

PART THREE
Star Performance

Spectacular Acts

Stars are performed brands. Whatever other factors contribute to the production of stardom, film stars are only stars because they perform in films.

So far this study has explored the broad contextual conditions of industrial structures, company operations, market trends and contractual arrangements for how these shape the symbolic commerce of stardom. Any analysis of film stardom must include, however, consideration of how stardom is produced on-screen. Script, cinematography, lighting and editing are active in the construction of the star performance. Agents, managers, producers, writers, directors and the technical crew all play their parts in bringing the starring act to the screen. But these inputs exist beyond the star. The star specifically contributes to the star performance through acting, the mode of performance specifically concerned with the representation of dramatic character through the media of the voice and body. It is the concern of this chapter to examine the dynamics at work in the symbolic construction of the star performance. It looks at the star performance as an effect of both narrative and spectacle produced through elements of film form and enacted by the star's voice and body. Looking at performance, the chapter therefore explores how the star brand is enacted on-screen.

To anchor this discussion, the chapter focuses on a single star in a specific film. According to the Quigley poll, from 1990 to 2009 Tom Cruise was the period's most enduring money-maker (see Table 1.1). In the period Cruise maintained a record of box-office hits rivaled only by Tom Hanks (see Figure 5.1). In the year it was released, *Mission: Impossible 2* (2000) finished second in the annual box-office rankings for North America and scored the highest gross of any film in the international market: *M:I-2* took \$125.4 million domestically and \$331 million internationally. Produced by Cruise's indie Cruise/Wagner Productions for Hollywood major

Paramount, *M:I-2* became Cruise's second most commercially successful film in terms of worldwide gross (surpassed by *War of the Worlds* (2005) with \$591.7 million worldwide). Exhibitors voted Cruise the top money-maker for 2000 and when James Ulmer compiled his Ulmer Scale that year, Cruise was ranked third after Julia Roberts and Hanks, with a bankability rating of 98 percent.¹ In Ulmer's estimation, Cruise was "worth every penny. He has never had a bad performance. And he promotes his films" (2000: 15).

With *M:I-2*, Cruise appeared in an action drama, a genre he'd already built a strong association with. Cruise first played Ethan Hunt – agent with the secretive Impossible Missions Force (IMF) – in *Mission: Impossible* (1996), and returned four years later to reprise the role for this second installment of the series. *M:I-2* constructs a tale around the endeavors of Hunt and his IMF team to foil a plot which threatens to not only hold a major drugs manufacturer to ransom but also unleash a deadly virus which could kill millions. At the research laboratory of Biocyte Pharmaceuticals in Sydney, molecular biologist Dr. Vladimir Nekhorvich (played by Radé Sherbedgia) has cultivated the super-virus "Chimera" and antidote "Bellerophon." Anyone infected with Chimera dies a horrible death in a matter of hours but at the start of the film Nekhorvich injects himself with Chimera and urgently leaves with a consignment of Bellerophon to take a flight to the US and seek the assistance of his old friend "Dimitri." On the plane it is revealed Dimitri is actually Cruise/Hunt. But all is not as it seems. Nekhorvich has been duped for "Hunt" is actually rogue former IMF agent Sean Ambrose (played by Dougray Scott) who kills the scientist to steal the Bellerophon. Ambrose deceived Nekhorvich by wearing a rubber mask exactly reproducing Cruise/Hunt's face and an electronic chip to replicate his voice. Ambrose and his gang of accomplices escape, taking Nekhorvich's case carrying the Bellerophon. Before his death Nekhorvich sent a video recording of his planned movements to IMF headquarters, and so the real Hunt is recalled from vacation to track Ambrose. To assist him, Hunt must link up with Ambrose's former lover, British professional thief Nyah Nordoff-Hall (played by Thandie Newton). There then unfolds a narrative in which Nordoff-Hall goes undercover by re-acquainting herself with Ambrose but when he discovers the deception, her life is threatened.

Along the way, Hunt learns Nekhorvich developed Bellerophon for the scientific purpose of creating as an antiviral to combat all strains of influenza but in order to develop the cure it was necessary to cultivate the lethal Chimera. Biocyte's CEO sponsored the research to exploit the commercial value of Bellerophon and so Ambrose has stolen the drug to extort a heavy ransom from Biocyte and he intends to use the funds to buy share options in the company. When he killed Nekhorvich, however, Ambrose was unaware the scientist was carrying the virus in his own blood. Ambrose therefore finds himself with a cure but no virus and so must obtain Chimera before he can leverage the deal with Biocyte. After Nordoff-Hall injects herself with the last sample of Chimera to avoid Ambrose killing her, she has only hours to live and the film builds to a climax in which Hunt kills Ambrose, destroys the evil plot, retrieves the Bellerophon, and saves Nordoff-Hall.²

Coming after two decades in which action cinema had played a large part in defining commercial popularity, *M:I-2* appeared on the cusp of change in the film market before fantasy and comic book franchises went on to define popularity over the next decade. Working with this example, the chapter therefore analyzes star performance in a film which not only characterized popular Hollywood in the period but also marked a commercial high point in Cruise's career. Furthermore, as *M:I-2* includes a number of self-conscious references to Cruise's branded image, then the film itself reflects on stardom and the workings of the star act.

Star Attraction

Writing on early cinema, Tom Gunning describes the tendency for many films to revel in the "ability to *show* something" (1986: 57) as forming what he calls the "cinema of attractions." In these cases, film created exhibitionist spectacle, contrasting with the voyeuristic tendency of narrative film to tell stories. Once narrative production came to dominate, Gunning suggests this exhibitionist tendency went "underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g. the musical) than in others" (p. 57). However,

this view maybe unnecessarily limiting, for as a display constructed to be looked at, any film remains to some extent a form of show or spectacle. Like theater or opera, film is a “performing art,” a type of show staged for public exhibition. Narrative film stages stories, combining the voyeuristic representation of symbolically constructed diegetic worlds with the exhibitionist presentation of spectacular show.

As figures in film narrative, actors are situated within these dual aspects. Actors represent characters in the narrative but by appearing in a medium of public presentation they are also spectacle. Stardom arises from the hierarchical distinctions between actors formed by the differential distribution of wages, the creative decision-making powers granted to actors, or the uses of actor names in marketing media. But the hierarchy of actors is also produced on-screen. By appearing in a performance medium, all film actors are spectacle. Stars, however, are distinguished from this general ensemble – that is, the general spectacle of actors – for they are *spectacular* figures. Compared to their fellow performers, stars are presented in ways to appear more fabulous, compelling, marvelous, extravagant, incredible, dazzling, stunning and exciting.

This spectacularization of the star is a symbolic effect with a commercial purpose. While it may be debatable whether the presence of stars can or cannot actually sell films (see Chapter 5), regardless of outcome, if stars are to have any value they must at least be visible. Film is a medium of visibility – it shows something – but intensifying the visibility of the actor is fundamental to the work of the star performance so that the star becomes an attraction within an attraction. It is by spectacularizing star performance that the star is shown off as a film’s key performing asset. While the spectacularization of the actor is constant throughout star performance, it reaches particular highpoints where moments are staged precisely to display the star attraction. Most obvious of these moments is the star entrance. Before the film is viewed, before the film is consumed, anticipation of a star’s performance is built through advance marketing media. It may very well be this hype which draws the consumer to the film. When the film therefore plays, the star’s entrance is a moment of great significance and importance, for it fulfils anticipation by finally revealing the star. This game of anticipation/fulfillment, however, can only partly explain the significance

of the star entrance. Conceivably, many viewers may never have encountered the marketing for a film they watch, or may have no recollection of it by the time they come to see a film, particularly if viewed for the first time in a secondary release windows such as DVD or free-to-air television. Consequently the star entrance stages the more general function of announcing the lead performing attraction. The star entrance serves both the presentational and representational aspects of narrative film with the spectacular purpose of announcing “here is the star” and the narrative purpose of announcing “here is the person who (very likely) will play the central character.”

Due to its importance and significance, the star entrance is a highly orchestrated moment. In *M:I-2*, Cruise initially appears on the flight with Sherbedgia/Nekhorvich, but as will soon transpire, this is actually Ambrose masquerading as Hunt. Cruise as Hunt therefore actually enters the film in the next scene following the hijacking of the flight. An accelerated helicopter shot sweeps over the barren landscape of Dead Horse Point State Park, Utah, to pick out Cruise/Hunt precariously rock climbing at a dizzy height on a narrow ridge without ropes or protection ([Figure 7.1](#)). Cruise/Hunt is a man alone, risking his life in an inhospitable wilderness. Initially it is not entirely clear who the figure is for the camera is too far away, but as the camera nears the climbing figure, so Cruise’s face becomes visible. Given the hazards of the situation it would be reasonable to presume this is a stunt double or the creation of computer-generated effects, although publicity around the film worked hard to assure Cruise was actually climbing the rock protected by ropes removed in post-production.³ Both character and star are shown to be in danger, and as critic Manohla Dargis (2000) noted, the actuality of Cruise performing the stunt creates a spectacle of the star running counter to the digitally generated show commonly seen in action cinema of the period.

Much has been made in the entertainment press ... that Cruise performed many of his own stunts ... And it’s no wonder – the climbing scene is spectacular, both in its panoramic beauty and ... the audience’s shivery thrill of recognition that it’s the star himself ... In the age of the digital, this sort of flamboyant stuntwork might seem anachronistic ... But Cruise’s physical daring is necessary precisely because digital effects

have become so persuasive. In the age of virtual reproduction, the star body has become the test bed of authenticity, the last stand of the real.

Figure 7.1 Extravagant star entrance: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



Through music, the scene also makes one of what will become many self-reflexive plays on Cruise's on-screen identity, for the soundtrack carries the song "Souca Na Na," a reworking by Zap Mama of the frequently covered standard "Iko Iko," the song playing over Cruise's entrance during the opening credits of *Rain Man* (1988). Here music adds to the spectacularization of the star with an inter-textual reference that has no other purpose than to foreground a common star presence between two films, forming an in-joke for any viewers appreciative of the allusion.

As if the climb were not dangerous enough already, Cruise/Hunt leaps from one crag to another but in doing so misses his footing, sliding over the edge and only saving himself from certain death by grabbing a hold with his very fingertips ([Figure 7.2](#)). When he has recovered his control, Cruise/Hunt completes the climb, but no sooner has he reached the summit than he is delivered a message from his IMF controller. Potentially this could have been transferred very easily by hand, but this is the IMF and they don't do things that way. Instead, the delivery involves a helicopter, a missile and a pair of customized sunglasses through which play a pre-recorded briefing informing Cruise/Hunt of his mission to retrieve Chimera and link up with Newton/Nordoff-Hall ([Figure 7.3](#)). The moment creates a further reflexive gesture towards Cruise's on-screen identity, for by the time of *M:I-2* the sight of Cruise wearing black sunglasses had become a common image familiar from the star's earlier performances in *Days of*

Thunder (1990), *Rain Man* and *Top Gun* (1986) (where he became a product placement model for Ray-Ban shades), and receding back to the moment when he first appears in *Risky Business* (1982) ([Figure 7.4](#)). Following in the tradition of the *Mission: Impossible* television series, once the briefing has played out, Cruise/Hunt is warned the message will self destruct in five seconds, and he tosses away the glasses just as they explode ([Figure 7.5](#)). With the flashy camerawork, amazing scenery, death defying antics, highly contrived situations, explosive pyrotechnics, and self-reflexive quotations, Cruise enters the film in a moment where spectacle mounts on spectacle. This scene could be regarded as “excess” for it is highly elaborate and apart from Hunt receiving the briefing it has absolutely no narrative consequence. However the purpose of the scene has little to do with telling the story and more to do with creating show, for which it is not at all excessive but entirely essential, for it serves the key purpose of introducing and establishing Cruise as the film’s spectacular attraction.

Figure 7.2 Cruise/Hunt hangs on: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



Figure 7.3 Cruise/Hunt takes a message: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



Figure 7.4 Cruise and shades: *Risky Business*.

Producers Jon Avnet and Steve Tisch; director Paul Brickman; distributed by Warner Home Video.



Figure 7.5 Cruise/Hunt accepts his mission: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



With the “false” appearance on the plane followed by the real appearance on the rock, Cruise’s arrival in *M:I-2* forms a double entrance, a convention common to many of the star’s films. Frequently Cruise first appears in moments where he is somehow initially obscured or disguised, so that his entrance stages a revelation within a revelation. For *Minority Report* (2002), when Cruise first appears he is seen from behind until a cut reverses the angle through 180 degrees to show him face-on walking towards the camera. With *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), it takes seven minutes before Cruise enters, and when he does, only his hand and then his back are seen before his face is fully revealed. Likewise, in *Collateral* (2004), with 13 minutes already passed a hand is first seen before the full body of the star is shown.

Mission: Impossible presents another case of the double entrance. Cruise appears in the very opening shot of the film but his presence is obscured for Hunt is wearing a disguise in order to trick information from an interrogatee, thereby deferring the star’s entrance for a couple of minutes until the moment where he reveals himself by removing the latex mask he is wearing. That gesture demonstrates a more standard convention of the star entrance, in which the showing of the face – usually framed in medium shot or close-up – becomes the absolute confirmation of the star’s presence. “Several different bodies,” Richard Maltby notes, “may be used to construct a single performance: voices are dubbed, stunt artists are used for dangerous action sequences, and sometimes hand models and body doubles provide body parts to substitute for the actors” (2003: 371). Notably, when substituting stars with stunt men and women, or body doubles for nude or sex scenes, the face is obscured so as not to give the game away and break the illusion. With so many other bodies capable of dissembling, it is the face which ultimately authenticates the star’s presence. Consequently, a great deal of the spectacularizing of the star is actually condensed into the showing of the face. Revealing the body, or parts of the body, is just not enough to confirm the presence of the star, and so it is only with the show of the face that the star ultimately becomes visible. Roland Barthes described Greta Garbo as “an admirable face-object” (1957: 56) and the same could be said of stars in general, for their status as both actor and asset is quintessentially tied into the objectification of the face. In many ways,

the star entrance is a moment predicated on the revelation or spectacularization of the face as the core physical, symbolic and commercial feature of star performance.

Many of Cruise's entrances are extravagant, becoming "over the top" moments. *M:I-2* presents a particularly extravagant star entrance and similar spectacular moments are created for Cruise's entrances in *Days of Thunder*, *Jerry Maguire* (1996) and *War of the Worlds*. To the sound of heavy drum beats, Cruise first appears in *Days of Thunder* riding a motorbike on an empty racetrack but is initially obscured for he is held at a distance in extreme long shot and it is not until he nears the camera and his face becomes visible that he is clearly identified. On *Jerry Maguire*, at first only Cruise's voice is heard narrating over a montage of sports men and women, until two minutes into the film he becomes visible as he springs into shot from behind a bank of television monitors, putting his face on show. Cruise/Maguire is attending a convention as the eponymous sports agent where he plays the room by swiftly moving between delegates and fast talking promises to everyone he meets. Great energy is brought to the moment, for the scene is constructed as a rapid series of short shots which are spatially and temporally discontinuous but are given coherence by the central presence (i.e. the face) of the star. Overall, the speed of the cuts and the jumps in time and space give Cruise/Maguire a "whirlwind" entrance. Maguire dominates the narrative situation as Cruise dominates the screen. With *War of the Worlds* an extreme aerial long shot swoops over a freight yard, and as it hones in on a crane lifting containers, Cruise as Ray Ferrier is revealed seated in the cabin. Cruise/Ferrier has been in the shot from the very beginning but the camera works to find and isolate him in the enormity of the space, with the search ending once his face becomes visible.

In contrast to these ostentatious moments, Cruise's arrival in other films is comparatively subdued and understated, yet still shots are organized to stress the importance and significance of the star entrance. In *A Few Good Men* (1992), following a soldier's death at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, a captain assures his fellow officers that the ensuing investigation will be in safe hands as "division will assign the right man for the job." This immediately cues a cut to a new scene where Cruise as military attorney Lt. Daniel Kaffee is found on a playing field practicing his

batting skills. When compared to the extravagance of *M:I-2* or *Days of Thunder*, Cruise's entrance in *A Few Good Men* appears restrained, but the moment is still constructed as special and the star is distinguished from the general spectacle. Although the shot is constructed entirely for Cruise's moment of appearance, for a fleeting instant he doesn't emerge until walking into shot from frame left. Another actor appears in the background but use of a shallow depth of field places him out of focus while Cruise is crisply captured in the foreground ([Figure 7.6](#)). In *Far and Away* (1992) and *Vanilla Sky* (2001), Cruise is simply revealed by the camera tilting upwards or making a short mobile sweep across a room, while in *The Firm* (1993) Cruise is distinguished from the melee of a basketball game by isolating him in a medium shot as he utters an expletive. Although less "showy" than Cruise's hyperbolic entrances, these moments nevertheless still work to show off the star.

Figure 7.6 Subdued star entrance: *A Few Good Men*.

Producers David Brown, Rob Reiner and Andrew Scheinman; director Rob Reiner; distributed by Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment.



As a moment entirely orientated toward displaying the actor, the entrance marks the most obvious instance of spectacularizing the star. Yet the entrance is just part of the overall dynamic running throughout star performance which continually seeks to exhibit the key performing attraction.

The Performance of the Medium

In the star performance, the combination of story and show, of narrative and spectacle, is achieved at two levels. Together the technological and formal elements of photographic framing, camera movement, lighting, editing and sound recording mediate the presentation and representation of the actor to form the primary *performance of the film medium*. At a secondary level, the *performance of the actor* sees the body and voice used as media to represent but also present the character. This dual performance – of medium and actor – applies to all performers in film but contributes to the production of stardom by how elements of film form and the actions of the voice and body are used to hierarchically emphasize and thereby spectacularize the presence of particular performers.

Early in *M:I-2* Cruise/Hunt arrives in Seville to intercept Newton/Nordoff-Hall. The two first catch sight of one another inside a hall where a group of flamenco dancers are performing. Through the prism of the film medium, the scene creates four tiers in a hierarchy of performers. Scattered around the hall are many anonymous extras shot collectively in groups to set the scene by fleshing-out the diegesis, populating the space and creating a sense of location and atmosphere. Secondly, the dancers also contribute to setting the scene but are given greater emphasis as medium-long and medium shots are used to identify and isolate parts of a dancer's body – the hands, feet, face. This more intimate framing brings the film viewer closer to the dancers than the extras and an internal audience is also formed within the scene as the extras fix their looks onto the dancers. This emphasis on the dancers is enhanced by lighting which is used to illuminate the low platform they perform on with their audience kept in semi-darkness, while the camera moves inwards to the dancing group and a single shot captures dancing feet in slow motion.

