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Playing the part: reflections on aspects of mere performance in the customer-client relationship.

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The actor is like "the whore who feels nothing for the man she is with, but lets herself go in his arms anyway as a demonstration of her professional competence" (Diderot, 1773. In Roach, 1985, p. 138).

"The advisor considered that the client wasn't doing enough to find work so she went through the interview in a correct but entirely cursory way, playing her part in a detached and dismissive manner, disclaiming any contact with the personal" (Burke, 1999).

Introduction

The changing nature of the psychological contract of work has led to a situation in which "professional competence" might be construed in terms of a behavioural repertoire which attaches to the performance of specific work roles and their improvisation. This paper attempts to analyse Diderot's conception of the actor's skills in relation to the construction of professional competence. In particular, it seeks to give attention to the ways in which *mere* performance is required in the servicing of a role. When Diderot compares the actor's skill as similar to that of the whore he is making reference to the way in which the nature of the relationship with the other - actor-audience, customer-client - involves putting merely a part of oneself into the role, into the performance, while others aspects of the person are held back. There are many day-to-day references to the experience of work in such terms and the notion of work as "abuse" is not unfamiliar. Here the intention is to analyse the relationship between performance and the emotional repertoire which is used in the service of such performance. In particular, the intention is to give emphasis to the notion of distance (Goffman, 1971) and its consequences for the client relationship.

First, it is perhaps useful to consider the way in which Diderot uses the term "professional competence". In recent years, a number of themes have begun to emerge which give emphasis to the more subtle yet pervasive requirements of the employment contract. For example, the ways in which the language of emotion is used in support of strategic objectives, the proliferation of

the notion of emotional intelligence as related to success and business acumen, and of the increasingly explicit ways in which certain aspects of the individual are required to support work roles while, at the same time, aspects of the individual which do not support the rational trajectory of the organisation are rejected. This way of *speaking* about work has a long tradition. Gouldner (1969) makes the same point when he argues that in the experience of work "... the individual learns.... which parts of himself are unwanted and unworthy" (Gouldner, 1969, p. 349). Arguably, the past thirty years have seen an increasingly specific attention to those attributes of the person which are desired by organisations and those which are not. In this respect, it is possible to explore the nature of the contract of work as increasingly concerned with the procurement of attributes: as an expression of the organisation's desires and the employee's obligation to satisfy such desires by disaggregating themselves into desirable and undesirable parts. To some management theorists this may seem an entirely inconsequential necessity to ensure the predictability of organisational behaviour. However, more is at stake than a simple and necessary classification of behaviours and contributions. Organisations have for at least the last twenty years engaged in a meretricious approach to training for contact staff and an emphasis on performance has had a subtle and deleterious effect. In order to examine the ways in which organisations require the control and repression of undesirable emotions, the examples used in this paper are drawn from air line cabin crew as a familiar source of illustration and, from a less glamorous context, the UK Employment Service. The latter is a government agency established to find work for the unemployed. The Employment Service has been subject to changes in its sense of identity and purpose as successive governments have changed its name to meet shifting emphases of policy, philosophy and, consequently, of performance. The Employment Service, given its task, is of particular interest to this analysis because the performance repertoire is acted out within a potentially volatile environment. Employment advisors command resources and can make decisions which determine whether or not their clients are entitled to benefits and, therefore, the mutual requirement to play a part is very much a part of the interaction.

The Selective Procurement of Attributes

The first strand of the argument, therefore, is concerned with the selective procurement of attributes of the individual by work organisations. Specifically, this refers to the elaboration of the socio-psychological contract of work to include the use of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) in support of the work role. Implicit in this argument is the notion of the self an available and consumable collection of attributes which are both representational and reproducible; where the skill of the performance is in the achievement of sameness/ predictability/ regularity; where

