

the sharing out of the lead voice itself, and there is a direct continuity between the Shirelles' 1958 "I Met Him on a Sunday" and Salt-n-Pepa's 1991 "Let's Talk About Sex."⁵³

As a label, "girl groups" (which may include groups of boys) describes a form which is, by its nature, *dramatic*: girl group records feature—focus on—vocal rhetoric and its effects. And, though less obviously, so does the pop duet (a form which has been somewhat devalued by the current fashion of reviving old stars' careers by getting them to sing along with new stars to no dramatic effect at all). In country music, for example, the man/woman duet is usually conflictual; the male and female voices are registered separately, present their different points of view, with the chorus harmonies suggesting just a temporary truce (the classic pairing here was Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn). In soul the duet was usually used as a way of intensifying feeling, as a means of seductive talk, male and female voices moving in and to musical and sexual union (listen, for example, to Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell).⁵⁴

In rock the most effective duets work not so much with realist effects (a man and woman quarreling or making up) as with star quality and across genre lines. Sinéad O'Connor, for example, has been used to brilliant effect as a voice *querying* what's being said by a rapper, on the one hand (in her song with M. C. Lyte, "I Want (Your Hands on Me)"), and by a country singer, on the other (on Willie Nelson's version of Peter Gabriel's "Don't Give Up")—and I defy anyone to listen to her first entry on the latter track without a shiver of recognition that *this* person (with all we know about her) should be telling Willie Nelson (with all we know about him), should be telling him, so surely, so sweetly, to survive.⁵⁵

10

Performance

One minute into this performance and she's not wearing her heart on her sleeve: all of her internal organs are draped over her body like a hideous new skin. Blood seeps through her pores; stigmata break out all over, making signs no one can read. By marshalling an array of blues and soul mannerisms, she contrives an act that in certain moments—and you can hear them coming—ceases to be any kind of act at all. The means of illusion produce the real, and the real is horrible, but so vivid you couldn't turn away to save your life, or the singer's. It's no fun: there's an instant in the last chorus of the performance when Joplin's voice goes . . . *somewhere else*, and it's simply not credible that the music then ends with an ordinary flourish people can cheer for. How did she get back?

Greil Marcus on Janis Joplin's performance of "Ball and Chain" at the Monterey International Pop Festival, 1967¹

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on—and this seems to be the typical case—then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the "realness" of what is presented.

Erving Goffman²

My argument in this book is not just that in listening to popular music we are listening to a performance, but, further, that "listening" itself is a performance: to understand how musical pleasure, meaning, and evaluation work, we have to understand how, as listeners, we perform the music for

ourselves. In this chapter I want to explore in detail how pop performance works. One problem here is what is meant by a "performance," particularly now that "the performative" is a familiar term in the literary critical lexicon. I should stress, then, that I am less interested in theories of text than of context, less interested in performance as a means by which a text is represented, "licensed," or made "excessive" than in performance as an experience (or set of experiences) of sociability (it has always seemed to me ironic that the academic effect of Jacques Derrida's musings on what it means to treat a text as an event has been the systematic study of events as texts).³

I'm sure, similarly, that postmodern theorists (also much concerned with performance issues) have more to learn from a study of popular music than popular music theorists have to learn from postmodernism. Nick Kaye, for example, concludes the most systematic survey of the "postmodern" in dance and theater by tentatively identifying the term with "an unstable 'event' provoked by a questioning that casts doubt sharply upon even itself," but his relentless attention to the institutionally defined avant-garde means that at no time does he stop to consider to what extent such instability and questioning have always been an aspect of popular performance—something as much to do with the social basis of the event as with the intentions or principles of the performers.⁴

My position, in brief, is that before trying to make sense of performance as a way of working with a text, we should first be sure we understand how performance is different, how it is "non-textual." What makes something a "performance" in the first place? What are its conditions of existence? How does performance-as-acting relate to performance-as-role-playing? What is the difference between performance on stage and performance off stage? Such questions are central to any discussion of performance in popular culture, in which the most interesting phenomenon is, precisely, the shifting boundary between the "staged" and the everyday.⁵

Sticking with a high cultural theory for a moment, then, what would it mean to treat popular musicians as performance artists? Noël Carroll has usefully suggested that the concept of performance art, as developed in the 1960s, is best understood as the entangling of two rather different practices and aesthetics.⁶ On the one hand, the term described fine artists using their bodies, themselves, as the material of their art. In terms of art theory what mattered here was the *medium*: art became something living, moving, and, by its nature, changing. Work and artist were "for the time being" the same thing, and the space of art was redefined as a moment or period or *event*: now the work stopped when the artist's show was over. This was, nevertheless,

still effectively an *objectifying* process, objectifying the artist herself, whose very being (her shape, her look, her "willed" acts) were constrained by the work's formal requirements. The unsettling question became: where is the "subject"?

On the other hand, performance art described stage performers (actors, dancers) who now took themselves and their bodies as the objects or sites of narrative and feeling. Such performers no longer "acted out" (or "in") a playscript or choreographic score, but effectively *subjectified* themselves: the implication of their work (which depended, as we will see, on a degree of collusion from the audience) was that what was happening on stage was determined only by the nature, shape, technique, body, and will of the performers themselves, which meant, among other things, a new emphasis on the process of putting together and taking apart a *persona*. Such performance involved the dialectic of coherence and incoherence.

Put these two lines of development together—objectifying the artist as the medium of the art; subjectifying the artist as the site of the narrative—and it is clear why performance art called into question a series of binary oppositions set up or assumed by the academic arts (though not, I think, by the popular arts): subject/object, mind/body, inside/outside. I'll come back to these distinctions in pop music terms shortly, but first I want to note two more general issues that emerge from this account of performance art.

First, the term "performance" defines a social—or communicative—process. It requires an audience and is dependent, in this sense, on interpretation; it is about meanings. To put this another way, performance art is a form of rhetoric, a rhetoric of gestures in which, by and large, bodily movements and signs (including the use of the voice) dominate other forms of communicative signs, such as language and iconography. And such a use of the body (which is obviously central to what's meant here by performance art) depends on the audience's ability to understand it both as an object (an erotic object, an attractive object, a repulsive object, a social object) and as a subject, that is, as a willed or shaped object, an object with meaning. Rhetorically, then, performance art is a way *not of acting but of posing*: it takes for granted an audience's ability to refer these bodily movements to others (in this respect, as in others, Madonna is the most self-consciously "arty" of pop performers, but by no means pop's only performance artist).

My second general point follows from this: the performance artist depends on an audience which can interpret her work *through its own experience of performance*, its own understanding of seduction and pose, gesture and body language; an audience which understands, however "instinctively"

(without theorizing), the constant dialogue of inner and outer projected by the body in movement. For performance art to work it needs an audience of performers; it depends on the performance of the everyday.⁷

From a socio-historical perspective it would doubtless be relevant here to point to the increasing significance of performance in everyday life as an effect of urbanization and the decline of intimacy (more and more of our dealings are with people we don't know), as an effect of industrial capitalism (we no longer derive our identity from productive labor), as an effect of commodity fetishism (our consumption is now a matter of imagination, not need).⁸ But whatever the material basis for contemporary performance, it is clearly culturally based. Western performance art only makes sense in terms of Western performing conventions—conventions shaped as much in the home and on the street as in the theater and the gallery.

What this means, in turn, is that the body-in-communication in performance art holds in tension not simply the subjective and the objective (the art question), but also the private and the public (the everyday question). In our experience (or imagination) of our own bodies, that is to say, there is always a gap between what is meant (the body directed from the inside) and what is read (the body interpreted from the outside); and this gap is a continual source of anxiety, an anxiety not so much that the body itself but its meaning is out of our control. In most public performances the body is, in fact, subject to a kind of external control, the motivation provided by a score or a script or a routinized social situation, which acts as a safety net for performer and audience alike. It is this safety net which the performance artist abandons, and one can therefore conclude that the essence of performance art is, in the end, embarrassment, a constant sense of the inappropriate. If, in conventional theater, one is embarrassed only when someone forgets a line or is suddenly "out of character," in performance art one is on the edge of embarrassment all the time because the performer is not "in character" to begin with (and the nervous tension among the audience at a "performance" as opposed to a "performance of a play" is palpable).

