Digital Media, Society, and Culture

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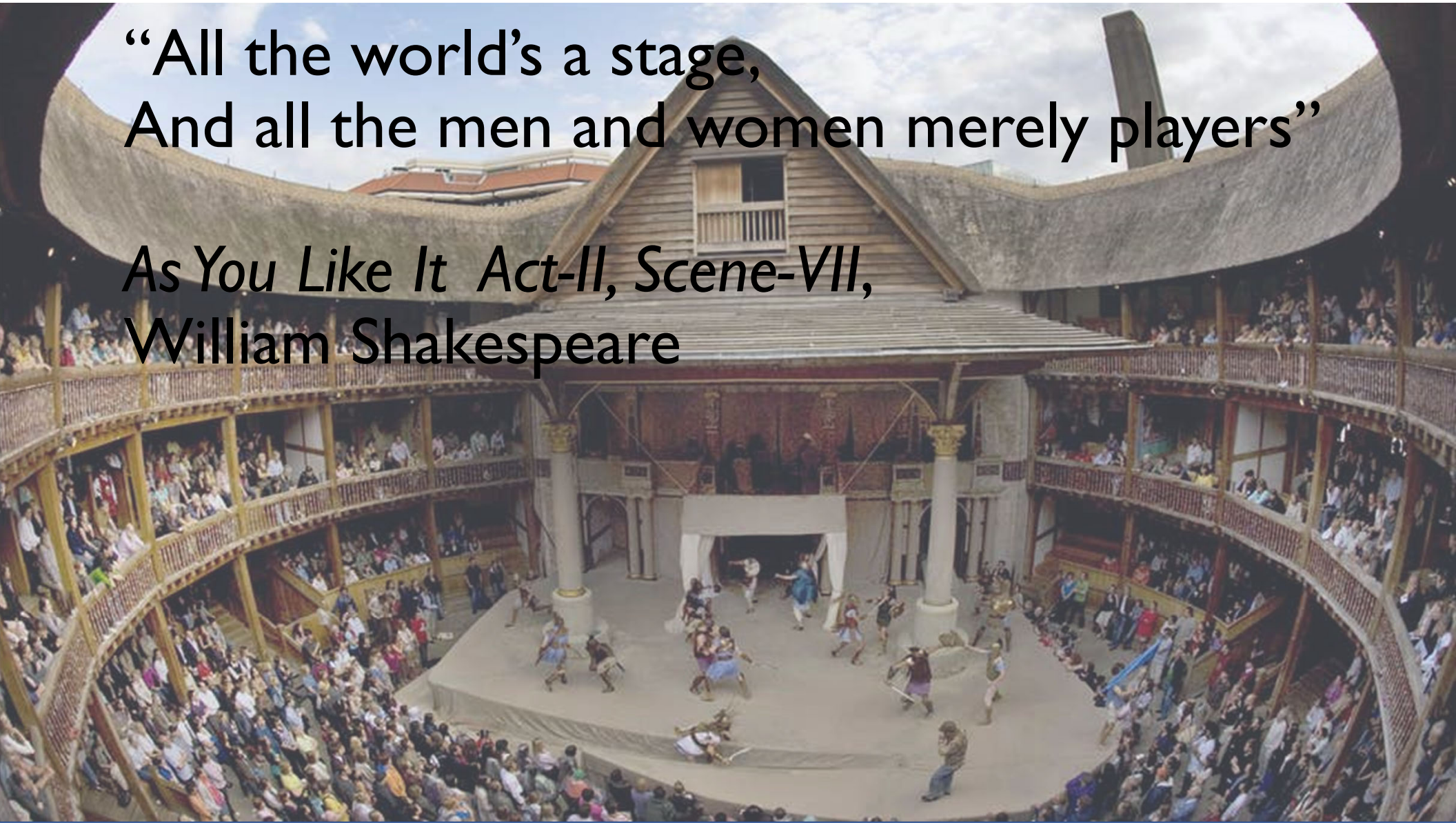
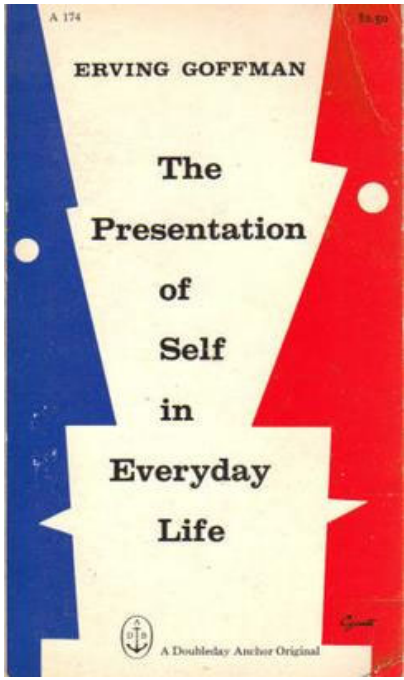
The Ego Online