creativity, ingenuity or improvisation can only be applied to the technique of reproduction, that it to say, can only be used to elaborate the prescribed role. For example, in training, the employment advisor, what is required is a relatively interchangeable performance from one advisor to another, common standards of presentation and delivery, attention to a well rehearsed repertoire of standard behavioural options and, indeed, of rehearsed deviations from standard interactions. Training might, thus, embrace a range of contingency positions and "what ifs", for example, "What if a client is rude and abusive?", "What if I don't know the answer to a question put by a client?". Improvisation, as might be signified by a personal interpretation of the role, is not considered a desirable skill unless it serves the unique demands of the role. In other words, the intrusion of aspects of the actor not required by the performance is generally regarded as undesirable whereas the ingenuity of the actor in furthering the performance via some elaboration of the role, what is technically termed "a conceit", is deemed to be an act which demonstrates "initiative" and is frequently rewarded via employee service awards. Consequently, the point of departure for this discussion is with the histrionic dissimulation which is necessary to sustain a convincing performance and with its emotional consequences. In part, this is to do with how the individual learns to *play a part* and to discriminate between what is desired and what is not desired and *to act* accordingly.

Acting the Part

In order to advance the argument, it is necessary to reiterate briefly some material which has been articulated in more detail elsewhere (Höpfl, 1994; 1995). First, it is important to preface any discussion of emotions with the caveat that the term is comparatively modern. Its current usage dates back little more than three hundred years. The earliest references to the use of the word describe states of agitation or disturbance (Latin, *emovere*: to move out, to stir up) and this later came to be applied to psychological states. Previously, from the ancient Greeks to the eighteenth century, what are now referred to as emotions were known as *passions* (Averill, 1976). The word *passion* is derived from the Latin (*patior*) meaning to bear, to suffer, to support, to undergo, to allow, permit, endure and, in an obscene sense and of particular relevance here, to submit to oneself to another's lust, to prostitute oneself. *Passion* is etymologically cognate with *patience*. It is to be borne or suffered. Clearly, this definition of *passion* - as submission, as resignation and compliance - provides an alternative view of the notion of a "passion for excellence". In the framing of this definition, the exhortation to *passion* for work is a call to a more complex and abject compliance. The requirement to perform a professional role can produce similar effects. Burke (1999) describes how an employment advisor was conducting an

interview with a client who smelt badly of alcohol and body odour. He describes how the advisor conducted the interview with appropriate professional detachment and was faithful to the script but confided afterwards that she could not send the individual out for an interview for a job because he was dirty. She expressed her distaste for her engagement with the client with a facial expression and gesture that demonstrated her feelings of contamination by contact and supported this evaluation with a facial expression that confirmed her distaste. After the client left the performance area, in effect went off stage, the advisor proceeded to take a bottle of perfume from her handbag and to spray around the chair where the client had been sitting. Burke (1999) comments on how this gesture reminded him of a priest incensing the altar before the ritual of the Mass begins. Here the advisor confirms the site of the performance as a "sacred" space, in other words gives primacy to the regulated performance area which has been contaminated by the intrusion of the unworthy. Therefore, just as when entering a Roman Catholic church the laity dip their hands into the holy water stoup at the church door and make the sign of the cross in a gesture of symbolic cleansing, so the client who does not symbolically cleanse himself before entering the site, brings with him the contamination of the world, of the body and of the lack of acceptance of the rules for entering the site(cf Fernandez, 1986). When the employment advisor incenses the air, she is restoring order and propriety to the site of the performance.

Diderot in his famous treatise on the actor, "Le paradoxe sur le comedien" written in 1773, says that the actor's skills are like those of "the whore who feels nothing for the man she is with, but lets herself go in his arms anyway as a demonstration of her professional competence" (Roach, 1985, p. 138). Leaving aside the temptation to explore the somewhat debased attempts to identify and validate "professional competencies", the relationship between performance, artifice and emotion might be argued to have characteristics in common with what might be termed *performed synecdoche*: where the part is used as an emblem of the whole and is devised to satisfy the desires of others. A disaggregation is required in performance by which the individual must allocate parts of his/her experience along the lines of what is required in performance to support the work role and what is set aside.

