

TO MY FACE

Some seven years ago, I passed a woman standing in the street, saying again and again 'He never said that to my face'. I do not know what the stresses were that drove her to the point of speaking aloud on the street. I did think that speaking as she did, she repeatedly called to the attention of passersby that which 'He' had not addressed her face.

Although one can substitute 'me' for 'my face' the power of the phrase is lessened. - 'my face' is a stronger signifier for myself than 'me'. 'To show one's face' is to put in an appearance, not to show it is to be, emphatically, absent. The person whose name we are unsure of or whose status we question is 'who's his face'. 'Face' is constitutive of the I for another, thus to lose face is to be less, publicly, than before and to save face is to preserve appearances. A face, for us, therefore constitutes identity, what separates, carves out, distinguishes, marks. What 'he never said to my face' he might have said, behind my back'.