

2000

Performer code : features that define star performance

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PERFORMER CODE: FEATURES THAT DEFINE STAR PERFORMANCE

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

Master of Arts

By

Donna Chesnut

May 2000

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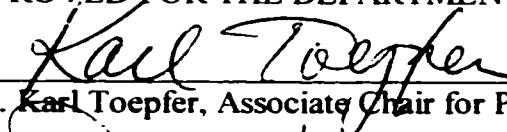
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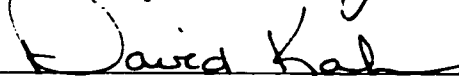
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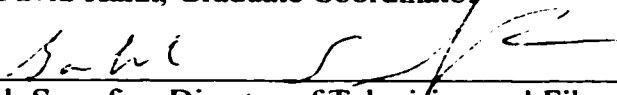
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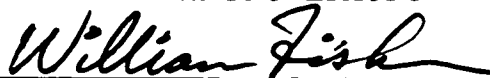


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ABSTRACT

PERFORMER CODE: FEATURES THAT DEFINE STAR PERFORMANCE

by Donna Chesnut

This thesis addresses the features of performance that define 'star' performance. The analyses of these features show the importance of the message of the star performer code. The performer code encompasses signifying practices that are unique to a performer because they recur only in the performance of the performer, regardless of the historical or narrative contexts in which the performer appears. The most dominant feature of the performer code is physiognomy. The achievements of two star performers: Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh were used as the method to interpret the evidence.

Research on this subject reveals that insight into performance determines the meaning of the performance, not the narrative intention. Understanding the message of the performer code and the dominance that physiognomy plays in the signifying practices reveals star performance.

Dedication:

This thesis is dedicated to my husband Dean.

With his unconditional love, support, and guidance he encouraged the writing of this thesis, his tolerance effected the completion, and his words, "this too shall pass" helped turn my wavering sanity into devotion.

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Karl Toepfer for his enthusiastic mentoring style, his scholarship, friendship and his unrelenting belief in performance.

Dr. David Kahn for his devotion to excellence, friendship, his scholarship and his belief "that you have to kill your darlings."

Scott Sublett for teaching me that "conflict drives drama" and that "you have to make decisions."

Barnaby Dallas for his friendship and leadership.

Jim Culley, Dave Guzzetta and Nick Amin, for their time and patience in their assistance in turning film into captured photos.

Dona Nichols for her support, friendship, leadership and her smile.

My Mother, Donna Thomas for her interests in Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh, her patience and understanding.

My sister and muse Franny Stoner, for her incessant, antidotal concern and her uncanny ability to ground me.

And to God for blessing me with the much prayed for *clarity of thought*.

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Chapter One - *Defining what is Relevant*

Performer Code: Features that Define Star Performance

What are the features of performance that define "star" performance? To answer such a question entails close examination of the evidence of star performance. How does one identify such evidence and interpret it or determine its significance? To provide an efficient method for answering such questions, it is useful to analyze the achievements of two star performers: Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh.

This thesis examines the importance of the message of the star performer code and how it relates to star performance regardless of role. It also explores the directors' camera angles and lighting selected to present Bette Davis' and Vivien Leigh's performances. These selections are inspired by Davis' and Leigh's performances and are executed by the director and then viewed as the star performance. The star performance refers to Davis' and Leigh's performer code and how it remains the same despite the directors' filmic choices. The performer code encompasses signifying practices that are unique to a performer because they recur only in the performance of the performer, regardless of the narrative contexts in which the performer appears (Toepfer 150). Davis' and Leigh's signifying practices include but are not limited to, physiognomy, head and facial gestures, vocal tone, body language, and gait. Signifying practices make up Davis' and Leigh's performer code and this uniqueness is chiseled into their stardom.

Most analysis of star performance focuses on narrative values, biographical issues, or critiques characters within a narrative. This research centers on performance and identifying the dynamics of Bette Davis' and Vivien Leigh's performer code, the

uniqueness of their star performances and the physiognomic aspects of their star images. This research analysis shows that directorial choices have limited relevance to Davis' and Leigh's performance because it is their *star* personalities that demand certain directorial filmic elements. The directors' choices that enhance Davis' and Leigh's performances are filmic. Filmic decisions discussed include the type of shots, camera angles and the lighting. These devices applied by the director are in alliance with Davis' and Leigh's signifying practices and they accentuate their performances.

Research regarding performance tends to include everything but the evidence of performance. This research analyzes Davis' and Leigh's actual star performer code emerging from their performances rather than from characters they played. It distinguishes the difference between performance code and performer code. Performance code is a complex of signs or conventions related to the narrative. A performance code defines opportunities, ideas or feelings are *not* specific to the any one star or actor. Any actor can imitate a performance code. A performer code refers to the signifying practices that are unique to a performer because they recur only in the performance of that performer, regardless of the narrative contexts in which the performer appears. The dominant aspect of a star's performer code is physiognomy. Physiognomy refers to the body features, size, shape, structure or appearance that in essence controls the star's identity. The physiognomy commands the performer code, meaning that bodily dynamics influence demeanor, attitude, actions, and drama. The identification of the specific performer codes of Davis and Leigh provides the potentiality in rethinking the individual stars' contribution to star performance.

The previous discourse is inadequate in understanding the physical presence of the performance of a star. However it provides examples of how a star's performance is enhanced by camera angles and is examined in Barbara Bowman's book *Master Space*. Bowman quite thoroughly describes director William Wyler's use of traditional double framing. Double framing can signify restriction or imprisonment in Wyler's films. Bowman states that both *The Little Foxes* (1941) and *The Letter* (1940) condemn the Bette Davis characters to a sort of self-imposed finality: Regina played by Davis moves away from the camera and is double-framed through the rails of the staircase associated with her ruthless acts. The effect is interesting and it certainly does clearly describe Davis' wickedness but Bowman does not describe the intensity of Davis' performer code like her eyes or how her glance was held several moments longer to convey her fear. What Davis *makes happen* is what stirs spectators' emotions, not the fact that she did it behind Wyler's interesting double framing. Bowman's description falls short when Davis' performance is not mentioned. These inadequacies in understanding the physical presence in performance hinder the viewers' ability to interpret the physiognomy of a star's performance and not just the directors' choices. Roberta Pearson, in her book *Eloquent Gestures*, briefly offers Richard Dyer's definition of performance "as what the performer does in addition to the actions/functions he performs in the plot and the lines he is given to say" (5). Cardullo takes the position in *Playing to the Camera* that it is hard to analyze on-screen ability.

Stars' performer talent comes in part from her sexuality, from concentration, and from her professional touch of certainty. This professional touch of certainty can be interpreted as their performer code. The stars' actual performance comes from her

signifying practices: her physiognomy, her mannerisms, and her well-developed personality. Cardullo implies that although the quality of the voice may have something to do with it, it is *personality* that dominates perception of the performance (Cardullo, et al 96). This point is one that can be agreed upon -- Davis' and Leigh's personalities project through in their performer code and the evidence lies in their star performances. For instance, Bette Davis playing Baby Jane Hudson in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), clearly that was Davis' performance, Davis' personality, it was clearly Davis. And Vivien Leigh playing Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), it was Leigh's performance of Scarlet that made it the success it was in film history. It is also implied in *Visible Fictions* that the film stars' performance produces the effect that, in its incidental rather than intended moments, reveals something of the essence of the stars' personality (Ellis 49). Incidental rather than intended moments are notable, but Davis and Leigh are stars based on their performances, spectators come to see all of their moments. Davis intended to embody Baby Jane Hudson with her personality, Leigh's personality embodied Scarlet O'Hara, they both created their star performances, intentionally.

The effects from within the film (the directors' devices) or from beyond the film (the film stars' devices or performer code) foster an effect which allows the performance to escape the boundaries of fiction. Conceptually, this means that by using the stars' performer code observed by directors' devices -- the film places the spectator in a position of cognitively accepting the star performance as less than fiction, or something that is almost real (Ellis 49). This thesis is in agreement with the more recent view of Cardullo, who states that "The star's personality projects her inner force, she makes it

leap across the footlights or from the screen. It is a wonder, for those who have it, and a mystery" (Cardullo, et al 96).

There are many ways of describing personality, but the portrayal of personality that this thesis probes is that of the film stars' performance personality. This is the presentation that appears when Davis' or Leigh's performer code receives the spectators' gaze on the movie screen. Davis' and Leigh's images are enhanced in part by the directors' lights, camera angles, but mostly by their natural being, their personality. Personality can be conveyed in many ways, the most immediate is through external factors, physiognomy, such as physical appearance - which includes age, gender, coloring, height, body and general demeanor, all merely clues to internal personality. Tangible facts anchor the intangible qualities of people -- who they really are. For instance, the tangibility of Vivien Leigh's petite, wispy physiognomy directly affects her performances. She is able to personify the fragile Blanche DeBous in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). Her body style creates an image for her that directly comes through in her performance. Davis' or Leigh's particular performer code is what created their stardom, their mystery. It is this mystery of the psyche that ultimately keeps the spectator fascinated with images of other human beings (Douglass and Harnden 100). The mystery of their distinctiveness keeps spectators interested in Davis' and Leigh's performances. This mystery is what makes them stars and their uniqueness is driven by their physiognomies and is projected through their performer code and into their performances. The director draws upon their personalities enhancing those mysteries by placing together the right combination of camera angles, framing and lighting intensifying this uniqueness. The more a role has to give a star, the more the star has the opportunity to

project their performer code, and the more the director can enhance the projection of that performance image, such as in a two or three-dimensional character. This type of character provides more depth for a star to perform and more for the director to strengthen with lighting and camera angles. When a character is established on the screen, an initial question to ask is: "What is unique?" Answering this question lifts the character out of the realm of stereotype (Douglass and Harnden 101), such as Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1939) who was a rich, lively socialite *and* who also was dying. A second facet potentially breaks away from many of the anticipated stereotypes. Three-dimensional characters, characters with complexity and multiple facets, have depth and even greater potential interest (Douglass and Harnden 102). Davis' opportunity to demonstrate the depth of her performance is strengthened by having a multifaceted role to utilize.

The stars' uniqueness, her physical gestures, delivery of lines and expressions are different than supporting actors. The supporting group has to produce emphasis in the gestures and delivery of lines and expression simply to signify the required meanings. For the star, it is different. For Davis and Leigh, they have the attention of their spectators and are recognized figures because of their performer code. For Davis and Leigh it is their recognized voice, body language, gestures, face and figure, even if no stable meanings accumulate to those features in their star images, the spectator knows them to be a star. In addition to the devices that film stars use, the directors' devices corroborate performance; therefore, anything that the star does becomes significant. Hence the star is permitted to under-act, compared to the supporting cast, and this under-acting performance produces the effect that the star behaves rather than acts. This effect

is due to the familiarity of their performer code. Spectators become accustomed to seeing Davis and Leigh on screen and identify their star qualities by their performances. Stars like Davis and Leigh, produce a very explicit regime of expression that is again divergent from that of the supporting cast. Davis and Leigh achieved a level of excellence in their star devices, in which they placed profound importance on each gesture enhancing the very artistic natures of their performances. After all, as Bordwell states, "the fundamental problem of cinema is to express thought" (Bordwell 65). Davis and Leigh expressed thought through their performer code.

Davis and Leigh were chosen for this research fairly fortuitously, but with some rationale. Both stars are from the same era, are contemporaries, and have been considered for the same roles. The impetus is that they are both firmly established stars and this research is about stars' performance. Specifically, Bette Davis is selected because of her interesting performance values. She also has an extensive film career, which means the accessibility of her films to study the uniqueness of her performances. Due to her lengthy career, tracking Davis' performer code throughout her film history was instrumental for the documentation of the distinctive qualities of her star performances. Davis possesses an unusual physiognomy for such an enormous star. She is an expert in using this uniqueness to her advantage and this expertise thrust Davis into stardom. Davis performs remarkable roles and does not place restrictions on her performances. Because of Davis' unconventional beauty she is able to press the envelope challenging many of the then societal conventions of what is expected of women and how they should look and perform. The decision to chose Vivien Leigh is based upon her star performance in *Gone with the Wind*, David O. Selznick's preference in selecting Leigh

over Davis for the starring role of Scarlet O'Hara, her profound beauty, and her choice of roles played in her career. Leigh's demanding performance in *Gone with the Wind* is one of the most memorable roles ever performed by anyone and it caused spectators to recognize her as a star. Selznick's choice in selecting Leigh over many of the other stars, including Bette Davis, is due to Leigh's beauty and physiognomy. Leigh's beauty is extraordinary and her figure delicate. These aspects alone prompted this thesis' exploration of how beauty and physiognomy affects Davis' and Leigh's choice of roles and in their star performances.

The aspects of Bette Davis' performer code being examined are the smile/snicker - which equates to a tightened face and lips drawn tightly into a half smile. A smile/snicker can be accompanied with a raised eyebrow, wide eyes or squinted eyes. This is a performer code is unique to Bette Davis' performance and it takes place when Bette Davis is touched emotionally, usually with anger or annoyance. It is her emotional release of a memory or feeling that completely takes over her face. She uses her code as a pivoting point in a dramatic scene.

The aspects of Vivien Leigh's performer code being examined are the raised brow/smile - pertaining to her arched brow, a pouting half smile, which can be accompanied with extreme hand gestures or nodding movements of the head. This is a performer code unique to Vivien Leigh and it signifies her disbelief/dissatisfaction. She also uses gestures to signify a situation in her favor.

These performer codes are unique to Davis and Leigh because they are the sole animators of their physiognomies. Performance is physiognomy driven and is the most powerful and original element in the performer code. The body of the star dominates

perception of all sign production and therefore constitutes a central objective of analysis in relation to the star performer code. Even a star that masks and disguises herself, which completely conceals a truthful image of her body has made physiognomy central to the construction of her performer code. In this respect, the performer code, like the performance code, remains aligned to cognitive controls over perception (Toepfer 156).

The method used to explain the evidence is semantics, of or pertaining to meaning, the study of relationships between signs and symbols and what they represent. The mission of semantics or semiotics is to study arts and media as languages or language systems -- technical structures with inherent laws governing not only what is "*said*" but also how it is "*said*." Semiotics attempts to describe the codes and systems of structure that operate in cultural phenomena. It does this by using a linguistic model; that is, the semiotics of film describes film as a "language" (Monaco 14). And recently, it has presented an interesting approach to the logical description of the language-like phenomenon of film and the other recording arts. "Film may not have grammar but it does have systems of codes. It does not, strictly speaking, have a vocabulary, but it does have a system of signs" (Monaco 44). As Christian Metz, the well-known film semiotician, pointed out: we understand film not because we have knowledge of its system, rather, we achieve an understanding of its system because we understand the film. Put another way, "It is not because the cinema has language that it can tell such fine stories, but rather it has become language because it has told such fine stories" (47). Pertaining to semiotics, a sign must consist of two parts: the signifier and signified. The word "chair," for example -- the collection of letters or sounds -- is a signifier; what it represents is something else again -- the "signified" or a piece of furniture. Films do,

however, manage to communicate meaning. They do this essentially in two different manners: to denote, to be a mark or a sign of, to indicate, like: *a fever denotes an infection*, or meaning something signified or referred to, specifically or explicitly. And to connote, to signify or suggest (certain meanings, ideas, etc.) in addition to the explicit or primary meaning: *To me, a fireplace connotes comfort and hospitality* or the act of suggesting or implying in addition to a literal, explicit sense. A film image or sound has a denotative meaning: it is what it is and we do not have to strive to recognize it. This factor may seem simplistic, but it should never be underestimated: here lies the strength of film. Film also has its own specific connotative ability where a filmmaker has made specific choices. For example: Bette Davis is filmed from a certain angle, the camera moves or does not move. The lens of the camera can be tinted, changing Davis' coloring. Davis can look fresh or fading and her clothing can be apparent or subtle, the background clear (so that Davis is seen in context) or vague (so that Davis appears to be isolated), the shot held for a long time or briefly, and so on. These are specific aids to cinematic connotation, and although we can approximate their effect in literature, we cannot accomplish it with cinematic precision or efficiency. When our sense of the connotation of a specific shot depends on its having been chosen from a range of other possible shots then we can say that this is, using the language of semiotics, a paradigmatic connotation. That is, the connotative sense we comprehend *Davis* from the shot being compared, not necessarily consciously, with its unrealized companions in the paradigm, or general mode, of this type of shot. For example, we see Bette Davis while the filmmaker can choose to film her in an infinite variety of ways (Monaco 127-132). For filmmaking, semiotics provides two axes of meaning (being a relationship among linguistic elements),

the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. Paradigmatic: pertaining to elements that can substitute for each other in a given context like: *sun* in *the sun is shining* other nouns could substitute for it, like: *star or light*). And the syntagmatic: an element that occurs sequentially, as the relationship between *the sun* and *is shining* in *the sun is shining*). Paradigms and syntax have apparent significance as tools for understanding what film means. Film depends almost entirely upon these two sets of choices. After a filmmaker has decided what to shoot, the two obsessive questions are how to shoot it (what choices to make: the paradigmatic) and how to present the shot (how to edit it: the syntagmatic). Semiotics, so far, has concentrated on the syntagmatic aspect of film, for a very simple reason: it is here that film is most clearly different from other arts, so that the syntagmatic category (editing, montage) is in a sense the most "cinematic" (Monaco 132-133).

To differentiate the various modes of denotation and connotation in film, borrowing a "trichotomy" from the philosopher C.S. Peirce, Peter Wollen, in the book *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969), suggested that cinematic signs are of three orders. The Icon: a sign in which the signifier represents the signified mainly by its similarity to it, its likeness, *a picture, an image or a representation*. The Index: which means a quality not because it is identical to it but because it has an inherent relationship to it, *an indicator*. The Symbol: an arbitrary sign in which the signifier has neither a direct nor an indexical relationship to the signified, *a material object representing something immaterial, an emblem or sign* (Monaco 132-133).

Film semiotics is an intellectual field of study in its own right and can shed interesting light on how a film conveys meaning. The emphasis in semiotics is more purely anthropological, philosophical -- even political -- however, and is not intended to

illuminate film and the filmmaking processes so much as to illuminate the workings of the human mind (Douglass and Harnden 250).

Given the vastness of the field of semiotics, this research is concerned with the appropriate element of the field regarding Davis' and Leigh's connotative and denotative performance in film and the paradigmatic and syntagmatic fields of the director. Director, Alfred Hitchcock, for example, has made a number of very popular films. We could ascribe his critical and popular success to the subjects of his films -- certainly the thriller strikes a deep responsive chord in audiences -- but then how do we account for the failed thrillers of his imitators? Dmytryk, in *On Screen Directing*, states that the drama of film, its attraction, lies not so much in what is shot (drama of the subject), but in how it is shot (paradigmatic) and how it is presented (syntagmatic). Hitchcock was the master par excellence of these two critical tasks and used extreme close-ups superbly to instill fear and terror as his characters reacted to startling or inhuman confrontations (74). Like Tippi Hedren's character, Melanie Daniels', extreme close-ups in Hitchcock's, *The Birds*. Those close ups of Hedren being pecked by the birds played an important component in providing a sense of imminent peril in her performance. But what about Bette Davis' signifying practices in her portrayal of Baby Jane Hudson in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* Her performance in this thriller was dramatic and chilling. The significance of her personality, attitude, overt facial dynamics as well as expressiveness in her body language made her spectators have no doubt that Davis was as psychotic as Baby Jane Hudson (Figs. 29-35).

Directorial filmic choices enhance and showcase the stars' performance for the spectator but it is the star that does the presenting. In other words, the *drama*, in her

performer code is what the star is and that is created through her physiognomy, which in turn conveys meaning through her performance and that is what is being filmed. For instance Davis' smile/snicker in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* during an argument with Joan Crawford (Blanche) reveals a cutting condemnation. The syntax or editing is important, the paradigm or camera angles and lighting are important too, but these things are tools to present Davis' performance image in the best light possible. It is Davis' star performance that is being presented. Semiotics focuses on codes that need to be revealed to determine values of performance and to interpret the directors' techniques in relationship to them. Directors use the two axes to convey meaning -- paradigmatic, which are camera angles and lighting; and syntagmatic, are their editing choices. Davis and Leigh communicate meaning in their performances through the use of connotative and denotative attributes conveyed through their performer code (Monaco 133). Much of cinematic meaning comes not from what we see (or hear) but from what we do not see or, more accurately, from an ongoing process of comparison of what we see with what we do not see. This is ironic, considering that cinema at first glance seems to be an art that is all too evident, one that is often criticized for "leaving nothing to the imagination" (Monaco 136-137). Semiotics approaches problems in a theoretical sense, but simply put, semiotics releases meaning from intention (Toepfer Semiotics 9/8/99). Meaning that, through the method of sign analysis, the slightest hint of intention in performance can be deciphered.

Research materials used in this thesis include close analysis of text, and the film videos of Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh. The discussion includes how Davis' and Leigh's performer code demanded certain filmic elements from the directors' technique.

Particularly close attention was paid to the physiognomy of Davis' and Leigh's signifying practices, how they were revealed in their performances and the enhancement of their personalities by directors' techniques. The directors' techniques studied are lighting, framing and camera angles that are utilized to assist in projecting Davis' and Leigh's performances. Explanations of what created the relationship of Davis' and Leigh's actions (performance messages) and the directors' intentions (camera angles, lighting choices or the framing of the stars) will be specified in the specific scenes chosen. The results will distinguish the performances of Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh, interpret their star performer code and identify what distinguishes them as stars.

Chapter Two - *Use of Lighting, Camera Angles and Framing Techniques*

Because the inventory of camera angles and framing techniques is expansive, this thesis is limited to considering only those, which are most important to the production of Davis' and Leigh's performance, image. Previous discourse has analyzed performance as it relates to directors' camera angles by describing the camera frame as the window on the world. What the spectator sees through the window, as defined by lens focal length, determines how small a detail or large a part of the scene the spectators can watch and how close or far they feel they are to the action on the screen. For instance, the human figure in a wide-shot (WS) surrounded by environment -- trees, office buildings, an empty room -- might convey a sense of vulnerability, isolation, and aloneness. If we frame the action continuously in WS, the imposed distance quickly discourages audience involvement. An example of a WS is used in the scene in which Davis arrives on her horse in the film *Jezebel* (1938). The feeling of isolation that this style of shot and camera angle evokes helped in exemplifying Davis' character that demanded to be removed from the conventionalities of the others, so she is shown arriving late, quickly paced down the road and in a wild, barely controllable mode of transportation. Another example used in the very next scene in *Jezebel*, Davis is marching into her party riding stick thrown over her shoulder indicating to all her individuality (Fig. 1).

