the showing of deference to unknown
persons whose ritual power must be respected. The use of
the word territory for ritual space does not help, I think,
my appreciation here that some people's territories are
more sacrosanct than others. "Ritual space", however,
suggests that space owes its power of commanding deference
to the ritual power of the persons using it. So it is
easy to see that God's space, a church, is more inviolable
than a punk's space, the street corner, though both are
equally territories.

Ritual space, I am arguing, originates in persons who
do not so much stake it out as hallow it in direct propor-
tion to their ritual power, which is very great in the case
of actors performing.   (As if in accord with this idea
Segal (1978) calls the theatre stage space "consecrated".)
So the other-wordliness of possession, that creates ritual
space, need not be territory, though territory must be an
other-worldy piece of the world.   In ritual spaces, ordinary
conduct may be profane, but, in strange territory, the ritual
behaviour as Scheflen describes it - making it look extra-
ordinary - should also be seen as ordinary awe.   Two
examples of "ordinary awe" follow here.   In the first
McMurphy solves his problem of having to cross stage space
where he should not be and in the second Harding, stuck for
a line, gets a prompt that respects the vocal space
of the stage.   Neither of these examples shows deference
to territory as such, but instead deference to a ritual
realm that just happens to be territory:

> There is not much room in the studio, so McMurphy has
> a problem when he leaves stage right because he has no
> way back to stage left that does not traverse stage
> space.   At his exit he walks off stage directly into
> a wall, then collapses himself into himself, and turns
> and quickly burrows - with eyes fixed on his destina-
> tion - to his next entry position.

> When Harding cannot remember a line, he freezes his
> posture and at the same time, without looking at her,
> calls out to the DSM "Line!" or "Yeah!"   The DSM
> softly cues him and he resumes his speech as if he
> has not stopped.

The next two examples show how stage space is routinely
respected:

The director wanted to show a friend of his the ward
book (in which Billy writes his reports of other
patients' conversations) that is kept near the nurses'
station in the Cuckoo's Nest set.   Both B and his
friend set off towards the stage from the wings, but
at the edge of the area the friend stops.   B walks
on and picks up the book from its lectern and brings
it back to his friend, taking it for granted that his
friend would not want to trespass on stage space.

During an afternoon rehearsal in the studio, someone
knocks at the door and when he has opened it a few
inches puts his head round it and says, "Phone for
B."   B is across the room where he has been watching
Big Nurse rehearse a scene with Warren and Bromden.
B now walks all the way round the perimeter of the
stage space to get to the door, even though Big Nurse
and Warren are not in action at that moment.   On his
roundabout way to the door, B spots a cigarette end
in the stage space and straightaway he picks up
Bromden's broom and sweeps the cigarette end into the
audience area.   Then he very carefully puts the broom
back as he found it before continuing on his way to
the door.

Earlier I advanced the view that possessed persons who

are fully in control create worlds for their audiences to

enter.   It is compatible with this to suggest that ritual

space, which acquires its holy nature from ritually power-

ful persons, should be deferred to in so far as it seems to

be the site of other worlds.   Certainly this is the case

with battlefields, cemeteries, and, of course, churches and

cathedrals.   Museums and art galleries are also the sites

of other worlds and it may be, then,that they are places of

hushed and rapt congregation not because art and archaeology

are now lay religions but because, like the churches of

religion, they are the places where other worlds begin.

As Hall (1966) showed, people carry about with them

units of space into which intrusion that is not at their

bidding is profoundly offensive. My argument shows that
this "contour", as Goffman (1972) describes it, is ritual
space. Thus people, who, according to their others, over-
estimate their ritual space, are said to be "distant" or
"unapproachable", while "familiar" people underestimate the
ritual space of their fellows. Both these descriptions
draw on spatial understandings, so too does "being made to
feel small" which would be to have one's ritual space com-
pressed, while he who incorrectly thinks of himself as
celebrated will be said to be "puffed up with his own
importance." Ritual power, already there in a contour
around a person, will enter, if it is strong enough, spaces
and even objects too, and by a circuitous route it is even
conceivable that from ritual spaces persons might draw a
ritual power they had not had before, as when a priest for
the first time takes up his station before assembled wor-
shippers.

So spilled presence can be treated as having entered
non-human ground and thence, sometimes, humans once again.

The Audience

Presence, then, may be spilled and absorbed into
spaces from which it might be reabsorbed by other perform-
ers than those who originally spilled it. But also, in
ever greater quantities, presence can be rebounded back
to himself by a performer off the audience.

The unity of an audience is itself in the first place
brought about by the presence of a common danger - excess
ritual power which, during the threatrical event, for

example, looms larger for each and every member of the audience than any of their differences. Cole goes so far as to say that audiences react to "rounding" like a crowd on which someone has pulled a gun, and Andre Breton said that the most perfect surrealist act was to fire a gun at random into a crowd. (Was Breton not expressing here the traditional artistic ambition to win urgent and concentrated attention, and does not this surely rank with the actor's imperative to be the focus of a communion?)

A possibility Cole does not go on to discuss is that audiences too can perform, even rounding on a performer. The mob that hacks down its leader could be said to have rounded on him, and, at least during the sixties, there was scarcely a rock concert that did not see sections of the audience trying to storm the stage. The mob, of course, has reversed the poles of danger and safety, but more commonly, in a real theatrical event, the danger will pass between performers and audience, never settling on either for long. So amidst one watchful agglomeration of con- sciousness whose supra-awareness is as fraught a medium as there is, great performers walk an electric stalking ground in which their every move and word is naked and in which they have to make a kind of bodily confession before an omnipotent judge, and be acquitted honourably if they want to hear applause.

It seems only commonsense that the more watchful, apprehensive, expectant, keyed-up, and eager the audience

is the more will the performer before it be able to feel con-
fident that his slightest move or intonation will be richly
interpreted.   In this situation he will be able to so
minimise his actions as to make for himself behavioural
room for more of the same, which will inevitably further
enrich his performance, or, if he keeps his action bare, it
will look barer still and so in that way seem a stronger
performance than it was.   An enriched performance cannot
but further excite an already attentive audience, so, it
can be said, the audience fuels a performer's ritual power
to the degree that he can awaken them to it.   I now give
some examples of this from the repertory company, and,
though they rather assume the point they try to make, I
think they give a good idea of this interactional feedback
process as it may occur in the theatre:

> The matinee audience fills about half the 350 seats
> and comprises mostly schoolchildren and old-age pen-
> sioners.   Julia Price advances to the front of the
> stage during her soliloquy and there is no atmosphere
> at all.   Backstage, after the interval curtain, I
> meet her drinking tea.   "It's awful," she says, "I
> feel as though there's nobody out there."

> B has instructed the cast to use the technical run-
> through as an opportunity to rehearse.   Half the time
> he is behind a desk rigged up in the middle of the
> auditorium.   When he has an important line, he waits
> till his cue, then races down the aisle, giving the
> line maximum volume and expression and arriving on
> his mark, after vaulting up on to the stage, just as
> he hits the last word.   Every time he does this, the
> rest of the cast seem to follow his example of throwing
> themselves further than necessary into their parts.
> The sundry people milling about, fiddling with lights

and wires and so on, cannot help responding to B's way
of playing his part, and the cast react positively to
this intriguement that normally is absent from techni-
cal run-throughs.

Friday night and a full house for Cuckoo's Nest.   From
the wings, even, you can feel that the pressure coming
from the auditorium is heavier and keener than usual.
The chances of an actor being "seen through" are higher
than normal tonight, and the actors respond with
additional firmness and precision in their playing.
The extra effort that is being put out on stage does
not seem to tire the actors at all, but to come about
as an almost unmediated response to an unusually
powerful audience interest.

In everyday interaction, too, it is commonplace that

interest can be generated or that interactants can get ex-

cited (in Chapter VII, I touched on this briefly when I

looked at "the framing of performance"). I am suggesting

that this is not only because of a possession coming into

focus but also because this is facilitated by ritual feed-

back.   It might be concluded here, then, that ritual power

is by no means always locked up in the performer.   But it

can be locked up in what I next consider: "The Rituals of

Ritual Life."

Rituals of Ritual Life.

Goffman describes how conversation can be a play of

and a play with disparate frames, the references for talk

being carved out of worlds not there but for the carving,

and he creates images of selves seeming to be regressing

backwards from themselves like reflections trapped between

parallel mirrors, the speakers not merely functioning as

performers and persons but as a quartet of strategists,

principals, animators, and figures, severally substitutable.

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He articulates a theory of interaction that can accommodate what in 1953 he noted was "the conversational thing about conversation," meaning its "rapid and continued give-and-take" (p119) with constant shifts in subject, tone, purpose, and direction.   Unlike any other sociologist, he has brought about a body of words that with an unusually high degree of precision seems in its structuring to reveal hitherto unacknowledged patterns and possibilities of conversation. But though he has used the idea of performance for the show a person can put on, he has not specifically opened his theories to what I take to be the force of performance.

The playworld, or even the world framed by a competent performer in interaction, can be overmastering.   Thus, in the intervals of shows that I watched from backstage, I would see actors indulge in just the sorts of choppy interchanges that Goffman analyses, yet all the while they would be pervaded by their playworld as if the characters they would soon be resuming were hovering over them.   This of course is the most-impressionistic type of data, but I do think that, for instance, the phenomena of "carry over" is not difficult to grasp of interactions, one to the next, in everyday life.   By this I mean the impression among interactants that a world left by one or more of them has not left them.   People perhaps do not always snap easily and instantly from frame to frame, from reference to reference, always taking all of their attention with them each time. Something lags, some part of past engrossment is not given

up, part of the mind is trailing. And, when the frame has
been brimfull of ritual presence, it might be expected that
this will not vanish with a vanishing frame. This is true
for performer and audience alike. So I now propose that the
shape of interaction chains may come from the ebb and flow of
ritual power as much as from the preordained rules of gather-
ings, which themselves, I suggest, may exist just to generate
or preserve ritual power in certain forms.

In the theatre, the arrangements by which audiences are
allowed to watch ritual lives are standardized and formalized.
Theatrical performances, occasions of ritual, become rituals,
because the form of the occasion gathers to itself the defer-
ential respect that is owed primarily to the performers.
This can be seen in four of the many rules that I saw followed
by audience after audience throughout a whole Spring Season,
and which, also, I have rarely seen broken elsewhere. That
these rules seem almost too obvious to set down further shows
how well-established they are:

    1 When the lights start to dim, people hush their
      voices, and by the time the lights are out no one
      is talking.

    2 There is no talking or moving about during perfor-
      mances, whatever their quality or power to absorb.

    3 When the final curtain falls - every time - people
      applaud, clapping their hands together in front of
      their chests, with no exceptions.

    4 Audiences as a body do not rise to leave until they
      have finished applauding, which is not until the last
      curtain call has been taken and the lights have
      started going up.

Most scenes of heightened ritual life seem to undergo this sort of transformation into ritual events in their own right. Trials, funerals, marriages, post-mortems, interviews, lectures, of themselves, like theatres, do come to hold a ritual power borrowed and accreted from the social interactions they are wont to frame.

Rules of rituals appear to be more strongly enforced than rules of interaction, and the more ritualised a ritual is the less the characteristics of its performers come into play. Thus, a mini-ritual like a greeting does not vary greatly whoever the pairs of greeters are, yet, since the greeting is an exchange between persons representing proper personness to each other, a failure to greet is "inexcusable" because persons in general are then disparaged. A maxi-ritual likewise celebrates institutionalised relationships, so that threats to the ritual are threats to the institution in proportion to the formality of the ritual. In this connection, the phrase "empty ritual" can be understood as describing ritual no longer felt to be fully celebrating real states of affairs, and so rituals, I am suggesting, when they are full, are full of ritual presence.

Since ritual life inevitably drifts to the fashionable forms that are rituals of life, it will be appreciated that proper forms of conduct will lag behind experienced ritual presences, and that new kinds of disciplined ritual presence at first will seem formless and opposed to old forms, when perhaps only social analysts - such as Marsh et al (1978), who

found order in football terrace hooliganism - will be disposed
to see new forms of ritual life at the very beginning of their
becoming outmoded rituals.

The Dispossessed

I want to say now that, just as the frames of ritual
performance become ritualized, so do persons - because they
are ritual frames - whether on-form or pathetic, awake or
asleep, alive or dead. Status itself may be the frame of a
ritual life that may or may not live up to this status-frame
which either way will be deferred to as if it truly frames
commensurate ritual power. But something happens to pro-
fessional actors which goes against this generalization.
Even though on-stage they can exert enormous ritual power,
off-stage their prestige is not nearly so high. Why is this?
Why is the professional actor usually regarded as a lightweight
person, who the better he is the more will seem to belong in
theatres which are not regarded with as much seriousness as
are, for example, factories or offices? Is it because the
more he is a medium for other selves, the less of a self will
he seem to have among those whose selves refer only in a
limited way for a limited distance back to their seeming
mirror images? Is it because the actor seems too alive,
having too much of too many potentials to be any one of them,
like a visitor from a kaleidoscope of dreams? Is it his
very capacity for possession that dispossesses the actor of any
mundane self heavier than that of "actor"?

Before suggesting an answer, I offer three examples of

actors being treated as lightweights:

Some members of the company meet with a representative
from Equity, the actors' union.   Equity have contri-
buted considerable funds to the company but neverthe-
less, full of after-performance euphoria, none of the
actors is concerned to be diplomatic.   When every-
body has become silent, the representative finds a
way of reproaching them for what he takes to be their
lack of seriousness.   He mentions the fact that he
had noticed that one of the non-speaking "loonies"
in the Cuckoo show had not been an Equity member.
Failing to get any response at all to this, he now
unveils the news that Equity has done a deal that works
retrospectively so that several of the company will
soon be coming into unexpected monies.   "Let's have
a party!" they all exclaim, and the Equity representa-
tive throws me a look which says "Actors!" as if it
would be too much to expect them to be serious about
anything.

Two city councillors from an area where housing has
been condemned to make room for a motorway-spur are
meeting the company to discuss the possibility of
the company helping a campaign against the motorway.
A Saturday afternoon "fair" is being organized to
publicise the anti-motorway cause and also to raise
cash for a fighting fund.   Would the theatre company
like to contribute some amusement that, by the way,
would also publicise the company's present production?
It is all getting bogged down in details when B
suggests, "Why don't we simply arrive in our lunatic
costumes and loon about among the crowds?"   Both
the councillors say "No" simultaneously.   Picking
up on their consternation, B says, "We could carry
pickaxes and shovels so that people would think we
were on the other side."   The councillors laugh in
such a way as to indicate that they want B to see
that they are tactfully regarding his suggestion as
not being made seriously.   B smiles broadly at
Martini who begins to mime pickaxing a hole in the
parquet floor, his eyes widening in horror at what-
ever it is his imaginary pickaxe is revealing.   The
elderly councillor clears his throat and starts again.

A delegate from the local Arts Council has called at
the office to explain the "position".   It takes him
half an hour to settle the blame on the company for
not filling in an application form when the company
first needed subsidies.   "But you yourself knew we
needed money then.   What difference does a form make?"

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the delegate is asked. He sighs and scratches his forehead before replying, "If there's no form, the committee can't be expected to know you need money." The response he gets to this is, "Why didn't you fill in a form for us, or tell the committee yourself?" The delegate now smiles as if this is some sort of very clever trick question. "I'm not the applicant," he says. Eyebrows are raised and heads are shaken and one of the girls giggles. The delegate rises to leave, saying, "You do have to fill in a form," as though he cannot believe there exist people naive enough to think otherwise.

I think that actors, dispossessed of the characters they play on stage from the moment that they walk into the wings, are further dispossessed of seriousness off-stage as if to counter their potential for ritual power in inter-action. My examples, I think, do show how the officials interacting with the actors I studied seem nervous of powers they have to mock if they cannot take them for what they are. Many times I saw this kind of interaction, and nearly always the actors played themselves unseriously, thus abetting their dispossession, as if, knowing they could easily summon ritual power, they would save it for the theatre.

CHAPTER IX

RAPTURE

>   If we wish the spectator to experience a
>   maximum emotional upsurge, to send him into
>   ecstasy, we must offer him a suitable
>   "formula" which will eventually excite the
>   desirable emotions in him.
>   The simplest method is to present on the
>   screen a human being in a state of ecstasy,
>   that is, a character who is gripped by some
>   emotion, who is "beside himself".*

Rapture is to possession as deference is to demeanour,

not the obverse side from possession of the coin "human

interaction" and not the impress of possession's face on the

soft substance of appreciation, but rather the sociological

state of a subject when he feels himself to be in an object

ritual realm that he cannot see as not being his own.

This chapter, then, is about possession from the point

of view of the audience, and so does not "advance" my ideas on

possession so much as go forth to meet these sideways on, so

to speak.

Summary

I argue that, given clear enough ritual interpretability,

rapture may become the sociological descriptor of one or more

persons in an interaction, and, further, that rapturous

interactions are not only of importance sociologically but

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*   Eisenstein, Sergei (1968) "Introduction" (to screenplay
            of) The Battleship Potemkin   London   Lorrimer Publishing

also, because of their nature, are neglected in sociology.
I go on to say that the possibility of rapture in interactions
can transform these, so that beyond merely making sense to
one another, people can become "interesting" as performed
beings, and then enrapturing; and rapture can culminate in
catharsis, the experience of having seen things afresh from
a privileged point of view. Rapture I here define as a
temporary dissolution of the self, but I propose - in an
argument which rebuts some of Richard Sennett's recent ideas
- that a sign of strong ritual being is the capacity to lose
the self so as to create a richer self. Interaction, it follows
from this, is fully interactive when persons within it lose
themselves over and over again, in every conceivable form.
So a person begins to be definable as the very interactional
ability to wipe himself from view and change himself totally,
at will. Those people who are able to become strange to
themselves can even interact, in a fully sociological sense,
with themselves, I suggest, and this is socially functional
when auto-rapture is its negative, shame. But, usually,
interaction is for each interactant an alternation of
possession and rapture, especially heightened in a love
relationship (for the lovers their most important relationship).
The conclusion I finally come to is that life without rapture
is hardly sociological, since it would mainly consist in
mutual cognitive appraisals which do not logically require the
empathetic identification of self with other that allows
persons to feel that through and through they are social beings.

Interpretability

The necessary condition for rapture is that the person who, as it were, becomes the condition of rapture, should so well understand the possession which enraptures him as to be able to share it, when the fact that he, the enraptured person, is one body and the other, the possessed person, is a separate body, is an irrelevance that gives a misleading picture of the rapture-possession relation. Understanding is in its turn impossible if the possession does not have interpretability, and this, in its turn, depends on a common language between the persons locked together, the one enraptured and the other possessed. These summary points need to be amplified.

No matter how great the fidelity of acting on stage to behaviour in life and no matter how skilfully essential elements of the latter are separated from inessential and turned inside out to expose their latent meaning, staged conduct will not be understood by an audience unused to seeing the conduct of everyday life in the same terms. The successful stage illusion, says Burns (1972), depends on a "working consensus" between performers and audience and not on the relationship between staged and unstaged conduct. It is not so much that people only see what they want to see, or that they are only capable of seeing things in certain ways, or even that they can only see what they are used to seeing, but rather that they speak a given language and will not fully understand conduct in a different language.[1] This constraint has never prevented great artists from reaching

the public with no loss of power, but it is an art, and not a science or a technique, to perform precisely for the moment - in a highly intelligible yet concentrated way - something that because it is true of one moment is true of other moments. However, in any culture, not much conduct of any form is of this artistic order, though all conduct must aspire to the condition of art, in which originality of expression is the only way to express what seems original and, therefore, ritually alive.[2]

Perhaps, then, the sense of exposure that actors customarily feel before a performance (reported by Little & Cantor, 1970, p 88) comes less from the prospect of being seen by a large number of people than from the certainty of being interpreted by them. After all, every one of millions of commuters each day is seen by thousands of others, and none of these, in streets and stations and so on, will feel nearly so exposed as he would were he on a stage, when an audience would be making up its mind about him as if he were their problem to be solved, either by his competent performance of himself or, if he could not act, by them despite his ineptitude.

Audiences too used to unexposed performances will sink into a sluggish appreciation of what it is to be alive, and they can be roused from this, thinks Grotowski (1976), only by being attacked: "We are talking about profanation. What, in fact, is this but a kind of tactlessness based on the brutal confrontation between our declarations and our daily actions?" Profaning the audience is here seen as a stimulus from the stage intended to spark off the feeling of danger that alone augurs ritual presence.

Grotowski's idea of using "tactless" over-exposure to break up moribund and habitual forms of conduct of course relies on no less well understood forms of ritual conduct. It might even be that the varieties of the ritual code are not so hard to translate one ot another as are verbal languages, for instance. The fact that Peter Brook's company in Africa (Heilpern, 1977) succeeded in performing ritually alive plays for audiences who were culturally very remote suggests, indeed, that the closer one approaches a pure ritual code the more universal it is. This does not mean that there really is a human lingua franca but that ritual acts, which need to be original, are equally original to all audiences, though only those audiences who speak the performer's own behavioural language will easily distinguish the genuinely original from what is unoriginal. (This explains why foreigners, at first, are interesting and strange; they seem original.) I now give a very simple example, from my fieldnotes, of interpretable stage conduct, and analyse it to show how intricate is its apparently obvious meaning. This I think shows how much there very often may be even in enactments that demand little decoding effort if the code is known, and this in turn must show how little may be understood of enactments in unfamiliar codes:

> There is a piece of stage business in the first
> act that always gets a good response. McMurphy,
> against Warren's orders, has just untied the belt
> that had been restraining Bromden, when Big Nurse
> comes into the ward, freezing the inmates with
> her clipped enquiry about what is going on.
> McMurphy turns wonderingly from Bromden to Big
> Nurse, whom he has not yet met, and she walks
> across the stage towards him. His face, but not
> hers, takes on a pleasant, friendly aspect.
> "I'll have that, Mr McMurphy, please," says Big
> Nurse, in a sort of singsong voice as if talking
> to a naughty child. She holds out her hand for

the belt that McMurphy is holding in his left hand. He makes a long explanatory reply that involves him turning back and forth between Bromden and Big Nurse, and this distracts the audience from the belt and from the fact that Big Nurse is still holding out her hand for it. McMurphy then steers his remarks into the comment that it's "mighty nice" to make Big Nurse's acquaintance, and on that he shakes her by her outstretched hand. Of course, she pulls it away fast, and this always makes the audience chuckle. McMurphy then turns the audience response into laughter as he elaborately hands over the belt, acting as he does so as if he had quite forgotten that that was what Big Nurse had originally asked him for and as if he had also quite innocently misinterpreted her outstretched hand. The audience, every time, at once understand how remiss the mental patient McMurphy has been to shake hands with a nurse and that he has done this in a way that cannot be sanctioned legitimately and how his apologies are completely insincere, and it is essential that they do clearly understand because this and other dramatic enactments of the first act are all that build, for the audience, McMurphy's habitual conduct style or character. But, even though a lot of meaning is being enacted in a very short space of time, there never seems to be any problem of interpretation.