So far I have been describing performance "art," something defined in the gallery, on the one hand, and the theater, on the other. Performance itself, though, has a history in low cultural spaces too, and I'm sure that performances in popular places and genres (in the music hall and vaudeville, popular song and comedy) are much more akin to performance art than to "legitimate" art or theater. If performance artists in the 1960s turned to such popular forms as stand-up comedy and burlesque, wrestling and the circus, this was not just a postmodern breakdown of high/low cultural barriers; it was also because they had something to learn.⁹

Two aspects of this need further discussion. First, in describing something as a "live" performance we are drawing attention to a situation in which thinking and doing are simultaneous: we are watching willed activity in which it is the will that is active, so to speak. To put this another way, *all* live performance involves both spontaneous action and the playing of a role. This is obvious enough in live music: it must involve a *combination* of improvisation and note-following, with the extremes being a well-drilled orchestra (in which each player still has to will each note, just so) and a free-form solo invention (which must make a gesture at musical expectations even in flouting them). The interesting comparison here is with sports, in which performers may well feel most in control, most free, when, technically, they are playing most correctly.

The sports example is also a reminder that one of the recurring pleasures of popular culture is the difficult or spectacular act, the drama of which lies precisely in its liveness, in the resulting sense of risk, danger, triumph, virtuosity: we need to see things which we know must be live (even if we also know, as in the case of a James Brown show, that for such things to work they must be elaborately planned and rehearsed—they must always work, that is, *in exactly the same way*). What's valued here is not (as in high culture) seeing something unique, but seeing something difficult, something that *takes work*. Far from wanting the means of production to be concealed, the popular audience wants to see how much has gone into its entertainment. Performance as labor is a necessary part of the popular aesthetic.

The second point I want to make here about popular performance concerns "framing." Performance may only make sense through the everyday, but "public performance" also describes something marked off from the everyday, something in which when the everyday does appear it is as a joke, an intruder (which also means, to reverse the argument, that when the everyday turns out to have been a performance, to have been literally framed, by a viewfinder, it comes as a shock: "Smile, please! You're on *Candid Camera!*"). Public "framing," in short, involves the application of the sort of genre rules I've already discussed, rules which determine how both performer and audience should behave (rules which we can see enacted in even the most domestic of home videos).

As the anthropologist Richard Bauman has pointed out, it follows that there is not necessarily a clear distinction in terms of setting between the "staged" and the everyday. What is at issue, rather, is how activities are "staged" *within* the everyday. Thus a way of speaking can, in itself, signify a performance (which describes both an action and an event) by putting an "interpretive frame" around itself, such that listeners no longer treat what is

being said as part of normal conversation. In everyday terms the most obvious example of this is probably the joke: joke telling is certainly a performance, even if it occurs within a casual conversation (or within another sort of performance altogether, a lecture, say)—hence people's claims that they "can't tell jokes." What does such "telling" involve?¹⁰

The relationship between the conversational and the performative is complex, then, involving not just a particular use of language but also a claim to be competent in such use, and an assumption that one's audience is also so competent, or, at least, able to recognize one's talking skills. Unlike ordinary conversation, that is, a performance can be good or bad; it is evaluated. It follows some sort of formal rule, and the anthropologist's question becomes how such a performance is "keyed". How do we know that it is a performance? That it has begun? That it is over?

The answers obviously relate to the genre rules I discussed in Chapter 4, but Bauman also makes three general points that are important here. First, he notes that in anthropological terms a performance may range, in principle, from the completely "novel" (spontaneous invention) to the completely fixed (a traditional religious rite). In practice, as I've already suggested, nearly all performances lie somewhere between these two extremes, and Bauman's point is that this is what enables an audience to *judge* them: by measuring what's original, personal to this performance, against the conventions of the performance form in general. This is one of the problems, of course, for "original" performance art: no one knows how to tell if it's any good or not. And this isn't just a problem for the audience. The success of a performance for a performer can, in the end, only be measured by the audience response (this is what makes it a performance, a kind of oratory). A joke that gets no laughs, a song that gets no response, is a bad performance by definition.

Bauman's second point follows from this: a performance is "an emergent structure"; it comes into being only as it is being performed.¹¹ As the dance theorist George Beiswanger puts it, performing is a "kind of activity, peculiar to art-making, in which doing and thinking are so aligned that thinking proceeds to deploy what the doing is to be, and doing provides the thinking with a manifest presence. What is thought out is precisely what is done, the thought-out dance and danced-out thought being one and the same . . . dances are events brought forth by performing."¹²

Finally, like Beiswanger, Bauman suggests that performance is an "enhancement," involving a heightened "intensity" of communication: it makes the communicative process itself, the use of language and gesture, the focus of attention. And if for the performers this means prestige (for a good performance, for their skill), for the judging audience too it means an in-

creased sense of *control* over the usual flow of communication: performance is, in this context, a way of standing back from content and considering form. Thus pop listeners are always aware of the tension between an implied story (content: the singer in the song) and the real one (form: the singer on the stage), while pop performers use this tension to destabilize the concepts of content and form in the first place. Björk's "There's More To Life Than This," for example, a track from her fine *Debut* album, was "recorded live at the Milk Bar toilets," and the drama of her performance, its sense of immediacy—a "secret" moment of song snatched from an evening of public display—is more significant for our listening pleasure than the excuse for it, a *faux-naïve* on-the-spot song *about* sneaking away from the party. The image that sticks in the mind is not from the song ("we could go down to the harbour and jump between the boats") but from its singing, Björk hiding out in the bathroom.¹³

It is arguable, then, that in this self-conscious games-playing with the musical "event" we have exemplified not the postmodern but the popular. Whereas in both high and folk cultures, performing rules tend to be naturalized (so that everybody carefully avoids noting what a very peculiar event a classical concert or a folk festival is), in popular performance the rules (and the comic or shocking possibility of breaking them) are always on the surface of performance itself.¹⁴ Peter Bailey thus argues brilliantly that the central performing trope in late nineteenth century music hall was a kind of *knowingness*, a *collusion* between performer and (implied) audience, between audience and (implied) performer, which was both inclusive and exclusive, worrying and reassuring.¹⁵

Bailey's key point is that the best performers in the music halls constructed their own audiences, their own colluders, by using a mode of address which both flattered the audience's social competence and acknowledged its social wariness, its feeling that it might *get things wrong*, a feeling played on by almost every comedian. (Bailey notes the routine use of a butt in the crowd, someone who could stand for cultural incompetence.) More specifically (and it is this which makes knowingness peculiar to the music hall—other forms of popular performance use other forms of collusion), music hall comics could work in the belief that the audience understood what was *not* said, could systematically use both innuendo and parody-by-inflection or, usually, both, as "respectable" English was spoken in a way that mocked its conventions in the very act of using them (which is, again, to come close to the idea of "postmodern" performance).¹⁶

For contemporary popular music, though, the most significant linguistic source of performing conventions is undoubtedly "talking black," the "speak-

ing behavior" of African-American and African-Caribbean communities described by Roger D. Abrahams, in which there is not (as in European and European-American cultures) a clear distinction between "dramatic-type performance" and "other types of interactional behavior." Rather, workaday talk and conversation are *constantly* framed as performance, as the language used becomes formalized, as speakers "get into it," as the street itself becomes the site of a "constant self-dramatization," "an entertainment of each by the other." Abrahams notes that such "performing by styling" involves the use of body as well as verbal language: "to stylize is to call attention to formal and formulaic features" of both what one says and how and in what situation one is saying it (at home or in public; as a man or a woman; to an audience of men or women; and so forth).¹⁷

As Abrahams further notes, black slang (often misunderstood when taken over into white talk) systematically describes performance as a collective process—"doing your own thing" means taking your own part in a group drama; to "dig it" means not to understand, to get beneath, but to get involved, to get into. And it is this everyday experience of vernacular performance which has made African-American culture so important as a source of popular performing expertise, of popular performing style.¹⁸

I argued in Chapter 9 that the meaning of pop is the meaning of pop stars, performers with bodies and personalities; central to the pleasure of pop is pleasure in a voice, sound as body, sound as person. The central pop gesture, a sung note, rests on the same inner/outer tension as performance art: it uses the voice as the most taken-for-granted indication of the person, the guarantor of the coherent subject; and it uses the voice as something artificial, posed, its sound determined by the music. The star voice (and, indeed, the star body) thus acts as a mark of both subjectivity and objectivity, freedom and constraint, control and lack of control. And technology, electrical recording, has exaggerated this effect by making the vocal performance more intimate, more self-revealing, and more (technologically) determined. The authenticity or "sincerity" of the voice becomes the recurring pop question: does she really *mean* it?