High-angle WS can emphasize scale and magnitude, for example, the scene in *The African Queen* (1952) when the camera looks down on Humphrey Bogart's boat lost in a sea of reeds near the film's conclusion. And when Butch and Sundance are running from the law in the barren wastes of the desert in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), are just a couple of examples. Conventionally, the camera is craned up to a high-angle

WS giving the spectators the feeling of departure from the story, is used frequently as the final shot of the film (Douglass and Harnden 79-80). A nice example of the contrast of the medium-shot to the wide-shot to the high-angle wide-shot, is the denouement (wrap up) of the recent movie, *The Matrix* (1999). On-screen personality Keanu Reeves stands in a telephone booth framed in a medium-shot, followed by a wide-shot which includes the neighborhood in which the phone booth stands and then lastly, the vastness of New York City in its entirety in a high-angle wide-shot.

Medium-shots (MS) bracket human action and interaction. They provide enough of the background to maintain a sense of context, yet concentrate attention on the human subject. MS show only part of the human figure so that large body movements sweep across the screen as more powerful gestures than in wide shots. MS's show facial expression clearly, together with body movement and location surroundings. In a single frame, the director can show Davis' and Leigh's full range of dramatic action and reaction, from their facial expressions to large body movements. An example of this is Davis toasting her guests in *Jezebel* (Fig. 8). Another name for a wide MS is a *two-shot*. As the term implies, the two-shot holds two people in interaction. For example, in the confining scene of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* Davis has postulated complete power over Crawford and this is illustrated by director Aldrich's observant choice of a two-shot (Figs. 29-35). Aldrich's choice in combination with Davis' performer code gives spectators a strong signification of Davis' and Crawford's imprisonment together. In some scenes, dominated by shots no wider than a MS, a feeling of confinement balances and compliments Davis' tense dramatic action. The interior treatment of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1964), as the night

becomes more drunken and hostile, is another example of this claustrophobic use of the MS. One important use of the MS, both for narrative and for the evocation of mood, is the close juxtaposition of significant subjects, characters, and objects -- in the same frame. Framing characters with objects or animals -- a cat in the corner chair, a talisman or family totem, a weapon, a suggestive sculpture, a telltale professional tool -- is a common technique borrowed from a painting convention that goes back to the Middle Ages. This technique builds mood and character by associating people with objects (Douglass and Harnden 80-81). One example is the mirror in the antique store window that Vivien Leigh looks at in the *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (Fig. 76). Leigh stands peering in the window at the mirror, (which is a metaphor for her fleeing beauty) and she removes her sunglasses as if to catch a peek of that beauty. Instead of her reflection appearing, as spectators would expect, her stalker's reflection emerges. He stands to the right and behind her, she becomes frightened, drops her sunglasses, (her shield) turns abruptly around and then flees (Figs. 76, 77).

The directors' close-up (CU) of the human face is the most powerful shot for the evocation of mood and the expression of emotion. For example, the director frames the image of Davis with a CU (Figs. 16-18). The camera will reflect what Davis thinks; the budging of her eyes, her smile/snicker or the raising of an eyebrow. All the subtleties of Davis, her character, her intention, and her feelings are visible to us in her face, and are revealed in a CU. "Look" shots are revealed in any of Davis' or Leigh' films these are CU shots of their reactions shown in facial expressions to the situation and to other actors in the scene (Figs. 42-46). These reaction shots are especially effective in conveying mood and interpreting a scene for spectators. CU's can exaggerate the force of Davis' sudden

movements toward Crawford, magnify the significance of telltale facial gestures of a smile/snicker or show the intensity of the raised eyebrow (Figs. 29-35). They can confine the spectators' view of a scene to pique curiosity, build mystery, or add suspense (Fig. 93). They can enlarge and fill the screen with the world of the very small (the opening shot of the ants and scorpion in *The Wild Bunch*, (1969) for example.) (Douglass and Harnden 81). CU shots can deliver the spectators into close confrontation with the beautiful, like Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (Figs. 64, 65) or the grotesque, Bette Davis playing Baby Jane Hudson in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Fig. 35)

Henry Fonda once said in an interview, "A movie director knows how he is going to tell his story with the camera. He looks to camera angles to bring out something more than what is in the script" (Cardullo, et al 290). Camera angles, like camera framing, can be a powerful element enhancing Davis' and Leigh's on-screen performance. Camera angles produce different effects according to degree. For example, a low-angle shot slightly below Davis' eye level causes the her to appear somewhat dominant but not necessarily threatening (Figs. 36-38), whereas a more extreme low-angle shot can make the subject appear to loom and seem very threatening or triumphant. Extreme low-angle shots, from the floor, can create an exaggerated and bizarre effect -- the fantasy perspective of a tiny creature in a land of giants. Another example takes place in *Citizen Kane* (1941) in the dialogue between Kane and the drunken Jedidiah in the newsroom office after the election is lost. Conversely high-angle shots slightly above eye can make the subject seem somewhat yielding but not necessarily endangered, subjugated, or forlorn. Like in this confrontational shot between Bette Davis and George Brent in *Dark Victory* (1939) (Fig. 4). More extreme high-angle shots can reduce the subject to a state

of utter defeat. For example, the high-angle shot in the *Dead Poets Society* (1989), after young Neil has returned home and is unable to confront his father he sits in total misery and contemplates his suicide.

Near frontal shots, especially CU involve the spectator in *character*, for example, as Davis draws the camera in closer, the focus of the spectators' attention would be on Bette Davis' facial expressions, exactly where she directs them to be (Figs. 16-18) or on Vivien Leigh's magnificent pouting smile (Figs. 64, 65).

A common angle shot is the front three-quarter MS, which opens up the face to show expression. It provides for a dynamic composition with perspective receding frame right or frame left. For example, in this scene in *All About Eve* (1950), Davis is in a confrontation, the camera is lured to Davis capturing her physiognomy as she fidgets with her bow the scene intensifies and she reveals a sense of fury in these three-quarter front over-the-shoulder MS (Figs. 23-26). Shots like these would be followed by a more frontal CU reaction shot emphasizing emotions. For example, we can see what Bette Davis, in this scene is doing (action) or with whom she is involved (interaction). The camera angle picks up the sensation of dynamics between them (Douglass and Harnden 82).

The working element between stars like Vivien Leigh and Bette Davis and the directors' camera can become quite imaginative. When Davis performed this scene in *Jezebel* a long distance from the camera it enabled her to focus on her stride and her image and creating a more comfortable feeling for performance (Fig. 1). But, a shift to medium shots makes it necessary for Davis to come much closer to the camera (Fig. 8). Sometimes the director wishes to rearrange the scene and suggests to Davis to turn her

face to the left or right making it impossible for her to see her partner, and still carrying on a dialogue with an invisible partner is no easy matter. But Davis makes it appear effortless.

Most complex shots for stars are CU with dialogues. For instance, Vivien Leigh's cathartic CU in *Ship of Fools* (1965) is shot with the camera positioned as her vanity *mirror*. Leigh sits confiding into her mirror (the camera) and applies her make-up (Fig. 83). At times in this scene, Leigh is apparently nervous and distracted by the absence of her mirror image and does not have the advantage of playing off her *partner* in this case it was herself. This being the circumstance, Leigh occasionally looks at a certain point in the camera and off to the side imagining those points to be her mirror image (Fig. 86). This CU connotes anxiety for Leigh and in her strain to visualize her image with no reflection back it affects her performance. Another example of the intensity of a CU in a love scene between Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable in *Gone with the Wind* where it is the camera's lens she is arousing, not Gable. The stars cues are generally given by the director, who for technical reasons, cannot always take up the position from which, in this scene, Gable is supposed to speak. In this case, it can be confusing to get cues from a position Leigh least expects. On the screen, after the cutting process, the scene is so presented that the impression of a perfect dialogue, give-and-take in thought and movement, is unmarred (Cardullo, et al 128).

What Davis and Leigh do in their performances is what determines the intended camera angles and framing. In a CU the camera is drawn in to observe their star quality performer code (Fig. 9) or away in a MS to enlighten spectators with their physiognomic expressiveness (Fig. 1).

Once a director, like Selznick, chooses Leigh for the role of Scarlet O'Hara, he has to consider her personality and what she *requires* as a star to enhance her performance and unfold that image through lighting and camera movement. Leigh's performer code directs her lighting in a scene urging spectators to focus on her significance and not the others in the same shot. Leigh's mannerisms, her personality, her body language influence her lighting and also the spectators' attitude towards her in terms of mood and genre. It is the stars' performer code that also directs the type of lighting and this lighting has an effect on the interpretation of her code. The directors' arrangement of lighting is important so that not a raised brow/smile or a smile/snicker is missed. The placement of the *key light*, or principal light source, greatly affects stars' portraiture. Key lights set frontally and near eye level minimize shadows, illuminate the eyes under the brow, and generally produce a smooth-skinned appearance. Such lighting diminishes structures of the face -- the nose, brow, chin, and cheekbones -- as well as wrinkles and skin texture. This placement of the key light is also used to smooth appearance and reduce apparent nose size. In this scene with Bette Davis in *Jezebel*, her background is muted and the key lighting source is placed on her face creating soft and flawless appearance. This effect creates a contrast for her illustrated unconventionality in this film. The lighting makes Davis look young, innocent, and vulnerable (Figs. 5, 6). The frontal placement of the key light slightly below the eye level provides this effect and also causes a reflected sparkle in the eyes, which can also be very attractive in romantic scenes. As the key light is moved farther to the side and higher up, brow shadows and nose shadows increase, bone structure and face become more pronounced, and skin texture is accentuated (Fig. 9). This kind of key light placement was also used for Bette Davis in *What Ever Happened*

to *Baby Jane*? making her appearance rugged, craggier, older, rougher, and tougher -- giving her the desired effect of a *demented* woman (Figs. 29-35). When the key light is moved all the way over to the other side away from the camera in a narrow lighting setup, with emphasis on the eyes, the facial structure will articulate expression. For example, this scene with Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), where Leigh's face is expressive and the lighting accentuates her performer code, of the raised brow/smile, ideally (Figs. 66-68). The correct choice of lighting affects the message of the performance. If the lighting is too dark and her face fully shaded the slight nuance of the raised brow/smile would not be as obvious or slight depending upon Leigh's intention.

In *St. Martin's Lane* (1938) Leigh is effectively lit from behind or it is called strongly backlit. This technique isolated her against the background and this gave her a good three-dimensional separation producing a halo effect on the hair (Fig. 47). Soft frontal fill can be added to these setups to avoid melodramatic shadows and create natural-looking scenes (Figs. 43-46). An *eye-light* was placed near Davis' eyes in *Hush...Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*, putting sparkle and fire in her eyes for the scene at the dinner table where she revealed Olivia de Havilland's dirty little secret (Figs. 36-38). This light is also very appealing and greatly enhances a romantic treatment. Another lighting choice that affects portraiture is the quality of light used to illuminate the character. For instance, hard lighting creates strong contrasts and sharply outlines facial features and skin texture, like Davis as Baby Jane Hudson (Figs. 29-35). Soft lighting produces delicate shadow effects, which make the face appear gentler and with velvety skin, like Leigh as Liberty in *St. Martin's Lane* (Fig. 46). A deeply shadowed face, as with hard lighting, is generally more appropriate for dark moods and somber characteristics (Figs.

91-93). When shadows are greatly reduced with fill light, as with soft lighting, this portrays an open, candid face appropriate for less stylized characterizations (Fig. 46) (Douglass and Harnden 114-115).

As described in the fore-mentioned examples, the director must choose the right lighting and camera angle in order to achieve the desired on screen performance image. The lighting used to enhance Bette Davis in her performance in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Figs. 29-35) would not be appropriate for Davis in her performance in *Jezebel* (Figs. 5, 6). The lighting of Davis is key to her spectators understanding her performer code, it entices them into watching her and assists in enhancing her star image. Lighting helps to produce Bette Davis' persona of power and the shadowing fabricates a veil of mystery.

These distinct lighting styles create different images. Hard lighting and soft lighting produce very different kinds of effects, and the choice of light quality greatly influences the look of the frame. Directional, sharply focused, hard light creates hard-edged shadows, glistening highlights, and little falloff over distance. This kind of light can accentuate facial structure and skin wrinkles if angled properly and generally can be used to emphasize texture (Fig. 3). In high-key lighting designs with two people facing each other, a hard key is set to back light one subject while keying the other (Fig. 4). A hard-key light causes the background to be brightly lit in the frame due to the minimal falloff of spill light falling behind the star. In low-key lighting designs, a hard key in a narrow lighting setup can easily be kept off the background. With this kind of lighting, we can use hard light on the subjects, sharply etching them against dark backgrounds, for

example, Davis in *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte* sitting in a dark room (Figs. 36-38) (Douglass and Harnden 141-143).

The way in which the spectators view Vivien Leigh in many of her movies is influenced by the directors' choice of lighting. Her persona also demands specific lighting choices and each lighting decision made is crucial to portraying her performance properly. One such way of lighting Leigh's image is a traditional lighting style known as *glamour lighting* that uses a hard key with strong backlighting. For example, Leigh's library scene in *Gone with the Wind*, just before she throws the vase (Fig. 65). Leigh is often set against darker backgrounds with just enough fill to bring out detail on the shadow side of her face (Fig. 57). In this design, the key tends to be frontal to avoid accentuating skin texture, for instance, Leigh stands with her back against a wall in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961), she is older but appears younger and softer. A silk or diffusion filter over the lens and back lights to flare can assist in this type of younger, softer effect (Douglass and Harnden 143).

Hard-lights are very effective when shooting extreme wide shots. Hard light can travel long distances with little falloff, and it can be tightly focused with little spread. Since hard lighting produces sharp shadows, it is the type of light used when the desire is to cast distinguishable, hard-edged shadows on the background. A hard light source is ideal for creating the Venetian blind pattern of *film noir*, palm tree shadows, shadows of people on walls, and angular architectural shadows. For example in *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte*, as Davis sits at her dinner table, many shadows are cast behind her on the walls, from the staircase and candelabras and even her champagne glass cast a shadow on her (Fig. 36). Soft lighting, on the other hand, tends toward being shadowless.

Depending on the degree of softness and the distance from the light to the illuminated star, soft light can vary in degree from being shadowless to producing very soft shadows with edges trailing off into feathered gradations. The closer a soft light is the more it becomes shadowless and "wraparound." Because it tends toward being shadowless, its use as a key softens features and minimizes wrinkles and blemishes. As a key, soft light produces a warm glowing illumination with gentle shadowing and wraparound quality which makes any additional fill light unnecessary (Figs. 1-4) (Douglass and Harden 144).

Chapter Three: *The Method and Analysis*

The reviewed films chosen for Bette Davis are *Jezebel* (1938), *Dark Victory* (1939), *All About Eve* (1950), *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), and *Hush... Hush Sweet Charlotte* (1964). The films chosen for Vivien Leigh are *St. Martin's Lane* (1938), *Gone With the Wind* (1939), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961), and *Ship of Fools* (1965). The selection of these films is based on the performances of Davis and Leigh, the comprehensive time span covering their careers and film availability.

The motivation for the selection of these particular films is to demonstrate what made Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh stars. The evidence reveals how Davis' and Leigh's star performer code emerges through their physiognomies in the beginning of their careers and develops throughout their years of star performance filmmaking. From a semiotic perspective, this performance analysis focuses on identifying the relationship between the performance elements that migrate across narrative and then across historical or cultural contexts. Performance signifying practices tend to remain transparent until one sees them removed from their narrative context and compared with other examples also removed from their narrative contexts (Toepfer 150). The performance elements are Davis' and Leigh's signifying practices and can be seen throughout their performances. Davis' and Leigh's physiognomies dominate perception of the performer code, which means what the stars signify with their facial gestures emanate from what their bodies signify and their consciousness of this signification. Toepfer defines performance code as that complex of signs, which migrates across performances and even across cultural contexts because their communicative power functions on a cognitive rather than cultural level.

The performance code is 'anonymous', so to speak, insofar as it consists of conventions or rhetorical devices that are not unique to any performance or cultural context, but to the phenomenon of 'performance' as a recurrent cognitive activity (Decontextualisation and Performance Analysis 152). A performance code is not unique to the actor but a performer code is distinctive and characteristic solely of the actor. The analysis of the Davis and Leigh performances in these films signify that their performance directly ties to the performer code that made them stars. The discovery upon viewing these films and then narrowing the film choices down into scenes is that many of the scenes could have worked for the analysis but the scenes selected are most demonstrative of Bette Davis' smile/snicker and Vivien Leigh's raised brow/smile and need not be comprehensive.

The process of placing Davis' and Leigh's films in chronological order is in respect to the historical code. The historical code shows an understanding of why films over a long time span, across narrative, across media, across performances, by a performer have a consciousness of their own physiognomy. The historical code shows the earlier physiognomy, the aging of the stars' own physiognomy and the consistency of their performer code says something regarding the performers' awareness about their power to say something. Older films clarify how physiognomy of star permits performer code to say something about the relationship of aging and their signifying practices. The signifying practices are determined by viewing the films and selecting which is most distinctive. Davis' smile/snicker leaps out of her films and demands spectators' fascination and Leigh's raised brow/smile draws spectators in as she captivates their curiosity. Davis' smile/snicker gives spectators a true sense of who she is and what she says in all her roles. *Her* choices, not the performance code, determine the identity of her

performances. Davis' smile/snicker is a commentary on herself; she is explaining her ideas, thoughts, opinions about herself and the narrative. Leigh's raised brow/smile gives spectators a peek into how Leigh felt about *her* beauty and how her security about herself affected her performance. Leigh used her idea of her beauty and later her aging beauty in all of her roles to achieve her desired goal or to fulfill her image. Davis' and Leigh's signifying practices are abundant. Several of Davis' signifying practices that comprise her unique performer code are her smile/snicker, toothy grin, bulging eyes, raised brow, quick gait, verbal enunciation, fidgeting, smoking, and physiognomy, just to name a few. Leigh's signifying practices are her raised brow/smile, smile, smirk, and hands framing face, giggle, verbal enunciation, and physiognomy. Davis and Leigh say more than the narrative in their repertoire of choices and it is *their* grasp of the narrative that spectators prognosticate.

The following procedure was used to analyze these films:

- Eight Bette Davis films and five Vivien Leigh's films were chosen and viewed based on their distinctive performances. Davis' film selections span 25 years and Leigh's films covered a period of 26 years. Bette Davis was born in 1908 making her thirty during the 1938 release of *Jezebel*. Vivien Leigh was born in 1913 making her twenty-five in 1938 when *St. Martin's Lane* was released.
- Davis' and Leigh's films were viewed in their entirety initially between two and four times. Then specific signifying practices were singled out and their performer code tracked throughout the selected films. Several distinct scenes in each film were chosen and viewed between ten and fifteen times to determine the clearest, most thorough examples of the smile/snicker and the raised brow/smile

and how they apply the uniqueness of their signifying practices to their performer code and into their performance. The scene that is considered is the most thorough based on the expressive qualities, delivery and versatility of their performer code. Then, that scene is chosen from each film and viewed another thirty to forty times. Upon that scene's analysis, it is again reviewed, but this time, frame by frame and the signifying practices are carefully studied and selected. The films were analyzed film frame by frame and evidence documented for each scene. Then the film is downloaded and frames were printed to coincide with the text of this thesis. The scene is then viewed several more times for flow and for errors.

The evidence that Bette Davis' and Vivien Leigh's signifying practices are relevant to their star performances exist in the potency of their performer code. Davis' and Leigh's performer code has remained the same yet have migrated through the years in their films and are immediately distinguishable through observation. Their performer code shaped their stardom.

Chapter Four - *Performances of Bette Davis*

Bette Davis' capacity for far-reaching self-transformation in her performances is bold and independent. Her efficacious action drives her audacity to see things her way. She has a matchless gift for expressive gesture and movement that allows her to give several of the most lucid and compelling acting performances ever recorded on film. Her stardom had allowed her to realize exhilarating on-screen depictions of the quarrelsome, contentious, uncompromising females synonymous with the Davis star performer image (Leaming 9).

In a scene in *Jezebel*, the director takes advantage of Davis' style for embodying contradictions and it does this visually by putting her on a wild horse and at the same time stressing her control over wildness. Davis gives the sense of being a wild woman and her physical presence within the image empathizes/seduces the viewer or establishes her appeal for the viewer in relation to this commanding wildness. Her ability to upset the ordering of society or convention, and inserting hers, is a strength few possess. When she comes into the party she takes command of that, she is commanding. An amplification of the smile/snicker signifying practice on her part, which is -- to a level a more metaphorical signification of the commanding wildness. This scene empathizes that very well. Throughout her career she embodies that contradiction masterfully, physically, vocally and in relation to the camera. Within this small gesture there are ramifications that connect to the relationship between a woman's body and the social context in which it acts. The emotional power of the performance articulates her connection to it in her own way. The smile/snicker carries other significance that relates to what Davis does, not the character. She wishes to communicate to the audience *her*

female identity in relation to social expectations and her role is to upset those expectations. Not what is written in the script - what she had brought to the script is why people want her and not someone else to play the role. The role could be played by other actress and done differently. But Davis was selected to do it because she will say something in that role that the other actresses will not say. *What is it that she is saying?* Davis makes her choices of what to say and what to articulate through her signifying practices in her star performances. Spectators went to the movies to see the signifying practices of Bette Davis, not the character she was playing. They came to watch *her*. Davis through the years created a performance persona that was filled with aspects of femaleness that were denied women.

The roles Davis chose scoffed at conventionality, but she with her powerful physiognomy scoffed at the scoffers, further adding a twist of unconventionality to the unconventional roles through her performance.

Bette Davis' performance communicates denotative and connotative signifiers, which engage spectators in her ensuing drama. Davis' performance reveals her film's dramatic plot to her audience and encourages them to decipher it. For example, by using her signifying practices and projecting an attitude with her eyes, sometimes at half-mast (Fig. 21), she conveys doubt and suspicion, eyes opened wide signifies that Davis is appalled and insulted (Fig. 26). Davis' raised brow signifies that an order is dispensed and it should be obeyed (Fig. 36). The importance of movements of her mouth to signify meaning is immense. The smile/snicker conveys suspicion, a shift in emotion or an irritation with the situation. More often than not, Davis is about to change the situation to reflect her favorably (Fig. 35). Davis' pronunciation and the over enunciation of words

signify that her opponent had crossed her and is now getting it with *both barrels*. She creates her star image and from that image through her performer code; her eyes, her smile/snicker, raised eyebrow, flaring nostrils, fidgeting, her gait, just to name a few. The smile/snicker is a contradiction. It isn't a smile or a snicker; it is almost both, but not quite either, it is a metaphor really. Davis' performer code is brought about through her physiognomy, her body construction. The fact that her physiognomy is not 'star' conventional, designed her behavior, and made her an unconventional star. Davis' unrelenting self-confidence in the presentation of her performer code is what spectators embrace. Bette Davis' performance in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* and *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* provides excellent examples of how her performer code migrated and developed over time. Bette Davis' physiognomic confidence strengthens her signifying practices, which in turn commands her performer code. Regardless of the film's age, Davis' performer code, no matter how slight, is immediately identifiable. In her later films, she matured and conveyed her star qualities in her performances through her well defined signifying practices and into her performer code. Davis grew into and with her physiognomy, completely.

