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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF STARDOM:
CELEBRITY, IMAGE AND THE MEDIA**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Media Studies and Communication).**

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ABSTRACT

The Development of Stardom: Celebrity, Image and the Media argues that the phenomenon of stardom has little to do with 'stars' and more to do with psychological processes of 'fans' that create 'artificial' relationships with them. The thesis examines how the fans' bond with a star evolves through a cycle. This can be traced through the foundational stages of 'early attachment', to a period in which the fan feels self actualised by establishing a 'healthy' relationship with the star, and on to a phase where the bond fades. Here, fans either reattach to a new star or react possessively, by trying to hold on to a star despite the continued erosion of their bond. The thesis suggests that the bond the fan forms with the star is false, and yet despite fans often being conscious of their 'fandom', true detachment from a reliance on stars is particularly difficult.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Development of Stardom: Celebrity, Image and the Media is an analysis of the relationship fans form with media stars. The central argument is that the meaning a fan 'takes' from a star is based on the fans' internal psychological processes and has little to do with the star. Based on a mental 'cycle' of the mind, the fan embarks on a relationship with a star that moves through a growth phase, maintenance phase and eventual demise.

Chapter Two: The Rise of Attachment discusses the evolution of a fans' attachment to the star. It discusses how the stars' power is drawn from fans' anxiety which results in fans giving the star elevated status. The process of relationship formation is discussed. The chapter progresses by describing how fans evolve their relationships by beginning to take charge, becoming self actualised by the 'dominance' they have over the star image, form an ability to regulate their own emotions through their relationship with the star, diversify their attachment away from a single 'star source' to many stars, and rank these stars in a hierarchy of perceived importance. The maintenance of the relationship is then analysed describing how the fan's contradictory psychological tendencies need to be 'triggered' by the star if the bond between the fan and the star is to be maintained. The star might be a figure of fear, or particularly aloof in order to achieve this 'hold' on the fans' mind. The 'scales' can then be balanced over a period of time before the stars' status ultimately erodes in the fans' mind.

Chapter Three: The Decline of Attachment describes the fans' reaction to an erosion in the bond with a star. This may involve the fan replacing the original star with a 'fresh stimulus'. Alternatively, the fan may remain fixed on the original star despite a slippage in the status of the bond. This often results in 'star-stuck' fans changing and altering a stars' meaning by actually 'becoming' the star. As the bond

slips further the fan seems to become increasingly possessive of the star, forming a type of 'ownership'. The fan might attempt to regain the lost bond by trying to communicate with the star, even physically searching for the star. The continued erosion of the bond can see the fan move into a panic state, and engage in an 'extreme' act as a way of 'merging' with the star. This seems to provide a short term release from the fans' desperate need. Desire for the star seems to return in time and there is a renewal in the need for attachment.

Chapter Four: Relinquishing Attachment proposes that the nature of the relationship between the fan and the star is false, that the star is merely a 'media artefact' and a product that fans consume. It argues that while fans, in many cases, are aware of the falsity of their attachment to stars, letting go of the illusion of stardom is particularly difficult.

Stars cited in the thesis range from movie stars - **Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Cary Grant, Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor, Clark Gable, Paul Newman, Rudolph Valentino**; Criminals - **Heidi Fleiss, Baby M, Joey Buttofuco, Amy Fisher and Tonya Harding**, and the **Menendez Brothers**; Music stars - **Elvis Presley, Madonna, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, Elton John**; Television stars - "**Spock,**" "**Archie Bunker,**" "**Murphy Brown,**" **Bart Simpson, Larry "JR" Hagman, John Cleese, Dan Rather**; Political Stars - **Ronald Reagan, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Margaret Thatcher**; Religious stars like **Pope John Paul II**; and Royal stars - **Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Diana and Princess Grace of Monaco**.

The types of fans referenced to are equally varied - Female romance novel readers, female television soap opera fans, male pubescent Star Trek fans, female pubescent **Beatles** and **Elvis Presley** fans, even upper class 'fans' of **Jacqui Onassis** and academic 'fans' of **James Joyce**.

The most influential sources include Lisa A Lewis' collection of essays on fan behaviour, *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, Celia Brayfield's *Glitter: The Truth About Fame* and Irving J. Rein, Philip Kotler and Martin Stoller's

analysis of the 'celebrity industry', *High Visibility*. The full list of sources is particularly varied. Media theorists - Richard Dyer (who has written extensively on Stardom); theorists with a particular focus on audience behaviour as an explanation for the phenomenon of stardom - Barbara Ehrenreich, Henry Jenkins, Ellen Saunders, John Fiske, Lawrence Grossberg, Stephen Hinerman, Cheryl Cline, John Ellis, Horton and Wohl, Paul Coates, Noel Carroll, Roland Barthes, Janice Radway, Yvonne Tasker, Edgar Morin, Christina Lane, Angela McRobbie, James Carey. E. Ann Kaplan. S. Baty Paige, Ien Ang, Christian Metz, and Richard Schickel. There is also a reference to theorists with a more 'mainstream' focus on the media - Andrew Fletcher, Tania Modleski, John Belton, William Goldman, Celia Brayfield, and Douglas Rushkoff.

