

Performativity and performance

Andrew Parker & Eve Kosofsky Sedwick

Indeed, the stretch between theatrical and deconstructive meanings of "performative" seems to span the polarities of, at either extreme, the extroversion of the actor, the introversion of the signifier. Michael Fried's opposition between theatricality and absorption seems custom-made for this paradox about "performativity": in its deconstructive sense, performativity signals absorption; in the vicinity of the stage, however, the performative is the theatrical. But in another range of usages, a text like Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* uses "performativity" to mean an extreme of something like efficiency-postmodern representation as a form of capitalist efficiency-while, again, the deconstructive "performativity" of Paul de Man or J. Hillis Miller seems to be characterized by the dislinkage precisely of cause and effect between the signifier and the world.