The problem which the notion of performed synecdoche presents is to do with the way in which behaviour in organisations is regulated and where such regulation originates. The regulation of organisational behaviour is, in the first instance, external to the actor(s). It is, effectively, regulation by an anterior authority which provides the script for the performance, sometimes with associated metrics, and the collaborative interpretation of this in performance. This anterior

authority may be in the cultural norms, patriarchs or matriarchs of the organisation, traditions and the whole range of prevailing assumptions that might be brought to bear on the construction of a performance. It is proposed that the prevailing and preceding authority are the source, the producer, of a text that specifies what is to be brought to the performance. If this authority says that the play is Hamlet, the actors cannot play Macbeth. However, the authority may propose that Hamlet be played *in the style of* Macbeth or with the characters from Julius Caesar. The point is that the setting, choice of performance, style of performance and so on is regulated by the anterior direction of the acting space. Given this, the greatest degree of choice for the actor comes in the extent to which they engage with their roles in performance. In 1998 on a scheduled flight from Warsaw to Heathrow, I witnessed an extraordinary performance by cabin crew that resembled a VI Form Review. The cabin crew donned the duty free articles they were selling and one of the male cabin crew members pushed his trolley up the aisle in an ostentatiously camp manner wearing a silk headscarf and Rayban sunglasses with a small teddy bear mascot waving from his breast pocket. The female member of the crew who accompanied him gestured and pointed like a magician's assistant. I have never seen anything like it in many years of flying. Another cabin-crew member announced that this was the floorshow and the passengers broke into spontaneous and sustained applause. At the end of the performance, the crew took their bows. I was struck by the inevitable logic of the performance requirement of the organisation which takes performance to this extreme. Without doubt, these crew members were acting beyond the call of their roles. This example provides an insight into what occurs to a lesser degree in everyday organisational performance in a less immediate and obvious way. Its significance lies in what is revealed by the extreme variant. This has much in common with the notion of the theatre of the absurd in which the production of the action is made transparent in its performance.

In the framing of the organisation, the site of performance is the nexus of constructed meanings which come together to create the performance. The meaning which is then specific to the site of the performance takes precedence, at least for the duration of the performance, over any such meanings as the fragments of which it is made up may have within their own contexts. The cabin crew in the example above decided by some collective understanding to overplay their roles. Their outrageous performance says, in effect, if the organisation expects us to act we will do just that. This is how for them some notion of their self worth is restored against the prevailing order. So, for example, whereas in the previous example, the employment advisor

restores the order of the site in line with the regulation of performance so in the second example, the logic of the performance is subverted by an overplaying of it.

The regulated performance is a pastiche of elements drawn from other contexts in the service of a particular trajectory of meaning. In other words, it is an elaborate dramaturgical allegory. The allegorical conceit of organisational performance is the amalgamation of artefacts, attributes and artifices which function to translate fantasies and desires into consonant actions and events. The construction of the allegory is such that it assembles attributes of the corporate actor in the service of the production and in such a way as to minimise, deprive or violate their significance outside of the performance itself. Hence, the aspects of experience which are employed in support of the organisational performance may become contemptible counterfeits and experienced as an abuse or the performance may become everything such that the actor has no existence apart from the performance. The latter, with its emphasis on the work-role to the exclusion of other possible roles is often associated commitment to the organisation and, hence, with a progression up the organisational hierarchy.

Masking the Emotions

It is evident that if the required behaviour is to be performed with authority and propriety, ambivalence regarding the intention, the direction, the scripting and the framing, needs to be concealed by a mask (Napier, 1986, p.xxiii). Within the framing, successful dramatic performance and the construction of an appropriate mask is primarily dependent on the rehearsal period. As indicated above, in a regulated performance site, real emotion is not expected to intrude other than in support of the dramatic action. In theatre, the ambivalence, anxiety, distress, fear of failure, lusts, tears and so on, often are most manifest on the very margins of the performance. When I worked in regional repertory theatre, I frequently saw actors in the wings confront and master highly complex emotions before stepping into the performance arena. It was not unusual to hear actors saying, "I can't do this, I can't go on" only to step a metre forward and into the acting arena to confront these anxieties in performance. Stepping out of that arena again also produced complex responses and these are discussed below.

Acting before an audience, on one level, requires a dispassionate and mechanical re-enactment of the product of the rehearsal room. Actors in long running productions have commented that, with an unresponsive audience, they can plan a weekend's activities, a holiday, a dinner party or whatever, while going through the motions of performance. As Burke (1999) comments on the

employment advisor, "The advisor considered that the client wasn't doing enough to find work so she went through the interview in a correct but entirely cursory way, playing her part in a detached and dismissive manner, disclaiming any contact with the personal" (Burke, 1999). Similarly, prostitutes will sometimes say that while trading in their most intimate *parts*, they may choose not to kiss their clients as this would be too intimate. In saying this, they alienate those aspects of their body which they put forward for trade in order to preserve their self-respect, privacy and reserve a part of themselves from the exchange. The cabin crew, on the other hand, symbolically seem to be saying that if the organisation takes so much they can have the lot. There is so little left to protect that a camp response is the only resistance available to them. Hence, their outrageous performance is a product of outrage and, in practice, more tragic than comic.

