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Subjectivity and male stardom : heterosexual female desire and male performer bodies

Yvette Michelle Anderson
San Jose State University

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SUBJECTIVITY AND MALE STARDOM
HETEROSEXUAL FEMALE DESIRE AND
MALE PERFORMER BODIES

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

by

Yvette Michelle Anderson

August 1999

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS

Dr. Karl Toepfer

Dr. Ethel Walker

Dr. Kimberly Massey

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

SUBJECTIVITY AND MALE STARDOM HETEROSEXUAL FEMALE DESIRE AND MALE PERFORMER BODIES

by Yvette Michelle Anderson

The instability of the female spectator in gender studies of performance is due to the absence of a model that connects heterosexual female desire with male stardom. Desire is merely defined as the lack of “other” but when discussed within performance studies, is better explained by the emotional values placed on the heterosexual female spectator by the male star due to his **code** of performance, making male stardom and heterosexual female desire more complex than previously thought. Understanding the nature of male stardom and its relationship to the heterosexual female spectator therefore requires establishing a system of subjectivity that explains heterosexual female desire and male performance within categories that define the qualities and actions of the star, their impact on the emotional values of the heterosexual female spectator, and reveals the value subjectivity has on shaping perception in order to view performance differently.

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Desire and the Female Spectator

The body is key in performance analysis. When the cultural, sexual, political and most recently, the explicit dimensions of bodily performance are analyzed and discussed in relation to the body of the performer, the body becomes an expressive part of performance (Schneider 11). Given the various topics on performance such as acting, technology, performer-audience relationship, and the vast categories which surround them such as dance, television, film, and live performance, it would seem that all has been said on the bodies which perform in these mediums. But it is because of the various dimensions of performance, that bodily performance needs clarification. When analyzing performance, it is easy to get lost in the theoretical explanations of it, instead of focusing on the meaning behind bodily performance, such as the expressive power of the body, strategies which shape bodily performance and the evidence which supports it.

One area of performance analysis which needs clarification is the sexual dimension of the male body, namely the male star, and his relationship to the female spectator. Much of the discourse on female spectatorship places the female spectator in tension with other females on screen. This is mainly due to the feminist movement in its efforts to re-cast women as active viewers of popular culture rather than objects of male desire, and because of the feminist movement, theorizing the female spectator has not been an easy task indeed.

Defining the female spectator has moved far beyond Laura Mulvey's contention of the "passive female" to renaming her the *active* female, but even that term has many definitions.

What does it mean to be an *active* female spectator? For Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment in The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture, (1989), being an *active* female means increasing the feminist presence both behind and in front of the camera as it is presently a minority one (3). bell hooks refers to "the oppositional gaze " of the black female spectator in Reel to Real, (1996) . In an attempt to define the gaze of the black female spectator, hooks explains that historically, blacks have been denied the right to gaze, and it is because of this denial that blacks have developed a "longing to look," a "rebellious desire" which she terms "oppositional." The oppositional gaze, as defined by hooks, is a response to a "negation of black representation" in television and mainstream cinema, which consequently produced black cinema (198). Yet another definition of female spectatorship seeks to expose the "wilder side" of the female gazer. Belinda Budge writes in The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture, (1989): "The 'wilder side of women' engenders a fantasy that re-introduces into our vocabulary the notion of *erotic* for women" but from the perspective of "the *active* female audience looking at 'attractive' women" (104).

Judith Butler's: Gender Trouble (1990) further complicates the discussion on what defines the female spectator. Butler theorizes that the term "female" is unstable. The distinction between male and female is disguised by gender. Rigid and hierarchical sexual codes placed on the body are deregulated and confronted by de-sexualization of the female body. Cultural intelligibility about homosexuality is understood in terms of a psychoanalytical and historical exploration of femininity (viii-16). Butler's analysis determines that an exploration of gender identities unifies the body as a "being," one in which sexual identity is constructed rather than inherent. Heterosexuality and homosexuality therefore are removed from consideration. Butler's definition of female spectatorship clearly relies less on sexual difference and more on gender complexities that are said to construct the so-called feminine and masculine identities. From Gender Trouble Butler writes:

When constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 6).

Although not forthrightly stated, definitions of the female spectator in some way allude to the desirous state of the female spectator. Mulvey's article, "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema" discusses the "repressed desire" of the spectator as the "conditions of narrative screening and narrative conventions which give the spectator the illusion of looking in on a private world"(9). The

illusions of cinema conventions, according to Mulvey, not only create a "private world" but also a voyeuristic one, which breeds "repressed desire," in males (9). Uncovering the "wilder side" of women reveals that the voyeurism frowned upon by Mulvey not only exists in men but also in women. Therefore, voyeurism is also a value that can be discussed in relation to the female spectator. bell hooks mentions the "rebellious desire" of the black female spectator while Butler discusses the desire to ascribe to a constructed image of masculinity or femininity. The female spectator is now postulated as a critical voice interrogating the female image on screen and giving voice to a field of perception marked as "feminine." But does this female spectator looking at images of females provide an altogether satisfactory model for theorizing the encoding of female desire in film imagery? What is missing from the discussion on the female spectator is a voice which considers the relationship of female desire to the male bodies, particularly male stars in defining the *female* perspective as well as a concrete definition of desire. What makes the body of a male star desirable and how is his body differentiated from other images of male stars?

In Female Desires (1985), Rosalind Coward's discussion of male desire versus female desire is engaging. Coward explains that female sexuality is "overexposed, " while male sexuality remains undiscovered. Coward states, "In spite of the ideology which would have us believe that women's sexuality is an

enigma, it is in reality men's bodies, men's sexuality which is the true 'dark continent' of this society" (227). While it is true that male bodies and sexuality are unexplained, it is not as Coward suggests, that, "One of the major consequences of men's refusal to be the desired sex...is that sometimes women have difficulty in finding them attractive" (230). Different bodies appeal to different women for a variety of reasons not yet explained by Coward. Male bodies, especially male stars, are coded with features that appeal to a wide female audience. In this way, the female gaze involves, as Suzanne Moore suggests in The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture, (1989), "a whole variety of looks and glances-an interplay of possibilities." To paraphrase Moore's theory on the female spectator is to suggest that there are many ways in which females view the male body, and that there is no "monolithic" ideal of masculinity (59). For this reason, male stardom, identity and persona are of a complex and unstable nature.

Mary Ann Doane does provide a comprehensive explanation of desire and stardom in her book The Desire to Desire (1987), but again, it is in relation to female desire and female stardom.

In her desire to bring the things of the screen closer, to approximate the bodily image of the star, and to possess the space in which she dwells, the female spectator experiences the intensity of the image as love and exemplifies the perception proper to the consumer (33).

Doane's analysis of desire illustrates that desire is not a term used loosely. It is in fact a complex term that, when analyzed in relation to stardom, begins to explain desire in terms of intensity, bodily image, space, perception, possession and other filmic contexts. An analysis of female desire to male stardom emphasizes the hypnotic relationship the female gazer supposedly has with the on-screen image of the male star. Her trance-like gaze is fantastic. The female gazer is obsessed with the desire to consume an image of the male star, which establishes a symbiotic relationship between the female spectator and male star. But it is due to expressive bodily performance that the male star has the ability to exude an image or persona which the female spectator longs for.

Yvonne Tasker, in her book Spectacular Bodies (1993), does provide a perception of male stardom in relation to the female spectator. Tasker begins her analysis of male stardom with production values and the cost of the "transition into big budget operations" of the action cinema rather than gender complexities and sexual issues of psychoanalysis. Tasker points to the performances of Bruce Willis, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone as examples of three major stars that shifted Hollywood cinema during the eighties. Tasker's analysis of the action cinema highlights the scale of the action films in the eighties and the box office success of the male bodies displayed (2) The physicality of the performer bodies is directly linked with a form of masculinity that contributes to the success of the stars, who, once objectified, signify

meanings which are not always *obvious* to the spectator, complicating popular film culture. "As good products, efficient *commodities*, films are polysemic, speaking or not speaking to different audiences in different ways" (61).

Tasker's analysis of stardom is compelling. It defines the male star phenomenon as a performative strategy of masculinity, spectacle and acting. The "excessive" and "explosive" setting in which the male body is displayed, as well as the way in which the star image exceeds various media, allowing for complex codes of signification, is key. Lastly, Tasker stresses the relationship between the body and the voice during performance, an element of performance, which shapes male identity in the action cinema (74). For example, the persona of Bruce Willis is defined within the use of his voice, particularly in *Look Who's Talking* (1989). "...Willis scored a huge success with the voice of baby Mikey... Indeed the particular style of masculine identity that Willis enacts as John McClane in the two *Die Hard* films has something childlike about it..." (88). Here Tasker refers to a significant element of performance, namely the voice but leaves it only as a frame of reference. Tasker does not decode the voice of Willis in *Look Who's Talking* or in the two *Die Hard* films. Her book contains an illustration of Willis, which does not connect his body with his voice as a signification of his masculine identity (79).

Willis appears standing before the camera in a confrontational pose
(Illustration One).

6 Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*
(© 1988, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved.)

Illus. 1 Bruce Willis Spectacular Bodies, 1993

His eyes are directed at the viewer and his lips are clenched as if to say, "Don't f-- with me", or "You want some too?" He is displayed in the foreground of a blurred image which alludes to wreckage in the background, signifying that he has stepped out of some fight or battle unscarred. The tattoo on his left arm and his hairy but semi-muscular frame construct his "tough-guy" image. He does not appear at all childlike as Tasker purports. In fact, his "tough-guy" image contradicts Tasker's claim about his voice. By merely presenting an unanalyzed image of Willis's body, it is not clear how Tasker reaches the conclusions she does.

Richard Dyer introduces the idea of the male pin-up and the unstable nature of the male body in his article "Don't Look Now" (61-73). The male model or pin-up image is unstable according to Dyer because it is a constructed image of a male who functions as a "sexual spectacle," he is essentially there to be looked at. Yet these images directed at women violate the usual codes of gazing in an effort to determine who is doing the gazing, how it is being done and to whom (63). Dyer is more concerned with how the male model looks or does not look at the spectator. Dyer's point supports the illustration of Bruce Willis whose image when analyzed reveals through eye contact with the spectator a daring sense of male dominance. From "Don't Look Now", Dyer states:

It may be, as is often said, that male pin-ups more often than not do not look at the viewer, but it is by no means the case that they

never do. When they do, what is crucial is the kind of look it is something very often determined by the set of the mouth that accompanies it (66).