University research and case studies also provide insightful observations about the phenomenon of stardom from researchers at Manchester University, Bristol Polytechnic, University of Chicago, and Florida State University. Newspapers like the *Guardian*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post* provided 'colourful' examples along with journals like the *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Journal of Film and Television*, *Screen*, *Sight and Sound*, and the *Chronicle of Cinema*; Consumer magazines like *Time*, *Advertising Age*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone*, *Media Week*, *Psychology Today*, *American Journal of Sociology* provided supporting material. First hand quotes from stars like **Pete Townsend**, **Malcolm McLaren**, **Marlene Dietrich**, **John Lennon**, **Ava Gardener**, and **Clark Gable** provide further insight.

CHAPTER TWO

RISE OF ATTACHMENT

Introduction

The Rolling Stones are ‘thrashing it out’ at Wembley Park Stadium to thousands of screaming girl fans. “... They press up against the stage,” says Saunders, “the young ones ... their faces bathed in delight or clenched in crumpled ecstatic agony.” Many attempt to reach out and touch the stars. “They lean over the edge of the platform,” she says, “clutching gifts and beads or notes or the groups latest album. And some reach out, squirm on their bellies, trying to get up over the edge of the stage, maybe-to-touch-one-of-them ... just once.” The desire for contact with the stars now becomes addictive. ““Did you see them,” says Saunders in the words of the love-struck fans, “did you see them, oh, Cathy, they’re so beautiful! Oh wow, the drummer, Cathy, the bass player! Let’s go in back to the stage door, Cathy, maybe we can meet them, talk to them, something, anything! Cathy, come on!””¹

Elvis Presley’s manager Colonel Tom Parker manufactured this type of hysteria in young female fans to build the status of the star in their eyes, according to his biographer Albert Goldman. Before a concert, as many as a dozen ‘trivial’, ‘tedious’ acts preceded ‘the arrival’ of the star, ranging from acrobats, comics, gospel singers, even a little girl playing a xylophone. Depriving the fans of Elvis made them want him all the more. As Goldman says, the audience, “driven half mad” by sheer frustration then began chanting rhythmically, “We want Elvis, we want Elvis.” Only when the fans’ reached an absolutely convulsive state, would Elvis finally be unleashed on the crowd. Goldman explains the fans’ reaction to the belated entrance

¹ Saunders, Ellen quoted in Ehrenreich, Barbara., Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs. “Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun,” in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 80.

of the elusive star. "Five thousand shrill female voices came in on cue," as the "screeching reaches the intensity of a jet engine ... When Elvis comes striding out on stage with his "butchy walk ... the screams suddenly escalate. They switch to hyper-space. Now, you may as well be stone deaf for all the music you'll hear."¹

When the **Beatles** arrived in the United States, this type of female-oriented, hysteric star-worship reached seismic proportions. On touch down, 10,000 'star struck' girls greeted them at Kennedy Airport while hundreds more, in Ehrenreich's words "laid siege to the Plaza Hotel, keeping the stars virtual prisoners."² The appropriate reaction to contact with the Beatles, explains Ehrenreich, was to sob uncontrollably while screaming, "'I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die,' or more optimistically, the name of a favourite Beatle, until the onset of either unconsciousness or laryngitis." She describes how, "Girls peed in their pants, fainted, or simply collapsed from the emotional strain."³ From these analogies it appears that stars, throughout the twentieth century, have had a profound affect on the mental state of the many fans who 'worship' them.

Anxiety

So, why do stars create such powerful nervous reactions in fans? Where does the stars' energy come from? **The Beatles'** power is drawn from fans' "sexual yearnings that would normally be repressed," according to Ehrenreich.⁴ The entire sixties rock scene was built on stars drawing their power from emotionally needy young females according to Herman. "Love-toting Pop or Rock musicians were truly seductive to teenage girls in the early sixties," he says, because of the "backcloth of fumbled experiences with untutored and ungainly boyfriends ... adolescent sexual

¹ Goldman, Albert quoted in Ehrenreich, Barbara et. al. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." 1992, 98.