Davis' performer code mixed with dialogue provides her with unique performances. She enjoys a game of cat and mouse and she challenges convention in the process. The bra appalled her; she had a big bottom, short legs, and she did not want to be another fashion statement like Greta Garbo (A&E). Although Davis was delicately small in stature, she was ferocious. She personifies the ability to play a character that does not glamorize, or place her in a position where she has to sustain beauty or elegance in her pictures. She plays *herself* in her roles; whether it is the role of the grotesquely painted

Baby Jane Hudson, in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*, the tragically aged Fanny Trellis Skeffington in *Mr. Skeffington* (1944) or a half hour long scene in *All About Eve*, with makeup grease on her face, it is Bette Davis. She defies the convention that women could not be viewed as inelegant. But in this *inelegance*, she had unmatched elegance and grace. Davis chose challenging roles and in those roles she is not afraid to get dirty or unattractive to get her point across. And her point is, that her signifying practices are so finely tuned that her spectators are able to endure whatever disfigurement she wore. Her performance in roles took not just talent, but audacity. The importance of her signifying practices are that she used them to convey emotion in a way that no one else could have because the codes are part of her, her personality, her being, and her life.

Bette Davis' first film performance reviewed is *Jezebel* (1938), directed by William Wyler. The scene opens capturing Davis, within a WS, filmed with hard key lighting, trotting down the road on a colt. The WS creates a sense of location; where Davis came from, where she is going and it also produces an awareness of Davis' isolation and apparent differences. The hard key is used for extreme WS's because it can travel long distances with little falloff. Davis emerges in view, sitting sidesaddle, racing down a cobblestone road on a wild, barely controllable colt. But after viewing this scene more than thirty times, it is really about Bette speeding down a cobblestone road enjoying the ride so much that she passes her own house and must stop the colt abruptly to turn it around, giving the appearance of riding an uncontrollable horse. Davis possesses control; it is just that her desires are different than conventions allow -- giving her the appearance of being out of control. This opening signifies the pace of the film and this scene is chosen to illustrate her performer code; her entrance, quick gait, elbows held at her waste

and her grin. A MS observes Davis taking control of the horse boy. She signifies this control with her performer code -- her eyes are bulging out, her head is thrown forward and she imposes her whole body into the conversation with the boy. Throughout Davis' performance, she makes an apparent conscious effort to control her body and use it to control the situation. She does this by working her physiognomy, meaning one part of her body plays off the next, like an assembly line. Davis' pragmatic application of her body parts produce her streamline effect seen throughout her performance. Some examples of this are as the scene continues, Davis spins around, scoops up her long riding habit (long black dress) neatly with her riding stick and proceeds to trot in the door. riding stick positioned on the shoulder with her riding habit dress flung over the stick. Davis' enthralling late entrance resembles that of a commander going into battle. Her physiognomy gives her the presence of complete command; her quick intentional gait, self-assured grin and elbows moving in tandem with her waist, and her hands held shoulder high. It is Davis taking command and signifying this with *her* choices effecting the use of *her* whole body in *her* signifying practices using *her* performer code. The camera sustains her in a MS that is positioned just beyond her back, focusing on her back. Spectators see *her* guests surprising reaction to her inappropriate dress (Fig. 2). Davis speaks to her visitors with her arms positioned, elbows at the waist and hands in an opened position signifying that she has them under control (crowd control). Even Davis' back to the camera reveals something; it is not just a performance code, because *she* is drawing spectators in with the anticipation of her turning around. The camera moves just to her left capturing a three-quarter view of her face. Soft key lighting is placed on Davis that diminishes structure in her face giving her a flawless appearance while the other

characters receive at times some of the spill from her key lighting that places shadows their faces. The MS reveals the driving effect of Davis' upper torso which influences the height of Davis' hands that frame her upper torso and are in effect prompting a swivel that propels her famous grin. The grin is Davis' assumptive close that further commands to her guests to approve her clothing, but with the same emanation, she is unaffected either way, with or without their approval. Davis' grin is a signifier of confidence coupled with a dash of crowd-pleasing humility. She quickly moves on with her 'no questions please' attitude. With this attitude Davis is effecting a star quality temperament within her performer code within her performance. Her unconventional attire, the riding habit, gives her engagement party's guests the opportunity to observe her unconventionality. And it is not just the fact that she is costumed unconventionally because she typifies this unconventionality with her physiognomy. The tight confinement of the constant MS allows spectators to feel her confinement and marvel at how she overcomes this in her performance. Davis overcomes confinement by using her physiognomy to add movement and action even though the camera tries to confine her. This is an apparent feature in Davis' performer code -- she creates movement within all of her performances and this movement is always under her control. As she speeds through the crowd with confidence, she arrives at a small pocket of friends. The camera does not remain focused on her; it cleverly tracks her methodical movement through the crowd and momentarily rests on her visitors and is led by the waiter at times. The spectators are always aware of Davis' presence and anticipate the sight of her because they want to see her face. This impatience comes not just with the sound of her voice but the effect her signifying practices have on the crowd around her -- she disrupts them. Davis' voice

beckons the camera for its much-awaited destination by spectators. A MS sustains Davis' back and profile as she talks amongst a group of friends. In her greeting to a friend, Davis creates action by fidgeting with the bows on her dress. In the tight confines of the MS Davis creates movement and activity with her performer code. Davis also then mimics verbally her well wish. This mimicking could be a performance code but the style in which Davis does it is her performer code. Davis' choice in mimicking and fiddling with the bows signifies her willingness to step outside of conventionality and take control. Her nature is unconventional -- Davis' loquacious behavior and her invariable fidgeting are distractions. Davis utilizes those distractions in an uncanny way to redirect spectators' attentions to her. Davis chooses a glass of whiskey, an unconventional drink for ladies and only meant for the males and proposes a toast (Figs. 7, 8). The camera comes in for several CU's where she exhibits an interesting aspect of her performer code captivating her spectators. This code is referred to as the smile/snicker and is one of the primary focuses of research on Davis' physiognomy.

This first smile/snicker suggests confidence yet uncertainty because Davis is under scrutiny. This is Davis' performer code, her way of saying more than just the narrative. In this performer code, she says more about herself and her understanding of the narrative -- it is Davis' commentary on both. An interesting camera angle is presented here. Davis and her opponent, George Brent, are held in a two-shot. They stand in profile and spectators see an enormous juxtaposition in their heights, signifying his advantage (Fig. 4). The camera is angled just to his right and back, creating dominance and capturing his mid torso, up. Davis' upper shoulders and face are visible. Her face remains straight ahead as she strains her eyes upward to capture his downward easy glance. They both

slightly turn towards the camera creating a sense of equality with their full profiles. The key lighting remains the same as their glasses are raised and this displays a feeling of camaraderie (Fig. 4). As the dialogue continues, the camera shifts just to her left, creating less of an adversarial ground. Now the view of Davis' face is virtually non-existent, but their heights seem less adversarial. The camera moves in for a close up (CU) on Davis, the soft key lighting exhibits a flawless Davis with her hat tipped to one side, slightly shading her right eye (Fig. 5). The uniqueness of Davis' smile/snicker in combination with the CU communicates her attitude and demeanor to her spectators. Davis wears the positioning of her hat to partially shadow her tightened face. Her face angles downward in doubt while there is a subtle shifting of weight that accompanies her smile/snicker and signifies her indignation (Fig. 6). The action of her physiognomy releases the choices she makes through the series of her signifying practices.

The second smile/snicker signifies her awareness while she resumes her posture of being in control. During the toast scene, a MS is used to group Davis and her visitors together. She stands directly in the center, toasting her whiskey glass and holding it high (Fig. 7). Her visitors never raise their glasses and merely just stand there with their backs to the camera or are profiled staring at Davis with surprise at her tenacity. Davis breathes deeply, her toast draws the camera quickly for a CU, she exhales with her flaring nostrils, eyes in a downward positioning as her face begins to tighten (Fig. 8). This CU accompanied by key lighting, isolates Davis from the others. Here again, Davis' face tightens, lips are drawn, and the subtle yet intentional shifting of weight reveals a transfer in control and of her certainty. Davis signifies her certainty with her performer code and

is quite convinced and demonstrates that she is living a completely different reality than her visitors (Fig. 9).

The next film in review showcasing Davis' performer codes is *Dark Victory* (1939), directed by Edmund Goulding. Davis' strength is signified by her performer code in this scene at the riding stables with Humphrey Bogart. The scene is established with a hard key and WS, to establish Davis' arrival speeding down the road and Bogart hitching a ride on the running board. Davis' pace is hurried and her energy is abundant. Bogart is essentially riding Davis' *fire*. The scene is lit with a soft key coupled with natural lighting that creates Davis' soft facial appearance. Davis' unconventional signifiers continue to appear -- she drives too fast to her destination, she fidgets with her clothing, tucking her shirt in her pants in public. After her arrival, the WS shifts to MS as Davis draws the camera in closer with her fidgeting. Davis' fidgeting is a signifying practice that directs the camera and the spectators' eye to her. She releases her energy through her fidgeting and says, with this fidgeting, *look over here, I'm about to show you something*. The camera pulls back to a WS and spectators view Davis, Geraldine Fitzgerald (her secretary), and the fast approaching Ronald Reagan. Davis and Fitzgerald greet him and the camera shifts to a MS creating a more intimate closeness. As they engage in conversation, the camera positions itself behind Davis and Fitzgerald capturing Reagan's face and then switching around to yield Davis' reaction. The camera maintains a MS as Davis struggles, moving her gloved hand back and forth to light a cigarette. The camera angle places no emphasis on Davis' struggle to light her cigarette. This filmic maneuver simply observes the choices that Davis releases with her expressive performer code. After a few moments of intense conversation with Bogart, Davis sits down and continues

fidgiting with the coffee and smokes her cigarette. Davis smokes her cigarette as if it is an extension of her hand, like an extra appendage. In this scene with Bogart, Davis' reality is under attack. She tries desperately to suppress the passion that produces a smile/snicker but it erupts from her squirming, shifting, lower torso and fidgiting hands. Her body movements seem to vibrate upwards and exit through her face, creating her complicated extensive performer code. In a closer MS of Davis it becomes apparent that the smile/snicker comes from and mimics Davis' bodily physiognomy -- it moves *with* her lower torso in tandem. Davis' performer code creates an unmasking of her understanding of the narrative. But, scene by scene her performer code signifies her gradual disclosure of the narrative through her choices. These choices, her signifying practices are like a box within a box within a box that produce her performer code.

The second smile/snicker exudes confidence from deep within. Davis has backed herself into a tree and emits valiancy (Fig. 10). The most difficult of scene to capture is the CU with dialogue, and Davis performs it seamlessly and unmarred. A CU combined with glamour lighting is placed on Davis with her back to the tree. The glamour lighting uses a hard key with strong back lighting, tending to be frontal and avoids accentuating skin texture. This effect adds an extra-added soft/fuzzy appearance to Davis' face and creates an unblemished look due to the silk or diffusion filter over the lens. The camera follows the conversation from Davis to Bogart, giving the appearance that they are in direct proximity, but in actuality, they are well over ten feet apart. Davis' performer code projects a strong attitude giving her spectators the impression that Bogart is almost contained in a two-shot with her. Here, Davis strengthens her approach by adding a few strong signifying practices to her performance -- the raised right eyebrow (Fig. 11), the

firm verbal enunciation separating each word with a punch, and the flaring of her nostrils (Fig. 12). These elements of her performer code and the tight CU give Davis the opportunity to effect control over the situation and communicate how ineffectual others can be.

The third smile/snicker unfolds in a victorious win over her opponent, Bogart. Davis intentionally punctuates specific words within the narrative with her inflections. An example of this dialogue is *"go bring him up here... and when I tell you to do something, do it."* She combines her choices of inflections with specific subtle physiognomic movements creating an active performance. Davis need not raise her voice; she just simply chooses her gestures. By nodding slightly and utilizing her vocal inflections Davis can execute a roar. The strength of her punctuated dialogue is accompanied with a half squint of the eyes as she says specifically, *don't cross me* (Fig. 13). Davis ends the scene sprinting across the field and her posterior is cleverly blocked off and on by obstructions, hence, the concealment of her physiognomy remains somewhat unmarred.

The third film viewing Davis' performer code directed by Joseph Mankiewicz is *All About Eve* (1950). Davis plays the role of Margo Channing with voraciousness. Davis utilizes the strength of her smile/snicker, wide eyes, and distinctive pronunciations connotatively to meet a multitude of challenges in her performance. The director cleverly engages this scene on stage where Davis performs. Davis is essentially on stage performing, she sees a stage and cannot help but play it to its fullest. Mankiewicz shares Davis' same ambition, he combines the placing of clever props that frame Davis in this *play* within a film. Davis also brings and works her own set of props. This scene takes place with Davis fully aware of the fact that Eve (her new understudy) has just read in

place of her. The camera captures Davis with a WS as she arrives on stage with her quick gait walking into the already established soft key lighting. The director, Mankiewicz, places bright, naked stage bulbs on stands that cleverly track Davis' entrance onto the stage. Her quick impatient trot sets the pace for her desired control over the scene. In this three-quarter MS, Davis walks in with a full, stride and never misses a beat. Davis gives the impression with this choice that she is too busy to stop to remove her coat. Her fast stride and the tossing of her coat on a chair signify her readiness for combat (Fig. 14). Framing Davis within the director's 'bulb props' works well together with Davis' signifying practices to communicate the narrative. Her signifying practices of her fidgeting and her props; like her coat, purse, cigarettes, gloves, and her bow to execute desired her effects in this scene. The soft key lighting is placed to the left illuminating Davis, who stands to the right facing her three opponents in a three-quarter MS. While Davis speaks, she uses her gloves as props by extending the length of time that it takes to remove them. *Her* uses of her gloves are to busy her hands, calm her nerves, and to distract. Davis utilizes her purse as a tool in conjunction with her arms and body. Davis' choices of utilizing her purse to perform a swaying motion with her arms and hips add to her already established control. This choice of swaying movement assists her in effecting physiognomic momentum in this scene. A three-quarter MS shot captures Davis as she turns away from the group and takes center stage in a confrontation, signifying that she stands alone. The signification of Davis standing alone is a performance code, however, what *she* says while standing alone strengthens the concept of her singularity. Davis is lit with a soft key lighting to the side, with a soft fill creating smooth facial features and a small shadowing effect on the left side of her face.

She is turned three-quarters of the way facing the camera and stands just to the right of the harp and is still removing her gloves (Fig. 15). Davis stands alone confronting her adversary and he recoils like a child when he is *pointed* at by her. Davis' choice in vocal tone on the word "*I*" connotes a firm realization as well as it catapults spectators into a shift in situation (Figs. 16, 17). This is a pivoting point in the scene where Davis' full use of her signifying practices escalate into her star performance. Davis hears the words "*it's over*" and she turns as if taking a dance step, her gloves are now placed in her purse, again using her purse but now as a shield (Figs. 18-20). In the actual action of this dance step, Davis signifies the incipience of her confrontation (Fig. 20). A MS finds Davis in center stage surrounded by the bulb props, which further signifies the commotion brewing in her mind (Figs. 18-20). When she turns around there is an apparent double clicking sound that Davis makes with her shoes. The bulb props combined with the double clicking give the amazing effect of a *light switching on* which further signifies to her spectators her intentions. Her left hand, which is closest to the camera, clutches her purse and reveals a pronounced middle finger, which is delicately swished off when she says, "*Eve*" (Figs. 19, 20). Davis chooses to carefully place her gloves in her purse and prepares to execute another prop. She gives the group a smile/snicker that signifies her dissatisfaction and in a sense it is a warning of imminent tension. The curious way Davis chooses to pronounce "*Eve*," coupled with a toothy grin, and her slight way of throwing her head back away from the group and towards the camera, signifies the build up of her continuing annoyance with the situation (Fig. 20). Davis is really telling her spectators to prepare because in this slight indication of annoyance she is effecting a signifier of her *imposing* exasperation yet to come. Davis changes position from a profile to a three-

quarter view (Figs. 19, 20). Her raised eyebrow and large bulging eyes face the camera, which is an admonition to her spectators that a significant confrontation is about to occur. Trotting back to her group, she cleverly removes her cigarette case from her purse, again using the middle finger pointed straight at Eve. Here in a three-quarter MS, Davis stands in front of a door 'prop' signifying that she is on her way out and is facing her three opponents who are standing next to a bed prop signifying that they are in bed together. Davis pushes off with her heel turning away from her three opponents. She saunters, using her purse once more to propel her to center stage. Davis' ferocious portrayal of the dialogue is offset by this near frontal CU now accompanied with a soft key light that produces a warm glowing illumination and an eye light that also begets a twinkle of fire in Davis' eyes (Fig. 21). She uses her signifying practices -- the fire in her eyes, the raised eyebrow, the smile/snicker, and the eyes squinted at half-mast to make her opponent wince and recoil again. This CU isolates Davis as she is lit with key lighting that is set a little farther to the side, displaying some accentuated shadowing to her face. Davis' vocals, pauses, and accentuation on specific words further display her dissatisfaction. For example: she articulates the words "*Sly Puss*" with her lengthy "Ssss." Davis' head turns abruptly as Eve approaches and they are framed in a two shot. Davis removes her lighter from her purse, lights her cigarette and keeps her purse raised and again uses it as a shield. After some dialogue, Davis walks past Eve, but uniquely enough, Davis chooses not to yield to petty upstaging tactics to make her point, she simply has to light her cigarette, toss her head back and blow smoke (Fig. 22). This signifying choice radiates her absolute confidence. Next, the tension heightens as Davis engages in an argument with the playwright, which takes place with a harp standing

between them. The camera is placed over his shoulder in this CU, the key light is moved all the way over to the other side, away from the camera, placing emphasis on her eyes. Davis is slightly back-lit, giving her a slight halo affect and the harp gives her a *religious experience* air (Fig. 23). Davis' agitated physiognomic movements; the quick turn of her head that propels her bouncing hair and divulges to her spectators, that *she* is playing him. Davis' choice of signifying practices peak in the scene when she punches her dialogue and activates her props. She fidgets with her bow, flares her nostrils, and raises her eyebrows -- signifying that she has snared her opponent, and the smile/snicker connotes that her satisfaction of winning is near (Fig. 24). Davis finishes the scene and finishes off her opponents by bearing her teeth and *punching* the word "*rat*" (Figs. 25, 26). Near the end of the scene, Davis is seen in a WS displaying heavy shadowing and a triangulation where she is caught in the middle of the playwright and Eve (Fig. 27). This triangulation is a performance code. However, at the end of the scene Davis stands alone on the stage wearing a smile/snicker. Her shadow is cast on the wall behind her. she has a prop placed in each hand -- cigarette in her right, her purse swinging in her left -- it is Davis who chooses to place *her* smile/snicker on her face (Fig. 28). And she is fully loaded with her performer code.

Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? (1962) directed by Robert Aldrich, will be the next film where Bette Davis' performer code is examined. This scene is filled with intense three-quarter MS's that create a trapped feeling between Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. The scene is a contest as to whose reality will prevail. Davis' features appear to be exaggerated by the influence of the hard key lighting, her extreme make-up, but mostly by Davis' imprudent facial movements. These three key elements together work

to make Davis' performance the embodiment of Baby Jane Hudson. Davis has recently discovered that her sister Blanche, played by Joan Crawford, plans to sell the house and put Davis' character, Baby Jane in a sanitarium. Davis, in this MS, stands over Crawford, effecting her signifying practices to intimidate; her hands anchored on her hips, this gives her upper torso more momentum as she punches each word by throwing her head back. Davis' tenacious signifying practices begin to intensify as she intentionally draws the camera towards her. The intensity of Davis' performance choices dramatically alters the rhythm of the scene as the camera angle changes to a CU. The light source also changes bringing the key lighting up and over Crawford's left shoulder illuminating the left side of Davis' face. The change in the light placement creates the look of deep lines on the right side of her face enhancing her already craggy and rough appearance. The lighting emphasis is placed on Davis' facial structure and is articulated through her performer code. The camera changes again to a MS awaiting Davis' choice of impending actions. Davis denotatively places her hands on her hips, tosses her head back, and throws her breasts forward. Her reactions signify the forewarning power she has over Crawford. Davis' facial expositions lure the camera in for a CU framing Davis' smug version of reality. It reflects Davis' mood of domination and total control over Crawford. Davis' face renders a look of terror as she throws her head slightly back and her eyes pierce downward at wheelchair-bound Crawford's face. Davis continues her annihilation by supporting it with her choices of speaking with her eyes positioned downwards, and her expressions. Davis' expression is not that of hate, her face denotes Crawford's fate, *matter of factly*, which invites the camera in for a CU. She is so confident of her ability to annihilate that she confidently does so with the slightest of expression. Davis' delivery of

the narrative that condemns Crawford is chilling. She escalates from telling Crawford *what to do* to *condemning her* with the pointing of her finger and the jabbing delivery of her words, "*...and you aren't ever going to leave here, either.*" In essence, it is Davis' choice of which moment she gives Crawford her death-sentence -- she chooses it with the word "*either.*" The claustrophobic stance of Davis looming over Crawford in a MS constructs a paralyzing imagery. Davis' performance lures her spectators into her psychotic world of prey versus predator. The camera is then placed over Davis' shoulder. This set-up frames Crawford's terror cleverly with Davis' pointing finger. The camera remains on Crawford as Davis points and intensely utters "*either.*" It is not necessary for Davis' spectators to see her utterance, because they only need to see Crawford's reaction. Davis' performer code is so compelling that seeing the effect on Crawford of Davis' vocal command is just as powerful. The next shot holds Davis and Crawford in a MS with their backs toward the camera. Davis has just become the victor, and signifies this with her gait. She struts to the window with her arms swinging, and then she positions them firmly on her hips. Crawford reminds her of the accident, Davis then turns around abruptly and she subtly shifts her physical weight and drops her hands. Davis' voice becomes lower and takes on a childlike quality of helplessness. Davis' signifying practices create a pivoting point in the drama. The key light changes and is placed farther to Davis' left and higher up, creating extreme shadowing on her face. The way that Davis is lit, her make-up, hairstyle, clothing and especially the way she uses her physiognomy, produces an unnaturally frightening, doll-like appearance. Davis stands before Crawford somewhat hunched over and spent. She then turns away as if to momentarily escape an outward vulnerability. A CU captures Davis and Crawford from an interesting

perspective -- through the open window. Spectators see the back of Davis' head, and Crawford's face framed by the bars on the windows suggesting her imprisonment. The camera waits for Davis as she turns away from Crawford and faces the CU. She looks upward as if to search to God for answers -- the frame connotes a religious suggestion (Fig. 29). Davis' display of vulnerability is projected through her signifying practices, the raised brow, bulging eyes and a smile/snicker. When Crawford delivers the words "*I'm just trying to explain to you how things really are,*" Davis tilts her head down slightly to the right and keeps her eyes open but angled to the right (Figs. 30, 31). Juxtaposed to Davis is Crawford's head, which appears to sprout from Davis' shoulder, giving her spectators the impression that she and Crawford are imprisoned together (Figs. 29-35). Further supporting this, the key lighting is placed above Davis' head causing the window bars to cast their lines on her face. The extreme facial shadowing further defines Davis and Crawford's life sentence together, which assists in piquing spectator suspense. Davis' face changes from 'the burden of responsibility' into her remarkable heightened use of her performer code signifying 'Jane's reality' (Figs. 32-35). Davis' performer code conveys the shift of reality remarkably. This CU enlarges Davis' face as she saturates the screen with a multitude of signifying practices. The camera closely watches Davis' performance as her eyes momentarily search for answers, and when *one* is quickly realized, Davis lets her spectators almost see her facial physiognomy capture it out of the air, producing a smile/snicker (Fig. 35). Davis connotes with this smile/snicker that Crawford is making this game too easy. Davis performs this shift in expression from *reality* to Baby Jane Hudson's reality effectively and she signifies this by the use of the smile/snicker. This smile/snicker creates a pivoting effect in the dramatic tension. As the tension builds and

when the camera finally pulls back to a MS, it thoroughly records Davis' spinning body propelled by her arms. When her arms take their momentary rest, they encounter her thighs with a slap. Her physiognomy, coupled with Davis' legendary release of the line "*But you are Blanche, you are in that chair,*" communicates to her spectators her complete control over the situation. Delivering a narrative line is a performance code but it is how Davis uses *her* inflections, *her* physiognomy and *her* choices of facial expressions throughout her performance that produce *her* performer code in *her* delivery. Davis hurls her arm into the air while releasing several quick intentional blinks of her eyes and a jerky toss of the head to signify her impatience with Crawford's inability to grasp the obvious. Davis' choices signify an amazing transformation in reality marking the impetus of this change in her performance. The camera maintains a MS and it is placed behind Crawford's left shoulder. Davis continues the scene speaking from her diaphragm, using her whole body, and again condemning Crawford to an existence in her wheelchair and in her bedroom. With power, with force she bends forward and presents Blanche with a terrifying smile/snicker. The choice of the smile/snicker is Davis' admonition that impresses fear, directs Davis' dramatic action and executes her control auspiciously.