Distinguished from these anonymous groupings are Cruise/Hunt and Newton/Nordoff-Hall. Both are introduced to the scene with medium-shots separating them from the larger space while at the same time camera movements track their passage as they walk amongst the people gathered in the hall. In this respect, both receive equal treatment by the medium, but a final hierarchical distinction is formed when the two catch sight of one another. Cruise/Hunt stops as his attention is caught by something out of frame, and to emphasize the moment the camera moves towards him,

thereby tightening the framing from a medium head-and-shoulders shot to something nearing a close-up on the face ([Figure 7.7](#)). By this movement and reframing, camerawork is used to communicate the character is about to experience or do something important. A cut to the next shot reveals Newton/Nordoff-Hall as the object of that look. Unlike the isolated figure of Cruise/Hunt, Newton/Nordoff-Hall is positioned amongst a group of extras. Although she emerges from that group and is thereby distinguished from them, the framing keeps her in medium-shot and as her head is dipped, she does not return the look ([Figure 7.8](#)). Through the performance of the medium, Newton/Nordoff-Hall is therefore distinguished from the general ensemble as someone of narrative significance but her status is exceeded by that of Cruise who is given greater emphasis through framing, camera movement and an organization of shots which position him as the figure with greatest narrative knowledge. Here, with these few shots, the performance of the medium affirms the hierarchical distinction between supporting actor and star.

[Figure 7.7](#) Cruise/Hunt looks: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



[Figure 7.8](#) Newton/Nordoff-Hall is looked at: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



Using the medium to construct this look achieves a number of effects. Through his possession and control of knowledge, Cruise/Hunt is marked out as the protagonist, the core centre of narrative action and incident. By knowing, Hunt can now act: he has located the woman and so can progress with his mission. In terms of narrative structure, the hierarchy of performers can therefore be explained by how elements of film form create a “hierarchy of discourses” (MacCabe, 1974) or “hierarchy of knowledge” (Branigan, 1992: 72–6): Hunt is followed, isolated and emphasized for only he and the viewer share knowledge about the mission and the plan to recruit Nordoff-Hall, while she quite “innocently” thinks she is merely there to steal an expensive necklace, and the dancers and guests are oblivious to all these goings on. But the significance of the moment comes from more than just placing Cruise/Hunt in the plotting of the chain of cause and effect. When Cruise/Hunt looks, he doesn’t just know, he responds and feels. Cruise/Hunt is more than just a protagonist, an agent of action; he is the central affective and emotional focus for this narrative moment. “Focalization,” argues Edward Branigan, “involves a character ... actually *experiencing* something through seeing or hearing it. Focalization ... extends to ... complex experiencing of objects: thinking, remembering, interpreting, wondering, fearing, believing, desiring, understanding, feeling guilt” (original emphasis, p. 101). When Cruise looks, he gives a fixed intense stare which conveys how Hunt feels about seeing Newton/Nordoff-Hall. It is a look which not only marks recognition of her importance to his mission but also signals the first glimmers of desire. This is actually an effect of acting rather than the medium, for although framing and editing create a point of view exchange, it is only the use of the body – specifically the face – which can communicate the quality

and manner of how Cruise/Hunt looks. Still the medium contributes to the moment for the use of close-up not only makes Cruise's facial details practically visible and readable but also intensifies his already intense look by isolating him in frame to mark him as both the central *knowing* and *feeling* consciousness of the film. This combination of effects makes Cruise/Hunt a figure of identification. Through the organization of shots, the viewer adopts Hunt's perspective, sharing his *viewpoint*, i.e. where he looks, but also his *point of view*, i.e. how he responds to, interprets and feels about what he sees (Maltby, 2003: 347). Identification is therefore formed by "alignment" between character and viewer (Smith, 1995: 83).

This scene offers just one example of how the performance of the medium contributes to the production of stardom on-screen through ensemble differentiation, for the formal elements of film are used to construct distinctions between the hierarchy of performers. Here the performance of the medium creates the narratological effects of focalization, point of view and identificatory alignment to position the star actor as the centre of the story, while at the same time framing him as the focal point of the screen spectacle. In the narrative Hunt looks and knows but at the same time Cruise is also made a figure to be looked at. All performers in the scene contribute to the production of the narrative and are also placed on display, but the performance of the medium structurally orders different tiers of performers towards enhancing and intensifying the narrative and spectacular significance of the star.

The Performance of the Actor

While elements of film form mediate the presence of the actor and thereby contribute to the construction of character, it is in the uses of the voice and body to portray character that the performance of the actor is to be found. All film acting brings together a figure who is represented (the character) and the figure who does the representing (the actor). Narrative film aims to create plausible and believable on-screen worlds and so the standard measure of success in film acting is the degree to which the actor forms a credible representational link with the character. Hypothetically this would result in pure and total representation, with the actor transparently

disappearing into character, yet for an audience knowingly watching a display of artifice played out on a screen, there is always the lingering knowledge that this is all “just an act.” Consequently, no matter how credibly a character is played, the actor always remains visible, and so “the audience experiences the presence of the performer as well as – in the same body as – the presence of the character” (Maltby, 2003: 380). Regardless of whether audience members judge Cruise does or does not make a believable IMF agent, at every moment he will always be experienced as both Hunt and Cruise. Combining the representation of character with the presentation of the actor, this splitting or doubling of the actor’s body relates to the dual aspects of the film medium: Hunt is a figure of the narrative while Cruise is a figure of spectacle. It is precisely this co-existence of character and actor in the same body which ensures the star act is simultaneously both story and show.

This duality relates to all actors in the narrative but the division becomes most acutely evident with the star. Many, possibly the majority, of actors who appear in *M:I-2* will be unfamiliar to audiences. For example, when Scott/Ambrose executes the plan to hijack the plane carrying Nekhorvich, the co-pilot passes out and collapses over his controls after inhaling the gas which the villainous plotters pipe through the emergency oxygen system. The co-pilot character is unnamed and the actor is unlikely to be a familiar face to most viewers.⁴ Still there is the doubling of the body for there remains residual awareness that this is not a pilot but rather an actor playing a pilot. In Cruise’s case, however, the division between actor and character becomes more pronounced for in a career that had already seen him play 16 leading roles, Cruise came to *M:I-2* as an entirely familiar figure, so that at each and every moment in the film he appears as both Ethan Hunt and “Tom Cruise.” In *M:I-2*, Cruise doesn’t just appear as Hunt but also as the guy who played, amongst other roles, Maverick in *Top Gun*, Brian Flanagan in *Cocktail* (1988), Charlie Babbit in *Rain Man*, Ron Kovic in *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) and of course Ethan Hunt in *Mission: Impossible*. Knowledge of the actor’s body differentiates the star from other actors in the on-screen hierarchy of performers. Whoever plays the pilot remains an anonymous body but Cruise is a recognizable, known and named body. Moreover, the status of Cruise as a known figure is essential to this whole

early sequence, for Scott/Ambrose's deception can only fool because it presumes that not only the character Nekhorvich but also the audience are already familiar with, and so are able to recognize, a specific voice and body. Recognition leads Nekhorvich to trust Dimitri (i.e. Hunt) while it can also be reasonably presumed that foreknowledge of Cruise's roles in other films may encourage audience members to believe he will feature in the film as a force for good and upholder of the law. The killing of Nekhorvich by someone who looks and sounds exactly like Cruise therefore creates a shock and is a further part of the film's self-conscious play upon Cruise's mediated identity.

It is precisely because actor and character are one and the same body that it is with acting that belief in what has been described as the charismatic theory of stardom (see Chapter 1) holds greatest influence. As the voice and body are physically part of the individual performer, then star acting appears as a charismatic statement of individual expression, for any significance or meaning generated in acting appears innate and to simply issue from the actor. To break from the seductive appeal of the charismatic theory it is therefore necessary to recognize the star act, like all instances of branding, as a work of symbolic and commercial production. This requires finding the terms to break apart the apparent naturalness of the actor and character relationship to open it up for analysis. Going beyond the simple actor/character dyad, Stephen Heath (1981: 178–82) poses a model in which “agent,” “character,” “person,” “image” are all components in constructing the “figure” in film. While useful, Heath's own account of his model is not only rather obscurantist and oblique but also his application of the terms is open to misunderstanding and confusion. It is therefore necessary to clarify the model and in so doing to revise the terms. “Agent” defines the function, or what can be described as the *role*, performed by a person contributing to the progression of the narrative. *Character* meanwhile defines the qualities or traits distinguishing a person as an individual. If role defines what the figure *does*, character describes who s/he *is*. “Person,” for Heath, is the “individual ... who actualizes – is the support for, plays, represents – agent and character” (p. 180), which in the case of narrative film may be more straightforwardly understood as the *actor*.

In *M:I-2*, Cruise/Hunt performs an obvious role: stop Ambrose's plot and save the girl. Not only does the narrative play out a clear and unambiguous structure of hero and antagonist but self-reflexively draws attention to the archetypality of Cruise's role by referring to Greek mythology and the legendary hero Bellerophon who slay the monster Chimera. Robert Towne's script brings this mythological content to the fore: in the very opening scene, as Sherbedgia/Nekhorvich is seen working in the lab at Biocyte, his voice-over narrates "every search for a hero must begin with something that every hero requires – a villain. Therefore, in the search for our hero, Bellerophon, we created a monster, Chimera." As the film then unfolds, structurally Cruise emerges as the hero/Bellerophon/cure while Ambrose is the monster/Chimera/virus. Part of Cruise's acting is therefore concerned with performing the actions necessary to achieve the functions of his role.

At the same time, Hunt is also portrayed as a particular type of person. Richard Dyer (1998: 106–17) sees a number of elements contributing to the construction of character in film. Familiarity with a film's story, characters, promotional materials, genre, star and criticism may all shape audience preconceptions of a character prior to viewing a film. Both the names of the character and the star can define certain traits: the surname "Hunt" holds resonances of tenacious and lethal pursuit, and when Thomas Cruise Mapother IV shortened his surname to "Cruise" he acquired a title signifying cool and controlled movement. Facial features, physical build, and costume all produce a set of outward appearances that give meaning to the figure. Hunt works for a quasi-governmental organization and yet Cruise's shoulder length hair and preference for tight fitting T-shirts and leather jackets artfully suggest he is no institutionalized drone. Objects can become indices of character if they appear to hint at certain traits. When Cruise/Hunt engages Newton/Nordoff-Hall in a car dual in the hills outside Seville, his choice to drive an open top Porsche attaches connotations of speed, power and freedom to the character. For Dyer, elements of *mise-en-scène* displayed in "lighting, color, framing, composition, placing of actors ... can be used to express the personality or state of mind of characters" (p. 117). Globe-trotting between Utah, Seville and Sydney, Hunt traverses a cosmopolitan *mise-en-scène*. He moves from the desolation of the desert, to the warm seductive ambience of a Spanish night to the stark

technological fortress of the Biocyte HQ, but with each context he can function in and command whatever environment he meets. Clearly Hunt is a man who does bestride the world.

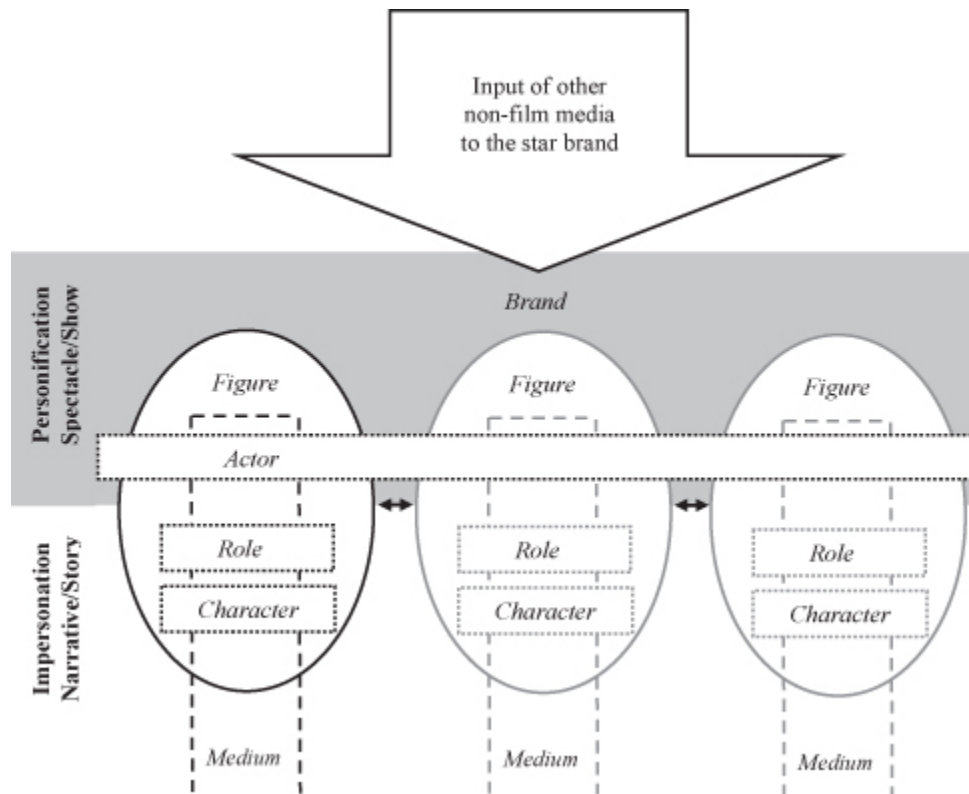
Knowledge about and impressions of character are formed through what a character says and what others say about the character. Hunt speaks of himself, and is spoken of, as a man who thrives on embracing danger. When the IMF controller Swanbeck, played by Anthony Hopkins, explains the mission to Hunt and the role of Nordoff-Hall in that mission, Cruise/Hunt immediately rejects the idea; he claims it will be very difficult to get her to do it, to which Hopkins/Swanbeck responds “Well, this is not Mission Difficult, Mr. Hunt, it’s Mission Impossible. Difficult should be a walk in the park for you.” Despite initial reservations, Newton/Nordoff-Hall agrees to accept the mission, but to avoid Ambrose becoming suspicious when she suddenly turns up in his life again, she recommends creating a situation where she’ll land in “serious trouble” requiring help from outside. In reply, Cruise/Hunt coolly says of himself “Serious trouble, Nyah, is something that I can always arrange.”

Where Heath’s categories become most confusing is in his account of “image,” for he seeks to apply the term to both the literal photographic image shown on-screen but also in a manner similar to how Dyer conceptualizes “star image,” i.e. as an inter-textual bundle of meanings, exceeding the particular role, which are derived from pre-existing performances and other media texts. To avoid this confusion, a distinction must be drawn then between the technology and aesthetics of what earlier was described as the performance of the *medium*, with the star’s trans-media identity (following the arguments outlined in Chapter 2) regarded as the *brand*. As few performers in film carry strong recognition, then the brand is a component restricted to only stars and other well known actors. Finally, Heath binds his categories together in what he calls the “figure,” the “circulation between agent, character, person and image, none of which is able simply and uniquely to contain, to *settle* that circulation” (original emphasis 1981: 182). What *figure* therefore describes is the flow of meanings and effects between the other categories.

Adapting Heath’s model provides the foundations for a complex and dynamic model of star performance. Audiences are presented with the

figure which, according to the revised terms outlined above, is the combined outcome of role, character, actor and medium. These components apply to all instances of acting in film but in the case of the star the branded identity of the performer is added to that mix. This model provides a framework and terms for understanding star acting as a dynamic process in which the figure materializes through the constant interaction between multiple elements of action and meaning. The star brand becomes an element in the formation of the figure but as the brand is formed across films, so it exceeds any specific instance of an enacted figure. On-screen the brand is produced, that is to say performed, by the star playing a succession of figures across films. As a multiple-media construct, that brand is equally the product of the star's appearances in other media ([Figure 7.9](#)).

Figure 7.9 Elements of the star performance.



Missing from Heath's model is an account of how these various elements are held in combination. To see this model at work, it is therefore necessary to appreciate how the voice and body materialize and cohere each of the components to make the figure a distinct and identifiable person

represented and presented in the star act. As already discussed the performance of the *medium* records and presents the voice and body of the star, particularly the face. Bodily form is given to the figure through the corporeality of the *actor*. Previously it was noted Cruise brings to *M:I-2* a known and named body and voice. Regardless of the character he plays, Cruise's dark hair, short to medium height, athletic build and enduring boyish looks present a familiar bodily shape and set of features which maintain strong physical recognizability. For *M:I-2*, Cruise is costumed in tight-fitting outfits which show off this body, for example during the rock-climbing entrance and later with the break-in at the Biocyte laboratories and the climactic fight with Scott/Ambrose. Vocally, in his performances Cruise generally speaks with a clear but low pitch, holding an even volume and steady rhythm to suggest calm authoritative control. It is precisely this vocal register which the false Hunt (played of course by Cruise) reproduces as part of the act to deceive Nekhorvich in the plane.

Through the media of the voice and body, the star performs the narrative actions of the *role*. At the micro-analytic level of physical gesture, the narrative chain of cause and effect can only be preserved because Cruise's right hand alone performs certain key actions: e.g., retrieving the sunglasses which the IMF use to send his mission brief; taking from Newton/Nordoff-Hall a memory card carrying a video revealing Ambrose's ransom plot; pressing play to run a sound recording of the Biocyte CEO's voice to unlock a door into the company's laboratories; and pulling the trigger of his pistol three times to finally kill Ambrose. Equally, the voice and body represent the distinctive traits of *character*. In contrast to the general state of control which Cruise's voice conveys, frequently the roles he plays give him brief moments where the volume and pace of the voice is racked up to convey explosive anger. Both registers are in play during the scene in *M:I-2* when Cruise/Hunt must tell Newton/Nordoff-Hall about her part in the mission and the need to renew her relationship with Scott/Ambrose. Hunt is confronted with a conflict between love and duty: professionally he must instruct her about the mission but emotionally he not only fears for the dangers she will be put in but is also deeply uncomfortable with how the woman he is falling for will be morally compromised by engaging in a false but intimate relationship with the villain. Newton/Nordoff-Hall is clearly

angered by the demands placed on her but Cruise/Hunt contains his feelings and retains his professional cool. He speaks in a composed manner until the point where he feels compelled to ask her “Would it make you feel any better if I didn’t want you to do this?” and she retorts “Yeah, much,” at which point Cruise’s voice breaks control and snaps back “Then feel better!” Here through the uses of the voice, Cruise is able to convey Hunt as someone who is both a cold professional and a passionately protective lover. Using the body and voice to perform the purposes of the role and traits of character can be explained in narratological terms as the enactment of “functions” and “indices,” with “the former correspond[ing] to a functionality of doing, and the latter to a functionality of being” (Barthes, 1966: 93). Although the plot driven narrative of the action film places heavy emphasis on the functional agency of the voice and body – for the hero must say and do things of consequence – still the enactment of character indices are equally necessary to convey the type of person who can achieve those actions. Hunt kills the hero and foils the plot but he is also a composed man of noble principle but with a fiery heart.