According to Dyer, spectators are asked to value these images of male pin-ups as representations of masculinity. Dyer, however, questions the values placed on the spectator by the male pin-up and exposes the inconsistencies within the images that are said to "make a man a man." The male pin-up rarely establishes eye contact with the viewer, causing *strain* to the viewer as he looks away from the viewer with his eyes, pretending that he is not being looked at when he in fact is (Dyer "Don't Look Now" 72).

Kevin Costner appears on the cover of both George magazine (***Illustration Two***) and Premiere magazine (***Illustration Three***). George magazine reads: "Kevin Costner Can Mr. Americana Get Lucky Again?" The photo taken of Costner is a medium shot, cutting him off at the waist. His face is well lit, as is the top portion of the blue background from which he is illuminated. His hair is neatly combed and parted to the side, revealing a polished Costner, which perhaps contributes to his title of "Mr. Americana." Contrary to the eye contact discussed by Dyer in his article on male pin-ups, Costner's eyes look directly into the camera and the position of his lips gleams openly, uncovering a great smile. Costner confidently looks into the camera, yet the position of his eyes as they stare into the camera compared to the way Bruce Willis dares the viewer with his glare, is different. Costner's stare like Willis's is

determined. It signifies to the spectator that he is not a symbol of danger but rather a man who invites the viewer closer. Willis, on the other hand, dares the female spectator to take a closer look, putting herself at risk if she does. The female spectator wants to get closer to Willis despite the danger that may be imposed on her. The female spectator also wants to get closer to the image of Costner, not because of the danger imposed on her but because of comfort and security. The images of Costner and Willis are aspects of their persona which when analyzed reveal aspects of their star appeal, explaining stardom and desirability in different ways. It is the expressivity of their bodies within the performance space that explains how signifying practices of a performer body reach an audience to establish meaning. The cold glare of Willis is just as inviting as is the assured glare of Costner. The female spectator is just as attached to the dangerous image of Willis, particularly because the position of his body, the slight tilt of the head and the racy hair cut he wears as she is to the signs of comfort, wealth and stability personified in the Costner image. Costner's smile is wide. His body is square to the camera, as is the head. This position makes Costner more accessible than Willis, yet Costner's wide smile is contradicted by his black attire, creating a distance between him and the female spectator and placing remote value on his image, making the image of him desirable. Signifying practices such as eye contact, and various positions of the

body are a way of decontextualizing male bodily performance as it relates to the female spectator, and explain the power of the image to produce desire.

A closer look at the on screen images of stars reveals aspects of the star's persona, and as Dyer states, the "instability" of those images. It is the instability of the images, which complicates star analysis, because analyzed images of stars are not consistent but changing. A star has the ability to change aspects of his persona yet still appeal to large audiences. Therefore, in order to understand the complexities of stardom, it is necessary to deconstruct the various images of them that circulate in magazines such as Premiere, George, and others, as well as other media texts such as film and television. Analysis of the media texts in which the star is placed explains how the star operates on various performance levels, revealing a performer code unique to the star. Can Costner's performances be explained in relation to desire? What is it about his performances that makes images of Costner desirable and make him an appealing star?

Jeremy Butler offers an enlightening aspect of star analysis in Star Texts (1991), which considers:

...an understanding of the significance of human bodies-their movement and, later, their speech-to the pleasures of cinema. And yet, spectators did not consciously watch movies for the editing or framing, they came to see vivid personalities in narrative situations. They came to see stars in performance (8).

The notion of stardom is indeed an intriguing subject discussed daily in television and print media, and heavily in scholarship. The fascination with stars draws considerable attention because stars are complex phenomena whose lives are displayed and told to the spectator via biographies, interviews, promotional magazines etc. In an effort to understand the complex nature of stardom in scholarship, it is determined that theoretical discourse differs in its explanations of defining stars.

Film historians do not disagree that stardom originated in the theatre and was well in place before it reached film. However, to date, there is still disagreement among film historians regarding who the first star was and when he was discovered. There are some who believe that Florence Lawrence was the first star, discovered in 1910, while opponents argue that Mary Pickford was the first discovered star (Staiger 5-6). Unfortunately, arguing back and forth about who the first star was and when she was discovered provides little insight into defining stardom.

In Stardom (1991), Barry King's "Articulating Stardom" defines stardom as "a strategy of performance that is an adaptive response to the limits and pressures exerted upon acting as a discursive practice in the mainstream culture" (172). King's definition of stardom proceeds to explain stardom within three distinct "economies" which he terms "systems of control that mobilize discursive resources in order to achieve specifiable effects" (King 172). King writes that an

actor is controlled or limited by his physiognomy and its signification to culture, the impersonation of the actor versus interiority in a filmic context, and the actor's ability to create a "personal monopoly" whereby the actor creates a "persona" specific to him (King 172). King provides a detailed definition of stardom, yet a major weakness with his definition is that it fails to distinguish between a star and an actor. Secondly, in defining stardom, King suggests that stardom is a response to acting. King does not clarify that star acting has its own category of analysis that can be explained separate from traditional definitions of acting. Lastly, King's implication that an actor is "limited" by his physiognomy suggests that physiognomy is a hindrance rather than a definite strategy of performance. For some stars, such as Kevin Costner, for example, whose entire performance strategy is built on physiognomy, proves that physiognomy can be foremost in defining star performance.

Jeremy Butler, in Star Texts, (1991) compares the stage actor to the screen actor. Butler's analysis of performance, however, is text based and contradicts his earlier statement on stardom. Butler's comparison of the stage actor vs. screen actor mentions the signification of intentionality of the stage actor vs. the dis-representation of text in film. Butler's argument here favors theatre performance over film. Butler claims that unlike theatre, film loses its naturalness due to the editing process in film, thereby reducing the performance of the film actor to "poor acting" (12). In articulating stardom, Butler merely

states that stage acting is of a better quality than film acting but does not clarify his position why. Butler's articulation of stardom fails to consider that a star is indeed a star because of his **lack** of impersonating a character. A star does not, as Butler suggests of the stage actor, lose his personality to become the character but rather, a star is the character or "personality" the spectator desires to see.

Another approach to stardom, presented by Charles Eckert in Stardom (1991), combines Marxist ideologies with a Freudian twist. Stars and film culture exist to resolve social discord and economic unrest in society. Stars and motion pictures are really the social underpinnings of a society's subconscious. Eckert refers to the Great Depression as a period in which economic unrest prevailed, and Shirley Temple as the star who saved society's problems.

As the days grew shorter and greyer it became obvious that for millions the hardest times were still ahead. Those already mentally and physically stunted by the years of malnutrition would know many more years of diminished existence before the economic boom of the Second World War would turn the depression around. And a few parents, broken under the responsibility of caring for hungry, ill and constantly irritable children, would kill one or more of them and sometimes themselves. But then there was Shirley Temple (185).

The social/political/economic culture is more complex than Eckert speculates.

Because of the complexities of social structures, stars do not exist to resolve these systems. Stars do, however, provide models of action for the world and can function to accommodate spectator desire by projecting a distinctive or attractive image. Thus male stars function as ideal images of maleness appealing to male and female spectatorship in different ways while also providing

insight into explanations of gender difference. Male stars exist because they mobilize large audiences due to qualities of maleness which reveal the identity of the star. Male spectatorship identifies with these aspects of maleness while the female spectator embodies images of maleness.

Gender distinctions separate qualities of maleness for the male spectator by recognizing that the male spectator seeks to "become" the male star by adopting aspects of the star's performer code such the voice, walk or certain facial gestures. The female spectator however, is motivated by physiognomic qualities of the star's male image. Her response to these qualities of maleness reveals the significance of male desirability and its association with the emotional values placed upon female construct; but discussing female spectatorship requires defining the female spectator in concrete terms. In relation to male stardom, the female spectator is defined as a subjective heterosexual viewer of images of maleness who becomes connected to male star performance due to the star's performance of "maleness" which reveals aspects of the star's identity to the heterosexual female spectator.

A thorough explanation on stardom must first place stars in a category separate from other actors. Stars are stars, not actors. Star acting is of a different nature than conventional acting. The techniques used in star acting are unique to the particular star performing the action so that any duplication of the action(s) is always traceable back to the star. Therefore, personality, bodily

virtuosity and voice are what drive star performance, and are significant aspects of a star's **performer code**. Bodily virtuosity adds signification to the performance but how does the body establish value during performance? There are five categories that outline the way, in which the body signifies virtuosity during performance, all of which refer to the performer code. They are: physiognomy, the body's capacity to command perception at a distant or close up, expressive movements which sustain perception, the expressive capacity of the body in relation to other bodies, and the complexity of vocal gesture. Star performances are explained within these categories of bodily virtuosity, as they are significant features, which shape star identity. Physiognomy is the central issue that shapes Kevin Costner's performances and respectably defines a distinct perception of masculine identity for the female spectator. A star relies upon these performance codes, as they are unique strategies of his performance appeal.

The performer code of star performance refers to "signifying practices that are unique to a performer because they recur only in performances of the performer, regardless of the narrative context in which the performer appears" (Toepfer 150). In his book Stars (1979), Richard Dyer refers to the performer code as "the star's performance style."

...a star will have a particular performance style that through its familiarity will inform the performance she or he gives in any particular film. The specific repertoire of gestures, intonation, etc. that a star establishes over a number of films carries the meaning

of her or his image just as much as the "inert" element of appearance, the particular sound of her/his voice of dress style (162).

The significance and slightness of bodily movement is usually unconsciously overlooked by the female spectator and explains why the on screen images or pin-ups are more intense and desirable to her. For example, in *(Illustration Two)* of Premier magazine, Costner appears on the cover of a magazine.