And there is an additional point to make here. In the gallery world, one important reason for taking up performance art was its impermanence: the performance artist mocked the ideology of transcendence and the exploitation of art as property (though, of course, tapes of performances were soon marketed). In the pop world, recording made a performance a property from the start (and what happened in a studio in 1935, on a stage in 1965, is now sold as a jazz or rock "classic"), but the most important "permanent" element of pop music culture is not the event but the star. A performance is always,

that is to say, a performance in a history of performances; an "image" (like a stylistic "voice") describes change within continuity.

This raises a number of questions about the listening (or spectating or consuming) process—we don't, after all, consume the stars but their performances. If the singer's voice makes public (makes manifest, makes available) the supposed sounds of private (personal, individual) feeling, then these public gestures are consumed privately, fitted into our own narratives, our own expressive repertoires.¹⁹ Similarly, if all songs are narratives, if they work as mini-musicals, then their plots are a matter of interpretation both by performers attaching them to their own star stories *and* by listeners, putting ourselves in the picture, or, rather, placing their emotions—or expressions of emotion—in our own stories, whether directly (in this situation, in this relationship, now) or, more commonly, indirectly, laying the performance over our memories of situations and relationships: nostalgia, as a human condition, is defined by our use of popular song.²⁰

Just as a singer is both performing the song and performing the performance of the song, so we, as an audience, are listening both to the song and to its performance. For me this is a literal process: to hear music is to see it performed, on stage, with all the trappings. I listen to records in the full knowledge that what I hear is something that never existed, that never could exist, as a "performance," something happening in a single time and space; nevertheless, it is *now* happening, in a single time and space: it is thus a performance and I hear it as one, imagine the performers performing even when this just means a deejay mixing a track, an engineer pulling knobs.²¹

Even without such naiveté, I think it can be argued that the "act" of singing is always contextualized by the "act" of performing; and if the latter, like any other stage role, is put together behind the scenes, the former takes place in public: we see and hear the movement in and out of character; we watch this aspect of the performance *as a performance*. The way singers put roles on and off—"the next song is a slower number"—works differently in different genres, but all methods (irony, earnestness, virtuosity, craft pride, humor)²² draw attention to the singers' knowledge of what is going on, to their knowledge of our knowledge of what is happening. It's as if the "as if" of the song performance is foregrounded in order to naturalize the "as if" of the musical performance. A skilled rock and role player like Bruce Springsteen seems to adopt the same attitude to his songs, to his band, and to his own performance as the audience itself, and in taking our place, living our reality, he thus enacts his own star persona, as *one of us*.

And it is here that we begin to get interesting divergences from (or glosses on) performance as performance art. For a star is also (to use the industry's

own language) an "act"; performance is not as self-revealing as it may seem. To begin with, because pop is primarily a song form, because it involves the use of voice and words, so it is also a dramatic form: pop singers don't just express emotion but also play it (as I argued in Chapter 8, pop songs are, in this respect, more like plays than poems). But pop singers are unlike play actors (though similar to film stars) in two respects.

First, as we've seen, they are involved in a process of *double enactment*: they enact both a star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires, and the pop star's art is to keep both acts in play at once. This is most obvious in the plainest narrative forms, such as music hall or country music, where performers employ a variety of techniques (more obvious on stage than in the recording studio, though used there too) to move in and out of character. Interruption thus becomes a basic vocal device: the performer's skill is to objectify an expressive gesture at the very moment of its expression, to put quotation marks around it. The singer (Elvis Presley, say) becomes his own audience: is it really *me* singing that? (In country music, with its excessively self-conscious equation of realism and formalism, a central place in this process is occupied by songs about the past: the singer in her present persona responds to the naiveté or ambition of her past self, as expressed in the song; the performer is thus the singer and not-the-singer simultaneously, just as—and this is essential to country ideology—the past is both the present and not the present.)

The second complication in the pop singer's enactment of the pop star is that she (unlike the opera singer, say) is also the site of desire—as a body, and as a person (the film star analogy still holds). In performance, then, in the playing of their various song parts, instead of "forgetting who they are," singers are continuously registering their presence. (This is, perhaps, most obvious for performers who are most remote—Whitney Houston, for example.) Singing, as an organization of vocal gestures, means enacting the protagonist in the song (the right emotions for this part), enacting the part of the star (the moves in keeping with the image), and giving some intimation of a real material being—a physical body producing a physical sound; sweat produced by real work; a physicality that *overflows* the formal constraints of the performance.

This raises questions about the sexuality or erotics of performance, and its relation to possession (why do audiences dress up like the stars?), though the issue that most immediately concerns me (one that is raised by performance artists too) is this: what does it mean to make a spectacle of oneself? In the last chapter I suggested that discussion of the voice as body would always be haunted by questions of sexuality. So are discussions of the body

as body. To put it simply (to return to the everyday), to perform for an audience as a woman means something different than to perform for an audience as a man—different both in terms of the *social* connotations of what it means for a woman to show her body publicly, to pose, and in terms of the power play of sexual desire.²³ As Susan McClary puts it, a woman's problem is how to keep control of herself in a space, the stage, patrolled by an objectifying sexual gaze conventionalized by hundreds of years of patriarchal command. The female performer is inevitably much more self-conscious than a male performer in that she has to keep redefining both her performing space and her performing narrative if she is to take charge of her situation.²⁴

McClary's heroine in this respect is Laurie Anderson; most recent feminist discussion of the issue has focused on Madonna.²⁵ But women performers in all musical genres have always been conscious of what it means to be spectacularly female. As a country singer, Dolly Parton, for example, doesn't only play on a male notion of femininity, but in *performing* the signs of vulnerability—the little-girl voice, the giggle, the nervous flounce—makes their meaning problematic. Parton's remarkable vocal range—in terms of volume/power rather than pitch as such—draws attention to her art as a singer as much as to her life as a woman. As is typical in country music, her voice (as opposed to her body), though a clearly physical sound, becomes the sign, the trademark even, of her stardom, the meaning around which all her other signs (the hair, the breasts, the gowns) are organized. The song of dependence (common in her repertoire and often self-written) is therefore so obviously crafted, so clearly designed to display vocal skill rather than an emotional state, that at the very least Parton's audience has to consider her lyrical sentiments as ironic. (It is not surprising that she built up a strong camp following.)²⁶

By contrast, the English music hall star Gracie Fields, an ungainly, "homely" woman by showbiz standards, took on character roles much more specifically than Parton did and, like other music hall stars, mixed sentimental ballads with comic story songs. By spoofing her voice (rather than her looks), by displaying her vocal range (in terms of style as well as pitch) as a bit of a joke, Fields became endearing, beloved—"Our Gracie"—as a kind of favorite aunt or big sister. (This meant, among other things, that in her films Fields, unlike Parton, always, only, played herself.)²⁷

By contrast again (although less of a contrast than one might imagine), Millie Jackson uses the different conventions of soul feeling and the insult ritual to set up another sort of collusive relationship with her audience—or at least with its female part, speaking for it, drawing on innuendo and the unsaid to unfold a conversation that could be taking place in the launderette

and then moving dramatically back to the reality of her presence, on stage, with a band, microphone, lights. Like Fields, Jackson's movement from comic routine to ballad implies that, in the end, the comedy is the assumed role, the ballad the real feeling. The message, for all the ideological aggression, is orthodox: all men are shits (laughs) but we love them anyway (sighs). Her strutting public performance acts out a private resignation.²⁸

Two issues are significant here, I think. The first is *embarrassment*. Performing involves gestures that are both false (they are only being put on for this occasion) and true (they are appropriate to the emotions being described, expressed, or invoked). Even the most stylized performer, the one with the most obviously formal and artificial gestures, is expressing the self, displaying in public sounds and movements usually thought of as intimate; what the audience wants to see, as Roland Barthes puts it, is "a convinced body, rather than a true passion."²⁹ In judging a performer we are, as an audience, measuring her gestures against our sense of what she's really like, off stage (what her voice and body really do, in this sort of situation), and even if, from the singer's point of view, this makes it even more important to maintain a clear separation or distance between self and personality, nevertheless, what's on offer is a kind of vulnerability: we might not like her (and in most pop genres performance is, specifically, about being liked).³⁰