Branded Performance

After medium, agent, character and actor, it is necessary to consider the place of the star brand in the performance of the figure. Dyer sees the link between star and role in terms of how successfully a “fit” is achieved between the star’s identity and the role/character construction (1998: 126–31). In the case of *M:I-2*, the cool self-confident assurance of Hunt effectively matches the self-assured independence which Cruise had already portrayed in a string of roles from *Risky Business* to *Top Gun*, *The Color of Money* (1986), *Rain Man*, *Days of Thunder*, *A Few Good Men*, *The Firm* and *Jerry Maguire*. “Cruise established his onscreen persona” by performing “the cocky loner who plays by his own rules, confronts a crisis, then is triumphantly transformed” (Kaufman, Malley, Rammairone and Weinstein, 1998: 52).

Although the term “fit” may suggest the brand is a pre-existing entity which is more or less successfully matched with the character, it is important to recognize the star brand as an identity produced (at least in

part) through acting. If there is a fit between Hunt and the Cruise, the link is produced only in performance as the brand is enacted through the voice and body. Reflecting on the actor/character relationship, Barry King (1985: 30) describes “impersonation” as instances of performance where an actor transforms the voice and body to represent character differences, which contrast with “personification” where vocal and bodily continuities are maintained so that the actor may seem to be simply playing him or herself. As all acting brings together the actor with the character or role, then no act can ever entirely be attributed to the role/character or the actor. Rather, impersonation and personification describe degrees of balance between the elements which make up the enacted figure. With personification, preserving regularities in the uses of the voice and body make the actor a recognizable figure regardless of the particularities of the role or character, whereas impersonation sees the voice and body used to enact the functions of role and indices of character specific to the particular narrative circumstances.

Star acting is forever situated in the co-existence of these two opposing performance principles, with personification foregrounding the actor over the role/character to create continuity and similarity, against the privileging of role/character over actor in impersonation to produce discontinuity and difference. Emphasizing the presence of the actor, personification is necessary to spectacularizing the star brand as a visible, familiar and known figure. With personification, King says “the actor is limited to parts consonant with his or her personality” (p. 30). As stars are highly mediated identities, however, any viewer’s perception of a star’s personality is the product of multiple and serial media representations, and so the star personality is already a deeply performed identity. If a star is judged to be playing him- or herself on-screen, it is precisely because s/he is repeating meanings and effects seen in other film performances, magazine articles, television interviews, etc. Criticisms of star acting often arise because the actor is seen to always be the same in each role, but this is exactly what is demanded by the symbolic commerce of Hollywood. Producers pay stars inflated compensation packages precisely to be a very visible and familiar asset. Even so, as each film sees the star responding to particular narrative circumstances, s/he never creates absolute sameness in each role. In *M:I-2*,

Cruise's manner of moving and speaking shares commonalities with not only his portrayal of Hunt in *Mission: Impossible* but also his acting in *Top Gun*, *Days of Thunder*, *A Few Good Men* and *The Firm*. At the same time, Cruise had never previously played a role which required him to use his body and voice to enact the exact circumstances of *M:I-2*. Consequently, personification and impersonation do not represent mutually exclusive performance principles but rather dual components of the star performance. In *M:I-2*, Cruise is Cruise but also Hunt. Star acting tailors personification to the needs of impersonation while achieving personification through repeated instances of impersonation.

This integration of representation with presentation is configured through the smallest details of star acting. James Naremore (1988: 4) suggests stars can be "known for an idelect [sic], a set of performing traits that is systematically highlighted in films and sometimes copied by impressionists." Idelectic features exceed the mere somatic substance of the star body, for they are acted similarities and differences, physically performed distinctions made in the actions of moving and speaking. At the most obvious level, the star idelect is evident in the overt madcap physical play of a performer such as Jim Carrey, or the vocal multiplication of identities within a single performance which at one point characterized the performances of Robin Williams. Other distinctions, however, are not produced by the body overall but by small isolated actions. One example of this is Cruise's famous distinctive smile, a feature shown off numerous times within and between films. As Cruise established his stardom in the mid 1980s, he repeatedly played a particular manifestation of swaggering masculinity, and key to manifesting that attitude was the smile, a broad grin beamed across an array of pearly white teeth. As Dargis (2000) describes it

During the 80s the smile would become Cruise's signature, his trademark ... it became synonymous with sex and box-office appeal. It defined Cruise's burgeoning star persona as pleasant, extroverted, open, friendly, neither overly macho nor aggressive, and, crucially, as someone to whom all things came naturally. It was the easy-does-it, no-problem grin, a smile without fangs or irony ... a mouth crammed with big white American teeth ... turning a simple human reflex into an epic of conquest and seduction ... throughout most of the 80s the essential Cruise

remained the guy who grinned from an F-14 cockpit and laughed his way around a pool table.

The smile not only featured in *Top Gun* ([Figure 7.10](#)) but was also on show with subsequent roles in *The Color of Money* and *Cocktail* ([Figures 7.11](#) and [7.12](#)). “The smile kept glowing until 1988 and *Cocktail*,” Dargis observes, “when all of a sudden it seemed wrong, a sign of Cruise’s superficiality and the yuppie-scum arrogance he signaled. For six years he turned down the high beam. For better and for worse, critically and commercially, he starred in movies that proved just how serious he could be.” Even so, in *Rain Man*, where the brash overconfidence of the Cruise brand was subdued, still the smile briefly broke through ([Figure 7.13](#)). Probably the ultimate confirmation of the smile as a hypersemiotized sign of Cruise’s presence came as the grin became a thing of self-parody. This was evident with Cruise’s cameo in the action packed spoof film-within-a-film pre-credits sequence of *Austin Powers in Goldmember* (2002), which culminates in Cruise smiling direct to camera ([Figure 7.14](#)). Here the joke works through many levels of star meaning, as Cruise plays the action star Cruise imitating comic star Mike Myers in his most famous role as the oversexed British spy Powers.⁵

Figure 7.10 Cruise smiles: *Top Gun*.

Producers Jerry Bruckheimer and Don Simpson; director Tony Scott; distributed by Paramount Pictures.

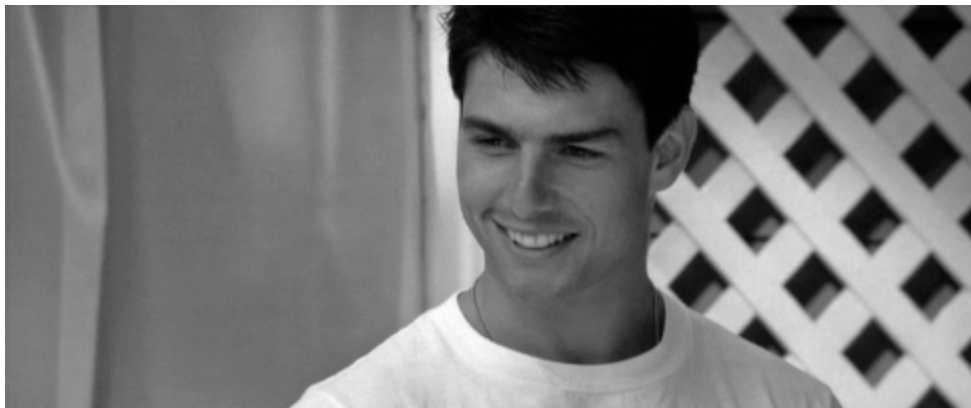


Figure 7.11 Cruise smiles: *The Color of Money*.

Producers Irving Axelrad and Barbara De Fina; director Martin Scorsese; distributed by Touchstone Home Video.



Figure 7.12 Cruise smiles: *Cocktail*.

Producers Robert W. Cort and Ted Field; director Roger Donadson; distributed by Touchstone Home Video.



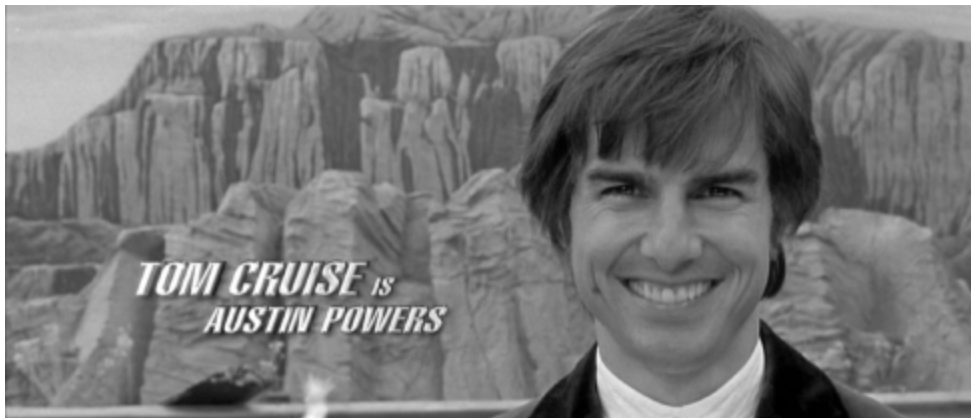
Figure 7.13 Cruise smiles: *Rain Man*.

Producer Mark Johnson; director Barry Levinson; distributed by MGM Home Entertainment.



Figure 7.14 Cruise smiles: *Austin Powers in Goldmember*.

Producers John Lyons, Eric McLeod, Demi Moore, Mike Myers, Jennifer Todd and Suzanne Todd; director Jay Roach; distributed by New Line Home Entertainment/Entertainment in Video.



In *M:I-2* the smile contributes to enacting the furtherance of the film's narrative circumstances. When Ambrose masquerades as Hunt to intercept Nekhorvich on the plane, a complex chain of performance relationships is created as Cruise must play Ambrose who is pretending to be Hunt as enacted by Cruise. Although only fleeting, the glimpse of the familiar smile is just part of this act designed to fool the scientist but also the audience. Later during the car duel, flashes of the Cruise smile represent Hunt as a man for whom life-threatening danger is mere play ([Figure 7.15](#)). At another level, the smile also becomes the cause for further self-reflexive play on the Cruise brand. When confronting Cruise/Hunt during the shoot-out in the Biocyte labs, Scott/Ambrose says "You know, that was the hardest part of having to portray you – grinning like an idiot every 15

minutes.” As the film builds towards its climax, Hunt uses prosthetic masks to substitute himself for Ambrose’s lieutenant, Stamp (played by Richard Roxburgh), and then apparently delivers “himself” to Ambrose. Unaware of the switch, Scott/Ambrose plans to kill “Hunt” but before doing so addresses his victim with “How about giving us a big smile?” In the one film, a single physical feature of the Cruise idiolect therefore serves both impersonatory and personificatory purposes, for the distinctive smile enacts specific narrative functions (i.e. fooling Nekhorvich) and character traits (i.e. displaying Hunt’s casual disregard for danger), while also specularizing the star brand by forming connections between films and drawing attention to Cruise as Cruise.

Figure 7.15 Cruise/Hunt laughs at danger: *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Producers Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner; director John Woo; distributed by Paramount Pictures.



It is precisely through the co-presence of personification and impersonation that the star performance enacts the star brand and negotiates the balance of familiarity and uniqueness fundamental to the film commodity. By foregrounding the presence of a star, personification vertically differentiates a film from films without stars. At the same time, by forming vocal and physical continuities, personification not only links the films of a specific star but also horizontally differentiates those films from the films of other stars. And yet if viewers are to pay for future performances by a star, then some sense of uniqueness has to be achieved, and so the voice and body must be used to also create impersonatory differences between roles played by the one star. This contrast in turn reflects the dual aspects of narrative and spectacle which characterizes narrative film, for impersonation is focused on representing a figure in the story world while personification

promotes the presentation and show of the actor. The fascinations of the star act arise precisely because these principles are not held in opposition but rather merged through the voice and body of the single performer. Furthermore, by means of personification and impersonation, the voice and body of the star manage the balance between familiarity and uniqueness fundamental to the film commodity. “Stardom, like the movies themselves,” Dargis notes, “depends on standardisation and differentiation.” Star acting provides producers and distributors with a means for signaling product differentiation through the performer and performance. Overall, star performance combines a series of contrasting symbolic and commercial principles:

Narrative	Spectacle
Story	Show
Representation	Presentation
Impersonation	Personification
Role/character over actor	Actor over role/character
Actor-as-representer	Actor-as-asset
Star-as-role/character	Star-as-star
Difference	Continuity
Differentiation	Standardisation
Uniqueness	Familiarity
	Vertical differentiation between films with and without stars
Horizontal differentiation between films featuring the same star	Horizontal differentiation between films featuring different stars

It is in the combination of these principles that the significance and attractions but also the commercial value of the star performance is produced.

Turning to matters of genre and marketing further illuminates understanding of the star act as branded performance. Connecting the star brand to genre brings together two systems of expectation. “The repetitive and cumulative nature of genre films,” Rick Altman explains,

makes them ... quite *predictable*. Not only can the substance and the ending of most genre films be predicted by the end of the first reel, but the repeated formulaic use of familiar stars usually makes them

predictable on the basis of the title and credits alone ... [Star names] designate more than just actors and actresses – they guarantee a certain style, a particular atmosphere and a well-known set of attitudes.

(original emphasis, 1999: 25)

Both genre and stardom work as systems for product differentiation as they equally identify what a film will and will not offer. Genre, as Steve Neale notes, “is ubiquitous, a phenomenon common to all instances of discourse: there is a generic aspect to all texts” (2000: 2). Film stardom is therefore continually produced within and through generic forms. Genres are “multi-dimensional” (p. 2) for they are categories formed from several elements, of which stars may be one. Genres are in part defined by the stars appearing in them, while star brands are in turn defined by genre. Stars therefore contribute to genre formation, while genres are active in the formation of the star brand.

As Neale notes, however, “most films are multiply generic,” and the same can be said of star brands. A star’s career may traverse several genres although through a succession of roles s/he may become closely associated with a particular genre, granting of course that the genre itself is probably not generically pure. Before *M:I-2*, Cruise had assembled a career which had seen him take lead roles in comedies of teenage experience (*Losin’ It* (1983) and *Risky Business*), fantasy (*Legend* (1985)), a biopic (*Born on the Fourth of July*), period drama (*Far and Away*), legal thrillers (*A Few Good Men* and *The Firm*), horror (*Interview With the Vampire*), and psychological drama (*Eyes Wide Shut* (1999)). Starting with *Top Gun* in 1986, however, Cruise commenced an association with action that would continue through *Days of Thunder* and then *Mission: Impossible*. Grossing nearly \$354 million worldwide, *Top Gun* became a defining statement in Cruise’s commercial and symbolic status. When the producing and directing team from *Top Gun* overtly repeated that film’s basic formula of maverick outsider character, speed machines, competition and a girl for *Days of Thunder*, maybe unsurprisingly the latter was referred to as “Top Gun 2” (C. Fleming, 1998: 143) or “Top Car.” *Days of Thunder* was an attempt to create continuity with limited variation, although after a disappointing worldwide gross of only \$157.9 million, the film represents just one example of how even the most sure-fire package of recurrent elements

cannot guarantee success in the film market. But six years later, as *Mission: Impossible* grossed \$457.9 million worldwide, the combination of Cruise and action was proved to still make a big impact in the market. By the time of *M:I-2*, therefore, Cruise had assembled a career which was generically diverse but his stardom was founded on commercial success in action. It was an association which would continue as action was combined with other generic credentials for the sci-fi action thrillers *Minority Report* and *War of the Worlds*, period action drama *The Last Samurai* (2003), action comedy *Knight and Day* (2010) and further run-outs for the Ethan Hunt character in *Mission: Impossible 3* (2006) and *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* (2011).

As these examples indicate, Cruise's action films are always multiply generic. *M:I-2* provided all the stunts, fights, gun-play and explosions demanded of an action movie at the very start of the twenty-first century, but these features were also combined with elements of romance. Cruise/Hunt saves the world from the deadly effects of Chimera and the wicked exploitation of Bellerophon but his motivations for so doing are entirely explained through his wish to save the woman he loves. *M:I-2* very obviously belongs to Cruise's action oeuvre, but with its romantic current, it is a film which equally belongs to an alternative lineage of the star's films extending back through *Eyes Wide Shut*, *Jerry Maguire*, *Far and Away* and *Cocktail* to *All the Right Moves* (1983). The star brand is therefore a multiply generic construct produced between and within films. A star may traverse multiple genres but becomes best known for only one or two, and with any film combining elements from various genres, the star brand provides a means for binding together inflections from different generic tendencies. In the case of *M:I-2*, the Cruise brand centrally unites the film's mix of action with some romance.