Illus. 2 Kevin Costner Premiere Magazine, 1998

The photo is an extreme close up of Costner as his eyes look directly at the spectator. However, his gaze at the spectator is offset by the slight squint in his right eye, the three-quarter turn of his head, in addition to the small lift of his right cheek from his mouth. The image of Costner here, as with many others, lacks hardness and muscularity. Costner's performances are unique because

Illus. 3 Kevin Costner George Magazine, 1997

his image is not the traditional, perceived image of masculinity. The fact that Costner contradicts the Stallone, Schwarzenegger, Willis image of masculinity is what differentiates Costner from other male performer bodies. A performance value that can explain heterosexual female desire in relation to Costner's performance is his ability to perform delicate facial gestures and offer subtleties, as indicated by his semi-shaven beard, which intensely engage the viewer into a performance of masculinity that is unconventional. Costner's semi-shaven beard is an invitation to the spectator to look at him in a non-glamorous state. The comfortableness that Costner has with appearing in front in print media without meticulous attention to his face not only makes him appear closer to the viewer but also makes the image of him desirable. His image is inviting because of the casual but direct nature of it. The close-up of Costner's image of masculinity here is a perception of masculinity that dominates viewer perception so that the heterosexual female spectator is consumed with the physiognomic qualities of Costner within the context of a small performance space. Yet, ***(Illustration Two)*** and ***(Illustration Three)***, although both of Costner, are strikingly different for apparent reasons.

(Illustration Two) and ***(Illustration Three)*** are both promotions of Costner's star image in a "fan magazine." The viewer's closeness with Costner's image in ***(Illustration Two)***, the closed mouth and the squinting eyes reveals a naturalness of Costner that is an "attractive" representation of masculinity.

(Illustration Three), on the other hand is a representation of masculinity that is associated with power and money due to the distance of the camera from Costner, juxtaposed with the glimmer, dotted background, and the tossed coin. His face is well lit as it peers from darkness imposed by his black attire. It is the illumination of Costner's face from darkness that draws the heterosexual female spectator closer to the physiognomic features of Costner's performer code. In Stars, Richard Dyer borrows from Bela Balazs' contention of the role of the close-up in his explanation of the star phenomenon:

Balazs is important because he gives expression to a widely held view, namely that the close-up reveals the unmediated personality of the individual, and this belief in the "capturing" of the "unique" "person" of a performer is probably central to the star phenomenon (17).

Revealing the 'person' behind the star image is what piques spectator curiosity in the image. The heterosexual female spectator who attaches herself to an image of a male star does so because the perceived image of maleness is magnified to an illusion that is lacking in her world, all created by film techniques such as lighting and camera angles. When performance is analyzed semiotically, the importance of lighting to the image cannot go unnoticed. The power of the image is magnified by the illumination of the body in relation to the camera. The way the light hits the body is expressive indeed. Without lighting, it is impossible to see subtle body movement and gestures that are present in performance. During performance, lighting is defined as the illumination of the body or

spectacle to create a desired effect. But how is the body expressive under these sets of filmic conditions? Kevin Costner serves as the primary example of explaining male stardom in relation to heterosexual female desire, but images and performances of other male stars will be analyzed as they function as examples of masculine identity, and also connected to heterosexual female desire.

BODYSCOPE: Subjective Male Bodies and the Female Response

Objectifying the male body by placing it in the foreground of star analysis reveals the signification of the male body and its relation to the heterosexual female spectator. Signifying practices that explain star performance such as how the camera enhances the image of the performer as well as physiognomy are essential to understanding how a male star becomes the object of heterosexual female desire. In this way, the uniqueness of the star's performance qualities and their signification to the female spectator is discovered.

Illus. 4 Harrison Ford Blade Runner Warner Bros., 1982

The science fiction film Blade Runner (1982) is an example of how camera angles and lighting techniques greatly enhance the image of the male star. Harrison Ford's performance in 1982 is consistent with his performances to date and helps to explain his star appeal today. The "stage" of Blade Runner consists

of a rustic, futuristic environment that is identifiable to Asian culture, i.e. the dragon-like drawing in the background, the set location which simulates Chinatown, and is filled with scientific gadgets and video imagery. The director, Ridley Scott, carries the viewer from scene to scene by placing the camera above the performers and then coming down on them. For instance, in **(Illustration Four)** the camera goes down to earth as it nudges its way through a crowd of umbrellas in order to find Harrison Ford seated next to an erratic television screen and neon lights spiraling out from behind him. The camera then moves in on Ford from an angle as he squarely sits reading a newspaper. In a medium shot of Ford, he begins his performance within this oddly illuminated environment of blue, orange, and green neon imagery. He is seen holding a newspaper, reacting to something. The small tilt of Ford's head and the apparent dismay indicated by the gesture made with his mouth, gives the viewer the impression that he is restless within the space that surrounds him, and that he is only there because he must be there or is forced to. These gesticular expressions and movements operate independently from the narrative, drawing attention to Ford's performance rather than the narrative context. Yet he does not appear to be the type of man who would renege on a promise because he has in fact taken an interest in his assignment and has gone so far as to dress for the occasion.

The lighting used in *Blade Runner* is hazy, nothing is clear. The actors perform in bad weather conditions, fog, smoke, rain, snow, and dim lighting, creating a curious tension between Ford and the spectator who is viewed in a series of close-ups. If the spectator chooses to get closer to the performers, namely Harrison Ford, she must sift through the rain, umbrellas and fog in order to get to Harrison who is within this cold environment. The lighting in *Blade Runner* is also used to separate Harrison Ford's body from other bodies in the film.

(Illustration Five) shows Ford seated in a room with Bryant, a police sergeant. In a series of close-ups, the image of Bryant is contrasted by Ford's image that is seen with a bright light hitting him from behind the head, while

***Illus. 5 Harrison Ford Blade Runner Warner Bros., 1982
Ford coded with exaggerated expressions of maleness***

Bryant's image is blurred with smoke, and a small amount of light behind him.

In this shot of Ford, the spectator can see how much of his performance is read

by the acting he is able to perform with his face, a consistent feature of Harrison Ford's performances. He is shot at close range so the viewer can see his overt but not overly exaggerated star performance. Ford typically performs gestures with his eyebrows and mouth that allow the viewer to focus on his physiognomy but because of his distinct gesticular facial movements the viewer reads his performance differently than Kevin Costner's. In Kevin Costner's performances the spectator must **look** for Costner's acting because it is not as evident as Ford's. Costner's ability to perform with such slighthness adds complexity and curiosity to his performances. Both Harrison Ford and Kevin Costner have different performance styles, yet each is a star in his own way due to this difference. Ford's facial gestures are read as lively, not animated but rather sportive, whereas Costner's facial gestures appear deliberate, but come across as "blank," a point made by Foster Hirsch in his book, Acting Hollywood Style (1991).

Like bodies, faces on screen range from blankness (deliberate or inadvertent) to quicksilver vivacity. Some movie faces are porous, receptive, saturated with feeling, others trap or suppress emotion beneath a surface we have to interpret, while yet others seem scrubbed clean of any trace of an inner life whatsoever (147).

In *(Illustration Six)*, Harrison Ford's body is separated from Sean Young's and the owner of Tyrell Corporation, Dr. Tyrell. She is seen emerging from a dark, shadowed environment and then walks into a slightly flickering lit space while an image of Harrison Ford is shown emerging from a yellow sun-like

background. Dr. Tyrell on the other hand is captured from a long shot, totally emerging from the flickering light. Each shot of Ford is seen with this yellow halo or non-flickering light while the images of Sean Young and Dr. Tyrell are seen with degrees of flickering light, creating a similarity between them but differentiating between them and Ford.

***Illus. 6 Harrison Ford Blade Runner Warner Bros., 1982
separating the body from filmic conditions. Yellow halo***

The lighting effects in Blade Runner "collaborate" with the performance of the actors, enhancing a style found in the forties while simultaneously revealing a futuristic atmosphere. The flickering light behind Dr. Tyrell discloses the fact that he is a scientist; the large thick rimmed glasses, the bow tie and greased hair, all hint to this. Sean Young, however, is wearing a hairstyle common to the forties, large bangs and pulled back hair, red glossy lipstick, and the tailored suit worn just below the knee is a reminder of Joan Crawford. This image of femaleness is contrasted by Daryl Hannah's look in the film. Her tall, shapely body is seen walking within a densely technological, cold, foggy, dark environment. Her hair

is matted and her makeup is smeared under her eyes. Yet, her full lips, torn pantyhose and fish net costume are just as intriguing as Sean Young's conservative image of femaleness.

Rutger Hauer on the other hand is obviously the antagonist. His white hair, invisible eyebrows and defined but ageless face are strikingly different from Ford's elastic face. His voice is whispery and chilling, as his speech is slow and paused. Ford however speaks in a dead pan forties style voice, similar to Bogart's style. Here Ford's use of the voice is slow. He pauses when he speaks and drops his voice down in tone, not only giving a voice to the main character or Blade Runner but also making that voice identifiable to him. From this point on, his voice is heard throughout the movie as it is used to narrate the story just as Kevin Costner's voice narrates *Dances with Wolves* (1992).

Compared to Costner, Ford's tone is different in that Ford's voice is deeper, and often sounds tired. Ford always sounds like he has just taken a few punches while Costner's tone is higher, and has an airy pitch to it. Seen in many close-ups, as is Ford, the viewer is drawn to Costner's physiognomy as she is to Ford's but both stars manage to keep her at a distance. Ford's image is overshadowed with obstacles such as rain, smoke, and fog and the exaggerated tone of his voice, as Costner creates tension with his impassive expressions and hollow sounding voice. Many if not all of Costner's performances are unique to his ability to perform small gestural movements with the use of his forehead,

eyebrows, eyes and mouth which are often moved independently of the other rather than in unison, and manifest themselves into a stoic performance.

In **(Illustration Seven)** from *Dances With Wolves* (1992), the camera sees Costner reacting to the slaughter of buffalo or “tatonka” with Sioux friends. Costner’s performance here is star quality because it is highly unpredictable. One would expect him to react grossly to grotesque images of buffalo, stripped of hides and tongues, but instead the viewer has to read Costner’s performance with scrutiny. In a close-up, the camera pans from right to left on the actors until it reaches Costner. Costner’s head moves slightly as the eyes look across the field of dead buffalo. The eyebrows are wrinkled, forming a slight indentation in the crevasse of the brow. His mouth is first closed and then parches open as the shoulder leans slightly forward from the lower back as he breathes a quiet sigh of disgust. Compared with the performances of Al Pacino,

Robert De Niro and Harrison Ford, Costner's facial acting is quite different.

