

SCOTT: *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* → VS 100218

**OUR EVERYDAY REALITIES... EVEN OUR EXPERIENCE OF “COLLEGE CLASSES”...
HAVE TWO DISTINCT SIDES, WITH TWO DISTINCT MODES OF VALUATION**

Why does Scott use the term “transcript”? What are the “official” vs the “hidden” transcripts?

- The short, nerdy answer is that in the early 1990s when the book was written there was a tremendous amount of emphasis upon “texts” and “discursivity” within Academia.
- Scott uses the term in order to capture a whole range of things that are not only “text.” He’s really referencing Foucault and trying to find a name for the whole range of things which “make an appearance” and “have a meaning”.
- So the “official transcript” and the “hidden transcript” just means EVERYTHING SAID AND DONE in one situation vs. in another...
- The “official Transcript” means what is done for all to see, but more specifically, in a public space that is dominated in one or another way, where power demands certain attitudes, manners, gestures of respect etc.
- The “Hidden Transcript” means what is done in some sequestered space where those who perceive are limited in some fashion. In the chapter I gave you, Scott only discusses the hidden transcript of the oppressed. Elsewhere in the book he also acknowledges and discusses that there are private spaces and modes of discussion (/valuation) for those in positions of dominance as well.

WHY are there two modes of speech/behavior/valuation?

- Scott says it’s because, when there are “compelled performances” or “forced compliance,” there’s a natural, psychological reaction/rejection. My boss/teacher can humiliate me in public, but I’ll say what I really think of those assholes when I’m with my friends.
- This means that the harsher a public environment we occupy, the more strongly we will seek to counterbalance that environment once we’re safe with our peers.
- This is premised on the idea that THERE IS A HUMAN DESIRE FOR FREEDOM OF ACTION
- *The only way around this, for power, is to cause people to PERCEIVE that their compliance is CHOSEN. That may be a lot of what happens in our world. We can be made objectively unfree by producing a subjective illusion of freedom. In this case, the harsh reaction to compulsion that is produced naturally is gotten around.
- Generally speaking, without this workaround, threats produce overt compliance, but covert resistance. People learn to act with a “mask,” but to preserve their “true face” for those they trust / those who are in their own situation.

What are the key examples of public vs hidden transcripts?

- The Christianity of American slaves in front of their masters vs. on their own
- The discourse/behavior of “untouchables” in India, in public vs. amongst themselves
- What students do/say in class and what they do/say out of class
- *What workers do/say when the boss can see them, and what they do/say when the boss can’t see

OFFICIAL “TRANSCRIPT”	HIDDEN “TRANSCRIPT”: “offstage responses”
Rituals of hierarchy: Deference Certain types of speech allowed/called for Punishments for violation of rules Humiliation Loss of dignity, sometimes in front of peers	Expressions of anger and frustration Mockery of the elevated Use of “inappropriate” (eg “working class”) speech “A joint discourse of dignity, negation, justice”.
Exclusion of certain statements, manners of speech, criticisms/refusals vs. power	Self-disclosure of whatever power relations normally disallow
For example: emphasis here on “XTIAN” VALUES OF Meekness Obedience Self-Control Quietness Fidelity Obedience	But in hidden slave Xtianity: emphasis on “XTIAN” Deliverance Redemption Dance Shouting Revolution in conditions between Blacks and Whites
Frowning on improper speech	PRIDE in “improper speech”
Atomization of subordinates	Solidarity among subordinates
Feigned ignorance: “the refusal to understand is a form of class struggle.”	Proud intelligence

What’s Scott himself valuing?

- **Autonomous spaces.** In order for a dominated group to develop a counter-dominant discourse, practice, and revolutionary potentiality, they have to have spaces to meet that are not surveilled and are not commanded by dominant forces. The hidden transcript ONLY EXISTS as practiced, articulated, enacted, disseminated.
- Of course, such spaces are ALSO spheres of power relations, now within the oppressed group. Whatever is “idiosyncratic, unrepresentative, non-resonant” will be selected against / censored.
- Or, if no totally autonomous spaces can be found, groups can SEAL OFF existing spaces
- Or if that’s not possible, they can produce manners of speaking that are unintelligible to the dominant
- AUTONOMOUS SPACES for the working class in England historically have included
 - BARS
 - TAVERNS
 - HOMES
- These were the main points of UNAUTHORIZED ASSEMBLY
 - (NOTE: To practice resistance, to develop a community of resistance, UNAUTHORIZED ASSEMBLY is a key starting point.)
- Historical struggles between classes have therefore included attempts to liberate and to control spaces.
- Also, MOBILE PEOPLE are necessary for dissemination.
- POWER wants to ATOMIZE SUBORDINATES.
- Counter-power wants to BUILD OPPOSITIONAL COMMUNITY, if only in secret to begin with.
- SOCIAL COHESION is especially prominent in “communities of fate”: miners, merchant seamen, lumberjacks, longshoreman

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does what is said/done in your classes contrast with what is said/done (about the class) outside of the class?
- How does what is said/done at work, when the boss can see, differ from what is said/done when the boss can't see?
- What's the "hidden transcript" of this class? Or is my asking a case of power trying to negate resistance?
- Is "feigning ignorance" potentially a technique of resistance, in a school?
- What are some autonomous spaces you know of? (That is, where do otherwise "subordinate" people get together and talk without anybody "in charge of them" hearing/seeing?)
- To what degree are you as a population "atomized"? To what degree do you form communities of solidarity?
- Is it true that humans naturally desire freedom of action?
- Is it possible that in our circumstance, we've been caused to believe that our various subordinations are "chosen" and therefore not appropriate grounds for resistance? Are these real choices? How could this circumstance be changed?