From shame to shyness to shining—and, inevitably, back, and back again: the candor and cultural incisiveness of this itinerary seem to make Warhol an exemplary figure for a new project, an urgent one I think, of understanding how the dysphoric affect shame functions as a nexus of production: production, that is, of meaning, of personal presence, of politics, of performative and critical efficacy.1

Eve Sedgwick's intuition, indicated here in one of her essays on queer performativity, might be more unfailling than she knew, since at the time she wrote this sentence she would have seen very little of what most bears it out—Andy Warhol's vast film production from the mid-1960s.2 I want in this essay to consider one instance of Warhol's mobilization of shame as production, and in doing so I want to specify that urgency Sedgwick imagines such a project might entail, an urgency that compels a project of my own.3 I should qualify "my own" by adding that this project heeds Sedgwick's axiom for antihomophobic inquiry: "People are different from each other." This is, of course, Axiom 1 from the introduction to Epistemology of the Closet, but I take it to be much more thoroughly axiomatic for Sedgwick's writing generally and what I've learned most from it: the ethical necessity of developing ever finer tools for encountering, upholding, and valuing others' differences—or better, differences and singularities—nonsense-taxonomies, as she wonderfully names such tools. In one of the many deeply moving moments in her work, Sedgwick characterizes this necessity in relation to the "pressure of loss in the AIDS years"—years in which we sadly still live—"that the piercing bouquet of a given friend's particularity be done some justice."4

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“Poor Mario Montez,” Warhol writes in Popism, “Poor Mario Montez got his feelings hurt for real in his scene [in Chelsea Girls] where he found two boys in bed together and sang “They Say That Falling in Love Is Wonderful” for them. He was supposed to stay there in the room with them for ten minutes, but the boys on the bed insulted him so badly that he ran out in six and we couldn’t persuade him to go back in to finish up. I kept directing him, “You were terrific, Mario. Get back in there—just pretend you forgot something, don’t let them steal the scene, it’s no good without you,” etc., etc. But he just wouldn’t go back in. He was too upset.”

Poor Mario. Even though Andy is full of praise for Mario’s talents as a natural comedian, nearly every story he tells about him is a tale of woe:

Mario was a very sympathetic person, very benign, although he did get furious at me once. We were watching a scene of his in a movie we called The Fourteen-Year-Old Girl [also known as The Shoplifter and The Most Beautiful Woman in the World, the film is now known as Hedy], and when he saw that I’d zoomed in and gotten a close-up of his arm with all the thick, dark masculine hair and veins showing, he got very upset and hurt and accused me in a proud Latin way, “I can see you were trying to bring out the worst in me.”

I call my project, provisionally, “Queer before Gay.” It entails reclaiming aspects of New York City queer culture of the 1960s as a means of countering the current homogenizing, normalizing, and desexualizing of gay life. In an essay initiating the project, on Warhol’s classic 1964 silent film Blow Job, I wanted to contest the facile charge of voyeurism so often leveled at Warhol’s camera. It seemed to me important to recognize that there can—indeed must—be ways of making queer differences and singularities visible without always entailing the charge of violation, making them visible in ways that we would call ethical. In that essay, titled “Face Value” both to suggest that I meant to pay attention to what was on the screen (in this case, as in so many others, a face) and to gesture toward Emmanuel Levinas’s ethics, I contrasted the self-absorption of the subject of Blow Job to what seemed to me its comic opposite, the utter self-consciousness of Mario Montez as he performs mock fellatio on a banana in Mario Banana, a single 100-foot reel Warhol film of the same year as Blow Job. On this subject of Mario’s self-consciousness, Warhol writes, “He adored dressing up like a female glamour queen, yet at the same time he was painfully embarrassed about being in drag (he got offended if you said that word—he called it ‘going into costume’)