The final Davis film chosen to present her performer codes is *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964), directed by Robert Aldrich. In this film, Davis' star performance demonstrates the effectiveness of her performer code in her scenes. Bette Davis plays Charlotte, a woman who is almost driven mad over the murder of her boyfriend that occurred over 25 years ago. Coincidentally enough, there are people who really are driving her mad and have much to gain. This scene is about whose version of the past

wins. Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland begin their game of cat and mouse at a dinner party. The attendees are Joseph Cotton, Olivia de Havilland and Bette Davis. They are drinking champagne in celebration of de Havilland's (Davis' cousin) arrival to *help* Davis retain her home. The scene opens with Cotton (Drew) pouring Davis' champagne. The camera is angled downward on Davis and Cotton creating a sense of equality in this two shot. The low soft key lighting seems to shine directly on Davis' face creating a soft velvety finish. Cotton's face is somewhat shadowed. The room is dimly lit and partially illuminated by candelabrum. The low-key lighting coupled with hard key lights prevents light from spilling onto the background giving the room the appearance of being completely candlelit. A low key with a hard light source is classic for creating angular architectural shadows like a scary staircase or an object that casts its shadow on the wall or ceiling. This light source is also ideal for producing active shadowing on Davis. For example, Davis sips her champagne and the lighting creates crystal glass etchings that dance on her chest (Fig. 36). These active shadows provide mystery and realizations that the unknown is afoot and could jump out at any moment. This shadowing is symbolic of the past and is effecting shadows or imprints in the house and on them. The room remains darkened so that focus is placed on Davis. The shadows are there to create mystery and hide what Davis shall reveal, in time through her choices. Davis chooses a relaxed body language giving the impression that she is comfortable even though the atmosphere creates a haunting appearance. Davis is well poised, almost gleeful. A momentary WS now incorporates de Havilland. Then a MS quickly focuses on Davis' profile in a two shot with her father's looming portrait, as Davis seems to tempt de Havilland with the offer of parties. Davis utilizes a manipulative vocal tone that tips the

situation in her favor. Davis changes her mood quickly when de Havilland refuses to help. She signifies disbelief with her mouth drawn tightly and with bulging glaring eyes and she says, "*You aren't going to help me?*" Davis articulates undeniably from her diaphragm expelling her words with control and power. A CU with soft key light captivates Davis' appalled, response (Fig. 37). She slides her hands off the table, placing them on the armrests of her chair then leans back into her chair as if to remove herself from her guests. Davis' physiognomic response to lean back and to wiggle herself up straight erects a straight pathway for the energy inside of her to travel. Davis directs a small amount of her energy to appear in the form of a hesitation -- but that hesitancy is actually a declaration fronting de Havilland. Davis chooses to deliver her line, "*What do you think I asked you here for... Company?*" with bulging eyes and a shaking head. The line itself can be said by anyone, it is how Davis says it that is affected by her performer code. Then Davis blinks her eyes profusely punctuating the word, *company*, and the implication being that her company would not be desired. Davis' delivery, tone, and facial expressions all signify *her* performer code. Davis' choice in attaching her body to the chair further signifies her trance of disbelief (Fig. 37). She begins her rebuttal with a slight smile/snicker pulling her vocal energy from her diaphragm to combat her attackers. The smile/snicker gives Davis the appearance that this could be a laughable situation if it were not so serious. Davis uses the smile/snicker to separate one thought from the next connoting an impetus for her next sentence. The camera pulls back to a WS capturing the three of them in a claustrophobic triangle. Davis appears smallest and de Havilland looks extremely large and shadowed. But, she effects this ferocious vulnerability that gives her spectators a visual contradiction to perceive. Davis and de Havilland argue verbally as

Davis signifies the truth of the narrative through her performer code. Her clear yet complicated, style of performance intimidates de Havilland as Davis exposes truth with the force of her signifying practices -- the power behind her eyes and vocal fluctuations. Davis' choice of her rhythmic enunciation of dialogue that she utters distinctly indicates her recognition of Cotton and de Havilland's disregard for her -- they want something. A CU is placed on emotionless de Havilland while Davis continues describing how people make *fun of her*. Davis' spectators are unable to see her perform this line. Her delivery is so verbally and vocally powerful that its intent is evident without seeing Davis. Her vocals carry as much punch as her visuals. The camera observes de Havilland's riposte of *the full responsibility of people making fun of her* (Davis), but is in denial. Then Davis lures the camera back with a CU conveying the significance of the scene through her signifying practices of vocal tone and facial physiognomy. She is seated with her arms placed on the armrests of her chair, removed from sight. An eye light accentuates her swelling eyes; her flaring nostrils and an occasional shake of her shoulders is dispensed. Davis' choice of facial expressiveness detains the camera as it converges solely on her. Her almost non-existent upper torso and the absence of her lower torso create a dominant emotional delivery concentrated on her performer code of facial expressiveness. Davis punches the words, "*Oh yes, I can see that...*" all the while showing spectators a contradiction in her smile/snicker which previews and is a turning point for the next well-executed verbalization. "*...God do you have gratitude!*" Upon her delivery, she releases herself from her chair and leans quickly forward towards the camera demanding and creating her extreme CU. Davis' eye light remains in front of her and slightly below eye level picking up the brilliance of fire in her eyes (Fig. 38). The camera cuts quickly to de

Havilland's *sanguineous* image while spectators hear the rest of Davis' dialogue. Davis' choice of the vocalization of words literally shoves de Havilland out of her chair, which confirms her guilt to Davis' spectators. The camera pulls back to a WS that captures de Havilland in the forefront and Davis leaning forward. Davis takes a drink from her champagne, pushes herself out of the chair and toward de Havilland to continue the confrontation. The camera moves in for a MS on Davis and de Havilland, then to a CU on Davis face with soft key lighting. A shadowing effect creates a partially shaded throat (what de Havilland is going after) on Davis. Her head is tilted slightly to the side as she displays the smile/snicker; this movement creates a balance between her dialogue and her physiognomy. The smile/snicker coupled with Davis' sarcastic verbal performance signal spectators of her awareness. Davis' choice of the smile/snicker signifies her confident attitude. Davis' way of drawing the camera in closer and closer creates the image that she is revealing the narrative's truth. This CU observes a little subtle signifying practice that Davis does with her eyes -- by just widening them slightly enables her to punctuate an ambiguous sentence in such a way that it turns into fact. The game continues while Davis' signifying practices are revealed in a multitude of powerful and well-developed, smile/snickers that deepens the complexity of her performance. Davis' toothy smile/snicker leads her progression of her bulging eyes, her raised eyebrows and finally a victorious smile/snicker, which illuminates Davis' face and signifies that the truth about the past has been revealed in her triumph. Davis *appreciated* being right, out smarting her opponents and winning. She signifies this auspiciously in her performer code as she unveils de Havilland's secret with smugness and pride. Davis' unveiling opens the door to contention and her choice of her smile/snicker is her signification. The MS supports

this by placing the shadowing on Cotton and de Havilland and this affect makes their guilt more apparent. All the while, spectators hear an incredible, childlike voice. Davis delivers her line with such timing, accuracy and intention that in just one sentence she summarizes her and de Havilland's childhood together. Spectators get a creepy almost disembodied sense of Davis' voice. Her performer code creates such significant ambiguity of her pivoting dialogue that punctuation is abandoned and should be left open for interpretation. She entices the camera's return with her chin held high in the air as she glares down at de Havilland. Then upon her thorough vexing of de Havilland, Davis raises her glass, to signify a toast befitting of her victory. The raising of the glass is a performance code but Davis' choices of her signifying practices are *her* performer code. The argument continues as the camera is drawn toward Davis' response to de Havilland's roused confession. Davis' face turns from calm to pain as she jumps out of her chair defensively. De Havilland continues to verbally assault Davis with unyielding emotionality. Davis' choice in facial expressiveness changes from just a slight lowering of the eyebrow, to her eyes looking downward, and rapidly following is her head, quickly followed by her entire physiognomy. Davis displays her performer code in a range of emotions, from anger to surprise, to the shattered reality of *the* murder. Davis uses a compelling vocal tone as she answers a question regarding how de Havilland would have known the affair would end in murder. Davis chooses to speak in a flat disconnected crackled voice, "*No you couldn't have known that...*" Davis' despondent voice and sideways glance pairing denote a much anticipated performance to come. Davis signifying practices reveal much more than dialogue to spectators, they communicate Davis' unraveling of the narrative.

Davis' signifying practices create interesting features in her acting style in all her films. Her smile/snicker and her tendency to display fidgeting; of bows, her purse, her collar, her gloves, her cigarettes, and her quick paced physiognomy. Davis fidgets with her hands to nervously conceal and reveal her physiognomy. Her body always seems to be in motion. Something always seems to stir within her; on her face -- her eyebrows, eyes and entire mouth; her upper torso -- her elbows give the appearance of being attached to her waist, which accentuates any swivel movements; her lower torso -- her short legs are off set by her quick gait. The different sections (her face, upper torso, lower torso) of Davis' physiognomy functions smoothly in tandem. But at times the *seams* show. While Davis is unraveling the mysteries in her roles, her body unwinds. For example, she is in movement and becomes distracted and turns. The physiognomy of her turn is lower torso; upper torso (elbows connected at waist) head then eyes. Giving the appearance of disembodiment. These subtleties enrich her performance and intensify the sense of clarity in which she reveals the plot of the carefully written narrative, for these gestures convey her desire for the spectators to understand meaning. Davis consequently conveys an aura of *strength* that is intimidating and seductive for both female and male spectators. The strength and power she possesses more than compensates for her small stature. In fact, her power comes from her small stature. Her *can-do* upright posture strengthens the perceptions of her ferocious, tenacious, demanding attitude. Her vocals exhibit and force her opponents to listen and rethink their motivations. Her over enunciating and quick responses work in conjunction with her eyebrows and eyes, to reveal her mind. When Davis wants to persuade her opponent to do something her way the over enunciating gives the spectators the opportunity to

recognize this. Neither the physical nor the vocal devices of the star are unique to the roles *Davis plays*, they are unique to the personality of the performer and belong to a strong performer code which imposes its authority over narrative contexts (Toepfer 156). Davis embodies such a complex performer code, which works consistently well with the narrative and filmic aspects of her films. Her physiognomy works like a machine. Her hands drive the upper torso and face which drives the lower torso and feet. Her commanding walk is propelled by the powerful heave of her arms, the swivel turn of her hips a function of her elbows connected at the waist and her face mimics those physiognomic gestures.

Davis' performer code engages the camera angles and lighting dramatically in her performance. For instance, the scene in *Dark Victory* where Davis gives the appearance that she and Bogart are in a two-shot, when in actuality they are over ten feet apart. She draws the camera in with an interesting allure of her facial gestures. She gives her spectators something rarely seen, she gives them herself. It is not what she says it is how she performs it. Just a glance from Bette Davis and there is an immediate thrust of action filling the room. Her performer code propels her performances and the energy and the momentum of the film, as well as the directors' choices.

Chapter Five - *Performances of Vivien Leigh*

Vivien Leigh, where her contemporaries are concerned, lies on the verge of living -- which sometimes means dying -- or just memory. Leigh has a remarkable blend of romanticism, ambition and tireless energy combined to secure the things she set her heart on, often without counting the cost of others or, eventually, to herself (Walker 1). There is about her a wildness that flashes in her eyes, and yet few women have more outward composure, elegance, or style. Leigh molded her early performances from dream and fantasy and she lived in the future where almost anything could happen (Edwards 13).

Ship of Fools had an ensemble cast however the focus remained on Leigh's performance. This film became a collection of many of her performer code. In one instance, Leigh signifies her childlike innocence with the raised brow/pouting smile when her flirtations go awry, like in her performance in *Gone with the Wind*. At the end of the film, Leigh is mistakenly seduced and upon her suitor's discovery of the *wrong woman*. Leigh demonstrates an emotionally crushed woman through her signifying practices and goes into a bizarre rage fluttering around flapping her arms and hitting him with her stiletto heel. Her fluttery physiognomy is apparent also in her performance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where Leigh also displays the performance of being trapped.

Leigh's signifying practices are found throughout her films and she uses them quite effectively. Her raised brow/smile, self-assured blink, pout, the raising of her chin, the framing of her face with her hands, her rapid lyrical diction, her physiognomy, throaty sounds, lunging, and fluttery body language, just to name a few, make up her performer code creating her star image.

Leigh's performance analysis begins with *St. Martin's Lane* (1938) directed by Tim Whelan. The film is about Leigh's rise from street performer to stardom. The scene begins with Leigh entering her rented room after being out all night. She has just been offered a position with the theatre and wants to leave her current group of street performers. Charles Laughton plays the street performer who discovers her and gives her housing. A WS captures Leigh opening the door of her room her face is filled with the daylight that shines through her windows engulfing her. She draws a deep breath, tosses her performer's hat (that she uses for collecting money) on the bed but remains wearing her coat. Leigh walks pointedly over to her vanity anxious to examine her face -- the face of a new star. She sits down and is being observed by a close MS that comes from in front of her and to the right. The MS catches her adjusting her bow with her left hand as she leans into her mirror to get a better look. The key light is soft and creates a flawless image of her face. Leigh admires that face, gives her signifying practices of *her* self-assured blink and raises her chin (Fig. 39). She bites her lower lip, tilts her head downward and proudly admires herself in the mirror (Fig. 40). Spectators can see Laughton entering over her shoulder. He walks quickly into the room and is seated to the right of Leigh. He has obviously intruded on her moment of glory. Leigh signifies this glory by her admiration of herself, her beauty, *her*. The camera pulls back and is positioned to the right of Laughton in a WS, which captures the entire room. Leigh is seated facing Laughton and asking twice, "*what's up?*" Laughton replies, "*we got to have a talk.*" Leigh's reaction to Laughton's utterance is to throw her upper torso forward and spin around facing the mirror and staring down at her hands. Leigh's way of throwing her physiognomy into her contemplation with her hands signifies a use of full body

utilization that effects her desired response. She tells him to verbally to clear out; her body language substantiates this in her signifying practices -- the way she straddles her chair, the poise of her arms and the raise of her brow. Leigh's performer code signifies confidence. Laughton wants to know where she has been. She tells him with confidence as she throws her upper torso forward. All is well until Laughton becomes jealous and corners her. A MS captures Leigh pulling back; she grips her hands as Laughton continues his jealousy. She stands up as if to take the role of an aggressor, but her slight physiognomy pales in comparison to Laughton's physiognomy. Laughton changes his tone -- Leigh takes this opportunity to project her signifying practices of femininity once again. And she responds well, as this is her familiar ground. She tilts her head to the side, blinks long sexy blinks and gives the impression that she has it all under control. She effects this control in her performer code. Leigh takes one confident stride toward Laughton and sweeps down kneeling at his side (Fig. 41). This maneuver is a contradiction achieved by Leigh's manipulation of the situation. In Leigh's performer code she is taking control by behaving submissively. The CU captures the side of Laughton's face and Leigh's raised brow and soft, slowed pace of speaking the words, "*why old Charles of course*" (I'm telling the truth) (Fig. 41). A reverse angle captures the back of Leigh's head and Laughton's expression of belief in Leigh. A MS is placed on Laughton leaning against the fireplace explaining to Leigh his troubles. A CU on Leigh's reaction to his words that shows in her face flushed with suspiciousness (Fig. 42). Her signifying practices of the flushness, tilting head, that look of vulnerability enhance her verbal reaction. The dialogue is not unique to Leigh; it is how she says it, it is her performer code that is distinctive. For example, Leigh's reaction to being trapped is her

communicating this with *her* signifying practices. She stands signifying a slight look of fear in her face, her brow becomes gradually and slightly raised and her mouth is pursed (Fig. 43). CU on Laughton's shows his constant desire for Leigh and on Leigh but her reaction is fear (Fig. 44). Her brow is further raised -- her performer code signifies this trapped behavior. The camera is straight on her but her eyes are evasive and dart off to the left at Laughton (Fig. 46). It is as if Leigh is reloading. Leigh's vocal tone is slow in the beginning and then Leigh marks an increase of the tone and tempo as she boasts about herself, "*Charles there ain't gonna be no new turns, I'm going on the stage!*" (Fig. 46). A three-quarter MS on Leigh and Laughton. Leigh exhibits her performer code with a tight blink of her eyes, a toss back of her head and then gracefully lunges forward creating a waltz movement. MS shows Leigh's signifying practices. The back-lighting produces a pronounced halo effect on Leigh hair and the camera is drawn into an over-the-shoulder CU of Leigh. This CU shows Leigh's pronounced raised brow/smile (Fig. 47). Her performer code projects her inner determination and marks the incipience of Leigh's imminent battle. Laughton pushes her aside with one quick back swipe of the hand -- Laughton's gesture is contemptuous. Leigh's reaction is surprise and momentarily this gives her a loftier edge. He uses brute force and she her cunning. In an over-the-shoulder shot we see the back of Leigh's head and a hard key on Laughton as she tells him that *basking* (street performing) is only *fooling*. He receives it as if she were saying that he has spent his whole life being a fool. The camera remains on Leigh and Laughton in an uncomfortable, lengthy MS. Spectators see the hard key on Leigh and a partial profile of Laughton. Leigh throws her chin out and charmingly blinks, signifying an attempt to regain her footing. Leigh's petite physiognomy is subdued as Laughton

combats her with his forceful bigness and seizes control. Leigh is backed physically into a corner and her eyes watch the menacing Laughton coming towards her. She displays a unique show of fear through an exaggerated form of her signifying practices. Her eyes are projected powerfully but Leigh appears powerless over all the battles that beauty cannot overcome (Figs. 48-51). He pins her savagely against the wall. Leigh's unique way of releasing screams of protest and attempting to battle him is her performer code (Fig. 52). Her small fragile body struggles, she propels her waving arms in the air with urgency. Leigh's expressive way of signifying terror of the unknown is with a wrinkled forehead, throaty guttural sounds and eyes bulging with panic (Figs. 51, 52). Leigh's performer code gives her spectators an image of her as a *wounded child*. Laughton tears her violently from the wall, Leigh's body is thrown forward and her hair fills the camera's CU with a violent flutter. Her slight physiognomy is further dwarfed as he forces her into his immense arms. A tight, edgy CU imprisons them together for about eight long seconds. The CU witnesses Laughton's groveling mouth imposing on Leigh's ear professing the words "*you stay here with me, you have to stay with me*" (Fig. 53). The CU uncomfortably continues as spectators witness Leigh's inability to move and her failure to work herself free. Leigh's performer code, which is a direct reflection of her petite physiognomy, tells spectators that she is vulnerable. The camera breaks from a long sustaining CU and into a WS the moment Leigh breaks free screaming and lunging for the door. Laughton chases and catches the hysterical Leigh at the now opened door. Leigh calls for Ma as Laughton drags her in, closing the door (Fig. 54). Her scream for Ma is that of a sanguineous cat. Laughton again pins Leigh, now against the closed door. A CU of Leigh in an over-the-shoulder shot and a hard key on her as she is pinned firmly

against the door (Fig. 55). The lighting accentuates Leigh's vulnerability and youth (Fig. 56). Leigh signifies terror by taking in large gulps of air into her throat making *her* guttural sounds (Fig. 56). This sound works nicely and produces *her* desired affect of fear. A CU marks Leigh's blinking response as Laughton proposes marriage to her (Fig. 57). Her signifying practice of the blink signifies relief, insult, and finally domination. At Leigh's point of realizing that she has domination she bears down and shoves him away (Figs. 58, 59). This shove is accompanied with the physically propelling word, "*Ma!*" as she launches herself out of his clutches (Figs. 60, 61). And then out in the hallway and into Ma's arms. Leigh's performance is her use of her performer code and this is propelled by the use of her signifying practices, which are directly driven by her physiognomy.