***Illus. 7 Kevin Costner Dances with Wolves Orion, 1990
Intensity and the Costner image***

Illus. 8 Al Pacino Heat Warner Bros., 1995. Vivid facial expressions

It is not as overt but is equally expressive. For example, (*Illustration Eight*) from Heat (1995) is an example of the overt acting style of Al Pacino's and helps to explain male bodily expressivity more concretely. In Heat, Pacino's style differs from Costner's in that Pacino has a dance-like quality to his acting. His body is constantly in motion whether it is actual physical movement of the hands or arms, or through facial movements. Pacino's wide eyes and large expressions with his mouth and the swaying of his body are what engage the spectator in his performances. His performances offer consistency as they uniquely reveal grand upper body and torso movements that are seen by the

camera at various distances, close and long. In order for the heterosexual female spectator to see Costner's performances, however, she is brought in on close ups or extreme close ups of him as illustrated in ***(Illustration Nine)*** of *Dances With Wolves*.

***Illus. 9 Kevin Costner Dances with Wolves Orion, 1990.
Extreme Close-up***

Costner's physiognomy is compelling compared to other stars such as Ford or Pacino. His streaked blond hair, blond eyebrows and hazel green eyes and unopened smile add a youthful quality to his appearance even-though he is forty-four years old. These performance qualities are what appeal to the female

spectator and explain why Costner is still able to attract viewers to the box office in spite of risks he takes as a star performer. Costner's performances are expressive because of the way he looks. He is a particular star who is separated from other male stars because a large part of his expressive power lies in his face; his hairstyles are also unique to his performances as well. It is therefore Costner's face and haircuts, which add great production value to his performances and his star image just as Pacino's hair cuts, and vivacity add value to his star appeal. But for Costner, the camera reads these values at a close range rather than at a distance.

Little is done to Costner's face to enhance its physical features. Make-up is only slightly used and it is not used to conceal his age as is done by Pacino. Costner's appearance is able to stand on its own without enhancements so that his image translates into a romantic leading figure or anti-hero as in *A Perfect World* (1993). The style of Costner's fine light brown hair changes throughout his performances. For instance, in the movie *The Untouchables* (1987), his hair is neatly cut short on the sides as he wears a part on the right side of his head. In the *Bodyguard* (1992), however, Costner wears a buzz cut. Yet, in both movies he still has the ability to play the romantic lead hero and it is these unpredictable performance tactics which make him a complex star figure. In *Waterworld* (1995), as the anti-hero, his hairstyle is extremely different from any of his star performances to date. It is styled well past his ears, covering the

neck area and Costner even goes so far as to wear the top portion of his hair in a ponytail.

His facial appearance also changes during his performances. The camera has captured Costner with a beard, without a beard, with a semi-beard and a mustache as illustrated in *Dances with Wolves*, (1990) and *The War* (1994), *Tin Cup* (1996) and *Wyatt Earp* (1994) respectively. With a beard, Kevin Costner's image is not threatening. In *Dances with Wolves*, his beard signifies an aspect of maleness which alludes to loneliness instead of fearfulness or roughness as conveyed by Bruce Willis. Without a beard, as in *The War*, his image is warm and fatherly. In *Tin Cup*, he appears unshaven. His stubble is barely noticeable: yet, noticeable enough to convey a non- harsh appearance that is not obviously sculpted, making his razor stubble approachable and appealing to the viewer. With a mustache his image can easily convey authority and leadership as is signified in *Wyatt Earp* but here, his image is less appealing than others for a variety of reasons.

Costner's performance in *Wyatt Earp* is unromantic and cold. The movie was not a "hit" in Hollywood. In *Wyatt Earp*, Costner's hair is parted on the side so that the part extends nearly to the middle of his head, and it is styled and slicked to the side of his head. He has a mustache and side burns and his face appears to be more lived in than other roles such as *Bull Durham*. It is not only because there is a six-year difference between the time each movie was made,

but also because his face is fuller. He looks heavier which changes his physical appearance (*Illustration Ten*).

Illus. 10 Kevin Costner Wyatt Earp Warner Bros., 1994.

In (*Illustration Eleven*) his movements are complex, but they remain subtle. For example, making Costner's performance difficult to read, forcing the spectator to come in close to view it. He consistently uses small head movements as he leans forward to show interest in a woman. When he finally confronts her, he is reserved. When he walks toward her, he walks from left to right on his outer heel rather than walking from heel to toe. His limitation as a performer is that the camera rarely captures him at a distance for two reasons.

First, instead of walking, Costner waddles. Second, because of his body size, he does not have the capacity to sustain expressive power at a distance like Clint Eastwood or John Wayne. Costner's performances are more expressive and contained within the extreme close up, the close up and medium shots of the camera.

***Illus. 11 Kevin Costner Wyatt Earp Warner Bros., 1994.
Long shot of Costner***

In Bull Durham, however, the signifying practices associated with Costner's performances almost go unnoticed, adding curiosity to Costner's performance. For instance, in (*Illustration Twelve*) his hair is full and worn

behind his ears. Gel is used to style his hair off of his face and behind his ears. He is shaven, and has a mole on the left side of his face along with a dimple on his cheek. His head movements are small. When he is angry, he uses small head movements to turn his head, rather than swift grand movements. He often turns his head, then his body using short and controlled shoulder movements. Little lower body movement occurs so his ability to sustain attention is performed in small spatial dimensions of either, the camera moving in on him, or him stepping closer to the camera which adds intensity to the scene.

***Illus. 12 Kevin Costner Bull Durham, Orion 1988
Costner stepping into the camera to reveal physiognomic qualities***

In relation to other actors in *Bull Durham*, Costner uses simple body movements to convey meaning. ***(Illustration Thirteen)*** shows Costner in a restaurant/bar scene. Costner is seated at a table with another actor, Tim Robbins. Costner's leg is positioned on a chair, slightly bent at the knee. His left arm is holding a drink while the other arm casually wraps around the shoulder of a chair that is placed between him and Tim Robbins. In this "pose," Costner's leg sways from side to side. The narrative of the scene is about Costner and Robbins fighting over the same woman, Susan Sarandon. But it is the position of Costner's body, the propped leg swaying from side to side, the reserved look at Sarandon and smile, which supersede the narrative, peaking heterosexual female desire, making him the desired one instead of Susan Sarandon.

***Illus. 13 Kevin Costner and Tim Robbins Bull Durham, Orion
1988***

***Body positions or "poses" in relation to other bodies
that draw the spectator in***

(Illustration Fourteen) is a two shot of Costner seated on a sofa with Tim Robbins at the apartment of Susan Sarandon. Costner is seated at one end of the sofa, Robbins is seated at the other end and Sarandon is seated a short distance from them, facing front. The scene is set up in this way to show the point of views of the actors. Costner and Robbins are at odds and Sarandon is in the position to observe both men and chose between them. In this scene, Sarandon claims the power of the female gaze discussed within the feminist

movement. Placed at a distance to view the two men as spectacles, rather than her being viewed as the object of desire, Sarandon speaks for feminists such as Nuria Enciso (1997) and Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (1989) who believe in “turning the gaze around” and giving power to women as viewers of popular culture. Sarandon therefore becomes the active gazer rather than the passive viewer.

***Illus. 14 Kevin Costner, Tim Robbins, Susan Sarandon
Bull Durham Orion, 1988***

***Reserved body position that adds curiosity for the spectator
separating Costner from other bodies***

Costner's body position compared with that in **(Illustration Thirteen)** is different. In **(Illustration Fourteen)** he is seated with his right leg crossed over his left, an indication that he has taken a more conservative approach to the situation. Costner's left arm rests casually on the arm of the sofa, while his right arm holds a drink. His "competitor," Tim Robbins however, is seated with uncrossed legs, arms to his side, and wide eyed, eager to give his body to Sarandon for the season. Costner's body position in this scene is a reflection of his persona. He is conservative in his approach to acting, giving nothing away. He does not allow himself to jump into situations, rather he is reserved and often cautious. Costner's tactic of holding back entices the female viewer, engaging her and drawing her closer to him while creating an emotional tension within her, stimulating a female response that effectively makes Costner a desirable objectified being.

Illus. 15 Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon Bull Durham Orion, 1988

In this scene Costner tires of Sarandon's active gazing signified in his upcoming bodily movements. He rises slowly from the sofa and begins to head for the door. Before leaving however, he turns to Sarandon with pointed finger and raised voice as they exchange words, an indication that he has lost patience with her active gazing. He then changes his voice from a loud, hollow tone to a soft, sincere tone as well as removing the pointed finger from view. Costner subtly draws attention to himself by these simple movements and change in voice tone drawing Sarandon and the viewer to listen in closely. (***Illustration Fifteen***).

Illus. 16 Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon Bull Durham Orion, 1988.

In relation to the Susan Sarandon, Costner as the male lead, in ***(Illustration Sixteen)*** looks deeply into her eyes for what seems an eternity. He expresses sorrow just by moving his chin close to his chest and then looks up into her eyes for comfort. (He has a black eye). He makes a little smile with his lips and cheeks; but his lips do not part to show his teeth. The scene is shot close and tight, even when he uses one hand to undress Sarandon. The camera takes a shot of just his hand as it gently moves up her dress. Also, the camera reveals the rest of his body in an appealing manner. In two close ups, it reveals

the slenderness of his body, showing his stomach and chest. These shots of Costner's body up close are desirable to the heterosexual female spectator because the camera captures an unconventional image of maleness that is tender, warm and caressing rather than buffed, toned and hard.

Conversely, Costner's image in *A Perfect World* (1993) as the anti-hero is likable despite his shortcomings as a criminal. He is a fugitive on the run with an eight-year-old boy who even attaches himself to Costner. Costner's hair is worn in a style similar to one worn in *The Untouchables* as the Eliot Ness character. It is a short, neat cut, made popular in the fifties. His body size is still slender, but for this movie, Costner has changed his body appearance slightly by gaining a little weight. As is the case with Costner, his weight gain is hardly noticeable unless the viewer pays careful attention to his performance. The extra weight adds value to his performance even though it is not obvious. The ability to change his physical appearance indicates that Costner is willing to take a risk with the viewer during his performances. He takes similar but more overt risks in the *Bodyguard* (1992) and the risks pay off. *A Perfect World* was not a block buster like the *Bodyguard*, but it nevertheless revealed aspects of Costner's persona that were different from his previous performances, and as a star, Costner risks changing his image in order to offer something new to the viewer. Costner's physiognomy in *A Perfect World* is still appealing. What makes his performance engaging is his striking physiognomy, viewed subjectively, is

contradicted by his portrayal of the anti-hero. The viewer likes him even though his actions are despicable. For instance, Costner breaks out of prison and at one point, kills his partner in crime in front of the eight year old boy. At another point he holds up a grocer for food and clothes for himself and the boy. In another scene, *(Illustration Seventeen)*, Costner is dressed in jeans

Illus. 17 Kevin Costner A Perfect World Warner Bros., 1993.

and a flannel shirt, with a tee shirt underneath. He is seen leaning back in a car seat as he isolates his head and neck. With his left hand he reaches in his shirt pocket while he bends his right arm, placing it on top of the car seat. His actions here as with many of Costner's actions are cool and deliberate and magnified by

the appearance of black sunglasses. Costner has the unique ability to play a likable anti-hero, and really seems to go over the top in Waterworld (1995).

