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## Celebrity and the Semiotics of Acting

One of the persistent problems in acting, and one that seems to grow steadily in importance, comes from the public identity of the actor. This study suggests that a semiotic approach to the acting sign can help to distinguish the function of celebrity in acting, the threats to authority that celebrity imposes, and the results of celebrity acting both on stage and in the efforts of the actor to achieve an identity. This essay is related to earlier discussions of the stage figure by its author, Michael Quinn, in *Modern Drama and Gestus*, applying the Prague School model of analysis that also supported his article on reading and directing in NTC11 (1987). Michael Quinn, an assistant professor at the University of Washington, is currently working on a critical study of Vaclav Havel, as well as a longer study of the stage figure in different theatrical contexts.

THE SYSTEM of celebrity production and reception provides an important supplement to performance study that is frequently dismissed by serious contemporary criticism, despite the apparent growth of celebrity phenomena as reflected in new venues like entertainment news, sneak previews, and an endless assortment of similar apparatus.<sup>1</sup> As the number and variety of activities that promote or inform performances has increased, the process of celebrity has progressed so uncritically that entertainment reporters like Mary Hart or Barbara Walters can presume to celebrity status solely by proximity to the stars.<sup>2</sup>

The geneology of celebrity has also reached an extraordinary state of extension: every star seems to have not only a performing spouse and children, but brothers and sisters, nephews and cousins, an endless network of Barrymores, Redgraves, and Belushis that seems to have little or no relation to the traditional training function of the theatrical family.

In attempting to explain this bewildering flow of persons and images it seems reasonable to look for its causes in the kind of event that all the chatter seems to be about: the moment of dramatic performance. There are compelling economic reasons and ideological uses for stardom, yet the phenomenon itself seems to me to result from an insatiable desire; the market is consequently manipulated, but cel-

ebriety does not seem contingent upon the desperate need to sell a product.<sup>3</sup> There is something about dramatic performance that causes spectators to seek information about the personal life of the performer, to cast that life in the mould of celebrity.

### Semiotics of Acting

The moment of theatrical acting is itself an uneasy metaphor – and instance – of the deconstructive gap of difference, its uncanniness typically described since Diderot as the paradox of acting.<sup>4</sup> In fact the problems of acting are far more complex than the binary tension between life and dramatic character that theorists (like celebrity reporters) tend to locate in the psychology of the performer.<sup>5</sup>

Diderot's focus on the performer's confusion derives from a pre-romantic concern with the creative aspect of acting that continues through Stanislavsky and his elaborate process of reception; but this concern does little to help distinguish or objectify performance signs, or to explain the dynamics of their reception.<sup>6</sup> Recent writings of the Prague School on the phenomenology and semiotics of acting are more comprehensive, and apply specifically to the problems of celebrity in performance.

The Prague School theory of acting reduces performance to three principal components: the

performer's personal characteristics; an immortal dramatic character, residing in the consciousness of the audience; and a third, intermediate term, the stage figure, an image of the character that is created by the actor, costume designer, director, etc., as a kind of technical object or signifier.<sup>7</sup> This third term allows a conceptual wedge to be driven between celebrity and performance, performance and reception, which provides greater space for the play of interpenetrating perceptions that animates the moment of dramatic acting.

Any film application makes the structure quite clear (though destroying its simultaneity), for there is no live celebrity present on the screen; the image is clearly a filmic figure, a projection arranged for aesthetic perception.<sup>8</sup> Problems with celebrity are only aggravated by the clarity of this filmic division, however, because the palpable absence of the performer creates a lack in the structure of film acting that has consistently required some compensation or substitution.

The Prague School augments the three formal aspects of acting with three analogous functions.<sup>9</sup> Every acting event contains within it some relative blend of performer, acting figure and character. The performer's personal contribution to the acting sign is called the expressive function; and in cases of celebrity, this function is often dominant. The objective aspect, the contribution of the stage figure, provides the referential function; this is the aspect of the sign that connects art, through a qualified resemblance or coded contingency, to the phenomena of the everyday world.

The third function, the beholder's share, involves the audience's conative contribution; in live performance the audience laughs, applauds, holds its breath, and in every performance images of character are funded from the personal storehouse of experience that constitutes each viewer's competence.