Vivien Leigh created a star performance in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), directed by Victor Fleming. Leigh's signifying practices were unique to her performance and the performer code is emphatically revealed. In this scene, Vivien Leigh convinces Leslie Howard to go inside the library where she begins to profess her love to him. The scene opens with Leigh and Howard occupying WS in the library. The low-key lighting in the room gives it a slightly shadowed metaphoric touch of impressionism. Leigh stands before Howard and they both are profiled. Leigh's signifying practices are pronounced -- her elbows tight to her waist, hands clenched together in front, she moans slightly as she hesitates to speak. Leigh holds back her words with her hands clutched to her diaphragm emitting a slight moaning signifying, *Oh do I have to say it Ashley -- can't you just -- say it for me?* The camera changes position creating a MS shot over Howard's shoulder which magnificently captures Leigh's signifying forward step. Soft key lighting is placed

on her right side, which casts a slight shadow on her left, delicately outlining her nose. Her body casts a heavy shadow on the door behind her, adding to the darkness of the room. Leigh's signifying dramatic forward step compels the camera's change from the MS to a CU. Leigh appears to waltz toward Howard -- signifying the beginning of their dance. The tenseness in Leigh's face, neck, the stiffness of her stilled hands placed over her diaphragm signifies her complete uneasiness. Leigh effects this uneasiness with the stance of a marionette. Leigh expresses her first attempt to tell Howard that she loves him as a question. Her signifying practices of her rapid, *almost lyrical* utterance of the words coupled with her raised brow give the line the tone of a question. Leigh's raised brow, waltz and lyrical expression signify that this is more than just an attempt at a mating dance, it is a conquest -- one of her flock is fleeing. The unattainable Howard has just become Leigh's challenge. Leigh's green eyes draw the camera in for a CU as the low-key lighting is placed just below them, urging them to sparkle. Leigh separates herself from the performance code as she throws back head her sparkling eyes begin to smolder. This smoldering sensuality is part of Leigh's performer code. She throws back her head, exposing her neck fully to Howard's glance, showing complete vulnerability and revealing her frailty to Howard and her spectators. Leigh's professed love is repeated when the first *performance* with the raised brow is not convincing. To make the second performance more convincing she combined the raised brow/with the slight frown of an insatiable child. Trying hard to convince him to take her seriously, the camera is then placed over Leigh's shoulder to show Howard's response of flattery but full awareness of Leigh's past, as he says, "*...you've always had my heart...you cut your teeth on it.*" The camera moves in for a CU of Leigh and Howard as she says in *her* breathy way, "*Don't*

tease me now." Leigh's type of breathy speech emerges straight up from her diaphragm this rise appears to *arouse* a stir in her throat which causes her eyes to blink and her head to move back. This reaction creates her effectual performer code. Leigh begins to profess her love again for the third time in an exhalation. Like a trusting child, Leigh says, *"have you my heart my darling I love you, I love you."* She speaks the line with meaning this time. Leigh draws the camera in for an extreme over the shoulder CU revealing her response to Howard, who confesses that he does care. Leigh gives the spectators an expression of the complacency, as if to say, *that was easy*. She effects this expression by swooning her upper torso forward, her chin is up, her head is back, and her eyes are closed and she is waiting to be kissed. But when she opens her eyes prompted by Howard's remark of *"can't we go away and forget we have ever said these things?"* Leigh opens her eyes to a whole new reality. She wrinkles her forehead with incomprehension, showing slight embarrassment to her spectators of Howard's rejection. Howard steps away from her and towards the window, Leigh follows. With Howard's back to her and her back to the camera, the camera reflects her rejection by shooting her from behind. She pursues him to the window and physically forces him to turn around. Leigh signifies to her spectators that her delicate physiognomy and beauty could turn him around. She occasionally resorted to physical force when her beauty did not achieve her desired result. Howard informs her that he will marry Melanie (Olivia de Havilland) and Leigh says, *"you can't!"* A CU on Leigh reveals that it will take more than beauty for Leigh to get what she desires so an array of signifying practices are effected. She begins with scowling -- this indicates that she can get sullen in order to achieve her desired goal. Leigh and Howard are captured in a profiled CU with their hands clutched together as if

conspiring. When Leigh professes the fourth time that she loves Howard, she takes a deep breath as if to gear up to say "*I love you*" and she closes her eyes and subconsciously shakes her head -- *no*. Her deep breath coupled with the words *I love you*, emit trust, the trust of a young woman. The camera comes in for an over-the-shoulder CU of a completely different Leigh. This CU is riddled with confusing shadows cast from outside the window (Fig. 62). The shadowing coupled with Leigh's expression of bewilderment, as she uses her eyes in search for her desired response. Leigh's searching eyes connotes the exodus of her youthful naiveté. The camera travels back to Howard for his response and then back to Leigh with another completely different CU. This CU has more distinct shadowing coupled with Leigh's overt anger, giving her a wicked appearance and creating a contradiction to her beauty (Fig. 63). Leigh begins ranting and raving which brings about a medley of signifying practices; her eyebrows raise, eyes bulge out and her lower teeth protrude forward extending her pouting lower lip; as the speed in her diction increases so do the movements of her eyes and brows. Her forehead begins to wrinkle. Leigh's signifier is a scowled forehead and brow, expressing disbelief at his response of rejection. Her forehead becomes smooth connoting a sign of sadness. Before long this is replaced by defensiveness as Leigh signifies this with her performer code. Her eyebrows move up and down with urgency while her eyes dance with the excitement musing her combative intonations (Fig. 64). All the action and emotion is executed in the physiognomy of her head and shoulders. A WS captures Leigh fleeing and Howard pursuing her. Her inability to have her beauty win the love of Howard inundates Leigh with reality. The camera is pulled in for a MS as Leigh reveals scorn and anger by releasing her explosive tears in a profiled shot. Howard follows her

to the middle of the room. At this point the camera misses an opportunity, the camera should have been placed in a CU directly on Leigh's expressive performer code, which requires a CU. Here, Leigh pauses as the sobbing takes over her upper torso and voice. She speaks and her voice breaks just as she says, *"I'll hate you 'til I die!"* Leigh performs an incredible break in her voice upon saying, *die*; she actually affected this idea that she is dying inside. But it is not because of Howard's rejection of her, it is because she is denied the trophy (whatever trophy she desires). Leigh's tearful emotional release is inadequate so she raises her hand, turns away from the camera, and strikes his face with impeccable follow through. Leigh again resorts to negative physical contact caused by lack of fulfillment that is signified by emotional rejection. At this point Leigh's performer code signify her lamentation for the exodus of her childhood innocence. Leigh's deep sobbing momentarily ceases after she strikes his face. Leigh draws her hand in, placing it carefully under her heart; she nurses her betraying hand and releases one last dwindling sob. Leigh's last sob is for her hand. A MS is placed on Leigh as Howard exits. She turns, steps towards the door, and drops her nursed hand. She faces the door then turns around quickly towards the camera. The camera comes in for an unblemished CU. Leigh's performer code executes her meaning of disappointment by her signifying practices. This execution of meaning is the lowering her head, (which mimics the statue on the table next to her) and a moment later something cathartic occurs, her chin pulls up, her eyes move right to left searching, her raised brow/slight smile ensues (Fig. 65). Leigh's performer code signifies her emotional recovery. She shakes her shoulders like a child about to stomp her feet, then she collects herself, stares down and with a raised brow/smile, and sees the vase (Fig. 66). The vase is cast with images of children playing

and is an index for her vanishing childhood. The camera leaves her face and follows her gaze to the vase, pulls back to a WS behind her to capture her physiognomy. Leigh's performer code is a purging of her emotion and she spitefully hurls the vase at the fireplace again with impeccable follow through. Leigh regains her footing, and becomes her own victor. Leigh denotes that a raised brow/smile signifies a change of emotion soon to follow a release of emotion. More often than not this emotion signifies dissatisfaction released into anger. Like Davis', Leigh's spectators are notified ahead of time by their performer code that something revealing is about to occur.

Another film revealing Leigh's performer code is *A Streetcar Named Desire*, (1951) directed by Elia Kazan. Although Leigh's appearance is rather wispy, almost transparent and ghostlike, it is heavily weighted with glimpses of the girlish southern charm spectators' observe in her performer code twelve years earlier in *Gone with the Wind*. Leigh signifies to her audience *her* reality with the raised brow/smile. These signifying practices of her raised brow/smile and her lyrical, almost floating physiognomy added much to her performance. The scene begins when Leigh attempts to convince Brando that nothing underhanded took place when she lost the family property (Bell Reeve). A close MS as Leigh reveals her vulnerability. Leigh saunters into the room away from the door with her eyes momentarily blinked closed, signifying wearing blinders. Leigh signifies that she is survivor by her wearied but not exhaustive, stride. The key light is hard and shines on the left side of her face (away from the camera); the right side of her face harbors a shadowing. The lighting gives Leigh a metaphoric appearance of being young on one side of her face and weary on the other (Figs. 67, 68). Leigh's physiognomy becomes more suggestive and flirtatious which she effects through her

signifying practices the moment she steps into Brando's lair. Through her signifiers in her physiognomy she claims to have the ability to subdue the lion. She begins to signify this and tantalize him with her fluttering eyes, her arousing walk, and verbally confessing that she understands him better than her sister. Leigh sashays to Brando who stands leaning against the fireplace. She uses her performer code to signify this understanding; she stops for a moment to pose; she rests her face on her hand and carefully frames it with her chin pointed downward. Leigh is demonstrating her signifying practice with this pose and her the ability to dazzle a beast with her beauty. Both Brando and Leigh are profiled in a MS at the fireplace mantel. Leigh's attempts to seem bashful and flirtatious are wasted on expressionless, sullen Brando. The lighting casts hard shadows on Brando's eyes; blurring them and making them appear not penetrable to Leigh. When Leigh realizes her flirtations are ineffectual, she attempts a different maneuver of her performer code. Leigh gives Brando a sideways glance and bends forward preparing to extinguish her cigarette. Leigh is making absolutely certain that Brando didn't buy her flirtations. Leigh's sideways glance signifies that her performer code is a performance within a performance. And her signifying practices demonstrate this. Even Leigh's transitional movements are her performer code. Her code is pointed and manipulative, she takes a breath and flutters her upper torso down to the ashtray -- everything she does is well tuned. Leigh goes through a medley of lines, each line expressing a different type of signifying practice. She first says, in an articulated voice -- forthrightly and to the point, but with a playful edge *"all right Mr. Kowalski, let us proceed without any more digression."* At this point Leigh extinguishes the cigarette saying *"I'm ready to answer all questions,"* which is uttered in a similar voice but Leigh continues to treat his inquiry

like a game of *buffoonery*. The camera remains in a three-quarter MS on Leigh as she removes a bottle of perfume from the mantel spraying it all around her face, as if it had shielding powers -- as if it would effect a force field. She sprays the perfume, informing the motionless and emotionless Brando that she has nothing to hide. Her actions display quite the contrary. Then why all the perfume? While spraying the perfume she utters, "*I have nothing to hide.*" Her voice swells on the word *hide*, as if she were questioning herself. And finally she says, rather flatly, "*What is it?*" This is her way of being submissive to Brando. Leigh's voice digresses from articulate to a complete loss of airs, until she arrives flatly at Kowalski's level. While Brando explains the Napoleonic Code (what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband), Leigh appears to be surprised by the close MS and at Brando's flash of intelligence. Seeing him now on a different playing field, she reverts to her *flirtatiousness*, flashing a smile, fluttering her lashes and playing the shy girl with the lowered chin. Leigh indicates her uncertainty in her abilities to win him over and attempts to further charm him by spraying him with perfume. Brando jerks her arm and screams at her to stop. Spectators see a CU of Brando and three-quarters of his face lighted with a key light source in an over-the-shoulder shot of the two of them. Leigh's anxiety creates a claustrophobic tension holding them in a MS. Her motion is frozen; her elbows are bent and held upright; she stops spraying the perfume and her hands remain tightly clasped to the bottle. Leigh effects this 'scared bird' body language with her bent elbows that are held upright signifying her vulnerability and the downward positioning of her chin echoes her fear. A CU of Leigh's mild embarrassment is a reaction to her underestimated opponent and is detected by her tone when she says, "*OK, cards on the table.*" She tosses her lower lip out signifying sincerity. But a moment later

she takes a deep breath and says, "*I know I fib a good deal... but after all, a woman's charm is 50% illusion.*" Leigh's tone becomes genuine, then insincere and then genuine again. These signifying practices indicate Leigh's instability. When she speaks of *illusion*, Leigh says it with her hand framing part of her face, fluttering her eye lashes, arching her brow and creating an *illusion* (Figs. 67, 68). Essentially, Leigh displays *her* signifying practices and conveys an example of what *she* looks like when *she* is creating an illusion. Now you see it now you don't... Leigh went on and saying, "*When a thing is important, I tell the truth.*" Leigh creates *her* interesting 'pop' in her voice when pronouncing *important*. With this tone Leigh gives the idea that she has a difficult time with what is important and what is illusion. She moves her hand from her face as if to say, *see I'm not blinking my eyes or fluttering my brow*, and holds onto her pearls explaining that she never cheated her sister or anyone. And without a blink or a flutter, controlling those signifying practices, her spectators believe her as she slides her hand down her chest. We see Brando's disapproving reaction in an over-the-shoulder MS. Leigh lowers her head to signify shame in her explanation that everything she owns is in that trunk. She breathes deeply, her shoulders rise and as she exhales her shoulders fall in a sigh of relief. The lighting on Leigh's face is shadowed, giving her a sense of isolation; her hand rises in a failed protest. Leigh momentarily lets her guard down and signifies this by relaxing her pose against the fireplace, her left arm crossing over her languid right arm. With hardly a moment to breathe, Brando sprints to her trunk and starts rifling through it. The camera pulls back and spectators see Brando and Leigh in a MS and Leigh's reaction of surprise. Then, Leigh lunges to her trunk and at the pilfering Brando. Leigh's physiognomy allows her lengthy arms to arrive at the trunk first and this adds

physiognomic shape her performer code. The MS camera angle combines well with Leigh's physiognomy and creates a visually effective, deep lunge. Leigh's lunge effects a significant ten-inch dip when she comes toward the camera into her MS -- Leigh's arms appear too long and disembodied. *Her* physiognomy is a key feature of *her* signifying practices and it effects all aspects of her performer code. A MS captures key lit Brando along with heavily shadowed Leigh coming around the trunk as her delicate physiognomy pushes Brando away. This action allows Leigh to retrieve the papers herself. Leigh conveys some control with her lunging maneuver and the rough physical behavior exhibited towards Brando. Her performer code has an instinctual flair as if she is saving a sanguineous child. Leigh further demonstrates this when Brando asks Leigh, *"What are those?"* and she replies; *"They are love letters, yellowing with antiquity all from one boy."* Brando grabs the love letters from Leigh and she reacts completely erratic. Her performer code is like a mother protecting her young -- she rushes around fluttering in exasperation and lunging once again for the letters, trying to protect her youth in the dead boy's letters. Leigh's ripping action of the letters from Brando catapults them onto the floor. She lunges once again to examine the letters. She signifies horror by using her hands to frame her face. By *her* performer code she effects a reliving of the death of the boy and her youth. Leigh's well-groomed image is now ruffled as she scrambles on the floor attempting to recoup the letters and perhaps her youth. Leigh sits on the floor clutching her letters closely to her chest, like a mother guarding her young. Spectators see Leigh's face nestled in her letters, as she is barely able to lower them enough to look over them to see Brando. She holds them closely and says with her partially veiled eyes and in a low voice, *"you can't hurt me because I'm not young and*

innocent anymore." Leigh's protective performance gives the perception that everything else had been taken from her -- don't take the letters, too. The letters signified her youth, love and innocence lost. A close MS on Leigh as she wipes a single tear from her eye. She does this as part of the process; she doesn't stop even for a moment. Leigh puts on her glasses and begins transferring the papers to looming Brando. Even Leigh's single tear is blackened with the symbolism of a life gone awry. Leigh performs a broken spirit; she signifies this with slightly crazed, ruffled jerky movements. Leigh's despondent facial expressiveness and jerky body language offers her performance a ravaged edge. Leigh connotes a similar fate for herself in her appearance and in the symbolic transfer of Bell Reeve's documents into Brando's hands. Metaphorically, Leigh is Bell Reeve. Leigh's physiognomy gives her a *fluttering* appearance. Her hand and body movement mimics her facial expressions, and her elaborate flowery wardrobe reinforces *her* fluttering movements. Leigh signifies with her physiognomy constant motion.

The next film where Leigh's performer code is in critique is *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961), directed by Jose Quintero. In this scene Leigh plays an aging stage actress living in Rome and is being stalked by an unknown man. The scene begins with Leigh stepping out of a car as Warren Beatty (Paulo the young gigolo) watches her through a beaded window. Leigh looks around and notices her *stalker*. She nervously removes her sunglasses from her purse and places them on her face to conceal her identity. The camera holds a MS on Leigh and soft key lighting illuminates her face. A WS now finds Leigh in the crowd as she searches for her stalker. The camera moves behind her in an over-the-shoulder shot as her stalker (the personification of death) follows her maneuvering through the crowd. Leigh turns quickly as the camera catches

her in a close MS of her back as her face turns towards the left. The camera's angle and Leigh's quickened physiognomy give the feeling of eminent danger. A WS tracks her flurry through town, as Leigh stops, pauses for a moment in an elegant pose. Leigh leans momentarily back on one foot then leads with her shoulder, briskly scooting down the busy street, weaving in and out of the crowd. Leigh's signifying practices of her physiognomy; her gloved hands gripping her purse as a shield, and her elbows flapped outward at her waist project an appearance of expecting, waiting for him as she pauses at the alleyway (Fig. 69), and proceeds down its path, as if to taunt. The soft key light casts her hastened shadow hard on the stone walls of the street. As her pace quickens through the alley, Leigh's expression is that of desperation and vulnerability. She effects the impression of being a victim with the positioning of her clutched hands clenching her purse just below her breasts -- elbows positioned out, as if she were a bird taking flight. As she pauses at another corner in the alley her back is pressed tightly against the wall. Leigh reaches up to remove her glasses, she hesitates, looks around. Leigh projects mixed signals in her signifying practices -- she almost appears sad when she notices that the chase has just lost its sizzle (Fig. 70). Leigh's hesitant reach for the sunglasses signifies that she is not ready to reveal herself and not certain that the pursuit is over. She prepares herself with her signifying practices; she draws in a deep breath, lowers her shoulders, extends her lower lip, and eventually slows down to a stroll. This signifies relief and some disappointment as she continues her walk through the deserted alley and around the trashcans that become obstacles that she navigates around. Leigh tiptoes through the alley in quiet enjoyment as if the slumming had become appealing. The risk and the danger of being caught and the thrill of being vulnerable become reflective in

Leigh's calm physiognomy. She is now framed in a WS, her back to the camera, stepping carefully on the cobblestones and down the alley. The director places interesting indexes throughout the alley (Fig. 71). A car is seen in the distance that appears relatively new except a few tires are removed, hood up and engine exposed. The car's engine signifies Leigh's exposed heart. There are shirts on a line strung across the alley hanging out to dry and amongst them hangs a blue shirt. The blue in the shirt is similar to the color of Leigh's suit. Signifying that Leigh's clothes can no longer conceal her exposed heart. On the left there is a cage filled with doves sitting on top of an old cart, Leigh hears them flapping around. The caged doves represent her trapped heart. As she passes by the cart its wheel gives way, the cart crashes, the cage falls emptying its cargo and the doves fly away with a raucous that startles Leigh. Leigh braces herself against the wall as the loud crash of the falling cart tosses her delicate balancing act off kilter. The camera changes to a MS on Leigh as she watches quietly the birds' upward flutter (Fig. 72). Leigh is watching the birds in a most interesting way, like a mime. She hunkers down slightly with her white-gloved hand pressing against her face as her elbow is pushed upward moving around like a bird's wing. Leigh's sunglasses disguise much of her facial expressiveness but her body language is most revealing. Leigh drops her hand, which communicates her amazement and she glances in the direction of the flying birds. Her most apparent facial signifying practices are her arched eyebrows, which are almost expressionless with the sunglasses further concealing any emotion. Leigh's signifying practices, her physiognomy, and her glasses, gloves and clothing give the impression that Leigh too is a bird in flight. Leigh's performer code expresses this impression throughout this scene. The doves in flight signify Leigh's inhibitions fluttering away. Without an

utterance, Leigh places her hand on her heart and proceeds casually in a stroll down the alley. A WS captures the overturned cart and her non-chalet navigation around its wreckage walking toward the camera. Leigh's elegant, careful almost silent footsteps on the cobblestone alley give her a disembodied attitude. Her legs move but her arms take on the winged quality due to her hands clutching her purse into her body (Fig. 73). Leigh let a bicyclist pass by as she turns slightly, casually, hearing something behind her as she continues to stroll. Her stalker passes behind her, undetected. She continues strolling and as she walks her movements become more sensuous. She is exuding sensuality. When Leigh passes by the camera she gazes around slightly, as if on a tour of the alley. In the three-quarter MS of Leigh's profile the camera also picks up behind her the hard lighting that cast shadows of bars on the stone wall, signifying her once imprisonment. Leigh's body language becomes more sensuous but her elbows remain wing outward. Her signifying practices are in contradiction. On one hand Leigh seems flirtatiously free and on the other she is signifying protectiveness with her winged bird physiognomy. The camera begins to track her expressive body language from behind as if it is stalking her too. Her elbows are still winged out and her purse firmly shielding her as she walks. The swishing of Leigh's legs against each other gradually create a more relaxing and inviting stroll (Fig. 74). The alley now reveals a new red scooter; symbolically Leigh trades in her inhibitions for youth. As she passes by the scooter her strolling performance becomes enticing. She hears a loud stir of a rollup door and people talking behind her and she turns only slightly. The camera angle shifts from tracking her briefly, to her point of view. Leigh cautiously turns back around and continues down the alley, gloves and elbows winged outward, hands clasped and positioned in the center of her heart. The

key lighting is placed on the left side of her face, and her right side is shaded as she walks past the disabled car. A MS holds Leigh's back to the camera (Fig. 75). Leigh pauses at an antique store window. She finally removes her sunglasses, lingers and then is startled by her stalker's image in the store's mirror (Fig. 76). Frightened, Leigh drops her sunglasses at a distance noise. Her profile is brief as she quickly spins around toward the camera and then like a frightened bird, flutters away to the main street (Figs. 76, 77). The camera observes a distorted reflection of her in the store window as she darts quickly down the alley (Fig. 77). Her stalker steps into the camera's view and spectators see his point of view as Leigh scrambles carefully down the alley. Leigh's physiognomy resembles a scared bird with her long arms waving in the air as she negotiates past mourners dressed in black. The camera picks up Leigh's arrival on the main street corner. Leigh's performer code projects her as more dynamic than frightened (Fig. 78). She surveys the area as she scampers down the street. Although Leigh's sunglasses are missing she remains almost expressionless. Her signifying practices of her raised brows and her physiognomy are that of a bird in flight -- no expression just moving fast. A CU on Leigh detects liveliness not before seen. Her hair is blowing, blood is reeling through her face coupled with a soft key, and not a blemish appears on her face. A MS continues to track her every movement. As she passes quickly through the crowd, her hair bounces up and down with speed giving her an impression of flight. She turns quickly around scanning once again behind her in the crowd for her stalker. As Leigh turns around forward she is completely surprised to run right into Warren Beatty (Paulo). Leigh in her excitement says, "*Paulo.*" Leigh's heated expression gives her the look of invigoration (Fig. 79). Her performer code exudes sounds of a bird cooing and Leigh expresses her

excitement in *her* tone of voice. A CU on Leigh reveals an unusual hard key lighting effect on her face. The lighting occupies the center of her face, shadows her neck and hairline and gives her a masked appearance, almost like a mime (Fig. 79). Leigh's body language is revealed through her signifying practices, which further supports this effect. Her constant over movement of her shoulders, her raised brows/smile indicate that she has already dismissed the stalking incident and will not be victimized. Leigh's performer code executes a vibrant and exhilarated performance. The CU and key light on Leigh is now soft and gorgeous. She looks young, radiant and flawless (Fig. 80). Leigh's eyes blink in excitement coupled with her raised brow/smile that signify her confidence and a pivotal change in Leigh's performance. Until this point she is not conveying this pivotal change in performance in the film. Leigh's performer code the raised brow/smile gives her eyes rejuvenation (Fig. 81). Leigh walks on to her car, expressionless like a mime, as if nothing occurred. In this performance, Leigh's facial signifying practices exist but seem to be squelched or hidden. It is as if the Leigh is attempting to hide Leigh's identity. Leigh wore a light colored wig that further detaches the spectators from her and she also seems removed from herself. There were several moments in the film when Leigh's raised brow/smile really supported her performer code and made her performance come alive. When Leigh produces *her* raised brow/smile it transports spectators back to her performance in *Gone with the Wind* where *her* performer code lit up the screen in her star performance.