In Waterworld, Costner is a loner. His lonesomeness is a signification of his masculinity personified by his gruffy beard, somewhat grungy looking appearance, and his place in the world, which is on an enormous boat. Costner's physical appearance in Waterworld is atypical and unconventional of the preconceived action hero. His body size is not like Stallone's or Schwarzenegger but it is nevertheless convincing and alluring. In fact, his body frame within the costume he wears in Waterworld indirectly objectifies his male body. His pants are worn close to his skin, exposing his slender, toned legs. His top is rustic, cut at the shoulders, revealing the shape of his arms, particularly his biceps, which are more defined here than in Tin Cup. The moving camera and various angles in Waterworld, place Costner as a spectacle of desire. Like Mel Gibson in Braveheart (1995) Costner appears barbaric but looks less rugged and more amoeba like due to the grotesque webbed feet and gills and fishbone earring. His hair is worn long with the exception of the top portion that is thinning and is worn in a ponytail. Gibson manages to maintain an image of masculinity even though he performs in a kilt and has long hair which goes back to Judith Butler's contention of gender being a "free floating artifice" whereby the male body may just as easily signify aspects of femaleness (6). Compared to Mel Gibson, Costner offers a different view of masculinity that is gross, crude and

uncharacteristic of his earlier performances. For example, in one scene, ***(Illustration Eighteen)*** Costner chops off Jeanne Tripplehorn's hair. In another scene he picks up a little girl and throws her into the water.

***Illus. 18 Kevin Costner and Jeanne Tripplehorn Waterworld
Universal Pictures, 1995. Costner as an anti-hero***

In another instance, Costner urinates in a cup to recycle fuel. These actions are hardly pleasing or "nice," a perception Costner's persona often projects. Costner's uniqueness is that he can perform such horrible actions or appear "mean", but has the physiognomic qualities that are appealing regardless of the cruel actions he performs. Stars therefore add complexity to their image by

performing such actions, creating a curious tension between the performance of such actions and the significant features of performance qualities, namely physiognomy. The ability to add complexity to his image with such is a significant feature of Costner's stardom, and is what establishes him as a unique performer.

In the *Bodyguard* (1992), Costner is again unconventional as a bodyguard. Compared to movies which precede it, *The Untouchables* (1987) *Bull Durham* (1988), *Dances With Wolves* (1990), and *Robin Hood Prince of Thieves* (1991), there are several strategies of performance used by Costner which illustrate his uniqueness as a star performer. First, Costner's physical appearance and size are drastically different. Costner's shoulders are larger which changes the formation of his upper body, causing his body to move and stand differently. His shoulders appear rounder and heavier, exaggerating his posture as his arms and hands trunk down. The dark suit he wears obscuring the perception of the viewer however foreshadows his physical size. Costner has no facial hair in the *Bodyguard*, revealing all of the physiognomic features of his face, captured in a series of close ups. For example, in *(Illustration Nineteen)*, the camera views Costner in a scene that takes place in a car. The camera moves from a shot of the car driving up a driveway, to an extreme close-up of Costner looking in his rear view mirror at a car that has followed him. In this scene, Costner's eyes perform in a subtle way that is not otherwise

noticeable were the camera at a further distance. His head slowly turns to the right in a three-quarter turn.

Illus. 19 Kevin Costner the Bodyguard Warner Bros. 1992.

He bats his eyelashes indicating that he has acknowledged the follower and then proceeds to wrinkle his eyebrows while raising his left eyebrow as he stretches his arm out to ring an old, shaky door bell (***Illustration Twenty***). Costner's face looks fresh and youthful. His skin is not wrinkled, drawn or tiresome. Instead it appears rested but not especially "made up" for the scene. The outdoor light reveals his light-colored brows with hints of blond in them, as well

as the full shape and smoothness of the lips. This close-up of Costner is extremely engaging to the female viewer.

Costner's physiognomy is curious because various images of him continually convey little if any facial preparation for the camera. Costner

Illus. 20 Kevin Costner Bodyguard Warner Bros., 1992.

projects an "as is" persona which means that what the viewer sees is what is there, making Costner's image extremely appealing. What the viewer perceives when she sees Costner is a man who appears to spend little time grooming for the camera yet, he is a major star. This helps to clarify misconceptions about

stars being glamorous figures who lead trendy lifestyles in Hollywood. Costner is not at all glamorous. He is in fact the opposite. As a star he establishes his own trend by merely being himself and revealing that to the spectator rather than hiding behind a false image, or one that is especially contrived for the camera. The heterosexual female spectator therefore views the "real" Costner image and personality by watching the way the camera exposes him to her. The camera reveals the persona of the star and any "truth" about the star in so far as it is captured on film. Costner's star image is a rarity and has yet to be duplicated. His physiognomy is long lived with the exception of his thinning hair, which he allows the spectator to see in Waterworld. Yet at forty-four, Costner has yet to show "true" signs of aging. For this reason, the Bodyguard does well at the box office. The Bodyguard is perhaps one of Costner's best movies financially as well as physiognomically. It cannot be understated that the movie does well financially because of Costner's physiognomic performance seen almost entirely in a series of close-ups. Every aspect of Costner's physiognomy is readable to the spectator, from the unusual haircut to the smoothness in his skin, from the blonde eyebrows to the gleam in his hazel eyes to the straight nose which points at the end, from the mole on the left side of his face to the shape of his lip which exudes a warm smile, to the poutiness or puffiness in his lower cheek area, to even the few lines around the eye area. The "landscape" of Costner's face is

provocative, “secretive yet willing to be exposed” (Hirsch 196). All of these qualities which Costner possess are attributable to his stardom.

In addition, despite Houston’s acting abilities, her contribution to the film deserves attention. The interracial dimension relationship between her and Costner on the surface makes the film controversial giving it media attention. But due to the star status of both Houston and Costner, their relationship in the film seems to transcend race so the viewer is drawn by their star qualities rather than the narrative context or racial dimension in which they perform. The Bodyguard like Blade Runner uses external filmic elements such as lighting; camera shots and angles which intensify Costner’s image and persona.

(Illustration Twenty-One) shows Costner seated. The camera sees him watching an enticing video of Whitney Houston running against chiffon veil. In this scene, Costner engages the spectator by making small movements with his eyes while gazing at the video. The light from the television reveals the gleam in his eyes as he watches.

Illus. 21 Kevin Costner the Bodyguard Warner Bros., 1992

He slowly puts a cup down to lean forward. He shifts his body position only slightly to move forward in the chair while the camera slowly zooms in. This image of Costner juxtaposes various close-ups of Whitney who is in a different room. The interracial dimension of the images of Costner and Houston in the Bodyguard is risky for both stars, making the movie controversial. But risk taking is a feature of stardom that is inconsequential to Costner's image with Houston. In fact, it further complicates his star image, making him an enigma and his stardom difficult to explain.

Similarly, in *(Illustration Twenty-Two)*, the close-up and the lighting situation intensify Costner's image. For the heterosexual female spectator, this is a desirable image of Costner who is fully clothed and seen only from the shoulder area up. Costner's image appears before snow covered trees and darkness as he is seen sipping from a coffee cup, using his eyes to hear his surroundings and turning his head slightly to see. In an instance, the intensity

***Illus. 22 Kevin Costner the Bodyguard Warner Bros., 1992
Costner as a desirable image of maleness***

of Costner's image is overpowering, dominating the screen space. Subjecting male bodies to the filmic conditions of lighting, camera angles and the body's

distance from the camera adds depth to bodily performance. Stars dominate viewer perception, complicating emotional values placed on the spectator, making the star's performance "readable" by decontextualizing the image stars project. Performance analysis therefore requires decontextualizing star "signs" and images in order to understand star performance and viewer perception. But how are these decontextualized images decoded in terms of expressions of male desirability for the heterosexual female spectator? The heterosexual female spectator in performance analysis is defined as one who views performance subjectively due to the vastly different images of maleness and their appeal to wide heterosexual female spectatorship and due to the number of box office hits which significantly determines stardom and longevity. One way to expose the subjectivity of the heterosexual female viewer is to articulate the many facets of "agencies" expressed by the male performing body and its impact on the heterosexual female desire. Revealing the subjectivity of the heterosexual female viewer is a repressed area of discourse, complicated by the absence of a model in which to define it but is also an indication of intense performance strategies used by the star which impact the emotional values placed on the heterosexual female spectator. On screen images of male bodies who cut across cultural texts, reaching large audiences due to physiognomic star qualities, not only exist as iconic figures that represent multiple masculine identities but also function as sexual vehicles in which heterosexual female desire is materialized.

If the push to define the female gaze as an active viewer is still a new concept, then the quest to define the sexually active gaze of the heterosexual female spectator is indeed advanced, unexplored and almost taboo.

Decoding Sexual Expressions of Male Desirability

In her article "Talk Now, Pay Later," bell hooks explains desire as an emotion which makes us forget who we are as it is an emotion that disrupts and deconstructs, dismembers and disembodies the female. Desire according to hooks is defined as a grotesque and displaced emotion for the female spectator that creates a sense of longing for the viewer and sometimes leads her into "dangerous" situations, which are often perverse and strange (18). For hooks the movie *Girl 6* functions as a film that gives a sexual voice to the female not yet found in the feminist movement. Ironically, *Girl 6* played by Theresa Randle, is a female who finds her "sexual voice" in the voice itself.

Despite interventions made by the contemporary feminist movement, women are still struggling to find a sexual voice, to find places where our desires and fantasies can be articulated in all their strangeness and perversity (hooks 18).