Obviously, interpretability on its own is not enough to guarantee that the interpretable will be interpreted. Some possessions are more popular than others and audiences vary as to what they choose to become enraptured by. This touches on the subject of culture, high and low, and of taste, "good" and "bad", but here I cannot go further into the social processes that set up situations in which one person can say of a possession that has enraptured another person, "I don't know what you see in it." (Raymond Williams, F R Leavis, and Richard Hoggart pursue these problems that also engaged Arnold and Ruskin.)

So rapture will not be brought on by a performance unless the performance has interpretability, and performances faithful to the forms of everyday life may not have this, and imperfectly enacted possessions will not have enough of this, while possessions relying on unknown behavioural codes may distort it, and, for audience reasons entirely, some possessions, however ritually powerful, may be reacted to as if they have no interpretability.

But interpretable possessions are the human totem poles around which the dances of social life go on, as I now indicate.

The Importance of Rapturous Interactions

> Aesthetic contemplation, which is possible for
> any object and only especially easy for the
> beautiful, most thoroughly closes the gap between
> the self and the object. It allows as easy,
> effortless and harmonious formation of the image
> of the object as if this image were determined
> only by the nature of the self. Hence the
> sense of liberation which accompanies an
> aesthetic mood; it is characterized by
> emancipation from the stuffy dull pressures of
> life, and the expansion of the self with joy
> and freedom into the objects whose reality would
> otherwise isolate it.

This is how Simmel (1971) describes a merging of the self with an object that engrosses it, but this process is not so intense or affective as the merging - one self into another self - which yields the "rapture" that I claim is created when ritually powerful possession is effortlessly understood. However, in the same way that a person cannot give himself due deference (for by being someone who would give it to himself he would cease to merit it, and, not being able to merit it, could not then give it either), so a person cannot

enrapture himself with his possession of himself, for his

being enraptured would require that he be lost in the

possessing self to the exclusion of the control constantly

needed to maintain the possession. Thus, persons need other

persons if they wish to be "taken out of themselves" into

ritual realms that are even more releasing than the objects

of aesthetic contemplation. The possession-rapture relation

may be then the most social of social relations.

Rapture at possession - getting lost in what Burns (1972)

calls a "mythical cohesion" - necessarily collapses social

distances, and thus threatens social structures (this,

incidentally, provides a structural reason for the framing of

performances). A person who regularly collapses social

distance by creating rapture is said to be charismatic in

Weber's sense of the word, his personal gifts, Weber

pronounces, being seen to be supernatural in origin. And

because social distance disappears in rapture, the "charismatic

structure" (Weber, 1974) "in contrast to any kind of bureaucratic

organisation of offices . . . . knows nothing of a form of an

ordered procedure of appointment or dismissal." This is

inevitable because "charisma knows only inner determination"

and "its attitude is revolutionary and transvalues everything."

Not only that, but charismatic persons, says Weber, "the

master as well as his disciples and followers, must stand

outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations,

as well as outside the routine obligations of family life."

So organizations and movements and even societies may revolve

around states of rapture.

Within interaction, the rapture of one person at the possession of another is a mutual over-involvement of the kind that Goffman (1963) has said embarrasses the social occasion in which it occurs.[3]   So I suggest here that the neglect within sociology, of the kinds of interaction in which this sort of highly alive mutual symbiosis takes place, may be a result of its not being seen in society, for, knowing its embarrassing potential for social occasions, it hides away or changes its appearance as soon as it feels scrutinized. This is why it is so difficult to study this phenomenon, and why it is necessary to settle in its stead for the stylized variants to be found in theatres.   Despite its secretive existence, it is still, however, a sociological phenomenon, because it is between persons, and, since it can be the most important relation persons can have with one another, it must have wide social repercussions.

So rapturous interactions are socially important not only in that they empower, through charismatic persons, charismatic organizations (from a world outside Weber's bureaucratic world it could be argued that bureaucracies too are charismatic, since they work best only when bureaucrats believe in without reserve, or are enraptured by, the magic of pure rationality) but also because for the persons of society, considered one at a time, their most crucial social relations are likely to be just those in which they have the greatest number of their most rapturous interactions.   For individuals

and for society as a whole, then, rapture is the key to life, and sometimes there arise political persons who understand this with absolute clarity. Such persons seek to make whole populations fall in love with them, so as to coalesce public and private lives into a millenial dream, and where this love is not forthcoming they perforce must coerce its simulation - I touch on this in the "Summary and Conclusions - with terror, and it has to be terror just because it had needed to be love, the exorbitant responses to love requiring an equally exorbitant coercion if they are not felt. I am thinking of Hitler and the Third Reich. The well-known fact that for a period of his early life Hitler himself was wholly enraptured by Wagner's music gives away the origins of his societal understandings, and, in my "Summary and Conclusions", when discussing the role of the film <u>Taxi Driver</u> in the life of President Reagan's would-be assassin, I shall be coming to a conclusion that the price of a Wagner is a Hitler, a person for whom no other possessions than Wagner's could so enrapture him. (Wagner, of course, knew exactly what he was doing to other people, because he was already doing it to Ludwig II of Bavaria.)[4]

But few people are as spellbinding as Wagner and most of us have all our work cut out just to make sense - a minimum interpretability - in the hope that our sense might be interesting. Rapture may be the key to life but without sense being made between people at all social times no occasions for rapture will arise. How then does sense imperceptibly become interesting, or begin to acquire enough ritual power to carry

other persons away from themselves in the direction of rapture?
The next section of this chapter essays some provisional
thoughts on this question.

Making Sense and Being Interesting

It is a sociological truism that when one person is in
the presence of another it will not be possible for either
person not to interpret the other's conduct.   Persons are
always in the predicament of actors, being seen to be convey-
ing a certain self, and, I have said, through that self
conveying a larger scenario or ritual realm that the self
seems to come from.   A heightened consciousness of this,
which is socially condemned as "self-consciousness", may
bring on a state of behavioural revolt.   By looking at such
revolts, as I now shall do, one can begin to detect what it
means to be "interesting".

The revolt may occur when an actor or an actress starts
to feel that other people are too glib in their interpretations
and are far too ready to believe in these.   Such is the dawn
of a Hamlet-style consciousness: "Hamlet is obsessed by the
idea of being an actor, that is to say, of falsifying himself
through what he does and says.   His self-consciousness exceeds
his role and blocks his performance of it" (Rosenberg, 1970).
This shows that, whatever the self privately thinks (over
against what its public thinks it thinks) its social existence
is still at the behest of others, who have no option but to
take the expressions of its consciousness as the performances
they necessarily must be.   A further example of a person who

revolts against slick and slickly interpreted outer forms of conduct is the actress Elisabeth Vogler in Ingmar Bergman's (1972) film Persona. She is a great actress who decides she will act no more, on stage or in life, and at first it seems that she is perfectly understood by her doctor, who addresses this speech to her:

> I do understand, you know. The hopeless dream
> of being. Not doing, just being. Aware and
> watchful every second. And at the same time
> the abyss between what you are for others and
> what you are for yourself. The feeling of
> dizziness and the continual burning need to be
> unmasked. At last to be seen through, reduced,
> perhaps extinguished. Every tone of voice a
> lie, an act of treason. Every gesture false.
> Every smile a grimace. The role of wife, the
> role of friend, the roles of mother and mistress,
> which is worst? Which has tortured you most?
> Playing the actress with the interesting face?
> Keeping all the pieces together with an iron
> hand and getting them to fit? Where did it
> break? Where did you fail? Was it the role
> of mother that finally did it? It certainly
> wasn't your role as Electra. That gave you a
> rest. She actually got you to hold out for a
> while more. She was an excuse for the more
> perfunctory performances you gave in your other
> roles, your "real-life roles". But when
> Electra was over, you had nothing left to hide
> behind, nothing left to keep you going. No
> excuses. And so you were left with your demand
> for truth and your disgust. Kill yourself?
> No - too nasty, not to be done. But you could
> be immobile. You can keep quiet. Then at
> least you're not lying. You can cut yourself
> off, close yourself in. Then you don't have
> to play a part, put on a face, make false
> gestures. Or so you think. But reality plays
> tricks on you. Your hiding place isn't
> watertight enough. Life starts leaking in
> everywhere. And you're forced to react. No one
> asks whether it's genuine or not, whether you're
> true or false. It's only in the theatre that's
> an important question.

This speech not only shows how Elisabeth Vogler's autistic mode of conduct can still trigger a massive interpretation from her doctor (that the actress had a demand for truth perhaps even

born of her gift for total deception) but also that there is

no eye-tight skin for the human being.   Like it or not,

reactions will be elicited, and they will be interpreted,

and, worse than that (or better, if you are a merchant of

morality), provided they make some sense (or a sense), this

will be taken as their complete sense.   For it is only in

the theatre, as the doctor observes, that audiences, behaving

there like the working paranoids they must not appear to be

in everyday life, search for the possible misrepresentations

of conduct, since dramatic staged conduct can only be

constructed out of these (if everything on stage at the end

of a play is the same as it was at the beginning then there

will have been no play).[5]   So it might be that in everyday

life you are only what you seem to be at a cursory glance, just

as Elisabeth Vogler, even when she severely inhibits her

conduct by retreating into mutism, is yet seen to be a woman

disgusted with pretence, when in fact she may have any number

of different reasons as well as this one, or instead of it,

for her social withdrawal.   (The words "retreat" and

"withdrawal" are fascinating evidence that, when a person

in Anglo-American culture refuses to give a readable ritual

realm, it is assumed that the person has "gone back" into

some realm which is secret and guarded.   The fact that the

person is right there - in close-up too in Bergman's film -

in no wise allays suspicions that "really" the person is just

about anywhere else but there.   Actually the person may just

be blank, or following some train of thought that he or she

finds senseless.   But that psychologists, for example, will

construct inner psychodramas from the minute "betrayals" of

mad people clearly shows that, even in the face of the most

deliberate acts of realm refusal, there is a cultural

determination to create realms out of cues, and this

determination is no less strong than the incapacity to accept

that realms may not be there, or may be different to the one

as it is read.)

So, though people, as I have proposed, might be looking

to lose themselves in other people, they only want to do so

up to the point that already makes sense to them.   Normally

then, persons empathise just enough to satisfy themselves that

other persons can be made to function in a scenario

recognisable to them.   But in this case why are Hamlet and

Elisabeth Vogler "interesting", and why are there, for that

matter, people in everyday life, and characters in playworlds

too, who are only looked away from with a sense of loss?   The

revolt is the clue.   Those persons who refuse their others

the perfunctory sociability that would "arouse no comment"

open up a crack in the psychosocial mosaic.   The detaching

fragment seems to be turning on its own axis in such a way

that its very composition is in question.   Therefore it

questions the surrounding fragments.   Those next to a loosened

social piece are immediately loosened themselves, and some of

their own self-possession is lost to the social object that

seems more lost, but lost only because it wants to find

itself, with interest, where it goes looking.   Interest here,

then, is that part of a person's possession which gives itself

into another's, as if to bring this back to itself.   And, if

it fails to do so, the other remains interesting.   So an

interesting person is a human kaleidoscope devised to always

produce a portrait that while being faithful is obviously not

the whole story and which, if it were the image in the

mirror of the viewer, would do him ritual credit.   (But

there may be many real people who could be interesting yet

are not because they do not want to be or because they are

speaking the wrong language to the wrong audience.) Sense,

then, that just fails to make complete sense, is the snare

laid by the stalked interesting person.   Catch him and you

catch yourself.   Lose him and you must go and find yourself

in him again.

    Perhaps it is even true that every person "can't help"

being interesting, but that society only works insofar as it

makes people do their best to be as uninteresting as possible,

to be, in other words, mere embodiments of current conduct

fashions, limiting the originality of their variations on

these to the bare minimum necessary to evince others' reaction

to them as live or ritual persons.   And perhaps people will

sacrifice their personness willingly because it is ritually

dangerous to be interesting, for interesting people threaten

to collapse society's formal status differences which "must be"

but "cannot be" exact equivalents of ritual differences.

That may be why many interesting people settle for being

entertainers: being merely entertaining is a safe way of

being dangerous. A dangerous way of being safe, on the other

hand, would be to take yourself seriously in everyday life.

I now illustrate these last aphorisms with a pair of contrasting

fieldnotes. The first, about a punk who plays safe by

remaining in character as a punk, shows how this is not

necessarily his safest course of action, and the second, about

an actor who performs murder on stage, suggests that this

person is socially viable perhaps only because he confines

his most theatrical conduct to stages:

> N got into trouble last night. After drinking
> beer all evening, he followed a courting couple
> through the centre of Bath. When the couple
> entered a telephone kiosk together and started
> kissing each other, N responded like a true punk
> by opening the kiosk door and yelling at the
> couple: "You dirty fuckers!" Then he slammed the
> door on them as hard as he could. A small pane
> of glass at the bottom of the door fell out and
> broke in two on the pavement and at exactly the
> same instant a hand clamped itself on N's
> shoulder. N turned round to confront the
> policeman who had been following him following
> the couple. The policeman arrested N, took him
> to the Police Station, and charged him with some
> offence or other. N was kept in custody until
> bailed from the Magistrates' Court the following
> morning.

> Night after night, watching McMurphy grab Big
> Nurse by the throat and then hammer her head
> against the wall of the Nurses' Station, I am
> struck by how murderous B looks when he is doing
> this. The expression on his face seems then the
> perfect completion of another expression he often
> has off-stage, of glazed restraint. Perhaps this
> kind of tolerated head banging has become
> indispensable for his general sense of himself.
> It's not easy to imagine what he would do or be
> if he wasn't allowed to act, but I don't feel
> it would necessarily not be frightening for
> society.

The interesting in social life, then, is that which makes

a sense more absorbing than is usual, and whose regard involves

a loss of self to the degree that the lost self is absorbed.

So interest is a form of rapture - much more frequently

encountered than rapture - which, I now add, must stand most

chance of being experienced in the rituals of ritual life when

these are "full" as in theatres.

Interest shown also revises the interested person, for after being interested he returns to himself changed from the person he was before becoming interested, but rapture that can come to a climax in catharsis can completely change the enraptured person, as I now elaborate.

Sociable Catharsis and Cathartic Sociability

I have said that persons are apt to be perfunctory in their interpretations of one another, but this, I now submit, may be partly a result of the press and rush of modern social arrangements. No one has enough time for anyone else. The ritual deprivation stemming from this endless social super- ficiality - which exists even between those lovers who keep glancing at their watches - may build up to a well-nigh insatiable demand for processed, condensed, dramatic life. In Anglo-American culture, it does seem that there must be stages and screens on which lives are distilled and served up with a narrative clarity that makes normal life look as if its medium is mud, and the human images on these stages and screens are there to receive the viewer's identification to such a degree that he will get rid of his limiting self the more so as he is "moved".

It is often wondered why entertainment thrives in hard times, and surprise is expressed that people who should be facing up to adverse realities choose escape. By my reasoning, the escape is a functional reassurance that the escaper is not really as imprisoned by his social circumstance as he had thought. Entertainment lets people be the people

life prevents them from becoming, and they need to be these
people very much indeed, for if they cannot become them they
stop being people altogether. (Conversely, when life is too
pleasant, persons may seek out entertainment that blackens
their horizons, going to see Citizen Kane or King Lear. In
this way they escape the delusion that, for example, human
beings are happy creatures.) So the stage and the screen
are where society short-circuits itself. The dullage of
everyday life is simply cut out, both as content and
consequence. (Of course, what is shown must look like the
dullage, but unlike everyday dullage it should be dense with
meaning.)[6]

Aristotle (1975) thought that all healthy societies
should include the dramatic performances of tragedy. Within
tragedy there should be, he says, "incidents arousing pity and
fear," the pity at seeing a person receiving "undeserved
misfortune" and the fear from his being "a man like ourselves."
The social purpose of drama, Aristotle thought, is to draw
its audience into it by empathetic identification so that the
emotions they will feel by imitation[7] will "purge" them
"cathartically". It is as though, for Aristotle, the dramatic
short-circuit is an electro-convulsive therapy for audiences,
jolting them into seeing sense where, before, their social
life had been slowly turning into a long sad vista of entropic
repetitions.

In my rhetoric catharsis is simply the outcome of rapture
at possession, and maybe it is most necessary for those most
"out of" life, as Freud found, for he took this concept to the

centre of his therapeutic practice.[8]

It even seems that possessions in general may often be the outcome of cathartic rapture, and it is possible that rapture in this way has an important function for possession, not just between people but as a routine imaginative require- ment. Thus the renowned bio-chemist Jacques Monod (1974) thinks his understanding of a protein molecule is arrived at in this fashion:

> I have . . . found myself, after lengthy
> concentration on the imagined experience to
> the exclusion of everything else, identifying
> with a molecule of protein. However, it is
> not at that moment that the significance of
> the simulated experiences becomes clear, but
> only when it has been enunciated symbolically.
> Indeed, the nonvisual images with which
> simulation works should be regarded not as
> symbols, but, if I may so phrase it, as the
> subjective and abstract "reality" offered
> directly to imaginary experience.

Here Monod says that his merging with a form, not even human, enables his later representation of it through a symbolic performance, which - if this makes him understand the molecule anew - is then cathartic. The same process is described by the French literary critic Maurice Nadeau (1972), attributing it to Flaubert (the quoted phrases in the following are taken by Nadeau from Flaubert's correspondence):

> For Flaubert, to write was to allow himself
> to be invested by "the objective" until he
> merged into it, and then, by "atrocious labour"
> and "fanatical and devoted perseverance" to
> "operate" on the compound formed by the
> interiorized "thing" or the exteriorized self
> and make it yield up the word which gives it
> its existence. In this way, "style is the

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> very life-blood of thought" though the
> "marvellous chemistry" by which words explode
> into another world, another nature, "remains
> completely incomprehensible."

Flaubert merges with the world he perceives and "explodes"

out of it (catharsis) as words that are "another world" or

"another nature", or, in my terms, a ritual realm.   (This

ritual realm of course is not Schutz's paramount reality,

but is paramount to those lost in it, who, for example,

reading a book, may reach a point of not being able to see

that it is mere words.   The words conceal their verbality

then as successfully as successful ritual people conceal

their biological humanness.)   Nadeau goes on to say that

for Flaubert "as for Mallarmé, language 'nothings'

(neantise) the thing it designates, and must be 'nothinged'

in its turn for the thing to emerge in its primal freshness

together with the unique expression which reveals it."   So

one might say that to speak at all is to catharsize oneself,

coming to be the exact possession of what had been enrapturing.

Not all catharses are like Madame Bovary, and against that

many individuals, with no forms or words for anything,

perhaps eschewing these in favour of "authenticity", are the

positively or negatively enraptured abeyances of themselves,

never, as it is said, "coming into their own," as little

definable as babies who in place of sentences and paragraphs

can only cry "Wow" or "Too much".[9]

Ritual realms, it must not be forgotten, are not really

there, and only arise in words and performances, but words

and performances are really there for people, where reality is

not, because they are ritual realms generated by articulated

incorporations of otherness into self. This is not a
question of one frame being preferred over another (Goffman,
1975), but of a frame itself preferring more than others to
be preferred. So Flaubert, the artist-masturbator, an
alchemist of meaning, distils an aphrodisiac that is itself
for itself, or as Flaubert put it, "Madame Bovary, c'est moi."
People do this sort of thing, I have suggested, because they
want to be people, i.e. always more interestingly defined.
They are scientists through and through: they want to be the
knowable unknown of themselves and more than that to be
carried away by themselves so as to know more of more
unknowability, and so on.

So I conclude here that phenomena make sense sometimes
to the point of becoming interesting, and that the interest
they command can turn into rapture which can dissolve an
enraptured self prior to its new resolution, and that this
may be a general feature of creative intellection.

The point has been reached now where rapture, because of
its far-reaching effect of identity destruction, does not look
innocuous any more, as does some such condition as "taking
the role of the other." An enraptured person, far from
taking the role of the other, a phrase which implies and
which I think is meant to imply that there is not only a
degree of choice in the "taking" but only a small amount of
the self engaged in doing this taking, actually becomes wholly
the other, submitting to the other in an absolute manner. So
the possessed other of an enraptured person is his master.

Is the self-destruction of rapture better avoided? I
now try to answer "No" to this question, largely by arguing
against Sennett (1977), who would answer "Yes". But first I

shall go into the interaction phenomenon of "atmosphere",
to emphasise a point to be made more strongly later that
human interaction in an "atmospheric" or quasi-rapturous
(positive or negative) state is so because it is on the verge
of possessions it fears and desires.   This will support my
view that rapture - as Sennett fears it is not - is inherently
unstable and ever likely to give way to possession.

An "atmosphere" may be defined as the behavioural
state for interactants in which the dominant orientations
are to unacted performances that are nonetheless indicated
by the present conduct.   A cheerful atmosphere is one in
which participants might seem to be restraining themselves
from breaking into song and dance, while an unpleasant
atmosphere is one in which open expressions of dislike and
acts of hostility are "just below the surface".   "Air" can
be "cleared" of threatening antipathies by addressing them
directly; serious differences that still cannot be settled
then may be settled interactionally with the formula of
"agreeing to differ," which will be a mutual tolerance of
irreconcilable opinions in which expressed "undercurrents"
of dislike are outlawed by common consent.

Sometimes, however, atmospheres can be so thick that
"you could cut them with a knife".   (In atmospheres like
these an interactant may not even dare to open his mouth
lest "one wrong word" result in his having "his head bitten
off".)   Most marriages produce thick atmospheric conditions

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at times, in which one or other or both of the partners may

be reduced to complaining, "Everything I do seems to be

wrong." This "getting on each other's nerves" can be cleared

not only by verbal agreements but also by the interactional

quantum leap to a "row", during which performances can include

physical assault, shouting, screaming, violent language,

weeping, and the smashing of treasured objects. Rows that

do not end in injuries or in one or other partner "walking

out", and often those that do, eventually lead to reconciliations,

when the whole process is set in motion again. What is

happening here, I suggest, is that persons who are too familiar

with each other's possessions suffer thwarted rapture which

builds up an atmosphere only cleared if the possessions are

changed, as in rows, when two furious persons wholly engross

each other in the mode I have called enrapturing, though

negatively, with each side shaming the other, until catharsis

of some sort ensues ("making it up in bed," etc when the

rowing couple, two demons, are sent packing like actors after

their too-exhausting show is over.) But of course atmospheres

exist in most interactions and it may even be possible to say

that if an interaction has no atmosphere then it is not an

interaction. And it seems as if it is of the nature of

atmospheres, the thicker they get, to precipitate from

increasingly unstable negative and positive raptures quite

new possessions.