² *ibid.*, 86.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*, 117.

electricity charged the whole atmosphere of Rock n' Roll concerts.”¹ Today, **Madonna** is another rock star that draws her power from the emotional needs of the crowd that “stands behind her,” according to Coates, while “never admitting dependence.”²

For this reason, marginalised groups like women, children³, lower socio-economic groups⁴, blacks, gays, handicapped⁵, and the elderly⁶ often appear to be the heaviest ‘users’ of stars. As Jenkins identifies, stars are “particularly attractive to groups marginalised or subordinated.”⁷ Fiske similarly associates stardom with the “cultural tastes of the subordinated formations of people,”⁸ while Horton and Wohl argue stardom is characterised by the “socially isolated, socially inept, the timid and rejected.”⁹ Arguably, isolatory urban environments have created this desperate reliance on stars among the general populous. As Brayfield argues, “Stars have become ... acutely desirable in a society in which individuals have a pervading sense of powerlessness,” reflected by the statistic that one fifth of citizens in London live alone, or in the US, that less than half the electorate bother to vote. Brayfield says, “People whose communities are stable, who live within large extended families do not crave attention with the desperation of an isolated city-dweller.”¹⁰

Ironically, not just fans are driven to attach themselves to stars by an inner sense of ‘lack’. The stars themselves seem to be angst ridden. As British actress **Tracy Ullman** says, “actresses don’t like themselves ... I do the characters I do

¹ Herman, Gary quoted in Cline, Cheryl, “Essays From Bitch,” in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 81-82.

² Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 134.

³ Lewis, Lisa A. “Fan Stories on Film,” in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 157-158.

⁴ Fiske, John “The Cultural Economy of Fandom,” in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 30.

⁵ Jenkins, Henry “Filking and the Science Fiction Fan Community,” in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 213.

⁶ Horton and Wohl quoted in Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 17.

⁷ Jenkins, Henry “Filking and the Science Fiction Fan Community.” 1992, 213.

⁸ Fiske, John. “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 30.

⁹ Horton and Wohl quoted in Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 17.

¹⁰ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 15-16.

because ... I don't like myself."¹ "I want to be loved and accepted," says **John Lennon**. "That's why I'm on stage, like a performing flea. It's because I would like to belong."² Troubled childhoods are often the foundation of a stars quest for fame. As British singer **David Bowie** says, "I was under a doctor's care during much of my youth because I was sickly and because I was accident-prone. I broke a hand and then after it healed, I broke a thumb on the same hand. And this was while I was planning to be an artist." He describes how he then ran over himself with an automobile. "I was cranking the car with it in gear and it ran against me, breaking both my legs," he says. "That time I very nearly lost my masculinity entirely and to this day have a large scar on the inner side of my leg."³

The foundations' of a stars' personal insecurities often derive from the nature of their upbringing. Many stars were fatherless as children. **Greta Garbo**, **Marlene Dietrich**, and **Andy Warhol**, for instance, all lost their fathers in childhood,⁴ in fact, over half the poets in the *Oxford Book of English Verse* lost their fathers when they were children.⁵ A number of stars were motherless. **Paul McCartney**, for instance, lost his mother when he was thirteen, while **Cary Grant's** mother was hospitalised with mental problems. Other stars had no parents at all. **John Lennon**, for instance, was rejected by both parents and raised by an aunt, while **Charlie Chaplin** was raised in an orphanage.⁶ 'Instability' during childhood is also a characteristic of many stars. As Brayfield identifies, **Elizabeth Taylor**, **Judy Garland** and **Maria Callas** were performing children with "gypsy upbringings."⁷

Contradictory to popular expectations, many stars failed within the educational system as youngsters. As a *University of Chicago* study uncovers, many stars had "learning difficulties or other handicaps as children," like "musicians not

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 39.

² *ibid.*, 35.

³ *ibid.*, 40.

⁴ *ibid.*, 38.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 40.

⁷ *ibid.*

having perfect pitch.”¹ It reports many high achievers were not even identified as gifted as children² with a stars’ talent not often peaking until 10 years after starting on their quest for fame.³

As a result of this foundation of personal anxiety, stars often seem to develop a phenomenal drive to ‘succeed at all costs’. As a *Manchester University* study identifies, high-achievers often have an “unrelenting drive”⁴ and “ambition.”⁵ **Norman Mailer** reinforces this with his comment, “I need attention ... I’ve courted the media the way other men court danger.”⁶ **Malcolm McLaren** similarly describes his sense of ‘anxiety-created’ drive, saying the “teacher gave prizes at the end of each school day and I never bloody won any, and I was totally pissed off. One day I decided that the only thing that was important was being first out of the classroom and I would scramble over all the chairs and desks to get out - like a wild animal.”⁷ It is this anxiety fuelled ‘drive’ which may manifest itself in a sense of total self belief in stars. As Brayfield argues, “Many [stars] develop supra-ordinate belief systems ... **Elvis Presley**, the only child and playground outcast who was later to believe in himself as a Messiah, is a good example.”⁸