In theories of acting, the separation of the act-action-acting from the actor's experience has been regarded as the most significant achievement of the actor's skill. Central to this argument is the notion of a dual consciousness. This is the view that outstanding acting requires an ability to possess dual personality (Roach, 1985, p. 148). Ironically, this is to be achieved via autonomy and self-possession. This amounts to a willingness to submit to the performance, in effect, it means the actor can say, "I can play this role because I am detached from it". This line of argument says that the embodied role can be in performance in a specific repertoire detached from a superior intellect which permits its body to be used yet remains disdainful of its appropriation. Hence, it has been suggested that one paradox of Diderot's "Paradoxe" is the contrast between the notion of actor as instrument manipulated in performance and the actor as autonomous and self-generative exercising choice over the extent of the submission to the role. Although the latter is seen by Diderot as a considerable achievement, it is arguable as to whether or not it can be realised without the contempt of the actor for those who consume his/her performance (Höpfl, 1995). Moreover, despite the confidence of the "Paradoxe", it is the case that many professional actors experience difficulties with the transitions in and out of role and seek ways to facilitate such transitions. Drink is not an unusual means of reconciling the mind and body after a performance. In the example of the purification ritual of the employment advisor above, it seems that the act of perfuming the air creates a cordon sanitaire around the acting space marking it as a place of ritual and performance. Consequently, movements into, across and out of the space mark important transitions with all the associated complexity of places of transition. The wings of a theatre are not unlike the international departure lounge of an airport or the portals of classical theatre where gods and mortals come into contact.

The Control of Embodied Passions

The appropriation of the actor's skill, both on the stage and in the organisation, has important implications. The subordination of the individual to the dramatic task has its origins in classical theatre. The actor on stage had to "carry" the action and, therefore, the character of the actor was not important other than for giving emphasis to the action itself (Holt, 1989, p. 172). The story of the play, and its trajectory was more important than the actors playing their respective parts. Emphasis is given by a class of actions that are concerned with the persuasive powers of the actor, with authority and propriety. The mastery of the mechanisms of the emotions and sustained rehearsal provided the basis of dramaturgical force. Sarbin (1986) has made a distinction between the dramaturgical, as being concerned with the theatricalities of performance - devices, acting techniques, masks, deceptions and so on, and the dramatistic which is made up of half remembered roles of epic scripts which are embedded in folk-lore and myth, archetypes and roles learned in early life. These are evoked in given situations from an "emotional repertoire" (De Souza, 1980) in the service of a role. It is evident that this categorisation can be applied to both theatrical roles and to work roles. The actor is expected to control inappropriate emotions and responses in support of the action. Clearly, it is improper for the dramatistic to intrude into the dramaturgical other than when it is called for as an emblematic artefact; as a device to be used when the situation requires histrionic skill to give force to the performance and authority to the actor (MacIntyre, 1990, p. 107). To play a fatherly role is not the same as to behave like someone's father. To express sympathy for someone is not the same as to become distraught. There are a range of feints which must be performed with detachment if they are to be successfully carried off. That social life is regulated in a similar way is not in question. The issue here is the locus of regulation: the individual or the organisation.

To act is to counterfeit for dramatic purpose and, as such, it requires practised skills and technical devices to present emotional conceits as its professional product. In Diderot's terms, the actor is a machine without a soul, the acting skill derived from the mastery and control of embodied passions. His concern is with the processes which shape creative energies in the production not of the imitation of reality but, rather and significantly, with the creation of the illusion of reality. It is argued here that the acquisition of the dramatic persona in organisational life is increasingly about the construction of a conceit, a counterfeit of experience that is to the detriment of the actor. The requirement to "fake it", to perform with a simulated intimacy is a familiar aspect of many service role jobs.