Ship of Fools (1965) is directed by Stanley Kramer and is Leigh's last picture. Leigh plays an aging beauty, alone on a ship looking for love. This scene finds Leigh in front of her mirror in her cabin; Lee Marvin enters mistaking her for someone else. A close

MS discovers Leigh seated at a vanity, her face rests upon her hands as she nervously rocks her body slightly back and forth (Fig. 82). Her signifying practice of her hands around her once youthful face springs eternal and has migrated through the years and across performances. She utilizes them to frame, to study, perhaps to guard that same face. The key light is soft and is placed on her from above and the light casts a slight shadow on her neck, which is created by her head. The camera is angled slightly downward from behind her, which gives her a somewhat forlorn appearance. Leigh projects a distant sadness as she sits at her vanity talking to herself. Leigh remarks aloud as she rests her face on her hands and glazes in the mirror that "*you are not a young Mrs. Treadwell...*" As she drops her hands away from her face, she opens them hands widely, palm out toward the camera, like a mime (Fig. 83). She pauses momentarily, creating an open kind of framing of her face and a lofty of acceptance of her age. Leigh picks up a cigarette and continues her monologue, "*...you have not been young for years...*" and she lights the cigarette ceremonially. The camera changes positioning from behind her shooting her image in the mirror to becoming the mirror in front of her. Leigh is framed in a CU with all of womanhood's accoutrements surrounding her -- her pearls, perfume, wine, and makeup. This type of shot, a CU with a monologue, is awkward and complex. It is a challenge for Leigh to only *imagine* seeing her image in the mirror. She proceeds to place her cigarette in the ashtray looking in the distance away from the camera and framing her face again with her hands. Leigh continues the monologue discussing *what she is and what men want*. Her performer code of her now deep raspy, smoky voice and dramatically painted eyes confidently gaze into the camera's eye. And into her heart discussing *her own sixteen-year-old heart behind the old eyes*. Leigh displays a raise

brow/smile and she *looks* sixteen. Her voice becomes lethargic and disturbing as she begins playing with her hair. Leigh curls the sides of her hair inwardly as if framing a young face and wiggles her lower torso while humming, as if she were a child playing makeup (Fig. 84). Her long fingers swipe her bangs away as she purses her lips to look doll-like. She again creates a frame for her face with her sculpted hands. Leigh lets her spectators know that she is amusing herself and this is indicated through her performer code. Leigh glances down and spontaneously picks up an eyebrow liner, releases a moan then begins drawing dark eyebrows (Fig. 85). She draws the left one first, all the while making humming sounds, then the right brow, which she drew twice. Then like an artist trying to keep balance on her canvas, she applies black eye shadow, and nervously says, "*baby*" (Fig. 86). Leigh begins to detach during her application of the exaggerated makeup that creates a clown-like mime resemblance. Leigh's personal detachment is disturbing. This act of defacing her own beauty is completely out of character for Leigh but in comparison, it would not be for Davis' performance as Baby Jane Hudson. The camera resumes its original positioning behind her as she applies her lipstick into the mirror, confessing that *she's never grown up*. Her fingers appear to move independently of her hands as she tosses her lipstick on the table. This gives her fingers a disembodied mannerism. As she throws the lipstick down, Leigh says, "*now*," and it is vocalized in a throaty, cat-like alien voice. Through her vocal tone Leigh disengages herself from this act. Leigh's comments and physiognomy throughout her monologue in her performer code indicates her apprehension. Leigh's comments; meaning her signifying practices, her throaty noises and humming, her physiognomy, meaning her apparent disembodiment of her actions. Leigh picks up her perfume and begins spraying it all around her face and

head in a circle. This spraying in a circle is nostalgic of Leigh's physiognomic response in *Streetcar Named Desire* when she was protecting her vulnerability from Brando, but now she is protecting herself from the scene and her own vulnerability. The camera regains its position as her reflection and as she continues spraying. Leigh continues her little joke saying, *if this is what men want, this is what they'll get*, -- all the makeup (Fig. 87). Leigh's performer code at this point is lighthearted on one hand but on the other hand she radiates sadness. Leigh sits at her vanity contemplating *her* vanity. She begins to settle into her newly found resolve. Then Leigh has a personal realization -- she whispers it to herself in a throaty voice of being alone and having a "*paid escort*" (Figs. 88, 89). Again her signifying practice of her hands framing her face issues meaning and draws attention to her face. At her realization, she places her painted face into her makeup-ridden hands and cries at the horror of her now smudged wasted life. A CU captures her disheveled expression of alarm and surprise when the door opens behind her (Fig. 90). Leigh turns around to face her intruder and sees Lee Marvin (womanizer) in an apparent drunken stupor. Marvin grabs her arm as the camera captures them in a WS. The room is dim with a small amount of hard key light to the far right of Leigh casting light on the right side of her face. The camera angle changes as Marvin forces Leigh out of her seat and suspends her off the floor. She struggles wildly to regain her footing. Leigh's distressed physiognomy; her kicking legs and swinging arms gives her spectators the appearance of a woman trying to break free of her captor. She looks as if she is fighting for her life, but which life? Leigh made it clear in her dialogue that she is dissatisfied with her life. This kicking could also be viewed as Leigh shaking off encumbrances or releasing frustration. A WS captures them in the dark as her violent

shaking releases the encumbrance of her overdress off and to the floor. Marvin continues kissing her as Leigh begins to relax into it -- enjoying the passion. The room is dark and their kiss draws the camera in closely. Then the camera pulls back momentarily to a MS of Leigh pulling free to catch her balance and her breath with her hand still clutching Marvin's coat collar -- then she releases his collar. The lighting changes and a soft key MS leaves Leigh's spectators with her satiated expression of a raised brow/smile in this over-the-shoulder shot (Fig. 91). Leigh regains her footing. The camera is drawn to her the now hard key lighting that changes her appearance accentuates the clown-like makeup and gives her an aged appearance. Leigh's eye-light adds a contrast to the hard lighting that puts sparkle in her eyes bringing forth a sense of romance and vulnerability (Fig. 92). A reverse angle of Marvin's surprise and his blundering apologies relinquish the camera back to humiliated Leigh. When she realizes the kiss was not intended for her lips, she says abruptly "*get out... get out!*" (Fig. 93). These words of hers coupled with a gasp and her hand held to her chest guarding her heart, propelled Leigh's body to the door. This particular performer code is reminiscent also of Leigh's role as Scarlet in *Gone with the Wind*, after Howard shunned her. In both scenes Leigh performed rejection. A close MS tracks fluttering Leigh through the darkness and to the door. She pulls the door-handle once and her hand slides from it, knocking her off balance. Her long swinging pearls produce a sense of action and sensuality. After attempting the door for the second time, Leigh finally throws the door open ordering Marvin to *get out* (Fig. 94). The camera remains on Leigh holding her in a MS and soft key lighting penetrates through the open door as spectators see a *soft* Leigh. She stands upright body to the camera head profiled towards Marvin with her right hand over her heart (Fig. 95).

Marvin steps into the camera frame continuing to apologize to Leigh. Leigh takes her right hand and with her full force hits him across the face shouting the word, "pig" and with great follow through (Fig. 96). Again the reference to Leigh and Howard's scene in *Gone with the Wind* is applicable. Her whack threw Marvin into the door and onto the floor. The contrast of Leigh's petite physiognomy and Marvin's great statue is ironic that with the force of her emotional rejection she is able to knock down Marvin. Marvin rises up and Leigh goes for her stiletto shoe and repeatedly strikes Marvin into the door and onto the floor and into submission, saying, "go on...get out...get out!" Leigh's signifying practices are displayed in a crazy sort of bizarre disconnected voice and disembodied arms. Leigh relentlessly and unmercifully thrashes the stiletto shoe in Marvin's face (Fig. 97). Her thrashing physiognomy and the propelling of her pearls through the air performs an interesting sexual innuendo. Beaten Marvin staggers into the hallway and Leigh pursues him continuing her mission (Fig. 98). Leigh's savage attack on Marvin seems like a release in many ways. Her wild flogging causes heavy breathing mirroring an orgasmic experience. Leigh stops her attack (she is the attacker not the victim) and backs up, leans against the wall with one last gasp she draws the camera in for a MS (Fig. 99). And in the distance over Leigh's shoulder the disrupted illusion of her vanity awaits (Figs. 99, 100). Leigh pulls her arm in tightly to her chest to guard her heart and aid to slow her breathing. Satiated Leigh leans her head back and momentarily closes her eyes then opens them slightly looking down at Marvin with a single sigh of relief (Fig. 100).

Leigh's extraordinary beauty sustained her through her short life. She was beautiful until the end of her career/life but her performances indicate that she no longer believed

that. In her performances she appeared to have lost faith in her beauty and did not grow into the age of it. When Leigh realized that her beauty could no longer protect her, she let it spoil her by taking and performing in roles of lost women with lost beauty. She personified this and became a victim in her roles. Leigh's performer code suggests that her belief in her once possessed heroine attributes of the Scarlet O'Hara is fading. She began establishing herself as a victim to her imaginary *fleeing beauty*. Leigh's physiognomy became the evidence of this. Her performer code began to show the strain of her beliefs. She began to hide herself in her roles and mask herself in some roles as a mime. Instead of commanding roles with her physical beauty, face and body, she became passive. She was no longer the bold beauty like Scarlet and Liberty (*St. Martin's Lane*). She had personified the loveless, Mrs. Treadwell (*Ship of Fools*) and Mrs. Stone (*The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*). Although at the end of *Ship of Fools*, she beats Lee Marvin with her stiletto heel and gives the appearance of not being a victim. Her physiognomy plays a major role in her performer code. Her bodily structure hardly changed, she remained petite, sensual and she remained beautiful, so what changed? She changed her opinion about herself and that identity manifested in her performances.

Chapter Six - *Bette Davis & Vivien Leigh -- The Conclusion*

This research discovers that Bette Davis' and Vivien Leigh's own personal attitudes; interpretations, and terms of their physiognomies made them stars. And this evidence shows in their performer code. The features of performance that define a "star" performance are different for each of them and exist in the close examination of the evidence of star performance. The importance of the message of the star *performer code* relates to the star performance regardless of role.

Leigh was a star because of the peculiar fragility of her physical beauty, and she was conscious of how little one's physical beauty protects one from the cruelty of the world. She *says* something like this in all of her performances. Davis did not possess the "wounded" physical beauty of Leigh: she was a star in spite of her failure to embody an ideal image of female beauty. Davis' performance *says*: in spite of the ambivalent or hesitant response my body provokes in you, in spite of your uncertainty about how desirable I am, I am stronger than the cruel world which hesitates to desire me.

Leigh's features of performance centered on her beautiful physiognomy and it was a tool, a very powerful tool. Few possess this attribute and actually had its utilization mastered. Leigh did, for awhile, as long as her physiognomy was youthful she filled the room with her performer code. As Leigh began to age, she became less secure of her beauty, therefore, less confident of her physiognomy, hence her performer code became more fragile. The once ravishing beauty became a victim of her own physiognomy. She was no longer able to fully manage it and this lack of management came through in her choice of roles and performances of them. She still visually maintained her beauty but lacked confidence. Throughout Leigh's career she fell short in obtaining the ability to

develop her physiognomy's natural aging process and this lack of ability came through in her performances. Davis on the other hand, possessed a different kind of beauty and chose to accentuate her aging physiognomy. She relaxed into it and made it something unique. Davis was an unconventional beauty: she portrayed and personified that uniqueness through her choice of roles and her performances. Her performer code was the manifestation of her physiognomy. She had an incredible balancing act mastered. She developed her performer code to off set her physiognomy, but it was her physiognomy that launched her performer code. Davis exploited her unconventional physiognomy to produce her unconventional performer code. And it worked beautifully.

Davis' and Leigh's performances communicate meaning denotatively and connotatively through their signifying practices. Their signifying practices stem from their physiognomies that are triggered by an occurrence of satisfaction or dissatisfaction creating an impetus for the desire to change the outcome of the situation. Davis' smile/snicker and Leigh's raised brow/smile performer code signify a pivoting point of change through one expression of emotion into the next. Aspects of Davis' and Leigh's physiognomy appear to be similar, yet their performer code is very different. Davis' code projects an image of ferociousness and Leigh's code tends to project more of a fragile, delicate image. Davis played women who took on large bites of life and somehow prevailed. Leigh appeared to always maintain a childlike, almost adolescent quality of fantasy and was often a victim. Leigh chose her roles differently from Davis in that she was viewed often as the defeated.

After *Gone with the Wind*, Leigh's performer code did not develop to the magnitude of Davis'. Leigh's code appeared to diminish, but upon examining her performance more

closely, Leigh *had* fine-tuned her codes in her raised brow/smile but with less frequency and with an opaque quality. Unlike Davis, Leigh narrowed her performer code. Leigh's physiognomy also did not change through her career. She remained nearly perfectly shaped and petite through the length of her career. Davis' body size fluctuated, which further assisted her to broaden and to develop her code. As time progressed and her physiognomy changed, as in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane*, Davis seemed to become more candidly exposed and unafraid of losing beauty to sustain her star identity. Davis allowed the camera to look at her physiognomic aging, shadows, and imperfections, even to exaggerate them, filming every aspect of a human life, even the obscure, hideous parts that no one wants to acknowledge. Leigh appeared to hide from her imperfections, spending energy concealing them from the camera and her spectators and projected uneasy performances when asked to perform these shortcomings. Unlike Leigh, Davis' performer code directed her energy in convincing her spectators that she was actually that person in the roles she played. Leigh's performances seemed almost detached in her later films, afraid to live the ugliness of being human even in a role in front of the camera. Leigh removed herself from the roles she played and Davis immersed herself in them completely. Leigh's later films wearily nudged her spectators in with her signifying practices *squeezing out* some great performances. However, in many performances Leigh's essence was detachment, for herself, her performance and her spectators. There was an underlying sadness and defeated quality to Leigh and the roles she chose. What happened to Leigh's Scarlet O'Hara spirit of victory? From victor to victim, the choice of films reflected Leigh's image of herself and the way she developed as a star. Her physiognomy was that of beauty and grace. But relying on those attributes

did not bring to Leigh the ferociousness Davis brought into her performances. On the other hand, the uniqueness of Davis' signifying practices revealed that she was alive, relishing the challenge and immersing herself in the roles she chose, completely. Davis took her spectators by the scruff of the neck and showed them a view of her reality through her signifying practices that at times was gruesome but always compelling. She spun them around and asked them, *keep your eyes open, now what do you see?*

Leigh's profilmic image drew the camera into her closely to record her magnificent beauty, facial expressiveness of her performer code as in her performance in *Gone with the Wind*. In contrast, she also enticed the CU's when playing Mrs. Treadwell in the scene in *Ship of Fools* where Leigh's beauty was spoiled by her own hand. In the scene in *Ship of Fools* where Leigh has just struggled free from Marvin's kiss, her facial expression demands the camera's CU. The hard lighting accentuates a tight look of surprise and the lines on the face of an aged beauty. Without the proper camera angle and lighting, spectators would have missed the entire suggestion of the scene, which was that Leigh was an aging beauty momentarily made vulnerable by Lee Marvin's kiss. Leigh assisted the camera's ability to frame her face by enlisting some of her own devices. Leigh used her signifying practice of using her own hands to frame her face, which strengthened her performer code and enlisted the camera's denotative devotion. Her hands framed the beauty in her face and later the fear. Leigh called attention to her face through this performer code that she possessed and used quite effectively. Such as in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, when she was trying to entice Brando into her reality of illusion. Leigh attracted attention to her physiognomy by the exaggerated use of her arms. At times her arms would appear disembodied as spectators are lured in to see

where the arms are connected. For example, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Leigh's arms gave an uncommonly detached appearance as she lunged for the trunk. Her physiognomy steered her to play similar roles throughout her career. A prevalent scenario in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* and *Ship of Fools* was that Leigh played an aging beauty who had fallen victim to the loss of her own beauty. In essence, she had fell victim to herself. In those films Leigh's reality that she had of her lost beauty came through in her physiognomy and dictated her performance and her choice in films. Leigh played a victim in life whose only shield against the cruelty of reality was her beauty that to her, was fleeing. Leigh's dependence on her youthful physiognomy stifled her growth as a mature star and this suppression is reflected in her performer code. The concept that there is nothing wrong with being an aging beauty alluded Leigh in her performances.

Davis' profilmic image mesmerized the camera, compelling it to move in closely to record every subtlety of her enthralling performance. Every raise of her brow or flash of her smile/snicker was intentional and key to her performance commanding the camera to work closely to capture it in its entirety. Davis also influenced the lighting through her signifying practices. Her nuances required distinct lighting choices by the director to assist in getting her desired point across. For example, Davis' role of Baby Jane Hudson's lighting was essential to project her desired image of an evil, crazy lady. So the use of hard lighting that creates strong contrasts and sharply outlines facial features and skin texture would be chosen for Davis in this role. However, for her role of Judy in *Dark Victory*, Davis' acting performance was for a role of an elegant socialite that required a soft lighting, to make her face appear gentler assisting in her presentation. Davis enticed

fascination for her face in interesting ways; unlike Leigh she did not use her hands to frame her face, she used her vocal inflections and her smile/snicker effectively. The cameras as well as, spectators were enticed into her face by the use of these framing tactics. As in *Hush...Hush, Sweet Charlotte* where Davis remained seated during much of the dinner scene and was able to completely hold captive her spectators and engage the camera indefinitely with her facial physiognomy. Davis chose films that enabled her to push her performer code to the limit, challenging herself and societal conventions. Davis let her physiognomy embody the roles she chose throughout her career. She was the essence of her performances. A common scenario in many of Davis' films was *whose reality wins?* Davis thrived on winning, so she won. Her role as Margo Channing in *All About Eve* provides her with a *staged* scene set cleverly on a stage, where she engages her opponents in an illusive game of cat and mouse, which reveals the inevitable triumph of her reality. Whether Davis' reality was right or wrong, she was always testing the risks of vulnerability and she always won. And the camera waited in anticipation to capture this. Davis let that "*sense of winning*" dictate her performance and her choice in films. Her dependence or independence on her physiognomy catapulted her growth as a star and this physiognomic freedom is reflected in her performances.

Evidence reveals that physiognomy determines the power of the performer code and the chief signifier of the performer code is physiognomy. For instance the smile/snicker and choices made by Bette Davis and Vivien Leigh are related to their bodies and this is the fundamental relationship that made them stars. The signifying practices they used to make themselves different from others came from their physiognomies and are unique to Davis and Leigh. Davis' disproportionately shaped body and unique beauty created her

performer code and this is reflective in her star performances. Her smile/snicker, which is metaphorically reflective of her exceptional position in a conventional society, was designed by *her* to house her unconventional physiognomy. Davis' choices in her performer code were accessed through her physiognomy and signify her emotion and motives. Leigh's nearly perfectly proportioned physiognomy and classical beauty created her performer code, which reflect her emotions and motives in her star performances. Her diminished ability to manage her aging beauty further exemplifies how a performer code distinguishes itself through physiognomy and in her later films this is exemplified.

The importance of this research is to broaden insight into performance and to determine the meaning of the performance, not the narrative intention. To understand the connection between the performer code and physiognomy is to understand the driving force behind star performances. Broadening the insight into performance opens spectators' minds into the richer, fuller almost hidden world of performance, the stars' performance, not the narrative or the directors' choices.

More research regarding performance is necessary. These inadequacies in understanding the physical presence in performance hinder the viewers' ability to watch the physiognomy of a star's performance and not just the directors' choices.



Fig. 1. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938).
A WS captures Davis taking command
in her riding habit.



Fig. 2. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938).
A WS shows Davis getting the crowd under
control.



Fig. 3. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938).
A close MS captures George Brent
in an adversarial position toward Davis.



Fig. 4. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938).
A close MS captures George Brent trying to
take control over Davis.

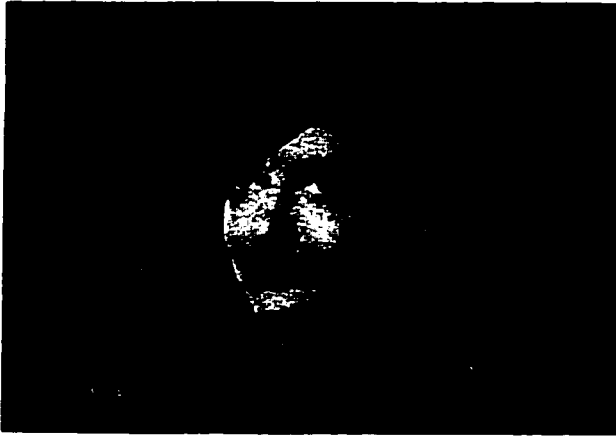


Fig. 5. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code.