In the normal realm of dramatic performance, what the traditional organic aesthetics of the post-romantic West calls 'good art', the referential function of acting dominates. Reality is observed, described, criticized, transformed in the context of an artistic code that pretends to be more or less objective, conventionally separated from the real world and similarly

protected from intruding acknowledgements of the real event of performance.<sup>10</sup> Only in the special genre of comedy is this structure occasionally violated, and then usually to be re-established. Celebrity threatens to subvert this traditional structure in a number of ways.

### Semiotics of Celebrity Acting

There is something about every real object that resists its use in signification. The distraction of a working clock on stage is Benjamin's example; the heaviness of individual objects on film, as theorized by Kracauer, is another way of noting the same problem.<sup>11</sup> In acting, this resistance still pertains: animals and children, notoriously, seem never to be quite sure they're in a play, and that constitutes the largest part of their delightfulness.<sup>12</sup> The personal, individual qualities of the performer always resist, to some degree, the transformation of the actor into the stage figure required for the communication of a particular fiction.

Once the fact that this personal, expressive function of acting is accepted as something that is always, already present – even in the film image that traces the actor's absence – celebrity becomes a tendency of acting rather than a higher order of performance.

Celebrity performance represents one case in which the personal, expressive function of acting comes into the foreground of perception. Expressive acting has many arenas: the school play, the folk drama, even 'someone I know on TV'. The personal qualities of the individual actor dominate the perception of the actor's references to the fictional events.<sup>13</sup>

Celebrities, almost by definition, substitute for this 'someone' that we seem to know apart from the play. They bring something to the role other than a harmonious blend of features, an overdetermined quality that exceeds the needs of the fiction, and keeps them from disappearing entirely into the acting figure or the drama. Rather, their contribution to the performance is often a kind of collision with the role, sometimes hard to accept, but sometimes, too, loaded with the spectacular energy that an explosive crash can release.

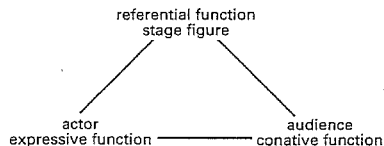
Celebrity acting exists in strict opposition to the system of stage types, which was to some

extent restructured by actor-managers to support stardom. Type-casting creates a situation where the 'newest young ingenue' is by definition excluded from enduring fame, because the extent to which she exemplifies her type will correspond to the rate of her disappearance.

The 'typage' of the early Soviet film-makers does something different, denying the acting event by bringing a real example of the character type to the screen; here, individuality dissolves in reference, in the representation of a social role. Similarly, actors who immerse themselves completely in each particular role run a risk of disappearance: complete transformation can render the personal contribution unrecognizable. Here critics can be some help; they can allow someone like Meryl Streep to emerge, who has subsequently been perceived to develop the external techniques of transformation – voice, hair, physicalization – into a kind of trademark style.

Celebrity in its usual variety, though, is not composed of acting technique but of personal information. The first requisite for celebrity is public notoriety, which is only sometimes achieved through acting. In the context of this public identity there then comes to exist a link between performer and audience, quite apart from the dramatic character (or in only an oblique relation to stage figure and character).

This relatively direct exchange of expressive signs and outside knowledge splits the acting sign much like the sign is split by Brecht in his *verfremdungseffekt*, though celebrity acting requires no space/time disruptions to achieve its structure.<sup>14</sup> Only in special moments is celebrity acknowledged separately in live performance, such as in the star entrance or curtain; it otherwise remains constantly involved in the ongoing performance event. The whole acting sign must be graphed in a triangle to acknowledge this link between the life of the performer and the knowledge of that life that the audience brings to the performance:



The information transmitted by entertainment news about the actor's life and work (whether through electronic media or in forms as apparently innocuous as the programme bio) is received by the audience and brought to the performance as a way to fund perceptions.<sup>15</sup>

Gossip presumably allows every spectator to see the truth behind the mask, to project the knowledge that similar events in the life of actor and character converge, validating a supposed spiritual integrity in the event. The shift of perception that celebrity allows is a key one, and is extraordinarily powerful; the audience's attitude shifts from an awareness of the presence of fictional illusion to the acceptance of an illusion, however false, of the celebrity's absolute presence. The actor becomes, in synchronization or in contrastive relation to the role, a paradoxical representative of *Dasein* – of the pureness of being-in-itself: rather than a mere chameleon, a celebrity stands for the irreducibility of the individual being, becomes a stable signifier, apparently impervious to the gaps that might deconstruct presence because the role he or she inhabits is an acknowledged fiction.<sup>16</sup>