Consider, for example, Burke's (1999) example of the employment advisor who believes that the client is not doing enough to help himself and, therefore, goes through the motions of doing the interview in the prescribed manner but little more. She believes he is not playing his part and refuses to bring any dramatic force to her own role. She performs her role with minimum engagement. Her performance is robotic and cursory. She does what is necessary and no more. In other words, she will only play her role if he plays his. Moreover, she sees his refusal to prepare for and play his role - he is not clean, he is not interested in what she can offer - as a violation of the acting space.

Diderot's actor is an instrument or an empty vessel, capable of playing any or all characters precisely because his/her own character is eradicated and sensibilities obliterated in the pursuit of professional craft. Not unnaturally, this view has been subject to considerable critical discussion within drama studies. However, in organisational terms the achievement of a flexible and well-rehearsed work force which can move easily between a variety of roles with skill is considered to be a desirable accomplishment. Nonetheless, Diderot went further so as to define actors characters in terms of their deficiencies - of a lack of commitment to friends, family and even of identities (Roach, 1985, p. 135). Organisations or occupations with strong cultural identities can achieve a similar estrangement. The actor is peculiarly impersonal in his/her impersonations and the actor's body, which is after all the instrument of performance, is offered for consumption by the audience. Hence, the logic of the "take all of me" performance of cabin crew is impeccable if tragic. Ironically, the actor has to find his/her skill in the *suspension* of the very sensibilities that are the substance of his/her craft.

Desire and Context

The corporate actor must embody the values which corporate culture proposes. Hence, demeanour, bearing, and supporting gestures must express the consonance of the role with the purpose of the action. This requires that an emotional repertoire be learned and employed in support of the performance. The actor's external appearance is clearly part of the construction of the performance. Hence, make-up, hairstyle and costume become aspects of the artistic control of the actor's body. Outside the actor, the appearance of the stage - properties, sets and lighting - and what Kowzan (1968) calls "the inarticulate sounds" - music and sound effects, all contribute to the performance and its construction within the acting space and to the regulation of performance, artistic direction and the skills of the actors in carrying the performance.

Properties, sets and lighting are designed to support and contextualise the performance, to reinforce the rhetorical trajectory of the performance (Aston and Savona, 1991). Training and staff development secure the script to the acting space and regulate performance in context. Management development programmes often include an element of role-playing or of speculating on the standpoints that might be adopted in specific managerial situations. Jackson and Carter in their analysis of labour as dressage where they argue that dressage "requires the body to perform, requires knowing acts which, implicitly or explicitly, demonstrate compliance to whatever demands the controller seeks to have satisfied", (Jackson and Carter, 1998, p. 58). These *rehearsals* for everyday actions are ways of relating desired behaviours to desired outcomes. Such activities have a similar function to the way in which a script is *blocked* in a theatrical rehearsal, the actors may walk through their roles marking the movements, turns and positions which support the performance of the piece. In training, the manager rehearses a range of possible behaviours which are appropriate or inappropriate to the extent that they achieve the objectives of the organisation or as Jackson and Carter put it "it is not sufficient that something should be done, it must be done in a particular way" (Jackson and Carter, 1998, p. 59). From the point of view of the study of emotions in work organisations, the significance of this style of training lies in its removal of emotion from the site of performance. Only counterfeits of emotion or dramatic emotional support is desired in the performance. Where emotion erupts into performance it is regarded as failed or culpable performance.

In theatre, the intended or posited meaning is normally derived from the author or the text of the play and interpretation via the director. The actor can be whatever he or she wants as long as he or she works with the author's intents, to construct and reconstruct him/herself to satisfy the author's desires and, in translation, the desires of the "artistic" director. The actor, in Diderot's terms, submits to a meretricious appropriation which demands a *passionate* response. The actor must carry the action and impersonate, that is, bring into being the posited meaning of the author. Read in this way, a call for a passion for service is an exhortation to submit to appropriation.

The appropriations - a physical body, gestures, looks, theatrical props and fetish objects - are not only commodified but also kitschified by an authority which frequently reassures itself that its lubricious motivations are liberal, informed, sophisticated and, indeed, enlightened. For example, a gender audit of a major UK company indicated that the shoes to be worn by service staff were required to be "high enough to show a well-turned ankle but low enough to suggest the sort of sensible shoes worn by nanny". One might give thought to the embodied ambivalence to

be translated into performance by the one who must wear the shoe so defined. Hence, the multiplicity of meaning an element might have in other takes on meanings which are irretrievably in the power of the regulated performance. The appropriated attributes, objects, bodies and so on are rendered abject by the posited meanings which are placed on them.