Rapture and Self-Destruction

In his important work, <u>The Fall of Public Man</u>, Richard
Sennett (1977) continually worries about the social situation
in which "one person must become master of, and distant from,
the feeling to which another will submit." But I think that,
correct though he is to isolate the activity of submission,
he misplaces his reservations in the actual process of
interaction rather than in the purposes and abilities of
possessing persons.   After all, it is exhilarating and
enlarging to submit to Johan Sebastian Bach when it is not
nearly so improving to go along with Barbra Streisand and is
perverting to sink oneself into the person of a Charles Manson.
Christopher Ricks (1974) in his book about John Keats,
<u>Keats and Embarrassment</u>, makes my point when he shows that
Keats' ability to empathize, rated by Ricks as outstanding,
derived from the very instability of his own identity, whose
instability, Ricks argues, is the necessary condition for
empathy.   There is no contradiction here.   Strong identity
is not fixed identity, but is one that is extraordinarily
sensitive and accommodative to its human surround, and the
more sensitive it is through its instability the more it will
know the difference between Bach and Radio One.   Rapture is
not, however, involuntary (as Sennett assumes it always must
be) but, when it is volunteered, of course it is submission
(as Sennett regrets very deeply), of a nature, I must say,
that simply cannot be maintained (whatever Sennett fears)
when what it would submit to shows itself as ugly according to
an aesthetic scale developed through earlier submissions.   The
idea being advanced here, that to be fixed and unyielding is to

be weak of identity, is actually quite an old one, even though it still runs contrary to many modern behavioural myths. Strindberg (1964) in 1888 put it as follows:

> The word "character" has, over the years,
> frequently changed its meaning.   Originally
> it meant the dominant feature in a person's
> psyche, and was synonymous with temperament.
> Then it became the middle-class euphemism
> for automaton; so that an individual who had
> stopped developing, or who had moulded himself
> to a fixed role in life - in other words,
> stopped growing - came to be called a "character"
> - whereas the man who goes on developing, the
> skilful navigator of life's river, who does not
> sail with a fixed sheet but rides before the
> wind to luff again, was stigmatised as
> "characterless" (in, of course, a derogatory
> sense) because he was so difficult to catch,
> classify and keep tabs on.

I do not think, however, that Sennett need be accused of having a middle-class prejudice against protean man, but it does seem that the cynicism with which performers sometimes view their performances makes him very suspicious of rapture. Thus, as if to seal his argument, he quotes Liszt on Paganini: "He who created so much enthusiasm could make no friends among his fellow men. . . . Paganini's god was never any other than his own gloomy, sad 'I'."   But this situation only comes about for Paganini because he would not or could not find any possession beyond his own in which to enrapture himself, and the fault for this surely lies elsewhere than in his own musical virtuosity in front of audiences.

It seems to me, then, that what most troubles Sennett is that possession - which I am saying the performer can hardly ever experience as his audience does - carries audiences away

to nowhere but where they came from and this very often
through a possession the performer turns on like a mechanical
projector.   But Sennett seems to have quite forgotten his
earlier book, The Uses of Disorder (1970), in which he makes
this excellent observation:

> The fact that a man can care about something
> outside himself is a sign that he has a
> distinctive self of his own.

Men who cannot become enraptured at least to this degree of
"caring" are, Sennett says in The Uses of Disorder, "indifferent
to the effects of their acts, especially in moments of strain,
because they have not developed a sense of themselves that
would give them the strength to have a sense of others."   And
Sennett's ideas are the same as mine when, in the earlier book,
he says that caring is a prerequisite for being somebody -
because caring, a form of empathy, is mild rapture - but when he
proposes, in The Fall of Public Man, that you cannot have a
self if you allow it to feel rapture I think he assumes that
rapture must preclude possession.   Sennett's horror of an
encounter group society, in which human forms would degenerate
into a psychosocial ooze, is one I share, but this kind of
society is surely not prevented by a taboo on rapture, and may
not be prevented, either, by a taboo on becoming enraptured by
poor people (F R Leavis would strongly disagree) because any
state of rapture is the beginning of a voyage out of the self
and, in any case, cannot survive either its disillusion with
any given possession or the disintegration of that possession.

My argument is that Sennett's two extremes - on the one
hand the personalisation of self by unique conduct and on the
other hand the elaborate control of the ungiving self - are

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not polar opposites. The opposite of originality is not

controlled unoriginality, for originality, I have shown,

depends on control much more than does unoriginality. (I

have in fact claimed that originality has no polar opposite,

only its rapturous appreciation, the state Sennett equates

with passive unoriginality.) Presence of rapture, I

therefore contend, in no wise irretrievably dissolves the

self and may even be a condition for the self's growth

(though absence of rapture need not prevent wholly original

possessions).

Now follow two fieldnote passages about occasions that

illustrate this idea. In the first a punk becomes more of

a punk by having been enraptured by a punk performer, and in

the second nurses work in a more nurse-like fashion after

helplessly watching others being more nurse-like than themselves.

Jimmy Pursey, of the only currently viable punk
group, Sham 69, has been on stage an hour at the
Bath Pavilion. He finishes a song, and then, in
the silence, points at the handcuffs he has
clipped into the belt loops of his jeans. Out
of breath from singing and dancing around, he now
almost gasps into the microphone (setting off some
painful feedback): "The next one's for anyone who's
ever worn a pair of these." This excites the
punks like nothing else, and as the guitars
practically knock down the back wall with their
opening chords the punks pogo faster than ever.
They're completely out of time with the beat,
punching fists into the air and leaping up and
down out of phase with one another. Over their
bobbing heads in the spotlight beam the air
clouds with the steam of their sweat, and Jimmy
Pursey, on stage alone in the beam, writhes like a
skewered dervish. Then he freezes and the noise
stops dead and he yells into the microphone: "I
never had fuck all!" And before one has time to
respond to this in one's mind the music hits one
again like a hammer blow between the eyes. The
punks are beside themselves, all of them thoroughly
enraptured, and in their midst I spot one of the

Bath punks who for the first time in twelve
months looks as if he's enjoying himself.
After the concert, on my way to a restaurant,
I see him standing alone, very posed, right on
the edge of a kerb next to fast traffic in a
one-way street.   The passing headlights splash
him with violent light and shadow so that his
face is like a flickering, heatless flame,
hardly a part of his general appearance which
is that of a teenage tramp who has been dragged
backwards through barbed-wire dripping with
day-glo dyes.   I am convinced that he is
absolutely conscious of his stance, and that he
relishes the image he makes.   His being as he
is at this moment can only be as a result of
his earlier total identification with Jimmy
Pursey on stage.

Bedmaking is done in pairs clockwise round the
ward.   With some nurses, it's very easy to
match my movements with pillow, sheet, blanket,
and bedspread to theirs, and with others almost
impossible.   And yet all do it in exactly the
same prescribed fashion.   The nurses are well
aware that this is how it always is.   Today, a
nurse new on the ward partners up with the very
tidy nurse, the one who opts for working with
equipment rather than with people whenever she
can.   The two seem to be competing, not only to
see how fast each can go but to see how neatly
they can work.   When they get onto their third
bed, they don't see that Sister (who is very bad
at beds herself, and knows it) is now stood
watching them, quite fascinated.   The rest of us
also stop doing what we are doing and watch,
because it is impossible to take one's eyes off
this brilliantly synchronised "first-time"
performance.   The two nurses finish their bed
and then, of course, notice they have been the
centre of attention.   Sister smiles at them and
walks off back to her office, while the two nurses
look at each other and at the rest of us and laugh
as does everybody now.   Then, when we resume our
bedmaking, we try a little harder and work a little
faster, and only because we have seen how well what
we are doing can be done.

Being a Person Means Losing Oneself

In exploring what by my theoretical light seem to be one
or two inadequacies on Sennett's part, I have cleared the way
for my making of the point (already made from possession's
point of view at the end of Chapter VII) that pure possessions
exhaust "being" not only of those who would become enraptured
by them but also of those who are so possessed, and this point
I make to suggest that auto-rapture, which I shall deal with
shortly, is an implicit, but only implicit, condition of the
possessed person. His state of being nothing but his legible
surface needs, as I have said, his full control, which would be
gone if he went over to rapture at a possession that in this
case just happens to be his own. But, implicitly, all of
himself, of whom his possession is its clearest definition, is
taken into his own possession just as it would be if he were
enraptured by it, but with this difference, that it is taken
into a form that it already knows, in which, usually, it
cannot get lost unless it would wittingly or unwittingly confuse
the possession. (Thus, if you do it yourself, you <u>do</u> it, and
if someone else does it in front of you he does it and you do
not have to do it yourself, and if you are the one doing it
your "implicit" rapture is the loss of your being with no
compensating bonus of discovery.) Sartre (1963) says much the
same of Genet's and Wilde's absolute declaration for the
surfaces of life:

> If Genet feels in his heart that Beauty concerns
> him, the reason is that, like evil, it demands of
> him the most difficult conduct. It requires that
> he live according to its law, the law that Wilde,

> prince of aesthetes, calls style and Genet
> elegance. "In matters of great importance,"
> says the former, "the vital element is not
> sincerity, but style." And the latter: "The
> only criterion of an act is its elegance."
> Elegance: the quality of conduct which
> transforms the greatest quantity of being into
> <u>appearing</u>. An act is the less elegant as it
> leaves a larger quantity of waste, of
> unassimilable residues, as it involves a greater
> degree of utilitarian conduct. Gratuitous and
> destructive, the act is all the more elegant as
> it transforms reality into appearance for a
> larger number of spectators.

Elegance, style, and possession, the more intense they are, are all the more concerned with audience, and are the truest manifestations of social man: that is the message of this thesis. Yet both Wilde and Genet, extreme stylists, the one with his cult of beauty, in which the contemplation of beauty was the only other excuse for life besides that of being beautiful oneself, and the other with his devotion to criminals (practised both by his passive homosexuality and his adorational prose), found that their creation of aesthetic words of performance was invariably the outcome of respective losses of self in rapturous abandonment. So the implicit rapture of clear possession may be a function of a person's capacity for direct rapture in an external possession, the greater this latter capacity the more his potential for effective self possession. This I think supports my argument that rapture and possession are very often found side by side, to the same degree, in the same person, as well as reciprocally between persons. Thus it would follow that, when persons interact, their biographies, for example, may have very little importance if the interaction is ritually alive, and if it is alive like this it may come about that any interactant may feel he is any other interactant. Interactants will then

feel strange or familiar as they are possessed or enraptured,

and sometimes, when a possession is perfect and the strange

is as familiar as the familiar is strange, interaction -

at its most interactive - will be a juggling of endlessly

metamorphosing identities that hardly belong to the bodies

without which (in not every case) they could not be there.

In everyday life one does not meet many moral aesthetes

on the order of Wilde or Genet, but one is unlikely to meet

another person who does not act, who does not conjure a

realm, and who does not do this except to try to bring about

in his audience a belief, which he would like to be a

rapturous one, that by his performance he comes into his own

as a person, just like them. A person then is someone who

if you look at him is not there, because if he is there you

cannot look at him, since then you must be him, who is not

watched by your eyes but entered by these, and this "him" is

constituted not by any confessional act of definition but by

the quality of his playing with any material that comes to

his hand, only being his and his only because of, if he has

it, his unique style or "behavioural signature", as Goffman

(1975, p 547) has said:

> ...when an individual appears in person before
> his familiars and joins with them in talk -
> surely the place where we ought to see him in
> the round, acting for himself, in his own name
> and in his own way - he frames himself from
> view. To say that he assumes a role and
> presents himself through it is already a bias
> in the direction of wholeness and authenticity.
> What he does is to present a one-man show. He
> animates. That much is his own, his doing of
> the moment. But this capacity to present is
> largely used in the name of principals other
> than he-himself-at-the-moment. Certainly,
> beliefs, concerns, feelings, attitudes, are
> "expressed"; "inner states" are documented.
> But these displays are not some privileged
> access to the biological innards of the speaker,
> for they are properly to be attributed to a

figure animated, not the animator.

So a person is not someone who merely is a person before
one's very eyes - such a person is only a creature, as he
must be to those students of interaction who cannot or will
not become enraptured (consider the above quotation and try
to visualise the individual described, and immediately you
realise that your refusal to be taken in by his performance
makes him little more than a figure of fun). A person is
someone who agitates his audience's imaginations, a being
who is the pretext for a world of meanings, a sort of
behavioural commotion that both he and his others with their
gestures and their words seem to be groping through as if
there is a way out of it into a world of clear, hard truth
not a long way away but, if only one can find the right
word at the right time, liable to open itself up at any
instant. And occasionally a person does and says things
in such a way that those around him fall in love with him,
by which I mean they lose their sense of separation, becoming
nothing but possessed consciousnesses wishing to further
excite the being they are watching, but are no longer conscious
of watching, into a form so true that it will be irrefutable.
A society without citizens who can relate in these ways, it
must be said, is not much more than a crowd of strangers, a
sort of limbo to a hell of inviolable solitudes, and is not a
social place that will claim any loyalty from its denizens,
nor have much use for sociology if sociology is the study of
social life considered as being social. This asocial limbo,
of course, exists for the major part of their time for the
majority of people, in every city of the world.

To close this section I invite the reader to ponder the following long excerpt from my theatre fieldnotes, which hints at what rapturous interaction might be. Then I follow that with an excerpt from a transcript of a university seminar which shows a singular lack of rapture between the two conversants who are in fact colleagues:

We shove our way into the club - it's like boarding a Northern Line tube in the rush hour at Leicester Square - and start struggling towards the bar. Already slightly drunk, after the post-performance drinks in the Griffin, no one notices their feet being trodden on or that they are treading on other people's feet and also on coats that have been brushed off the backs of chairs. I fancy that I am first to the bar but there ahead of me to my left is B, his eyes very bright, presumably because the pupils are dilated after his sniffing cocaine earlier on in the men's dressing room. He would also appear to have lost the capacity to blink. I wonder who he's going to be when he orders his pint of Guinness, the Lancashire lad made good, the gypsy, the forthright artesan, the gifted director, McMurphy, the womaniser, the failure and alcoholic, the paranoid, the rustic thespian, or what. He tilts his head back very slightly and at the same time turns his head very slightly from side to side taking in not only me but the entire press of his fellow actors shoving towards the bar, each of them thrusting paper money at Tom and his assistant as they dash back and forth behind the counter, drawing the outstretched hands after them like tentacles. Tom seems more hunched than usual, peering out from under his forehead as though expecting a hail of glasses and bottles, and then he sees B and notices the familiar look of calm belligerence, and comes to him straightaway. I've been so intent on watching B ride this rip-tide of outsize personalities that I have stopped hearing the noise. Then I come to and hear an undifferentiated roar, through which the juke-box - it's the Stranglers singing, "Whatever happened to Leon Trotsky?" - even at full volume can barely be heard. There's a sudden lull in the sound and it coincides with a brief pause in the music. B supplies the Stranglers' next line slightly ahead of them and in an undertone: "He got an ice-pick." B buys me a pint along with his Guinness which means that he's decided

to be Orson Welles, and I feel he wants me to
say something arresting so as to justify to
him his decision to make me privy to his life
style. Without really thinking, I lean across
and shout in his hear: "Alcohol, the great
ventriloquist." He smiles broadly. Then a
voice in my ear - it belongs to Martini, but
I can't turn round to check because of the
crush - says, with surprising clarity above
the roar: "Glove puppets!" There's a lot of
laughter and spilled beer now, and the next
thing I remember I am in a group sat round a
circular table so full of glasses that there
isn't space for a matchbox let alone a micro
tape-recorder. Hands keep swooping into the
collection of full and empty and half-empty
glasses and sometimes - it's almost surprising
- they snatch up not glasses but lit cigarettes
from the ashtray in the middle of them all.
I'm very aware of people's teeth and the red
fingernails of women and the eyes glancing this
way and that and voices almost polyphonic
as if detached from faces and including my
own as if detached from me. I keep looking
at my watch - every time I do so I think I am
looking at it too much - and each time it shows
another thirty minutes as if some child under
the table has moved on the minute hand for
devilment. In the toilets I try to reconstruct
who I am sitting with and what the conversation
has been about, but B comes in and, as if I
have prompted the remark, says conclusively:
"No more heroes." After a pause, he adds:
"The excellence of mediocrity." I just cannot
remember what I said, but I do remember him
chuckling with appreciation. The next day (now,
as I am writing) I feel - through a headache
like pounding smog - that I have been in a sort
of giant concrete mixer and haven't yet reformed
into a slightly different shape to the one I
had before I chucked myself into the mixer. My
only thought at this point - the point of
giving up the reconstruction of persons and their
statements, which I never carried on from where
I began it in the toilets last night - is that
people are afraid of self-propelled interaction
not because the reasons for it may be wrong
but because it can become the reason for every-
thing else which, when it is lacking, leaves
one in social worlds that simply do not feel
sufficiently social. Thus pubs, pub life, and
the "problem" of alcoholism.

X: So if you look at that work and I don't
     want to get into that stuff in detail because
     it's - it's all very complicated and - and
     um well worked out I mean it's well worth
     while just going back to the thing. They've
     got - let me see - they've got - they
     identify eight threats to internal validity
     and another four to external validity, and
     they work out all sorts of elegant designs
     (pause in which speaker smiles pityingly
     and patronisingly) of - um - experimental
     treatments to meet these different threats.
     Um...

Y: Interesting...

(The door to this seminar room has swung into an
open position of its own accord.)

X: What? (Looks to door.) A non-person coming
     in.

Y: Non-person coming in.

X: An invalid person.

(No laughter. Four seconds of silence.)

X: So, and then there's all sorts of other -
     sort of - discussions about validity, there's
     all sorts of different definitions about
     validity - um - in the literature, about -
     um - face validity - about whether it looks
     right on the surface - at least to a
     reasonably discriminative observer does it
     look right. And there's notions of convergent
     validity, which are the notions of using
     a set of different measures to sort of
     triangulate in on what we're trying to
     measure...

Y: Sorry X - Can I? - I'm in a muddle - I don't
     know when - how soon you want the discussion
     to start, because I don't want to stop your
     - your development of the argument but there
     are already one or two queries I've got.

X: Aha.

Y: And they're terminological. Are you talking
     of validity of measures or the validity of
     evidence or the validity of conclusions?
     Because some of the things you've been saying
     are traditionally in the business of the
     validity of measures, like valid - like
     validity and reliability of measures - do they
     measure what they purport to measure. Um.
     But some of the arguments might also be about
     the validity of conclusions which you come to

on the basis of examining the evidence -

X: Uhum.

Y: Is your evidence a valid sample or is the
        conclusion you've drawn validly drawn. Which
        is it you're talking about?

X: Yeah. That's a confusion in my mind as well.

        Man, therefore, does not live by himself alone. But some

manage quite well, sometimes seemingly indifferent to the rest

of the species, in a state, auto-rapture, whose definition is

overdue.

Auto-Rapture

        I started out by saying that a person cannot enrapture

himself. This is not strictly true, but cases of auto-rapture,

as one might call it, do depend on the strangeness of the self

to the "same" self that regards it. Louis Bouilhet reported

that his friend Gustave Flaubert could not help crying when he

re-read Madame Bovary. Here an author is worked on by his own

performance. Similarly a man might build his own physique into

something wondrous to his eyes, as one of the heroes of Mishima's

Kyoko's House (in Nathan, 1975) does:

        What he now beheld was something he had
        created himself; moreover it was himself.

Mike Katz (Gaines & Butler, 1980) has similar experiences:

        Sometimes when you're working out in the gym,
        and you're so much more developed and, you
        know, unbelievable in comparison to anybody

> working out around you, you say to yourself,
> "Man, am I real? Is it possible that I
> really am this big?"

Freud (1978) says that women "especially if they grow up with good looks" love themselves as deeply as they are loved by men. Of these and other auto-rapturous beings he writes:

> Such women have the greatest fascination for men,
> not only for aesthetic reasons, since as a rule
> they are the most beautiful, but also because of
> a combination of interesting psychological factors.
> For it seems very evident that another person's
> narcissism has a great attraction for those who
> have renounced part of their own narcissism and
> are in search of object love. The charm of a
> child lies to a great extent in his narcissism,
> his self-contentment and inaccessibility, just
> as does the charm of certain animals which seem
> not to concern themselves about us, such as cats
> and the large beasts of prey. Indeed, even great
> criminals and humorists as they are represented
> in literature, compel our interest by the
> narcissistic consistency with which they manage
> to keep away from their ego anything that would
> diminish it.

What Freud is saying here, of course, virtually rejects its own concept of narcissism, for there is no need to say any more than that the self enraptured in itself is only enraptured by what would enrapture any self, and that this is the simple reason why other selves come to be enraptured by auto-enraptured people. (And being enraptured in or possessed by one's own possession of the moment must strengthen it so long as the auto-rapture does not reduce the possession's consciousness.)

But, as if going along with Freud's idea that narcissism or auto-rapture is of itself attractive, many people assume that auto-rapturous persons would be relatively closed to possessions other than their own. I now advance the opposite view that a person is more likely to be able to achieve the state of auto-

rapture if he can become relatively easily enraptured by
other possessions first.

To appreciate this, it must be born in mind that rapture
is not a state produced as it were involuntarily. A great
performance might be resisted - Pontius Pilate was only "almost"
persuaded - and a bad one might be used for absorptive purposes,
as when people allow themselves to drift into the tune of an
indifferent song. So persons can deliberately cultivate their
interest and rapture in artefacts or performances they would be
inclined to ignore. Thus Genet, as Sartre (1963) discloses:

> He [Genet] uses gestures as instruments of
> prospecting. He has informed us of his method:
> "I take gestures chosen from young men passing
> by. At times it's a French soldier, an American,
> a hoodlum, a bartender. . . . They suddenly
> offer me a gesture which can only be Erik's.
> I shall take note of it. . . . I sometimes try
> to imitate the discovered gesture. I note the
> state that it makes me know." No doubt he is
> only momentarily a beggar, a fallen queen, a ship's
> ensign. But there are only momentary souls. The
> one that remains longest or that recurs most often
> we call our soul, and we are surprised to find it
> again after a long journey. Proust, too,
> experienced the surprise that Genet cultivates
> and that Darling tries to ignore, and he often
> wondered how, "after deep slumber. . . . seeking
> one's mind, one's personality, as one seeks a
> lost object, one ends by finding one's own self
> rather than any other."

In this way an oft-enraptured person can almost become a
stranger to himself, or, to put it in the language of this
thesis, can reawaken himself to the contingent nature of his own
possession which then - just because it has been made strange -
much more than the closed "narcissistic" self opens itself up
for the rapture that is auto-rapture. He who would readily
inhabit possessions, of others and of himself, then, will develop
a finer consciousness of these than his opposite extreme, the
man who "does not waste his time" on other people. In everyday

life, one might go on to say, the "showing of an interest"
that is the mark of an auto-rapturous person will inevitably
facilitate more interesting displays, for resolute shows of
"not being interested" will likely blight all but the hardiest
ritual growths, because of the feedback process (noted in
Chapter VIII) of ritual awareness fuelling ritual power.