Fig. 6. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code.



Fig. 7. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Davis toasts alone. A three-quarter MS captures her on-lookers reaction.



Fig. 8. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Davis draws the camera in closer to recording her separateness.



Fig. 9. Bette Davis in *Jezebel* (1938). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code which signifies her disappointment.

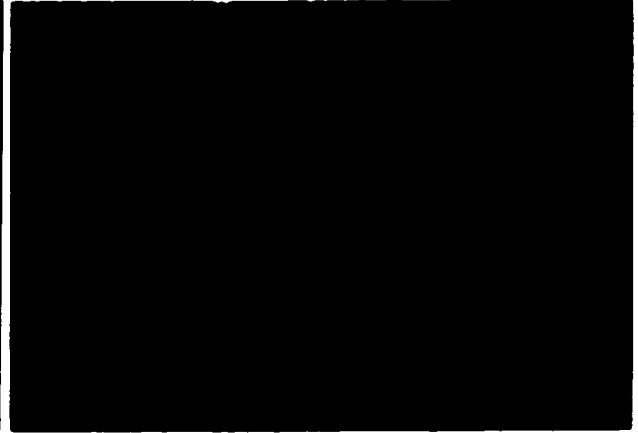


Fig. 10. Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1939). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code signifying her dissatisfaction.



Fig. 11. Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1938). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code with a added raised brow effecting an order.

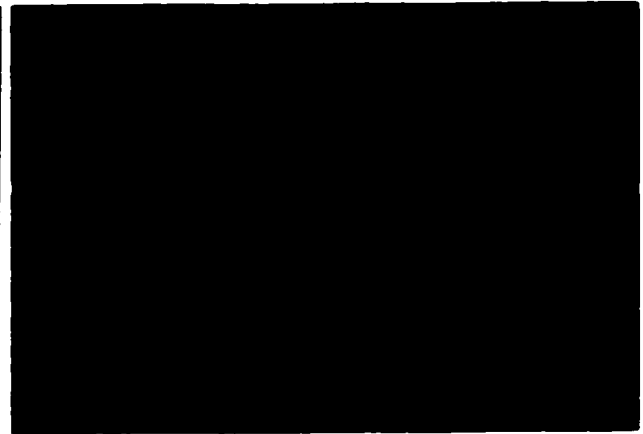


Fig. 12. Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1939). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of her smile/snicker performer code signifying her dissatisfaction.



Fig. 13. Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* (1939). Davis "smile/snicker" performer code signifying confidence.



Fig. 14. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). A MS shows Davis' physiognomy on the move signifying confidence.



Fig. 15. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). A three-quarters MS captures Davis in front of a harp, fidgeting with her gloves.



Fig. 16. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws the camera in for a toothy grin performer code.



Fig. 17. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws the camera in for a smile/snicker CU.



Fig. 18. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis' quick response to hearing 'Eve's' name. Davis uses her purse as a prop.



Fig. 19. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). MS shows Davis' pronounced middle finger and using her purse as a prop.



Fig. 20. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis saying 'Eve?' and using her purse as a prop.



Fig. 21. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis drawing in the camera for a CU of a smile/snicker signifying that her opponent was caught.

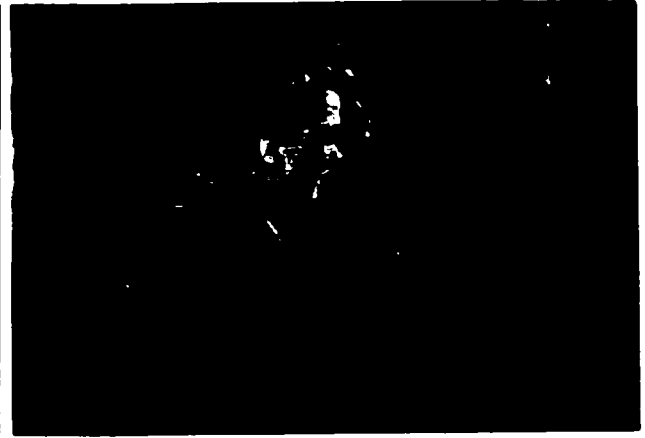


Fig. 22. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis showing no need up "upstage" anyone.



Fig. 23. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws in the camera for an over-shoulder MS of a smile/snicker.



Fig. 24. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws the camera in for an over-shoulder MS of a smile/snicker and fidgets with her bow.



Fig. 25. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws in the camera for an over-shoulder MS of a smile/snicker. as toothy grin Davis fidgets with her bow.



Fig. 26. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis draws the camera in for an over-shoulder MS of all of her facial performer code as Davis fidgets with her bow.

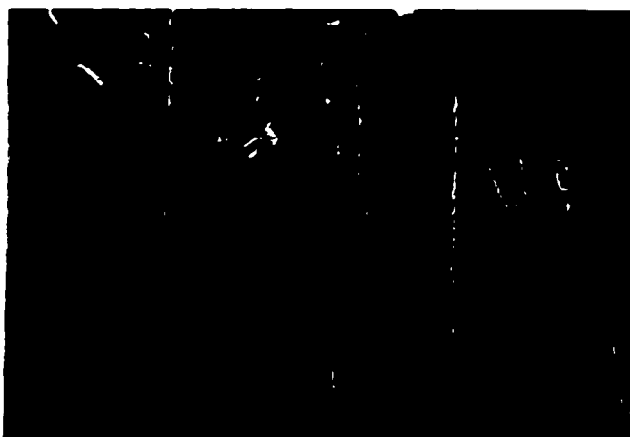


Fig. 27. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis is shown here in a three-quarters MS of a her physical presence, props in hands.



Fig. 28. Bette Davis in *All About Eve* (1950). Davis is shown here standing alone with just her swinging purse, cigarette and ferocious physiognomy.

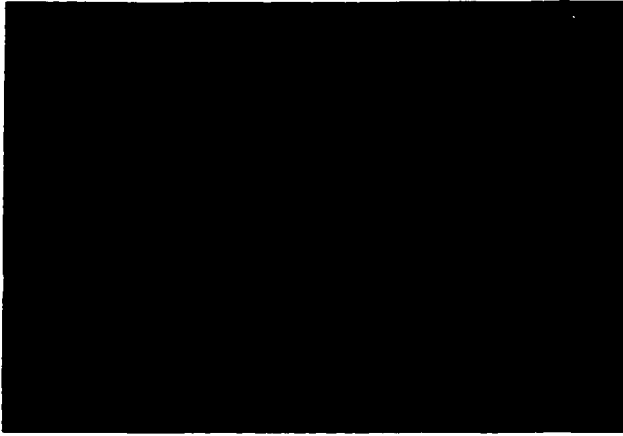


Fig. 29. Bette Davis in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962). Davis draws the camera in for a CU of what looks like religious moment.



Figs. 30-35. Bette Davis in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962). The moment vanishes here when Davis realizes that she has complete control over her sister. A smile/snicker is in progress effecting a change.



Fig. 31.



Fig. 32.

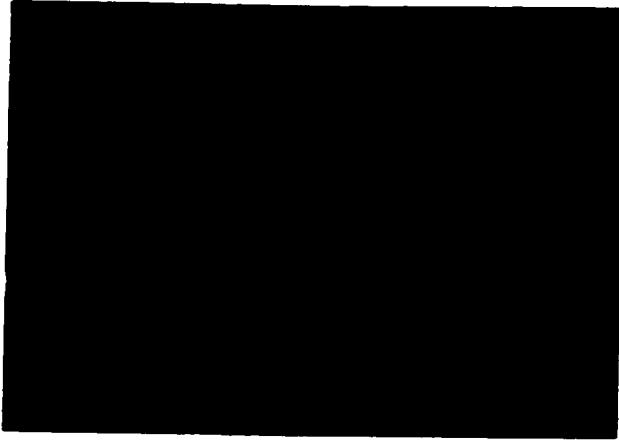


Fig. 33.

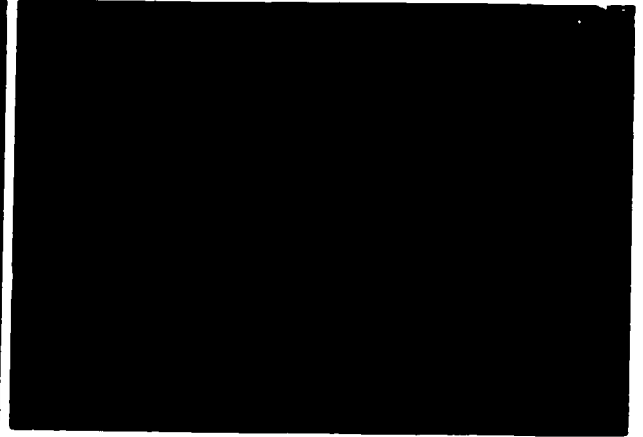


Fig. 34.



Fig. 35.

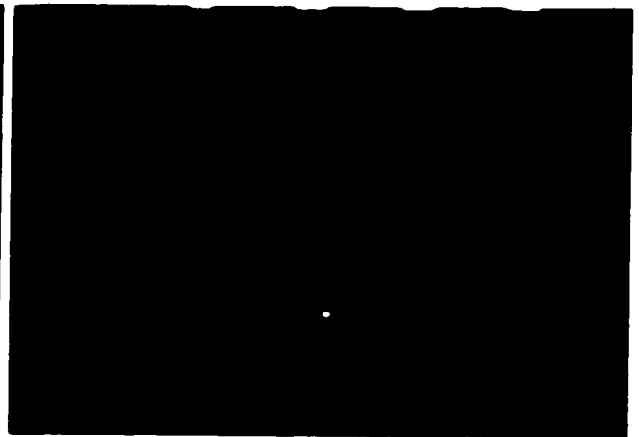


Fig. 36. Bette Davis in *Hush... Hush Sweet Charlotte* (1964). Davis' wide-eyed code signifies to her spectators that she has been crossed.



Fig. 37. Bette Davis in *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964). Davis' wide-eyed code coupled with the tightly drawn mouth signifies to her spectators that an emotional explosion is about to occur.



Fig. 38. Bette Davis in *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte* (1964). Davis' smile/snicker gives her face some relief.



Figs. 39-40. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh admires herself in the mirror.



Fig. 40.



Fig. 41. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh draws the camera in while she charms Charles Laughton using her raised brow/smile performer code.



Fig. 42. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh draws the camera in for a CU with a submissive camera angle denoting her vulnerability with her pouting smile.



Figs. 43-44. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh draws the camera in with her raised brow signifying a challenge.

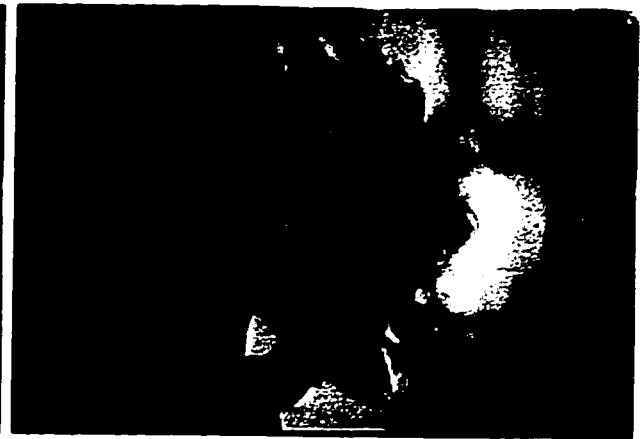
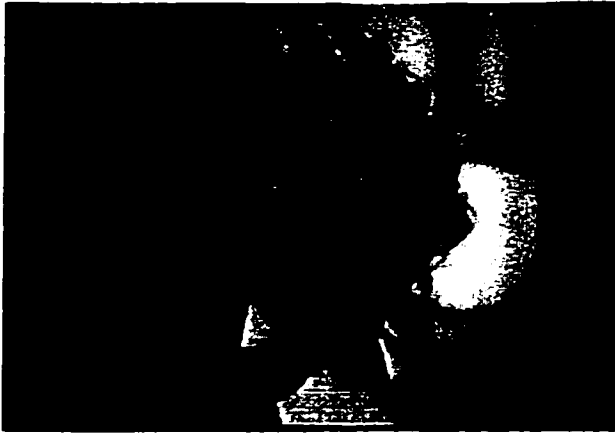


Fig. 44.



Figs. 45-47. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh draws the camera in for a CU of her performer code of the raised brow/smile demonstrating that she is the victor.

Fig. 46.

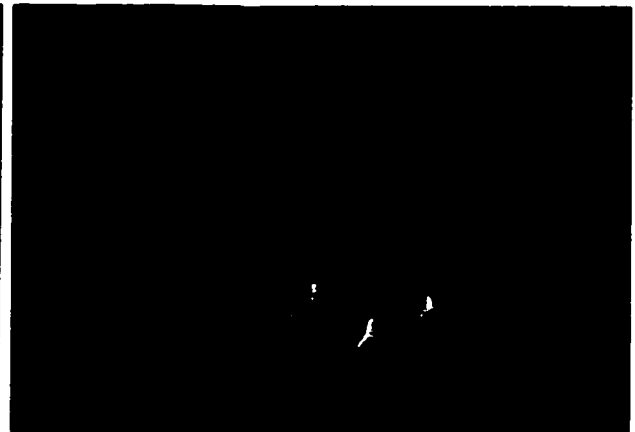


Fig. 47.

Figs. 48-51. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Leigh draws the camera in for a CU of her performer codes of how quickly her frailties show and how her beauty is no match for brute force.



Fig. 49.

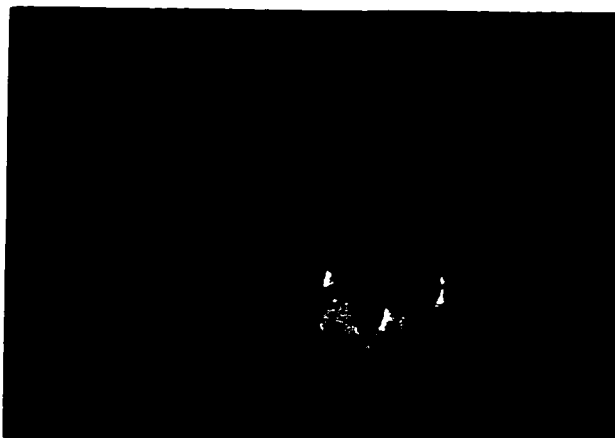


Fig. 50.

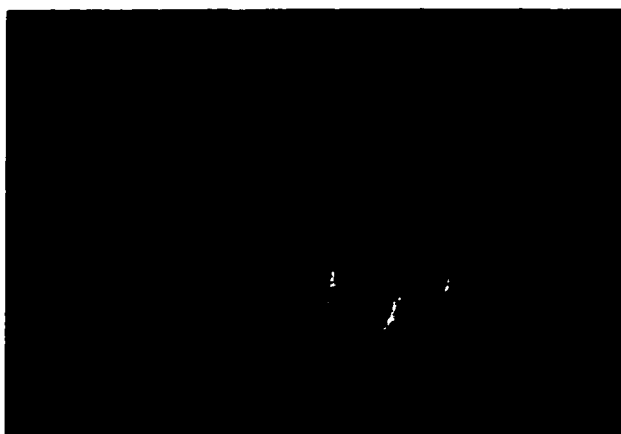


Fig. 51.



Fig. 52. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). This long CU of Leigh's struggle exemplified by her performer code.

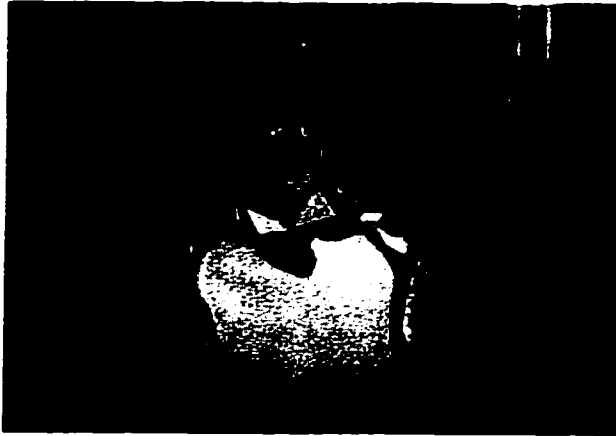


Fig. 53. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). Laughton groping Leigh.



Figs. 54-60. Vivien Leigh in *St. Martin's Lane* (1938). CU of Leigh's struggle to free herself exemplified by her performer code.



Fig. 55.

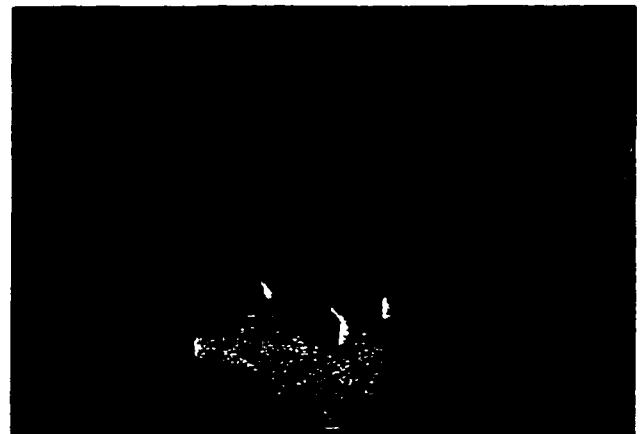


Fig. 56.

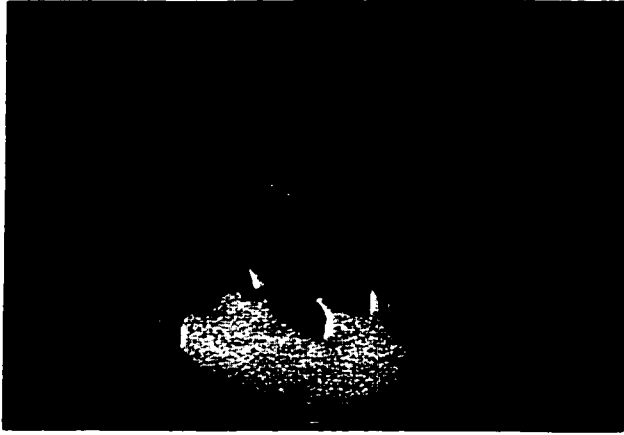


Fig. 57.

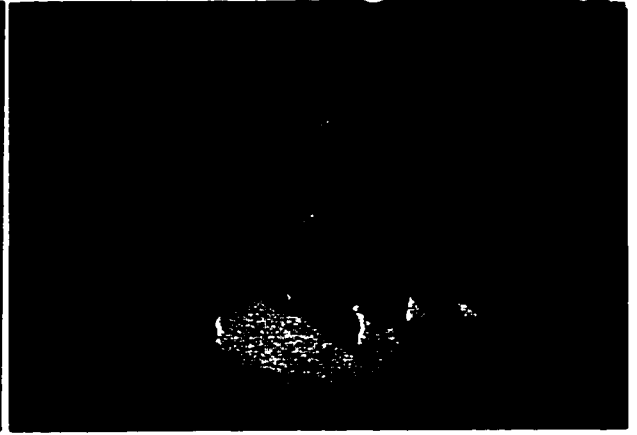


Fig. 58.



Fig. 59.

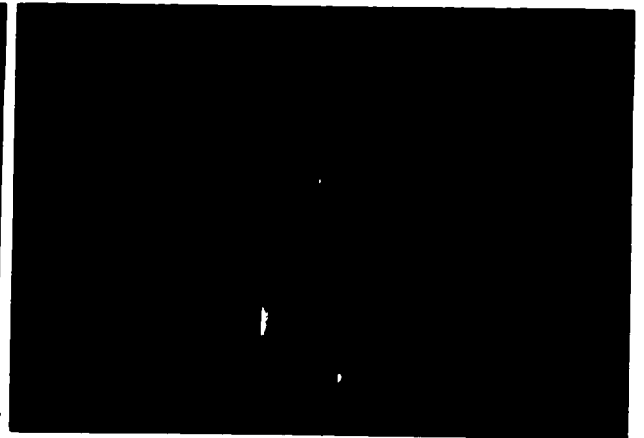
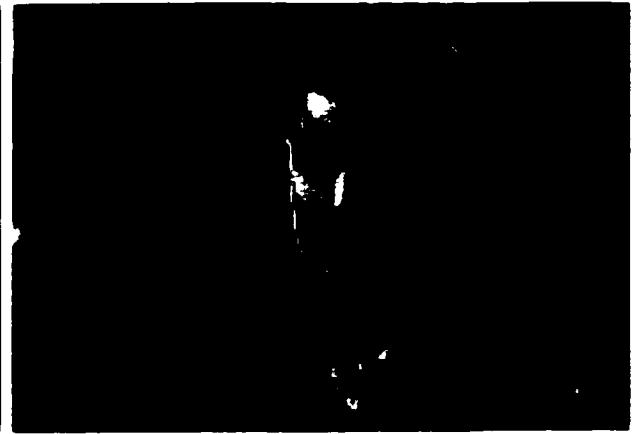


Fig. 60.



Figs. 61-63. Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). This CU of Leigh is riddled with confusing shadows coupled with her raised brow creates a searching look and shows her dissatisfaction.

Fig. 62.

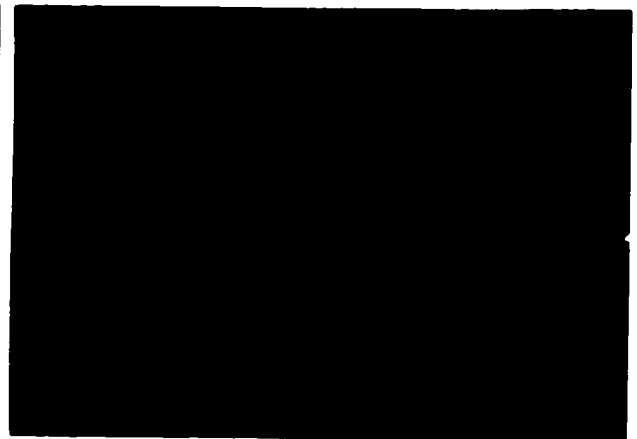
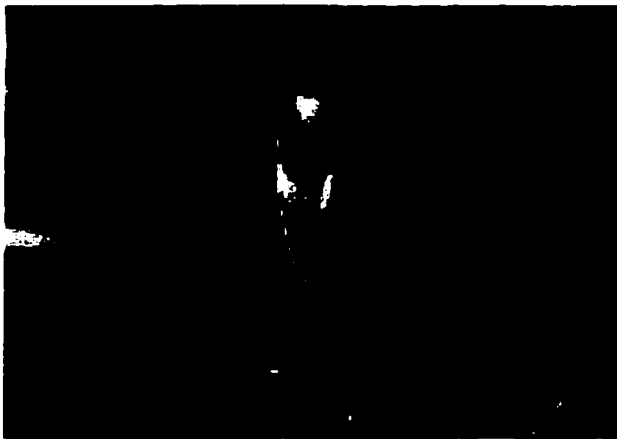


Fig. 63.