It is indeed a struggle to "find the sexual voice" of women even in all of its perversities and strangeness as hooks points to but she appears to have the same trouble that many others have in connecting desire to performance which is generalizing the perspective of the female spectator as an unidentified viewer of performance without recognizing or understanding the subjective nature of the heterosexual female spectator's perspective as a critical voice motivated by performance strategies of the male star, and one that shapes the value of the performance of the male star.

Another attempt to define the sexual voice of the female is made by Wendy Doniger in her article: "When a Kiss is Still a Kiss" (1997). Doniger's article is refreshing because she stresses the importance of the body as the locus of human identity over the mind in film. An aspect of sexual bodily performance that she is concerned with is "the kiss." For Doniger, Hollywood is guilty of sexualizing the body to the point of obsession. But again, Doniger makes no clear connection between establishing the identity of the female spectator and makes only a small reference to describing an emotional value of the female spectator, the kiss, which goes unanalyzed.

Francine Koslow's article "Sex and Surrealist Art" provides an excellent analysis of visual art and the bodies present in the work of Max Ernst (1891-1976) *Men Shall Know Nothing of This*. Although there is no photograph to view as visual evidence, Koslow's analysis is detailed and descriptive enough making it easy to imagine the vivid description of Ernst's "metaphysical fantasy" of two sexes joined in a coital position. The uniqueness of Koslow's analysis is that it stresses the importance of the body within the image.

The upper region of the composition is dominated by two sets of amputated lower extremities locked in the sex act. Two female legs spread in a froglike pose, are penetrated from above in what appears to be the anal or abdominal region by the male legs, which are joined at the thigh. The erotic legs are pierced at the feet by the umbrellalike arch of a new moon (77).

Koslow's analysis serves as an example of how an image can contain dense significations of performance "signs" that when discussed within performance analysis, can be analyzed in ways which require new approaches and theoretical explanations for analyzing them. New approaches to performance therefore provide a systematic method in which to analyze the complexities contained within an image.

Sam Umland's "Sexual Freaks and Stereotypes," however, is a critical narrative on performance rather than an analysis of bodies within the performance construct. Umland grapples with gender issues of women in film emphasizing the surge of violence aimed at women as androgynous and "freakish" figures of the eighties and questioning whether these images of women are moral and justified. Umland opts for a more stable "romantic" heterosexual view but does not provide clear examples to support his view of stability. Instead, he believes films such as *Blade Runner* (1982), *Videodrome* (1983), *Dressed to Kill* (1980) and others, are representations of a delusional, confused, and oppressed American culture (Umland 225-235).

Blade Runner was an alternative to "stable" bodies of the seventies in film and was disruptive during its time and perhaps still is today. But, *Blade Runner* mobilizes the male and female bodies in ways that their bodies become mechanized and post-human due to particular movements by the actors and the performance space in which they perform and are placed. *Blade Runner* offers

three different representations of the female identity each struggling for a more “human” identity within a cold, eerie and scientific environment. Their identities include the freakish female, a female performer, and coifed mannequin figure of the forties. As Doniger assessed, Hollywood movies are saturated with sex themes, but why this obsession with sex scenes? What do we make of these freakish, post-human, sexualized bodies that function as sexual beings who perform actions that are intimate and sometimes personal in nature on the large screen? How does the heterosexual female spectator view the sexualized body of the male star? What are the qualities of male desirability and how are they decoded as expressions of maleness? Finally, how do expressions of maleness become connected to aspects of femaleness and what does this reveal about values of femaleness in shaping performance?

hooks’ and Doniger’s article are appropriate segues to analyzing sex scenes because they recognize the importance of the voice and the body as strategies of performance yet they do not provide a model in which to analyze them. Elements of sex scenes consist of physical actions that motivate the subjectivity of the heterosexual female spectator due to the male star’s expression of sexuality. Physical expressions of male sexuality consist of the look, the approach, the touch, the kiss of a woman, and vocal complexity. How the male star performs these actions and the degree to which they are performed are the codes of performance which the heterosexual female

spectator responds to and reads as expressions of maleness. These codes function as signifying practices of male desirability. Kevin Costner functions as a male star who creates that sense of longing within for the female spectator due to his performance of maleness.

The purpose here is to connect qualities of maleness to the subjectivity of the heterosexual female spectator by offering a method in which to decode expressions of male desirability in an effort to identify the sexual voice of the heterosexual female spectator and the emotional values placed on her by the male star. It is important to note again that establishing the emotional values placed on the heterosexual female spectator is strictly a subjective response to aspects of male desirability and Kevin Costner is used as an example of a male star who evokes spectator desire through his performer code of performance.

Physical Actions of Sexual Performance

The Look

Male stars perform in unique ways that mobilize audiences on a large scale. Costner is unique because he is able to do so with a wide heterosexual female audience. Physical actions of sexual performance systematically define the sexual performer code of the male star making the performance of these actions unique to the star but also attributing to his star power. Categories of male desirability for Costner as they expose the subjectivity of the heterosexual female spectator begin with the look. The look as a physical action within a sex scene defines movements of the eyes, brows, mouth, forehead, and head in ways which reveal sexual expressions of maleness that the heterosexual female spectator finds desirable. Interpretations of the look by the heterosexual female still remain a subjective response to the performer's code of maleness.

Analyzing Costner's look across performance contexts in sex scenes from *Bull Durham* (1988), *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Revenge* (1990), the *Bodyguard* (1992), *Tin Cup* (1996) and *The Postman* (1997), proves that it is Costner's distinctive performer code that discloses his desirability to the heterosexual female viewer.

A sex scene in the movie *Bull Durham* (1988), (*Illustration Twenty-Three*) is evidence of Costner's look in its infancy before gaining star status. Here Costner's expressions of maleness reveal distinctive qualities, which are unique to his sexual performer code and are desirable to the heterosexual female spectator. Costner's look is complex due to the intensity of in the brow and the stare in his eyes, which is contrasted by a slight smile. The intensity of the eyes and the brow signify a determined and assured Costner who appears

***Illus. 23 Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon Bull Durham
Orion, 1988***

humble due to the actions of shifting the eyes downward then upward, the slight smile, and the cleanly shaven face seen at a profile. These small movements of Costner's, qualities of his sexual performer code are what the heterosexual female spectator responds to and reads as engaging signs of maleness. Costner is a unique performer because his look consists of small facial movements that invite the camera in but these actions are also yielding, creating tension within the perceived image.

Costner's look in Revenge (1990) compared to his look in Bull Durham (1988), (***Illustration Twenty-Four***), is a little less humble but just as forthcoming and engaging. The dynamics that construct his look in Revenge and

***Illus. 24 Kevin Costner and Madeline Stowe Revenge
Columbia, 1990. The Look***

are read as codes of signification to the heterosexual female spectator are the methodical stare into Stowe's eyes as he proceeds to move her in a backward motion, the resigned face seen at a profile, magnified by the tilted angle of the camera. Costner's look of strong intensity is contrasted by the blowing white curtains which cushion his performer code, making him appear safe and approachable within a non-static scene. These contradictions work well for Costner and serve as the basis of what invite the desire of the heterosexual female spectator and the camera to get closer to his image while movements

within the scene and the airiness of it complement subtleties apparent to Costner's image and actions as a male star.

***Illus. 25 Robert De Niro Jackie Brown Mirimax Films, 1997
The Look defined by De Niro***

Male stars such as Robert De Niro, Denzel Washington, Wesley Snipes or Tom Cruise offer uniqueness in their performer codes inviting heterosexual female desire as well. Robert De Niro's look (***Illustration Twenty-Five***) seen at a distance is animated and jovial. His body position is relaxed but unrestrained, inviting the viewer to come closer to his image.

***Illus. 26 Denzel Washington and Tom Hanks Philadelphia
Columbia Pictures 1993. Washington, confident and assured.***

Denzel Washington's look however is coded with strength and unyielding qualities that dominate heterosexual female perception due to erectness of body seen in a medium shot, the grand smile that jeers from the dark mustache and the confident look exuded in the eyes (***Illustration Twenty-Six***). Tom Cruise's look however, is less restrained than Washington's and De Niro's and appears more risky (***Illustration Twenty-Seven***). For example, in a close-up, the

***Illus. 27 Tom Cruise The Firm Paramount Pictures, 1993
Cruise's seductive code***

camera reveals the risky qualities associated with Cruise's look illustrated in the darkness that underlines the gleaming eyes that pop out from the dishveled bangs, the slight tilt in the head as the eyes squint, and the partially opened mouth. Wesley Snipes' look differs in that his look is more muscular. The skeletal structure of his face seems to be more defined and apparent representing a more muscular image of maleness. However, that image is softened by the wide smile and especially groomed hair and face (*Illustration Twenty-Eight*).

***Illus. 28 Wesley Snipes One Night Stand New Line Cinema, 1997
A groomed but soft image of Snipes***

Costner's look is complex because it is compounded with contrasting performance qualities that are not always obvious. In *Dances with Wolves* (1990) (***Illustration Twenty- Nine***) shows Costner standing in an upright position yet the energy from his face travels downward not outward or upward like De Niro, drawing the viewer in closer. The resigned expressions in his eyes, the closed mouth and the fiery light which hit his face offer a captivating but complicated view of Costner which is restrained, so even though the viewer is close to Costner's image it is difficult to read his performance because his actions

are yielding and slight. Costner's look is curious for this reason because it appears expressionless yet when the camera is in close it becomes heightened and intensified due to the closeness of the camera which reveals these subtle actions.

***Illus. 29 Kevin Costner Dances with Wolves Orion 1990
Costner's restrained image of maleness***

It is the ambitious application of analyzing these small physical actions within a theoretical context that provides a system of understanding the subjective view of the heterosexual female spectator as it relates to male stardom.

Costner's expressions of maleness in the *Bodyguard* (1992) (*Illustration Thirty*) signify a look of delight. He maintains constant eye contact with his

***Illus. 30 Kevin Costner the Bodyguard Warner Bros., 1992
Costner's physiognomic qualities as sexual expressions of maleness***

partner, and smiles slightly expressing confidence and assurance. At the same time, his look offers contradictions that are gentle but appear blank. However, his look is deep with signification that creates an approachable tension between him and the heterosexual female spectator. Costner's deep but gentle looks are so inviting that even the camera has the desire to move in closer, making Costner a curious and captivating male star. His subtle expressions are not only

engaging but are also what sustain heterosexual female spectatorship. Costner's look(s) represents an aspect of maleness that is unusual. For the heterosexual female spectator, these looks function as representations of male desirability. Male stars such as Costner connect with the emotional values of female audiences in desirable ways that are penetrating, accommodating female desire with distinct expressions of maleness, and speaking to gender difference in ways that is widely appealing.