"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players"
As You Like It Act-II, Scene-VII,
William Shakespeare

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

Erving Goffman

- A dramaturgical account of human interaction.
  - The social self needs to be continually achieved in and through **interaction**
  - This not only defines interpersonal interaction, but also affects **social structure**
  - To play along is not only a social, but also a **moral** imperative



*"We can say that a social **role** will involve one or more **parts** and that each of these different parts may be presented by the **performer** on a **series of occasions** to the same kinds of audience or to an audience of the same persons."*

*"When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his **observers** to take **seriously** the **impression** that is fostered before them."*

Our real screen-selves

- Pseudo.com (1993), by Joshua Harris, led to…
- *We Live in Public*
- *The Real World* (MTV 1992)
- *Big Brother* (EndeMol 1999)
- Reality TV
  - Social Realism

"So MySpace had almost a third of their staff monitoring the pictures that got uploaded for pornography. We hardly ever have any pornography uploaded. The reason is [….]on Facebook."

"And I think that that's a really simple social solution to a possibly complex technical issue"

What is the reason/What is FB a solution to?

Anonymity!

→ breaks your role

→breaks (and remakes) the social order

- Anonymity (before and after) the internet:
  - Social hierarchies
  - Power dynamics
- Online Roleplaying Games

A member of the Iroquis False Face Society

Venetian Masquerade

Anonymous protester during Occupy Wall Street

World of Warcraft

Online Anonymity

- Usenet (1980)
  - "poor man's ARPANET“
  - Usernames rather than given names
- 4Chan and 8Chan
- Anonymous and the [Rules of the Internet]

Questions Answered

1. Won't this be expensive?
Not at all. Night time phone costs are perhaps $0.50/3 minutes, in which time uucp could transfer perhaps 3000 bytes of data (300 baud). Daily polling would then cost $15.00/Month, which is half what Duke pays just for an office phone.

2. Could Duke really handle all the phone calls?
Sure. We have two call-out lines: at five minutes/call, we can handle 24 calls/hour. Other nodes can also volunteer to perform the call-out function.

3. What does Duke get out of this?
We avoid phone charges ourselves, and we get news sooner than anyone else.

4. What about abuse of the network?
In general, it will be straightforward to detect when abuse has occurred and who did it. The uucp system, like UNIX, is not designed to prevent abuses of overconsumption. Experience will show what uses of the net are in fact abuses, and what should be done about them.

Certain abuses of the net can be serious indeed. As with ordinary abuses, they can be thought about, looked for, and even programmed against, but only experience will show what matters. Uucp provides some measure of protection. It runs as an ordinary user, and has strict access controls. It is safe to say that it poses no greater threat than that inherent in a call-in line.

5. Who would be responsible when something bad happens?
Not us! And we do not intend that any innocent bystander be held liable either. We are looking into this matter. Suggestions are solicited.

6. This is a sloppy proposal. Let's start a committee.
No thanks! Yes, there are problems. Several amateurs collaborated on this plan. But let's get started now. Once the net is in place, we can start a committee. And they will actually use the net, so they will know what the real problems are.