However, auto-rapture may not be merely and only the
personal pay-off for being interested in others or for being,
as Freud thought, interesting of oneself. A social function
is performed by its negative, "shame". The ashamed person, or
the person who fears to feel ashamed of himself, is brought into
social line by no other internal process than that, when he
contemplates, as if from outside it, his engrossing self, he,
the contemplator, is suddenly "mortified" by what engrosses him.
His rapture then does not cathartically precipitate a better
self, but, abruptly negativized, spits out a grim consciousness
bent on nothing more splendiferous than "living down" its
socially unacceptable predecessor.

One would expect, therefore, that in interaction auto-rapture
will probably alternate with possession, the fully auto-enraptured
person not being social enough and the possessed person always to
some degree - despite that I have said he is familiar with himself
from the inside - identifying rapturously with his possession (as
much as he is unfamiliar with it by his coming to it from other
enrapturing possessions), and, in the same way, two persons,
interacting, might be in a state, each of them, of alternating
possession (of himself) and rapture (in the other) that is quite
wrongly represented here as discontinuous events. Although I

shall stick to my analytic schema, I am indicating that this is

all it is, and that, useful as it may be, it may not very

accurately chart the actual reciprocations, one with another,

of possession and rapture in interaction, about which, however,

practically nothing is not open to revision. I now fill out

these thoughts a little more.

Direct and Alternating Interaction

I have already said why I think Richard Sennett (1977) is

unnecessarily alarmed by the capacities for rapture that persons

show, and I have indicated that it might be a mistake to see

rapture as exclusive of possession, as does Sennett when he says

the intimacy of private life can only beget "refugee" personalities

and "soft selves". Against the soft selves "in a hard world"

(p 260) Sennett advocates the development of masks, recommending

a new animation of these false faces, which would require the

practice of an all-but lost art of public performance between

persons. Though I thoroughly agree with Sennett that rapture

confronted with rapture involves a deterioration of human

definition inimical to the production of rapture in the first

place, I cannot go along with him in assuming that possession

must only meet equal and opposite possession - though in "rounding"

this in effect is what it does, but, I am saying, adamantly, with

intervening rapture on both sides. I say this because it does not

seem to me that it must follow that an enraptured person is not,

straightaway after being enraptured, capable of assuming a

commanding possession, any more than it must follow that a

possessed person is not, straightaway after

achieving a very high definition of self, capable of sinking
completely into someone else's equally defined performance.
Thus I am led to say that this process of possession becoming
rapture in each and every person of an interacting group may
be normal for all proper interactions, the oscillations perhaps
being very rapid. Certainly it would seem that in the case of
lovers there is likely to be incredibly quick oscillation,
for both interactants, between losing the self in the other and
feeling the other to be lost in the self, with additional
contrapuntal oscillations between losing oneself in one's lost
self in the other and finding oneself in the other's lost self
in oneself.

A good question to ask now is, "How does a person recover
himself from rapture?" I think that he does not so much tear
himself out of someone else's possession as find that it is no
longer enough to hold him, and he knows he is not being held
by noting that he has "come to". Coming-to and "staying to"
may lead to boredom with an interaction. Boredom, then, may be
the absence of rapture through the persistent presence of an
unenrapturing self. Solitary confinement perhaps would not be
the punishment it is were this not the case.

Perhaps, also, the alternating current of self and not-self
is what charges lovemaking with its feeling of being more
creative than any other kind of social interaction, the biological
creation sometimes consequent upon the activity being seized on
as a convenient rhetoric of description by those, the majority,
who so far lack sociological imagination as to mistake copulation
for a celebration of biological relations when, as often as it
may be that, it is also the process of biologies being used to

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effect very special social bondings, which the Christian marriage service, for example, recognises in the phrase, "With my body I thee worship." (The biological reduction translates that into, "With myself I worship thy body.") Mutual engrossment of any sort might then require that both parties are able to be fascinating for each other at the exact same time that they can also lose themselves in each other without thereby relinquishing their separate fascinations. Thus social interaction that is fully interactive enough to feel for the interactants like interaction might depend on these sorts of rapid oscillations of the self, it only being the case in stage performances that the division of labour is not made within each interactant but actually between interactants. The following passage from James Joyce's (1948) A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man I think does show that an enraptured person may not be lost to his surroundings even when only one aspect of these enraptures him:

> His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and
> down the dark slimy streets peering into the
> gloom of lanes and doorways, listening eagerly
> for any sound. He moaned to himself like some
> baffled prowling beast. He wanted to sin with
> another of his kind, to force another being to
> sin with him and to exult with her in sin. He
> felt some dark presence moving irresistibly
> upon him from the darkness, a presence subtle
> and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly
> with itself. Its murmur besieged his ears like
> the murmur of some multitude in sleep; its
> subtle streams penetrated his being. His hands
> clenched convulsively and his teeth set together
> as he suffered the agony of its penetration.
> He stretched out his arms in the street to hold
> fast the frail swooning form that eluded him
> and incited him: and the cry that he had
> strangled so long in his throat issued from his
> lips. It broke from him like a wail of despair
> from a hell of sufferers and died in a wail of
> furious entreaty, a cry for an iniquitous
> abandonment, a cry which was but the echo of an
> obscene scrawl which he had read on the oozing
> wall of a urinal.

> He had wandered into a maze of narrow and
> dirty streets. From the foul laneways he
> heard bursts of hoarse riot and wrangling
> and the drawling of drunken singers. He
> walked onward, undismayed, wondering whether
> he had strayed into the quarter of the jews.
> Women and girls dressed in long vivid gowns
> traversed the street from house to house.
> They were leisurely and perfumed. A trembling
> seized him and his eyes grew dim. The yellow
> gas flames arose before his troubled vision
> against the vapoury sky, burning as if before
> an altar. Before the doors and in the lighted
> halls groups were gathered arrayed as for some
> rite. He was in another world: he had
> awakened from a slumber of centuries.
>
> He stood still in the middle of the roadway,
> his heart clamouring against his bosom in a
> tumult. A young woman dressed in a long pink
> gown laid her hand on his arm to detain him
> and gazed into his face. She said gaily:
>
> - Good night, Willie dear!
>
> Her room was warm and lightsome. A huge doll
> sat with her legs apart in the copious easychair
> beside the bed. He tried to bid his tongue
> speak that he might seem at ease, watching her
> as she undid her gown, noting the proud
> conscious movements of her perfumed head.
>
> As he stood silent in the middle of the room she
> came over to him and embraced him gaily and
> gravely. Her round arms held him firmly to her
> and he, seeing her face lifted to him in serious
> calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of
> her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping.

Goffman (1963) says that full engrossments (such as rapture)
cannot occur in public without involvement rules being broken,
and earlier I said that rapture is not seen outside of private
places. But maybe, after all, rapture can exist in gatherings,
hidden away in very thin slices of time. ~~Thus rules of
gatherings, hidden away in very thin slices of time.~~ Thus rules
of gatherings may not be broken even when a state is experienced
that has no consciousness to spare for their observance. And,
more than that, I do not think it is always the case that

publicly enraptured persons are deemed out of order. My

own entirely personal point of view here is that, very often,

indulgent others can be a little enraptured themselves by

shows of mutual engrossment, even when these are fist fights

and slanging matches.

This concludes the essential material of this chapter,

but before ending it in so many words I shall add some

reflections on Sartre to show that my rhetoric does not lack

the corroboration of other rhetorics whose theoretical

equipment moreover is vastly superior to mine and only not

used in this thesis because it has been my concern to manage

without its ontological and psychological "whirligigs"

(Jameson, 1976; Sartre, 1963).

Conclusion

Sennett, I have shown, deplores mutual rapture because

his analysis does not contain the possibility - which is

central to mine - of this only really being worth calling

rapture if it alternates with very precise possession. But

another fundamental disagreement with my thesis seems to come

from Jean-Paul Sartre (1963) in his book Saint Genet: Actor

and Martyr. Sartre, the exact reverse of Sennett, lauds

rapture and deplores possession, as in this passage which
          his
begins by/asking why Jean Genet seeks to identify with

(enrapture himself in) others:

> Why does he demand disgust and rebuffs, the
> other's indifference, the tortures of jealousy
> and, in the end, the despair that comes from
> the certainty of not being loved? And yet he
> must have something to gain by this. What is
> behind it all? For Genet, the answer is clear:
> love is a magical ceremonial whereby the lover
> steals the beloved's being in order to
> incorporate it into himself. . . . Thus Divine
> says to Gabriel: "You're myself," and Gabriel,
> decent chap that he is, smiles fatuously
> without realizing that his blood is being
> sucked from him . . . To those who have a sense of
> belonging, to the just, to the honorable, this
> identification may seem a vain and absurd
> endeavor. But I would like to ask them whether
> they are quite sure of being themselves. How
> do I know that they have not obtained that inner
> peace of theirs by surrendering to a foreign
> protector who reigns in their stead? I know
> that the man whom I hear utter the words "We
> doctors..." is in bondage. This we doctors is
> his ego, a parasitical creature that sucks his
> blood. And even if he were only himself, there
> are a thousand ways of being delivered to oneself
> as to beasts, of feeding with one's own flesh an
> invisible and insatiable idol. For nobody may
> say the simple words: I am I. The best and
> freest of men may say: I exist. Which is
> already too much. For the others, I suggest that
> they use such formulae as: "I am Himself" or
> "I am so-and-so in person." If they do not aim
> at changing their skin, it is because the force
> that governs them does not allow them the leisure
> to do so; above all, it is because society has
> long since recognised and consecrated this symbiosis
> by according glory or simply honorability to the
> couple formed by the sick man and his parasite:
> it is a legitimate hell.

For Sartre, what possesses a man, then, is a "parasite" and

the man possessed is "sick", and whole arrangement is "hell".

Sartre, in the name of reciprocity, or deep inter-subjectivity,

as strongly resists the idea of possessions within interaction

as Sennett resists the idea of undifferentiated symbiosis.

But I think Sartre confirms that things are as he describes

them precisely by the depth of his disgust, and later on in

Saint Genet, his theory of interaction does allow for both

possession and rapture, when he calls possession "objectivity"

and rapture "subjectivity".[11]

But even Sartre's terminology is purely cognitive, bereft of a word like rapture that gets one out of the trap of thinking interaction approximates to mutually imperfect cognition. The state of rapture is an emotional one, both of escape from identity and into new identification: rapture is an emotion of metamorphosis. What this kind of emotion is, I do not know, but I suggest that rapture cannot exist without emotion, for if it did it would be an irremediable loss of self, the "lost self" no longer registering, through emotion, being new-found, in which case its reconstitution would not be catharsis but a takeover, the creation of a replica human, a zombie. Interaction, then, is about escape, and escape is emotionally toned. (When the escape is too effective, when a person is too lost, then his home self, his former prison, looms for him as a safe haven, into which from his spacious disorientation he will reversedly escape.) Why should this escape be emotional in its nature? Is it because persons are all the time much greater than they can cognitively appreciate, "ritual beings" as I have tried to capture this in words, who are mobilized even down in their biology when they are released from their limitations?

But the escape may be blocked. The disposition to rapture might confront a human object that cuts down to a small size its would-be inamorata. This human object not only may refuse a person's rapture but also may disenrapture a person with himself, because the object is a negativized possession, an acted closing of a preferred ritual realm. Negative possession draws comments like, "I hate the sight of him." (It is perfectly appropriate to my analysis that it is the "sight" of him that is hated more than is the "him".) And for he who feels it, hate is the emotion that accompanies his annihilation

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of its objects, usually in imagination, to make room for the blocked and thwarted ritual person. So hate, a central social emotion, is explained by rapture,[12] though, of course, blocked rapture may vent itself into the possessions, often seemingly there for just this purpose, of artists and entertainers. (One would expect, then, that the most ardent fans, or, in the political sphere, the most fanatical followers of charismatic leaders, will be those who are most trodden down by their fellow men, and this seems to be the case.)

So, the imperative to be a person, as I have defined persons, seems very powerful, but one must ask why. Why the endless complaint, "I just want to be treated like a human being." Why do people want to be themselves, knowing themselves to be what they do not know, and not knowing this cognitively when cognitive life is not their life as it is lived?

Perhaps one way not to find out is to construct cognitive social analyses that ignore love and hate. And perhaps theories that assume the human is a cognitive actor must end up finding that people are stupid, just because people identify with others and also refuse identifications with others on the basis of what cannot be known in advance. Cognitive theories, moreover, will not understand people in as much as people are not seen as enrapturing, but people might well understand that many cognitive theories are unenrapturing (even when the theories themselves are not understood) and so refuse identifications with them, which, whether these theories are right or wrong by any imaginable criteria, will result in their social disregard, and so also result in their having no chance of becoming self-fulfilling.

Notes

1   Barthes (1977), in his autobiography, says that his
    idea that wrestlers "unlock Justice" comes from a phrase
    of Baudelaire's - "the emphatic truth of gesture in the
    great circumstances of life." Barthes goes on: "Baudelaire
    called this excess of pose the numen (which is the silent
    gesture of the gods pronouncing on human fate). The
    numen is hysteria frozen, eternalised, trapped, since it
    is at last held motionless, pinioned by a long stare" (p 134).

2   Artists, if "originality of expression" defines art,
    are not ahead of their times, by this logic, so much as
    non-artists are behind the present. The "unacknowledged
    legislators of mankind" (Shelley) and the "antennae of the
    race" (T S Eliot) are "ahead" because they are more re-
    sponsive to current fashions that non-artists do not yet
    see as fashions.

3   But there are special occasions, like the performances
    of plays in theatres, where an absence of rapture at pos-
    session would be embarrassing, and, then, if it is gen-
    uinely absent, it may well have to be feigned.

4   Norman Mailer (1970) describes hippies marching on the
    Pentagon in 1967 as a sort of vast troupe following the
    enrapturing Beatles of Sgt Pepper:

        The hippies were there in great number, perambulating
        down the hill, many dressed like the legions of Sgt
        Pepper's band, some were gotten up like Arab sheiks, or
        in Park Avenue doormen's greatcoats, others like Rogers
        and Clark of the West, Wyatt Earp, Kit Carson, Daniel
        Boone in buckskin, some had grown mustaches to look like
        Have Gun, Will Travel - Paladin's surrogate was here! -
        and wild Indians with feathers, a hippie gotten up like
        Batman, another like Claude Rains in The Invisible Man -
        his face wrapped in a turban of bandages and he wore a
        black satin top hat. A host of these troops wore capes,
        beat-up khaki capes, slept on, used as blankets, towels,
        improvised duffel bags; or fine capes, orange linings,
        or luminous rose linings, the edges ragged, near a tatter,
        the threads ready to feather, but a musketeer's hat on
        the head. One hippie may have been dressed like Charles

Chaplin; Buster Keaton and W C Fields could have come
to the ball; there were Martians and Moon-men and a
knight unhorsed who stalked about in the weight of real
armor. There were to be seen a hundred soldiers in
Confederate gray, and maybe there were two or three
hundred hippies in officers' coats of Union dark-blue.
They had picked up their costumes where they could,
in surplus stores, and Blow-your-mind shops, Digger
free emporiums, and psychedelic caches of Hindu junk.
There were soldiers in Foreign Legion uniforms, and
tropical bush jackets, San Quentin and Chino, California
striped shirt and pants, British copies of Eisenhower
jackets, hippies dressed like Turkish shepherds and
Roman senators, gurus, and samurai in dirty smocks.
They were close to being assembled from all the inter-
sections between history and the comic books, between
legend and television, the Biblical archetypes and
the movies.

5   Waiting for Godot, the play in which "nothing happens,
twice" is nonetheless a calculated misrepresentation.
Audiences, not believing that the tramps really will go
to the nowhere of which they speak, are dramatically sur-
prised when the tramps do actually end up there. This,
because the face-value words must prove they are only face-
value, in the theatre, just as often as they are proved
not to be.

6   Societal short-circuits exist everywhere. All those who
write about life, for example, try to make it seem in-
terpretable as it had not seemed in life - or else they do
not make sense, though some forms of deliberate senselessness
make the sense that nothing makes sense - and so sociologists
too must be dramatists. There is no harm in this as long
as sociologists do not start thinking that sociology is
more important than life, for it goes without saying that
it is only because life is important that sociological and
other texts about life have their secondary importance. Of
course, the sociological short-circuit will be ignored if the
voltage is too small, and, to follow the metaphor, volts
are dramatic human enactments.

7   William James said that people do not cry because they
are sad but are sad because they cry. Eisenstein also

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writes (in Barna, 1973) of a member of an audience: "...he must, by way of fantasy, give free rein to base promptings and criminal tendencies in his nature. . . through the play of the _real_ emotions that go with his fantasy complicity in the horrors perpetrated on stage."

8   Freud relieved his neurotic patients by collaboratively rewriting their inner psychodramas in such a way that the final denouement completed hitherto looping neuroses. However, rapture will be its negative, shame, if on emerging from the Freudian possession the patient recognises it as more demeaning than his earlier representations of himself to himself, and catharsis will only "cure" if after rapture - usually some admixture of this with shame - the new possession of the enraptured person has been enriched during the loss of the old possession, by his disowning the shamed self and cleaving to his enrapturing possibilities.

9   People recognise both their need for sublime expression and their incapacity for it in locutions such as, "it was indescribable," or, "words fail me." These are second-best performances that at least point to things so enrapturing that their possession by words would not "do them justice."

10 But it is possible, _contra_ the 1970 Sennett, to go from caring to not caring, from having an identity to not having one. This is what Goffman saw happening to many of the patients travelling down betrayal funnels into the asylum wards he researched in the mid-fifties.

11 Sartre (1963) says that at one limit each person is an object (and is this only for a transcendental subject) and that at the opposite limit each person is a subject (this is only possible if objectivity completely liquidates itself). Between the two limits, persons are not homogeneous: "We are not quite objects and not quite subjects." Goffman's "embarrassment", for example, occurs when a person in his subjectivity experiences the object he is for another's

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subjectivity. Thus far Sartre has not said any more than
that persons are never wholly enraptured and never wholly
possessed, and that auto-rapture can be negativized when it
suddenly sees the possession it is for someone else in the
most unflattering moral light possible. Negative auto-
rapture, of course, is shame, a feeling of being wholly
taken up by an unwanted image of a person who moreover is
oneself, the perception of whose form having the effect on
one's moral outlook that sudden sobriety would have on a
drunk. Negative rapture, by this line of argument, would
be shame by proxy, felt for the person by whom one would be
used to being enraptured. Children who disgrace their
families, persons who commit acts so heinous that their
spouses no longer dare "show their faces" in public, people
who make their companions wish the floorboards would open
up for them, all these and many other unstable surfriders
of the breaking waves of social forms sink not only them-
selves when they crash into the "unnamable" (Beckett, 1958)
but their loved ones too, whose negative rapture is a
further argument for the existence of its positive counter-
part and for its nature as I have described it. Sartre
goes on to note that solitude has less to do with the
physical separation of beings than with the states of
persons when the social relationship is "lived in despair,"
which is to say, is lived with no feeling that it is there
or is being lived. Criminal societies (not all of them)
like homosexual societies (not all of them) and like the
society of females (in male-dominated worlds) tend to be
peopled solitudes because their members cannot escape the
shame that awaits them when they emerge their "relative"
societies that are defined by the wider, shaming society,
and expressions of ashamedness within these relative
societies further intensify individual solitudes, occasioning
even more negative rapture. Solitude then is a result of
not being able to become enraptured in another person, and
it may come about because everywhere the possessions that

are seen trigger off negative rapture or because when
rapture is possible negative auto-rapture sets in. Whole
communities may be experienced by their members as the
social occasions for solitude, just because nowhere is any
member worthy of becoming enraptured in and everywhere is
every member fully conscious of this unworthiness, and it
may be the case, I suggest, that calls for "community"
reflect this perceived state of affairs, the call going
unheeded when it reminds its hearers of this state of
affairs that can only be reversed by a member or members
finding ways to act shamelessly. In most societies, however,
Sartre says, persons oscillate from being objects ("victorious
conformists") or, in my terms, possessed people, to being
subjects ("defeated opponents") or enraptured people, the
words "conformist" and "opponent" serving Sartre as moral
parameters of humanness.

12 Hate very often calls forth hate and this cycle can only
be broken by forgiveness. A person who is forgiven for a
ritual crime is reinstated by his victim and his victim's
sympathizers as a ritual being who once again, in principle,
can be enrapturing. Forgiveness, then, is a delicate ritual
state because if it comes too quickly to a victim it can
show that he lacks self-respect and if too slowly that, again,
he has too little honour, since he is not "big enough" to
readily overcome his fear of the ritual offender. So it
might be expected that genuine forgiveness is rarer than
the feigned kind, it being socially expedient to pretend
that an offender no longer offends even though his offence
still rankles. An exception here is Jesus Christ, whose
quick forgiveness always redounded to his ritual credit,
because his obvious lack of rancour showed him to be of a
ritual order that it was impossible for others to offend.
However, during his forgiveness, any sign whatsoever of his
"being offended" would have destroyed his self-respect in
others' eyes, for the forgiveness would then have been seen
as meek submission to superior power or, at best, merely

strategic situational politicking. Presenting a flaw-
lessly performed forgiveness, then, is one way to rise
above offenders, since they will not believe such a state
is only as it seems. It follows that the performance of
forgiveness is greatly facilitated by its being felt,
though, as I have indicated, its being performed may en-
courage its being felt. Here again a person's "going
through the motions" might lead directly to his seeming
to come from them alone, if, of course, the motions do
not seem to be motions that are being gone through.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS[1]

> The strength and strangeness of art, and in particular
> of literature since its medium is the medium of daily
> human relationship, derive from our feeling that we
> both are and are not in the presence of another human
> being; there is a voice which we can hear but which
> cannot hear us, a presence that can be passionately felt
> to the point of an enobling superstition, rather as
> Keats felt Shakespeare to be his "presider", but which
> does not need to be mystical. In the same way, any
> great work of literature which teaches and changes us
> is a presence and a presider. "Required both to be
> present and to not be present": Goffman's core of
> embarrassment is a core of literature. "Because of
> possessing multiple selves the individual may find he
> is required both to be present and to not be present on
> certain occasions. Embarrassment ensues: the indiv-
> idual finds himself being torn apart, however gently."
> Corresponding to the oscillation of his conduct is the
> oscillation of his self. Part of such oscillation is
> between the sense in which the role of the reader is
> truly passive (Wordsworth's "wise passiveness" is
> attuned to books as to nature) and the sense in which
> the role of a reader is truly active. Some people
> find this duality more than they can take, and are fret-
> ful or embarrassed by not knowing what they are supposed
> to do as a reader; it is not just their attention to the
> book, but the book's attention to them, which discomposes
> and even threatens them.*

I began with the idea that people when they interact

treat one another as ritual beings. This was taken from the

theories of Erving Goffman, which show that interactions are

moral situations whose analysis demands that people be regarded

as sacred. Sacrality, however, is not an unvarying attribute

and it may even be greatly dependent on acting ability. This

assertion is really founded on a commonsense appreciation that

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* Ricks, Christopher (1974) <u>Keats and Embarrassment</u>

Oxford, Clarendon Press

in any interaction a person can be degraded or exalted either
by himself or by others or, not infrequently, by others be-
cause of what he does to himself.   I sought to further
elucidate this last category by describing, in apposition to
each other, two appearance-oriented groups, punks and nurses,
and to make sense of their conduct I found it necessary to
use the concept "ritual power".   The major part of my thesis
thereafter is developed around this concept in a rhetoric
which would have it, for example, that total interaction is
one person's "rapture" at another's perfect "possession" by
an entity often called "self".   But first, the merchants of
filth and how they make power out of it.