The performer's problem here is that however carefully crafted the star persona, in performance a real body is involved: singing is not necessarily or even desirably pretty—singers sweat, they strain, they open their mouths wide and clench their throats. To make the necessary musical sounds, singers have to do things (or simulate doing things) which may not "fit" the star body, the star persona. As Koestenbaum says of opera singers, "Singers look like freaks unless they control themselves, and this possibility of looking grotesque is appealing if you choose (as I am choosing) to embrace rather than to reject a stereotypical freakishness."³¹

Performers always face the threat of the ultimate embarrassment: *the performance that doesn't work*. (I have painful memories from my rock critic days of support acts orchestrating an audience response that isn't there, a singalong in which no one else is singing; that was just embarrassing, we muttered in the interval bar.) The appropriateness of a gesture, in other words, can be decided only by its effect. (This is a normal aspect of everyday performance too: a risked intimacy—an endearment, a caress—is always a risked embarrassment; it's the response which decides whether it was, indeed, fitting.)³²

On the other hand, we also know from everyday life that the way to deflate embarrassment is through self-mockery—we hastily pretend that the

gesture was a joke, was meant ironically. As audiences too we often decide (with delight or disdain) that a performer has gone "over the top." This is, in part, the effect of the music in making expressed feelings more intense: a stage performer gets the same sort of emotional charge from her soundtrack as a screen performer gets from his. And music's enveloping effect applies to the audience too: the world can only now be perceived in this emotional state, and the narcissism of the singer, exploring her own feelings, becomes our own. We forget ourselves in the music as part of a condition of collective self-indulgence; we are alienated, as Sartre would put it, in the collective ego.³³ But, further, over-the-top artists deliberately set gestures free from their appropriate setting. The great pop performers (whether Judy Garland or Shirley Bassey, Mick Jagger or Prince) don't so much enact emotional roles as hold their enactments up before us in fragments, so we can admire the shape of the gesture itself.

It is no accident that such performers are camp idols, are beloved (following Susan Sontag) in terms "of artifice, of stylization." Such performers seem to have grasped the camp point that the truth of a feeling is an aesthetic truth, not a moral one; it can only be judged formally, as a matter of gestural grace. "Sincerity," in short, cannot be measured by searching for what lies *behind* the performance; if we are moved by a performer we are moved by what we *immediately* hear and see.³⁴

This brings me to the second theme I want to pick up here, *seduction*. Guy Scarpetta suggests that a singer is in the same trade as a prostitute, publicly offering a bliss that can only be experienced privately.³⁵ We realize that the singer is making us an offer ("Know me!") that is essentially false, yet is true to our fantasy of what the offer might be, that it might be just for us ("To know me is to love me"). The listening fantasy, to put this another way, is that we control the music (the sexual exchange) when, in fact, the performer does. The seductive voice mediates between nature (the real person about whom we fantasize) and culture (the performing person we get); it draws attention both to the social construction of our desire, to its artificiality, and to our obdurately subjective reading of it. The presence of even a recorded sound is the presence of the implied performer—the performer called forth by the listener—and this is clearly a sensual/sexual presence, not just a meeting of minds.³⁶

What, then, is the role of the body in our understanding of musical performance and musical response? How does the body itself (as separate from the voice) communicate and react? Paul Eckman has usefully suggested that in considering so-called body language, we should move analytically from universal, unconscious, spontaneous bodily "utterances" through a spectrum

of socialized body movements to the most stylized, conventionalized, and posed.³⁷

First there are the direct physical expressions of emotional states—fear, ecstasy, delight, anger, aggression, timidity, and so forth. There does seem to be a repertory of physical and facial expressions (to go with the vocal noises described in Chapter 9) which are simply human (though we also read them onto animals). In responding to such bodily signs (a baby's smile; an audience's laughter; a friend's fear) we both read their bodies as indicating their emotional state and experience their emotions by reproducing the same bodily and facial movements for ourselves (by smiling, laughing, holding our bodies in the same state of tension).

This is the essence of what John Blacking calls "fellow feeling" (and, for him, a necessary aspect of musical communication). Such movements are, significantly, the hardest to act (it is difficult to laugh or cry to order), and actors normally need to be in the right character or narrative situation to do so—to be, that is to say, in the right state of fellow feeling. Nowadays, Blacking suggests, we tend to feel such "oneness" with other people only in specifically framed situations (as an aspect of particular sorts of hedonistic or religious or aesthetic experience; at climactic moments of love or achievement): "Similar somatic states seem to be induced by drink or drugs or fasting; but I think it would be more correct to say that such devices do not induce the state so much as help suppress the cultural rules that have inhibited their natural expression."³⁸ And this is obviously relevant to the way in which popular performance is framed, precisely with the promise of such fellow feeling. The usual cultural constraints on expression are suspended, and at the height of enjoyment at a rock concert (or football match), one can and does hug strangers, leap into the mosh pit, turn cartwheels on the floor. Such body movements feel spontaneous, unmeaningful of anything except a diffuse joy.

Second, there are what Eckman calls "illustrative movements," movements tied to the content of a verbal narrative, to the flow of speech. These can be quite unconscious (or "integrated") movements—the hand movements we make (and can't help making) when we speak, as a kind of commentary on what we say: an emphasis here, a shrug there (and tones of voice, bodily *sound* adapted to the nature of what we're saying, are obviously an aspect of this). But even if such movements are unconscious, they are certainly not universal; they are as culturally specific as the languages in which we speak. The point here is not simply that different languages use the body differently (so that one can distinguish French, Italian, and English speakers by sight as well as sound) but also that the same bodily movements may mean different things in different cultures. (A nodded head can be "yes" or

"no"; eye contact a mark of respect or contempt. How to touch someone else's body is in most societies the subject of elaborate rules of power and decorum.)

In performance terms, we could also label the "semi-conscious" or intentional acting out of a described emotion as illustrative: in conversation, that is, we find ourselves mimicking the state we describe (in saying we felt sad we "sadden" our face, and so on), and such mimicry (which quickly becomes conventionalized) becomes the basis for the enactment of emotion in mime and pantomime (in the exaggerated bodily and facial movements of the silent screen actor and actress).

Eckman's third category is bodily manipulations, movements in which one part of the body does something to another part. Here we find an odd mixture of our most unconscious movements, nervous tics like head scratching, nose picking, mouth rubbing, nail biting, and so on—actions that we both can't help doing and are embarrassed to be caught at—and the most conventionalized, the language of insults, insulting, it seems, precisely because they draw attention to bodily functions.³⁹

Finally there are what Eckman calls emblems, symbolic body movements which have specific (often verbal) meanings that can only be understood by people who know the interpretive rules, the code (and such body language is often, indeed, an aspect of membership in a secret or exclusive society). Obvious examples are making the sign of the cross, auction bidding, the Masonic handshake, and the referees' rulings in American football. Such movements are entirely conventionalized, which is to say that they make no reference whatsoever either to an emotional state or, indeed, to the body as such. It is simply being used as an instrument to write with, as a site to write on.

Two issues emerge from this approach to the performing body. First, at the core of our understanding of body language must be the knowledge that even the most direct form of human expression—the unmediated articulation of fear, anger, ecstasy, and so on—can always be faked (as in the faked orgasm restaurant scene in the film *When Harry Met Sally*). To call something a language is to say that it can be used for lying, and this is a particularly disturbing aspect of body language because its "truth" is tied into our own *unable-to-be-helped* response: someone's "appearance" of laughter or anger is enough to cause our laughter or fear *for real*.⁴⁰

This takes us back to the script as safety net and to the potential for embarrassment when it is removed. A staged performance is framed by a suspension of fellow feeling or, perhaps, by a kind of enactment of it: we know the performer is acting anger, so we act our fearful response. In

performance art, though, we don't know if this is an act, and an element of our fear is therefore real—maybe she, Millie Jackson, is going to come to my table and ask my partner about my own sexual performance (and there will be further embarrassment when I reveal my fear of humiliation just as she reveals that this was only an act, after all). Or, alternatively, perhaps she, Judy Garland, is not just acting grief but is really crying, which is to embarrass us in a different way, on her behalf. This is a particularly complex issue given that in performance body language is necessarily a combination of direct and conventional expression.