At this point celebrity becomes a kind of idealist virus, communicable through its transfer to real roles as important as a presidency (but that's an old digression), and transferable through public contact or familial relation. Celebrity stands in strict opposition to the lack of presence experienced in ordinary life, in the retreating 'carrot-on-a-stick' of difference, lack, desire, and deferral that post-modern theorists since Lacan have used to describe the normal experience of individuals in the system of social roles.<sup>17</sup> Celebrities seem to resist this social dissolution, the conflict of different presentations of the self, just as resolutely as they resist the reduction of their acts to referential aesthetic signs.

### Celebrity Acting and Authority

The apparent presence of the celebrity has three principal effects, all relating to conflicting structures of authority. In the first place, the celebrity can find no place in an 'ensemble'. The dream of an artistic ensemble of actors is really a director's dream, and the idealization of the

repertory company, accomplished by despots like Georg II of Saxe-Meiningen, was really the achievement of a directorial authority in the theatre that allowed actors to become more or less interchangeable.<sup>18</sup> The authority of character interpretation rests in repertory companies with the director, who can then aim for an art work unified on the director's terms, from a director's perspective – a work harmonious in its dominant referentiality, its illusion of a sometimes other-worldly reality.

The celebrity breaks this illusion, of course, with a definitional emphasis upon the personal, self-referential (not illusive) meaning of the acting event. Celebrity carries with its rhetoric of the real in acting an acknowledgement of the facts of performance that a poetics of illusion cannot typically accommodate, despite the somewhat illusive structure that creates the celebrity in the first place. The intrusion of celebrity displaces authority from the creative genius of the author (or the interpretive genius of the director), so that the bid for absolute authorial presence in the ideal of romantic creation and/or imagination is consequently subverted.

Only one human subject can use the fiction of the art work to suture an illusion of presence; the celebrity has the power, as both sign object and producer, to subvert or pre-empt the efforts of other artists to authenticate themselves through fictions of absolute authority. Moreover, the celebrity also makes frequent recourse to the combination of normal artistic functions as a way to multiply the empowerment of his or her image.

Thus, Sam Shepard is both actor and author, actor and director, performer and celebrity husband, collapsing distinguishing structures into an apparently seamless amalgam of roles that never really breaks the protective myths and contingencies of fiction, yet consistently augments his reputation for genius.

Secondly, celebrity threatens to subvert the economic structure of authority, to disrupt the budget – the arrangement of relative values – for a production by introducing the actor as a singular quantity rather than a supply. The celebrity, as an absolutely irreducible and apparently authentic being, can demand a high price for individuality.

This tendency toward economic rapacity contributes a financial condemnation to the reputation of celebrities that only compounds the problems stars generate for ambitious directors and writers. The list of greedy stars, like the list of authoritative ones (or even the habitually late, which is the same thing), is so long as to make examples unnecessary. Yet the madness of the million-dollar actor is rooted in the kind of contribution celebrity seems to make – the illusion of authenticity that a celebrity can bring to a role's performance that outweighs both historical precedent and topicality in persuading a doubtful public to accept dramatic representation as a real thing.<sup>19</sup>

The third area in which the star subverts authority, and the area that produces the most damning press, is in the realm of criticism. In the current structure of reception aesthetics, the author has been banished by theorists like Foucault and Barthes to provide an opening into which the critic-as-reader can move.<sup>20</sup> This contemporary development only exaggerates an important official phase in the exception of all art, and it helps us to understand the tensions between celebrity and criticism.<sup>21</sup>

The absolute qualities of the celebrity threaten the evaluations of the critic. No supposed arbiter of taste, usually still operating in the context of a holistic aesthetics, can finally resolve the tensions that result from a star turn in a wretched movie. The pleasure of the celebrity's authenticity still remains as a dominant factor in the star vehicle, even when that vehicle fails to produce more traditionally aesthetic pleasures like beauty, suspense, or humour. Consequently, academic criticism of film and theatre still tends to focus on the director as auteur, defining a territory where holistic authors and critics can defend themselves from the occasional ruptures and raptures of celebrity art.<sup>22</sup>

### Aesthetics of Celebrity Acting

Celebrity is the one area in which the component art that is considered almost definitional for drama, the art of acting, comes into conflict with the whole form. Veltrusky has noted the continuity between actor and object that culminates at one extreme in stardom, at the

other in nonentity.<sup>23</sup> Only the star's role has the power to overshadow the whole art work; this influence is due to the illusive phenomenon of celebrity and the systematic aesthetics of celebrity acting that it generates.