Elevation

As a result of their anxiety, fans often ‘elevate’ stars to positions of ‘life-givers’ or ‘providers’. As US tennis player, **John McEnroe**, once said to the crowd, “One of me is worth forty-thousand of you,”⁹ while Playwright

¹ A study of 120 stars in sport, arts and science made by educational researcher Benjamin Bloom and a team from the University of Chicago quoted in Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 30-31.

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Cooper, Cary L. and Peter Hingley, Director of Applied Social Studies at Bristol Polytechnic quoted in Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 29.

⁵ *ibid.*, 40.

⁶ *ibid.*, 202.

⁷ *ibid.*, 38-39.

⁸ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth about Fame*. 1985, 35.

⁹ *ibid.*, 23.

Heathcote Williams comments, “.001 per cent of the population are getting creme brulee every day and the rest of us are being ignored.”¹ Dahlberg recognised the superiority of stars over ‘helpless’ fans while researching British newspaper articles about the famous. He says personalities appeared like “members of a privileged caste ... nearly all of the stories make a point of telling readers about the wealth and advantageous circumstances of the featured personalities.”² Dyer, likewise, observes how stars are often “set apart from ordinary men,” and treated as if they were endowed with “supernatural, superhuman, or at least superficially exceptional qualities,”³ while Belton observes, the “general public has always tended to see Hollywood as less of a factory town than a place where royalty resides.”⁴

In this ‘elevated’ position, the star may appear sexually desirable to fans. As **Graham Greene** recognises, fame is a “powerful aphrodisiac.”⁵ A survey of 367 **Michael Jackson** concert attendees also identifies how stars exhibit incredible “sex appeal” for fans.⁶ **Barry Manilow** illustrates this by telling the story of his grandmother saying: “Barry, you were always a clever boy and I knew you would be a success. You were always talented, and I knew you’d be famous. But how you got to be sexy and good-looking, I’ll never understand.”⁷

Many stars assume a type of religious status for fans. As **Clark Gable** says, “[fans] love to put us on a pedestal and worship us.”⁸ Brayfield observed this process in two young female fans at an **Elton John** concert. She says, both were “holding up double-spread pages from the souvenir brochures which by chance were designed like a diptych ... With the image turned towards the idol ... the girls chanted the songs and waved the pictures from side to side ... unknowingly copying the gestures of crowds around statues of the Madonna and saints carried through the street in Catholic

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth about Fame*. 1985, 25.

² Dahlgren, Peter and Colin Sparks. *Journalism and Popular Culture*. 1992, 78.

³ Dyer, Richard. “Charisma,” in Gledhill, Christine (Ed.) *Stardom: The Industry of Desire*. 1991, 57.

⁴ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 83.

⁵ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 45.

⁶ Stever, Gayle S. “Gender by Type - Interaction Effects in Mass Media Subcultures.” *Psychological Reports*. Vol. 68. (3, pt.1) June 1991, 859-866.

⁷ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 48.

⁸ Braudy, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown*. 1986, 9.

cities.”¹ Base argues, stars are the “mythology of the 20th century ... the gods we worship ... This isn’t helped by the ‘god’s themselves’ stating over and over to an adoring press, only too anxious to fuel their myth that somehow they woke up one day to find themselves there.”²

What is the emotional state the fan experiences while being ‘fed’ by the star? The ‘Number One Fan’ in music videos like **Mick Jagger’s** *Just Another Night*, **Bruce Springsteen’s** *Dancing in the Dark*, and **Dave Edmund’s** *High School Nights* typifies the emotion, angst-ridden fans experience when ‘connected’ with the star. “She’s the girl,” says Cline, “who’s picked out of the mass of common humanity by the god-like rock star and given the privilege of ‘dancing’ with him ... She’s full of awe and admiration and gratitude, she swoons, she breathes funny.”³ As Coates argues, rock stars “posit ... this ideal world ... [a world] in which no one is limited by background ... [where] whites meet blacks on the grounds of R&B ... the working class accedes to riches and fame ... and white trash becomes a goddess,” in the form of **Madonna**.⁴ **Mickey Mouse** created this ‘idealised’ state in cinema goes as early as the 1920’s. As Walt Disney observes, Mickey Mouse was “made up of parts of people, of that deathless, ageless, absolutely primitive remnant of something in every world-wracked human being which makes us play with children’s toys and laugh without self-consciousness at silly things, and sing in the bathtub and dream.”⁵

As Dyer identifies, movie stars typically provide fans with this “escapism, wish-fulfilment, and a state of utopia,”⁶ creating “something better [for fans] to escape into,” something “we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don’t provide. Alternatives, hopes, wishes - these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realised.”⁷

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 52.

