THE PRESENTATION OF SELF
IN
EVERYDAY LIFE

ERVING GOFFMAN

University of Edinburgh
Social Sciences Research Centre
39 George Square, Edinburgh 8

Monograph No. 2

1956

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation. I would not say that substance exists for the sake of appearance, or faces for the sake of masks, or the passions for the sake of poetry and virtue. Nothing arises in nature for the sake of anything else; all these phases and products are involved equally in the round of existence . . . . .

George Santayana [1]

[1] *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (New York: Scribner's, 1922), pp. 131-132.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The report presented here was developed in connection with a study of interaction undertaken for the Department of Social Anthropology and the Social Sciences Research Committee of the University of Edinburgh and a study of social stratification supported by a Ford Foundation grant directed by Professor E. A. Shils at the University of Chicago. I am grateful to these sources of guidance and support. I would like to express thanks to my teachers C. W. M. Hart, W. L. Warner, and E. C. Hughes. I want, too, to thank Elizabeth Bott, James Littlejohn, and Edward Banfield, who helped me at the beginning of the study, and fellow-students of occupations at the University of Chicago who helped me later. Without the collaboration of my wife, Angelica S. Goffman, this report would not have been written.

PREFACE

I mean this report to serve as a sort of handbook detailing one sociological perspective from which social life can be studied, especially the kind of social life that is organised within the physical confines of a building or plant. A set of features will be described which together form a framework that can be applied to any concrete social establishment, be it domestic, industrial, or commercial.

The perspective employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones. I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them. In using this model I will attempt not to make light of its obvious inadequacies. The stage presents things that are make-believe; presumably life presents things that are real and sometimes not well rehearsed. More important, perhaps, on the stage one player presents himself in the guise of a character to characters projected by other players; the audience constitutes a third party to the interaction—one that is essential and yet, if the stage performance were real, one that would not be there. In real life, the three parties are compressed into two; the part one individual plays is tailored to the parts played by the others present, and yet these others also constitute the audience. Still other inadequacies in this model will be considered later.

The illustrative materials used in this study are of mixed status: some are taken from respectable researches where qualified generalisations are given concerning reliably recorded regularities; some are taken from informal memoirs written by colourful people; many fall in between. The justification for this approach (as I take to be the justification for Simmel's also) is that the illustrations together fit into a coherent framework that ties together bits of experience the reader has already had and provides the student with a guide worth testing in case-studies of institutional social life.

The framework is presented in logical steps. The introduction is necessarily abstract and may be skipped.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER IV

DISCREPANT ROLES

One overall objective of any team is to sustain the definition of the situation that its performance fosters. This will involve the over-communication of some facts and the under-communication of others. Given the fragility and the required expressive coherence of the reality that is dramatized by a performance, there are usually facts which, if attention is drawn to them during the performance, would discredit, disrupt, or make useless the impression that the performance fosters. These facts may be said to provide 'destructive information.' A basic problem for many performances, then, is that of information control; the audience must not acquire destructive information about the situation that is being defined for them. In other words, a team must be able to keep its secrets and have its secrets kept.

Before proceeding it will be convenient to add some suggestions about types of secrets, because disclosure of different types of secrets can threaten a performance in different ways. The suggested types will be based upon the function the secret performs and the relation of the secret to the conception others have about the possessor; I will assume that any particular secret can represent more than one such type.

First, there are what we sometimes call 'dark' secrets. These consist of facts about a team which it knows and conceals and which are incompatible with the image of self that the team attempts to maintain before its audience. Dark secrets are, of course, double secrets: one is the crucial fact that is hidden and another is the fact that crucial facts have not been openly admitted. Dark secrets were considered in Chapter One in the section on misrepresentation.

Secondly, there are what might be called 'strategic' secrets. These pertain to intentions and capacities of a team which it conceals from its audience in order to prevent them from adapting effectively to the state of affairs the team is planning to bring about. Strategic secrets are the ones that businesses and armies employ in designing future actions against the opposition. So long as a team makes no pretence of being the sort of team that does not have strategic

secrets, its strategic secrets need not be dark ones. Yet it is to be noted that even when the strategic secrets of a team are not dark ones, still the disclosure or discovery of such secrets disrupts the team's performance, for suddenly and unexpectedly the team finds it useless and foolish to maintain the care, reticence, and studied ambiguity of action that was required prior to loss of its secrets. It may be added that secrets that are merely strategic tend to be ones which the team eventually discloses, perforce, when action based upon secret preparations is consummated, whereas an effort may be made to keep dark secrets secret forever. It may also be added that information is often held back not because of its known strategic importance but because it is felt that it may someday acquire such importance.

Thirdly, there are what might be called 'inside' secrets. These are ones whose possession marks an individual as being a member of a group and helps the group feel separate and different from those individuals who are not 'in the know.'[1] Inside secrets give objective intellectual content to subjectively felt social distance. Almost all information in a social establishment has something of this exclusionary function and may be seen as none of somebody's business.