The presence of the celebrity is, by testimony of cliché, magnetic. In psychoanalytic terms, the apparently absolute status of the star provides the spectator with a ground, a stable construction that allows 'the handing back of truth to the Other'.<sup>24</sup> Like the analyst, the masterful celebrity is 'the subject who is supposed to know', against which the viewer becomes aware of the personal lack that generates desire.

The sexual attraction of the celebrity depends upon the illusion of presence that the spectator grants. In film, this circular dynamic develops into a fully articulated 'erotics' of celebrity precisely because the prospect of rejection disappears. This erotics is just one form of a dream of unity with the celebrity that provides, within the moment of the individual acting performance, a context for a traditional aesthetics of transcendence.<sup>25</sup> The spectator, rapt, projects the self onto and into the celebrity to produce a vivid attention only partially ascribable to the fictional events of the art work.

Yet, because of its personal nature, the transcendence effected by celebrity is much less likely to be appropriated by religion or philosophical idealism than the transport attributed to the whole art work (and proportionately more likely to be exploited for personal gain). Herbert Blau postulates that the presence of theatre is our essential collective awareness of approaching death, that life is being created in acting as it really vanishes. In his view the celebrity must, then, retain a kind of privilege, for on film or in print the celebrity persists in the ghosting of the image, leaving a trace that surpasses mortality.<sup>26</sup> A celebrity is 'somebody' in the concrete – like the ancient hero, a stable signifier that continues to pattern the subsequent meanings of desire, and consequently much too important to admit of Andy Warhol's famous prediction in anything but the re-enactment of proto-typical celebrity virtues.

The aesthetics of celebrity are not only psychological but structural: the apparent stability of the star provides a landmark against which the unfolding scenes of the drama can

be judged. Celebrities come equipped with an intertext that includes several levels, only the most obvious of which is the conjunction of art and life in a particular role. The intertext is an accretion, based on similar art/life connections in earlier roles, and also on the connections the celebrity provides between the roles themselves.

This intertext forms the basis for the 'star salute', the posthumous retrospective popular with *cinéastes*, and the general emergence of the kinds of eccentric habits and personal quirks that such viewings provide. The process of accrual is so inexorable and complicated that it becomes a matter not of *whether* the actor and producers use the intertext, but of *how* they do so. Dustin Hoffman's role in *Tootsie*, for example, may not have garnered an Oscar, but it enhanced his reputation as a 'serious actor' to such a degree that a future award seemed inevitable. If it is impossible to sort out the personal from the referential in debut performances, it is equally difficult to avoid such perceptions when an actor is seen after a dozen roles.

To a certain extent the celebrity provides viewers with a constructive principle, a context for evaluation. When celebrity and role merge in an art work that both validates the performer's identity and fulfils general aesthetic expectations of beauty, pathos, humour, etc., the work is good art by most criteria – often award-winning art by the popular standard of predictable thrills.

When celebrity and role more clearly collide, then two kinds of effects are possible. Either the celebrity is perceived as meeting a challenge, as achieving a stretch – a personal growth that provides a pleasure of audience approval to augment the drama – or the celebrity might be perceived as 'out-of-place', miscast at best, at worst an overreacher.

Most of my remarks deal with celebrities who are sympathetic, but there are also repellent figures, whose presence seems equally stable yet whose influence can taint an otherwise sympathetic role or art work. Celebrity can be constructive or deleterious: the perceived narcissism of stardom is only another problem that leads critics to decry its influence.