Ritual Power of Punks and Nurses

Punks use[2] their understanding of a societal pollution
scheme (Douglas, 1966) in order to systematically contaminate
themselves so that other people will rear back from them as
if from "untouchables".   By doing this the punks achieve a
ritual power of an inverted kind, for they come to seem as
hard to approach on equal terms as persons of very high status.
Furthermore, the very deliberation of the punks' self degrad-
ations gives them yet more ritual power, since they appear to
be capable of rising above the opprobrium they excite - or
else they surely would divest themselves of their punk appear-
ance - and thereby create for themselves the ritual power that

can withstand contaminations that would desacralise others.
All the ritual power of punks, arising from their conduct as
it is seen and also from its evident election over alternat-
ive "life-styles", is won from appearances alone.

The specifically punk appearance, by being fashionable,
provides would-be punks with a ready-made, unambiguous visual
statement which also has the look of collectivity. Not only
that but an individual punk is protected from being seen as
a lone deviant because he is recognised as an instance of a
widespread type, yet, all the while, his fashion, by being
deviant itself, magnifies his "legitimate deviancy" because
his person is a loud reminder of the society-wide presence of
very many similar persons. But, like all fashions in the
period before they become outmoded, punk seems to be of a
different order to other fashions, being mistaken for a social
movement whose members can feel that they are united against
contrary styles of conduct. At all times the punk therefore
is activated by a behavioural logic that runs like this:
"When you walk into a place where people can see you, you want
to look as repulsive and repugnant as possible."[3] The nurs-
ing fashion, on the other hand, guarantees for its wearers
that they will be impervious to and lifted above whatever
might contaminate them, and zealously it is kept pure because
nurses, facing considerable contamination, believe that they
are the better sealed against filth, intrinsic and symbolic,
the more they look like nurses. Thus nurses, regardless of
the tasks they must perform, try, before all else, to be

immediately identifiable as nurses, which incidentally
accounts for the world-wide uniformity of their appearances.
Where punks play the behavioural trick of degrading their
appearances so as to appear like people who beneath their
appearances have such strong ritual power that nothing can
pollute or defile them, nurses work the same trick the other
way and sacralize themselves so as to visually testify to
the fact that neither the defiling persons and substances
(with which they are in contact) nor their dirty duties can
penetrate them.   So the nurse rises above contaminants
because she is untouched by these, and the unchallengeable
proof that she is unsullied lies in her looking exactly as
a nurse should look, that is, like someone with an extraord-
inary ritual power that can withstand contaminations that
would desacralize others.   Nurses, like punks, then, acquire
ritual power merely through their manipulation of appearances.

"Ritual power" may now be defined as the amount of
"ritualness" a person has within interaction, and as such it
is something more than the ritualness that Goffman has said
must be respected between persons.   So ritual power can be
won from interactional conduct alone and is not just a prop-
erty to be lost or, at best, after being lost, restored to a
former level.   It should be noted here, of course, that,
since ritual power belongs primarily to interactions, it is
not the same as status, which is a given societal quantity.
Nevertheless it is quite sensible to say that a person with
commensurate ritual power will "live up to" a particular role

expectation, or, alternatively, if his ritual power is insufficient, fail to live up to it.

Punks and nurses, then, gain ritual power through their exploitation of pollution systems and their power lies mainly in their costumes and costume-associated conduct. However, ritual power is not only a function of systematic communications in the language of pollution codes.

Fashionable Ritual

Another kind of ritual power (besides that secured from organized orientations to pollution) can be brought into interactions by persons when variants of fashionable human exemplars effectively possess them.

This proposition is best understood if it is approached from the idea that conduct, being first and foremost ritual conduct, enjoys its highest esteem when it is fashionable conduct. This must be so, because unfashionable conduct, always inappropriate, is necessarily offensive, and, since fashions only relate to other fashions and only obey laws internal to themselves, the correct action has to be the fashionable one. (Of course, it is assumed here that all conduct is appearance, of which clothing is only its especially obvious facet, and that all appearances are governed by fashion, so that in the world of appearances, which in this thesis is the whole world, fashion holds sway.) But, where

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do people get their notions of fashionable conduct?

Perhaps the well-established fact that in Anglo-American culture most persons spend a lot of their time spectating dramatised conduct on television might be cited to support the hypothesis that models of proper interactional performance are increasingly to be found on television screens. Professional actors, then, may well have come to "embody the forms of intelligible conduct", and those actors who are seen most are those who are most as they "should" be, behaving in the height of contemporary fashion. Thus, conduct, from this perspective, begins to look like creative mimicry, judged right or wrong not for any intrinsic moral intention - insofar as this does not seem to satisfyingly express itself - but according to whether it is aesthetically apt.

The Balinese, as Clifford Geertz (1975) interprets them, are an apparently extreme example of persons whose predominant concern is to be effective aesthetically, and they repay consideration at this point. Geertz says that the social life of the Balinese is both a solemn game and a studied drama in which etiquette, dance, and formal ritual are always melting into one another. The need of each Balinese person to please all his others creates a flexible mosaic of conduct held together by the surface tension of a pervasive Balinese stage-fright called "lek". (Lek is the fear that the forms might collapse back into the beings creating them, which in societal terms would cause fissures through which unnamable and un-classifiable and therefore terrifying social entities might

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be glimpsed.)   Geertz, however, feels that the Balinese show one another too much respect by always trying to be the best selves that they can be for other best selves.   It is as though the comparative lack of obviously gratuitous and graceful behaviours in Anglo-American culture induces Geertz into appraising his own culture's conduct as not principally aesthetic.   Here, I think, Geertz falls victim to his American culture's heroic materialism which is premised on a belief that if you work hard enough you will produce something more valuable than a simple picture of yourself working hard.   But, and the kind of ethnocentricity Geertz reveals supports this contention, conduct in Anglo-American culture is most effective insofar as it is not seen to be performed in just those cases, therefore, in which performance is good enough to completely conceal both the performer and the idea of a performer; then performance is, whatever its performer's attitudes and beliefs about it, so aesthetic as to render parallel "inner" commentaries (psychology) redundant.   For example, tact, whose practice permits tentative, new forms to burgeon without premature censure, shows by the unceasing need for it in all interactions that it is precisely during the play of aesthetic conduct that the ritual, moral self is most exposed, contrary to an Anglo-American myth that when the forms of conduct are all that are of concern between persons their ritual selves must be hidden. A person's ritual presence, then, despite the Geertzian tendency to separate morality from beauty, would appear to be congruent with his best enactment of himself.   This moral

enactment, furthermore, is in terms borrowed from profess-

ionalised stage interpretations of current conduct fashions,

seemingly without a great deal of reference to the morality

of acts as this may be measured against absolute values

where these are considered either out of date or too modern,

the morality being that an act be the "done thing to do",

and the current fashion of doing being seen as anything else

except a fashion.

There is much resistance to such an idea, and, in the

theatre, this has come most powerfully from Antonin Artaud,

who advocated a method of acting that would cut directly

through what he read as oppressively deceptive outer forms.

In everyday life, too, many would-be authentic people have

echoed Artaud's call for persons to drop their masks so as

to let their real selves emerge.   But such calls ask human

life to perform a contradiction: a person cannot show himself

to be anything whatsoever - even if this would be Artaud's

pure force of life - without this too being conduct of a kind,

which, the more desperately it attempts to be unmediated by

the human physiology, will the less make deep sense in any

sophisticated code.   Real selves, then, if considered to be

damagingly masked by outer forms that in principle can be

removed, in fact cannot emerge except as behavioural screams

that will always lack the expressive subtlety - and force

therefore - they could have if they said what they meant,

for example, through performances of articulacy in a language

of words.   De-aestheticised or authentic man, in this pers-

pective, is much less than a man, rather more closely resembling Samuel Beckett's (1958) Unnamable who "is nothing but a shapeless heap, without a face capable of reflecting the niceties of a torment", and, though the Unnamable certainly exists, and very frighteningly for the Balinese at least, such a being is bound to say for itself, through the medium of Samuel Beckett in this case, that "it has not yet been my good fortune to establish with any degree of accuracy what I am, where I am, whether I am words among words, or silence in the midst of silence", whereas Samuel Beckett, his author par excellence, by dint of his aesthetic concentration in words is exactly defined by them - and by them more than by any other aspect of his conduct - as precisely himself and no one else, the "real" Samuel Beckett.

So, to be taken seriously as a person it is necessary not only to have a relatively serious status but to play it with adequate panache.   That persons are expected to restrict themselves to the playing of one self may be merely a societal expedient to prevent confusion, and the uniformities exacted by fashions of their adherents obviously further reduce complexity by simplifying individuals into broad and easily legible social categories.   (An unremitting social rule may be discerned here, that, whatever a person can be, he must not be senseless.   So strong is this rule that many people become convinced that sense is built into the universe specifically for human comprehension - and so human beings, as it were, must be involuntarily intelligible to whatever "depth"

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the perceiver chooses to look.   My own conviction, drawn

from Popper (1977), has it the other way round, that acts of

Kantian comprehension project the simplifications of sense

into an overrich universe of indefinitely related signs so

as to liberate persons from other humanly-imposed limitations

on the human.   Needless to add, that is only the beginning

of comprehension, for in its wake come acts of comprehension

about acts of comprehension, and so on, either creatively dev-

eloping the initial guesswork or traducing that into reified

orthodoxies to ends either of absolute banality or wonderful

illumination or, as in my case, a fitful show of intelligence

that while it can be intelligent about itself nonetheless does

not know with any certainty (if it does desire certainty)

whether it is worthwhile or worthless, to itself or to others,

or how much of either, though it could talk about that too,

but only at the same level of unknowing.)

Thus it is that persons possess themselves with recog-

nisable and stable social identities in respect of a societal

moral conduct scheme wherein self-possession itself is highly

valued.   By virtue of the quality of this possession, aside

from its formal identity, persons may procure extra ritual

power that in the theatre is known as "presence".   Presence,

as I use the word, is not some sort of peculiar emanation from

a hidden real self so much as possession by a clearly visible

outer self, whom the possessed person as it were operates with

the capabilities of the possessing self.   Artaud, I think,

wanted actors to be possessed by life itself, but his project

was bound to give audiences nothing save the spectacle of people behaving as if so possessed. Yet it is to the stage or to television that people turn when they wish to watch experiments with the ritual code, for stage conduct is not only unusually self-conscious and hyper-aestheticised but also safely framed from practical effects. Thus, "lifelike conduct in its most pure and heightened forms is dramatised conduct, that is, the ritually live conduct of knowing possession". It does need to be added, however, that though,on stage, professional actors are regularly alive with a ritual power surpassing by far the ritual power the majority of their audiences ever attain, off-stage they are not treated as ritually very serious persons. This may be because off-stage they willingly, though sometimes with great difficulty, give up the character they were playing on stage. If, however, an actor chose to stay in his stage character, he would retain his ritual power (provided he could disarm the plentiful dissuassions he would certainly encounter). So persons with names like James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, John Wayne, and Humphrey Bogart, who have not given up their characters even years after their physical decay, are very alive in many social worlds where, volte face, their recorded performances are taken as excerpts from their mundane lives. (Perhaps, with varying degrees of intent, the reading of the filmed performance as an episode of an ongoing mythic existence is fostered by the person so filmed.) The power these persons exert, I suggest, comes of their having presence, which for the time being can

be understood as an expertly controlled possession that seems

at play within unstable moral ambiences, effective only so

long as good and evil (fashionable against unfashionable

conduct) come into sharp relief on the body and face of the

"star", or in the voice, if it belongs to someone like Billie

Holiday, or in the tenor saxophone, if Charlie Parker, or in

the words , if Shakespeare.   These people from the grave,

through electronic circuitry or print, come closer to every

one of their fans than any one of their fans' loved ones, be-

cause they look so hypnotically as if they have to be so prec-

isely what they are and what - in their absence of closure -

they are not.   But the role of actor, it might be countered,

is so lightweight that it vitiates any enactment an actor might

perform, just because he has been known to be an actor - for

example, Ronald Reagan.   This is true, I think, but only

because actors want it that way, for what their audiences do

not see is that actors' choices of the unserious actor self

off-stage are serious choices to the precise degree that actors

have acting talent.   I myself take actors more seriously than

any other type of person whom I meet, now that I understand that

they play themselves unseriously in everyday life.   Whether

or not - to continue this digression - ritual power as a James

Dean (an actor who never "comes off it") exercises it is a

form of coercion, and whether, if it is, it is immoral, as

Plato against his own inclinations decided poets must be, will

have to remain questions unanswered here.   But this is as

good a place as any for me to reflect on the fact that I am

writing this text one week after the attempted assass-

ination of Ronald Reagan by an individual whom the FBI

claims identified himself with the character Travis Bickle

in Martin Scorsese's film Taxi Driver.   Universally, the

would-be assassin has been written off as insane on account

of his "muddled identity", based, so the media put it, on a

fictional character who himself was "muddled".   Now last

year I chose an epigraph for this thesis from the words of

Travis Bickle in Taxi Driver, because I thought that that

character was one of the truest I had seen in the sphere of

entertainment in the last several years.   Similarly, I think

that Reagan's assailant is not a freak and that the very

strength of the media effort to so stigmatize him is a panic

reaction to this distressing truth.   My argument must be that

a good performance by Robert de Niro, who played Travis Bickle,

evoked another that in its turn set off a world-wide media

psychosis.   The world watched John Warnock Hinckley fire his

gun at the President of the United States of America, just as

Hinckley watched Robert de Niro, and the really significant

difference, in my view, between Hinckley and all the other

people who have watched Robert de Niro is that de Niro's per-

formance was more real to Hinckley, for the reason that he

seems not to have perspectivised it against any other competing

performances, probably because he had no one dearer to him than

the characters in Taxi Driver.   (Thus the responsibility for

the assassination attempt lies as much with the film as with

Hinckley.   The moral criticism of Hinckley is that he aspired

above his ritual station: he could only challenge the President

by using a real gun and dealing out real death, which of course
is to choose to use terror rather than genuine ritual power.)
When the ritual imperative is irresistible, in a world that
Andy Warhol, another human target (of the feminist assassin
Valerie Solanas), so perspicaciously has said would only be
satisfactory if each citizen were world-famous for fifteen
minutes, the pressure to be interesting cannot be dismissed as
a pathological condition.   Naturally, as soon as a new assass-
ination hits the headlines, Hinckley will be forgotten and, as
soon as an actor walks out of his limelight to resume the
possession called "actor", he loses his ritual power, which
only goes to show, at the end of this long digression, that
ritual power, as I have claimed, can be entirely interaction-
dependent.

        Thus am I proposing certain extensions to Erving Goffman's
ritual rhetoric, for, although Goffman often refers to persons'
competences in performing, he does not examine the consequences
for interaction of these varying between interactants, and I
suggest that ritual power - human worth in its most human sense
- accrues to competence. Goffman, what is more, tends to slight
the secrets of performers as being "petty" (Goffman, 1971), and
I further suggest that this is not only because he separates
the ritual frame from the dramaturgical frame but also because
he ignores the fact that people can be very deeply moved by the

good performances that are possessions in concentrated human form. Cless (1979) says that possessions work best when the performer produces original conduct that is self-evidently right, and from this I conclude that ritual power indeed can be gained by acts that, while retaining full interpretability by being fashionable, are yet quite original, and that ritual power - even if Goffman's rules are not broken - is indeed lost when conduct does not include new forms and variants, in which latter case it can, by looking less than fully alive, also seem not lifelike enough to be fully human.

Though the concept "possession" is now current in my analysis, I do not wish to define it summarily, but to let it show its meaning through the uses to which I put it. Freud (1978) has given reasons for a similar refusal to define his concept "instinct", and these I think state the terms of my excuse:

> ...it is not possible to avoid applying certain abstract ideas to the material in hand, ideas derived from some- where or other but certainly not from the new observa- tions alone. Such ideas - which will later become the basic concepts of the science - are still more indis- pensable as the material is further worked over. They must at first necessarily possess some degree of inde- finiteness; there can be no question of any clear delimitation of their content. So long as they remain in this condition, we come to an understanding about their meaning by making repeated references to the material of observation from which they appear to have been derived, but upon which, in fact, they have been imposed. Thus, strictly speaking, they are in the nature of conventions - although everything depends on their not being arbi- trarily chosen but determined by their having significant relations to the empirical material, relations that we seem to sense before we can clearly recognise and demonstrate them.

The purest possession is likely to become the centre of

attention in any gathering, and it is the case that, say, a

seizure of epilepsy - perhaps the most captivating perfor-

mance a person can mount - has a long human history of being

interpreted as the visitation of spirits more powerful than

men.   I have implicitly proposed in this thesis that inter-

actions should not be analysed for their rules so much as

understood, however this can be done (and The Stalking Ground

is only an experimental piping of ritual life into social

science), as occasions of ritual manifestation.   But to

arrive at this conclusion it is first essential to reorient

to the topic of human interaction by declining to make the,

I think, uninteresting assumption that what can be usefully

said about, for example, a boring interaction, however that is

defined, is all that can be said about another interaction in

which persons are electrified, as though it is enough that both

occasions comprise people paying attention to one another.   It

is the dimension of possession (one that is also indicated by

"narratibility") that I believe creates a necessary distance

from certain sociological worlds that I find, despite their

powerful argumentation (I am thinking of ethnomethodology), too

bland to be true.   I shall now summarise what I have said

about possession.

The Dimension of Possession

        Performances, particularly of actors, are often rated

along a scale from non-seizure to total possession, and in

this light social variations of a person's conduct may look

less those of a "constant" defined person who plays a

succession of parts than like total changes of person whose

single actor, the body, is not a person until it acts.

Interaction now can be seen not as the making of moves in a

formal game but as an essentially supernatural ritual in

which flesh-and-blood persons are closer to mediums than to

strategic players.

Life, as it may exist through the possessions of per-

sons in interaction, can only come, therefore, from a ritual

realm which is created wittingly or unwittingly, as if it is

somewhere they are coming from, by the visible conduct of

persons.   Thus a society belle strung with diamonds seems

to be an envoy from some luxuriously resplendent amnion while

the nurse in her carefully-shaped white hat displays her

intimate spiritual affinity to the long-deceased Florence

Nightingale.   Such an appreciation as this of what can be

going on in interactions is inevitably heightened among pro-

fessional actors, and it is for this reason that "camp" conduct

(burlesquing the sacred) is so prevalent in the theatre world,

for camp is a means by which persons can block one another's

routine creation of ritual realms so as to make their inter-

actions less fraught with significance.

By describing conduct in these terms, one can easily see

that the differences between the conduct of, for example, a

great performer on stage and, say, subjects being studied in a

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laboratory or a workshop amount to a crucial dimension of

interaction.   If such a dimension is accepted it follows that

interactions which have some of the feel of effective drama

contain more of what is specifically interactive in human

conduct than do those that are unclear to or of only super-

ficial interest to interactants, the uninteresting ones, of

course, ceasing to qualify as interactions when the interest

of all its parties finally dies.

Further, it seems to be a consequence of the super-

natural possibilities within interaction that persons are

accredited what I have termed "narratibility", the sense-

making and even interest-generating capacity to coherently

perform themselves.   This must be, since it is a condition

of being dramatic that one dramatises intelligibly (i.e. through

a narration of sorts) and it is a condition of being human that

one is dramatic, so much so that, robbed of narratibility,

persons feel disoriented, senseless, and worthless.   Thus

the writers Joan Didion and Charles Dickens both show how

personal confusion or a sense of incoherent possession, which

is the same thing, can be reorganized by recasting the self

as the hero of its own narration, thereby restoring the

ritual worth arising out of narratibility.   (It follows that

the inordinately intricate senselessness of life may be the

powerful prompter of people's never-ending work of story-

telling and the reason for their non-stop activity of self-

possessing.)   The idea of narratibility, or imposition of

historical pattern, now connects directly to the idea of

control, for even the wildest possession takes up some form that can be seen as "wild possession".

The Control of Possession

Possession on its own is not enough to transform the human physiology into a person, for possession - to be seen as what it is - must always be controlled. The apparently universal practice of tact, for example, is evidence that control is always exercised in interaction, for the tactful person is his "better self", a human creation whose precise characterisation depends both on its sensitive appreciation of and accommodation to difficult situations (which may be all of them). Anglo-American culture, moreover, is one that will not allow that persons can be uncontrolled; thus psychopathic conduct, the most asocial that can be imagined, is attributed to a "psychopathic personality", which is held to be the more clearly indicated the more the conduct is uncontrolled. This type of nominalist magic, of course, shows that the desire to control the uncontrolled if not present in the subject will be met by him in his human objects.

What happens if "responsibility" (Hymes, 1975) for performance, or control as I phrase it, is not assumed? Becker (1962) found that depressives consistently fail to present selves of a kind to which proper deference can be paid, and so, receiving insufficient deference, become further depressed until a point may be reached where the only means left to them of regaining control may be the refusal to control any self

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at all. Now just as loss of or abrogation of control in this way is a full social withdrawal so the maintenance of control might be all that allows a person to remain the social person he would be. Thus, Mishima's (1979) Hagakure code - "the slightest flaw in word or deed causes the collapse of one's philosophy of life" - and Stanislavsky's theory of the sub-text both explicitly state that all acts must be invested with "readable" thought. This strongly recommends the idea that a person is most himself when his possession by himself is in his fullest control.