It is clear, moreover, that questions of gender and sexuality must be central to any account of body language, if only because the body is the key to the social meaning of both. On the one hand, sexual differences are directly read from physical differences (A has visible breasts, B doesn't; A is a woman, B a man); on the other hand, these biological differences are coded culturally into different *uses* of the body which have nothing to do with biology at all. And it is because men and women are seen to move differently that transgressive performance becomes possible, as a fertile form of sexual lying.⁴¹

So far I've been talking about the body as an expressive site or medium, assuming that an internal state or statement is externalized as a body shape or movement which is then interpreted, given meaning, by reference to the intention or feeling that produced it. And this is certainly one way in which we routinely listen to music and read performers. But we need to consider also the body's relationships *outside*, its place in the material world.

To begin with, take clothes. Clothes offer the body its most intimate traffic with the outside world (a point brilliantly made in *Paris Is Burning*), and there is by now a well-established literature that treats clothes (or fashion) as a language too. The implication here is that it is the clothes themselves that do the talking; beneath them is a kind of universal (if aged and gendered and racialized) body. This is the Emperor's New Clothes model: clothes are the way the body speaks; without them it has nothing to say. Hence the pop significance of dressing up, making up, Madonna's endlessly "revealing" costumes.

But as Anne Hollander has argued so persuasively, the relationship of clothes and body is more complex than this model implies.⁴² Bodies themselves bear the imprint of clothes. Social signs, that is, are written on the body itself, on its shape, its size, its texture, its curves and bones and flesh and hair. Stage clothes, stage costumes, don't necessarily *transcend* physical circumstances (think of those clodhopping British glitter bands of the early 1970s like Sweet and Slade), and band uniforms depend, for their effect, as much on the musical relationships between a group's members as on their design

features. How musicians look—how casual, how smart—clearly affects how at first we hear them (and most pop fans quickly realize that the most casual clothes are carefully chosen: it's the *same* ratty T-shirt every night). But we don't just experience a musician's body as costumed. As Ornette Coleman explains,

For me, clothes have always been a way of designing a setting so that by the time a person observes how you look, all of their attention is on what you're playing. Most people that play music, whether it's pop, rock or classical, have a certain kind of uniform so they don't have to tell you what you're listening to. I always thought that if this was the case, why wouldn't I try to design from the standpoint of the opposite of that? Have the person see what you have on and have no idea what you were going to play. I'm not playing to represent what I'm wearing, and I'm not dressing to represent what I play.⁴³

The point here is that the musician's body is also an instrument. Much of the discussion of body language treats the body as an autonomous object, something defining its own space. In fact, though, much (if not most) body movement is determined by other bodies (by parents and children and lovers and friends) and by the use of tools (whether at work or play). The use of the body as an instrument involves, in fact, two components. On the one hand, the *material* we work on determines our movements (when writing, cuddling, driving, sewing)—in musical terms the instrument we play thus determines the instrument our body must be (standing up, sitting down, bowing or blowing, hitting or pulling).⁴⁴ On the other hand, our movements are also determined by our *purpose* (to write a letter, comfort a child, go to the store, make a shirt, play a certain sort of note).

To describe body movement, then, is to describe both *what* is being done and *why* it is; to read body movements, to interpret them, is always to put them in a story. The same physical acts may be described as writing or doodling, as caressing or harassing; we refer here not to what we see but to what we infer (because of the situation, the characters, the plot). And the further complication here is that bodily movements (this is particularly obvious for musicians) depend on physical capacities, on learned competence. The body can't always do what we want it to, and what we see may mark a *failure* of purpose.

In pop terms, the most commonly learned form of musical movement is dance, and the most familiar setting for performing anxiety the dance floor. The starting question here is a simple one: what does it mean to move to music? Among performers (I'll come back to the audience shortly) we can

distinguish between techniques of *interruption* and techniques of *enslavement*, between devices that signal listening to music by disrupting it, and devices that signal listening to music by being absorbed in it. In some musical genres the spontaneity of a show is indicated by the performers' mistakes, their broken strings, their false starts and ruffled endings; in others the musicians' total engagement with what they're doing is indicated by the precision of their changes, the perfection of their harmonies. Then there's the question of what musicians do when they are not playing: is their interest in their colleagues' sounds best shown by movement or stillness, by concentration or abandon? Silent singers perform their continuing stage role in various ways, but most deliberately move as musicians (rather than as listeners), grab castanets rather than go into a choreographed routine.⁴⁵

The relationship of "listening" to music and "moving" to music is, in short, a matter of convention, as is what sort of movement to make; even a spontaneous response has to be coded as "spontaneous." The next question is when does a movement-to-music become a dance-to-music, and there are two issues here: the nature of the connection between what's heard and what's done, and the question of form, the relationship between one movement and another—how free are we to move, how do we know what movement is appropriate? The issue here is control: dancing is to walking, one might say, as singing is to talking. When dancing we subject our body movements to musical rules (we are less free than when we walk), and yet in our very self-consciousness we seem to reveal more clearly our physical sense of our selves; we are more self-expressive. As Francis Sparshott puts it, "Dance, then, is a mode of behaviour in which people put themselves rhythmically into motion in a way that transforms their sense of their own existence in a way that is at once characteristic and strongly qualified according to the dance performed."⁴⁶

The art and ballet critic Adrian Stokes once noted that to add music to a scene is to frame it, to make the movements in it (people walking to and fro) look different, less natural. As spectators we become more aware of people's body movements (trying without thinking to relate them to a musical shape), and they look to us themselves more self-conscious. Movement to music seems more willed than movement without it; more thought is going into it—when to put one's foot down, when to pause and turn—and even when holding still one's posture now seems more consciously crafted. The analogy that comes to mind here is listening to a strange tongue: we distinguish between someone babbling and someone speaking an unknown language according not to what we hear but to what we assume about what we hear: language, unlike babble, is taken to be ruled, the words consciously

chosen for their meaning. Adding music to a scene gives all the movements in it an implied intention: babble becomes speech, a walk becomes a dance, even if we don't understand it.⁴⁷

Dance is not simply a heightened or more intense form of movement, then; rather, it is movement which *draws attention to itself*, in the very act of ceding control to the music—this is the difference between a movement that coincides with a beat and a movement that submits to it. (In the video of "Papa Don't Preach," for example, when does Madonna stop walking to the rhythm and start dancing to it?)⁴⁸ For Adrian Stokes, a balletomane, the question becomes: is a ballet dancer totally in control of her movements (all of which are decidedly unnatural, depending on years of training, skill, and self-discipline) or totally out of control of them (with *everything* she does determined by the score and the choreographer)? The dancer's technique, that which allows her body to do whatever the dance requires, is precisely that which allows her to forget about her body altogether and just think the music (the parallel with sport is again applicable here: the unnatural fitness to which a soccer player brings his body enables him to forget it, as a body, when he's playing—which no doubt explains why soccer players, like dancers, are recurrently injured: they also forget what frail things their bodies really are).

Dance, in short, is willed movement (people only dance on hot bricks by analogy), but it is also unnecessary movement, an end in itself rather than a means to another end (like walking to the store for milk or passing the ball to the inside right).⁴⁹ Dance movements are chosen for aesthetic rather than functional reasons—dancing to the store isn't the quickest way to get there, and dancing back may well mean dropping the bottle; there's an analogy here with the poetic use of language: describing the fire in sonnet form is not the most efficient way of clearing the building, even if the sonnet is still about the fire, just as dance is still about moving across a space. The anthropologist Roderyk Lange thus describes dance as "poeticised" walking—a form of movement in which we are "carried" by the music, and experience an "unusual degree of continuity" in our actions. They relate to each other now according to the logic of shape and sound rather than means and ends; again there's an obvious analogy with the "poetic" use of language, words chosen for the logic of a poem's rhythm, shape, and sound, not just to convey meaning.⁵⁰

What makes a dance movement attractive or, to use the key word, graceful? To some extent such a judgment depends on genre conventions, but whether we're describing Margot Fonteyn or Michael Jackson, Cyd Charisse or John Travolta, Will Crooks or Siobhan Davies, the common factor seems

to be ease of movement, a sense of bodies become somehow *immaterial*—as if the music flows through them without any physical hindrance at all. As Sarah Jeanne Cohen notes, “To be dramatically compelling on stage, the dancer cannot allow *involuntary* movement to distract the viewer.”⁵¹ The dancer, in other words, conceals her efforts, draws attention to the created form rather than the process of creation.