How certain the violation, then, when Mario was subjected by Warhol in Screen Test #2 to being shamed precisely for his gender illusionism, or perhaps his gender illusions. Warhol—with his uncanny ability to conceal dead-on insight in the bland, unknowing remark—writes of that film in a parenthetical aside in Popism, “Screen Test was Ronnie Tavel off-camera interviewing Mario Montez in drag—and finally getting him to admit he’s a man.” I call this “insight” because, although it doesn’t really describe what takes place in the film at all, it nevertheless gets right to the point of what is most affecting, most troubling, most memorable about it—that is, Mario’s “exposure”—a word that Warhol used, in its plural form, as the name of his 1979 book of photographs, and the word Stefan Brecht chose to characterize Warhol’s filmic method:

Warhol around 1965 discovered the addictive ingredient in stars. He found that not only are stars among the industrial commodities whose use-value is a product of consumer phantasy, a phantasy that publicity can addict to a given brand of product . . . , but that what adds the consumer is the quality of stardom itself. . . . He set out to isolate this ingredient, succeeded, proceeded to market it under the brand name “Superstar”—Warhol’s Superstar. Superstar is star of extraordinary purity: there is nothing in it but glamour, a compound of vanity and arrogance, made from masochist self-contempt by a simple process of illusio-inversion. The commercial advantages of this product originated in its area of manufacture: the raw materials, any self-despising person, were cheap, and the industrial process simple: to make the trash just know he or she is a fabulous person envied to adoration. You didn’t have to teach them anything. If the customers would take them for a star, they would be a star; if they were a star, the customers would take them for a star; if the customers would take them for a star the customers would be fascinated by them. Exposure would turn the trick. Here again Warhol’s true genius for abstraction paid off: he invented a camera-technique that was nothing but exposure.

Ostensibly just what its title says it is, Screen Test #2 is the second of Warhol’s screen test films of early 1965 in which Ronald Tavel, novelist, founding playwright of ridiculous theater, and Warhol’s scenarist from 1964 to 1967, interviews a superstar for a new part (Screen Test #1, which I haven’t seen, stars Philip Fagan, Warhol’s lover of the moment, who shared the screen with Mario in Harlot, Warhol’s first sound film and the first in which Tavel participated). In the case of Screen Test #2, Mario Montez is ostensibly being tested for the role of Esmeralda in a remake of The Hunchback of Notre Dame. He is shown throughout in a slightly out-of-focus close-up on his face, wearing (and often nervously brushing) a cheap, ratty wig. He also wears dangling oversize earrings and long white evening gloves. For a long time at the film’s beginning, he ties a silk scarf into his wig, using, it seems, the camera’s lens as his mirror. After speaking the credits from
off-screen, where he remains throughout the film, Tavel begins to intone, insinuate, cajole, prod, demand: “Now, Miss Montez, just relax . . . you’re a lady of leisure, a grande dame. Please describe to me what you feel like right now.”

“I feel,” Mario begins his reply—and there follows rather too long a pause as he figures out what to say—“I feel like I’m in another world now, a fantasy . . . like a kingdom meant to be ruled by me, like I could give orders and suggest ideas.”

Poor Mario. This kingdom is ruled by Ronald Tavel. It is he who gives orders and suggests ideas. At first, though, he indulges Mario’s fantasy. He asks about his career to date, allowing Mario to boast of his debut as Delores Flores in Jack Smith’s Flaming Creatures, his part as the handmaiden in Ron Rice’s Chumlam, his starring role as the beautiful blonde mermaid in Smith’s Normal Love, and his small part as the ballet dancer wearing hot-pink tights in the same film. Asked whether the critics were satisfied with his performances, he gives an answer fully worthy of his name sake in Jack Smith’s famous paean, “The Perfect Filmic Apposition of Maria Montez.” “It’s a funny thing,” Mario says with no guile whatsoever, “but no matter what I do, somehow it comes out right, even if it’s meant to be a mistake. The most wonderful mistakes that I’ve done for the screen have turned out the most raging, fabulous performances.”