Inside secrets may have little strategic importance and may not be very dark. When this is the case, such secrets may be discovered or accidentally disclosed without radically disrupting the team performance; the performers need only shift their secret delight to another matter. Of course, secrets that are strategic and/or dark serve extremely well as inside secrets and we find, in fact, that the strategic and dark character of secrets is often exaggerated for this reason. Interestingly enough, the leaders of a social group are sometimes faced with a dilemma regarding important strategic secrets. Those in the group who are not brought in on the secret will feel excluded and affronted when the secret finally comes to light; on the other hand, the greater the number of persons who are brought in on the secret, the greater the likelihood of intentional or unintentional disclosure.

The knowledge that one team can have of another's secrets provides us with two other types of secrets. First, there are what might be called 'entrusted' secrets. This is the kind which the possessor is obliged to keep because of his relation to the team to which the secret refers. If an individual who is entrusted with a secret is to be the person he claims

[1] Cf. Riesman's discussion of the 'inside dopester,' *op. cit.*, pp. 199-209.

he is, he must keep the secret, even though it is not a secret about himself. Thus, for example, when a lawyer discloses the improprieties of his clients, two quite different performances are threatened: the client's show of innocence to the court, and the lawyer's show of trustworthiness to his client. It may also be noted that a team's strategic secrets, whether dark or not, are likely to be the entrusted secrets of the individual members of the team, for each member of the team is likely to present himself to his team-mates as someone who is loyal to the team.

The second type of information about another's secrets may be called 'free.' A free secret is somebody else's secret known to oneself that one could disclose without discrediting the image one was presenting of oneself. A team may acquire free secrets by discovery, involuntary disclosure, indiscreet admissions, re-transmission, etc. In general we must see that the free or entrusted secrets of one team may be the dark or strategic secrets of another team, and so a team whose vital secrets are possessed by others will try to oblige the possessors to treat these secrets as secrets that are entrusted and not free.

This chapter is concerned with the kinds of persons who learn about the secrets of a team and with the bases and the threats of their privileged position. Before proceeding, however, it should be made clear that all destructive information is not found in secrets, and that information control involves more than keeping secrets. For example, there seem to be facts about almost every performance which are incompatible with the impression fostered by the performance but which have not been collected and organized into a usable form by anyone.[1] These are in a sense latent secrets, and the problems of keeping secrets are quite different from the problems of keeping latent secrets latent. Another example of destructive information not embodied in secrets is found in such events as unmeant gestures, previously referred to. These events introduce information—a definition of the situation—which is incompatible with the projected claims of the performers, but these untoward events do not constitute secrets. Avoidance of such expressively inappropriate events is also a kind of information control but will not be considered in this chapter.

[1] For example, Wilensky, *op. cit.*, chap. vii, reports that a union newspaper may have such low readership that the editor, concerned with his job, may refuse to have a professional survey made of readership so that neither he nor anyone else will have proof of the suspected ineffectiveness of his role.

Given a particular performance as the point of reference, we have distinguished three crucial roles on the basis of function: those who perform; those performed to; and outsiders who neither perform in the show nor observe it. We may also distinguish these crucial roles on the basis of information ordinarily available to those who play them. Performers are aware of the impression they foster and ordinarily also possess destructive information about the show. The audience know what they have been allowed to perceive, qualified by what they can glean unofficially by close observation. In the main, they know the definition of the situation that the performance fosters but do not have destructive information about it. Outsiders know neither the secrets of the performance nor the appearance of reality fostered by it. Finally, the three crucial roles mentioned could be described on the basis of the regions to which the role-player has access; performers appear in the front and back regions; the audience appears only in the front region; and the outsiders are excluded from both regions. It is to be noted, then, that during the performance we may expect to find correlation among function, information available, and regions of access, so that, for example, if we knew the regions into which an individual had access we should know the role he played and the information he possessed about the performance.

In actual fact, however, we find that the congruence among function, information possessed, and accessible regions is seldom complete. Additional points of vantage relative to the performance develop which complicate the simple relation among function, information, and place. Some of these peculiar vantage points are so often taken and their significance for the performance comes to be so clearly understood that we can refer to them as roles, although, relative to the three crucial ones, they might best be called discrepant roles. Some of the more obvious ones will be considered here.

Perhaps the most spectacularly discrepant roles are those which bring a person into a social establishment in a false guise. Some varieties may be mentioned.

First, there is the role of 'informer.' The informer is someone who pretends to the performers to be a member of their team, is allowed to come backstage and to acquire destructive information, and then openly or secretly sells out the show to the audience. The political, military, industrial, and criminal variants of this role are famous. If it appears that the individual first joined the team in a sincere way and not with the premeditated plan of disclosing its

secrets, we sometimes call him a traitor, turncoat, or quitter, especially if he is the sort of person who ought to have made a decent team-mate. The individual who all along has meant to inform on the team, and originally joins only for this purpose, is sometimes called a spy. It has frequently been noted, of course, that informers, whether traitors or spies, are often in an excellent position to play a double game, selling out the secrets of those who buy secrets from them.

