THE DELANEY DOSSIER: GOFFMAN MATERIALS

1972: Social Interaction class (Anthropology 666). As best I can recall, EO did not mark up or comment on my paper on make-up, and I found out my grade only when the end-of-term report card was issued through regular university channels. (I suspect that he was bored with the subject-matter and turned off by my overly imitative, “Goffmanian” treatment of it; in all likelihood, he had thought through the topic in his own terms much earlier in the game.)

Included are my (rather cheeky) answers to a short mid-term exercise for the Social Interaction class, dated October 1, 1972. As written up in my reconstructed class notes, the assignment was as follows:

**Class exercise.** Write a mini-paper of two pages on the following topics. Be incisive and brief. Use your native wit.

1. Address some issues that might be involved in using the lay term “couple” as a technical term.

2. Discuss this exchange:
   - Customer: “Do you have coffee to go?”
   - Waitress: “Cream and sugar?”
   - Customer: “Just sugar, thanks.”*

3. Criticize the territorial typology in Goffman’s “Territories of the Self,” Chapter 2 of *Relations in Public.*

* In “The Interaction Order” (p. 15), Goffman later examined this customer-waitress exchange in terms of “the unstated assumptions in servicing regarding who qualifies as a serious candidate.” Thus, the laconically responsive reply of the waitress (“Cream and sugar?”) implicitly validates the customer’s implicit order for coffee to go, posed in the form of a question. But this ratification might well be withheld, and further interrogation ensue as to pecuniary resources at hand, if the person doing the tacit ordering was, to all appearances, a destitute street bum.**

** [Footnote to the footnote: my analysis of the exchange largely tracks with EG’s eventual account, although his, naturally, is accomplished with far more concision, precision, and flair.]

My parting jibe (last page) about Henry Kissinger was occasioned by a slide of a news photo seemingly showing him slyly preparing to put on a display of gravitas for the camera.
MAKE-UP

The Social Dramaturgy of A Bodily Art

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"Couple" as technical term. A couple is, by definition, a twosome. It suggests engagingness and a certain quality to a dyadic relationship. Such a term would tend to direct attention to shared definitions of reality, typified interaction sets, and most distracting (from a Geffmanesque point of view) the structure of shared sentiments, mutuality reciprocative feelings and expectations. In short, "couple" suggests a rather deep social bond. The prototype, of course, is lovers and marrieds. Even as an interaction unit, "couple" refers to the duo constituting it; they constitute the unit (except when used to describe merely their twoness, as in "a couple of burglars.") Besides, the locution "member of a couple" burdens.

Far better is the happy notion of a with, defined on the basis of simple more-than-twoness. It immediately commends itself for its brevity and transparent goodness. At once more generic and more specific than "couple", it ramifies into a set of concerns for the structural aspects of sheer being-with-others and how that alone shapes the contours of interaction potential both to these with-in and with-out.

Some addenda: There can be "virtual" withs and singles both in terms of recognizable transitions and readily apparent anticipations. The members of a with can be subject to estrangement too, thereby bracketing the with from without and within in their fresty singularities. Also, is a man along with his manservant a with? And large "parties", say at a Chinese banquet? Woodstock?
2. I will set aside here the whole structure of supporting reality required to validate the dialog. However, it is important to note at least that a certain normality is implicated.

A: "Do you have coffee to go?" Our man is "saying" that I am a someone with the requisite appearances, manner and especially means to be here now and to ask this of you. The question form of the utterance serves dually functional as well as "ritual" purposes. It asks as it orders. Questions, ceteris paribus, are generally more mannerly than commands, even such bare ones as our A's. It is cast almost in a favor-asking frame. Being cast in this form, the ball is tossed back to the other's court; mean time a ask certain residue of politeness efficiently leaks out. Further, it is an announcement of intention to buy (and pay for) the good in question, thus authorizing the intrusion. In that sense, one might think of it as a functional greeting, in that it represents a non-threatening summons to duty; it sets up the (typified, reciprocally understood) interchange, inaugurating the appropriate role behavior even while initiating the first move of such behavior correctly, thus extending a down payment (from A's side of the encounter) to the interaction as a whole.

B: "Cream and Sugar?" The role has been duly engaged, the functional prerequisites attached to what has to be done tacitly assumed. To translate: I will "answer" your question implicitly, in actual so to speak, by a stereotyped ellipsis which, neatly, almost parallels your initiating utterance. It responds to your question-order and ratifies your status as orderer. Moreover, perhaps by interpreting your "to go", it feeds back a further question to keep flowing, at minimal involvement expense, the informational stream. So I have bled my required speech response to your question-
form into a compressed counter-question whose answer will fulfill my need to know which of the standard variants of the good you want (and assuming you will take what is usual.)