On the other hand (given the aesthetic of effort), at the populist end of dance there clearly is pleasure to be taken in virtuosity and spectacle, in high leaps and difficult turns.⁵² The work that goes into these is certainly not concealed, and this is as true for Russian ballet dancers as for New York break dancers.

Sally Banes describes what happened to break dance when it became “art”:

The media hype about break dancing has changed both its form and its meaning. So to talk about break dancing you have to divide it into two stages: before and after media. Before the media turned breaking into a dazzling entertainment, it was a kind of serious game, a form of urban vernacular dance, a fusion of sports, dancing, and fighting whose performance had urgent social significance for the dancers. After media, participation in break dancing was stratified into two levels: professional and amateur. For the pros, break dancing had become a theatrical art form with a technique and vocabulary that, like ballet’s, could be refined and expanded. On this level, competition took on new meaning. It was no longer a battle for control of the streets, for neighbourhood fame, or to win your opponent’s “colors” (tee-shirt with crew insignia). Now cash prizes, roles in Hollywood movies, and European tours were at stake. For the amateurs, the element of competition had diminished. The appeal was a mixture of getting physically fit, tackling the challenge of breaking’s intricate skills, and even becoming more like street kids, who’ve suddenly become stylish thanks to the meteoric vogue of hip hop.⁵³

In tracing the way the meaning of break dance changed as it moved from an amateur to a professional setting, Banes raises general questions about the differences between various forms of stylized movement. What is the difference, for example, between dance and gymnastics? Answer: the different factors controlling the body’s moves: music rather than equipment, choreographic convention rather than competitive rules. What makes dancing dif-

ferent from ice dancing? Answer: in principle, nothing (ice dancing is mostly performed as a competitive sport, but that is not necessary to the form). But we’re beginning to touch now on the aesthetic problem at the heart of dance analysis: if dance is a communicative art, what does it communicate, what is it about? Why, as Sparshott asks, should we attend to it? What, for example, do we mean by a good dancer? What are we describing? A physical skill? The dancer’s ability to make us feel that she is somehow exempt from the law of gravity? Or something else—an interpretive skill, the ability to use the body to say something?⁵⁴

In terms of physical display, there was a direct continuity between break dance as street and as theater art, but in terms of dance meaning there was an equally clear change of focus. As Banes notes, its “body symbolism” had made break dancing “an extremely powerful version of two favorite forms of street rhetoric—the taunt and the boast,” but such rhetoric lost its point once staged for the art audience: the dance now represented the boast and the taunt, rather than being them.⁵⁵

When we talk about dance we are almost always talking about movement to music.⁵⁶ The question therefore comes back to this: does a dancer, any sort of dancer, express the music, or respond to it? If, as Lange suggested, to dance is to let oneself to be carried by the music, to be moved by it (rather than by where one wants to go), then in what sense is this a personal matter? Does one have a heightened sense of oneself when one dances, or no sense of oneself at all? I don’t know the answer to that question (both, I think), but one does, without a doubt, have a heightened, more intense, above all more concentrated sense of *the music*. Dancing (if not watching dancing), is, in this respect, a form of enhanced listening, which is why a good club deejay can play a club as if choreographing a dance (and why disco dancers on the floor are no more dancing apart than ballet dancers on the stage).

A question still remains, though: how do dancers know how to listen to the music, what to listen for? And clearly the answer depends on the genre. Conventions of dance performance are genre-based; they follow a combination of stylized and naturalized movements, of learned and spontaneous responses. (In my own experience, it is in learning how to dance to a music—watching what other people are doing and copying them—that we learn how best to listen to it.) And conventions also determine what the dance is “about.” In classical ballet, after all, the dancer is not just dancing the music, but dancing a character, a narrative role, and Edward Cone thus distinguishes the “art dance” from the “natural dance” and the “ritual dance.” But certain pop performers too (Madonna, Prince, Mick Jagger, most obviously) dance

a part, dancing *to* the music but *in* character, and much vernacular dance has used mime, the dancer representing the movements of an animal, a work process, a social type.⁵⁷

Dance is an ideological way of listening; it draws our attention (not least in its use of space and spaces) to arguments about its own meaning (think of the difference between classical, modern, and postmodern ballet, between ballroom and break dancing, between a hop and a rave). And dancing, like listening, doesn't come naturally: to dance to music is not just to move to it but to say something about it—whatever else the performer may tell us from stage, what they really think about their music is shown by how they move to it. The meaning of heavy metal is best articulated by head-banging, male bonding in futility, just as the most profound statement of what Motown meant in the twenty-fifth anniversary Motown TV show was Michael Jackson's glide across the stage in front of footage of old Jackson 5 stagecraft, a movement both exhilaratingly free and frighteningly precise.

It is somewhat ironic, then, that in self-consciously studying "performance," cultural analysts have paid far more attention to pop videos than to stage shows. There are various reasons for this: performance is taken to be a postmodern topic, pop videos are taken to be a postmodern medium, and so the two naturally go together; videos are now ever-present in the home: they're probably the way most teenagers now see most performances, and they're certainly the way most academics do; the most interesting contemporary performers (that is to say, Madonna) use music video as their performing medium, and therefore video is the source of pop's most interesting performance practices.

There's truth in all these assumptions, but there's also (as so often with postmodern theory) a willful ignorance of history: videos are analyzed as if pop stars didn't perform before there was a camera to record them (and as if pop's performing conventions weren't long ago established in both cinematic and televisual terms). The pop video is important, in other words, not because it compels musicians to perform in quite new ways (though it may sometimes do this), but in the way it necessarily draws on (and therefore brings to our attention) established performing conventions and adapts them to new technological and selling circumstances.⁵⁸

From my perspective, then, music videos are less interesting as mini-films, as visual narratives, than as ideal types of performance, as visual frames, and the most obvious differences between video styles reflect musical rather than filmic conventions. As we've seen, different pop genres offer quite different accounts of the relationships between performer and audience, performer and song, performer and performer. These distinctions must be

articulated in video: a credible heavy metal musician looks and acts quite differently than a credible country star.⁵⁹ And, just as important, a heavy metal crowd registers its pleasures quite differently than country music fans do. In framing performance for television, pop videos (like TV music shows before them) pull away from the stage (if only metaphorically) to show the auditorium as well. They reveal as much about the meaning of the music in the shots of people listening to it as in the footage of the people playing it.⁶⁰

My conclusion from this is that videos are ideologically important not because they bring new concerns to pop performance (and certainly not as some sort of postmodern disruption of musical narratives) but because they enable musicians (or their record companies) to translate their performing ideals into televisual terms directly, without having to be mediated by the established norms of TV entertainment. However, two innovative aspects of video production are worth noting. First, video performance isn't restricted to the usual performing settings. While most videos do, in fact, set their stars front stage and in the recording studio or back stage and in the rehearsal room, they also move them out of a musical context—into the everyday (the street, the home); into the fantastic (the dream, the wilderness). And what makes such movement coherent is not the song (the closer the match between setting and lyric, the more banal the video) but the performer (whose ability to impose herself on all visual circumstances parallels the ability of the live performer to impose herself on all musical circumstances, to register the continuity between sad and happy song, rocker and ballad).

As video stars, pop performers have to play themselves. They are not acting out stories (videos are not operas). Video foregrounds the performance of music rather than the music itself. We don't take the musicians to be interpreting the song; rather, our response is to interpret the musicians. Video performers are taken to be the authors of what we see (videos are not watched as examples of either directors' or songwriters' art), which is why video was an empowering medium for female acts, whatever the sexist or "objectifying" visual elements involved.⁶¹ Pop videos, in short, foreground performance-as-seduction and forestall performance-as-embarrassment. If nothing else (and this relates to the long history of music photography, framing the musician as pinup as well as stage star), video is now a key component in our understanding of music as erotic.

certainly be applied to pop's instrumental-narrative moments, whether they're performed by an improvising player like, say, Keith Richards, or by a calculating producer, like, say, Phil Spector.