The real person, then, is not to be encountered in unguarded moments or at times of distress, for on such occasions he will tend to lose the particularity that made him what he was for others, and, instead, disintegrating now into loosely-organized and comparatively illegible human behaviours, his selves will unfocus. (That so many people are unoriginal in deed and word, yet at the same time live under the impress of a cultural myth that the differences between persons, not their similarities, allow them to be "individuals", would explain the assumption that a person's uniqueness must be out of sight. The perceived uniformi-ties of conduct together with the belief that individuality is the mark of a "real" person may be impelling people to think that some blueprint or template or programme or inner composition that is theirs alone is hidden somewhere inside them. I have already shown that, if this be so, real selves

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are doomed to be forever unseen because they are "unemergable" except through codes that must destroy entities defined as essentially antipathetic to codes. Those enslaved to beliefs in hidden real selves therefore inhibit their creative generation of original communication - because they act as if their conduct cannot fully represent them - and must travel backwards from other people, ever more deeply regressing towards total unintelligibility.) Furthermore, microanalysts such as Birdwhistell (1971) and Scheflen (1973) have conclusively demonstrated that even the "unpossessed" conduct Hymes designates "behaviour pure and simple", which, on the face of it, would seem least capable of conveying self, is always minutely attuned to audience reaction exactly according to Hymes' definition of performance. In social life, then, people show themselves as what they are, and they are physiologies trying to communicate in languages that in every single case have to be learned from scratch. (Of course, people can choose to misrepresent themselves, and that, as spies or secret adulterers for example, they can do so over long periods of time and under very fine scrutiny proves the point that an enacted self until gainsaid by discrepant enactments is the only social self there is.)

It is as if the human judgement of conduct is too harsh a measure of the man in much of contemporary Anglo-American culture, for everywhere its members try to assume that, in some unspecified place and using some unspecifiable language,

some other entity than that given conscious being by its forms
of conduct alone (as they possess human raw material) pulls
the puppet strings of a behaving person.   Paradoxically,
however, it might be the very cogency of possessions, in
creating habitable ritual realms out of visible cues, that
prompts other persons - or possessions - to go regressively
searching in those realms - now possessed by them - as if
realms were strong enough to exist apart from the acts that
bring them into being.   What happens to the man lost in
someone else's possession (which, of course, comes to be his
own) is that he foregoes his own separate ritual development.
Confronted with worlds he would understand, he enters them
as if he would find their origins and somehow deal with these
direct, without the mediation of imaginative constructs.
In this sense, he is literally "taken in".   Unless he can
repossess himself, his articulations now will be those of a
"mouthpiece" for another's realm.   So those who, for fear of
ridicule or for other reasons, will not produce performances
of their own by properly responding to different performances,
will sink into an ideology which - dumbly, because it does
not like to speak - thinks that the way to find out about
the self among other selves is by some different route than
being a self for other selves who are also being themselves
for others.   A society of such "taken in" people, audiences
to their own non-performances, will be a sort of amoebic
stasis in which there will be an increasingly unthinking
absorption in increasingly unabsorbing human material.

Richard Sennett (1977) calls this psychosocial sump "the tyranny of intimacy," portraying it as a permanent and total encounter group in which there is no possibility of any encounters. But this is not to say that the practice of psychologising about interaction has not produced great performances. The work of Freud and Jung, tracking back to "first causes" of Oedipus complex or archetypes may have been more illuminating than the writing of Samuel Beckett, but, like all psychology, it can only exist if its phenomena are discovered in the sociological realm of interaction and if its reporting takes place in the sociological medium of verbal language. Thus Jung does not discover his "internal society" (Rowan, 1978) until he has put it before himself in the form of words that he recognises as his various possessions; but, instead of then conceding that he has found a new way of seeing himself from the outside, he begins to think that all along this was how he must have been on the inside. (Obviously, there is complex matter "inside", but it is not comprehensible until repossessed outside.) I argue here no more than that he who would explore the mind must behave as though he has created it from its visible behaviour, as Ryle (1949) and Coulter (1979) insist. However, the idea of "inner men" deterministically manipulating persons is perfectly adjusted to the idea of a ritual realm, only failing to be logical by ignoring the fact that the ritual realm is definitionally absent until someone seems to be arriving from it.

So much, then, for the pathetic fallacy that, beneath
our second-hand gestures and borrowed phrases and copied
attitudes, we are there, pristine little souls, treasure troves
of authenticity, who only need the courtship of people who love
us to be charmed out of the deep recesses of the psyche into
which hostile environments have driven us.   No, whatever we
do belong to - if to anything, even if to others, the equally
unbelonging - it is not to ourselves, for there is no one
inside any one of us, and, worse yet, every time we do or say
what someone else has said and done, we automate our conduct,
becoming dummies then.   So perhaps the only way out of the
semiological scrapheap we spend a lifetime assiduously turning
ourselves into is to "make it new" (Pound) in hopes that any
one of us might voice some thought quite beyond the capacity
of cellular matter, which furthermore might be heard by others,
whom conceivably it might invigorate.   "But what about 'being
natural'?   Don't we often relax and quite naturally let our
normal selves show through these creative behavioural dances
that surely are not our only warrant for thinking ourselves
human?"   Again, no: I am afraid the phrase "natural conduct"
is a contradiction in terms, as follows.

Natural Conduct and the Ritual Imperative

The form of controlled possession predominating as an
ideal to be aimed at in Anglo-American culture is "natural
conduct" which is the less seen as performance the more
controlled it is.   Unlike other forms of controlled
possession that command interest within interactions, natural

conduct tries to pass itself off as the next best thing to no

conduct at all, as if a natural person were to be hermetically

sealed from any suspicion that being a person is not wholly

guaranteed by the human physiology.   Natural conduct is thus

required to look unforced and spontaneous as though it cannot

help but be exactly as it is, having its unusual harmony with

whatever interactional rules govern the contexts in which it

is found by happy coincidence, quite "naturally".   However,

it can easily look too self-possessed, when what shows is not

a natural self but a self that looks as if it is acting self-

possession, and it can be successfully feigned for though, to

quote Strindberg (1968), "It is not easy to be charming when

one is mad with rage," it is nevertheless not impossible

either.   Not only that, but to be complimented for being

natural is to be highly praised, which fact alone indicates

that it is difficult to bring off the performance of natural-

ness.   Being natural is, then, as Evreinoff (n.d.) says, "a

science necessitating long years of training, experience, and

education."   This means, I think, that without a refined but

far-reaching understanding of social situations, without

physical adroitness, without delicate verbal care, without

eyes that know exactly when to look and when not to look and

what to look at when they are and are not looking, and without

a skilled willingness to abide by the conventions, a man who

would obey the self-directed social injunction to "be himself"

- which he should if the rhetoric of naturalness would be

believed - would rage like a bull among the china sensibilities

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of whatever emporium of selves he is loosed into, and would be

banished eventually from the company of his fellow men, just

for his crime of "not knowing how to behave." On the other

hand, the human chameleon who is nimble and svelte, who can

juggle not only his own but the identities of others too in

complex trajectories, while all the time seeming to have polite

eyes only for what is shown to him, will be a social asset,

feted for his vivacious ease, an artist to his fingertips,

whose very presence is the breathtaking physiological trick

of seeming to be an absence of all those human phenomena that

are "not done", "not mentioned", and "unmentionable". Natural

conduct, one must conclude, is the reverse of what it is

believed to be, and so this analysis is on the edge of saying

that there is nothing natural about natural conduct.

The social construction of naturalness - both as a

desirable mode of conduct and as conduct that poses as its

own opposite - may well function, as does the myth that real

selves are inaccessible, to protect performers from a con-

sciousness that they can only be what they can seem to be,

which consciousness would surely make more taxing still the

creation of natural selves in interaction, to such an extent

that the continuity of social life would be threatened.

Maybe this threat of disruption, should people realize that

their conduct, when imperfectly natural, signifies that they

only have inadequate selves, has to be met by a myth which

says the opposite, that selves are somehow traduced by any

conduct.

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Obviously some people are better at seeming to be natural than others, and this fact leads me to repeat what I have already observed, that, although Goffman is always aware of people as ritual beings, he has never considered the consequences for interaction of variations in acting ability between persons. (He could have done in the essay "Where the Action Is" when he writes about the "character contests" whose outcome is diminished ritual power for the loser and increased ritual power for the winner, but, instead of working the analytic promise of this discovery, he drives only to the conclusion that run-ins are socially disruptive.) One important interactional consequence for the person who is exceptionally good at acting himself, whether as a unique behavioural montage or as a natural self or as a mix of both, is, I now again suggest, that he will by his conduct alone gather ritual power. Thus the more interactants are bent on raising their ritual power - as indeed, obeying the dramatic imperative of everyday life, they must always be - the more interactions, which Goffman has already shown must be viewed as structured on the basis that people are ritual beings, will turn round exclusively ritual concerns. But unfortunately, despite his saying (Goffman, 1975) that often interactions are one-man shows, which perception, I am suggesting, actually demands the ritual frame of analysis, Goffman has only used his idea of persons' sacrality in a negative way as if sacrality is merely an attribute that only must not be offended rather than, as I propose here,

one that not only _can be_ generated and magnified by expert

human enactments but _should be_, a state of affairs that cries

out for more of Goffman's ritual sociology.

Now if ritual power even in the seemingly undramaturgical

case of natural conduct can be dependent on acting ability, it

would follow that there might exist institutions wherein

persons can be so trained that their cultivated styles of

conduct will come to command more than their fair share of

deference. Public schools in England are one such institu-

tion, and so successful is the dramatic coaching of their

clients - albeit taking place on rugby fields and in dining

rooms and under other guises - that these persons can often

be described as "well-bred", as if their peculiar behavioural

inflexions were so "natural" to them that they must have been

inherited. In fact, everywhere in society, persons develop

their expertise at acting, and the periods of training are

usually called "socialization" periods as though that term

can mask their essentially dramaturgical function, this

masking being itself a form of deference to the idea that

humanness is so worthy - in whatever role it is discovered -

as to be something that cannot be bought by fees for

instruction in how to act it.

Of course, it is not only individuals who will be

natural or unnatural. Interactions as a whole may be ex-

perienced as having this or that amount of naturalness, but

only by their interactants and not necessarily equally for

each of them. One test of a natural interaction might be

the degree of ease with which an interactant can forget him-
self therein, the greater this is the more natural the inter-
action.   So interactions which feel like interactions would
be _ipso facto_ unnatural, and always like this for he who
would study them.   The active student of interactions more-
over must fake sufficient naturalness, which might be an
adequate performance of appearing to have forgotten himself,
in order to prevent his exclusion from the interactions he
would study, and he will never know whether or not his co-
interactants are similarly faking.   Appearance is all in these
matters, and the consciousness accompanying appearances - in
the above examples as well as in several other situations my
analysis turns up - need not be taken into consideration so
long as it does not look like consciousness, which in the
case of a natural appearance would transform this anyway into
an unnatural one.   Obviously, interactions are more likely
to be natural when interactants are similarly trained, for
then in order to be in harmony with one another they need
make less of the effort that would awaken them to the inter-
actional side of interaction.   From this it can be inferred
that items of behaviour taken on their own are not in them-
selves natural or unnatural, so that the naturalistic
rhetoric which would outlaw unnatural conduct as intrinsi-
cally unhuman misses the point that any conduct can be
regarded as natural if only it makes sense in a shared
interpretive scheme.

Natural conduct, which will always be fashionable conduct, is good conduct because it is the exemplary opposite of what is taken to be least human of all, unnatural behaviour, but conduct in general will be the more moral - or, as is natural conduct, the more ritually effective - the more consummately it is performed, with little regard for the contents of the moral realm created by the performance. So a poor performer is a poor person, not just because he breaks an important rule of the stage - one which is no less important in everyday life - that a person must always give himself to the best of his ability but more significantly because if he does not do this he cannot appear as much of a person. What is more, in appearing as less than himself, a person not only slights himself but also those he interacts with, who are made to feel they are only worthy of his half-hearted self. So it is not surprising that the rule to perform well is entrenched in all forms of social life. From this one might speculate that much of social life is not just about the protection of face, as Goffman has demonstrated, but beyond that, is to do with the ritualization of persons. The principal social activity of persons might just be their individual and mutual attempts to generate sacrality for themselves. Sometimes they may do this with one another's assistance as appreciative audiences, and, at other times, persons may open a ritual gap beneath them by desacralizing others. A central human ambition, then,

might be as simple as the one to be something greater than flesh and blood, to be, for example, an immortal soul which can be won or lost by mortal conduct. Does this mean that good performers are necessarily good people? I think they are taken to be so, provided that their performances neither look like what they are nor are compromised by being too various or too skilled, which again would show them to be more like performances then genuine-seeming selves. An objection might be made here that a brilliant criminal, for example, is bad because he is bad, never mind his brilliance. But I suggest that, if this criminal gets away with his crime and if he sets a fashion whose adherents similarly get away with their crimes, then he will be considered good, and the more so as the fashion catches on. As it is, his badness - which will be the element of his acting that is "not done", such as injuring another person - will be redeemed with moral credit to spare if the crimes have been lucrative and daring and imaginative, which are very much elements of highly competent performance. This has been the case for the Great Train Robbers at any rate.

So possession is always controlled and only sometimes by its being natural conduct, and life is about the ritualization of self (which is almost to say, about the annihilation of the physical). Do people really spend their lives fighting for the limelight? I think they do, but I also think that they are safely boxed into frames and greatly constrained by their dramatic talent, as I now explain.

Additional Controls of Possession

Natural conduct controls itself as a matter of course to conform slavishly to given rules of conduct but performances require additional controls if they are not to overwhelm interactions. These are supplied by framing devices which range from the physical separation of stages (in the case of ritualized ritual enactments in the theatre) to a continuous framing generated in his paracommunicative channels by the performer as he might, for example, relate a story in a small focused gathering. Safely framed, the performer can create worlds for his audience to enter, and it is to the performer as an envoy from a world that appreciation is shown and not to the performer as human physiology per se. The opposite of appreciation is the rudeness of breaking into a world without warning. Interrupting like this is in its own right a performance, but, unframed by requisite apologising, it discommodes its audience, and powerful sanctions are reserved for interruptions of all kinds, whether these be "contempt of court" in judicial places or "butting into" conversations. In this way social life is not only organized to protect people from performances but also to protect performances from people, so much so that those who repeatedly disrespect performances - such persons as importunate children and lunatics - are regarded as less human than performers. Thus, deliberated performance, as long as it looks reasonably natural or unperformed, despite the fashionable counter-rhetoric, is regarded as more human than undisciplined

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or free expression, and it is controlled or disciplined by its frames as soon as it appears.

As well as being controlled by its frame, performance is more comprehensively controlled by a person's dramatic ability. Throughout society this fact is recognized by the lengthy socialization periods individuals must undergo before they can feel at ease in new roles. Socialization, and indeed professionalization, is a rehearsal period, and even professional actors need a great deal of rehearsal time before they can feel comfortable in a new part. Actors who perform inadequately can destroy a playworld, of course, but other role-players in society may wobble institutions if they forget important lines, miss cues, or simply seem miscast. It would only take, for example, one nurse going about in a filthy dress for a whole hospital and a calling to be brought into disrepute. (At first sight this seems unreasonable, because only one nurse is behaving "badly", but, if my point, that she is mostly an envoy from a ritual realm all other nurses also come from, is granted, it becomes obvious that a nurse who looks like a dirty slut is enough to make those around her, including her fellow nurses, see the possibility of similar transmogrifications in any nurse anywhere, just because something very evidently has gone wrong in the ritual realm of "nurseness".) One can appreciate from the hard work it is even for professional actors to learn new parts that, as it is generally true that societal roles must be learnt in the same way as stage parts,

they are not easy to assume, and this is perhaps yet another reason why persons tend to only play one self. Control, then, is also exercised by the difficulty there is in mastering any performance, and this difficulty is partly a function of dramatic ability.

Unlike other persons, however, the professional actor needs to develop an unusual degree of behavioural self-consciousness. This, on top of the arduous and unique working conditions of his profession, separates the actor from the very people he must impersonate on stage. Yet, on stage or television, the more successfully the actor acts the more he succeeds in hiding from audiences what he very definitely is, an actor. This is an unexpected form of control of possession, that well-controlled possession always controls disclosure of the possible source of control, and it explains why persons in interaction, seeming to be in depth what I say they can only be on the surface, must initially seem resistant to the analysis I am advancing. So expressions form and reform on the face, the body moves, the hands, arms, head, and trunk gesture and indicate, eyes glance, a vibrating column of air becomes a voice, and the whole is suddenly something unproblematic. But, when people are understood to be variously caught up in behaviourally cueing their audiences as to what they wish to be taken for, their conduct can be seen as a dance and a prayer, as antics and invocations seeking to create beings called persons, for whom a body and a mind are the bare minimum constituent

parts that in consort must devote themselves to their trans-formation into a person who is only a person when it becomes unthinkable that he need not be what and who he is in his present condition, when his ritual appearance fully controls into invisibility its appearance of being mere appearance.

In this "Summary and Conclusions" I have already used the concept "ritual realm" on several occasions. Now I shall come at it more directly through the following condensed remarks about "rounding", which is the term David Cole (1975) uses to describe how an actor creates presence by seeming to come from an "illud tempus" or land of spirits and dreams.

Ritual Power Absorbs People rather than Impresses Them

A controlled performance, I argue, is not a feat of conduct standing in interactional lieu of some other more real person, rather it is the person _in toto_, so that a tightly controlled person, for example, shows not that he is securely guarded but only his limited scope and stiff syntax. Thus, totally uncontrolled people are not people at all whereas people whose control excels - not by being tight but by being expert - can bring about the interactional phenomenon of "rounding", that is, of becoming present by flooding an interaction with a supernatural realm fellow interactants hunger to see more of in his person. A person who rounds, very much more so than one who fails to do so,

creates, as it were, a human "black hole" into which an
audience can disappear. Therefore it is misleading to say
that interactionally powerful individuals "project" strong
"impressions" of themselves. Much more accurately, one '
should say that brilliant performers open up larger worlds
for other people to enter.

Among actors on stage, rounding can call forth rounding,
and, when this happens, the staged conduct, in looking
larger than life, looks fully alive. In everyday life,
roundings may be uncommon but the entertainment ethic
that dominates Anglo-American culture (Althiede & Snow, 1979)
compels the presentation of events as dramatic conflicts,
and the more these resemble (or become) actual roundings the
more involving they must be for audiences. So it could be
that a form of social life which was entirely lacking in
occasions of rounding would never fully involve its members,
seeming to them an arena wherein they are less than fully
alive. And it would follow from this that the goal of
quietly harminous relations - within an organisation, for
example - would entail, if achieved, a fall-off of members'
interest, niceness having been bought at the cost of humanness.

On stage, however, where rounding is sought, not only
by actors but, because they are watching, by the audience
too, the ordeal an actor goes through, if he cannot properly
control his possession, or the triumph he enjoys, if he does
round, comes to an end with his curtain call, but in everyday

life (if its interactions are lived, that is) the ordeals whose overcoming can give rise to triumph are never finalized. An actor, furthermore, is judged the better actor the more easily he dispossesses himself after a performance, whereas other people, if they suddenly stop being the selves they had seemed to be, are for that seen as less than, not more than, any one of those selves. So continuity is one of the main differences between stage life and everyday life, and perhaps this is the stress against which people mythologize a real self that could only be itself by not performing. Unfortunately, only the sleeping self meets this criterion and though, as they say, it may be, in having "all its defences down," the realest of selves, it is of course a self that communicates no self, being no more absorbent of interest than the flesh constituting it.

Known ritual realms, moreover, I am implying, lose their ritualness by being known. I now give a possible reason for this, and some consequences arising from this reason.

Ritual Power as the Originality that Escapes Theory

Only its originality warrants that conduct is meant for its present audience, and, where a sleeping self, for example, is at the extreme of unoriginality, a thoroughly original self is the most alive kind of self. Thus, social

life, which is lifelike to the degree that it seems, without loss of interpretability, spontaneous, unpredictable, and original, is not necessarily best analysed under the auspices of determinism, when it must be assumed that all conduct can be predicted, for original conduct like future knowledge (Popper, 1957) cannot be known in advance. In other words, because life at its liveliest tends to transcend itself in unexpected ways, any complete analysis must take care to seem incomplete. (A sociological realm, therefore, diminishes itself as it reduces the ritual realm to nothing.)

A person's pursuit of originality, I contend, is no more than his attempt to acquire ritual power in order to be a serious person who is taken seriously. However, truly charismatic individuals who unfailingly transport fellow interactants to transcendent realms are few and far between. But that does not mean that their opposites are not usually looked down on as "automatic" humans, too obviously taken over by possessions unworthy of human life. Stage actors falling into automatism are considered to have sold them- selves, when, says Grotowski, they cannot bring about a real theatrical communion. It is this sort of "sold" bad acting, with its stereotyped movements and its parroted lines, that has given acting a bad name and helped to obscure the reality that when all conduct is acting the more human person is the better actor of himself.

As social life becomes ever more differentiated and

therefore more dishonest (Luhmann, 1979), so ritual power will accrue not just to original acts but also to any human truth, since this alone can cue its interpreters to a realm that does not destroy itself the instant it is imagined, as a lie must (its realm necessarily negating itself). It might be that it is societally convenient to frame such truth in theatres, there to institutionally preserve refreshing evidence that selves can be awesome. Conversely, when social selves are expected to be hyper-aware of the moral meanings of their conduct, as in Cromwell's England, theatres might appear to be untactful insinuations that the reverse is the case, and so be closed, as they were by Cromwell.

But ritual presence, always having to find new forms for itself, can quickly become automatic, whether in theatres or in life. Grotowski (1976) says that the only way an actor can avoid this "death in life" is by giving himself to others with love, and Abrahams (1972), of street performers in American ghettos, also says that the sharing of possession is an act of love. I think that what is meant by this is that presence must be realized for the audience of the moment, since, if it seems like something that has been manufactured for others, it also seems not to care especially for the present audience. If this is so, then loving someone is the constant recreation for the person in question of a self that is to be entered only by this person or by this person ahead of all others. When this is mutual in everyday life, universes will open for each other, but love that uses hackneyed speech and worn-out signs has the

problem of appearing to be other than it is, as does any con-
duct not bearing an individual signature. So perhaps the
desire to come across to other people as really-meaning-
something-quite-genuinely is the greatest spur there is to
creative expression, and perhaps talking to other people is
the only chance for most people of receiving proofs that
they can be listened to as people. The imperative here is
to be a human being who can hold up his head in the eyes of
others even if he cannot get others to bow their heads before
him. Human beings must want to "walk tall" in this way
because they want to be people, and they must want to be
people because they are not, and they are not people because
at every moment of every interaction they must begin again to
be original with no guarantee that this is possible. Becoming
a person, therefore, is an endless social construction process
whose completion is ever in the future, in life and in analyses
of life.

But people do manage to be people and sometimes they bring
themselves off with such virtuosity that, when they exit their
own performances, something - an aura? - lingers like a disem-
bodied ritual power. From the springboard of this thought I
now leap to the further thought that people know enough about
ritual power to arrange life around it.