What is key to Kevin Costner's performance strategy is his stability as a male performer whose stardom is due to consistent physical actions used **across** his performances. Identifying actions in *The Postman*, (1997) which help to explain his desirable male image and comparing them to his other performances reveals how Costner establishes a stabile image for the female spectator. His look is similar to his other performances i.e., his look begins with his reaction to his partner's actions instead of initiating with overt movements. For example, Olivia Williams is drawn to a seated Costner who is lying upright in bed. She begins to unclothe directly in front of him while a close-up reveals a surprised Costner which consists of shifting the eyes downward as she undresses and then a quick look forward signifying his embarrassment with her forwardness but a humbleness nevertheless. What is different about his look here compared to other performances is the opened mouth and parted lips,

Illus. 31 Kevin Costner The Postman Warner Bros. 1997.

and the slight shift in the eyes which reveal a stunned Costner not yet seen.

From these small, quick movements with the eyes, Costner reveals to the heterosexual female spectator that he is not one to quickly respond to such directness. He is instead more reserved and methodical in his approach. Male performance is intriguing due to the performance of consistent actions which vary slightly across the performance, making the star's performance unpredictable, revealing something new and different about the star.

***Illus. 32 Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon Bull Durham
Orion, 1988. Costner's intense approach***

The Approach

The approach as an action of male desirability is defined as the way in which the male star directs his body or does not direct his body towards the female he will engage with in the sex scene. It is a star's code of performance seduction upon which he establishes a connection of desire with the heterosexual female spectator. An example of Costner's approach is in *Bull Durham* with Susan Sarandon, (***Illustration Thirty-Two***). It is subtle yet seductive.

In a close two shot Costner first looks away from Sarandon then he turns his head slowly to the right allowing the rest of his body to follow. His smile is consistent with what is described in the look, humble and slight, and his eye contact is again constant as he looks deeply into Sarandon's eyes.

These small actions invite heterosexual female desire illustrated by Sarandon's following actions (*Illustration Thirty-Three*).

***Illus. 33 Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon Bull Durham
Orion, 1988.***

She is magnetized by his exposed non-muscular chest as she reaches out to him, placing her lips against his chest. Costner's deep and gazing look signifies a

resigned approach that is comforting because of the softness of his look with the black eye but also one that invites the spectator to move in rather than him moving closer to Sarandon or the camera.

Costner's body position in *Revenge*, illustrates (*Illustration Thirty-Four*) a passiveness in his approach that the heterosexual female spectator responds to and finds appealing. The slight tilt in the head, the fact that he is in partial view and the curious preoccupation with the clothes rack indirectly invites the viewer closer. Like *Bull Durham*, he is the recipient of the female's desire for him and in *Revenge* does not oppose Stowe's aggressiveness. He responds to her "signals" of approach only to reveal his own sexual agencies of desire. Costner is always the spectacle of desire despite his "passive" approach.

Illus. 34 Kevin Costner Revenge Columbia, 1990

In *Revenge*, it is Stowe who enters the room initiating the approach. Similarly, in *Dances with Wolves*, McDowell responds to his image of maleness finding herself in his hut, not he in hers. In *Message in a Bottle*, (1999) Robin Wright Penn travels from the Mid-West to the South in search of Costner, a man she has never met before. A key tactic surrounding Costner's approach is that it is built on his intention to give space to the female performer within the scene making his male image and physical actions appear incidental or secondary to the female but which are in fact primary to his performance of male desirability.

Costner's approach in Revenge compared to his approach in Bull Durham and Dances with Wolves is different because the signifying practices associated with his approach in Revenge offers a welcoming danger. In Bull Durham he is exposed and vulnerable; in Dances with Wolves, Costner's approach is restrained and yielding. The dynamics that construct Costner's dangerous appeal in Revenge seen in **(Illustration Twenty-Four)** and create a desirable tension for the heterosexual female spectator, are constructed by the tilt in the camera, the slight lean over Stowe which leaves little space between their bodies intensifying a piecing Costner, together with the right hand of Costner's that moves gradually up Stowe's bare shoulder. In many of Costner's approach scenes, part of his approach consists of him looking away from his partners suggesting shyness or lack of interest in them. In Revenge, slight changes in Costner's body position and small movements of the hands and arms contradict his original body position in the scene **(Illustration Thirty-Four)**.

Costner's actions in the Bodyguard convey a strong sexual code of seduction **(Illustration Thirty-Five)** that is indirect but purposeful.

***Illus. 35 Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston the Bodyguard
Warner Bros., 1992 Costner's code of seduction***

He is seated while Whitney Houston is seen standing at a distance from him. She initiates the contact between them because his magnetism curiously draws her closer but she defends herself with a samurai sword. Costner responds to her playful threat by indirectly seducing her with the weapon of choice. He places his chest against the tip of the sword. The hypnotic gaze in his eyes pulls Houston closer as he uses his right arm to gently remove the scarf from her neck, tossing it into the air. In an instance as the scarf falls, Costner clutches Houston's wrist pulling her closer to him for a passionate kiss. What makes

Costner's approach seductive is the fixed look that comes from his hazel green eyes, the fact that his disposition is controlled and quieting as he appears unthreatened by Houston coming towards him with a dangerously sharp weapon.

The Touch

Categorizing sexual agencies as expressions of male desire within sex scenes, not only helps to understand the significance of performance analysis, but also stresses the importance of bodily movement and physiognomic qualities attributable to star acting. The touch in sex scenes is therefore defined as the star's use of the body in relation to other bodies in order to establish a bodily relationship with the intended scene partner. It does not however include the use of the lips which are explained within **the kiss** category. The touch is explained by the star's use of his shoulder or hand, for instance, which are used to establish bodily contact between himself and his scene partner and function as strategies of sexual performance that are significant actions coded in male desirability for the heterosexual female spectator.

In *Tin Cup* emphasis is placed on showing just a shot of Costner's hand, which he places lightly on Russo's hip (*Illustration Thirty-Six*).

***Illus. 36 Kevin Costner and Rene Russo Tin Cup
Warner Bros., 1996 The Touch***

His gentle yet purposeful touch performed with deliberacy seen here and the preciseness of his action seen in Bull Durham (***Illustration Thirty-Seven***) are what the heterosexual female spectator responds to. In the Bodyguard it is the light touch of the scarf and the tossing of it into the air which leads to a kiss.

Illus. 37 Kevin Costner Bull Durham Orion, 1988

A scene from *Dances with Wolves* shows Costner and McDowell smothered in embrace with Costner's hands rippling around McDowell's back (***Illustration Thirty-Eight***). The placement of the hands in an upward circular motion indicate controlled movements that are strong and penetrating but also suggest a moderate touch due to the separated fingers that refrain from clenching the back. These small actions function independently from Costner's other actions, making them a significant part of his performance strategy as they are isolated by the camera to stress their importance and value to heterosexual female

desire. Examining physical actions such as ones described within the touch is indeed a new way of explaining gender difference because of heavy attention given to the male body as the primary motivator of desire for the female construct.

***Illus. 38 Kevin Costner and Mary McDowell Dances with Wolves
Orion, 1990 Costner's yielding touch***

The Kiss

The kiss as a physical action of decoding sexual desire is defined as the use of the male star's mouth, lips, tongue and head in conjunction with the

intended scene partner's mouth or tongue or other body parts that in some way creates an emotional effect that unifies heterosexual female desire. In a close-up, (*Illustration Thirty-Nine*), the camera reveals Washington's performance of an on screen kiss. Washington is an unyielding performer whose movements

***Illus. 39 Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury Mississippi Marsala
Columbia Pictures, 1992 Washington's exaggerated kiss***

are exaggerated. The full lips, mouth and white teeth are performance qualities that the heterosexual female spectator responds to as he performs vacuum like kisses that consume the mouth of Sarita Choudhury in *Mississippi Marsala* (1992). Al Pacino is even more over the top than Denzel. His on screen kiss is

consistent with his vivid movements described in the look, (*Illustration Forty*). For Pacino the kiss consists of covering the entire mouth area of Michelle Pfeiffer with his mouth, holding that position and then bending the knees to deepen his kisses. Wesley Snipes' kisses unlike Pacino's consist of small pecks that seem to signify his versatility as a muscular body who is capable of displaying

***Illus. 40 Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer Frankie and Johnny
Paramount Pictures 1991.***

The Kiss. Pacino uses the entire body to perform one action

gentleness (***Illustration Forty-One***). Costner's on screen kisses however, are more traditional and less exaggerated than Washington's and Pacino's yet more fulfilling the Snipes'.

In (***Illustration Forty-Two***) from *Revenge* Costner's kisses build within the scene so that in the beginning of the scene they are slower but by the end of the scene they become quicker and stronger. In a close up, Costner slowly moves his head forward with parted lips, then tilts it to the side to kiss Stowe's lips. His lips separate even more and building upon his previous action he proceeds to kiss Stowe's mouth and the area surrounding it. Following the progression of his kisses, Costner uses his left hand, places it on Stowe's face

***Illus. 41 Wesley Snipes and Natassa Kinski One Night Stand
New Line Cinema, 1997***

to move up and down it, and then uses it to slide down the side of her dress and back up to the wall. His kisses to her mouth and face then become stronger and quicker as his head follows in circular motion.

(Illustration Forty-Three) from Tin Cup shows outlines of Costner's and Russo's bodies seen underneath sheet covers. They proceed to have simulated sex, as there is a lot of up and down gyrating movements taking place under the sheets.

***Illus. 42 Kevin Costner and Madeline Stowe Revenge
Columbia Pictures, 1990 Intensifying the Kiss***

Costner is seen on top but then slides off onto the side of her as he grabs her closer, placing small, light kisses upon her face. She snuggles closer to him and he proceeds to smell her hair. In this short kissing scene, the kiss for Costner consists of soft and delicate lip actions contrasted by the slight roughness in their body movements and him grabbing her. The kiss here for Costner signifies his versatility as a sexual performer. The audience sees little if almost nothing of what takes place under the sheets so that the scene is concentrated on the power of Costner's small kisses with Russo. For the female

heterosexual female spectator the significance of Costner's performance is that it is the contrasting images of Costner's action, which reveal a doublesideness to his sexual persona which the heterosexual female spectator attaches herself to.