If we view it with the methodological fictions of structuralist analysis, celebrity acting partakes of a kind of dual system structure. The first

system of celebrity is synchronic, a web of contemporary figures who exist in any cultural moment as representatives of the character traits most revered (or feared) by the community. The celebrity paradigm takes on the shape of a labour pool, a Fortune 500 of casting combinations that is drawn upon to balance or augment the themes of a given art work.<sup>27</sup>

### A Dual System Structure

Simultaneous to this contemporary system is our growing awareness, due to the accumulation of film performances, of a historical system of celebrity, where stars appear as heirs to a tradition of predecessors who resemble them or represent similar values; actors' memoirs and the Rosciad once preserved this history for an ephemeral stage. The growing historical system of images contributes mightily to the post-modern passion for quotation in performance; many recent stars first emerged as comic impressionists, mastering the system before entering it.

The historical situation has by now become complex enough that stars who may previously have seemed to be guaranteed a place in the iconological pantheon, like Edward G. Robinson or Ronald Coleman, are likely to be extinguished; history and synchrony exist in an ongoing partnership that ensures both the emergence and eventual obsolescence of most celebrities.

As a subsystem, the discourse about stars is like the discourse of fashion observed by Barthes: a fragmented, symbiotic language of attributes that defines the values of the contemporary moment by aligning them with the illusive presence of the celebrity.<sup>28</sup> Endorsements exist by this principle alone. The values and associations of tabloids, interviews, and commercials subsequently enter the circle of celebrity information and contribute to the future funding of any kind of star appearance.

A formal aesthetics of celebrity exists, too, mostly in the relation of film to presence. Film supplants the fact of theatrical presence with two complementary devices, magnitude and detail. The closeup offers an illusion of intimacy that may well be more affective than the real thing. And the sharp focus of film, together

with its embrace of the seemingly ephemeral as noted by Balazs, allows a concentration of detail in the film performance that the stage figure in theatre cannot simultaneously supply to both front and back of house in a crowded auditorium.<sup>29</sup>

A peculiar hybrid of the theatre/film antinomy of presence exists for celebrities in the 'live television' performance – now quite rare, of course, because it includes all the risks of theatre without the benefits of presence or the compensations of film. Yet in all media the distinctive characteristics of the celebrity are emphasized, if only through the conspicuous absence caused by their attempted erasure.

Recent feminist film criticism maintains that the realistic convention, which attempts to establish the film as nature, necessarily implies a male subject position for the viewer.<sup>30</sup> Celebrity, because of a specificity that breaks through the sutures of any ideology (including the patriarchal one), seems to encourage the construction of figures for a variety of subject-positions, including a variety of gazes that cohere only in the case of the androgyne or monster.<sup>31</sup> While most stars may seem to encourage ideological closure, they may also disrupt it: Elizabeth Taylor, for example, fulfilled an image of feminine beauty in her films while resisting male appropriation in her chequered private life. The contradictory aesthetics of the celebrity may be quintessentially post-modern.<sup>32</sup>

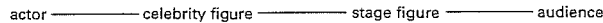
### Celebrity and the 'Real Actor'

In his meditation on *The Presence of the Actor*, Joseph Chaikin proposed that 'acting is a demonstration of the self with or without a disguise'.<sup>33</sup> This quotation would seem to be a formula for the presentation of celebrity as art work, a confirmation of the selfish illusion of presence that the star provides for the viewer. Yet the definition carries within it the gap of signification that cannot be filled: for to demonstrate the self is to represent, to cease to offer the thing itself in favour of its use as a sign.

The illusion of celebrity presence is most illusory of all to the star, trapped in a stable image of selfhood that bears limited correspondence to the desires and disappointments

of the changing real. The standard talk-show format, which exists to allow celebrity and role to interact or merge in the mind of the prospective viewer of a polyphonic drama, exists for the celebrity as an extreme (late) form of the mirror stage: the star views and comments upon an image of the self not only objectified and retouched but commodified, all in the names of art and authenticity.<sup>34</sup>

The triangular structure of celebrity performance in this perspective replaces the expressive actor with another mediating element, the celebrity figure, Genuine expression, like authentic selfhood, is banished to a more remote position in a more elusive reality. The celebrity figure is an alternative reference, competing with and structuring the role of the stage figure as it promotes its own illusion. The sequence can be graphed this way:



Even the alienation experienced by the actor in this displacement of the self is only further grist for the mill — preparation of the audience for a future appearance in an interview or role featuring an action of existential crisis, the dream scene of Cary Grant playing out the agony of Archibald Leach.<sup>35</sup>

The celebrity exists in a state of increased awareness of the differences between self and social role, yet may remain powerless to counteract the social force of celebrity identity. Even a symbolic return to the 'legitimate' stage, where self and role are supposedly joined in the material presence of the stage figure, shrinks to yet another ritual of authenticity under the gaze of a popular culture that creates, maintains, and apparently requires celebrity actors to feed its desire for an aesthetics of familiarity, recognition, and fulfilment.