Secondly, there is the role of 'shill.' A shill is someone who acts as though he were an ordinary member of the audience but is in fact in league with the performers. Typically, the shill either provides a visible model for the audience of the kind of response the performers are seeking or provides the kind of audience response that is necessary at the moment for the development of the performance. Our appreciation of this role no doubt stems from fairgrounds, and the designations 'shill' and 'claque,' employed in the entertainment business, have come into common usage. The following definitions suggest the origins of the concept:

> *Stick*, n. An individual—sometimes a local rube—hired by the operator of a *set-joint* (a 'fixed' gambling booth) to win flashy prizes so that the crowd will be induced to gamble. When the 'live ones' (natives) have been started, the *sticks* are removed and deliver their winnings to a man outside who has no apparent connection with the joint. [1]

> *Shillaber*, n. An employee of the circus who rushes up to the kid show ticket box at the psychological moment when the barker concludes his spiel. He and his fellow *shillabers* purchase tickets and pass inside and the crowd of towners in front of the bally stand are not slow in doing likewise. [2]

We must not take the view that shills are found only in non-respectable performances (even though it is only the non-respectable shills, perhaps, who play their role systematically and without personal illusion). For example, at informal conversational gatherings, it is common for a wife to look interested when her husband tells an anecdote and to feed him appropriate leads and cues, although in fact she has heard the anecdote many times and knows that the show her husband is making of telling something for the first time is only a show. A shill, then, is someone who appears to be just another unsophisticated member of the audience and who uses his unapparent sophistication in the interests of the performing team.

We consider now another impostor in the audience, but this time one who uses his unapparent sophistication in the interests of the audience, not the performers. This type can be illustrated by the person who is hired to check up on

[1] David Maurer, 'Carnival Cant,' *American Speech*, VI, 336.

[2] P. W. White, 'A Circus List,' *American Speech*, I, 283.

the standards that performers maintain in order to ensure that in some respects fostered appearances will not be too far from reality. He acts, officially or unofficially, as a protective agent for the unsuspecting public, playing the role of audience with more perception and ethical strictness than ordinary observers are likely to employ.

Sometimes these agents play their hands in an open way, giving the performers preliminary warning that the next performance is about to be examined. Thus first night performers and arrested persons have fair warning that anything they say will be held as evidence in judging them. A participant observer who admits his objectives from the beginning gives the performers whom he observes a similar opportunity.

Sometimes, however, the agent goes underground and by acting as an ordinary gullible member of the audience gives the performers rope with which to hang themselves. In the everyday trades, agents who give no warning are sometimes called 'spotters,' as they will be here, and are understandably disliked. A salesperson may find that she has been short-tempered and impolite to a customer who is really a company agent checking up on the treatment *bona fide* customers receive. A grocer may find that he has sold goods at illegal prices to customers who are experts on prices and have authority concerning them. [1]

Incidentally, we must be careful to distinguish real spotters from self-appointed ones, often called 'knockers' or 'wiseguys,' who do not possess the knowledge of backstage operations that they claim to possess and who are not empowered by law or custom to represent the audience.

Today we are accustomed to think of agents who check up on the standards of a performance and on the performers, whether this is done openly or without warning, as part of the service structure, and especially as part of the social control that governmental organizations exert on behalf of the consumer and taxpayer. Frequently, however, this kind of work has been done in a wider social field. Offices of heraldry and offices of protocol provide familiar examples, these agencies serving to keep the nobility and high

[1] An illustration as regards train conductors is given by W. Fred Cottrell, *The Railroader* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1940), p. 87:

'Once a train conductor could demand respect of passengers; now a 'spotter' may 'turn him in' if he fails to remove his cap as he enters a car where women are seated or does not exude that oily subservience which increasing class consciousness, diffusion of pattern from the European and the hotel world, and the competition with other forms of transportation have forced upon him.'

government officers, and those who falsely claim these statuses, in their proper relative places.

There is yet another peculiar fellow in the audience. He is the one who takes an unremarked, modest place in the audience and leaves the region when they do, but when he leaves he goes to his employer, a competitor of the team whose performance he has witnessed, to report what he has seen. He is the professional shopper—the Gimbel's man in Macy's and the Macy's man in Gimbel's; he is the fashion spy and the foreigner at National Air Meets. The shopper is a person who has a technical right to see the show but ought to have the decency, it is sometimes felt, to stay in his own back region, for his interest in the show is from the wrong perspective, at once more lively and more bored than that of a thoroughly legitimate spectator.

Another discrepant role is one that is often called the go-between or mediator. The go-between learns the secrets of each side and gives each side the true impression that he will keep its secrets; but he tends to give each side the false impression that he is more loyal to it than to the other side. Sometimes, as in the case of the arbitrator in some labour disputes, the go-between may function as a means by which two obligatorily hostile teams can come to a mutually profitable agreement. Sometimes, as in the case of the theatrical agent, the go-between may function as a means by which each side is given a slanted version of the other that is calculated to make a closer relationship between the two sides possible. Sometimes, as in the case of the marriage-broker, the go-between may serve as a means of conveying tentative overtures from one side to the other which, if openly presented, might lead to an embarrassing acceptance or rejection.

When a go-between operates in the actual presence of the two teams of which he is a member, we obtain a wonderful display, not unlike a man desperately trying to play tennis with himself. Again we are forced to see that the individual is not the natural unit for our consideration but rather the team and its members. As an individual, the go-between's activity is bizarre, untenable, and undignified, vacillating as it does from one set of appearances and loyalties to another. As a constituent part of two teams, the go-between's vacillation is quite understandable. The go-between can be thought of simply as a double-shill.