A: "Just Sugar, thanks." The "thanks" terminates these minimal moves in this rather pretty picture of economical co-functioning. (The gratified display seems perfunctorily marginal in this case.) It might even be said to bracket the whole interchange, but I rather sense that there will be a spate of thanking and thank-acknowledging when the counterpart exchange of money for goods takes place (or, given sequential division of cafe labor, when the coffee or some reasonable facsimile is handed over--handings over seeming to require such ritual largesse.)

3. On Territory. Put at the very center of social organization, as "claim", the concept of territory must needs dance on some quicksilverish ground. The categories elicited do describe validly isolatable features of "commingling." But I wonder: does not the stretching to metaphorical proportions tend to evacuate the specific usefulness of "territory" as a term. (Durkheim and ethology are recalcitrant ingredients.) Here are some specific objections I have to some of these extensions:

The "turn" while involving space use is essentially a time category (with all due regard to Einstein) and analyzed as such. Nor do I think the skin and its outer accouterments fit easily here. Now qua sheath they most surely do in the most direct (even physiological) way. The body or parts of it remains largely an untouchedable in public life. But as the modestly unseeable--is that a function of space? Likewise with the contents of pockets and access to them. But the mind?? Ditto for conversational preserves. The
synthesis just won't hold itself together here. It seems as if sight and the other senses are taken as space-binders. More generally, the categories seem to distinguish locatable media of/for/by the self, sympathetic extensions. But if all these are net-space then what kind of systematically ordered net-space is it? In short, I agree about the claims; I find the "space" troublesome.

The categories seem to have, by and large, different loci as their organizing principle. It could be argued that they are not strictly a typology at all, rather mere a list of space-linked properties of interaction. Functionally, they don't articulate against each other. They are only tenuously autonomous, easily conflatable and ever vulnerable to cross-cutting. (A fault of the reality more than the schema itself, I should suppose.) For example, "personal space" is supposedly present in all the others, differentially, yet it is enclosed in the claimant's person and still part of the situation (2 aspects.) Thus the prudely result of needing the will while needing to deny it. (The will, a bitch-concept, thus finds itself in a paralogism of sorts. It has been known to have had happened before.)

More attention could be paid to the three-fold division of territory organization. Take a classroom. It is a fixed space, within which there are situational fixtures which implicitly structure the transients' bodies and attention channels. Each brings his own egocentric claims and perquisites to the scene. But there is also a socially fixed kind of staging going on here. The teacher is...
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due a certain spatial deference complete with lecturn-shield at
the head of the classroom and class. A "fixed" space, then, may
even have its own socially fixed situational properties (always
open to defilement of course.) This spatial authority structure
is carried along in warm bodies, if not always cool heads, even
when the bearded prof wafts his students onto the grass for a
bout of poesy. There is need here, I think, for recalling
region behavior, if in a mere free-form way. I might add that we
have also portative fixtures which serve not only as markers but
definitional
as/props, the great archetype here being the soapbox.

Would it make much sense to distinguish preserves, conserves
and reserves? The idea is to bring up the issues of going about
staking one's claim, maintaining it against possible claim-jump-
ers while allowing favored others in, and finally questions of
legitimacy and relinquishment.

Doors are among the most common of all fixed claim markers,
serving also, as we know, as actual barriers which can be further
stylized with locks, peepholes etc. They remind us that every
exclusion is also an inclusion (even if the opposite is not quite
the same structurally.) Windows, too, function as a transparent
interaction shield, restricting certain undesirable contacts
and thus acting in effect as an interaction filter. (Compare two-
wide-to-touch tables in prison visiting rooms.) Lastly, ponder
the complexly laminated spatial-ritual claims involved in the
great lowly American sanatorium, the bathroom, where incidentally,
running water or whistling in the MMMX shower may validate one's
functional legitimacy (no matter what sort of funny business is
going on inside.) Here we have the individual by himself involved
in one of the richest spatial-ritual settings he can get, one in
which each of the postulated categories impinges. That, I think,
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makes one chary of over-criticising too soon their provisional formulation even while the task of description and/or explanation 

_Originally_ abrade one xxxxx another.

P.S. I think Henry Kissinger is a wolf (or is it Fox) in sheepish clothing.