The selective procurement of attributes and the use of costume and setting secure and capture the individual in a performance in which the person is made available via their role which is pre-scripted and pre-signed to extend specific meanings which may or may not be coincidental with those of the actor.

Hypocrisy

The assumption of a role and its performance by the actor is a paradox both remarkable and disturbing to behold. The skill which permits performance, which masks the actor and achieves the concealment of the actor's true character, is a considerable competence. The actor is able to translate human experience for re-presentation, to convey the range of human emotion in all its power and fragility, to transform his/her appearance through costume or physical distortion, to employ voice and gesture in the realisation of the performance. The actor is able to make manifest a supreme deceit. In work organisations, the actor is constrained by context, role and script with a limited capacity for dramatic improvisation. What is significant is that the construction of the role regulates the emotional repertoire that attaches to it.

Acting is a craft which requires the simulation of behaviour and emotion, a practised dissimulation, the "professionalization of two-facedness" (Roach, 1985, p. 137). Consequently, it is the consummate counterfeit of experience. Nothing is as it appears. It is a performed hypocrisy. The actor's craft is primarily one of self-transformation. It is for this reason, that the actor has, throughout history, been regarded with suspicion and unease. Indeed, actors were frequently excommunicated from the Church and their craft was regarded as degrading, deceitful, morally bankrupt and hypocritical. The word hypocrite in Greek means literally *an actor* and hypocrisy, *to play on stage*.

The prostitute offers a counterfeit of pleasure as a professional accomplishment and this proficiency has the capacity to dissipate, in reversal, the power of the appropriator. The performance of the prostitute is achieved with contemptuous regard for the client. In this paper, the analogy has been drawn between this contempt for the client and the logic of the dramaturgy

of customer service. The necessary abstraction by which the performance is achieved, by its implicit disdain and removal, reverses the appropriation. The consequence is a power play based on a mutuality of contempt (Höpfl, 1995).

The travesty, the grotesque re-presentation of attributes always bears the possibility of collapse into the comic because such constructions bear an implicit irony. The cabin crew push their roles to the point where they become ludicrous. The ludicrousness of such selective representations both enthralls, embarrasses and destabilises the constructions of the desirer/ consumer of such representations. It is only possible to sustain the activity of consumption and capture while such representations are given serious regard. When the ludic and the ludicrous are reconciled, the *consumer* is, at least temporarily, released from a constructed desire for a particular performance. This would suggest that resistance to an extension of the psychological contract of work requires an elaborate and exaggerated performance based on a ludicrous rendering of the partial. Here the violation of the appropriation is reversed by the power of an overplayed simulation.

The Fear of Contact

Theatre is dirty work. Contact with actors brings the fear of defilement. As has been argued above, the actor is considered to lack morality, to have no capacity for normal relationships and is thought to possess an unstable character. Yet, these very aspects of the actor intrigue the audience. Audiences experience both envy and moral superiority in relation to actors. Performance is glamorous. The essentially dirty work of the cabin crew is elevated into glamour by make up and costume and setting. This is not so for the local office employment advisor for whom there are few theatrical props to glamorise the role and, consequently, there is frequently a more insistent rendering of the role. The spectators desire a furtive excursion back-stage to marvel at the devices which produce theatrical illusion, and show a considerable curiosity for the techniques of transformation. Yet consumers of the actor recoil from a peering behind the mask. The audience is discomfited by personal contact with actors. In a similar way, the regulation of organisational behaviour by close reference to the text and the framing of organisational roles permits a reassuring regularity in the nature of interaction between organisational members and their audiences.