7. Okay, so a few systems get the net started. What next?

The FAQ in the FAX that announced Usenet

A thread on 4chan

(don't go there if you want to retain any hope for humanity)

The Return of the Role: Social Media

"In the early 2000s, **Friendster** gets all the early adopters, has a really dense network, and then just hits its breaking point."

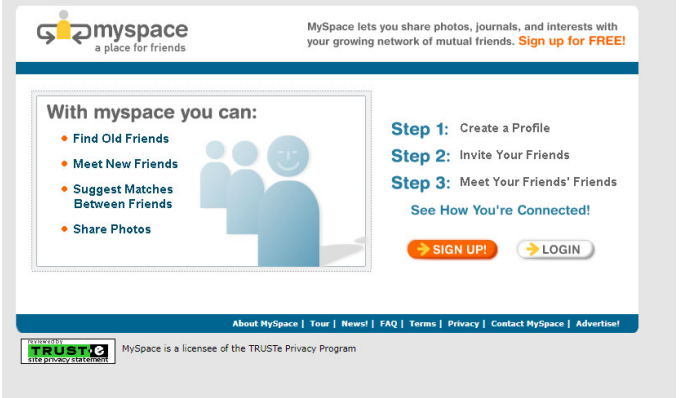
~Ezra Callahan

"**MySpace** was really popular, but then MySpace had scaling trouble, too"

~Scott Marlette

"Back then there was a really common problem that now seems trivial. It was basically impossible to think of a person by name and look up their picture. All the dorms at Harvard had individual directories called "**face-books**"

~Dustin Moskovitz



Quotes from *Valley of Genius*

A typical Silicon Valley Story

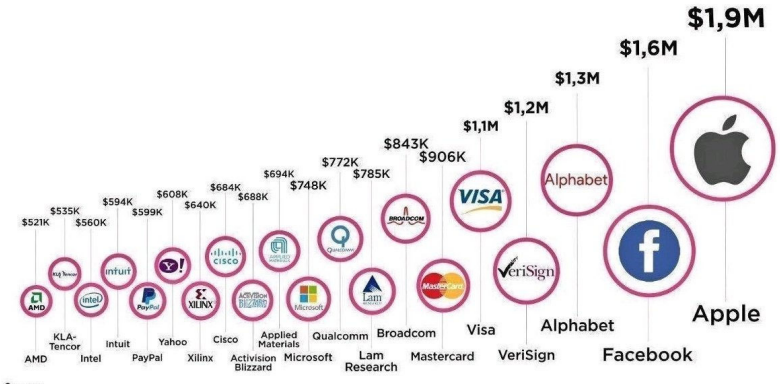
"Palo Alto was kind of like this mythical place where all the tech used to come from. So I was like, *I want to check this out*."

~Mark Zuckerberg

- A (dorm-room) **startup**
- College **dropouts**
- **Mentors** and investment from **serial entrepeneurs** (taking huge cuts)
- A **pivot**
  - Facebook was originally conceived of as a filesharing network then photos became central
- A **Unicorn** (an **IPO** of $108 billion)
- Extremely large income, with **very few employees**
- Growth not through innovation but through **take-overs/copying**
  - Whatsapp (bought)
  - Hobbi (Pinterest clone)
  - Instagram (bought)
  - Lasso (Tiktok clone)
  - Libra (cryptocurrency)
- A 'brilliant, but socially awkward nerd' at the helm

"Sean [Parker] put together an investment round quickly, and he had advised Zuck to, I think, take $500.000 from Peter Thiel"

~Mark Pincus



Revenue/employee 2016

…**CEO/Founder** is an (idolized) public persona

'Zuck' in Washington

Adam Neumann
(WeWork)

Nolan Bushnell (Atari)

Steve Jobs and his Apple

Elizabeth Holmes
(Theranos, check '[the Dropout]' podcast)

Cambridge
Analytica
+
facebook

"Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him."

~ Erving Goffman, *The Representation of the Self in Everyday Life*, p. 1

“And within a couple weeks, a few thousand people had signed up.”

~ Mark Zuckerberg

Facebook in 2010

Facebook’s mission:

“Founded in 2004, Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to build community and **bring the world closer together**. People use Facebook to stay **connected with friends and family**, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.”