Altman argues genre is potentially an ineffective way of differentiating films in the market: "Like generic supermarket products, genre films can be made and distributed by any producer ... How much more rewarding is a strategy of avoiding generic identification, instead stressing the *particular plus* that the studio brings to the genre" (emphasis added, 1999: 115). "By definition," Altman argues, "genres can never be fully controlled by a single studio, whereas individual studios have exclusive access to contract

actors” (p. 115). Emphasizing the “particular plus” of the enacted star brand through marketing therefore differentiates between generic products. Film marketing aims to raise public awareness and thereby influence purchasing decisions, and it is in this intertwining of communication with selling where the symbolic commerce of the star brand plays a crucial role. Any star performance is a marketing device, for casting the star imports the star brand into a film as a way of signaling similarities and differences to position the film as a particular offering in media markets. Chapter 1 discussed how marketing media propagate the star name but those same media also provide the means for circulating and dispersing the star body. Name and body are disseminated across the promotional media of theatrical trailers, television or radio spot advertisements, and websites, but also feature in the publicity channels of press kits, junkets, press screenings and gala premieres.⁶

As a vehicle for product differentiation, the star performance must become a highly visible statement in the market. Not only is the brilliance of the star attraction achieved on-screen but also through the spectacular circulation of that performance. By organizing and coordinating the visibility of the star performance, marketing and distribution strategies show the brand, or to adopt a term which emphasizes the performativity of that visibility, they *stage* the brand. Film marketing and distribution stage the brand by creating a platform in the market for showing off the star attraction. Producing a series of micro-messages about a film, marketing media form highly compressed clusters of impressions conceptualizing what a film promises to deliver. Promotions for many films involve creating a number of poster designs but with *M:I-2* a single layout was created which prominently featured Cruise’s name accompanied by an image of his face and upper torso in an action pose set against a fiery background. Here the star communicated the film, for the poster entirely conceptualized the movie through Cruise. Compressing the narrative concept into a single image of the star was a convention already well established in promotions for Cruise’s films. More specifically the design for *M:I-2* followed the practice of using Cruise’s face alone (and in many cases only the right profile) seen with the posters for *Jerry Maguire*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The*

Firm, *Days of Thunder*, *Born on the Fourth of July* and *Risky Business*. In these cases, the star was the message and the message was Cruise.

Distribution patterns position the star performance in the market, inviting consideration of how the visibility of the star brand is staged across the organization of time and space. *M:I-2* started its theatrical run in North America. By releasing the film on Wednesday 24 May 2000, Paramount expanded the first weekend so that by the end of five days the studio could boast the film had opened with a staggering \$78.8 million gross. Furthermore, as Memorial Day followed on Monday 29 May, the film also benefitted from the holiday audience to finish the weekend with a gross of nearly \$91.8 million. Memorial Day is traditionally taken as the start point of Hollywood's summer, and *M:I-2* was Paramount's major event movie offering for the season, although DreamWorks appeared to have prematurely kicked off the summer three weeks earlier by opening the Roman epic *Gladiator* starring Russell Crowe and Disney followed two weeks after with its animated family feature *Dinosaur*. Understanding how distribution uses the star brand as a positioning statement also requires seeing how the star performance is situated relative to other films on release at the same time. *M:I-2* was followed through June and July by the other leading event movies from the majors, as Disney released its live action car theft drama *Gone in 60 Seconds* starring Nicolas Cage, Warner Bros. opened the maritime adventure *The Perfect Storm* with George Clooney in the lead, Mel Gibson fought the American War of Independence for Sony's *The Patriot*, Disney's Miramax subsidiary brought out the horror spoof *Scary Movie*, Fox commenced a new sci-fi franchise with *X-Men*, DreamWorks paired Harrison Ford with Michelle Pfeiffer for the supernatural gothic thriller *What Lies Beneath*, and Universal created a comedy showcase for Eddie Murphy to play eight different roles in *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps*. Star and genre therefore combined in *M:I-2* to provide Paramount with the means to differentiate the studio's key tentpole movie of the summer season in this congested marketplace.

For the North American theatrical release, Paramount opened *M:I-2* wide across 3,653 screens in Canada and the United States. Over the next six weeks up to the release in Japan, the film was then rolled out in all of Hollywood's major international markets. By the end of its run, *M:I-2* had

earned over 60 percent of its worldwide box office in international territories, with over 77 percent of that share coming from the film’s performance in just 12 countries ([Table 7.1](#)). Worldwide releasing and the compressed temporality of the international release schedule therefore meant that for a few weeks at least, Cruise’s performance achieved near global ubiquity. Subsequently, as that performance was passed through the secondary release windows of pay-TV and home video, it extended its commercial afterlife. *M:I-2* has long ago disappeared from cinema screens and may now only occasionally get a television airing, but with the “long tail” economics of online retail, over a decade later Cruise’s performance is still available.⁷

Table 7.1 Global performance of the star act: main markets for *Mission: Impossible 2*.

Sources: EAO (2001), www.boxofficemojo.com and www.imdb.com.

	Distributor	Release date	Gross (\$) (ranking amongst annual top films)
North America	Paramount	24 May 2000	215.4 (2)
Key International Territories			
<i>Europe</i>			
Germany	UIP	6 July 2000	25.0 (2)
UK and Ireland	UIP	7 July 2000	26.4 (5)
Spain	UIP	7 July 2000	12.5 (3)
Italy	UIP	7 July 2000	11.5 (4)
France	UIP	26 July 2000	21.8 (5)
<i>Asia-Pacific</i>			
Australia	UIP	1 June 2000	13.2 (2)
South Korea	n/a	17 June 2000	13.9
Taiwan	n/a	17 June 2000	11.3
Japan	UIP	8 July 2000	94.1 (1)
<i>Latin America</i>			
Argentina	UIP	16 June 2000	7.1
Brazil	n/a	22 June 2000	9.0
Mexico	UIP	30 June 2000	10.4

As actor and asset, stars are performed and performing brands, symbolic commercial identities enacted on screens both large and small. Combining narrative with spectacle, the star act is produced through the performances of the medium and the actor. Operating as signs of continuity and

difference, star acts are part of the currency of conglomerate Hollywood, positioning films in the market. With an industry now tuned to simultaneously pushing its premium titles across globally extended markets, and then continuing to exploit them through a series of aftermarkets, the star performance becomes a show distinguished as much by its omnipresence as by its permanence.

Notes

1 It is not clear when Ulmer's survey was taken that year but it is likely the rankings were prepared before *M:I-2* had completed its run internationally and so the outcome didn't reflect the commercial impact of the film.

2 Robert Towne's script for the film also constructs a narrative which is a thinly veiled copy of the Alfred Hitchcock thriller *Notorious* (1946) in which a European woman, whose reputation is tarnished by criminal association, is required by an American agent to go undercover and spy on a former lover, but when her cover is blown she is poisoned and must be saved by the agent.

3 Many stars claim to do their own stunts but before covering a film, insurance companies usually insist stars are prevented from endangering themselves (Epstein, 2010: 94–8). Cruise's work on *M:I-2* may therefore have been an exception to common industry practice. On the "Impossible Shots" featurette included with the DVD edition of the film, stunt coordinator Brian Smrz, expert climber Ron Kauk, director John Woo, and stunt double Keith Campbell all sing the praises for Cruise's decision to do his own stunt work on the climbing scene, thereby adding to the hype around the spectacularization of the star performance.

4 He is television actor Daniel Roberts.

5 As Naremore notes, the existence of a star's idiolect is often confirmed by acts of impersonation. Shortly after *M:I-2* was released, at the 2000 MTV Movies Awards Ben Stiller appeared with Cruise in a specially created comedy skit built around the premise of a long-serving stunt double who obsessively mimics the star. When playing the double, Stiller's imitation of the Cruise smile provided a crucial point of

connection between him and his parodic reference. The skit even included shots of Stiller and Cruise side-by-side pulling the same famous grin. Cruise has made no secret of his allegiance to Scientology but in January 2008 a rare candid insight into his beliefs became available when one of the organization's internal videos from 2004 was leaked documenting the ceremony celebrating conferment of the International Association of Scientologists' Freedom Medal of Valor on Cruise. This included an interview showing the star talking about his commitment to "KSW" (Keeping Scientology Working), countering "SPs" (Suppressive Persons) and claiming "we are the authorities on getting people off drugs, we are the authorities on the mind, we are the authorities on improving conditions ... we can rehabilitate criminals, way to happiness, we can bring peace, errrr, and unite cultures." For most of the clip Cruise spoke with an earnest tone to communicate his commitment, but in the moments where he broke into laughter, the flash of his smile was enough to bring the world of Hollywood film crashing into the scene. Over the internet the recording spread rapidly through viral video and the clip became an object of humour with many professional and amateur comedians creating numerous parodies of the scene. In one of the most effective of these, comic actor Miles Fisher lampooned the scene for *Superhero Movie* (2008), delivering a rambling speech in which he claimed he "can eat planets" and punctuating the scene with a series of mad, explosive laughs while mimicking the Cruise grin.

6 In film marketing, promotion describes forms of paid advertising, while publicity represents any activity intended to attract media coverage but without buying advertising space or time.

7 Chris Anderson advanced the concept of the "long tail" to explain how online retailing can supply an inventory extending beyond mass demand items to minority interest goods, forming a "mass of niches" (2007: 5). Six months after its North American theatrical opening, *M:I-2* was released in the US on home video formats on 7 November 2000. At that point it was a mass-market title but, as time passed, demand inevitably declined. Even so, years later, the film and Cruise's performance remain available amongst the thousands of titles for sale through e-tailers such as Amazon.com.

Prestige Stardom and the Awards System

While the A-list sit atop the economic hierarchy of actors, as a cultural industry, film is subject to other measures of value beyond the purely financial. In Hollywood, where the A-list are prized for their potential box-office impact, there is an alternative hierarchy of high-profile performers who are respected, celebrated and esteemed for their artistic achievements. With some actors, economic and artistic hierarchies intersect, but as in many other cases they don't, so artistic prestige functions as an alternative measure or index of star status related to, yet independent of, commercial value.

A-list status is produced by economic valorization demonstrated through the actor's record of appearing in commercially successful films. Chapter 1 offered alternative configurations of the star with actorly and prestige stardoms, the products of artistic valorization over commercial credentials achieved whenever performers accrue a sustained record of performances which attract illustrious reviews and other critical commentary. As suggested in the earlier chapter, prestige stars are effectively a subset of actorly stars: they are the "A-list" of artistically valorized performers, distinguished by their acquisition and accumulation of cultural honors. Demarcating "the Best" from the rest, awards offer a direct and tangible expression of actorly prestige. Awards represent a form of currency in film culture, the value of which is not defined, at least ostensibly, by the commercial terms of the money economy but rather by the effects they achieve in what James F. English (2005) refers to as the "economy of prestige." Film awards have symbolic rather than economic value: they are tokens of esteem, and as such can be understood as representing a form of what Pierre Bourdieu describes as "symbolic capital" (1984: 230).

This chapter therefore explores prestige stardom as a form of star status which co-exists with, but does not mirror, the economic standing of the A-

list. As this argument involves making a departure from the more familiar understanding of stars as signs of commercial value, so the chapter will first set out some conceptual ground with a discussion of the “anti-economic” logic which Bourdieu suggests permeates cultural production. This logic is intrinsic to the configuration of prestige stardom as will be illustrated through a study of Daniel Day-Lewis. Numerous film awards ceremonies are held each year, the most famous of which – and of greatest importance to Hollywood – are the annual awards of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), or the “Oscars” as they are familiarly known. In a third section, the chapter therefore examines the factors at work in producing the symbolic value of the Oscars, before considering how the awards function to legitimize certain forms of acting performance. Although the conferment of the awards is based on artistic rather than commercial achievements, still the Oscars produce effects in the film market, and so the final part of the chapter is concerned with how the Academy Awards position the performances of lead actors between both the prestige economy and the money economy.

Cultural Production and Symbolic Capital

Understanding the artistic valorization of prestige stardom and the currency of awards is helped by exploring Bourdieu’s work on what he refers to as the “field of cultural production.” Bourdieu’s sociology broadly applies the concept of “fields” to describe specific arenas of interaction, with the field of cultural production representing the arts. By using the term field, an explicitly spatial metaphor is adopted to conceptualize how cultural practitioners and their works occupy structured relations in which they are hierarchically positioned according to the distribution of different forms of capital. Conventionally, under capitalism the terms “economy” and “capital” are applied to describe mercantile exchange, but for Bourdieu this restricted definition of economy blocks consideration of a broader “economy of exchanges” which extends beyond commercial relationships (1983b: 242). He therefore expands the concept of capital beyond monetary

or financial resources to describe others types of asset which can be accumulated and used to obtain advantage. Of these, symbolic capital, or what is “commonly called prestige, reputation, fame” (1984: 230), has value in the field of cultural production because it serves to hierarchically differentiate between artistic practitioners.

A defining feature of the field of cultural production is how it operates by a logic which inverts conventional economic reasoning. Symbolic capital, in the form of artistic prestige, is prized and obtains value precisely for how it appears to disavow economic (in the financial sense) capital. In Bourdieu’s terms, cultural production forms an “anti-economy” or “upside-down economic world” (1983a: 40), where the value of symbolic capital is realized by the “‘refusal’ of the ‘commercial’” (1977: 75). Consequently exchanges of symbolic capital assume the character of “A commerce in things which are not commercial” (1996: 148). Due to the dominant perception of financial transactions as the only definition of economy, “other forms of exchange [are rendered] as non-economic, and therefore *disinterested*” (original emphasis, 1983b: 242). In the inverted economics of cultural production, practitioners may therefore acquire symbolic capital precisely by creating works or undertaking actions which reject the market to become statements of economic disinterest. Although not economic in the mercantile sense, the circulation of symbolic capital in this context still follows an economic logic. As John B. Thompson (1992: 15) notes,

Within fields that are not economic in the narrow sense, practices may not be governed by a strictly economic logic (e.g. may not be orientated towards financial gain); and yet they may none the less concur with a logic that is economic in a broader sense, in so far as they are orientated towards the augmentation of some kind of “capital” (e.g. cultural or symbolic) or the maximization of some kind of “profit” (e.g. honor or prestige).

Cultural practitioners may therefore “accumulate” and “invest” symbolic capital in search of symbolic “profits.”

Distributions of economic and symbolic capital hierarchically organize the positions which are objectively available to practitioners in the field. Foundational to the structuring of the cultural field is the opposition which Bourdieu poses between “heteronomy”/“autonomy,” poles on a continuum

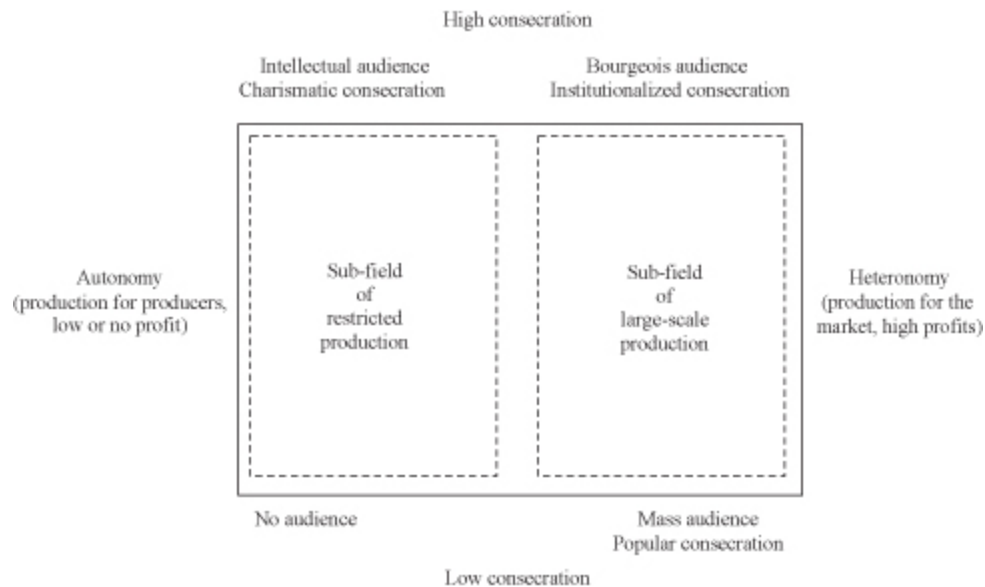
which demarcates the degrees to which forms or acts of cultural production may be judged to be directed either towards or against market forces. Heteronomous production embraces the market and so, according to the anti-economic logic of the cultural field, is rich in economic capital but consequently poor in symbolic capital, with the reverse defining autonomous production. These opposing principles bifurcate the field between a sub-field of “large-scale production,” in which producers produce for the market, and the autonomous sub-field of “restricted production” governed by economic disinterest where “producers produce for other producers” (Bourdieu, 1983a: 39).

Although cultural production has long sustained charismatic belief in the talents of painters, authors and composers as individual creators, it is commonly acknowledged that the creation of artworks “rests on an extensive division of labor” (Becker, 1982: 13). For Bourdieu, however, cultural production involves more than just the collective making of the work. He describes the work of art as “an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art” (1983a: 35). For works to become art, they must be recognized as such, and so the field brings together not only all those engaged in the collective material production of the art work but also agents, intermediaries and institutions involved with the symbolic production of belief in the work (p. 37). Recognition is key to “consecrating” or legitimizing certain objects or acts as art, shaping the differential distribution of symbolic capital as some works are recognized and respected as art while others aren’t. Bourdieu therefore sees the field of cultural production as bisected by a secondary axis marking high and low degrees of consecration. Whatever value attaches to that capital of consecration depends on who does the consecrating. Bourdieu distinguishes the “charismatic consecration” conferred by cultural producers on the works on their competitors, against the “bourgeois” or “institutionalized” consecration endowed by official and authoritative arts organizations, and the “popular” consecration which results from the choices made by the consuming public (pp. 50–1). Across the axes of heteronomy/autonomy and high/low consecration, what the field therefore represents is a “space of positions” which is expressed through the “position-takings” of those

practitioners who are active in the field (p. 30) ([Figure 8.1](#)). Although a very powerful hierarchical structure, practitioners do not occupy fixed positions, and the field is a dynamic space in which those involved negotiate and struggle over their artistic legitimacy through the acquisition and investment of symbolic and economic capital. Over time, a cultural practitioner will create a “trajectory,” “the series of positions successively occupied by the same writer in the successive states of the literary field, it being understood that it is only in the structure of a field that the meaning of their successive positions can be defined” (Bourdieu, 1986: 189).

Figure 8.1 Bourdieu’s field of cultural production.

Source: based on Bourdieu (1983a: 49 and commentary 50–1).



Middle-brow Hollywood and the Prestige Star

What Bourdieu offers is a broad model for understanding the hierarchical principles at work in cultural production. His own application was however limited by the historical examples he considered, with the French literary field of the late nineteenth century a predominant example (Bourdieu, 1983a and 1996). To emphasize the anti-economic logic of the field, Bourdieu dwelled mainly on the autonomous sub-field of restricted

production, with the result that he had little to say about large-scale, “heteronomous” commercial cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 217). Moreover, his historical focus did not address the emergence, growth and consolidation during the twentieth century of the mass media industries of recorded music, film, radio and television (p. 219). Bourdieu’s work cannot therefore be simply and directly transposed to the study of film. Instead, what it offers is a set of concepts to work with, principally his identification of the anti-economic logic which powerfully determines artistic status in cultural production, the hierarchical organization of the field through the distribution of symbolic and economic capital, and the importance of the production of belief to the recognition and consecration of cultural practitioners and their works. Adapting Bourdieu ideas for studying the symbolic commerce of Hollywood stardom, it is therefore necessary to apply these concepts to two questions: where is Hollywood film positioned in the field; and how does the differential distribution of economic and symbolic capital configure the hierarchical status of stars?