Only an acknowledgement of the pervasive influence and embedded semiotics of celebrity, neither of which are necessarily negative, can yield an adequate description of the meaning and aesthetics of dramatic acting. Such a recognition will also allow us to acknowledge (accept?) the cultural values inscribed in our acting conventions.<sup>36</sup>

## Notes and References

1. Film criticism has of course been more receptive than theatre writing; e.g., Charles Affron, *Siar Acting* (New York: Dutton, 1977). In theatre, most celebrity material tends to suppose that celebrities are consummate artists; but when their secrets are recorded, the result is usually disappointing: e.g., Lee Alan Morrow and Frank Pike, eds., *Creating Theater* (New York: Vintage, 1986) and Lewis Funke and John Booth, eds., *Actors Talk about Acting* (New York: Avon, 1961).

2. Richard Shickel's *Intimate Strangers: the Culture of Celebrity* (New York: Doubleday, 1985) provides an engaging, provocative commentary on the process of celebrity making (and unmaking), but his thesis, like most, concentrates on the phenomenon's pernicious effects, like its relation to political violence.

3. Daniel Boorstin's *The Image: a Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1961) provides an etymology and brief history of celebrity which, while ahead of its time, is typical in its emphasis on celebrity as a typically American problem coincident with capitalism and the arrival of cinema. He makes no connection with earlier star systems, nor with other media that confer presence, like radio, but most importantly he overlooks the relation of the system of celebrity to similar systems of illusive closure that are overtly political, like the cult of personality in communist states.

4. Diderot, *The Paradox of Acting*, trans. W. H. Pollock (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957). For its deconstructive reading, see Derrida's essays on Artaud in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978).

5. Connections between the science of behaviour and acting theory have been criticized in Joseph Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Newark: Delaware University Press 1985).

6. The mystification implicit in the romantic view of the actor continues today: for example, in Brian Bates, *The Way of the Actor: a Path to Knowledge and Power* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987).

7. Otakar Zich, *Estetika dramatického umění* (Prague: Melantrich, 1931). For an English summary of the theory see František Deák, 'Structuralism in Theater: the Prague School Contribution', *The Drama Review*, XX, 4 (Dec. 1976), p. 83-94.

8. See Jan Mukařovský's exemplary study, 'Chaplin in City Lights: an Analysis of a Dramatic Figure', in *Structure, Sign and Function*, trans. J. Burbank, ed. Peter Steiner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

9. For the most detailed exposition of these concepts, see Jiří Veltruský, 'Contribution to the Semiotics of Acting', *Sign, System and Meaning: a Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle*, ed. Ladislav Matejka (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Studies, 1976).

10. Veltruský describes these conventional separations — distinctness, continuity, etc. — in 'Acting and Behaviour: a Study in the Signans', *Semiotics of Drama and Theater*, ed. H. Schmid and A. Van Kesteren (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1984).

11. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1977); Sigfried Kraauer, *Theory of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford University Press, 1960).

12. The resistance to theatrical signification is the special thesis of Bert States, *Great Reckonings in Little Rooms: On the Phenomenology of Theater* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1985), which nevertheless bases its study of 'phenomenal modes' in acting on the Prague School model. I owe the Benjamin example, too, to States.

13. In the traditional context of folk drama this phenomenon has been thoroughly debated and described in Jiří Veltruský, 'Notes Regarding Bogatyrev's Book on Folk Theater', *Poetics Today*, Winter 1986.

14. See my analysis of Brecht's acting devices from this standpoint in 'The Semiosis of Brechtian Acting: a Prague School Analysis', *Gestus: a Quarterly Journal of Brecht Studies* (Winter 1986), and 'Švejk's Stage Figure: Illustration, Design, and the Representation of Character', *Modern Drama* (September 1988). Historically, Brecht's association with star actors — Laughton, Weigel, Lenya, Schall — seems to be a key factor in the elaboration and reception of his acting theory, their celebrity allowing the split to be observed.

15. One theorist who has noted the conditioning effect of such information is Martin Esslin, *The Field of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1987).