Poor Mario. Now begins his humiliation. Tavel tells Mario to repeat after him, “For many years I have heard your name, but never did it sound so beautiful until I learned that you were a movie producer, Diarrhea.” Mario is obliged to say “diarrhea” again and again, with various changes of inflection and emphasis. Then to lip sync as Tavel says it. “Mouth ‘diarrhea’ exactly as if it tasted of nectar,” Tavel instructs. Mario obeys, blissfully unaware of where this game of pleasing a producer named Diarrhea will lead. He will gamely demonstrate his ecstatic response to “playing spin the bottle”—to masturbating, that is, by shoving a bottle up his ass (remember, though, we see only his face). Mario will ferociously mime biting the head off a live chicken as he obeys Tavel’s demand that he pretend he is a female geek. He will show how he’ll manage, as Esmeralda, to seduce three different characters—captain, priest, Quasimodo—in The Hunchback of Notre Dame. He’ll scream in terror and dance a gypsy dance with only his shoulders; he’ll pout, sneer, and stick out his tongue; he’ll cover the lower half of his face with a veil and show that he can be evil or sad using only his eyes. He’ll repeat after Tavel, apparently as an exercise in stressing consonants, “I have just strangled my pet panther. Patricia, my pet panther, I have just strangled her, my poor pet. Yet I am not scratched, just a little fatigued.”

Now and again Tavel gives encouragement: “That’s fine, Miss Montez, thank you very much.” “That was delightful, Miss Montez.” “Thank you, Miss Montez, that was beautiful, that was perfect, and I think we are going to sign you on immediately for this role.”

“How can I ever thank you?” Mario replies, so delighted as to make it obvious he’s still hoodwinked. But the encouragement only sets Mario up for his fall, which comes near the end of the film’s second thirty-three-minute reel. Mario has just cheerfully described the furniture in his apartment. Then it comes, as if out of nowhere.

“Now, Miss Montez, will you lift up your skirt?”

“What?” Mario asks, with a stunned look. He’s clearly caught completely off guard.

“And unzip your fly.”

“That’s impossible,” Mario protests, shaken.

“Miss Montez,” Tavel continues, “you’ve been in this business long enough to know that the furthering of your career depends on just such a gesture. Taking it out and putting it in, that sums up the movie business. There’s nothing to worry about, the camera won’t catch a thing. I just want the gesture with your hands. This is very important. Your contract depends on it.” Following confused, helpless, silent stalling, Mario finally gives in, and the humiliation continues: “Look down, look down at it,” he commands.

“I know what it looks like,” is his petulant response.

“Zip your fly half way up and leave it sticking out. That’s good, that’s good, good boy, good boy.” When he refers to Mario this way, Tavel isn’t calling attention to Mario’s “true” gender; far worse than that, he’s treating Mario like a dog. “Take a look at it, take a look at it please. What does it look like?”

Mario half-heartedly fights back, “What’s it look like to you?”

“It looks fairly inviting, as good as any,” Tavel answers, not with much conviction. “Will you forget about your hair for a moment. Miss Montez, you’re not concentrating.”

But Mario is defiant: “It’s really senseless what you’re asking me. I must brush my hair.”

Mario finally seems able to put a stop to this couch-casting episode, and we breathe a sigh of relief. But Tavel has still one more ordeal in mind, and it’s no doubt all the more painful for Mario because it follows upon the mockery of his cross-dressing. Remember that Warhol writes in Popism of Mario’s embarrassment about doing drag. He goes on to explain that Mario “used to always say that he knew it was a sin to be in drag—he was Puerto
Rican and a very religious Roman Catholic. The only spiritual comfort he allowed himself was the logic that even though God surely didn’t like him for going into drag, that still, if He really hated him, He would have struck him dead.”31 So, resisted by Mario in making him expose his sex, the ever-inventive Tavel moves on to a new torment. Showing Mario how to take a supplicating pose, with eyes and hands turned heavenward, he instructs him to say, and repeat, and repeat again, “Oh Lord, I commend this spirit into Thy hands.” Poor Mario looks alternately bewildered and terrified, as though he feels he might truly be struck dead for such irreverence. Finally, though, Tavel has little time left to taunt his superstar. As Mario begins to acquiesce in giving the camera the cockteaser look Tavel wants, the film runs out. Just how tense the experience of watching Warhol’s films makes us is revealed to us from the release that comes when the reel comes to an end, a moment always entirely unanticipated but occurring with astonishingly perfect timing.