One illustration of the go-between's role appears in recent studies of the function of the foreman. Not only must he

accept the duties of the director, guiding the show on the factory floor on behalf of the managerial audience, but he must also translate what he knows and what the audience sees into a verbal line which his conscience and the audience will be willing to accept.[1] Another illustration of the go-between's role is found in the chairman of formally conducted meetings. As soon as he has called the group to order and introduced the guest speaker, he is likely to serve thereafter as a highly visible model for the other listeners, illustrating by exaggerated expressions the involvement and appreciation they ought to be showing, and providing them with advance cues as to whether a particular remark ought to be greeted by seriousness, laughter, or appreciative chuckles. Speakers tend to accept invitations to speak on the assumption that the chairman will 'take care of them,' which he does by being the very model of a listener and thoroughly confirming the notion that the speech has real significance. The chairman's performance is effective partly because the listeners have an obligation to him, an obligation to confirm any definition of the situation which he sponsors, an obligation, in short, to follow the listening-line that he takes. The dramaturgical task of ensuring that the speaker appears to be appreciated and that the listeners are enthralled is of course not easy, and often leaves the chairman in no frame of mind to give thought to what he is ostensibly listening to.

The role of go-between seems to be especially significant in informal convivial interaction, again illustrating the utility of the two-team approach. When one individual in a conversational circle engages in action or speech which receives the concerted attention of the others present, he defines the situation, and he may define it in a way that is not easily acceptable to his audience. Someone present will feel greater responsibility for and to him than the others feel, and we may expect this person closest to him to make an effort to translate the differences between speaker and listeners into a view that is more acceptable collectively than the original projection. A moment later, when someone else takes the floor, another individual may find himself taking on the role of go-between and mediator. A spate of informal conversation can, in fact, be seen as the formation and re-formation of teams, and the creation and re-creation of go-betweens.

Some discrepant roles have been suggested: the informer,

[1] See Roethlisberger, *op. cit.*

the shill, the spotter, the shopper, and the go-between. In each case we find an unexpected, unapparent relation among feigned role, information possessed, and regions of access. And in each case we deal with someone who may participate in the actual interaction between the performers and audience. A further discrepant role may be considered, that of the 'non-person;' those who play this role are present during the interaction but do not, in a sense, take the role either of performer or of audience, nor do they (as do informers, shills, and spotters) pretend to be what they are not. [1]

Perhaps the classic type of non-person in our society is the servant. This person is expected to be present in the front region while the host is presenting a performance of hospitality to the guests of the establishment. While in some senses the servant is part of the host's team (as I have treated him previously), in certain ways he is defined by both performers and audience as someone who isn't there. Among some groups, the servant is also expected to enter freely into the back regions, on the theory that no impression need be maintained for him. Mrs Trollope gives us some examples:

> I had, indeed, frequent opportunities of observing this habitual indifference to the presence of their slaves. They talk of them, of their condition, of their faculties, of their conduct, exactly as if they were incapable of hearing. I once saw a young lady, who, when seated at table between a male and a female, was induced by her modesty to intrude on the chair of her female neighbour to avoid the indelicacy of touching the elbow of a *man*. I once saw this very young lady lacing her stays with the most perfect composure before a negro footman. A Virginian gentleman told me that ever since he had married, he had been accustomed to have a negro girl sleep in the same chamber with himself and his wife. I asked for what purpose this nocturnal attendance was necessary? "Good Heaven!" was the reply, "If I wanted a glass of water during the night, what would become of me." [2]

This is an extreme example. While servants tend to be addressed only when a 'request' is to be given them, still their presence in a region typically places some restrictions upon the behaviour of those who are fully present, the more so, apparently, when the social distance between servant and served is not great. In the case of other servant-like roles in our society, such as that of elevator operator and cab-driver, there seems to be uncertainty on both sides of the relationship as to what kind of intimacies are permissible in the presence of the non-person.

In addition to those in servant-like roles, there are other standard categories of persons who are sometimes treated

[1] For a fuller treatment of the role see Goffman, *op. cit.*, chap. xvi.

[2] Mrs Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (2 vols.; London: Whittaker, Treacher, 1832), II, 56-57.

in their presence as if they were not there; the very young, the very old, and the sick are common examples. Further, we find today a growing body of technical personnel—recording stenographers, broadcasting technicians, photographers, secret police, etc.—who play a technical role during important ceremonies but who are not, in a sense, treated as if present.

It would seem that the role of non-person usually carried with it some subordination and disrespect, but we must not underestimate the degree to which the person who is given or who takes such a role can use it as a defence. And it must be added that situations can arise when subordinates find that the only feasible way that they can handle a superordinate is to treat him as if he were not present. Thus, on the island studied by the writer, when the British Public School doctor attended patients in the homes of poor crofters, the residents sometimes handled the difficulty of relating themselves to the doctor by treating him, as best they could, as if he were not present. It may also be added that a team can treat an individual as if he were not present, doing this not because it is the natural thing or the only feasible thing to do, but as a pointed way of expressing hostility to an individual who has conducted himself improperly. In such situations, the important show is to show the outcast that he is being ignored, and the activity that is carried on in order to demonstrate this may itself be of secondary importance.

We have considered some types of persons who are not, in a simple sense, performers, audience, or outsiders, and who have access to information and regions we would not expect of them. We consider now four additional discrepant roles, involving, in the main, persons who are not present during a performance but who have unexpected information about it.