² Base, Ron. *Starring Roles*. 1994, xiv.

³ Cline, Cheryl. “Essays From Bitch.” 1992, 73.

⁴ Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 141.

⁵ Brockway, Robert W. “The Masks of Mickey Mouse: Symbol of a Generation.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1989, 29.

⁶ Dyer, Richard. “A Star is Born and the Constuction of Authenticity,” in Gledhill, Christine. (Ed.) *Stardom: The Industry of Desire*. 1994, 92.

⁷ *ibid.*

Grossberg also supports this view, calling stars potentially the site of “optimism, invigoration and passion ... which are necessary conditions for any struggle to change the conditions of one’s life.”¹

Stardom seems to function as an ‘outlet’ for these fans. Radway identifies how romance novels function this way for female readers. She says the lives of characters in romantic fiction provide many women with a “compensatory fiction ... the act of reading ... fulfils certain basic psychological needs for women,”² being a denial of the demands that women recognise as an integral part of their role as nurturing wives and mothers.³ This ‘outlet’ can become a highly addictive emotional state for the fan. As Scottish patriot Andrew Fletcher comments, “Give me the making of the songs of a nation ... I care not who makes its laws.”⁴

Formation

Fan’s relationships with stars, according to Rein, are built following the “same psychological process that governs a fans’ adoption of friends and any other intimates.”⁵ As Modleski observes, soap opera fans often form friendships with stars, treating the leading characters as intimates, “as extensions of [their] world.”⁶ **Elvis Presley** is a star commonly befriended by fans. Hinerman studied this in Bess Carpenter, a Presley fan who was ‘visited’ by the star when pregnant in hospital. Carpenter describes how “doctors and nurses were all around me in these white gowns, looking at me.” Then, “Right there among them, Elvis Presley appeared. He smiled and winked at me. He said, ‘Relax, Bess, it’s O.K. I’ll be here with you’.” She describes how the others in the room had surgical masks on “but

¹ Grossberg, Lawrence. “The Affective Sensibility of Fandom,” in Lewis, Lisa. A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 65.

² Mayne, Judith. *Cinema and Spectatorship*. 1993, 82-83.

³ Radway, Janice quoted in Boyd-Barrett, Oliver and Chris Newbold. *Approaches to Media: A Reader*. 1995, 547.

⁴ Fletcher, Andrew quoted in Turow, Joseph. *Media Industries: The Production of News and Entertainment*. 1984, 5.

⁵ Rein, Irving J., Philip Kotler, and Martin R. Stoller. *High Visibility*. 1987, 309.

⁶ Modleski, Tania quoted in Rose, Ava and James Friedman. “Television Sports as Mas(s)culine Cult of Distraction.” *Screen*. 1994, 28.

Elvis didn't ... It was his voice, too. I'm certain of it. When you hear Elvis Presley's voice speaking to you, there can't be any doubt whose voice it is ... He was so sweet. He stood there the whole time." Then, when the baby came, it was Elvis who told her it is a boy. Carpenter explains how "for an Elvis Presley fan, there can't be a bigger thrill than hearing Elvis himself telling you, you have a new baby." Then the "commotion" started. Doctors and nurses began running about, "checking the baby and sewing me up and I sort of lost Elvis in the crowd. I didn't see him anymore after that." But "I feel like he came through for me when I was feeling low."¹

As the relationship evolves, fans may begin to 'see themselves' in the stars they are identifying with. As **Clark Gable** says, stars "all have a contract with the public - in us they see themselves."² **The Velvet Underground and Nico** recognised this in 1965, singing "I'll be your mirror," a decade before the Lacanian take-over of film theory.³ The way fans 'relate' to stars can be observed in young male adolescents' relationship with *Star Trek's Spock*. As Greenberg points out, Spock "struggles to control his emotions ... has difficulty managing relationships with members of the opposite sex and his parents and has an ongoing search for identity. This mirrors the experience of puberty."⁴ Through their relationships, fans begin to almost 'live through' the star. As Brayfield argues, we "measure our achievements against [stars], orientate our ambitions towards their examples, envy their achievements and [...] their rewards."⁵ **Norman Mailer** recognises this, saying, to "most of the voters, the **President** is ... the leading actor of a vast soap opera about America's role in the world."⁶

As a result of prolonged exposure to the star, a fully fledged relationship can develop between the fan and the star. Horton and Wohl call this a "para-social

¹ Hinerman, Stephen. "Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis," in Lewis, Lisa A. (Ed.) *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. 1992, 128.