Figs. 64-65. Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Leigh draws the camera in for a CU of her raised brow/smile performer code. Leigh is showing her dissatisfaction. This code creates a pivoting point in the scene.

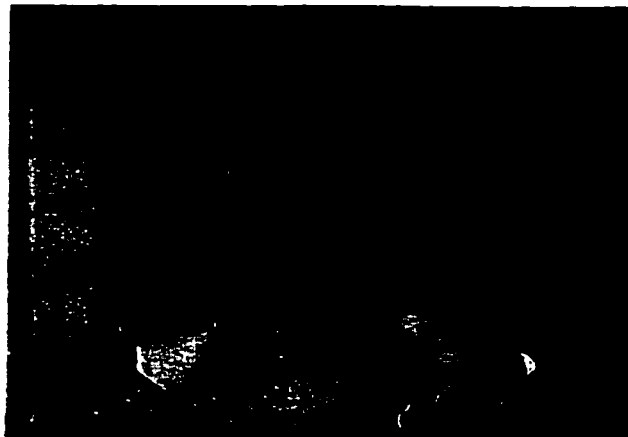


Fig. 65.



Figs. 66-68. Vivien Leigh in *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). Leigh draws the camera in for a CU of her raised brow and fluttery hand movements.



Fig. 67.

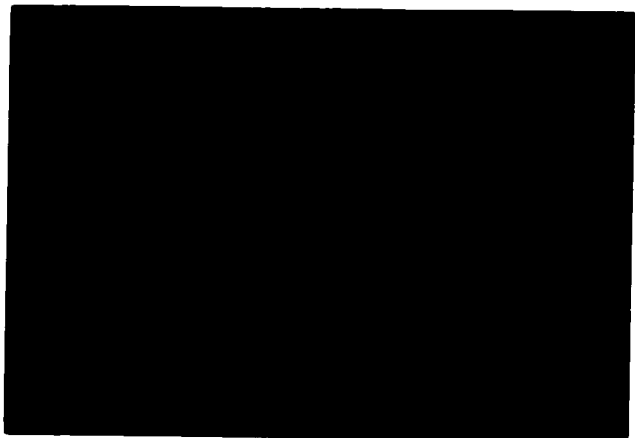


Fig. 68.

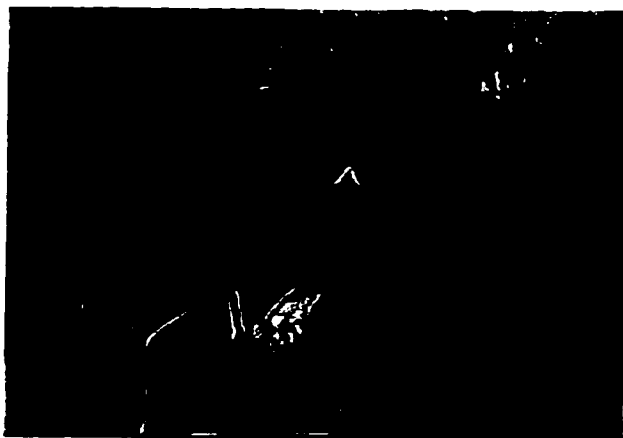


Fig. 69. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh's sunglasses partially conceal her face but her pursed lips and brow are visible.



Fig. 70. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh's arms and purse are held high at the elbows, giving her a bird-like physiognomy.

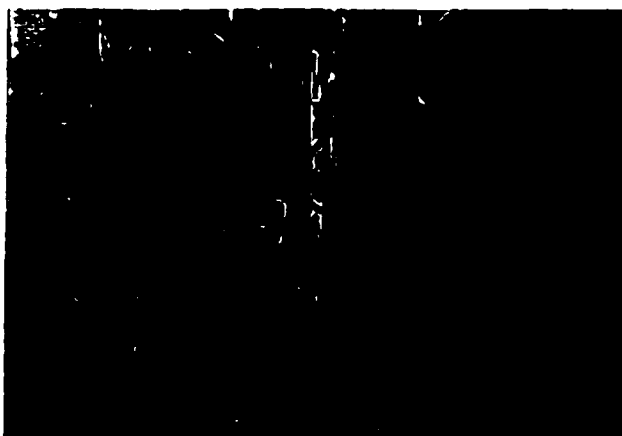
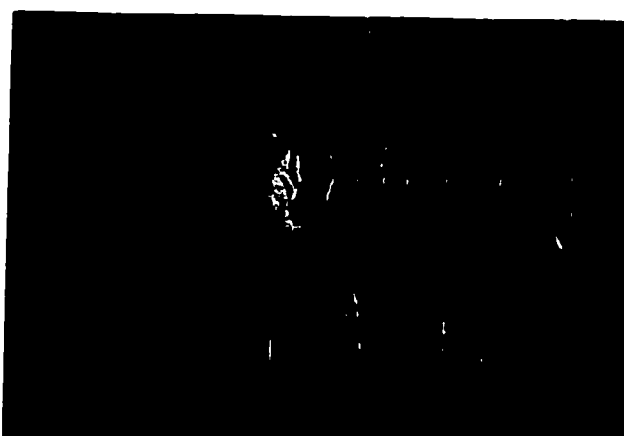


Fig. 71. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh travels down the cluttered alley.



Figs. 72-73. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh's arms and her purse is held high at the elbows, giving her a bird-like physiognomy. Sunglasses conceal her face.

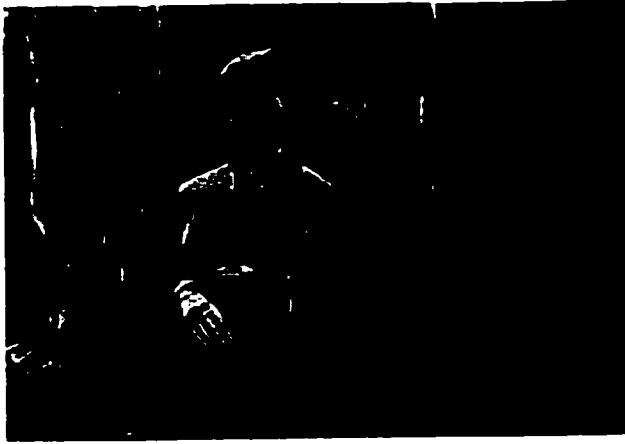


Fig. 73.



Fig. 74. Vivien Leigh in *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). WS observes Leigh's enticing physiognomy.



Fig. 75. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh hears a noise and is startled. Elbows remain positioned upward.



Figs. 76-77. Vivien Leigh in *Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh sees her stalker's reflection. Her elbows remain positioned upward.

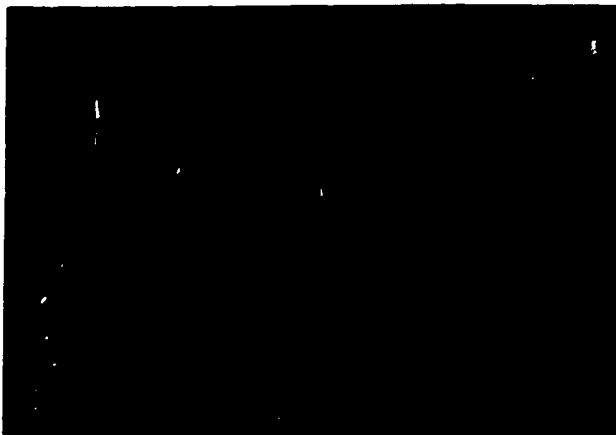
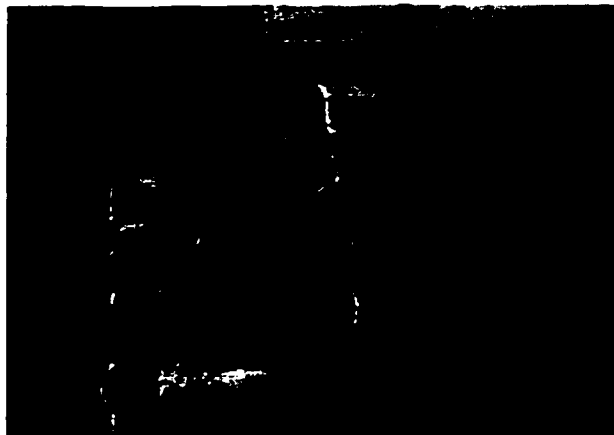


Fig. 77. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh's bird-like physiognomy flutters down alley way.



Figs. 78-79. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh flees looking alive and young. Her performer code shows invigoration.



Fig. 79.



Figs. 80-81. Vivien Leigh in *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* (1961). Leigh's raised brow/smile is apparent in her performer code.

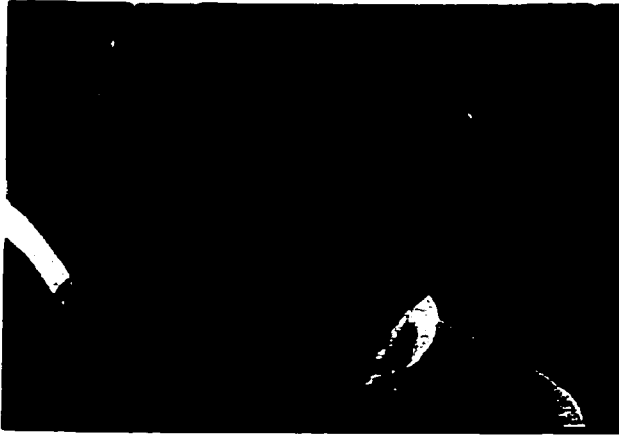


Fig. 81.

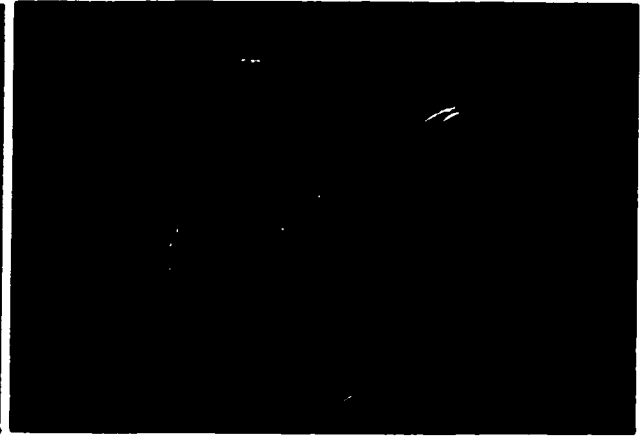


Fig. 82. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh sits at her vanity in this over-the-shoulder CU. Her hands frame her face.

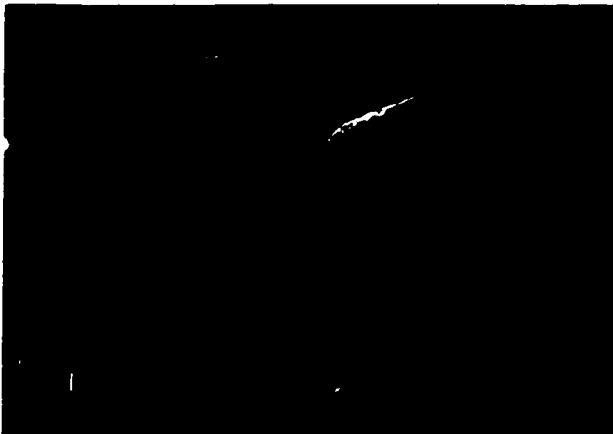
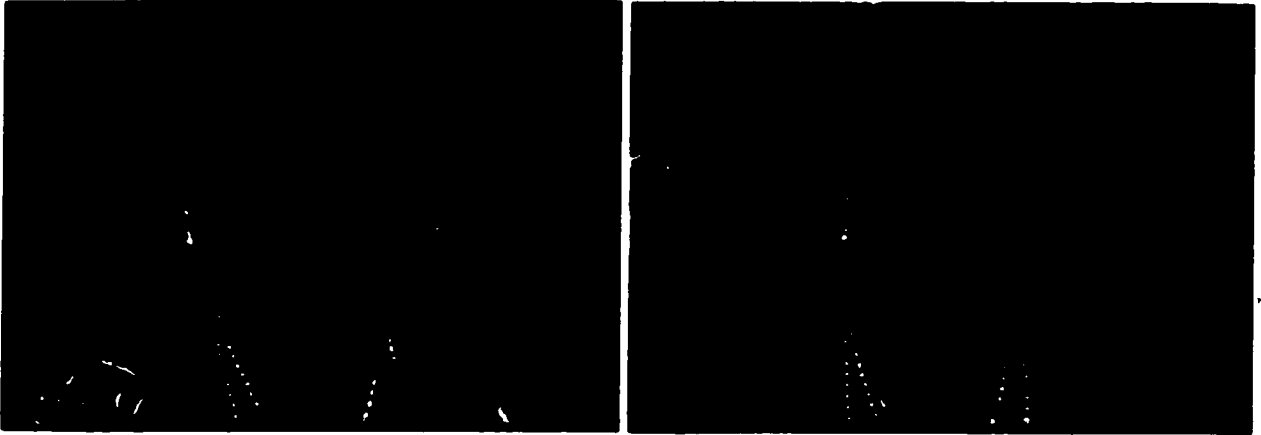


Fig. 83. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh sits at her vanity in this over-the-shoulder CU. Her hands frame her face like a mime.



Fig. 84. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh sits at her vanity in this over-the-shoulder CU. Her hands frame her face.



Figs. 85-91. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh sits at her vanity and her performer code draws in this intense CU using the camera as her mirrored reflection. Fig. 86.

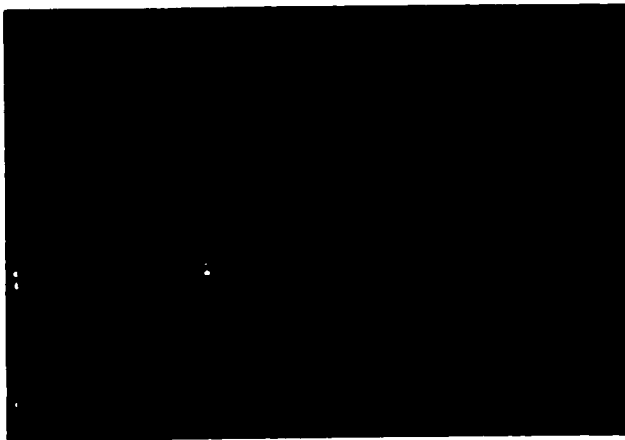


Fig. 87

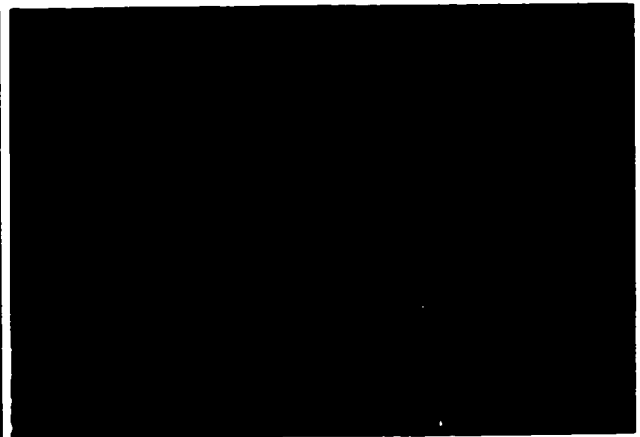


Fig. 88.

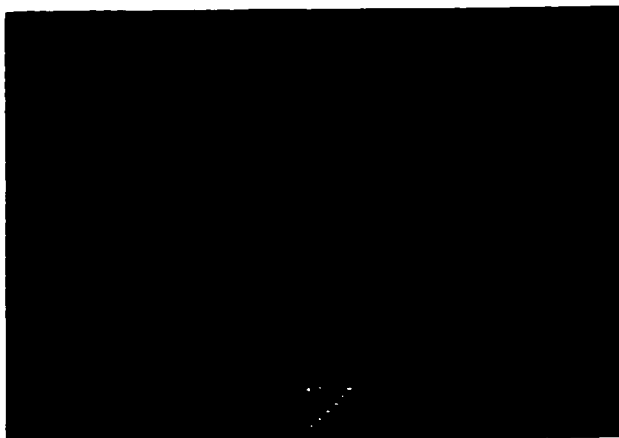


Fig. 89.

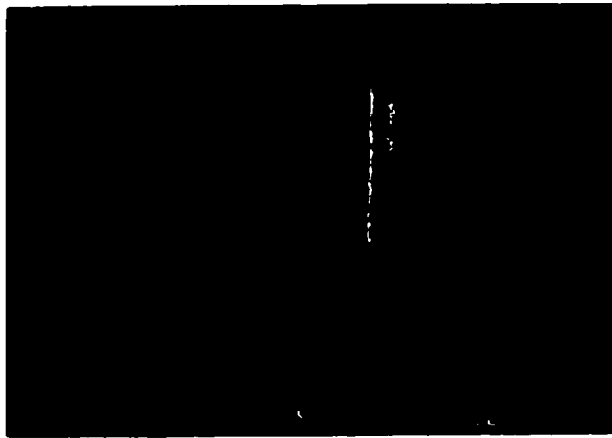


Fig. 90.

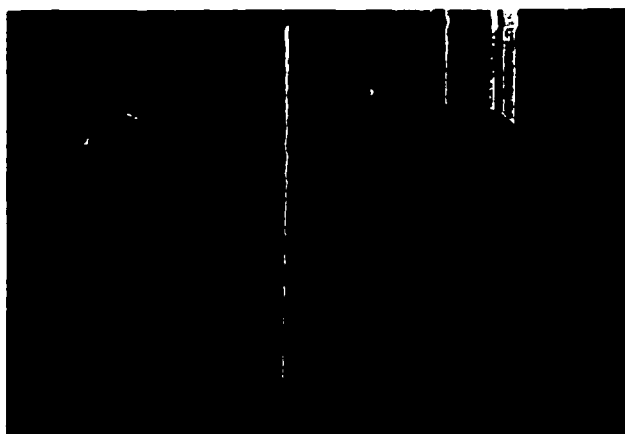


Fig. 91. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh is kissed then released.



Figs. 92-93. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). This CU captures Leigh's rejection as shown in her raised brow.



Fig. 93.

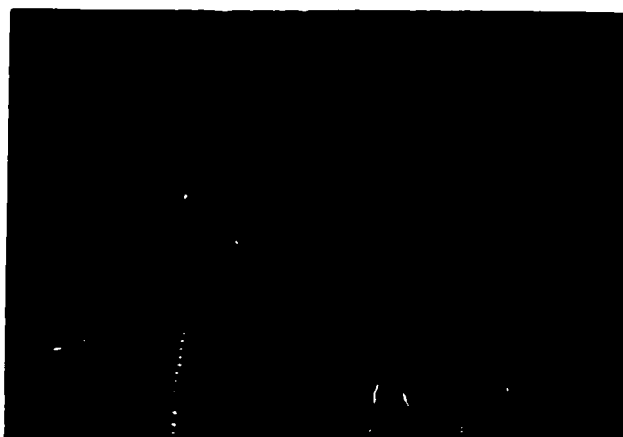
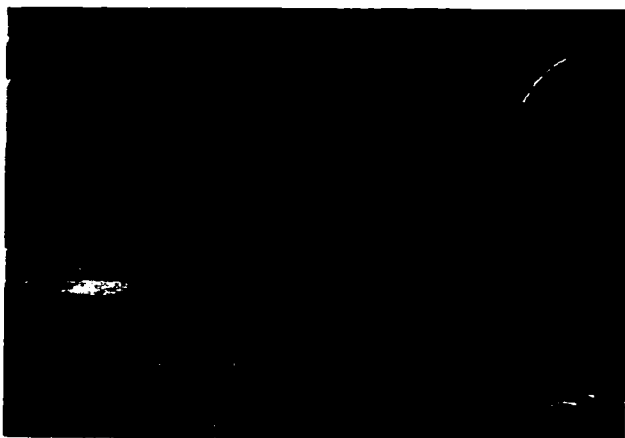


Fig. 94. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh's powerful lunge toward the door demonstrates her physiognomy in her performer code.



Figs. 95-98. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh kicks Lee Marvin out. Leigh beats Marvin with her slight physiognomy drove by rejection.

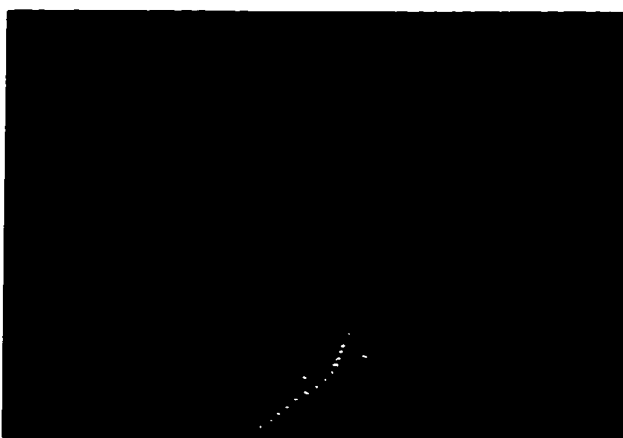


Fig. 96.

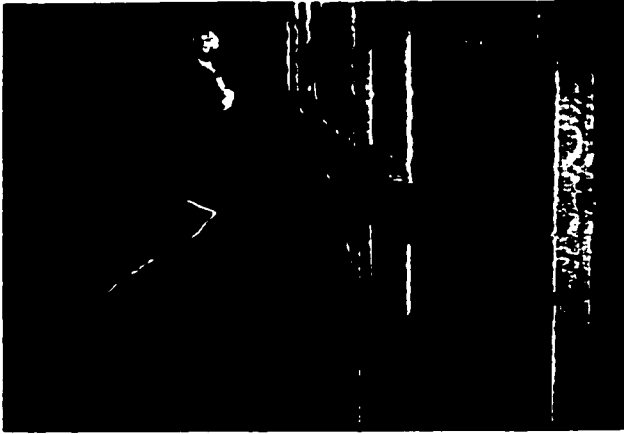


Fig. 97.



Fig. 98.



Figs. 99-100. Vivien Leigh in *Ship of Fools* (1965). Leigh is exhausted and recovers from the beating she gives Marvin.



Fig. 100.

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