As a high-cost enterprise directed at large and frequently mass audiences, feature film production, and Hollywood film-making specifically, is positioned towards the heteronomous pole of large-scale production. But in a field which grants greatest legitimacy to anti-commercial activity, Hollywood film has consequently long faced critical dismissal if not derision. Tatiana Heise and Andrew Tudor (2007) use Bourdieu’s field theory for a comparative study of how film art movements emerged in Britain and Brazil during the 1920s and ’30s. Mapping the range of film activity in these periods, for both contexts “general Hollywood product” is placed at the extremity of the heteronomous pole and as lacking in critical consecration. This position certainly accords with enduring perceptions of Hollywood film as purely popular commercial entertainment. Yet this perception rests on a single monolithic conception of Hollywood production which ignores the diversity of output from the major studios. Has there ever been such a thing as “general” Hollywood product? Historically, Hollywood has remained a resolutely narrative cinema, and yet within the bounds of narrative has produced a remarkable variety of film types (Bordwell, 2006: 10–11). If considering just the period 1990–2009 which this study focuses upon, while the major Hollywood studios turned out

event movies aimed at the largest possible audience, they also targeted more narrowly defined tastes with genre films and movies for kids. Universal's *Schizopolis* (1996), Columbia's *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996), Fox's *The Crucible* (1996), Paramount's *Orange County* (2002) or Warner Bros.' *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) and *The Good German* (2006) offer just a few examples of the majors also producing and releasing so-called "specialised" films.¹ Moreover, with the emergence of the Indiewood subsidiary divisions in the early 1990s (see Chapter 4), the studios created a third tier of production and distribution situated between the large-scale production of the majors and the restricted production of the genuinely independent sector. For example, after its acquisition by Disney, former independent producer-distributor Miramax made and released the controversial *kids* (1995) and biographical drama *Basquiat* (1996), while Sony Pictures Classics produced the ensemble drama *The Company* (2003) and comedy crime thriller *Sleuth* (2007), and Universal's Focus Features subsidiary produced the homage to 1950s film melodrama *Far from Heaven* (2002).

Rather than creating a generalized type of product catering for a homogenized mass audience, Hollywood can best be understood as proffering a limited diversity of film content variously addressing a restricted variety of audience tastes. Hollywood may be situated in the sub-field of large-scale production but rather than bundle the whole of Hollywood output together as a single commercial mass, it is necessary to recognize the studios produce films which occupy multiple positions scattered between popular and more "bourgeois" tastes. While avoiding the elitism or the formal reflexivity and experimentation which characterizes avant-garde "high" culture, Hollywood otherwise produces across a spectrum which accommodates "middle-brow" and "popular" tastes (Bourdieu, 1989: 16; Gans, 1999: 75–93). Hollywood creates plot-driven spectacles of action, thrills and sensation aimed at the popular market, along with more "serious," "thoughtful" and "moving" fare. It is the latter which defines middle-brow Hollywood. For Bourdieu, middle-brow culture combines "two normally exclusive characteristics, immediate accessibility and the outward signs of cultural legitimacy" (1989: p. 323). As the middle-brow "give[s] the impression of bringing legitimate culture within the reach

of all” (p. 323), so one expression of the middle-brow imagination in film can be seen in screen adaptations of classic drama and literature

Applying Bourdieu’s model to Hollywood not only provides a framework for thinking about the positioning of films but also of stars in the field. Film actors are differentially positioned in the field by how they come to accumulate and represent economic and symbolic capital in human form. A-list names are positioned towards the heteronomous pole of the field, for their status is defined by the actor’s record of commercial success as measured by box-office grosses or sales of home entertainment units. In contrast, the prestige star is a figure rich in symbolic capital but, at least when compared to the market value of the A-list, relatively poor in economic capital. As leading figures in Hollywood production, prestige stars can never completely claim artistic autonomy and still belong to the sub-field of large-scale production, but rather than the box office, it is the accumulation of award nominations and wins, or of positive critical notices from the culturally legitimated press, which defines their status. It has already been established that based on the performance of their films in the market and the compensation packages they were able to demand, in the years 1990–2009 the A-list was populated by the likes of Jim Carrey, Tom Cruise, Mel Gibson, Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts and Arnold Schwarzenegger. In contrast, taking just Academy Award nominations and wins as a one measure of status, then Jeff Bridges, Cate Blanchett, George Clooney, Judi Dench, Morgan Freeman, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Diane Keaton, Julianne Moore, Jack Nicholson, Sean Penn, Kevin Spacey, Meryl Streep, Denzel Washington and Kate Winslet provided the period with a line-up of prestige stars.

Prestige stardom is a product of middle-brow Hollywood. Prestige stars are distinguished from the leading names of the most commercially popular forms of cinema but as figures in film they can only claim a certain level of cultural legitimacy. Bourdieu argues film as a medium has not achieved the standing of “the fully consecrated arts ... theatre, painting, sculpture, literature and classical music” (1990: 96). Set within this strata of legitimacy, prestige stars fail to attain the same cultural status as the leading practitioners of those arts – the acclaimed authors, fine artists, composers and sculptors, or the actors of the legitimized dramatic stage. Prestige stars

may not belong to the most legitimized forms of art but still gain kudos from association with consecrated culture. For example, multi-Oscar-winners Seymour Hoffman and Streep added to their prestige cache by jointly appearing in the 2008 screen adaptation of the stage play *Doubt: A Parable*, winner of the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play. Hollywood has steered clear of trying to adapt for the big screen the philosophic writings and high-brow novels of Irish writer Iris Murdoch, but this did not prevent Miramax and its co-production partners from hiring Dench and Winslet to share the portrayal of her in *Iris* (2001), a film which viewed Murdoch's life in terms of an enduring romance and noble battle against Alzheimer's disease. Dench's long career includes film and television adaptations of Anton Chekhov, Terence Rattigan, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, Jane Austen and William Shakespeare, and with the film *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) she appeared in a much-lauded fictionalized comedy-drama which was honored with five Oscars. As Dench shows, unlike the financial index of star status, where the value of women expires by the time they are in their 30s (see Chapter 1), the prestige economy may embrace age as a measure of artistic durability.

Prestige status depends on the disavowal of the commercial market. At one level, this is achieved by taking up a position in the overall system of production by not appearing in films or genres directed at the popular market. As already suggested, this need not mean working outside Hollywood for the major studios themselves create diverse streams of production. What it does mean though is not working on films directed at the mainstream. Making this choice will very likely be accompanied by a further act of economic disavowal, for the star must accept lower financial rewards than his or her A-list peers. At a secondary level, economic disavowal is enacted through performance. Whatever positions stars occupy in the field are always materialized in performance. As the previous chapter discussed, the representation of character is always enacted through the media of the voice and body. For Bourdieu (1983b), capital can be "objectified" (i.e. expressed in material objects) or "embodied" (i.e. as the inhabited properties of the body). In Hollywood, the star performance is an enactment of objectified and embodied capital, for the performance is part of the material content of films and is inhabited through the voice and body.

The previous chapter considered how star performance rests on the tension between representation and presentation, or impersonation and personification. In the economic dynamics of the cultural field, this tension is active in positioning the star performance as an instance of objectified and embodied capital. For the value of the A-list star to be realized, the actor must be a recognizable, visible and marketable identity, and so in performance the presentational aspect of personification must exceed the representation of character. In contrast, prestige stars acquire their reputations for how their performances are led by the impersonatory work of character portrayal, rejecting commercial appeals in favor of economically disinterested artistic goals. If personification enacts the heteronomous principle of performing for the market, impersonation rejects the stable, repetitious identity on which A-list status depends to enact the autonomous principle of investing in the purely artistic objective of character representation.

As discussed in the last chapter, however, any performance is balanced between personification and impersonation, and so the prestige star cannot and does not completely disappear into the role. Whether playing Queen Victoria, Queen Elizabeth I, Lady Bracknell or M in the James Bond series, Dench is always Dench, and even after her carefully crafted vocal transformations, Streep always remained Streep. Indeed, overt signs of transformation – changing the shape of the body, adopting a particular voice or accent, or moving in a different way – may actually become part of the spectacle of the prestige performance, as the display of transformation becomes a show of actorly craft. This investment in actorly transformation on-screen may be complemented off-screen by the prestige star using interviews to make declarations of personal commitment to the demands of his or her art, or otherwise refusing interviews altogether, for these are inevitably linked into the processes of film promotion and publicity. While an actor's choice of roles or manipulations of the voice and body can become gestures against the market, ultimately it is left to the critics to consecrate and recognize the artistic legitimacy of performance. The production of prestige stardom is therefore not confined to the production of performance alone but involves the production of belief in the merits of a performance. Accordingly, prestige stardom can survive, and may even

thrive on, the poor financial returns of a film if this can then be accompanied by the riches of positive critical recognition. With their judgments and reviews, critics and other film commentators frame the meaning of – and thereby contribute to the positioning of – the actor’s voice and body in the field.

Daniel Day-Lewis and Anti-Star Stardom

In a career which has spanned three decades, Daniel Day-Lewis has taken a succession of lead roles and received widespread star media coverage, becoming the subject of magazine articles, newspaper interviews and a few biographies. His fame positions him on a hierarchy which grants him more power, influence and profile than the vast majority of film actors working in Hollywood. He is a marketable figure: on posters his name appears above the film title and trailers emphasize his presence in films. Although a figure in the symbolic commerce of Hollywood, Day-Lewis’s status is formed around his overt rejection of the market. Unlike his A-list peers, Day-Lewis’s status is the outcome of his self-conscious production of artistic autonomy and the recognition and acceptance of that stance by the legitimizing institution of critics. Day-Lewis has never appeared in a “hit,” if that term is measured in purely in commercial terms, but yet he has banked a wealth of symbolic capital with award nominations and wins. Biography does not determine positioning in the field of cultural production but in Day-Lewis’s case it worth noting he has acquired a certain amount of symbolic capital by familial association alone. Grandson of British film producer Sir Michael Balcon, who in the 1920s founded Gainsborough Pictures and later headed Ealing Studios, and son of Poet Laureate Cecil Day-Lewis and actress Jill Balcon, even before entering films Day-Lewis had gained the capital of artistic lineage. These associations were added to with his 1995 marriage to Rebecca Miller, daughter of Pulitzer Prize winning American playwright Arthur Miller. Day-Lewis’s fame is based on embracing artistic autonomy but this does not mean he has not acquired a branded identity. Rather Day-Lewis’s rejection of the market has seen him

precisely find a place in the market by cultivating what amounts to a prestige brand.

Day-Lewis articulates the anti-commercial logic of prestige stardom, acquiring the symbolic capital of award-winning distinction by enacting a series of gestures of economic disinterest which reject the pull of the market. His career has seen him repeatedly appear in middle-brow product. As Bourdieu noted, accessible adaptations of well-known literary works are a standard category of middle-brow production. Before he started working in productions from the Hollywood studios, Day-Lewis had appeared in adaptations of “quality” literature, taking a supporting role in the 1985 film version of E. M. Forster’s 1908 study of upper-class English Edwardian society *A Room with a View* and starring as the surgeon and intellectual Tomas in the 1988 adaptation of Milan Kundera’s 1984 philosophic novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* set against the backdrop of the Prague Spring. This literary vein continued once Day-Lewis entered Hollywood, where he built up a record of appearing in film versions of well-known works of literature. He took the lead in Twentieth Century Fox’s 1992 adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper’s lengthy 1826 novel of the French and Indian War, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and played the male lead in Columbia’s 1993 production *The Age of Innocence*, a screen version of Edith Wharton’s 1920 novel of 1870s upper-class New York society. Day-Lewis starred in Fox’s 1996 production of his own father-in-law’s renown drama *The Crucible*, an allegory for McCarthyism, the reputation of which was confirmed by winning the Tony Award for Best Play when first staged in 1953. Along with these literary adaptations, Day-Lewis has also appeared in films inspired by literary works. On Miramax’s production *Gangs of New York* (2002), Day-Lewis took a supporting but stand-out role in a film based on Herbert Asbury’s 1928 non-fiction historical study *The Gangs of New York*, and played the lead role in *There Will Be Blood* (2007) based on Upton Sinclair’s 1927 novel *Oil!*. By this cross-fertilization of media, Day-Lewis has assumed associations with fully consecrated cultural forms to become a “literary” film star.

In his choice of films and performance practice, Day-Lewis has enacted the principle of artistic autonomy by a series of refusals or negations of the commercial marketplace. A-list stardom depends on establishing a strongly

personified on-screen identity but Day-Lewis's fame has been achieved without the fixing of a stable image. In the UK and Irish production *My Left Foot* (1989), Day-Lewis portrayed the true-life story of Christy Brown, an Irish born writer and artist who suffers from cerebral palsy. Brown added to Day-Lewis's record of eclectic roles, which already included the gay racist gang member Johnny in *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), upper-class suitor Cecil in *A Room with a View*, and the Czech doctor Tomas in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. When *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *A Room with a View* opened simultaneously in the US, star film critic Roger Ebert wrote in the *Chicago Sun-Times* "Seeing these two performances side by side is an affirmation of the miracle of acting ... That one man could play these two opposites is astonishing" (quoted in Lewis, 2007: 37). Jim Sheridan, director and writer of *My Left Foot*, has remarked "A big star is someone who projects a particular image from one film to the next, like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. Daniel disappears so completely into a role, how can he project an image?" (quoted in Barra, 1996: 90).

Alongside his refusal of image, Day-Lewis has also demonstrated artistic autonomy by his much reported dedication to actorly craft. With dramatic film-making, the principle artistic aim of naturalist acting is the believable representation of character. Acting is legitimized as "good" if it can be judged to involve some gesture towards closing the gap between actor and character so that the performer becomes fully integrated into the diegetic on-screen world. In Day-Lewis's case, he has cultivated an image of himself as an actor who "disappears" into character to engross himself in the dramas he enacts. Stories abound of the obsessive lengths he has taken to immerse himself into the roles he plays. As the disabled Brown in *My Left Foot*, Day-Lewis prepared by reportedly learning to paint with his foot (p. 91). On *The Last of the Mohicans* he spent time familiarizing himself with the life of a frontiersman, learning how to navigate the land without a compass and to hunt and trap using eighteenth-century tools (Loewenstein, 1997: 94). For *In the Name of the Father* (1993) he played an Irishman wrongly convicted on terrorist charges and his preparations included losing a lot of weight, and before shooting a scene where a confession is beaten out of him, he stayed awake for three nights and let himself be interrogated by real policemen (Corliss, 1994: 68). When filming *The Age of Innocence*

in New York, he stayed at a Victorian hotel, registered under the name of his character Newland Archer, and walked the streets in period clothing (p. 68). As *The Boxer* (1997) Day-Lewis trained with former world featherweight champion Barry McGuigan (Loewenstein, 1997: 94) and to play Bill “The Butcher” Cutting in *Gangs of New York*, he spent months perfecting knife-throwing and reading literature of the time to perfect the vernacular (Lyall, 2003: 1). For *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* he learnt Czech and on *The Ballad of Jack and Rose* (2005), written and directed by his wife, the couple lived apart so he could understand the isolation of a dying man perplexed about his family (Lewis, 2007: 38). Day-Lewis has explained his motivation for acting is “the gravitational pull of another life that fires one’s curiosity” (quoted in Loewenstein, 1997: 94). Michael Mann, who directed Day-Lewis in *The Last of the Mohicans*, has said “He doesn’t perform or act but mutates” (quoted in Abramowitz, 2008: E13). Description of Day-Lewis as “a chameleonic star” (Corliss, 1994: 66) therefore encapsulates the essential paradox of a Hollywood performer whose star identity is based on the refusal of a fixed image. It is not that Day-Lewis does not have a brand but rather that his brand is formed around projecting the refusal of a personified performed identity and thereby rejecting the market.

A-list stardom depends on the visibility of the performer – visibility on-screen and visibility through media reporting of his or her life off-screen. As a film performer, Day-Lewis is highly visible, yet by his refusal of a personified on-screen identity and the stories of actorly dedication, he has cultivated an image of invisibility. Even so, while this dedication to the representation of character is directed at the disappearance of the actor, as tales of Day-Lewis’s fanatical working processes have been widely covered in media reporting, so they’ve become visible and therefore part of a publicly circulated actorly image. In an article for *Vogue* titled “Disappearing Act,” it was noted that “While the typical movie star plays versions of himself, myths grew up around the rigor with which Day-Lewis got ready for roles, checked his ego at the door, and vanished inside” (Kerr, 2001: 298). By this mythology, Day-Lewis has paradoxically achieved invisibility in the midst of visibility as his refusal of image and show of artistic dedication has cultivated invisibility through the highly visible

channel of cinema, and media reporting has made that invisibility a matter of public knowledge.

This invisibility is not confined to performance alone. Day-Lewis has geographically distanced himself from the Hollywood milieu, setting up home in County Wicklow, Ireland. Possibly the greatest act of invisibility which any film actor can perform is to no longer appear in films. Between *The Boxer* in 1997 and *Gangs of New York* in 2002, Day-Lewis took several years out from his film career, and even once he returned to film, he only irregularly worked, making films every two to three years. “As long as he keeps acting,” observed the *Vogue* article, “his performances will be intense. But they may be fewer and farther in between, like the show put on by a desert plant that blooms unpredictably, and only when it’s ready” (pp. 341–2). Day-Lewis’s actorly image has seen him accumulate a high degree of symbolic capital but he has also made gestures aimed at rejecting the hierarchical status of the prestigious artist by aligning himself with artisanal activities. While starring in *The Crucible*, he joined with carpenters to build the set (Loewenstein, 1997: 90) and during his career hiatus after *The Boxer* he was also rumored to have served as apprentice to a Florentine cobbler (Dahl, 2008: 88). Day-Lewis has been described as an actor who “prefers the reclusive lifestyle of a male Garbo” (Holden, 1994: 25), alluding to the famous isolation of the legendary MGM star of 1920s and ’30s. In the opinion of Paul Thomas Anderson, who directed Day-Lewis on *There Will Be Blood*, the star’s low degree of public exposure aids and complements his immersion into character: “One of the advantages that Daniel has ... is you don’t see him everywhere, so you don’t really know who he is or suffer through having to see him every day in the newspaper. So he already has that advantage to be somebody else” (quoted in Dahl, 2008: 84).