Many of Warhol’s films include similar scenes of extraordinary cruelty that are met with disbelief on the part of the performers, most famously when Ondine, as the pope in Chelsea Girls, slaps Ronna Page. “It was so for real,” Warhol writes, “that I got upset and had to leave the room—but I made sure I left the camera running.”32 The moment that I’d found most discomfiting, up to seeing Mario’s shaming in Screen Test #2, is when Chuck Wein, who’s been taunting Edie Sedgwick through the whole of Beauty #2, but who’s rarely a match for her sparkling repartee, suddenly hits the raw nerve of her relationship with her father. She looks more stunned than if she’d been literally hit, like Ronna. It isn’t merely a look of incredulity, it’s one of utter betrayal, a look that both says, Surely you didn’t say that, and pleads, How could you possibly say that? How could you so turn our intimacy against me? Would you really do this for the sake of a film? I thought we were just play-acting.

George Plimpton captures the feel of such moments when he describes Beauty #2 in Jean Stein’s devastating book Edie:

I remember [Chuck Wein’s] voice—nagging and supercilious and quite grating…
A lot of the questions, rather searching and personal, were about her family and her father. On the bed Edie was torn between reacting to the advances of the boy next to her and wanting to respond to these questions and comments put to her by the man in the shadows. Sometimes her head would bend and she would nuzzle the boy or taste him in a sort of distracted way. I remember one of the man’s commands to her was to taste “the brown sweat,” but then her head would come up, like an animal suddenly alert at the edge of a waterhole, and she’d stare across the bed at her inquisitor in the shadows. I re-

member it as being very dramatic… and all the more so because it seemed so real, an actual slice of life, which of course it was.”

How might we square these scenes of violation and shaming with what I’m describing as an ethical project of giving visibility—and I want also to say dignity—to a queer world of differences and singularities in the 1960s? What does the viewer’s discomfiture at Warhol’s techniques of exposure do to the usual processes of spectator identification?

To answer these questions, I need to take a detour through the present, whose sexual politics fuels my interest in this history in the first place.

Following New York’s annual gay pride celebrations in 1999, the New York Times editorialized:

When police harassed gay patrons of the Stonewall Inn in 1969, the patrons stood their ground and touched off three nights of fierce civil disobedience—prominently featuring men in drag… The building that once housed the Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street has earned a listing in the National Register of Historic Places, becoming the first site in the country to recognize the contributions that gay and lesbian Americans have made to the national culture. This also marks the gay rights movement’s evolution from a fringe activity to a well-organized effort with establishment affiliations and substantial political clout.

Noting that the gay pride parade included Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, the Times concluded, “Things have come a long way since those stormy summer nights in 1969.”

The Times’s view marks the extent to which the various myths about Stonewall and the progress of gay rights have now become commonplace and official, even to the point of the newspaper’s ritual nod to the prominence of drag queens among the Stonewall rioters. But we might be inclined to skepticism toward this bland narrative of progress through its unremarked report of the mayor’s participation in the parade, because not since the days of Stonewall has queer nightlife in New York been so under attack by a city administration. Harassment and padlocking of gay clubs have again become commonplace in New York City. The response to this disjunction between the New York Times’s sense of our having come a long way and the experience of many of us in New York has been for queers to organize, for the past several years, during the time of the gay pride celebrations, a counter-event devoted explicitly to shame. Gay Shame’s annual zine is called Swallow Your Pride.

These may seem like no more than the usual exercises in camp humor
aimed at normalizing mainstream gay and lesbian politics. But given the place of shame in queer theory—and in earlier queer culture, if we can take what I've described in Warhol's Screen Test #2 as in any sense representative of that culture—I think we would do well to take the idea seriously.

What's queer about shame, and why does it get posed against the supposedly shame-eradicating politics of gay pride?