***Illus. 43 Kevin Costner and Rene Russo Tin Cup
Warner Bros., 1996. Light kisses as actions of performance that
motivate heterosexual female desire***

Compared to Revenge and Tin Cup Costner's kisses in a scene from Dances with Wolves (***Illustration Forty-Four***) is equally expressive but less dangerous, humorous and simulated. Candlelight creates the mood. The kiss for Costner begins with him placing his lips lightly on McDowell's. His head moves

from side to side in a circular motion as he proceeds to slide down her body kissing her breast. He uses his hands to caress and massage the breast in a forward/backward motion while using the same gesture to massage the back with his fingertips. The extreme close-up of his actions reveals the slight, gentle actions of his performance while intensifying them to the viewer.

***Illus. 44 Kevin Costner and Mary McDowell Dances with Wolves
Orion, 1990***

Costner's **kiss** in the sex scene from The Postman (1997), (***Illustration Forty-Five***) like Dances with Wolves and Revenge build as the scene progresses intensifying simple actions of performance. In an extreme close-up the mouths

of Olivia Williams and Costner are seen coming together while their noses brush lightly. His body is positioned over hers while his eyes look at her motionlessly with the familiar methodical "look" used in previous performances, revealing an aspect of his sexual virtuosity as a male performer. Williams uses her arms to reach up to Costner, wrapping them around his neck as he proceeds to kiss her mouth and surrounding areas of the face as his does in Revenge.

***Illus. 45 Kevin Costner and Olivia Williams The Postman
Warner Bros., 1997. Building the Kiss.***

Vocal Complexity

The voice, like physical actions of performance, is also a strategy of performance that is significant to the star's performer code of performance. It is a category of performance that functions independently however from bodily movements, and is coded with identifiable inflections that are traceable to the star's identity. The star's voice is coded with vocal inflections that emphasize tonality, pitch levels, stress on syllables and consonants, in addition to inflections in breathing patterns within phrases that motivate performance to levels of audience sustainability. The voice is a critical aspect of performance that deserves attention because of its power to drive performance to levels that can separate it from bodily performance, engaging the spectator in a form of expressivity that is often unique due to performance situations that require various vocal strategies. Vocal performance therefore becomes a compelling presence within performance due to its ability to draw attention to itself and as a strategy of performance that is used or not used by the star, can have complex meaning and signification that is analyzed and defined within performance analysis as **vocal complexity**.

Vocal complexity for Costner when analyzed outside of sexual agencies of performance for example is typically medium in pitch and tone. He does not make inflections that bring the voice down in tone or pitch but instead maintains a vocal evenness that signifies a consistency in his vocal performance similar to

his bodily performance. Costner's speech patterns and pauses within phrases fluctuate between pitch levels only slightly, inflecting vocal patterns that cause air to be contained within the voice box rather than flow directly from it so that Costner's vocal strategy is also yielding.

In the sex scenes described, Costner uses little or no vocal sound. In a scene from the *Bodyguard*, Costner and Houston are seen lying in bed together, (*Illustration Forty-Six*). He lies shirtless so that the chest and stomach are revealed, signifying his submission and vulnerability yet at the same time one arm rests on his chest while the other wraps around her neck extending around her shoulder signifying his protectiveness and safety of a woman. While in bed, Costner speaks. His voice is raspy. Air and sound travel through the throat, out of the mouth and then his voice drops down in tone. Words are spoken at a whisper, drawing the female spectator close to his image. In the sex scenes described in *Bull Durham* and *Tin Cup*, Costner's voice is again low in tone, raspy and whispery in sound revealing an aspect of vocal complexity that is also desirable to the heterosexual female spectator. However, in the sex scene from *Dances with Wolves*, with Mary McDowell Costner does not use his voice. Yet in the *Postman*, Costner's vocal tone is less serious and due to small inflections between phrases that elevate his vocal performance offering a different Costner that is comedic. His tone is nasal in sound causing his voice to rise in pitch rather than lower as in the *Bodyguard*. Costner's speech pattern in *The Postman*

scene is paused with short phrases whereas in the *Bodyguard* the silences between sentences appear longer, intensifying the power of his vocal complexity and his image as a star performer.

Illus. 46 Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston the Bodyguard Warner Bros., 1992. Separating the voice from the body

Summary

Present performance research talks around the subject of the body and the voice in performance if at all. It explores the moral, cultural, psychological and sexual dimensions of the body and the voice as they relate to the world we live in, a clear indication that the body and the voice function as expressive powers which motivate human behavior. In order to better understand the dynamics surrounding the expressive nature of the body and the voice as art forms, they must be discussed independently of any external factors such as theories or narrative context, which disguise their virtuosity and expressivity. The body and the voice throughout performance research have been supported by Freudian, Marxist, Foucaultian, and some feminist theorists, who have provided a solid foundation of critical thinking that has shaped performance studies in meaningful ways. However, these theories can be expanded to include the hidden meanings and power behind two forces of performance which when analyzed reveal new theories and methods that help to explain complicated phenomena.

One approach is to explain performance semiotically. This requires decontextualizing the body and voice and recognizing that each part or sound has its own expressive quality that can be examined during movement, static form, and vocally or non-vocally. In doing so, it is determined that the nature of

bodily and vocal performance is in fact shaped by the “signs” or codes of performance attributable to the star performing particular actions or certain vocal inflections. Yet, this is still an area of performance analysis that needs further clarification due to the tensions that are with performance contexts such as tensions between the performance code, “external” elements of performance, and the performer code, or tensions between the narrative and the performer code. The movie *Blade Runner* is coded with performance tensions that are related to sexual and cultural identities which also separate Ford from that context. Repeated reference within the performance code of *Blade Runner* are made to Asian culture and identities in addition to diverse representations of female identities. These are key devices that are used to sustain audience attention and are what drive performances (*Illustration Four*). Pleasure values arise for the spectator due to these tensions within performance elements and a performer’s code and are therefore less associated narrative qualities of performance.

The purpose of discussing gender difference in relation to the heterosexual female spectator and male stardom is to arrive at a better understanding of what devices within a male’s performer code sustain or expose the nature of heterosexual female desire which is mainly subjective. Male performance is explained specifically within stardom because stars themselves are unexplained phenomena, despite all that has been written on them. By

studying the connection between male stars and the heterosexual female spectator it is revealed that stars not only function as models of action to accommodate spectator desire but stars also exist because they motivate spectator desire on a large scale. A star does not become a star unless he proves himself at the box office and longevity as a star is due to repeated box office hits, making stardom an intriguing topic. Indeed, stardom is an area that few have explained in terms of the star's box office hits versus motivators of spectator desire. Performance can be understood by the impact that signs have on those who read them taking us away from conventional mechanisms by opening up perceptions which allow us to see performance differently. Perception has an implied meaning of subjectivity that is relative to shaping the value of performance for the spectator. Desire for the heterosexual female spectator is therefore explained by providing a system for understanding the value of how subjectivity shapes performance in terms of defining the way in which star qualities of maleness and male desirability impact female perception. Kevin Costner is important because he is a unique star who accommodates mainly heterosexual female desire. He is the subversion of what the Hollywood star system defines as "male." He appears ordinary and almost plain on the surface and does not possess rugged, muscular qualities like other male figures. Analyzing the Costner image has been complicated because of peculiar contradictions within his wholesome, clean-cut image or persona revealed

primarily through close-ups, compared to the actions he performs on screen. Costner's performer code is indicative of contradicting physiognomic qualities that are decoded as expressions of maleness which relate to femaleness in ways that expose her subjectivity. Progressive feminist thinking as it relates to performance analysis does acknowledge the female voice as an active one but extends it to defining that voice as subjective, heterosexual and one that becomes attached to images of maleness due to physiognomic qualities of male desirability. In the case of male stardom, codes of male desirability consist of physical actions that describe the uniqueness of the performer's code and the expressive values placed on the heterosexual female spectator by the star. All stars have this ability to dominate viewer perception with underlying signifying practices and for this reason it becomes difficult to connect male stardom to heterosexual female desire without establishing a systematic method of viewing the performance and the values that shape the performance. Indeed, it is almost impossible, for it is the actions of the star and the star's performer code which define the performance dominating and shaping viewer perception.

Star acting involves analyzing how a star performs certain actions or movements which reveal the star persona. Star analysis is defined by how the star performs certain physical actions rather than concentrating on character portrayal because it is through the performance of the actions that the star identity is revealed not the identity of the character he portrays. Categorized in

terms of physiognomy of performance, star bodies are framed within different historical and filmic contexts and are discussed in relation to the body's tensions between itself, the camera, other bodies, and vocal complexities which all construct and define the expressiveness of the star image.

Gender differences are expanded in performance studies by clarifying the instability of the heterosexual female spectator connecting her to an area of male performance that establishes a theoretical basis for understanding subjectivity. Studies in performance do recognize the power of the body in performance but tend to understate the expressiveness of the body by responding to its expressiveness rather than stressing the importance of the signs which shape bodily value and impact on pleasure values contained within all performance mediums. New directions in performance studies begin with the value of bodily and vocal performance in relation to any one of the historical, dramatic, cultural, media, performance, or performer codes that are within every performance. Using a viable system of analysis that categorizes performance according to codes that impact upon viewer perception reveals the true nature of performance which is to motivate spectator desire, changing our perceptions of the world we live in by identifying what is not seen on screen or within the performance medium and revealing what is significant about it.

In conclusion, analyzing gender difference as it relates to heterosexual female desire and male stardom reveals that stars are not made as previously

thought. This is a misconception which is debunked by evidence that suggests that the star phenomenon goes deeper than the manufacturing process. Stars are one of a kind unique beings who possess charismatic, unduplicated qualities which are present in their persona. Second, males stars, although they dominate on screen performances, have inspired little published commentary on how or why they dominate heterosexual female perception. A system of subjectivity has explained the star phenomenon conclusively as physiognomic male attributes and physical actions that construct the performance of the male image. The illustrations of Kevin Costner are useful because they function as evidence of how a male star discloses his image to the heterosexual female spectator. Without evidence of the performance it becomes difficult to read and analyze the significance of the performance, the star's image and how his code migrates across performance structures, impacting heterosexual female desire. Performance studies and analysis are elevated by these new systematic performance models which help to explain performance in new terms.

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