This refusal of a stable, marketable identity has been accompanied by a rejection of straightforwardly commercial production. Before *The Last of the Mohicans*, Day-Lewis worked outside of Hollywood, but from that film onwards he played roles, albeit irregularly, for five of the major studios or their subsidiaries while starring in films for independent outfits such as IFC Films and The Weinstein Company. Although Day-Lewis’s stardom was channeled through Hollywood, his choice of film projects did not however position him with the commercial mainstream. With the exception of the

costly production *Gangs of New York*, he worked on medium-budget features. These films were never hits, generally falling in the mid-to-low strata amongst the annual rankings of the top-grossing films in North America ([Table 8.1](#)). Domestic box office is just one revenue stream for Hollywood films, and distributors only receive a portion of the gross, but even so comparing the North American gross to the production budget, the films which Day-Lewis has starred in have, in commercial terms, been at best modest successes and otherwise failures. However, those films have seen Day-Lewis acquire and bank a wealth of symbolic accolades with numerous awards and nominations.

Table 8.1 Daniel Day-Lewis: the grosses and the glory, 1992–2009.

Sources: compiled from data at www.boxofficemojo.com, www.imdb.com and analysis of D'Alessandro (2003: 26), Klady (1995b: 17; 1997: 22 and 1999: 34) and *Variety* (1993: 22; 1994: 14; 2009: 10 and 2010: 12).

	North American distributor	Budget (\$m)	North American gross (\$m)	Rank ¹	Honors
<i>Nine</i> (2009)	The Weinstein Company	80.0	19.7	120 ²	1 award, 5 nominations ³
<i>There Will Be Blood</i> (2007)	Paramount Vantage/Miramax	25.0	40.2	73 ⁴	25 awards, 2 nominations
<i>The Ballad of Jack and Rose</i> (2005)	IFC Films	1.5	0.7	n/a	1 award
<i>Gangs of New York</i> (2002)	Miramax	97.0	77.8	33 ⁵	17 awards, 4 nominations
<i>The Boxer</i> (1997)	Universal	n/a	6.0	161 ⁶	1 nomination
<i>The Crucible</i> (1996)	Twentieth Century Fox	25.0	7.3	143 ⁷	
<i>In the Name of the Father</i> (1993)	Universal	13.0	25.1	54 ⁸	1 award, 5 nominations
<i>The Age of Innocence</i> (1993)	Columbia	30.0	32.3	51	2 nominations
<i>The Last of the Mohicans</i> (1992)	Twentieth Century Fox	40.0	75.5	20	2 awards, 1 nomination

¹ According to Variety's end-of-year reporting of the top-grossing films in North America.

² Released in mid-December 2009 and continued into 2010. Ranked here according to position as if run were completed in 2009.

³ Three of these award/nominations were for the ensemble cast.

⁴ Released in the last days of 2007 and so ranked according to main year of release 2008.

⁵ Released late December 2002 and continued into 2003. Ranked here according to position as if run were completed in 2002.

⁶ Released on the final day of 1997 and so ranked according to main year of release 1998.

⁷ Released in November 1996 and continued into 1997. Ranked here according to position as if run were completed in 1996.

⁸ Released on the last day of 1993 and so ranked according to main year of release 1994.

Day-Lewis's anti-star gestures – his refusal of image, actorly obsessiveness and overt invisibility – are therefore echoed by his position in the film market. In the limited economic terms of financial success, Day-

Lewis is not a star because he lacks the commercial clout of the A-list, but in the anti-economic economy of cultural production, he carries value as a prestige sign of objectified and embodied symbolic capital. Day-Lewis's fame may not be configured around a personified image but yet he remains a marketable attraction: films are promoted through his name and reputation as an actor of distinction. Although that fame is largely configured around his show of economic disinterest and rejection of the conventional appearances of stardom, it is his anti-stardom which is the very basis for Day-Lewis's stardom.

The Symbolic Authority of the Oscars

Cultural awards represent tangible emblematic resources or assets which can be accumulated and invested in order to achieve the "profits" of artistic status, esteem and reputation. In film culture, the economy of prestige is sustained by an annual international system of awards: festival awards, industry award, critics awards, and audience awards. All bestow a certain degree of distinction on recipients but as each category is decided by different classes of voter, so the source of the award determines the degree of consecration attached. Audience awards are decided by the personal likings of "lay" voters and hold little symbolic value because their conferment is underpinned by the heteronomous interests of the consumer market. In contrast, industry, festival and critics awards carry greater weight for not only are they bestowed according to what are seen to be the more informed judgments of professional practitioners and intermediaries from the field of cultural production itself, but they are predicated on the autonomous principle of celebrating artistic merit. The latter categories of awards therefore incline towards what in Bourdieu's terms is the charismatic consecration of producers by fellow cultural professionals.

Individual awards form hierarchical distinctions between cultural practitioners but there is also a pecking order of annual award schemes. Amongst film awards the Oscars, bestowed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), hold the greatest authority. This

meritorious system is based on the autonomous principle of celebrating the artistry rather than the commerce of film, with awards “given annually to honor outstanding achievements in theatrically released feature-length motion pictures” (AMPAS, 2009: 1). As Steve Pond observes, “the importance and significance of the Academy Awards is tied to the perception that they genuinely are awarded for merit” (2005: 14). Emanuel Levy (2001b: 338) pinpoints the cultural significance of the Academy Awards when he describes the Oscars “as an institutionalized yardstick of artistic quality.” As Levy notes, “Through the Oscar, the Academy functions as peers, critics, and tastemakers. No other award so well combines critical and popular judgment” (p. 44). Oscar prestige is therefore a middle-brow creation, honoring art in popular culture by conferring artistic validity on products which to varying degrees are commercially orientated.

Awards provide tangible markers of artistic prestige yet whatever value is attached to them is entirely arbitrary: why should a 13 1/2-inch statue of a gold knight holding a sword and standing on a reel of film, the iconic figure of the Oscars, be so imbued with significance by the film community? Whatever value the Oscars have is the outcome of the production of belief in their authority. The value of Academy Awards depends on collective belief in their value and recognition that the works or acts they celebrate are things of value. This belief is sustained by a combination of factors. First, the authority of the Oscars is supported by the commercial and cultural dominance of Hollywood film in the world’s leading film markets. The Academy’s membership is predominantly drawn from the US professional film community, and although the Oscars are open to embracing a wide diversity of films from across the world, for over 80 years now the voting of the Academy has overwhelmingly focused on celebrating English-language – and in most cases American-produced – films which frequently come from the Hollywood majors. While apparently set apart from the film market, the hegemonic status of the Oscars in the international system of film awards mirrors the economic dominance of Hollywood in international territories, but through the symbolic terms of the prestige economy.

Second, belief in the value of the Oscars is sustained by belief in the Academy as an authoritative organ for the industry. When the Academy was

formed in 1927, it had two purposes: to create an industry-wide body to mediate in labor disputes and to guard against perceptions of the moral turpitude of the movies by “establish[ing] the industry in the public mind as a respectable, legitimate institution, and its people as reputable individuals” (1929 Academy annual report cited in Shale, 1993: 2). On the former point, the Academy received criticism that it acted as “a company union for the producers” (Frank Gillmore, President of the stage performers union Actors’ Equity Association, cited in Clark, 1995: 53), and with the formation of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) in 1933, the Academy was defeated in this purpose. However, the inauguration of the Oscars in 1929 provided an instrument for legitimizing the industry. Subsequently, while moral criticisms of the movies may have receded, the Oscars continue to serve a legitimizing function: the awards create a circle of belief in their own value, for by celebrating the art of cinema, they reciprocally confirm cinema as an art. This authority is also affirmed by maintaining a closed membership system “limited to those who have achieved distinction in the arts and sciences of motion pictures” (AMPAS, 2011). By restricting its members to distinguished figures working in the film professions, the Academy positions itself as an informed and influential arbitrator in recognizing art in film.

Third, there is the placing of the Oscars in the annual calendar of American film awards. Since the 6th Academy Awards were held on 16 March 1934, the pattern has been to host the awards ceremony on a date in either March or February each year.² This sees the ceremony occur two to three months after the conclusion of the year for which achievements are honored. In the intervening period, other leading rounds in the awards calendar have already taken place, including the National Board of Review Awards, Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards and SAG Awards ([Table 8.2](#)). Since 1944, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA) has awarded the “Golden Globes.” It is the mission of the HFPA to “recognize outstanding achievements by conferring annual Awards of Merit, (Golden Globe® Awards), serving as a constant incentive within the entertainment industry, both domestic and foreign, and to focus wide public attention upon the best in motion pictures and television” (HFPA, 2011). Held in January each year, the Golden Globes precede the Oscars and by

honoring more or less the same categories of achievement in the same award year as the Academy, the Golden Globes could be regarded in many respects as a direct competitor for the Oscars. Yet any excitement or anticipation generated is repeatedly over-shadowed as commentators only discuss the Globes for how they may provide a forecast of forthcoming Oscar nominations and winners. Sitting at the tail end of the awards season, potentially the Academy Awards could lose their importance, yet the perception has endured that other events in the film awards calendar are mere precursors to the Oscars.

Table 8.2 Annual cycle of film-acting awards in the US.¹

Month ²	Award	Voters and awarding body	Started
December	National Board of Review Awards	Professional members of the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures	1929
December	New York Film Critics Circle Awards	Professional members of the New York Film Critics Circle	1936
December	Critics' Choice Awards	Professional members of the Broadcast Film Critics Association	1995
January	People's Choice Awards	Sponsored by Proctor & Gamble and voted for by members of the public	1975
January	National Society of Film Critics Awards	Professional members of the National Society of Film Critics	1966
January	Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards	Professional members of the Los Angeles Film Critics Association	1975
January	Golden Globes	Professional members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association	1944
January	SAG Awards	Professional members of the Screen Actors Guild	1995
February	Independent Spirit Awards	Previous Spirit Awards nominees and paying members of Film Independent	1984
March	Golden Raspberry Awards (the "Razzies")	Paying public members of the Golden Raspberry Award Foundation	1981
March	Academy Awards (the "Oscars")	Professional members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences	1929
June	MTV Movie Awards (the "Golden Popcorn")	Members of the public	1992

¹ To identify award rounds with relevance to Hollywood stardom, the table is limited to only those awards which confer honors in acting categories, and so does not include other important events in the film calendar such as the American Film Institute Awards, Directors Guild of America Awards or Writers Guild of America Awards.

² As many awards ceremonies have moved between months, this chronology is inexact. Recorded are the most regular months award ceremonies were held in the period 2000 to 2010 and the chronology is organized to follow the order in which ceremonies are held for the films of the previous year. Exceptions here are the National Board of Review Awards and New York Film Critics Circle Awards which are presented in December, and the Critics' Choice Awards which are announced in December but presented the following month. Falling in the last month of the calendar year which they are celebrating, these become the first rounds in the annual awards cycle.

Finally, the symbolic value of the Oscars is produced through the process by which the awards are actually decided and conferred. To recognize and celebrate solitary winners, the Oscars must enact a ritual of exclusion, conducted under the authority of professional peers. This progresses through the phases of eligibility and submission, two rounds of voting, and then the awards ceremony. To be considered, achievements by individuals must be attached to particular films, and to be eligible for submission any film must fulfill certain criteria.

All eligible motion pictures ... must be:

- a.** feature length (defined as over 40 minutes),
- b.** publicly exhibited [using professional standard equipment],
- c.** for paid admission in a commercial motion picture theater in Los Angeles County,
- d.** for a qualifying run of at least seven consecutive days,
- e.** advertised and exploited during their Los Angeles County qualifying run in a manner considered normal and customary to the industry, and
- f.** within the Awards year deadlines.(AMPAS, 2009: 5–6)

Voting for the awards is conducted by secret ballot restricted to active and life Academy members who are organized under 15 branches defined by craft specializations, e.g. art directors, cinematographers, editors and visual effects, with the Actors Branch retaining the largest membership (1,183 in 2011), inevitably including previous nominees and award-winners.

Voting is a two stage process of preferential balloting.³ Initially, candidates are selected through the nomination ballot. Taking all the films which meet the aforementioned criteria, the Academy compiles an annual “Reminder List of Eligible Releases” which is circulated to members in late December, together with forms to register votes for nominations in 25 categories. Members can only vote for nominees in the category or categories represented by the branch to which they belong, which in the case of the Acting Branch means members vote for nominees in four categories: Actress in a Leading Role, Actor in a Leading Role, Actress in a Supporting Role, and Actor in a Supporting Role. Forms are returned unsigned in late January to the accountancy firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and just over a week later nominees in all categories are announced

at an early morning (5.30am Pacific Time) press conference held at the Academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills. There then follows the Final Ballot, where voting is opened up to the entire Academy membership to cast their votes on nominees in all categories, and the poll closes a few days before the awards ceremony takes place.

As Bourdieu noted, the value of symbolic capital depends on recognition. In purely practical terms, the voting process serves the purpose of elimination, but its larger cultural function comes from how the voting stages the recognition, and therefore the legitimization, of certain works and practitioners as worthy exemplars of artistic merit. With the voting completed, the ceremony therefore becomes the ultimate act of recognition, as legitimacy is affirmed and confirmed in an act of widespread collective witnessing. This is achieved at two levels: the witnessing inside the closed world of the award venue by the Academy and other privileged invited guests; and the global mediated event of the televised "Oscarcast," which allows the general public to observe the outcomes of the Academy's decisions. This dual audience for the ceremony exactly articulates the middle-brow status of the Oscars, for the awards are at once a statement of elite selection and of popular approval and fascination.

By taking these factors together, it becomes possible to see how the symbolic value of the Oscars is not the outcome of the individual accomplishments of award nominees or winners. Rather, the Oscars become symbolic capital as belief in their value is produced collectively through Hollywood's global dominance, the awards system and the institutionalized force of the Academy as a forum for the recognition and consecration of artistic achievements in film.

Oscar Prestige and Legitimized Acting

Acknowledging differences in the nature of achievements made by nominees, the Academy's branches are entitled to formulate their own special rules. In the case of the acting categories, rules are in place to regulate the distinction between "leading" and "supporting" status as there

is no hard and fast distinction between these categories. Current regulations permit a “performance by an actor or actress in any role shall be eligible for nomination either for the leading role or supporting role categories,” with the caveat that “determination as to whether a role is a leading or supporting role shall be made individually by members of the branch at the time of balloting.” (AMPAS, 2009: 11). Tabulation of nominations in leading and supporting categories is conducted simultaneously and if a single performance receives nominations under both categories, in the system of preferential voting it will be entered on the ballot only in the category where it first receives the number of votes to be nominated. If a single performance receives enough votes to be nominated in both categories, or if a performer attracts enough votes to be nominated in the same category for two different performances, then in either situation the performance or performer will only be nominated once as determined by the preferential tabulation process (p. 11). This does not prevent, however, a performer from achieving nominations for separate performances under the leading and supporting categories. Historically, dual nominations for performers in the lead and supporting categories have been rare, although the incidence has increased since the early 1980s. Most recently, in 2002 Julianne Moore was nominated for the lead in *Far from Heaven* and her supporting performance in *The Hours*, and two years later Jamie Foxx received a supporting nomination for his role in *Collateral* while winning the award for Actor in a Leading Role with *Ray*. In the lead-up to the 80th awards in 2007, Cate Blanchett picked up nominations for the lead in *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* and her supporting performance in *I’m Not There* although ultimately missed the opportunity to take home a statue.

According to the criteria outlined earlier, in any year hundreds of films fulfill the bureaucratic requirements to be eligible for submission. Yet one factor severely limits the possibilities for the majority of films to be considered. Tradition weighs on the Oscar ritual in the form of historically embedded taste. Future beliefs about whether a particular performance or film is worthy of nomination or an award is always at least partly produced through a history of trends in what the Academy has previously believed to be achievements of merit. Something of those trends can be identified by considering the 160 performances which represented all the nominees and

winners in the Best Actor and Actress categories from the years 1994 to 2009. In his analysis of winning roles over the first seven decades of the Academy Awards, Emanuel Levy identified the Academy's preference for rewarding performances based on the lives of real-life figures, with a stronger incidence of this trend amongst men than women (2001b: 194–95). This trend has persisted: in the period 1994–2009, 21% of nominations and 50% of winners in the Leading Actress category, and 31% nominations and 31% winners in the Leading Actor category, were for performances based on biographical figures. Within this trend, the Academy has shown preferences for nominating and honoring performances representing certain categories of true life figures (**winners in bold**):

English royalty: **Helen Mirren** *The Queen* (2006), Cate Blanchett *Elizabeth* (1998) and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), Judi Dench *Mrs. Brown* (1997) and Nigel Hawthorne *The Madness of King George* (1994).

Popular entertainers, particularly singers: **Marion Cotillard** *La Vie en Rose* (2007), Joaquin Phoenix and **Reese Witherspoon** *Walk the Line* (2005) and **Jamie Foxx** *Ray* (2004). If extended to encompass figures moving in the general world of entertainment, then this category also includes Leonardo DiCaprio *The Aviator* (2004) and Ian McKellen *Gods and Monsters* (1998).

Figures from the fully consecrated arts: i.e. literature (**Nicole Kidman** *The Hours* (2002), Judi Dench *Iris*, **Philip Seymour Hoffman** *Capote* (2005), Johnny Depp *Finding Neverland* (2004), Geoffrey Rush *Quills* (2000), Javier Bardem *Before Night Falls* (2000), and Miranda Richardson *Tom & Viv* (1994)), concert music (Emily Watson *Hilary and Jackie* (1998) and **Geoffrey Rush** *Shine* (1996)), and painting (Ed Harris *Pollock* (2000) and Salma Hayek *Frida* (2002)). If this category is defined broadly speaking by figures noted for their “intellectual” achievements, then Russell Crowe *A Beautiful Mind* (2001) also fits here.

The latter ensemble also shades into a uniquely female category: Kidman as Virginia Woolf, Dench as Iris Murdoch and Watson as Jacqueline du Pré could equally be grouped with Angelina

Jolie *Changeling* (2008), **Charlize Theron** *Monster* (2003), and **Hilary Swank** *Boys Don't Cry* (1999) as “the tragic woman.”