For an answer, I turn to Eve Sedgwick's essay "Queer Performativity: Harry James's The Art of the Novel." Schematically, Sedgwick suggests that shame is what makes us queer, both in the sense of having a queer identity and in the sense that queerness is in a volatile relation to identity, destabilizing it even as it makes it. Sedgwick finds in shame the link between "performativity and—performativity" (1993, 6), that is, between the two senses of performativity operative in Judith Butler's enormously generative work Gender Trouble. Performativity 1: "the notion of performance in the defining instance theatrical," and Performativity 2: that of "speech-act theory and deconstruction," in which we find a "necessarily 'aberrant' relation" between a performative utterance and its meaning (1993, 2). In order to demonstrate this latter, Sedgwick departs from J. L. Austin's paradigmatic instance of the performative in How to Do Things with Words, that of the "I do," of "I do take thee to be my lawful wedded wife" (how ironic that this has become the very performative that the official gay and lesbian movement in the United States has expended all its recent energies and resources to be able to utter!). Sedgwick moves from Austin's "I do" to the more "perverse"—the "deformative," she also calls it (1993, 3)—"Shame on you." For which, I want to suggest, "for shame" works just the same, linguistically and performatively, except that, when written, it can also be read the way I'd like it to be read here: as advocating shame. I hope it will become clear as I proceed that favoring shame in the way I intend it is just the opposite of, say, conservative Catholic ideologue Andrew Sullivan's view that contemporary American society lacks sufficient shame. Sullivan's is a conventionally moralistic view of shame's function. Mine, I hope, is an ethico-political one.

Shame, in Sedgwick's view, is equally and simultaneously identity-defining and identity-erasing; in Sedgwick's words, it "mantles the threshold between introversion and extroversion" (1993, 8). Moreover, shame appears to construct the singularity and isolation of one's identity through an affective connection to the shaming of another.

One of the strangest features of shame (but, I would argue, the most theoretically significant) is the way bad treatment of someone else, bad treatment by someone else, someone else's embarrassment, stigma, debility, blame or pain, seemingly having nothing to do with me, can so readily flood me—assuming that I'm a shame-prone person—with this sensation whose very suffusiveness seems to delineate my precise, individual outlines in the most isolating way imaginable. (1993, 14)

I want to reiterate this passage, since I think it gets to the crux of the matter. In the act of taking on the shame that is properly someone else's, I simultaneously feel my utter separateness from even that person whose shame it initially was. I feel alone with my shame, singular in my susceptibility to being shamed for this stigma that has now become mine and mine alone. Thus, my shame is taken on in lieu of the other's shame. In taking on the shame, I do not share in the other's identity. I simply adopt the other's vulnerability to being shamed. In this operation, most important, the other's difference is preserved; it is not claimed as my own. In taking on or taking up his or her shame, I am not attempting to vanquish his or her otherness. I put myself in the place of the other only insofar as I recognize that I too am prone to shame.

But who is prone to shame? The answer, for Sedgwick, will necessarily be a bit tautological. A shame-prone person is a person who has been shamed. Sedgwick associates the susceptibility to shame with "the terrifying powerlessness of gender-dissonant or otherwise stigmatized childhood." And therefore, if "queer is a politically potent term . . . that's because, far from being capable of being detached from the childhood scene of shame, it cleaves to that scene as a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy." (1993, 4).

In this power of transformation, performativity functions both theatrically and ethically. Just as shame is both productive and corrosive of queer identity, the switching point between stage fright and stage presence, between being a wallflower and being a diva, so too is it simultaneously productive and corrosive of queer revaluations of dignity and worth.