Ritual Power Shapes Places, Audiences, and Occasions

Ritual realms may be entered when the person or persons
who created them are absent, and this is true not only of

performances coded in words, music, or images, but also of
territories of persons, which I term ritual spaces because
I believe they are sacrosanct insofar as they are invested
with ritual power belonging originally to people.   So
territory is less a chunk of demarcated real estate than it
is ritual space, an other-worldly piece of the world, though
of course the other world is not any sort of territory.   This
must be why churches, art galleries, and the like, containing
as they do imagery that functions as the interface between the
so-called real world and other ritual worlds, are treated of
themselves with respect.   Places that are treated with dis-
respect, on the other hand, by vandals for example, are like-
wise ritual spaces, but ones whose putative ritual owners are
targets for contaminations designed to show the owners that
their power is being challenged.   (Citizens who urge stiff
punishment for vandals, tit for tat degradation, as it were,
reveal that they are highly receptive to this meaning of
"mindless" spoliations.)   Persons themselves, moreover, are
necessarily self-propelled units of ritual space, and it is
consistent with this conceptualization that they are respected
not because, having two arms, two legs, a head, and a torso,
they look like human beings but because humans look like
beings who can open up realities that are more absorbing
than the visible one.

   But these ritual realities only occasionally reach the
pitch of being completely absorbing and, when they do, it is
because a person bringing them to life has "rounded".   By

rounding, an actor unleashes ritual danger and this common

danger transforms a collection of individuals into the

collective of an audience.[4] Without the audience's ap-

preciation of his danger a performer could not round.   He

needs to feel that all eyes are locked on him before he can

go on to create from his slightest acts realities that

transcend the mundane, and only when a performer feels he

is fully there for others can he begin to assume a character

with which the audience can identify until in a sense it

too becomes the character.   Generally speaking, then, the

audience fuels a performer's ritual power to the degree

that he succeeds in awakening them to it.   Thus a given

frame can go on filling with ritual power through a feed-

back process, and this power might not vanish with the

vanishing frame.   This being so, gatherings may owe their

shape to the ebb and flow of ritual power rather than to

the rules of gatherings per se, and these rules in turn

might exist mainly to help in the generation or preservation

of ritual power.

It should be noted at this point that ritual power

may not only gravitate to space but also to its other kinds

of frames, so that the frames of occasions can come to possess

independent ritual power.   For example, the routines of

theatres are deferred to in their own right, because they

have borrowed presence from the productions they have framed.

Obviously, formal rituals can be full of ritual presence

while empty rituals are precisely those from which it has

gone, and, given the behavioural imperative to be fashionable,
it would seem that ritual life will drift from the unfashionable
rituals of life so that "proper" forms of conduct will tend
always to lag behind contemporary experiences of ritual
presence.   So empty rituals will be encountered more often
than full ones, and ritual life will seem to be the less
definitely framed the more it is ritually alive.

It might also come about that a person whose ritual
power is strongly associated with a certain heavily-
ritualized frame will find it hard to maintain his power
outside it.   This is definitely true, as has been pointed
out, of actors, who on stage can achieve ritual power quite
beyond that of members of the audience and yet who are treated
as lightweight persons off-stage.   (It even happens that
actors at the beginning of their performances may take from
places and frames a power that was put into these by other
actors.)   In a sense, then, actors who are not acting on
stage are dispossessed, as must be anybody who lacks the
ability or opportunity to conjure gestures and words into an
interpretable self.   A person who cannot stage himself in
interaction - so far as this analysis goes - cannot be a
person.   His dispossession is ritual death, some examples
of which I now consider before briefly recapitulating my
thoughts on "rapture", which is only not ritual death because
the enraptured person is taken into another possession,
whereas people who ritually die must enter into possessions
that do not want them to be the people they either were or

would wish to be.

Ritual Death

A person dies ritually when his habitual possession is destroyed by hostile forces outside his own control. Thus:

> A young woman is walking down a city street. . . .
> She walks through a group of construction workers who
> are eating lunch in a line along the pavement. Her
> stomach tightens with terror and revulsion; her face
> becomes contorted into a grimace of self-control and
> fake unawareness; her walk and carriage become stiff
> and dehumanized. No matter what they say to her, it
> will be unbearable. . . . They will use her body with
> their eyes. They will evaluate her market price. They
> will comment on her defects, or compare them to those
> of other passers-by. They will make her a participant
> in their fantasies without asking if she is willing.
> They will make her feel ridiculous, or grotesquely
> sexual, or hideously ugly. Above all, they will make
> her feel like a thing.

(Tax, 1972)

Here the young woman's ritual being cannot survive an inter-actional atmosphere of pure biological appraisal, and yet (unlike some women) she cannot welcome the only possession available to her, of her own body. As a person, she dies, and what walks on past the construction workers is her body in which, desperately, amidst the death throes of the old possession, some new possession - such as the experience in its written form - is being born.

The ritual death of the young woman is possibly not visible, but it could have been, as it is in the case of this suspect when he realises he is not going to get away with murder:

"I guess you know why we're here."
Hickock's mouth straightened - his posture, too.
"I guess you realize we wouldn't have come all the
way to Nevada just to chat with a couple of two-bit
cheque chisellers."
Nye had closed the notebook.   He, too, stared at the
prisoner, and observed that a cluster of veins had appeared
in his left temple.
"Would we, Dick?"
"What?"
"Come this far to talk about a bunch of cheques."
"I can't think of any other reason."
Nye drew a dagger on the cover of his notebook.   While
doing so, he said, "Tell me, Dick.   Have you ever heard
of the Clutter murder case?"   Whereupon, he later wrote
in a formal report of the interview, "Suspect underwent
an intense visible reaction.   He turned grey.   His eyes
twitched."

<div align="center">(Capote, 1966)</div>

Now that his secret murdering self is public, Hickock's

"innocent" public self, turned into a ritually empty pos-

session, cannot survive and visibly dies.   Exactly the same

sort of death is narrated in finer detail by the hero, also

a murderer, of Norman Mailer's (1967) An American Dream:

I did not have any certainty at all that I could go on.
No, they would question me and question me;   they would
tell me truths and they would tell me lies;   they would
be friendly, they would be unfriendly;   and all the while
I would keep breathing the air of this room with its
cigarettes and cigars, its coffee which tasted of dirty
urns, its distant hint of lavatories and laundries, of
junk yards and morgues, I would see dark green walls
and dirty white ceilings, I would listen to subterranean
mutterings, I would open my eyes and close them under the
blistering light of the electric bulbs, I would live in
a subway, I would live for ten or twenty years in a
subway, I would lie in a cell at night with nothing to
do but walk a stone square floor.   I would die through
endless stupors and expired plans.
Or I would spend a year of appeals, spend a last year
of my life in an iron cage and walk one morning into a
room where ready for nothing, where nothing done, failed,
miserable, frightened of what migrations were ready for
me, I would go out smashing, jolting, screaming inside,

out into the long vertigo of death which fell down
endless stone walls.
   It was then I came very close.   I think I would have
called Leznicki over and asked him for the name of a
lawyer, and stuck my tongue out in some burlesque of
him and me and our new contract, and rolled my eyes, and
said, "You see, Leznicki, I'm raving mad."   I think I
really would have done it then, but I did not feel the
strength to call across the room, I had a horror of
appearing feeble before that young blonde girl, and
so I sat back and waited for Leznicki to return, ex-
periencing what it was like to know the exhaustion and
the apathy of those who are very old and very ill.

(Mailer, 1967)

But Rojack is not fully dispossessed, because his old

possession, which is the narrator's too, is, feebly, holding

itself together.   However, ritual death might be experienced

as an instantaneous shock.   In the next example a young man

suddenly senses his imminent exposure as a homosexual, which

would divest him of the only possession he has:

At this instant something inside of me was torn in
two with brutal force.   It was as though a thunderbolt
had fallen and cleaved asunder a living tree.   I heard
the structure, which I had been building up piece by
piece with all my might up to now, collapse miserably
to the ground.   I felt as though I had witnessed the
instant in which my existence had been turned into some
sort of fearful nonbeing.

(Mishima, 1965)

An instantaneous ritual death may entail the destruction,

along with that of the possession itself, of the whole world

in which the possession had lived:

All men who have experienced prison know that its
terrible grasp reaches out far beyond its physical
walls.   There is a moment when those whose lives it

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will crush suddenly grasp, with awful clarity, that
all reality, all present time, all activity - everything
real in their lives - is fading away, while before them
opens a new road on to which they tread with the trembling
step of fear. That icy moment is the moment of arrest.

(Serge, 1972)

Solzhenitsyn describes the same experience:

Arrest! Need it be said that it is a breaking point
in your life, a bolt of lightning which has scored a
direct hit on you? That it is an unassimilable spiri-
tual earthquake not every person can cope with, as a
result of which people often slip into insanity?
    The Universe has as many different centres as there
are living beings in it. Each of us is a centre of the
Universe, and that Universe is shattered when they hiss
at you: "You are under arrest."
    If you are arrested, can anything else remain un-
shattered by this cataclysm?
    But the darkened mind is incapable of embracing these
displacements in our universe, and both the most soph-
isticated and the veriest simpleton among us, drawing
on all life's experience, can gasp out only: "Me?
What for?"
    And this is a question which, though repeated millions
and millions of times before, has yet to receive an
answer.
    Arrest is an instantaneous, shattering thrust, ex-
pulsion, somersault from one state to another.

. . . .
    That's what arrest is: it's a blinding flash and a
blow which shifts the present instantly into the past
and the impossible into omnipotent actuality.

(Solzhenitsyn, 1974)

In all these cases the self is annihilated while the

body and a disoriented, possession-less consciousness live

on. These forcibly dispossessed beings will have to learn

new parts on stages not of their choosing, with nothing in

their pasts to act as guides. Deaths like these are more

profound than physical deaths because it is the person who

dies, whereas, when the body dies, its possession, though obviously terminated, may not have been affected.

Who else but professional actors would know more than most about these involuntary dispossessions? There are few actors who cannot graphically describe what they call "dying" on stage, which happens, they say, when the performance fails in the eyes of the audience. Such "dyings" occur in everyday life too, as when spouses kill trusting partners by telling them they do not love them any more, or bosses faithful retainers by firing them, and so on. But in every interaction each person is no more than a word or a gesture or a glance away from his ritual death, though the further he thinks he is from it the more of a death it would be were he to suffer it.

However, much more often that a person dies in interaction, he leaves himself behind and freely enters another's possession, which to some extent enraptures him. Now follows a short exposition of my provisional ideas on rapture, which, with its negative, shame (a partial ritual death), is the corollary of possession in interaction, if interaction is fully interactive.

Rapture

Possessions of full ritual power can be effortlessly entered by a willing audience who then inhabit the same ritual realm as the possessed persons and, in so doing, become

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enraptured through their release from their own possessions
into realms not the least of whose enrapturing properties is
that of seeming to be at once familiar in being strange and
strange in being familiar.

Rapture in a mild form is interest, and interest in its
turn can only be felt if its object makes sense, but making
sense is not a guarantee of being interesting any more than
being interesting guarantees rapture. So, just as the op-
posite of possession is dispossession, the opposite of rap-
ture is disinterest, with the median state, interest, ob-
viously being experienced more often than rapture. But
everyday interactions are fully interactive only if one
person at least is enraptured by some other possession;
usually, however, interactants, each of them, oscillate,
either between rapture and possession, or between interest
and being interesting, or, if the interaction is minimally
interactive, between seeing sense and making it.

The "rounding" which takes place when the ritual power
of possession in interaction is at its height is not, be-
tween two persons, possession _contra_ possession, but this
with intervening rapture on both sides. The relationship
between rounding persons is, of course, the most interactive
there is, with every word, tone, expression, gesture, and
appearance (of any sort) making sense that seems absolutely
original and perfectly true at the same time. (Hollywood
has chosen the gun-fight for the archetypal representation

of the rounding encounter, but this degrades the ritual

powers of rounding by involving physical death in the out-

come of ritual murder.) All interactions must fall short

of this "ideal type", the rounding interaction, which is

perhaps found most often between lovers, where it is least

accessible for direct sociological observation.

Because rapture must dissolve social distance it en-

dangers formal status differences, which are therefore least

likely to be found in charismatic groups where the leader

enraptures his followers (and, conversely, when everybody

hates the "system", the formality of ranks and duties will

be the only resort for ritually unimpressive persons, as is

the case in prisons, armies, hospitals, and some university

departments, for example). But, politically, rapture need

not necessarily be felt just for a human leader; it is my

contention that bureaucracies themselves are charismatic

organizations functioning most rationally when bureaucrats

are enraptured by the idea of rational offices and pro-

cedures. Those political leaders, however, who set out to

enrapture whole societies are obliged to use terror, when

they fail, in order to command for their shows of possession

suitably reciprocal shows of rapture that obviously must be

in excess of the respect that could be evinced with fear in

preference to terror. (Nations without political prisoners,

one may say then, are likely to be fairly uninvolving per se

to rulers and citizens both.) The charismatization of poli-

tical leaders (Sennett, 1977), even long after Weber and others

have predicted their decline, may be accounted for by rapture: the socially secessionist enrapturing possibility one lover may hold out for another is intercepted by the friendly political face on the TV screen, so that the very state that would take persons in pairs out of society is used in an attempt to take the whole of society out of its constituent pairs. Those political leaders, whether societal or organizational, who actively compete in this way with husbands and wives for husbands and wives, work their images as the "stars" of entertainment do, but no longer framed in the safety frames of "entertainment" or "high culture".

Rapture, then, is a social state that may be seen as pivotal to any understanding of societal processes, but, of course, for that very reason, it is a central experience of the individual. Thus, persons capable of the enrapturing possessions that make them more like people than people, seem very used to becoming enraptured, and it seems to be a condition of any possession that it be preceded by rapture, the new possession, if radically redefining and improving on the old, coming as a catharsis. What is more, people who have the talent and willingness to lose and find themselves in a variety of relationships with external human or other material would seem able to enrapture themselves with themselves. And auto-rapture such as this enables shame, which is rapture at the self turned into its negative, by an emerging self's consciousness that the old self or possession was ritually unworthy; and since shame is a social state - because it leads persons

to try to live down or sheer off their shameful possessions
and to cultivate those of their possessions that have enrap-
turing possibilities - it facilitates personal growth.   (It
is also the case that, when rapture for another person has
existed, shame at his disgraces will be keenly felt, and this
supports my view that not only in interactions, when these
are truly interactive, are the boundaries of selves wrongly
represented if persons are seen as their physical beings -
insofar as these are not the cues for ritual meanings - but
also in some more prolonged social relationships like marriage,
in which it is less helpful to think of the pairing as an
interacting dyad than to think of both individuals as being
separate, complementary representatives of an essential unity.)

        Rapture, of course, may be thwarted, perhaps more often
than not, and the consequence for an individual is that he
will feel hate when his ritual development through rapture is
blocked, and he will feel it for the person or situation or
thing that is in his way.   Bettelheim (1970), however,
reports that in the German concentration camps many of the
longest surviving prisoners identified with the SS guards,
even wearing home-made jackboots in pathetic emulation.   This
indicates that, when hate for oppressors cannot translate into
action or of itself clear them out of the way, it may yield to
its opposite, so imperious is the human dramaturgical spirit
which will be a person.   But, outside concentration camps and
prisons of all sorts, hate can be suspended by ritual re-
routings into entertainment and culture;   these offer short cuts

for their audiences to the state of personness, when people are released from themselves so as to come into their own as truly human beings, whose essential nature may be that it is always beyond itself, drawing itself into itself.

Of course, in this rhetoric, hate or release or any feeling is not something a person just feels. A feeling happens when a person experiences himself as a person behaving in a way that it has been culturally established designates certain ritual states.[5] Thus a person is "moved" only when he has a defining consciousness that he is being moved, otherwise he is simply taken in. Likewise he is shamed only when he sees the socially degrading state that is his is degrading, else, however shameful he may be to others, he can feel no shame, only the cultural epiphenomena in their unprocessed state as it were, before culture has redesigned them into signs and symbols. That feelings may be very painful or ecstatic, and everything in between, only shows the tremendous capacity for identification persons do have for other people. (Naturally I do not include here the feelings that are sensations or pre-social biological experiences.)

This is definitely not to say that feelings are not deeply felt or that they are understood only through unfeeling understandings, and it is not to imply that if somehow feelings could be blown away from people's minds then people would be better able to be people. On the contrary, my view is that, for example, societal analyses operating with purely cognitive understandings of persons risk concluding that people are

stupid, for this is an inevitable result of looking at people as if their ways of being conscious of one another are not those of empathy and identification. Now, since people who would empathize cannot be cognitive without ritually offending those about whom they are thinking in this mode, it is in fact stupid to aspire to a style of apprehension that carries on as if it were not human. Fruits of this sort of socially clumsy, cognitive understanding, furthermore, will only become incorporated in human life if there are persons who can in their turn be enraptured by the cognitive, and be so enraptured that they still cannot see that this is what they are (for if they did they would feel shame at having been enraptured).

Cognition, however, is in no way threatened by its use of rapture as a means of apprehension, because rapture is respect heightened to an inordinate pitch, and respect is the leaving alone of phenomena. Moreover, rapturous apprehension is only possible when it intimately relates the known to the unknown, whereas free-floating cognition when it is not of itself enrapturing may have very little human content. (It need hardly be said at this point that the anti-dramatic short circuits of experiential-style research workshops can only work when they stop being what they think they are.)

It should be clear by now that, throughout this very brief resume of my remarks on rapture (Chapter IX), I have assumed that a person cannot become enraptured by phenomena that are not interpretable to him. Interpretability is the conceptual link between the apparently subjective state of

rapture and the society-wide appearances of fashion. The nature of this link has not been examined in this thesis much beyond the point of saying that a minimum necessary condition for enrapturing possession is interpretability. But it is implicit in several passages that a close appreciation of originality in conduct, which is the sine qua non of ritually powerful forms, depends on a fine understanding of conduct fashions, for only he who is thoroughly conversant with already established forms will be able to confidently declare for true originality when he sees it. True originality consists in being beyond what has gone before while being perfectly comprehensible (and if the new comprehensibility is larger than the old it could be said that a civilization is becoming more intelligent). Such originality is perhaps impossible for most people most of their time, and this is precisely a reason for fashion, that it gives its followers a momentary advantage over those who lag behind its original forms, for the fashion follower can be highly original and also, just because he is in fashion, quite comprehensible in wide societal terms. Here is a return to my proposition that fashionable conduct is ritually strong conduct and that ritual conduct is good conduct. So it might now be said - to make one more connection between fashion and rapture - that those who are "interested" in fashion, although they may not know it, are interested in being alive with other persons. The tragedy of these people is beautifully stated by George Eliot (1957)

apropos of the young Gwendolen Harleth:

> She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her
> horizon was that of the genteel romance where the
> heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of
> vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while
> her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and
> if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly,
> so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes.   Here
> is a restraint which nature and society have provided
> on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul
> burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and
> ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless
> held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms
> and does nothing particular.

Both punks and nurses, I have said, live for their
ritual power (or enrapturing capabilities, according to
whether those who see them would enter a realm defiant of
normal society or one risen above it), and, because of this,
also have ritual power to diminish or offend those who only
see it as a self-serving insistence on empty ritual power that,
however, by pushing down the audience, can still maintain the
same differential between those seen and those seeing.   But
no punk and no nurse, insofar as he or she comes to perfectly
exemplify the punk or the nurse, which is the whole point of
being either, is a separate, unique possession.   These fas-
hioned beings, just as they do not succeed in coming across
as independently embodied persons, must look "taken over",
like dummies or zombies.   Cleverly, both groups adopt just
such routinized conduct that looks as though it were not alive
(in the sense of being a conscious separation from the social
universe), and this zombifying of conduct - in the case of

punks done by deliberately adopting moronic conduct appearances

and in the case of the nurses by the ruthless extirpation of

the personal in pursuit of utter selflessness - is too much.

Confronted with it, audiences give in, because it is not

natural, and therefore evidently is a product of human will.

So the will reveals itself, and at this meta level the dummy

is humanized again, now being the more powerful the less

personal he or she is.   Soldiers, policemen, and all office

holders, inasmuch as they totally sink themselves into their

offices, in this way acquire the ritual power that, it can now

be said, will always accrue to immolations of the self on the

emptiness of roles, in exactly the same way that ritual power

accrues to immolations of the role on the emptiness of selves.

Yet, as George Eliot observes, this is "nothing particular".

It is simply conduct that looks towards its own time as a

time to be preserved against every possible force of change,

and its originality is nothing but its willed unoriginality.

Persons so possessed by it abrogate their particular possi-

bilities, but, and this is the crux, only to a greater extent

than all persons who allow themselves to be possessed.   In

any age and culture there simply may not be many viable

possessions, and the sense of there being a variety between

persons may only come from their individually different ways

of failing to be properly possessed, and the failures will

seem the same as the rare cases of genuinely original

possession to those who themselves, knowing it or not, are

improperly possessed.   The dummies and the would-be dummies,

then, whether they veneer themselves in acceptability or try
to tear themselves to shreds, are out there, right now, a
jostling throng, the human race, through which, who knows,
may be shouldering someone who can see himself, and his others
too, for what they are, and in a way that lets them see it.
Saying this, I, myself, feel like one of the dummies, through
whose mouth some ventriloquist who has no respect for me is
articulating these words and sentences.   But this social
feeling, that the world is an ant heap and that being an ant
is to move and speak at another's bidding, of course, can be
escaped, if, and only if, rapture should supervene.

Conclusion

    People, so-called, know themselves in one another's
company when possessions spiral into being and travel to and
fro between them, and sometimes separate possessions may
become one larger possession into which fingers, hands,
words, eyes, laughter, expressions, gestures, exclamations,
faces, voices, and bodies too are drawn pell-mell.   These
mini-zeitgeists that only obey their own dynamic may also
feed the societal zeitgeist which sucks into itself the
larger human material of lives entire, careers, businesses,
artistic movements, money, and ideas until eventually blowing
itself out and dropping the airborne harbingers of the future

to the ground as period pieces and relics. Strindberg (1964),

who, in my opinion, is still airborne, understood this very

well in 1888, when writing of the characters in his play

Miss Julie:

> Since they are modern characters, living in an age
> of transition more urgently hysterical at any rate than
> the age which preceded it, I have drawn my people as
> split and vacillating, a mixture of the old and the new.
> And I think it not improbable that modern ideas may,
> through the media of newspapers and conversation, have
> seeped down into the social stratum which exists below
> stairs.
>   My souls (or characters) are agglomerations of past
> and present cultures, scraps from books and newspapers,
> fragments of humanity, torn shreds of once-fine clothing
> that has become rags, in just the way that a human soul
> is patched together.