First, there is an important role that might be called 'service specialist.' It is filled by individuals who specialize in the construction, repair, and maintenance of the show their clients maintain before other people. Some of these workers, like architects and furniture salesmen, specialize in settings; some, such as dentists, hairdressers, and dermatologists, deal with personal front; some, such as staff economists, accountants, lawyers, and researchers, formulate the factual elements of a client's verbal display, that is, his team's argument-line or intellectual position.

On the basis of concrete research it would seem that service specialists can hardly attend to the needs of an

individual performer without acquiring as much, or more destructive information about some aspects of the individual's performance as the individual himself possesses. Service specialists are like members of the team in that they learn the secrets of the show and obtain a backstage view of it. Unlike members of the team, however, the specialist does not share the risk, the guilt, and the satisfaction of presenting before an audience the show to which he has contributed. And, unlike members of the team, in learning the secrets of others, the others do not learn corresponding secrets about him. It is in this context that we can understand why professional ethics often oblige the specialist to show 'discretion,' i.e., not to give away a show whose secrets his duties have made him privy to. Thus, for example, psychotherapists who vicariously participate so widely in the domestic warfare of our times are pledged to remain silent about what they have learned, except to their supervisors.

When the specialist is of higher general social status than the individuals for whom he provides a service, his general social valuation of them may be confirmed by the particular things he must learn about them. In some situations this becomes a significant factor in maintaining the *status quo*. Thus in American towns upper-middle class bankers come to see that the owners of some small businesses present a front for tax purposes that is inconsistent with their banking transactions, and that other businessmen present a confident public front of solvency while privately requesting a loan in an abject, fumbling manner. Middle-class doctors on charity duty who must treat shameful diseases in shameful surroundings are in a similar position, for they make it impossible for a lower-class person to protect himself from the intimate insight of his superordinates. Similarly, a landlord learns that all of his tenants act as if they were the sort who always paid their rent on time but that for some tenants this act is only an act. Persons who are not service specialists are sometimes given the same disillusioning view. In many organizations, for example, an executive officer is required to observe the show of bustling competence that the personnel maintains, although he may secretly possess an accurate and low opinion of some of those who work under him.

Sometimes we find, of course, that the general social status of the client is higher than that of the specialists who are retained to attend to his front. In such cases an interesting dilemma of status occurs, with high status and low information control on one side, and low status and high

information control on the other. In such cases it is possible for the specialist to become overimpressed with the weaknesses in the show that his betters put on and to forget the weaknesses in his own. In consequence, such specialists sometimes develop a characteristic ambivalence, feeling cynical about the 'better' world for the same reasons that make them vicariously intimate with it. Thus the janitor, by virtue of the service he provides, learns what kind of liquor the tenants drink, what kind of food they eat, what letters they receive, what bills they leave unpaid, and whether the lady of the apartment is menstruating behind her uncontaminated front, and how clean the tenants keep the kitchen, bathroom, and other back regions.[1] Similarly, the American filling station manager is in a position to learn that a man who affects a new Cadillac may buy only a dollar's worth of gas, or buy a cut-price variety, or seek to work the station for free service. And he also knows that the show some men put on of masculine know-how about cars is false, for they can neither diagnose the trouble with their car correctly, although claiming to, nor drive up to the gasoline pumps in a competent way. So, too, persons who sell dresses learn that customers of whom they would not have expected it sometimes have dirty underwear and that customers unabashedly judge a garment by its capacity to misrepresent the facts. Those who sell men's clothing learn that the gruff show men maintain of being little concerned with how they look is merely a show and that strong, silent men will try on suit after suit, hat after hat, until they appear in the mirror exactly as they want to see themselves. So also, policemen learn from the things that reputable businessmen want them to do and not do that the pillars of society have a slight tilt.[2] Hotel maids learn that male guests who make passes at them upstairs are not quite what the seemliness of their downstairs conduct suggests.[3] And hotel security officers, or house dicks, as they are more commonly called, learn that a wastebasket may conceal two rejected drafts of a suicide note:

> *Darling—*
> *By the time you get this I will be where nothing you can do will hurt me—*
> *By the time you read this, nothing you can do will be able to hurt*[4]

[1] See Ray Gold, 'The Chicago Flat Janitor' (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1950), especially chap. iv, 'The Garbage.'

[2] Westley, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

[3] Writer's study of an island hotel.

[4] Collans, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

showing that the final feelings of a desperately uncompromising person were somewhat rehearsed in order to strike just the right note and in any case were not final. Service specialists of questionable repute who maintain an office in the back regions of a city so that clients will not be seen seeking assistance clearly provide another example. In Mr Hughes' words:

> A common scene in fiction depicts a lady of degree seeking, veiled and alone, the address of the fortuneteller or the midwife of doubtful practice in an obscure corner of the city. The anonymity of certain sections of cities allows people to seek specialized services, legitimate but embarrassing as well as illegimate, from persons with whom they would not want to be seen by members of their own social circle. [1]

The specialist may, of course, carry his anonymity with him, as does the exterminator who advertises that he will come to the client's house in a van that wears a plain wrapper. Any guarantee of anonymity is, of course, a rather blatant claim that the client has need of it and is willing to make use of it.