In contrast, a body of male nominees and winners have represented real-life national leaders (Morgan Freeman *Invictus* (2009), Frank Langella *Frost/Nixon* (2008), **Forest Whitaker** *The Last King of Scotland* (2006) and Anthony Hopkins *Nixon* (1995)), or otherwise figures whose lives are touched by actual political circumstance (**Sean Penn** *Milk* (2008), David Strathairn *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005), Don Cheadle *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and Woody Harrelson *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996)).

With the figure of the boxer (Will Smith *Ali* (2001) and Denzel Washington *The Hurricane* (1999)), the ring has become a fertile dramatic arena.

Alongside royalty, artists and politicians, the Academy also likes to see the lives of extraordinary ordinary people acted out, with wins for **Julia Roberts** *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and **Sandra Bullock** *The Blind Side* (2009) showing the Academy's fondness for stories of strong mothers holding the family together while confronting social injustices.

Several of these categories also expand to fictional characters. Julie Christie *Away from Her* (2006), Imelda Staunton *Vera Drake* (2004) and Julianne Moore *Far from Heaven* (2002) and *The End of the Affair* (1999) all performed the tragic woman. **Hilary Swank** *Million Dollar Baby* (2004) gave a rare female inflection on the boxer, and although Mickey Rourke as *The Wrestler* (2008) belonged to a different sport, the film followed many conventions of the boxing movie. Fascination with music both popular and classical has also accommodated **Jeff Bridges** *Crazy Heart* (2009) and Richard Dreyfuss *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995).

By selectively legitimizing the acting of certain character types, the Oscars equally de-legitimize a far wider array of other types of performances and performers. Whole genres fail to be recognized by the Academy. As already noted in Chapter 5, in the 1990s action film stood at the forefront of the box office, and in the following decade fantasy and comic book adaptations took over, yet nowhere did lead performances in these films feature amongst the Academy's preferences. This systematic exclusion can be understood according to the logic of the cultural field, for

although the value of the Oscars remains within the context of large-scale production – and so the achievements they celebrate are never entirely liberated from the trappings of commerciality – as expressions of the middle-brow disposition the Academy Awards set themselves apart from the most popular terrain of the market. The Academy does not like horror, while dual wins for **Helen Hunt** and **Jack Nicholson** in *As Good As It Gets* (1997), together with nominations for Meryl Streep *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and Diane Keaton *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), are rare cases of the Academy consecrating comedy acting. Generally the Academy has not rewarded performances in out-and-out comedies but at most has made concessions to dramas with comic tones, as seen with the nominations granted to Judi Dench (*Mrs. Henderson Presents* (2005)), Bill Murray (*Lost in Translation* (2003)), Jack Nicholson (*About Schmidt* (2002)), and Dustin Hoffman (*Wag the Dog* (1997)). This sample also confirms the Academy's preference for recognizing English-language performances. Between 1994 and 2009, only 3 percent of total nominations and 6 percent of all winners were in a language other than English: i.e. **Marion Cotillard** *La Vie en Rose*, Catalina Sandino Moreno *Maria Full of Grace* (2004), Fernanda Montenegro *Central Station* (1998), **Roberto Benigni** *La vita e bella* (1997) and Massimo Troisi *Il Postino* (1994).

There is no set template for the “Oscar performance” and occasions continually arise where sure-fire predictions are proved empty. Even so, enduring patterns in the Academy's preferences suggest that it is possible to find parameters circumscribing Oscar contending material. Tradition powerfully defines what the Academy is prepared to recognize but is even more powerful in determining the types of performance which will not be legitimized.

Prestige vs. Profit?

The Academy Awards are founded on economic disinterest, rewarding artistic merit rather than financial profits. Oscar winners do not even receive any financial compensation for their achievements. Oscar prestige is therefore overtly disconnected from market considerations, but not entirely so. Only in the rarest of cases does the Academy consecrate popular hits but

the symbolic capital of nominations and awards is still deployed in the market with the aim of milking financial returns. Bourdieu argued that

it has to be posited simultaneously that economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital and that these transformed, disguised forms of economic capital ... produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal ... the fact that economic capital is at their root, in other words ... at the root of their effects. (1983b: 252)

Symbolic capital is therefore a transformed or “disguised” form of economic capital: in cultural production, its value may arise from disavowing the market, but nevertheless it can still achieve economic ends. This invites the question – does Oscar prestige “cash in on kudos” (Groves, 2001: 10)?

In the years 1994–2009, 126 of the 152 films which represented the 160 nominees continued their release over the period of the nominations and awards, indicating distributors strategically staged the release of those films which they strongly suspected to have potential for generating ticket sales through the Oscar buzz ([Figures 8.2](#) and [8.3](#)).⁴ By the end of their North American runs nearly, 67 percent of the films featuring nominated performances in the actor and actress categories had grossed less than £50 million and only 18 percent grossed over £100 million. Generally, Oscar prestige was not therefore linked into the hit driven market, although a few performances appeared in movies ranked amongst *Variety*'s end of year top tens. These had either completed their runs (*Silence of the Lambs*, *Gladiator* and *Erin Brockovich*) several months before the awards season or had already attracted over 90 percent of their North American gross by the time of the nominations were announced (*The Blind Side*) ([Figures 8.4](#) and [8.5](#)). These were films whose commercial standing was not made by the Oscars. Where the financial effects of the Oscars could be detected was amongst the nominees belonging to the mid and lower tiers of the box office market. Here there was a group of films which attracted the majority of their audiences through the exposure arising from Academy recognition. *Blue Sky* (1994), *Dead Man Walking* (1995), *La vita è bella*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Monster's Ball* (2001), *The Pianist* (2002), *Monster*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *There Will Be Blood*, *The Reader* (2008) and *Crazy Heart* featured 41 percent of all

winners in the Lead Actor and Actress categories between 1994 to 2009, and all attracted over 60 percent their tickets sales in the period after the nominations were announced. Of these, Jessica Lange in *Blue Sky*, Charlize Theron in *Monster* and Forest Whitaker in *The Last King of Scotland* were the only nominees for these films, and so that whatever economic effects the Oscars had on box office can only be attributed to the buzz created around those individual performances. With the others, the Oscar effect was more dispersed, as award-winning performances featured in films which received multiple nominations in the main award categories. For example, Hilary Swank's award-winning performance in *Million Dollar Baby* featured in a film which not only collected awards for Best Picture, directing and Supporting Actor, but also nominations for Lead Actor, editing and writing. Likewise, Adrien Brody's award for the lead in *The Pianist* was accompanied by wins for Roman Polanski and Ronald Harwood in the directing and adapted screenplay categories, with the film also picking up four other nominations.

Figure 8.2 Best Actor nominees and winners: gross box office, 1994–2009.

Sources: compiled using data from www.boxofficemojo.com and www.the-numbers.com.

2009 (82nd)	Jeff Bridges (Crazy Heart)	██████████					
	George Clooney (Up in the Air)	██████████					
	Colin Firth (A Single Man)	██████████					
	Morgan Freeman (Invictus)	██████████					
2008 (81st)	Jeremy Renner (The Hurt Locker)	██████████					
	Richard Jenkins (The Visitor)	██████████					
	Frank Langella (Frost/Nixon)	██████████					
2008 (80th)	Sean Penn (Milk)	██████████					
	Brad Pitt (The Curious Case of Benjamin Button)	██████████					
	Mickey Rourke (The Wrestler)	██████████					
	George Clooney (Michael Clayton)	██████████					
2007 (80th)	Daniel Day-Lewis (There Will Be Blood)	██████████					
	Johnny Depp (Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street)	██████████					
	Tommy Lee-Jones (In the Valley of Elah)	██████████					
	Viggo Mortensen (Eastern Promises)	██████████					
2006 (79th)	Leonardo DiCaprio (Blood Diamond)	██████████					
	Ryan Gosling (Half Nelson)	██████████					
	Peter O'Toole (Venus)	██████████					
	Will Smith (The Pursuit of Happyness)	██████████					
	Forest Whitaker (The Last King of Scotland)	██████████					
2005 (78th)	Philip Seymour Hoffman (Capote)	██████████					
	Terrence Howard (Hustle & Flow)	██████████					
	Heath Ledger (Brokeback Mountain)	██████████					
	Joaquin Phoenix (Walk the Line)	██████████					
	David Strathairn (Good Night, and Good Luck)	██████████					
2004 (77th)	Don Cheadle (Hotel Rwanda)	██████████					
	Johnny Depp (Finding Neverland)	██████████					
	Leonardo DiCaprio (The Aviator)	██████████					
	Clint Eastwood (Million Dollar Baby)	██████████					
	Jamie Foxx (Ray)	██████████					
2003 (76th)	Johnny Depp (Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl)	██████████					
	Ben Kingsley (House of Sand and Fog)	██████████					
	Jude Law (Cold Mountain)	██████████					
	Bill Murray (Lost in Translation)	██████████					
2002 (75th)	Sean Penn (Mystic River)	██████████					
	Adrien Brody (The Pianist)	██████████					
	Nicolas Cage (Adaptation)	██████████					
	Michael Caine (The Quiet American)	██████████					
	Daniel Day-Lewis (Gangs of New York)	██████████					
	Jack Nicholson (About Schmidt)	██████████					

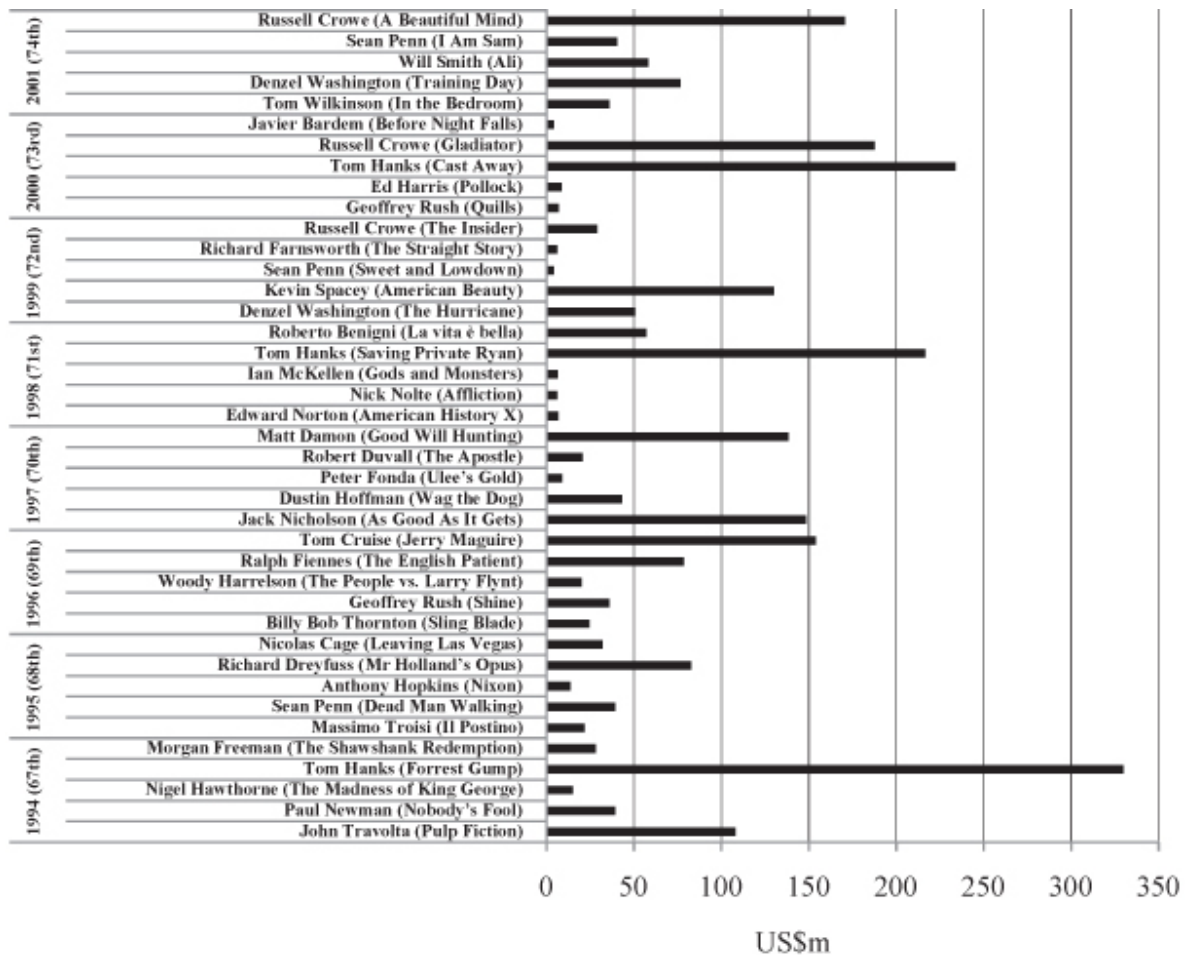
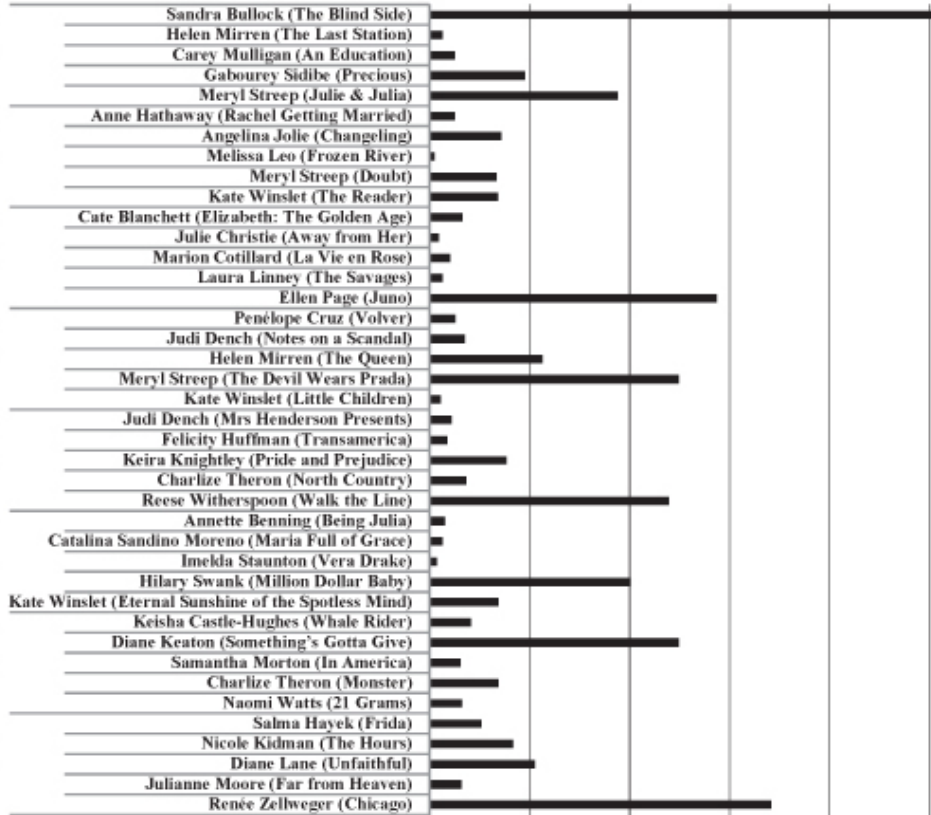
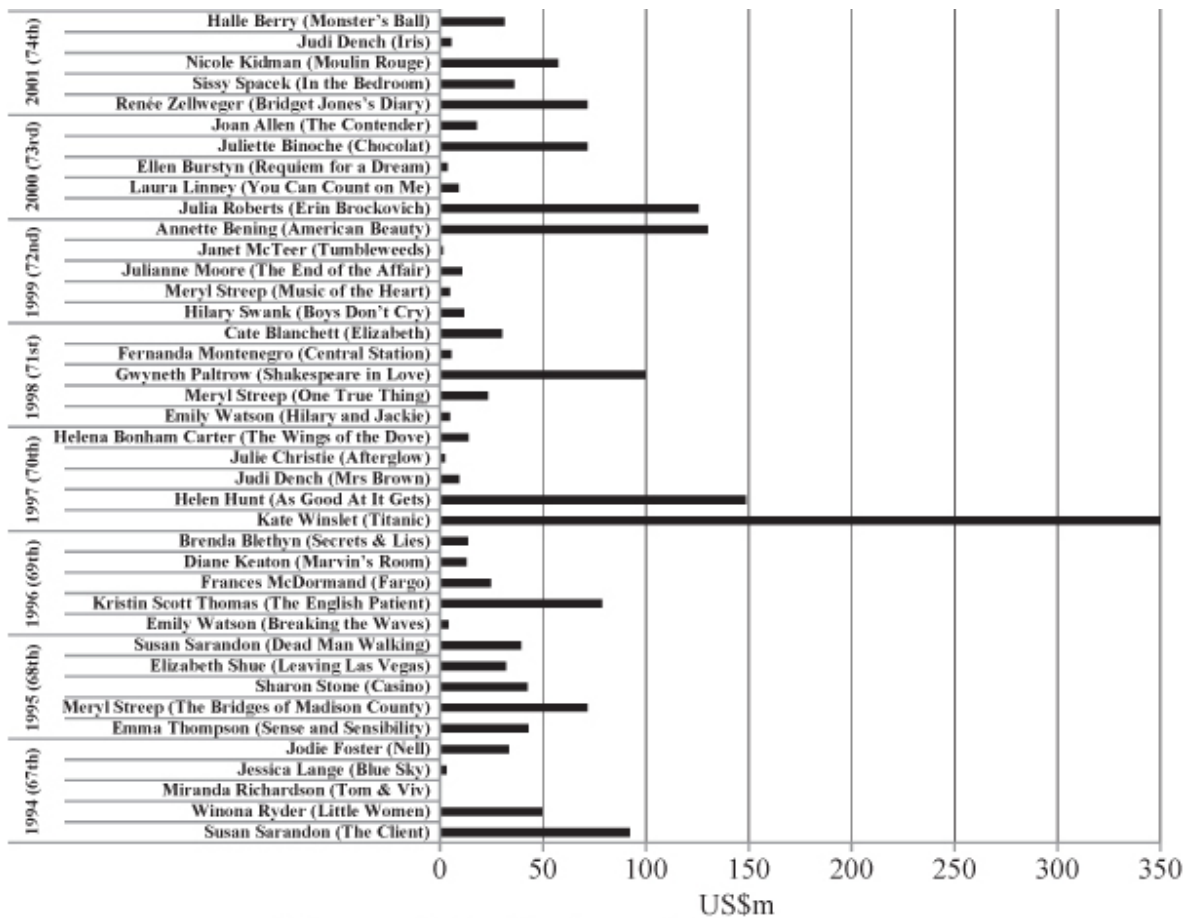


Figure 8.3 Best Actress nominees and winners: gross box office, 1994–2009.