Individuals may only occasionally be aware of themselves

like this, and perhaps less frequently still are they fully

alive in interactions, as Normal Mailer (1970), about to be

arrested outside the Pentagon on 20 October 1967, describes

the condition:

> It was as if the air had changed, or light had altered;
> he felt immediately much more alive - yes, bathed in
> air - and yet disembodied from himself, as if indeed
> he were watching himself in a film where this action
> was taking place. He could feel the eyes of the people
> behind the rope watching him, could feel the intensity
> of their existence as spectators. And as he walked
> forward, he and the MP looked at one another with the
> naked stricken lucidity which comes when absolute
> strangers are for the moment absolutely locked together.

This interactional state is captured by Raymond Chandler (1971):

> The coffee-maker was almost ready to bubble. I turned
> the flame low and watched the water rise. It hung a

little at the bottom of the glass tube.   I turned the
flame up just enough to get it over the hump and then
turned it low again quickly.   I stirred the coffee and
covered it.   I set my timer for three minutes.   Very
methodical guy, Marlowe.   Nothing must interfere with
his coffee technique.   Not even a gun in the hand of a
desperate character.
    I poured him another slug.   "Just sit there," I said.
"Don't say a word.   Just sit."
    He handled the second slug with one hand.   I did a
fast wash-up in the bathroom and the bell of the timer
went just as I got back.   I cut the flame and set the
coffee-maker on a straw mat on the table.   Why do I go
into such detail?   Because the charged atmosphere made
every little thing stand out as a performance, a move-
ment distinct and vastly important.   It was one of those
hypersensitive moments when all your automatic movements,
however long established, however habitual, become
separate acts of will.   You are like a man learning to
walk after polio.   You take nothing for granted, ab-
solutely nothing at all.

Mailer and Marlowe, as fully as can be, actors of themselves,

are, I contend, at the limit of self-possession, when being

a person is totally a matter of acting in a distinctive, in-

telligible manner that, the sharper it is and the more of a

style it is with prevailing fashions, will acquire ritual

power, commanding attention, then, of itself for itself alone.

This is the condition that all other impersonations of the

self in interaction fall short of to various extents, and

normally, of course, a person is less likely to become the

centre of attention by consummate acting than by "making a

scene".

    But social life, it will be objected, is about real

political situations, in which performances are powerless

against economic and similar factors.   This is probably so,

except that these "real" factors do not exist for most

people unless dramatized.   For example, Jean-Luc Godard (1972)

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reflects on how to make a film about concentration camps, and desperately concludes that their reality is unintelligible unless conveyed obliquely through the reality of those to whom pain and death are administratively irrelevant:

> Take concentration camps, for instance. The only real film to be made about them - which has never been made because it would be intolerable - would be if a camp were filmed from the point of view of the torturers and their daily routine. How to get a human body measuring two metres into a coffin measuring fifty centimetres? How to load ten tons of arms and legs on to a three-ton lorry? How to burn a hundred women with petrol enough for ten? One would also have secretaries making lists of everything on their typewriters. The really horrible thing about such scenes would not be their horror but their very ordinary everydayness.

Here the problem is laid bare, of how to make an audience see a "real" factor, like anti-semitism and genocide, in ways that do not dissipate into statistics, thereby dehumanizing the ritual sense of what it is to be human. Goerge Steiner, confronting the same issue, has concluded that tragedy itself is no longer possible against the scale of human exterminations in this century, but if this is so then humans will have stopped being ritual beings, which I do not think is everywhere the case, though I feel that the only contemporary tragedy is the political triviality of human tragedies.

Already, from within "high culture", literary works are being de-ritualized, notably by the French structuralists who refuse to see anything but words in a text. This only mirrors the wider social science practice of behaviourizing

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man by collapsing his ritual realm into the literal dimension
of his conduct.   I see both these approaches as being untrue
to people's experience: that how they act, no more than the
two-dimensional representation of perspective in a painting,
is not to be fully understood in terms that do not, as in the
analogy of the painting, show a third dimension or ritual realm
as I have called it.

Can I prove this?   Only if the words with which I have
indicated the ritual realm have seemed to open up a space that
at the same time is not a space so much as a frame in which
human acts can begin to be properly analysed as having such
attributes as dignity, vileness, goodness, beauty, clumsiness,
and so on, through the manner of their being acted.

I have declared "inner men" to be fabrications or at
best misleading descriptors of possessions that are private,
and I suggest that these non-sociological entities are
mythologized into the culture so that society may be kept
stable.   In the situation where people's faces can so easily
be blown this way or that in this or that ritual wind, life
is brought under control when these faces are nailed to a
variety of grinning skulls such as "IQ", "extraversion-
introversion rating", "neuroticism score", "construct set",
and so on.

Of course, already, many distinguished scientific
careers (Birdwhistell, Garfinkel, Scheflen) have been poured
into the proposition that a person is only his seeable self,

but not even Goffman has seemed to want to make a case for

the human capacity to enrich and refine performative con-

duct, especially by its sensitive responses to other per-

formances, and so these scientists miss perhaps a central

social fact, that, if ritual power can be acquired in

interaction by conduct alone, every other theory, of how

power (of this sort) is acquired by a levelling down of one

set of parties in order to elevate another, is riddled with

as many holes as there are ritually powerful performances

in the interactions it would pretend to explain.   Of course,

it is always easier to short-cut performance demands by

politically consolidating a ritually powerful enactment

with rules backed by force, and those who confront such

political terror tactics - whether in their families or

in the organizations where they work - may re-route thwarted

appreciation (of "betters" who do not live up to their

statuses) into figures from the realms of entertainment and

high culture.   Thus there arises a parallel society, more

real, if reality be measured by engrossableness, than the

one of cash and labour and gun, which, of late, Althiede &

Snow (1979) have demonstrated, more and more models itself

on this flimsier but ritually more powerful world.

My thesis has been a provisional affair, since it wished

to begin five inseparable large projects rather than conclude

a small one.   These projects are:

(1)　The integration of a branch of interactional sociology
　　　with some society-wide conceptualizations.

(2)　A re-orientation of a style of interactional sociology
　　　so that the life of everyday life becomes its central
　　　reference.

(3)　The linking of an interaction theory to a wider theory
　　　of human comprehension (this in embryo is the rapture-
　　　possession relation).

(4)　The development of a sociology whose methodology and
　　　practice are of a piece with its findings.

(5)　To advance a theme of the thought of the only genius
　　　(known to me, at any rate) currently writing sociology.

My judgement of this thesis is that I have indeed opened up
each one of these projects as sociologically viable activi-
ties, and my reason for not having been clearer or more
comprehensive than I have been is that the amount of work
required to push any one of these projects to a conclusion
that would draw mainstream scientific respect is obviously
enormous.

Notes

1   Some of the conclusions are developed as the summary
    goes along.

2   I refer to punks in the present tense even though their
    fashion is now outmoded.

3   An Oakland Chapter Hell's Angel quoted in Thompson (1968).

4   Audiences may be a sociological category between groups
    and mobs, but, though most persons belong to them more
    frequently than they belong to groups or mobs, the category
    has not been well developed in sociology. A view of society
    as a collection of overlapping audiences has the merit of
    directing attention to what is most attended to by social
    people.

5   Scheflen (1973a) says that an emotional response "is merely
    cognitive experience for which the idea is not conscious"
    and that the unconscious is behaviour "not countenanced in
    traditional explicit metasystems."

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        Wiley

Appendix

My theory, speculative and barely theoretical though
it may be, predicts a trend in sociology toward more literary
work, because literature is a dramatic ritual realm that meets
both social life and language in full face, so to speak,
generally avoiding outlooks, on the one hand, that take lan-
guage to be a mathetic code for things called facts and, on
the other hand, that assume life to be best approached by
the mind in its lowest gear, steering straight ahead, and
throttled back to a purely measuring, quantitatively analytic
mode. Once the premature scientism of sociology (and perhaps
psychology too) is seen for what it is, perhaps a new genre
of sociology-literature will replace it, blending ethno-
graphies and speculative analysis as good journalism, in a
halting way, already does. The imagination may then be used
to take the reader closer to the realities of life and not -
as has happened in most of literature since the novel ceased
being a popular verbal entertainment - further away as if it
itself were a greater realm than society. Thus this appendix -
"Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man" - is a short text
written to show how a series of experiences lived on the level
of cunning, physical performance awakens a protagonist to
their ritual meanings. From a sociological point of view,
the text feels incomplete, because everything is implicit.
But from the point of view of the text, of course, sociology
seems incomplete, because nothing there is implicit.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

His pencil beam played over the statuette without
sticking to the gold that, touched by light, seemed warm
and reptilian and alive with a contempt for the man behind
the beam. He switched his torch off and darkness, dissolving
away his surface, exposed his tree of nerves to the seething,
hyperactive silence, but, from this fear-infested non-being,
his hand and arm, a trembling branch of nerves, reached out.
The hand took the statuette and put it as gently as if it
were a grenade into his pocket, then, not sensible that it
had stolen what had been coveted, waited there while he,
still rooted to the spot, braced himself against arresting
hands that did not seize him this time.
He padded across the carpet to the door at which,
appalled by the loudness of his footfalls following him,
he paused, but he heard not the tiniest crack of any one
of this building's bricks contracting in the huge cold
night. He went through the door, and as he closed it the
latch clicked to like a camera taking a portrait of his
back. Motionless now, he peered between the landing ban-
isters into a black fog that stirred in none of its particles
and only his heart thudded at the centre of this palace
of refrigeration.
He glided along the landing, and then up a flight of
marble stairs, three at a time, and up a second flight,
and a third, and into what, from his sense of its walls
and ceiling narrowing him in, he guessed to be corridor.
Twenty paces down the corridor he stopped. In the icy
wall to his right, there was the handle he wanted, which

he turned to open the door of a small room he entered.
Fresh air now penetrated the wool of his ski mask: it came
from the high window he had struggled in through just two
minutes ago.

He egressed the window backwards, pulling himself
up by his hands which had hold of the guttering above,
and, as he swung round the overhang of the gutter, he did
not see down into space that far below ended in level,
hard denial of braggadocio on high. His toes at last in
the gutter, he stretched up and out in a star on the sloping
roof, then crabwise inched right till he could drop onto
a flat ledge.

There he took his bearings in a nightscape of lights
cumulatively glowing yellow beneath a sky whose ragged
muslin clouds took on tinges of blue as they tore across
the moon.

It was bitter cold.

Five storeys below, the exhaust of a Rolls Royce drifted
through the hard light of a No Entry sign, and the Rolls Royce's
perfected drone disappeared street by street into the city's
low roar that now and again was descanted by wind keening
in some aerials overhead. To the left, a box with louvred
vents housed the inflow of an air-conditioning system.
Crouching next to it now, he heard a woman moaning, "Say
you love me, please, or I'll die of shame." A man grunted
and bedsprings twanged as if the man had jumped to his feet.
Sounds of a scuffle filtered up through the vents, and
horrified female gasps and female words, "Help me somebody
please."

His ladder, at the far parapet to which he had crept,
was still there, thank god. He placed it across the drop
between this building and its neighbour, and on all fours
crawled downwards into the sag - over a street as clear
as a photograph but in his same medium of empty air - then
crawled up to the other side, where he pulled the ladder
in after him. Below this parapet, as he had left them,
were the briefcase, western boots, and anorak. He ripped

off his ski mask and gloves and training shoes, and stowed
them in the briefcase on top of the statuette; then he
put in the bleeper by which his look-out in the street
had not needed to alert him.

A minute later, briefcase in hand, he was ready to go,
but he stood listening intently to a roof so silent he
suspected a trap. Trap or not, there was no other way
down than the emergency stairs, which he did not make a
move towards until the moon went behind a thick cloud.

Less than thirty seconds later he was in the street
walking away from the scene of his crime with the relaxed
gait of a man of means.

Outside the pub where he had arranged to rendezvous
with his lookout, he faltered, irrationally certain that
the police were lying in wait behind the swing doors, yet
in the Lounge Bar no one was watching his accomplice, who
seemed ready to plunge, a suicide, into the deep V neck
of a barmaid whose two eyes were like Pernod clouding from
within as she saw an admirer taken away from her.

At the rear of the pub the two men locked themselves
into a single cubicle of the Gents.

The briefcase was exchanged, but words were not.

A minute later, with empty hands, the burglar passed
through the pub's back gate into a cul-de-sac lined with
battered, lidless dustbins. For an instant of foreboding,
he felt that the bins were waiting to fill with the goods
his cash would consume, but he walked past them, and on,
to the terrace house of his brother-in-law. Its door opened
as if it were the entrance to a Victorian catacomb, barred,
however, by his brother-in-law, whose face was like an
identikit being jogged as it said, "Hello."

In the lounge they disturbed a woman watching Startrek.
She eyed her brother with an unnerving stare of greed and
fear combined; then she went to the TV and decreased its
volume to zero while her husband poured gins. She handed
round the drinks, and, after omitting to toast one another,
the three of them sipped cautiously.

"What's the time?" demanded the visitor.

"Ten forty-five," murmured his sister.

"And I've been here since nine?" she was asked in the same tone of voice.

The woman searched her husband's face for the face of the man she had married and he gazed back at her as if he thought she thought he was someone else, and, outside the continuing guessing game and feud of their marriage, the visitor laid five £10 notes next to his almost full glass on the low coffee table.

"Yes. You've been here since nine," the man estimated, "hasn't he? hasn't he, dear?"

"Yes. Nine."

The two men then drove in the brother-in-law's van through Highbury to a block of flats in Islington. This was to maintain the alibi that had just been bought: it was understood that if its truth had to be sworn in court more money would change hands. By now the statuette had been fenced and the briefcase full of forensically incriminating gear had been loaded with a brick and dropped in the Thames, so only one link to the crime remained. That was the Security Officer. Probably he would confess to the police and maybe he was talking at that very moment, but he could only point the finger at a man who when bribing him to unplug the alarms for that vital ten minutes had worn a blond wig, sunglasses, and, to increase his height, cuban heels.

The brother-in-law parked the van and had to trot to keep up as they entered the block, crossed the hall, climbed twelve zig-zag flights of stairs, and went down a sixth-floor corridor.

They stopped and the man in front tapped on a door which, after a wait, opened slowly, revealing a woman with brilliant eyes. The thief turned from the eyes and said to his brother-in-law, "Goodnight."

"Oh yes, goodnight," was the reply from a figure who diminished down the corridor as if he were pushing a barrow loaded with scrap. From the gloomy distance, this badly-

dressed, furtive-looking man looked back and darkly called,
"Be lucky."

The thief joined his wife in the bed she had risen
from to answer the front door, and they lay side by side,
not touching, she in one of her few nightdresses that he
had not given her. He could no longer understand whom he
had been in those days when he had always rushed into the
flat with nothing else in his mind but to go to work on
her like a pneumatic drill. After all her explosive orgasms,
he wondered that she was still shaped like a woman, whom
other men, at least, lusted after just as he had once.

"I'm going to leave you," she said.

He felt like retorting, "So leave me."

After a while, though, his life began to seem futile
without her.

He rolled onto his side, facing her, and could see
the livid line of her profile against the dim wall, a wall
vague as if through it he might discern some consoling
human sign. Her profile's lips, now parting and closing
three times in saying, "I mean it," seemed to take in a
shadowy hope that he felt was his.

"No!" she shouted, wrestling away from him, but in
no time her body, whoever that was, welcomed him without
reserve.

He began to spin round a tiny, living Venus that was
gleaming lasciviously with gold. If he grabbed it, crushed
it to nothing in his fist, would he absorb its strange
erotic power? His hand moved to pluck the figure from
its darkness but, when his fingertips brushed the gold,
he lost his balance and toppled over and fell headlong
into what felt like an endless hole. A window in the side
he was falling past lit up and out of it popped the head
of his wife, happy as he had never seen her in life.
"Goodbye," she said. He laboured to find some words to
say but another window lit up showing a teacher he remembered
from Primary School. She was shaking her head. Below
the teacher there glared the face of a lady magistrate.

"Do you want to spend your whole life in prison?" she enquired. Following her, a detective pronounced, "You'll do ten for this you bastard."

A long way below the detective a prison governor fixed him with sharp, inhuman eyes. "I might as well be addressing a brick wall," he sighed, and then he laughed an ugly laugh that followed its human object down the hole into even thicker blackness. No faces materialized for quite a time, until a grey-wigged judge suddenly shone forth. "You are an enemy of society. I am sentencing you to..." But the man in the dock was plummeting too fast to hear the length of his term, though it had to be life.

The bedroom door was being broken down.

Twisting round, he separated from his wife, and was blinded by the beam of a heavy-duty torch. Before he could react, the centre light switched on, bleakening four walls that, newly solid, closed off rescue or redemption. At the foot of the bed crouched two rigid detectives, like figures in a manual, each aiming a .38 revolver at his brain, and in the doorway behind them thronged uniformed policemen and women, gaping in. To stop the howling noise he shut his mouth, yet the howling continued. Thickly he understood that it came from his wife hidden under the white sheet she had dragged over her head.

He put up his hands and got out of bed, and the police made way for him as nakedly he strolled into the lounge where a search warrant was waved under his nose.

"You're coming with us," commanded a senior detective.

Two policewomen dashed into the bedroom and the wife quieted to the relief of everyone, though not a single face relaxed. A detective appeared with clothing in his arms, but he was still pointing a gun at his nude quarry, whom he allowed to dress before locking handcuffs onto his wrists. Even as their prisoner was being hustled out of the flat the uniformed police began tearing it apart.

Nobody spoke in the lift or in the front hall of the block or in the police car or in the police station all

the way to an underground Interview Room, where the prisoner
was left alone. He sat on one of two chairs at a battered
table, and studied the grain lines that pencil points had
deepened. Every single channel led indirectly or directly
to one or other of the table's precipitous edges. He was
trapped on the table top, unable to leap to freedom.

There were hours to go before dawn and this windowless
room, despite an iron radiator that smelled of the nineteenth-
century foundry it had been cast in, held no more warmth
than a railway platform.

The prisoner's senses were so bared that he could
hear a detective going up the steps to the side entrance
of the police station, hear him walk down a hallway, enter
an office, open a filing cabinet, pull out a dossier, shut
the cabinet, exit the office, descend a flight of stone
steps, walk down the corridor outside this room... The
detective opened the door, sat down across the table, and
began to read from the dossier:

"Taking away a car... Burglary... Resisting arrest...
Conspiring to rob... Armed robbery... Etcetera..."

The detective then authored a swelling silence before
closing the dossier as on a pressed flower he had reprieved
from burning.

"You're a shit," he commented, "and I don't like you
living in the area of my jurisdiction."

"Hard luck," the prisoner said, his words outing before
he had thought them.

More silence, signed only by the detective, who eventually
said:

"It's your hard luck actually. From now on I'm going
to go after you day and night, night and day. You'll make
a mistake sooner or later. And I'll catch you."

The detective stood up, and tucked his dossier under
one arm and almost marched to the door which he opened but
did not go through. He called to the policeman on guard
outside, "Lock him up," and he looked back lingeringly at
the prisoner, who was studying the fingernails of his right

hand. Then the detective leaned into the corridor as if
it were an uphill slog all the way now to his pension.
The prisoner was escorted the other way down this corridor
to a narrow flight of concrete steps, and down these, then
along a darker corridor which smelled of unwashed bodies,
and into a dirty cell. The policeman took off the prisoner's
handcuffs before leaving the cell and turning a loud iron
key in its door. Locked away, the prisoner sat down on
the hard bed and looked up at the light, a glaucomatous
bulb covered by a bowl of reinforced glass, and he looked
at the hard walls which seemed to harden further as if
their solidity was extending to the boundaries of his
consciousness. So here he was again trapped in a lift stuck
nearer hell than heaven.
          Three hours later, released as arbitrarily as he had
been confined, he walked home into the dawn breaking over
the city that by day he regarded as asleep, swarming with
people to whom he did not credit the emotion which in him
night sharpened till it could cut through the bars he met
everywhere.

          At home, his wife, who had cleaned up the flat, made
two cups of instant coffee which she set down on the kitchen
table they sat either side of.

          "What are you going to do today?" she asked.

          He gave a start, for even in so brief a spell of custody
he had broken the habit of making plans.

          "Go to the gym. Weight training."

          She shut her eyes as if her burden, of neglect, was
finally too great.

          He thought of his muscles glistening with sweat and
the swollen blue veins snaking beneath his skin, and an
image came back to him from a glossy magazine, of a nude
woman photographed upwards from a position between her
knees. She was caught in the act of pulling a T-shirt
over her head, her arms snared in the garment above her
leaned-back body which was as inviting as runway to one
longing for take-off into what?

          He did have the phone numbers of a girl who for cash

would willingly assume the stance of the woman in the magazine,
so he would take it from there, because he had to try.
He knew already, though, that it would probably end up with
his whipping the girl's buttocks until he shot himself
into thin air. The distant premonition of those whip marks,
that like thin red bars caged in his desire to love, paled
as his wife's face came back into focus.

They finished their coffees in silence. He felt she
understood him. She waited for him to say he would stay
home after all. He got up and walked out of the kitchen,
she following.

In the hall he donned his Crombie overcoat while his
wife framed herself in the lounge doorway. On a row of
cloakroom hooks to her right, their coats hung like dis-
continued personalities. She leaned against one jamb,
folded her arms.

"Do you love me?" she asked.

He stopped buttoning his coat and met her eyes. She
blinked and looked down. He buttoned the last two buttons.

"When you get back tonight, I'll be gone."

"You don't have to go."

In the doorway that over the years she had made her
proscenium for the delivery of farewells, nothing changed
but her eyes which began shedding tears.

He left, and she listened to him thumping down the
corridor, listened to the lift, and, after a gap, to his
car as he backed it out of the car-park behind the block.
She did not budge, though if it had been possible she would
have lain open-legged in the path of his car, for she craved
what he had become for her, a vicious machine, which, as
it tortured also processed her emotions into reliable,
calculating attitudes that protected her from men.

Eventually her tears dried. She laughed, and said
aloud, "I'm leaving you today." Still laughing, she went
into the kitchen. There she smashed the coffee grinder,
the percolator, the electric kettle, the microwave oven,
the freezer, the fridge, and the transistor radio. Still

laughing - but all the while hearing herself with a mixture
of affection and panic - she went from kitchen to lounge,
where she smashed the hifi, the colour TV, the standard
lamp, the bottles and glasses of the cocktail cabinet,
the cabinet itself, the ashtrays, the mirrors, and the
glass of the glass-topped tables. After that she stopped
laughing and went to bed, and resolved not to move until
she was absolutely certain what to do next.

In the gym, meanwhile, her husband on his back bench-
pressed a seven-foot cadmium steel bar with 30 Kg on each
end. At this moment, when the man of nerves was eclipsed
by the man of muscles, he recited one of his poems to
himself:

> I do not work.
> I make money.
> I use people.
> I am stamina.
> I live with the dead.
> I am a spirit,
> for ever and ever.