As the subject/object of selective procurement, the corporate actor is humiliated and degraded in the service of performance. As a consequence, the actor turns for support to the intimacy of other actors - friendship, respect and admiration, are found in the companionship of the rehearsal

room in a common suffering. The relationship between actor and audience could, therefore, be described as saprophytic. In other words, the actor must in a sense be dead to any notion of self and the audience then consumes this performance as a saprophytic act. On the other hand, actors demonstrate their skill with condescension to the audience. The back-stage world is dirty, sweaty, raw and emotional, fractious, fraudulent. Behind the curtain is the territory in which the actor perfects his/her craft in order to enter and exit the role with practised facility. Yet, the actor knows the point at which he or she must "enter" the role and the costs of surrender to it. The esoteric learning of stagecraft alienates the actor from the audience. Actors offer themselves for consumption in performance yet, despite appearances to the contrary, despise audiences who they feel do not and cannot understand the sacrifices which are demanded by the pursuit of that craft. All jobs which require performance skills carry this burden. The audience cannot appreciate how much the actor suffers. Only the other actors know this. Hence, the cabin crew who collectively decide to overplay their roles and the employment advisors who console themselves after they have encountered a difficult client share the sense of collective identity which marks them out as differentiated from other players who enter the performance space. Likewise, the manager who has not experienced the sufferings of playing minor roles will not be credible to his/her staff and may lack empathy with the actors. As is well known a group of actors is called a company. Interestingly, the word *company* comes from the Latin, *com - panis* meaning *to take bread with*. The company and the notion of companionship reside in this sense of collectivity and sharing.

On the Examination of Conscience

The theatricalities of organisational life have produced actors who are humiliated, debased and under-valued. Only fellow actors understand the sense of abuse which they share. The customer is led to expect increasing levels of service and high standards of performance from organisational members and yet they cannot appreciate the sacrifices required of the performer. The actor is left with the difficult reconciliation of the experience of degradation and defilement and the public production of virtue. The customer is led to expect continuity, regularity and, indeed, improvement. The contradiction of contamination and goodness produces in the actor a disdain thinly masked by the persona of professional competence. At the same time, the audience is not deceived by the counterfeit of performance and being now consumers of grotesque counterfeit of service finds a residual dignity in a scornful aversion to the actor's craft. The client as audience is aware of the minuscule movement which transforms the performance into ludicrousness.

For example, when an employment advisor experienced intimidating behaviour from a client who did not want to be interviewed, the advisor persevered with the interview, in effect, sticking to the script but later when the interview was over she undertook a cathartic deconstruction of the interviewee with her colleagues and made fun of the physical characteristics and bodily imperfections of the client. In this way, she performed what she could not perform in acting out her role, the contempt she felt for the individual who had treated her badly. Only her fellow workers could understand what she had experienced in the performance of her role (Höpfl and Burke, 1999).

Here is the ultimate irony of the argument presented here. The most powerful emotion at work in the production and consumption of the performance is now contempt. The customer enthralled and seduced by promises of intimacy and care, of arousal, delight, and special attention finds him/herself confronting a grotesque simulacrum of these very things: invasive intimacy without care, neglect dressed up as concern, a hideous and thrusting theatrical mask. The consumer of such performances can only enter the site of performance as a sceptic with some revulsion for the counterfeit experience at the heart of the performance. The appropriation of emotion in the service of the organisation and to the exclusion of human values and virtues produces alienated actors and estranged audiences (Höpfl, 1995).

The precarious point between resistance and compliance in performance is the mask which marks the boundary between all that is and all that is not in performance. The construction and maintenance of the mask marks the boundary between the consummate counterfeit and the grotesque parody. The mask is the site of multiple possibilities and, in collapse, of heterogeneity. The apparent coherence and consensus regarding the definition of the event depends primarily on masking. The dramatic mask conceals ambivalence about the role, about performance and about the production but it is not infallible nor, indeed, irreversible. When the mask fails the performance is thrown into question: becomes ludicrous. For the actor, the extent of his/her degradation is revealed. This was quite obvious in the case of the cabin crew where the parody of performance exposed the completely abject position of the actor. The humiliation of the appropriation is apparent in such gross performances. However, when the mask is made grotesque, when the actor forces the role to its and beyond its dramatic possibilities the author of the performance, or the intents of the author, are transgressed by the power of the reversal. Not only does the mask fail but also the performance and, by implication, the desires of the author.

What was peddled as good customer service is synonymous with a mutuality of contempt. The irony is that good customer service and perhaps more importantly good management cannot be achieved by dramaturgical simplicities.

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