

Production Values

What is it we accept as real?
The gaslight decades found no fault
In canvas flats or painted waves;
The 1930s did not cringe
At back projections as the world
In which screen heroes moved. For now,
Computer imaging persuades.
Tomorrow its spaced dots may seem
Virtual unreality,
Or living actors virtual.
There is a test. The actual
Shows up the act for what it is:
Impersonation. Oedipus
No actor not a lunatic
Would take on in Vienna. Couch
One-ups the built-up boot, the throne,
As Ptolemaic marriage
Makes blinding oneself seem de trop.
No actress into middle age
Enjoys a scene with ingénues.
One cannot pass for young if youth
Itself is present., any more
Than a Kabuki heroine
Would be mistaken on the street
For woman. Did castrati
Sing convincing lullabies? The Globe's
Pubescent Rosalinds prolong
Careers by trained falsetto? Or,
At so to say the first crack out,
Give up? If blackface power passed
For true Black Power, minstrel shows
Might still be on the boards. Ahead,
If they join Actors Equity,
One must decide if clones have less,
Or have the same seniority
As those who gave the DNA.
Eternal understudies they,
Reality denies them role.
But Jekyll knows that Hyde is there,
And Hyde knows it is not make-up
By which in him we see ourselves.