In his book about the banishment of sex from contemporary queer politics, The Trouble with Normal, Michael Warner argues that we need to "develop an ethical response to the problem of shame." "The difficult question is not: how do we get rid of our sexual shame?" Warner writes, "The question, rather, is this: what will we do with our shame? And the usual response is: pin it on someone else." 13

How does this work, performatively? Sedgwick explains:

The absence of an explicit verb from "Shame on you" records the place in which an I, in conferring shame, has effaced itself and its own agency. Of course the desire for self-effacement is the defining trait of—what else?—shame. So the very grammatical truncation of "Shame on you" marks it as a product of a history out of which an I, now
withdrawn, is projecting shame—toward another I, an I deferred, that has yet and with difficulty to come into being, if at all, in the place of the shamed second person. (1993, 4)

Saying “Shame on you” or “For shame” casts shame onto another that is both felt to be one’s own and, at the same time, disavowed as one’s own. But in those already shamed, the shame-prone, the shame is not so easily shed, so simply projected: it manages also to persist as one’s own. This can lend it the capacity for articulating collectives of the shamed. Warner explains,

A relation to others [in queer contexts] begins in an acknowledgment of all that is most abject and least reputable in oneself. Shame is bedrock. Quers can be abusive, insulting, and vile towards one another, but because abjection is understood to be the shared condition they also know how to communicate through such camaraderie a moving and unexpected form of generosity. No one is beneath its reach, not because it prides itself on generosity but because it prides itself on nothing. The rule is: get over yourself. Put a wig on before you judge. And the corollary is that you stand to learn most from the people you think are beneath you. At its best, this ethic cuts against every form of hierarchy you could bring into the room. Queer scenes are the true salons des refusés, where the most heterogeneous people are brought into great intimacy by their common experience of being despised and rejected in a world of norms that they now recognize as false morality."

The sad thing about the contemporary politics of gay and lesbian pride is that it works in precisely the opposite way: it calls for a visibility predicated on homogeneity, and on excluding anyone who does not conform to norms that are taken to be the very morality we should be happy to accept as the onus of our so-called maturity. It thus sees shame as conventional indignity rather than the affective substrate necessary to the transformation of one’s distinctiveness into a queer kind of dignity. This is why the queer culture of the 1960s, made visible in Warhol’s films, is so necessary a reminder of what we need to know now.

So I’ll return, in closing, to the shaming of Mario Montez in Screen Test #2. As I mentioned before, I wanted, in my earlier essay on Blow Job, to contest the cliché of Warhol’s filmic vision as voyeuristic. I argued there that formal features in Warhol’s films—different formal features in different films, of course—worked to foreclose a knowlingness about the people represented in them. Warhol found the means to make the people of his world visible to us without making them objects of our knowledge. The knowledge of a world that his films give us is not a knowledge of the other for the self.

Rather what I see, when, say, I see Mario Montez in Screen Test #2, is a performer in the moment of being exposed such that he becomes, as Warhol said, “so for real.” But unlike Warhol we don’t leave the room (nor, for that matter, I’d bet, did Warhol). Rather we remain there with our disquiet—which is, after all, what? It is our encounter, on the one hand, with the absolute difference of another, his or her “so-for-realness,” and, on the other hand, with the other’s shame, both the shame that extracts his or her “so-for-realness” from the already for-real performativity of Warhol’s performers, and the shame that we accept as also ours, but curiously also ours alone. I am thus not “like” Mario, but the distinctiveness that is revealed in Mario invades me—“floods me,” to use Sedgwick’s word—and my own distinctiveness is revealed simultaneously. I, too, feel exposed.

Ronald Tavel, the brilliant, ridiculous scenarist—brilliant, indeed, at ridicule—seemed to provide just exactly what Warhol wanted. “I enjoyed working with him,” Warhol wrote, “because he understood instantly when I’d say things like, ‘I want it simple and plastic and white.’ Not everyone can think in an abstract way, but Ronnie could.”

Tavel repays Warhol’s compliment:

This operation-theatre he brings us to and in which we at first resentfully feel ourselves to be the patient, suddenly actualizes as the real and traditional theatre: we are audience as always, suddenly alive and watching, horrified after amused, scholarily after enuited. And alarmed. The “destructive” artist proves again the prophet and makes of his life a stunning cry, withal keeping his mask-distance of laughter and contempt. He emerges gentle from a warehouse of Brillo boxes, having stated his bleak vision, as social an artist as any 30s fiend could ask for."