² Brady, Leo. *The Frenzy of Renown*. 1986, 9.

³ Taubin, Amy. "My Time is Not Your Time." *Sight and Sound*. Vol. 4. No.6. June 1994, 22.

⁴ Greenberg, Harvey R. "Desiring Images: Sex and Sexuality." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Vol.12. No.2. 1984, 52-65.

⁵ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 12.

⁶ *ibid.*, 210.

interaction” between fans and stars, one that, on the surface, “imitates normal relationships.”¹ Over time, this interaction can become so advanced that fans become ‘sexually involved’ with the star. As Hinerman argues, it causes “few eyebrows to be raised if one ‘dreams’ of a sexual encounter with **Paul Newman**.”² “These types of star fantasies are now a matter of cultural course, from childhood on.”³ Stromberg similarly recognises how, “Many fans fantasise about marrying or having sex with a mediator”⁴ while Coates observes, it “is ... hardly surprising that the film deity is always a love god or goddess ... when the lights go down, the stage is set for love.”⁵

Control

By ‘understanding’ the star, fans seem to ‘take charge’ of their relationships. This knowledge might allow fans to centralise aspects of the stars personality into a fixed meaning. As **Freddie Mercury** says, “I created a monster. I’m handicapped because people think I’m really like that. I virtually have to fight my stage persona because otherwise it often works against me.”⁶ **John Cleese** and psychologist Robyn Skynner found this while collaborating on the book, *Families and How to Survive Them*. Cleese says “Robyn Skynner was very intrigued by what he felt was the need of people to see me as Basil Fawlty ... aggressive, angry Basil type behaviour.”⁷ Dallas star **Larry Hagman** also recognises the way fans control meanings of stars, saying “People I meet really want me to be JR, so it’s hard to disappoint them,”⁸ while movie star, **Ava Gardner** says, “I became a victim of my image. Because I was promoted as a sort of siren, and played all those sexy broads, people make the mistake of thinking I was like that off screen. They couldn’t have been more wrong. There was nothing sophisticated about me. Although no one

¹ Horton and Wohl quoted in Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 16.

² Hinerman, Stephen. “Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis.” 1992, 117.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Stromberg, Peter. “Elvis Alive? The Ideology of American Consumerism.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1990, 17.

⁵ Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 135.

⁶ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 125.

⁷ *ibid.*, 116.

⁸ *ibid.*, 106.

believes me, I have always been a country girl and I still have a country girl's values."¹

Brayfield refers to the merging of stars and the roles they play.² "We did not see **Richard Burton** as ageing," she says, "which he undoubtedly was, but as a drunk, which a hellraiser should be. If **Mick Jagger** is caught in a grimace he must be swearing, not yawning, because pop stars must be profane, not bored."³ **John Wayne** is a similar case in point. As Brayfield argues, "what audiences see is not the fictional character he plays but Wayne as the character."⁴ Belton explains how **Charles Chaplin** similarly became identified with the **Tramp**, **Sean Connery** and **Roger Moore** with **James Bond**, **William Shatner** with his screen personality **Capt. James Kirk**, **Sylvester Stallone** with **Rocky Balboa** and **John Rambo**.⁵ As King says "... audiences fasten on to one aspect of the actor, they hold on to a piece of the personality for dear life ... and they decide what they want you to be. They think you are playing yourself."⁶

Fans might form an ability to even 'alter' stars to make them conform to their own desires. As Brayfield suggests, "Behaviour judged to be out of character for a famous person is ignored."⁷ Brecht argues, "We are happy to overlook inaccuracies if we get something out of the spiritual purifications."⁸ Hinerman supports this view, describing how the fans' knowledge is not so much concerned with "the truth" as it is with "the appropriate."⁹ At the end of the day, "Arguments over truth and fiction do not concern us," says Brayfield.¹⁰

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 102.

² *ibid.*, 106.

³ *ibid.*, 67.

⁴ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 92.

⁵ *ibid.*, 88.

⁶ King, Barry. "Stardom as Occupation," in Kerr, Paul (Ed.) *The Hollywood Film Industry*. 1986, 159.

⁷ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 114.

⁸ Brecht quoted in Carroll, Noel. *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory*. 1988, 92.

⁹ Berger and Luckmann quoted in Carey, James W. *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*. 1988, 149.

¹⁰ Hinerman, Stephen. "Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis." 1992, 129.