16. For an exposition of this circular logic see Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

17. In psychoanalytic terms the celebrity would be considered phallic, an illusion of a stable signifier that orders the system of signification. I see no reason, however, for this illusive stability to be essentially male in any more than its dominant historical sense.

18. For substantiation of this view of the Theatre Duke, look no further than Helen Chinoy's standard study, 'The Emergence of the Director', *Directors on Directing*, eds. Cole and Chinoy (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 22-3, which reads:

The authority of the Duke as Regisseur, director, made possible this complex integration. Although he was assisted by his wife and by his stage manager, Ludwíg Chronek, he alone was the artistic creator of each production. He designed the sets and costumes, but he went further and designed every movement and every position on stage. He dictated the very folds of each actor's costume. Everyone in his small theatre had to be subservient to the production, whose form he determined and sustained through an iron discipline. The mob scenes, for which the Meininger were greatly admired, were made possible by this discipline. Each actor had to take his turn as a supernumerary; those who refused were dismissed from the company. The Duke's ensemble was the product of his skill in using actors as theatrical material, rather than the natural result of individual acting talent at his disposal.

19. In Jonas Barish's exposition, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1982), the West seems to dispute the authenticity of theatre principally with recourse to authority (religious or political) rather than argument. Celebrity, then, insinuates acting into this anti-theatrical culture by using the rhetorical tools of its opponents, achieving both its acceptance and its potential for abuse.

20. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. S. Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977); and Michel Foucault, 'What Is an Author?', *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. and eds. D. Bouchard and S. Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).

21. Felix Vodicka, arguably the founder of the aesthetics of reception, outlines this sanctioned process in 'Response to Verbal Art', *The Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, ed. L. Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979).

22. See, for example, the selection of materials in Denis Babel's series, *Les Voies de la création théâtrale* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

23. Veltruský, 'Man and Object in Theater', in *A Prague School Reader on Aesthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, trans. and ed. Paul Garvin (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1964).

24. Jacques Lacan, 'Of the Subject who is Supposed to Know', *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. J.-A. Miller (New York: Norton, 1978).

25. For examples see the notes of Barthes and Kenneth Tynan on Greta Garbo in *Film Theory and Criticism*, 3rd ed., eds. M. Cohen and G. Mast (Oxford University Press, 1985).

26. Herbert Blau, 'Theater and Cinema: the Scopic Drive, the Detestable Screen, and More of the Same', *Bleaded Thought* (New York: PAJ Press, 1982).

27. Notice the recent emergence of the casting director in screen credits.

28. Barthes, *The Fashion System*, trans. M. Ward and R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983).

29. Bela Balazs, *Theory of the Film: Character and Growth of a New Art*, trans. Edith Bone (London: Dobson, 1925).

30. See the especially discouraging survey by Christine Gledhill, 'Recent Developments in Feminist Criticism', in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Mast and Cohen, p. 817-45.

31. Teresa de Lauretis implies this position in her discussion of the star's body in 'Snow on the Oedipal Stage', *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 82, though she sees such images as always subsumed in male narratives.

32. I won't quite commit to this position, but only because I also don't quite accept the argument that the world has become an ideological theatre that 'lacks reality', and in which the stage, paradoxically, becomes a space for the creation of more authentic selfhood; cf. J.-F. Lyotard, *The Post-Modern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 1984). The world seems to me to mount an implacable (if entropic) resistance to its reduction into cultures, much like the object resists semiotic uses in the theatre.

33. Joseph Chaiken, *The Presence of the Actor* (New York: Atheneum, 1972).

34. J. Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I', *Écrits*, trans. A. Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).

35. Bruce Wilshire makes the borders this theatrical self-making his special concern in *Role Playing and Identity: the Limits of Theater as Metaphor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), particularly in Part II, 'Reality and the Self'.

36. Compare the performance of identity in the *wanyang kulit*, outlined in Ward Keeler, *Japanese Shadow Plays, Japanese Selves* (Princeton University Press, 1987), to the material on celebrity and actors in sources like Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (Oxford University Press, 1986); Richard Gilman, 'The Actor as a Celebrity, in *Humanities in Review*, Vol. I, ed. Richard Sennett, et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1982); or articles by Leigh Woods and Thomas Postlewait in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Postlewait and Bruce McConachie (Iowa University Press, 1989).