Sources: compiled using data from www.boxofficemojo.com and www.the-numbers.com.

2002 (75th) 2003 (76th) 2004 (77th) 2005 (78th) 2006 (79th) 2007 (80th) 2008 (81st) 2009 (82nd)





Note: *Titanic* grossed just over \$600 million in North America.

Figure 8.4 Best Actor nominees and winners: box office (%) by award phase, 1994–2009.

Sources: compiled using data from www.boxofficemojo.com and www.the-numbers.com.

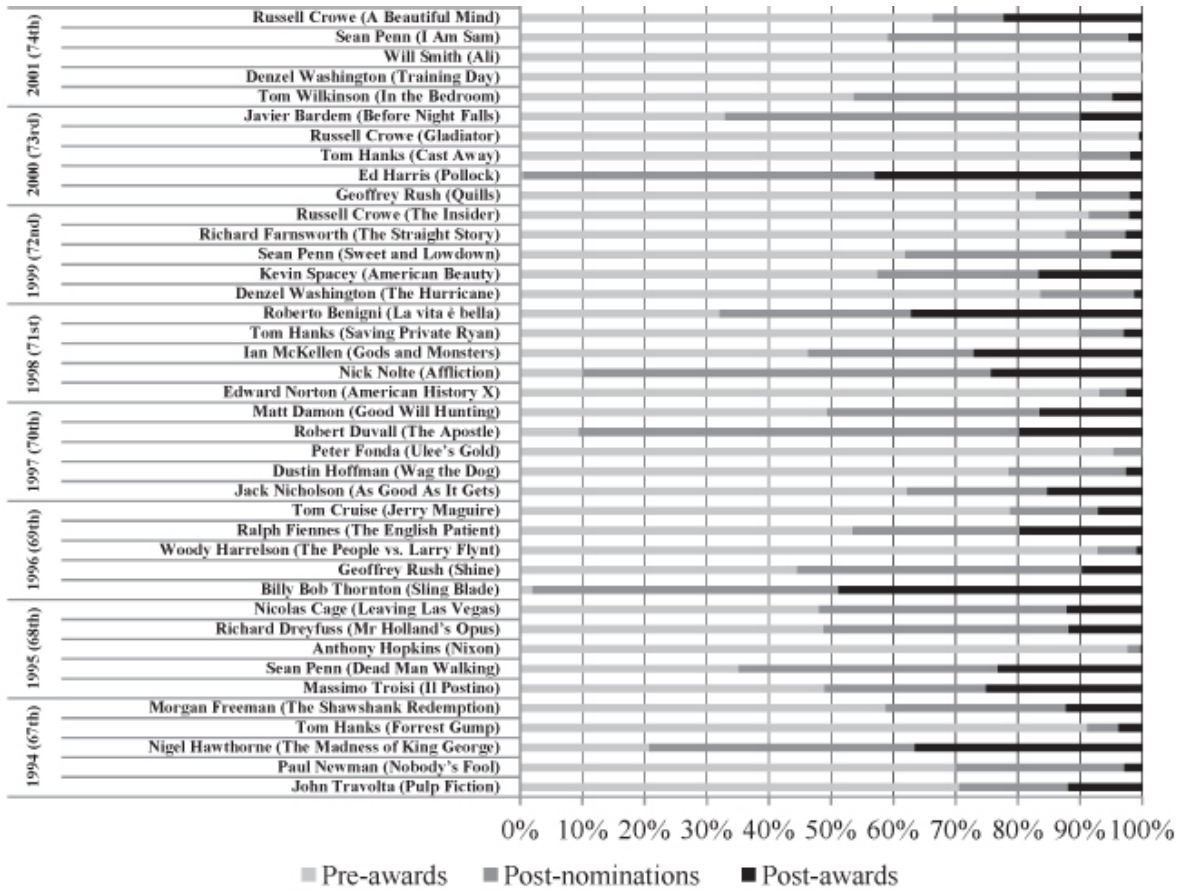
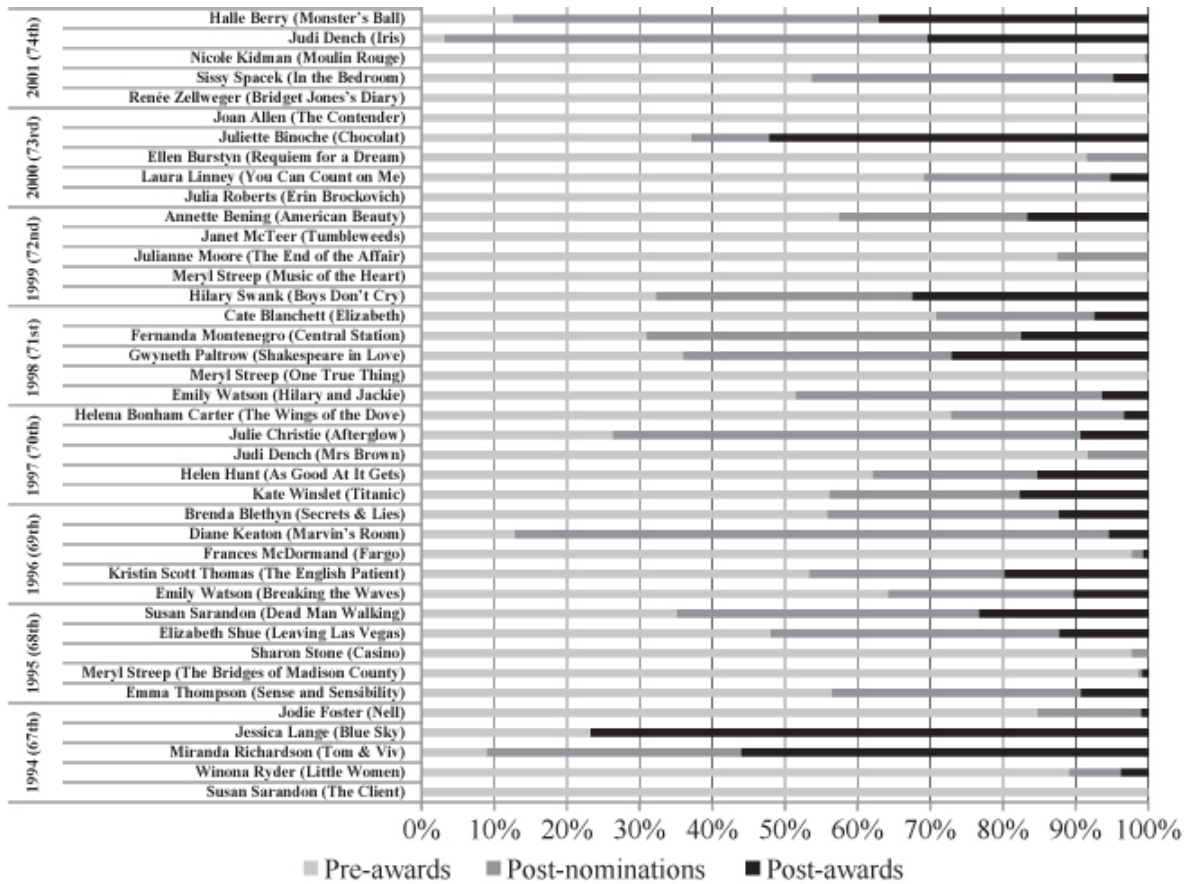


Figure 8.5 Best Actor nominees and winners: box office (%) by award phase, 1994–2009.

Sources: compiled using data from www.boxofficemojo.com and www.the-numbers.com.

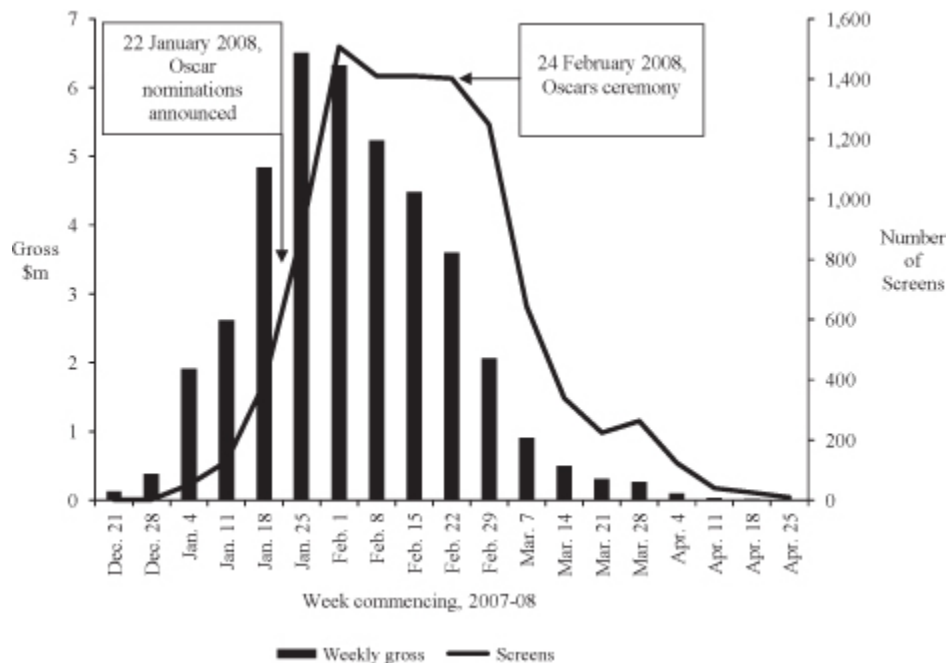


As these cases show, consecration of the award-winning performance can be surrounded by, and no doubt aided by, a wider base of prestige credentials which collect around a single film. Equally, the prestige package can benefit from the accumulated honors which a single performer's prior record of awards and nominations brings to a film. This was certainly the case of Daniel Day-Lewis's nomination and eventual award for his performance as oil businessman Daniel Plainview in *There Will Be Blood*. Day-Lewis won his first Oscar for *My Left Foot* and subsequently gained nominations in the Lead Actor category with *In the Name of the Father* and *Gangs of New York*. A co-production from Miramax and Paramount's Vantage specialty subsidiary, *There Will Be Blood* opened on 26 December 2007 in the US on just two screens. As a tale of greed, treachery and murder set in Southern California at the start of the twentieth century, which can be read as a critique of capitalism, the film was unlikely to tap into the mainstream popular market and was certainly not the kind of fare likely to receive much interest in the Christmas holiday period. The timing and scale of release was strategic, however. By opening in December, the film not

only fulfilled the eligibility criteria to be submitted for consideration in voting for the 80th Academy Awards at the start of the following year but was also beginning its run just as the nomination forms were issued. Over the next four weeks, the release expanded from two to 51 to 129 screens, following the pattern of platform releasing, a familiar strategy for specialized distribution whereby a film opens on a few screens in metropolitan centers with the aim of attracting positive critical notices to generate the “buzz” and “word of mouth” to support the widening of the release for an extended run over several months (Figure 8.6). Day-Lewis’s prestige stardom brought to the film his symbolic capital, which included not only his award and two nominations from the Academy but also four Golden Globe nominations. Before the Oscars he’d already collected numerous awards for his performance as Plainview, including a Golden Globe and awards from the New York Film Critics Circle, the National Society of Film Critics, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, and the Screen Actors Guild.

Figure 8.6 *There Will Be Blood*: box office and release pattern.

Source: compiled from data at www.boxofficemojo.com.



By the time the Oscar nominations were announced on the morning of Tuesday 22 January 2008, the film was playing on 389 screens in North America and had grossed nearly \$9 million. It picked up nominations in

eight categories (a standard only equaled that year by *No Country for Old Men*) including Best Picture and Achievement in Directing. In the lead actor category, Day-Lewis was pitched into competition against George Clooney for *Michael Clayton*, Johnny Depp in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, Tommy Lee Jones for *In the Valley of Elah* and Viggo Mortensen in *Eastern Promises*. In the same award year, *Spider-man 3*, *Shrek the Third*, *Transformers*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* had topped the annual box-office rankings in North America. *Transformers* and *Pirates* picked up three nominations in the technical categories but otherwise these films were entirely ignored in the Academy's "artistic" categories. Depp was an Oscar contender for his lead role in *Sweeney Todd*, which grossed nearly \$153 million across all territories, but while audiences worldwide were prepared to spend nearly \$1 billion on tickets to see him star in *Pirates*, the Academy was unprepared to smile on that performance.⁵

With multiple nominations behind it, *There Will Be Blood* continued its run. On the weekend following the nominations the scale of release expanded to 885 screens and a week later nearly doubled to 1,507, giving the film wide but still comparatively restricted coverage when measured against the 4,100-plus screens which all the hits of 2007 had opened on. Leading up to the awards ceremony on Sunday 24 February 2008, the scale of release continued at a similar level, and during the few weeks between the nominations and the ceremony, the film grossed nearly \$26 million. On the night, Day-Lewis picked up the statue and Robert Elswit won for the film's cinematography. By the following weekend, *There Will Be Blood* was still playing on 1,248 screens before the release was scaled back. Although the main excitement of the awards was over, following the ceremony the award winning afterglow was enough to carry the film through to 1 May 2008 when it concluded its run, grossing a further \$5 million for an overall North American total of just over \$40 million. Over the five months of the full run, 65 percent of the gross was therefore accumulated in the five weeks between the nomination announcement and the awards ceremony. To take advantage of the international hype created by the Oscars, in that same small window the film was also rolled out in all of Hollywood's major overseas markets except Japan. Compared to the hits of 2007, *There Will Be*

Blood was small fry: if the entire North American run had been completed that year, the \$40 million gross would have ranked the film just 61st amongst the year's film grosses. Based on an average 2007 ticket price in the US of \$6.88 (MPAA, 2008: 4), *There Will Be Blood* played to an estimated 5.8 million cinemagoers in North America, compared to the nearly 49 million who saw *Spider-man 3*.⁶ Whatever commercial success *There Will Be Blood* did enjoy was almost entirely built on the symbolic capital of Oscar nominations and awards. *There Will Be Blood* profited – both symbolically and commercially – from Day-Lewis's prestige stardom and cache of award credentials, while also reciprocally serving as a platform to further enhance and strengthen his status.

On the evening of 27 February 2011, Melissa Leo took to the stage at the Kodak Theatre to accept the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in *The Fighter* (2010). Closing her acceptance speech, she concluded on a rousing note with “thank you Academy because it's 'bout selling motion pictures and respecting the work.” Probably unintentionally, because such matters are to be disavowed on the big occasion, Leo drew attention to the dual aspect of the Oscars. As a meritorious system, the Oscars are all about “respecting the work” but at the same time the awards are a commercial system for “selling motion pictures.” According to the anti-economic logic of the field of cultural production, the symbolic and cultural authority of the Oscars can only be achieved by denying or disguising the commercial currents of the awards system, and yet the awards are fully integrated into the symbolic commerce of Hollywood. Paralleling the meritorious ritual of eligibility, submission, voting and ceremonial witnessing, there is the commercial ritual by which the whole buzz created around the nominations and awards becomes the engine for promoting and publicizing films in the market.

Prestige stardom is a product of the consecrating and legitimizing effects of the awards system. Unlike the commercial obviousness of the A-list performance, the acting of the prestige star appears as a gesture against the market, and the symbolic value of the Oscar-nominated performance is founded on a show of economic disinterest. Instead, through the eclectic roles s/he takes, through the refusal of a commercially valuable personified image, through the actorly craft of vocal and physical transformation, the

prestige star exemplifies the autonomous principle of artistic interest. Although in every way belonging to the symbolic commerce of Hollywood stardom, the prestige star appears to stand for art against commerce, a figure of artistic principle rejecting the market whose eminence is yet entirely dependent on the market.

Notes

1 By the 1990s, the phrase “specialised film” was widely used by distributors and exhibitors as something of a catch-all term for any type of film which departed from the features characterizing mainstream production. Although widely applied, the term remained rather nebulous, and possibly the only direct attempt to define what might be included under the heading came from the UK Film Council. While including archive classic re-releases alongside foreign-language films and documentaries, the UKFC’s definition also encompassed certain narrative characteristics.

Whereas mainstream films might be regarded as falling within popular and recognisable genres ... Specialised films are often less easy to define and thus more difficult to categorise in this way ... With mainstream films, the subject matter is generally immediately obvious, appealing and easy to communicate to audiences. Specialised films often deal with more complex and challenging subject matters that are less easy to communicate ... Within the mainstream ... the film’s narrative and cinematic style are generally quite straightforward, uncomplex, conventional and with high production values. Specialised films are often characterised as having a more innovative or unconventional storytelling style or aesthetic and may deviate from the straightforward narrative structure found in mainstream cinema. Overall, the film is more dependent on story, character development and a challenging subject matter than on high production values, effects and star names.

(UKFC, n.d.)

2 Apart from an interval in the late 1950s to early 1980s when events were often held in April.

3 According to the preferential system of balloting, each Academy member holds a single vote and casts that vote, depending on the category, against a choice of five individual achievements or films in order of preference. Achievements or films which receive the majority of first choice votes are thereby nominated and any which receive no votes are eliminated. Achievements or films gaining the fewest votes are also eliminated with the votes of those members who made those selections their first choice then becoming redistributed according to the second choice of those members, with the process repeated until five nominees are eventually selected (AMPAS, n.d.). While complicated and potentially confusing, the benefit of the system is that the vote of every Academy member is eventually cast against one of the nominees.

4 The difference between the total number of films and the total nominees arises because *Dead Man Walking*, *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), *The English Patient* (1996), *As Good As It Gets*, *American Beauty* (1999), *In the Bedroom* (2001), *Million Dollar Baby* and *Walk the Line* all picked up dual nominations in the Lead Actor and Actress categories.

5 Although in voting for the 76th Academy Awards he was nominated for his performance as Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003).

6 According to Box Office Mojo, in North America *There Will Be Blood* grossed \$40,222,514 and *Spider-man 3* \$336,530,303.