While it is plain that the specialist whose work requires him to take a backstage view of other people's performances will be an embarrassment to them, it must be appreciated that by changing the performance which serves as a point of reference other consequences can be seen. We regularly find that clients may retain a specialist not in order to obtain help with a show they are putting on for others but for the very act that is provided by having a specialist attend them—especially if he has a higher general status than his clients. Many women, it seems, go to beauty parlours to be fussed over and called madam and not merely because they need to have their hair done. It has sometimes been claimed, for example, that in Hindu India the procurement of proper service specialists for ritually significant tasks is of crucial significance in confirming one's own caste position. [2] In such cases as these, the performer may be interested in being known by the specialist who serves him and not by the show that the service allows him later to perform. And so we find that special specialists arise who fulfil needs that are too shameful for the client to take to specialists before whom he is ordinarily not shameful. Thus the performance that a client stages for his doctor sometimes forces the client to go to a pharmacist for abortives, contraceptives, and venereal disease cures. [3] Similarly, in America, an

[1] E.C. Hughes and Helen M. Hughes, *Where People Meet* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1952), p. 171.

[2] For this and other data on India, and for suggestions in general, I am indebted to McKim Marriott.

[3] Weinlein, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

individual involved in unseemly entanglements may take his troubles to a Negro lawyer because of the shame he might feel before a white one. [1]

It is apparent that service specialists who possess entrusted secrets are in a position to exploit their knowledge in order to gain concessions from the performer whose secrets they possess. The law, professional ethics, and enlightened self-interest often put a stop to the grosser forms of blackmail, but small concessions delicately requested are frequently unchecked by these forms of social control. Perhaps the tendency to place a lawyer, accountant, economist, or other specialists in verbal fronts on a retainer, and to bring those who are on a retainer into the firm partly represents an effort to ensure discretion; once the verbal specialist becomes part of the organization, presumably new methods can be employed to ensure his trustworthiness. By bringing the specialist into one's organization and even one's team, there is also greater assurance that he will employ his skills in the interests of one's show and not in the interests of praiseworthy but irrelevant matters such as a balanced view, or the presentation of interesting theoretical data to the specialist's professional audience. [2]

A note should be added about one variety of specialist role, the role of 'training specialist.' Individuals who take this role have the complicated task of teaching the performer how to build up a desirable impression while at the same time taking the part of the future audience and illustrating by punishments the consequences of improprieties. Parents

[1] William H. Hale, 'The Career Development of the Negro Lawyer' (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1949), p. 72.

[2] The specialist in verbal fronts who is brought into the organization will be expected to assemble and present data in such a way as to lend maximum support to the claims the team is making at the time. The facts of the case will ordinarily be an incidental matter, merely one ingredient to be considered along with others, such as the likely arguments of one's opponents, the predisposition of the public at large to which the team may want to appeal for support, the principles to which everyone concerned will feel obliged to give lip-service, etc. Interestingly enough, the individual who helps collect and formulate the army of facts used in a team's verbal show may also be employed in the distinctly different task of presenting or conveying this front in person to the audience. It is the difference between writing the ceremony for a show and performing the ceremony in the show. Here there is a potential dilemma. The more the specialist can be made to set aside his professional standards and consider only the interests of the team which employs him, the more useful may be the arguments he formulates for them; but the more he has a reputation for being an independent professional, interested only in the balanced facts of the case, the more effective he is likely to be when he appears before the audience and presents his findings. A very rich source of data on these matters is to be found in Wilensky, *op. cit.*

and schoolteachers are perhaps the basic examples of this role in our society; the sergeants who drill officer cadets provide a further example.

Performers often feel uneasy in the presence of a trainer whose lessons they have long since learned and taken for granted. Trainers tend to evoke for the performer a vivid image of himself that he had repressed, a self-image of someone engaged in the clumsy and embarrassing process of becoming. The performer can make himself forget how foolish he once was, but he cannot make the trainer forget. As Riezler suggests about any shameful fact, 'if others know, the fact is established and his image of himself is put beyond his own power of remembering and forgetting.' [1] Perhaps there is no consistent easy stand that we can take to persons who have seen behind our current front—persons who 'knew us when'—if at the same time they are persons who must symbolize the audience's response to us and cannot, therefore, be accepted as old team-mates might be.

The service specialist has been mentioned as one type of person who is not a performer yet has access to back-regions and destructive information. A second type is the person who plays the role of 'confidant.' Confidants are persons to whom the performer confesses his sins, freely, detailing the sense in which the impression given during a performance was merely an impression. Typically confidants are located outside and participate only vicariously in back and front region activity. It is to a person of this kind, for instance, that a husband brings home a daily tale of how he fared in office stratagems, intrigues, unspoken feelings, and bluffs; and when he writes a letter requesting, resigning from, or accepting a job it is this person who will check through the draft to make sure the letter strikes exactly the right note. And when ex-diplomats and ex-boxers write their memoirs, the reading public is taken behind the scenes and becomes a watered-down confidant of one of the great shows, albeit one that is by then quite over.