47. Is it better, for example, for an opera to be sung in the language in which it was composed, which "sounds" right but may not be linguistically comprehensible to either singers or audience; or to translate the libretto into, say, English, which means that Anglophones now know what is being sung but the vocal *sounds* are no longer those in which the opera was originally composed? I would always opt for the first approach, but then words have always been the least of my musical pleasures.
48. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, p. 119–121. For further consideration of this issue, with reference to instrumental interpretation, see Jerrold Levinson, "Performative vs Critical Interpretation in Music," in Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music*.
49. See John Moore, "The Hieroglyphics of Love." I take the concept of "verbal space" from Griffiths, "Talking About Popular Song," p. 353. For technical discussion of interpretive singing see Will Friedwald, *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond* (New York: Scribners, 1990). For the torch singer's art listen to Chris Connor's "All About Ronnie" (1954), on *Out of this World* (Affinity, 1984), or Jerry Southern's "I Thought of You Last Night" (1952), on *When I Fall in Love* (MCA, 1984).
50. O'Meally, *Lady Day*, p. 198. His emphasis. Martin Williams is quoted on p. 43.
51. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, p. 53. Record references: Billie Holiday, "These Foolish Things" (1936), on *The Billie Holiday Story Volume 1* (CBS, n.d.); Bryan Ferry, "These Foolish Things," on *These Foolish Things* (Island, 1973).
52. Keightley's discussion concerns the Beach Boys—see "The History and Exegesis of Pop," p. 128.
53. The Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack," Red Bird single, 1964; the Angels, "My Boyfriend's Back," Smash single, 1963; the Shirelles, "I Met Him on a Sunday," Tiara/Decca single, 1958; Salt-n-Pepa, "Let's Talk About Sex," Next Plateau single, 1991.
54. Record references: Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty, *Lead Me On* (MCA, 1971); Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, *Greatest Hits* (Motown, 1970).
55. Records cited: Sinéad O'Connor and M. C. Lyte, "I Want (Your Hands On Me)," Ensign 12" single, 1988; Willie Nelson, "Don't Give Up," on *Across the Borderline*, Columbia LP, 1993. For discussion of the former see Katrina Irving, "I Want Your Hands On Me: Building Equivalences Through Rap Music," *Popular Music* 12(2) (1993): 117–120.

10. Performance

1. Greil Marcus, "Days Between Stations," *Interview*, October 1993.
2. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [1959] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 28.
3. For the distinction between "textual" and "contextual" performance theories see Graham F. Thompson's very useful "Approaches to 'Performance,'" *Screen* 26(5) (1985): 81.
4. Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 144.
5. See Thompson, "Approaches to 'Performance,'" p. 88. I'm also obviously indebted in

what follows to the work of Erving Goffman—for an exemplary study see his lecture on "The Lecture" in *Forms of Talk*.

6. Noël Carroll, "Performance," *Formations* 3 (1986).
7. As Erving Goffman famously put it, "All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify." *The Presentation of Self*, pp. 77–78.
8. John Kassan, for example, suggests that embarrassment (or its avoidance) became the key to public behavior in the nineteenth-century American city, because of the unstable context of honor, shame, and reputation. See John F. Kassan, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 114–115.
9. See Sally Banes's excellent study of this period, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).
10. See Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," *American Anthropologist* 77 (1975).
11. Which makes it different from a literary text. It may be true, as I discuss in Chapter 12, that books too only come into being when read, but they can and are studied as if they were always already structured, so to speak.
12. George Beiswanger, "Doing and Viewing Dances: A Perspective for the Study of Criticism," in George Beiswanger, Wilfried A. Hofman, and David Michael Levin, "Three Essays in Dance Aesthetics," *Dance Perspectives* 55 (Autumn 1973): 8.
13. Björk, "There's More To Life Than This," on *Debut*, Bapsi/One Little Indian LP, 1993.
14. Anne Lederman argues persuasively that folk musicians' use of a "deliberately dramatic, staged presentation" of their music on tour or in the recording studio enables them to assume that their "ordinary" (though equally rule-bound) performances in "informal" settings, or in their own communities, just come naturally. See "Barrett's Privateers: Performance and Participation in the Folk Revival," in Neil V. Rosenberg, ed., *Transforming Tradition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Charles Keil makes a similar point about polka bands' performing norms in "People's Music Comparatively," *Dialectical Anthropology* 10 (1985).
15. Peter Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture," *Past and Present* 144 (1994).
16. Bailey relates the music hall use of linguistic humor to the nineteenth-century disciplining of working-class talk in general, by factory, office, and school, and to the legal policing of music hall speech, in particular.
17. Within street conversation Abrahams thus distinguishes the casual *running it down* from the "aggressive, witty performance talk" of *signifying*. Within signifying one can distinguish *talking smart* ("serious, clever, conflict talk") from *talking shit* (non-serious, all-join-in contest talk). Talking smart (which can be further divided into the "overtly aggressive" *putting down* and the "covertly aggressive" *putting on*) "arises within conversational context yet is judged in performance (stylistic) terms." Talking shit (which can be further divided into "nondirective" *playing* and "directive" *sounding*) is "performance interaction, yet built on a model of conversational back-and-forth." And we can further add to this picture the variations of women's talk *talking tough* and *talking sweet*. See Roger D. Abrahams, *Talking Black* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1976), Figure 1, p. 46, and, for the general argument here, pp. 5–89. Zora Neale Hurston, who long ago observed that "drama" defined the "Negro expressive

- self," described Negro boys and girls walking past each other on the street as "little plays by strolling players." See "Characteristics of Negro Expression," in Nancy Cunard, ed., *Negro* (London, 1934), p. 39.
18. For further discussion of this argument, in terms of the nineteenth-century appeal of minstrelsy, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
 19. See Donald Horton, "The Dialogue of Courtship in Popular Song," *American Journal of Sociology* 62 (1957) for one account of this process.
 20. For this point see Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), chap. 11.
 21. Alfred Schutz suggests that all musical experiences, however "mediated," whatever the variations of "intensity, intimacy and anonymity," refer to the "vivid present" that performers and listeners share in face-to-face relations. "Making Music Together," p. 174.
 22. In the early 1970s the British folk scene became an unexpected source of stand-up comics—Billy Connolly, Mike Harding, Jasper Carrott.
 23. Even in the most "respectable" of the performing arts—classical theater, the ballet—female performers (like artists' models) were taken in the nineteenth century to be akin to prostitutes, while one could argue that an important strand of performance in the low arts, such as vaudeville and music hall, blues and jazz, has been the continuing, deliberate emphasis on the performer's off-stage propriety.
 24. In this respect, female stage performers have an advantage over women with the everyday problem of walking down the street. See Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), chap. 6. David Schiff suggests that McClary doesn't push her argument far enough here: "Opera is performance art, and one in which female performers do not merely 'enact' a male drama but essentially rewrite it in performance . . . If performers were given their rightful place in the history of music, it could easily be shown that Callas exerted a far greater influence on the course of opera in the past forty years than any composer did. Might not feminist musicology profitably shift the focus away from a male-controlled cultural product to a female-centered cultural process and celebrate these issues of feminine dominance? Our notion of music would be appropriately challenged and enriched." (David Schiff, "The Bounds of Music," *New Republic*, February 3, 1992, pp. 35–36.)
Or, as Wayne Koestenbaum puts it, "Since the most electrifying singers were often women and castrati, the emphasis on performance undid opera's masculinity" (*The Queen's Throat* [London: GMP, 1933], p. 182).
 25. The most entertaining collection of Madonna essays is Lisa Frank and Paul Smith, eds., *Madonnarama* (Pittsburgh: Cleis Press, 1993).
 26. Listen, for instance, to Dolly Parton, *Best of Dolly Parton*, RCA LP, 1970.
 27. Listen, for example, to Gracie Fields, *Stage and Screen*, EMI/World Record Club, n.d., which includes a live recording of her show at the Holborn Empire, October 11, 1933.
 28. Listen, for example, to Millie Jackson, *Live and Uncensored*, Spring/Polydor, 1979.
 29. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* [1975] (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), pp. 177–178.
 30. And as J. O. Urmson points out, in paying to see a performance we also expect that the star (Madonna, say) will, in good faith, continue to *be herself* (whatever the new

theme or costume). See his "The Ethics of Musical Performance," in Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music*.

31. Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*, p. 168.
32. Which is not to say that the respondent isn't just as embarrassed by the misjudgment as the performer.
33. To be excluded from this excitement (the rock critic's common condition) is, oddly, to be embarrassed not for oneself but for everyone else. The point here is that intense or abandoned listening involves a loss of physical control—think of the ugliness of the audience in concert photos—and it is this which embarrasses: to be the only person to clap at the end of the first movement, the only person to leap to one's feet screaming. It is not embarrassing (well, I was never embarrassed) to be the only person taking notes.
34. See Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'" [1964] in her *Against Interpretation* (New York: Delta, 1966), p. 277.
Camp strategy has been a useful solution to the male performing dilemma: how to make oneself an object of adoring—feminizing—attention while signaling clearly that *I'm still in charge!* For an interesting analysis of the camp basis of Mick Jagger's performance style, for example, see Sheila Whitely, "Mick Jagger: An Analysis of Sexuality, Style and Image," in Sheila Whitely and Stan Hawkins, eds., *Sexing the Groove: Representations and Identity in Popular Music*, forthcoming. For a general survey of the influence of camp sensibility on pop history see Jon Savage, "Tainted Love: The Influence of Male Homosexuality and Sexual Deviance on Pop Music and Culture since the War," in Alan Tomlinson, ed., *Consumption, Identity and Style* (London: Routledge, 1990).
As Gary Jardim notes in his account of the Newark/New York 1970s and 1980s dance clubs, the same sort of "fascination with illusion and theater" and "grand sense of playfulness" fed into the audience performance that defined disco: "The elegant flow motion, the shuffle beat, the love spirit—they were all elements of style pioneered in the pre-disco gay club scene." See "Al Murphy and the Club Music Aesthetic in Newark," in Gary Jardim, ed., *Blue: Newark Culture, Volume Two* (Orange, N.J.: De Sousa Press, 1993), p. 145.
35. Guy Scarpetta, *L'Impureté* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1985), pp. 207–208. In Britain gossip about each successful new teenybop band is always the same: X or Y used to be a *rent boy!*
36. For graphic accounts of such calling forth see Fred Vermorel and Judy Vermorel, *Starlust* (London: W. H. Allen, 1985), and, for further discussion of what they mean, my "Afterthoughts" in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, eds., *On Record* (New York: Pantheon, 1990).
37. See Paul Eckman, "Biological and Cultural Contributions to Body and Facial Movement," in John Blacking, ed., *The Anthropology of the Body* (London: Academic Press, 1977).
38. John Blacking, "Towards an Anthropology of the Body," in Blacking, *The Anthropology of the Body*, p. 7.
39. Sally Banes notes that the young break dancer in New York in the early 1980s, in attempting to be as "intricate, witty, insulting or obscene as possible," would "perhaps present his ass to his opponent in a gesture of contempt. Through pantomime, he

might extend the scatological insult even more graphically, pretending to befoul his opponent." Sally Banes, "Breaking," in Nelson George et al., *Fresh* (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 94.

40. As Erving Goffman notes, in judging whether someone else's performance is sincere or phony we pay special attention "to features of performance that cannot be readily manipulated." If they are, then we feel particularly deceived. *The Presentation of the Self*, p. 66.
41. Though what the truth is here is a difficult question to answer—see, for example, Jennie Livingstone's film about New York's transvestite balls, *Paris Is Burning*. "Driving the mechanism of these performed identities," as Peggy Phelan puts it, "is a notion of 'the real.'" These men-performing-as-women express real erotic desires (and invoke real erotic response): "Underneath the image of these visible women is a man, but it is extremely difficult to say what a man is. Underneath the film there is a performance but it is extremely difficult to say what the performance 'means.'" (Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993, pp. 96, 102.) And see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 158–159.
42. Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: Viking, 1978).
43. Quoted in Greg Tate, *Flyboy in the Buttermilk* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 115.
44. See John Bailey, "Movement Patterns in Playing the Herati *dutr*," in Blacking, ed., *The Anthropology of the Body*.
45. "Stage dancer" is a specific band role in Britain, and has been at least since the days of Madness.
46. Francis Sparshott, *Off the Ground: First Steps to a Philosophical Consideration of the Dance* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 206.
47. See Adrian Stokes, *Invitation to the Dance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), p. 13.
48. As Sparshott points out, Adam Smith long ago noted that the type of movement valued in dance would be frowned on as "ostentatious" in ordinary life. See *Off the Ground*, p. 277. For a subtly choreographed move from walking to dancing see also the opening scene of *West Side Story* (thanks to Wendy Wolf for this example).
49. Like Francis Sparshott, I can't resist quoting here a 1588 account of what the function of dance might be: "Dancing is practised to make manifest whether lovers are in good health and sound in all their limbs, after which it is permitted to them to kiss their mistress, whereby they may perceive if either has an unpleasant breath or exhales a disagreeable odour as of bad meat; so that in addition to divers other merits attendant on dancing, it has become essential for the wellbeing of society." ("Thoinot Arbeau" or Father Jean Tabourot, quoted in *Off the Ground*, p. 22.)
50. See Roderyk Lange, "Some Notes on the Anthropology of Dance," in Blacking, ed., *The Anthropology of the Body*, p. 243. Sarah Jeanne Cohen notes another distinction here between dance and sport: "For dance, both performer and audience shift into a special time-space dimension. This is not the case with sport." *Next Week, Swan Lake: Reflections on Dance and Dancers* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1982), p. 66.
51. Cohen, *Next Week, Swan Lake*, p. 54. My emphasis.
52. It could be argued, I think, that the emphasis on effort (as against grace) is gendered—

in classic ballet, at least, men show the work that goes into their routines while women conceal it. Cohen suggests, though, that virtuosity, at least, should be seen as a personal rather than a gender quality, its "exuberance" reflecting the sense that the dancer is "rebellious" against "restrictions of form," so that our attention is drawn to the "tension" between dancer and music rather than, as is more usual, to their unity. See *Next Week, Swan Lake*, p. 75.

53. Banes, "Breaking," p. 83.
54. For discussion of these issues see Sparshott, *Off the Ground*, pp. 207–214.
55. See Banes, "Breaking," p. 87.
56. "To say that music is one of the essentials of dance is not to say that every dance must have a musical accompaniment. It is rather that some music is expected, even it be only a drum, and if there is no music, the dance is danced in the absence of music." (Sparshott, *Off the Ground*, p. 173. His emphasis.)
57. Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 140–144. For the use of imitative or symbolic body movements in break dancing see Banes, "Breaking," p. 97.
58. For the most lucid and intelligent discussion of music video see Andrew Goodwin, *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).
59. See Mark Fenster, "Genre and Form: The Development of the Country Music Video," and Robert Walser, "Forging Masculinity: Heavy-Metal Sounds and Images of Gender," in Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader* (London: Routledge, 1993).
60. It could be argued, in fact, that live audiences long ago learned how to respond to music from television—American programs like *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train* and British programs like *Ready Steady Go* and *Top of the Pops* were as significant in showing audiences as musicians at work. And the effect of such programs as the British music hall show *The Good Old Days* or the American country show *Hee-Haw* was undoubtedly to define (and mythologize) what it meant to enjoy live music hall or country shows.
61. For this argument see Lisa A. Lewis, "Being Discovered: The Emergence of Female Address on MTV," in Frith et al., *Sound and Vision*. Barbara Bradby has suggested that video allows male directors to "fragment" the female body just as record producers once fragmented female voices. My argument is that the viewer (and listener) still takes the (female) performer rather than the (male) director to be the source of musical meaning. See Bradby's "Sampling Sexuality: Gender, Technology and the Body in Dance Music," *Popular Music* 12(2) (1993).

11. Technology and Authority

1. Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful* [1854] (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), p. 72.
2. Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), p. 158.
3. Quoted in Harry Allen, "Invisible Band," *Village Voice Electromag*, October 1988, p. 11.
4. As Shuhei Hosokawa has argued most eloquently, music can thus be treated as a form of information; the technologies at issue are information technologies—oral trans-