Fans' deliberate 'bypassing' of truth to suit their own emotional needs can be witnessed by looking at the story of the 'birthplace of **Elvis Presley**'. As Goldman points out, the house which draws more than a million visitors a year is totally different to when Elvis Presley was born. He says the "local ladies who are the keepers of this shrine, transformed it into the cute little dolls' house which it should have been according to the Myth," then effected the "typical substitution of fantasy for history" that is the essence of Elvis Presley's story. "They painted the bare boards gleaming white ... papered the rough wooden walls with primrose-patterned wallpaper ... hung dimity curtains at the windows ... filled the cramped interior with a clutter of objects which the Presley's never had the money to purchase ... a sewing machine, a baby's high chair, solid pieces of furniture and electric appliances such as a fan and a radio ... hung a swing on the tiny front porch and landscaped the grounds."¹ **Marilyn Monroe** was also a victim of fans reinvention of the star-image. Mailer recognises that much of her story was made up of 'factoids', "facts which have no existence before appearing in a magazine or newspaper."² As Brayfield points out, "Tiny scraps of how-it-ought-to-be are stuck to how-it-is by fans, until the outline of how-it-is is totally obscured."³

Actualised

Fans can experience a sense of personal autonomy when they establish a long term relationship with the star. **Cagney & Lacey** fans often experience this sense of autonomy and uniqueness through their identification with the programmes' two leading characters. D'Acci examines a school girl fan who said her relationship with **Cagney & Lacey** made her realise that she could perform as well as boys at school, while an adult woman attributed her decision to risk starting her own business directly to the self confidence she generated from watching the television

¹ Goldman, Albert quoted in Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 113.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 113-114.

³ *ibid.*

show.¹ Young female **Madonna** fans, according to Fiske, often learn to control the meaning of their own sexuality, and 'walk more assertively through the streets' because of their attachment with the star.² Angela McRobbie identified how fans become 'self actualised' through their attachment with stars in a series of interviews with teenage girls. She concluded that girls' passion for a film like *Flashdance* was related to the creation of feelings of "physical autonomy."³

In the 'self actualised' position, fans seem to form an ability to 'take charge' of the star. Young female rock fans often assume this control. As Cline points out, a particularly popular fantasy is, "He's a wild, bad boy, but I'll bring him to his knees by God, he'll beg for it, he'll be such a quivering mass of desire he won't be able to see straight."⁴ Soap opera fans can also sit in the 'control seat' in their relationship with stars. As Modleski observes, soap fans often assume the position of an "ideal mother, a person who possesses a greater wisdom than all her children," a person whose "sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family."⁵

Adult male fans also take on this controlling role, psychologically commanding stereotypically beautiful female stars. **Marilyn Monroe**, according to Dyer, was the ideal 'playmate' fans could command. Her image was "nourished" by the acceptance of her pictures which "skyrocketed her to an almost allegoric position as the symbolic object of illicit male sexual desire."⁶ Brayfield further explores how male fans control female stars, identifying how **Bo Derek**, **Raquel Welch**, **Pia Zadora**, **Natassia Kinski**, **Sophia Loren** and **Brigitte Bardot** all function as "objects of male desire controlled or even created by men that looked at them."⁷

¹ D'Acci, J. quoted in Fiske, John. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." 1992, 35.

² *ibid.*

³ Mayne, Judith. *Cinema and Spectatorship*. 1993, 81.

⁴ Cline, Cheryl. "Essays From Bitch." 1992, 75.

⁵ Modleski, Tania quoted in Rose, Ava and James Friedman. "Television Sport as Mas(s)culine Cult of Distraction." 1994, 25.

⁶ Harris, Thomas. "The Building of Popular Images: Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe," in Gledhill, Christine. (Ed.) *Stardom: The Industry of Desire*. 1991, 42.

⁷ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Stardom*. 1985, 55.

Regulation

Fans often exhibit an ability to shape their reading of the star to suit their desired mood state. In X-Rated movies, for instance, viewers often become active “co-directors” of films shaping them to conform to their personal desires.¹ Uses and gratifications theories demonstrate how television programming can similarly be shaped to the desires of the fan. In Zillmann’s Mood Management Theory, television can be used to produce a “desired affective state.” Individuals will select programmes to achieve a certain level of arousal. The theory suggests bored people select stimulating programs, while stressed people try to reduce their level of arousal by viewing more calming programs.²

Over time, fans seem to become particularly skilled at shaping a star’s meaning to suit their own emotional requirements. As Fiske suggests, the fan learns to play the text as a “musician plays a score.”³ Barthes identifies how the viewer “interprets it, activates it,” and “gives it a living presence.”⁴ He says any one reader reading any one text at different times may exercise different pleasures,⁵ while Moffit identifies how these mood changes can eventually be instantaneous within the particular onlooker.⁶

Through this process of mood balancing, the fan can create a whole range of pleasures. Romance novel readers offer an illustration. As Fiske suggests, mother and daughters reading romance novels create multiple, positive, and subversive meanings.⁷ The plethora of different pleasures a fan can take from a particular reading

¹ A model for studying audience response to pornographic films is developed using psychoanalytic and aesthetic theories. Rollin, Roger B. “Triple X: Erotic Movies and their Audiences.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Vol. 10. No. 1. 1982. 2:21.