Tavel continues in the same essay, “The Banana Diary: The Story of Andy Warhol’s ‘Harlot,’”

The New American Cinema has taken the mask off rather than putting it on. . . . The souls of the beings we view are enlarged before us, even to the point of snapping out of character and blinking into the camera; an instant more and they would be wakening at us. That these souls are wretched, which means our souls are wretched, has brought the accusation of brutality and sadism against the movement. Yet who among us, in his own life, escapes the complex of sado-masochistic chaos or finds his way about in a commodiousness less than brutal?"

It should be clear from this, I believe, that Tavel’s purpose in Screen Test #2 is to solicit from Mario exactly what we see: Mario’s irresistible, resplendent vulnerability. We see his soul enlarged before us most conspicuously at those moments when Mario is overcome with shame, and when we be-
come aware—painfully—of his shame as what Sedgwick calls a blazon. That blazon, which we share, might well proclaim a new slogan of queer politics: For Shame!

Notes

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3. The stakes of such a project comprise a portion of my argument in “Getting the Warhol We Deserve,” Social Text 59 (Summer 1999): 49-66.


6. Ibid., 91. Heddy Lamarr was notoriously litigious; thus, since Warhol's film, with a script by Ronald Tavel, was inspired by a real-life incident in 1966 in which Lamarr was charged with shoplifting (charges of which she was later cleared), the title was variously obfuscated. Lamarr was arrested at least twice more for shoplifting.

7. My work on Warhol's films owes an enormous debt to the careful work and intellectual generosity of Callie Angeli, curator of the Warhol Film Project.


9. Warhol and Hackett, 91.

10. Ibid., 124.


13. In 1965, Tavel was the Warhol dramatist in residence. He did the scenarios for what were, except for Harlot and Drunk, Warhol's first sound movies: Screen Test Number One, Screen Test Number Two, Life of Juanita Castro, Vinyl, Suicide, Horse, Bitch, Kitchen. His Warhol scripts, directed by John Vaccaro 1965-7, also became the first plays of the Playhouse of the Ridiculous” (Brecht, 107; see also the footnote on p. 29).


16. This moment of Screen Test #2 suggests that the tour-de-force scene of Paul Morrissey’s Trash—Holly Woodlawn’s Coke-bottle masturbation scene—was a reused Tavel idea. For all that Morrissey professed to find Warhol's early films self-indulgent, dull, and pretentious, he nevertheless made much use of them for his own film making.

17. Warhol and Hackett, 91.


22. “Readers who have paid attention to the recent, metoric rise of shame to its present housewife-megastar status in the firmament of self-help and popular psychology ... may be feeling a bit uneasy at this point. So, for that matter, may those used to reading about shame in the neo-conservative framework that treasures shame along with guilt as, precisely, an adjunct of repression and an enforcer of proper behavior. In the ways that I want to be thinking about shame, the widespread moral valuation of this powerful affect as good or bad, to be mandated or to be excised, according to how one plots it along a notional axis of prohibition/permission/requirement, seems distinctly beside the point” (Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s The Art of the Novel,” 6).


24. Ibid., 35-36.

25. “The universal humiliation of all characters in this [ridiculous, queer] theatre gives it a repulsive air of viciousness, even cruelty, because it is absolute: the victims are accorded no basic dignity, no saving graces. We are not reassured of worthy or innocent motives of underlying rational seriousness. The characters are not just clownish or foolish but clowns and fools. They are not exactly funny, isolated clown scenes, jokes and parodies that at first seem pure fun trouble us by their implications of profound ridiculousness. Some important, often protracted, actions are specifically and formally cruel humiliations: Bajazeth’s enslavement in [When] Queens [Collide]/Conquest of the Universe], the entire action of Screen Test, Lady Godiva’s undressing (according to [John] Vaccaro, in Lady Godiva, Victor’s re-education in Vinyl. These humiliations bring this close to a theatre of the terrible. It takes a strong stomach to participate in their fun” (Brecht, 36). Screen Test and Vinyl are both films by Warhol whose scenarios by Tavel became plays performed by the Playhouse of the Ridiculous.

26. Warhol and Hackett, 91.

27. Tavel, 77-78.

28. Ibid., 85.