A person in whom another confides, unlike the service specialist, does not make a business of receiving such confidances; he accepts the information without accepting a fee, as an expression of the friendship, trust, and regard the informant feels for him. We find, however, that clients often attempt to transform their service specialists into confidants (perhaps as a means of ensuring discretion),

[1] Riezler, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

especially when the work of the specialist is merely to listen and talk, as is the case with priests and psychotherapists.

A third role remains to be considered. Like the role of specialist and confidant, the role of colleague affords those who play it some information about a performance they do not attend.

Colleagues may be defined as persons who present the same routine to the same kind of audience but who do not participate together, as team-mates do, at the same time and place before the same particular audience. Colleagues, as it is said, share a community of fate. In having to put on the same kind of performance, they come to know each other's difficulties and points of view; whatever their tongues, they come to speak the same social language. And while colleagues who compete for audiences may keep some strategic secrets from one another, they cannot very well hide from one another certain things that they hid from the audience. The front that is maintained before others need not be maintained among themselves; relaxation becomes possible. Hughes has recently provided a statement of the complexeties of this kind of colleague solidarity.

> Part of the working code of a position is discretion; it allows the colleagues to exchange confidences concerning their relations to other people. Among these confidences one finds expressions of cynicism concerning their mission, their competence, and the foibles of their superiors, themselves, their clients, their subordinates, and the public at large. Such expressions take the burden from one's shoulders and serve as a defence as well. The unspoken mutual confidence necessary to them rests on two assumptions concerning one's fellows. The first is that the collegaue will not misunderstand, the second is that he will not repeat to uniniated ears. To be sure that a new fellow will not misunderstand requires a sparring match of social gestures. The zealot who turns the sparring match into a real battle, who takes a friendly initiation too seriously, is not likely to be trusted with the lighter sort of comment on one's work or with doubts and misgivings; nor can he learn those parts of the working code which are communicated only by hint and gesture. He is not to be trusted, for, though he is not fit for stratagems, he is suspected of being prone to treason. In order that men may communicate freely and confidentially they must be able to take a good deal of each other's sentiments for granted. They must feel easy about their silences as well as about their utterances. [1]

A good statement of some other aspects of collegial solidarity is given by Simone de Beauvoir; her intention is to describe the peculiar situation of women, her effect is to tell us about all collegial groups:

> The female friendships that she succeeds in keeping or forming are precious to a woman, but they are very different in kind from relations between men. The latter communicate as individuals through ideas and projects of personal interest, while women are confined within their general feminine lot and bound together by a kind of immanent complicity. And what they look for first of all among themselves

[1] Hughes and Hughes, *Where People Meet*, pp. 168-169.

is the affirmation of the universe they have in common. They do not discuss opinions and general ideas, but exchange confidences and recipes; they are in league to create a kind of counter-universe, the values of which will outweigh masculine values. Collectively they find strength to shake off their chains; they negate the sexual domination of the males by admitting their frigidity to one another, while deriding the men's desires or their clumsiness; and they question ironically the moral and intellectual superiority of their husbands, and of men in general.

They compare experiences; pregnancies, births, their own and their children's illnesses, and household cares become the essential events of the human story. Their work is not a technique; by passing on recipes for cooking and the like, they endow it with the dignity of a secret science founded on oral tradition. [1]

It should be apparent, then, why the terms used to designate one's colleagues, like the terms used to designate one's team-mates, come to be in-group terms, and why terms used to designate audiences tend to be loaded without group sentiment.

It is interesting to note that when team-mates come in contact with a stranger who is their colleague, a sort of ceremonial or honorific team membership may be temporarily accorded the newcomer. There is a sort of visiting-fireman complex whereby team-mates treat their visitor as if he had suddenly come into very intimate and long-standing relationships with them. Whatever their associational prerogatives, he tends to be given club rights. These courtesies are especially given when the visitor and the hosts happen to have received their training in the same establishment or from the same trainers, or both. Graduates of the same household, the same professional school, the same penitentiary, the same Public School, or the same small town provide clear examples. When 'old boys' meet, it may be difficult to sustain backstage horse-play and the dropping of one's customary pose may become an obligation and a pose in itself, but it is more difficult to do anything else.

An interesting implication of these suggestions is that a team which constantly performs its routines to the same audience may yet be socially more distant from this audience than from a colleague who momentarily comes into contact with the team. Thus the gentry in the island community previously mentioned knew their crofter neighbours very well, having played out the gentry role to them since childhood. Yet a gentry visitor to the island, properly sponsored and introduced, could, in some senses, become more intimate with the island gentry in the course of an afternoon tea than could a crofter during a lifetime of contact with his gentry neighbours.

It may be suggested that the good will one colleague ceremonially extends to another is perhaps a kind of peace offering:

[1] de Beauvoir, *op. cit.*, p. 542.

'You don't tell on us and we won't tell on you.' This partly explains why doctors and shopkeepers often give professional courtesies or reductions in price to those who are in some way connected with the trade. We have here a kind of bribery of those who are well enough informed to become spotters.

The nature of colleagueship allows us to understand something about the important social process of endogamy, whereby a family of one class, caste, occupation, religion, or ethnicity tends to restrict its marriage ties to families of the same status. Persons who are brought together by affinal ties are brought to a position from which they can see behind each other's front; this is always embarrassing but it is less embarrassing if the newcomers backstage have themselves been maintaining the same kind of show and have been privy to the same destructive information. A misalliance is something that brings backstage and into the team someone who should be kept outside or at least in the audience.

It is to be noted that persons who are colleagues in one capacity, and hence on terms of some reciprocal familiarity, may not be colleagues in other respects. It is sometimes felt that a colleague who is in other respects a man of lesser power or status may over-extend his claims of familiarity and threaten the social distance that ought to be maintained on the basis of these other statuses. In American society, middle-class persons of low minority-group status are often threatened this way by the presumption of their lower-class brethren. As Hughes suggests in regard to inter-racial colleague relations:

> The dilemma arises from the fact that, while it is bad for the profession to let laymen see rifts in their ranks, it may be bad for the individual to be associated in the eyes of his actual or potential patients with persons, even colleagues, of so despised a group as the Negro. The favoured way of avoiding the dilemma is to shun contacts with the Negro professional. [1]

Similarly, employers who patently have lower-class status, as do some American filling station managers, often find that their employees expect that the whole operation will be conducted in a backstage manner and that commands and directions will be issued only in a pleading or joking fashion. Of course, this kind of threat is increased by the fact that non-colleagues may similarly simplify the situation and judge the individual too much by the collegial company he keeps. But here again we deal with issues that cannot be fully explored unless we change the point of reference from one performance to another.

[1] Hughes and Hughes, *Where People Meet*, p. 172.

Just as some persons are thought to cause difficulty by making too much of their colleagueship, so others cause trouble by not making enough of it. It is always possible for a disaffected colleague to turn renegade and sell out to the audience the secrets of the act that his onetime brethren are still performing. Every role has its defrocked priests to tell us what goes on in the monastery, and the press has always shown a lively interest in these confessions and exposés. Thus a doctor will describe in print how his colleagues split fees, steal each other's patients, and specialize in unnecessary operations that require the kind of apparatus which gives the patient a dramatic medical show for his money.[1] In Burke's term, we are thereby supplied with information about the 'rhetoric of medicine.'[2] Of course, in a very limited sense, whenever any non-colleague is allowed to become a confidant, someone will have had to be a renegade.

Renegades often take a moral stand, saying that it is better to be true to the ideals of the role than to the performers who falsely present themselves in it. A different mode of disaffection occurs when a colleague 'goes native' or becomes a backslider, making no attempt to maintain the kind of front which his authorized status makes or leads his colleagues and the audience to expect of him. Such deviants are said to 'let down the side.' Thus in the island community studied by the writer, the inhabitants, in an effort to present themselves as progressive farmers to visitors from the outside world, felt somewhat hostile to the few crofters who apparently didn't care and who refused to shave or wash, or construct a front yard, or to supplant the thatched roof of their cottage with something less symbolic of traditional peasant status. Similarly, in Chicago there is an organization of blind war veterans who, militant in their desire not to accept a pitiable role, tour the city in order to check up on fellow blind men who let down the side by appealing for alms on street corners.

---

[1] Lewis G. Arrowsmith, 'The Young Doctor in New York,' *The American Mercury*, XXII, 1-10.

[2] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1953), p. 171.

Applying this statement to our purposes, we could observe that even the medical equipment of a doctor's office is not to be judged purely for its diagnostic usefulness, but also has a function in the *rhetoric* of medicine. Whatever it is as apparatus, it also appeals as imagery; and if a man has been treated to a fulsome series of tappings, scrutinizings, and listenings, with the aid of various scopes, meters, and gauges, he may feel content to have participated as a patient in such histrionic action, though absolutely no material thing has been done for him, whereas he might count himself cheated if he were given a real cure, but without the pageantry.'

A final note must be added about colleagueship. There are some colleague groupings whose members are rarely held responsible for each other's good conduct. Thus mothers are in some respects a colleague grouping, and yet ordinarily the misdeeds of one, or her confessions, do not seem to affect closely the respect that is accorded the other members. On the other hand, there are colleague groupings of a more corporate character, whose members are so closely identified in the eyes of other people that to some degree the good reputation of one practitioner depends on the good conduct of the others. If one member is exposed and causes a scandal, then all lose some public repute. As cause and effect of such identification we often find that the members of the grouping are formally organized into a single collectivity which is allowed to represent the professional interests of the grouping and allowed to discipline any member who threatens to discredit the definition of the situation fostered by the other members. Obviously, colleagues of this kind constitute a kind of team, a team that differs from ordinary teams in that the members of its audience are not in immediate face-to-face contact with one another and must communicate their responses to one another at a time when the shows they have seen are no longer before them. Similarly, the collegial renegade is a kind of traitor or turncoat.

The implications of these facts about colleague groupings force us to modify a little the original framework of definitions. We must include a marginal type of 'weak' audience whose members are not in face-to-face contact with one another during a performance, but who come eventually to pool their responses to the performance they have independently seen. Colleague groupings are not, of course, the only sets of performers who find an audience of this kind. For example, a department of state or foreign office may lay down the current official line to diplomats who are scattered throughout the world. In their strict maintenance of this line, and in the intimate co-ordination of the character and timing of their actions, these diplomats obviously function, or are meant to function, as a single team putting on a single world-wide performance. But of course, in such cases, the several members of the audience are not in immediate face-to-face contact with one another.