² Schmitz, B. and Lewandrowski, U. in *Medienpsychologie: Zeitschrift für Individual- und Massenkommunikation* Vol. 5. No. 1. March 1993, 64-84.

³ Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 230.

⁴ Barthes, Roland quoted in Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 230.

⁵ *ibid.*, 234.

⁶ Adolescent and adult readers are examined, mothers and daughters, who read romance novels. It starts with British cultural studies’ articulation model of meaning and its authorization of meaning and audience in Moffit. M.A. “Leisure Fiction and the Audience: Meaning and Communication Strategies.” *Women’s Studies in Communication*. Vol. 16. No. 2. Fall, 1993, 27-61.

⁷ Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 233.

of a star text, is summarised by Grossberg: “[The] satisfaction of doing what others would have you do ... enjoyment of doing what you want ... fun of breaking the rules ... fulfilment ... of desires ... release of catharthis ... comfort of escaping from negative situations ... reinforcement of identifying with a character ... [to the] thrill of sharing another’s emotional life.”¹

Because of the vastly differing emotional needs of fans, one particular star might be ‘used’ in a number of different ways by fans. As Hinerman argues, “One **Elvis** may be used by gay men, another by heterosexual men; one Elvis may be used by lower-class Southern women, [and] another by bohemian New York artists.”² *All in the Family*, the controversial hit starring **Archie Bunker** is a particular example of how different fans read the same ‘star text’ in a different way. As Carey illustrates, Liberals and intellectuals could cite it as an example of the absurdities of prejudice. Red-necks could agree with Archie’s attitudes and enjoyed him as their kind of guy. “The loud-mouthed yet vulnerable Archie Bunker was a man for all audiences.”³

Ethnographic research has begun to focus more and more on understanding these different modes of reception, and how they are characteristic of specific social and cultural communities. This diverse range of readings is obvious in the selective attention of the child viewer,⁴ the housewife⁵ who divides her attention between television programming and other household activities, or the “focused attention” of the husband,⁶ who often makes a broadcast the focus of undivided concentration.⁷

¹ Grossberg, Lawrence. “The Affective Sensibility of Fandom.” 1992, 55.

² Hinerman, Stephen. “Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis.” 1992, 129.

³ Carey, James W. *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*. 1988, 156.

⁴ Jenkins, Henry. “Going Bonkers! Children, Play and Pee Wee Herman.” *Camera Obscura* 1989, 18; Palmer, Patricia. *The Lively Audience: Children Around the TV Set*. 1986.

⁵ Brunsdon, Charlotte “Crossroads: Notes on Soap Opera.” *Screen*. 1981, 32-7; Morley, David. *Family Television*. 1986.

⁶ Morley, David. *Family Television*. 1986.

⁷ Amsley, Cassandra. “How to Watch Star Trek.” *Cultural Studies*. Fall 1989, 323-39.

Diversification

When sufficiently 'safe' in a relationship with the star, fans might begin to diversify their attachment away from a single star source to a wide variety of stars. The two-way split is an example. Here, the star divides (in the fans' mind) into two characters, good:evil, hero:villain.¹ **Hitler** and **Superman**² for instance, perhaps both 'worked together' to form a circuit in the minds of the American public according to Lang. Hitler was the evil side, and Superman represented all that was good. **Bart Simpson** as an anti-hero is a similar example,³ providing the flip-side to all that society deems a 'hero is not'. The split may be three-ways, broken up into what Klapp identifies as Heroes, villains, and fools.⁴ **Donald Duck** as the fall guy for **Mickey Mouse** is such an example of the fool providing a breakaway from the star as the all encompassing star figure.⁵

Fans might diversify their attachments even further to fit Klapp's definition of "hundreds of universal person-types based on the make-up of the human mind."⁶ Rock fans commonly have a 'network' of stars they identify with. As Tweerksy says, "Playgirl peddles a narrow assortment of universally handsome, clean-cut, well-formed male model type[s] ... Nothing as weird as **Ozzy Osbourne** ... sinister as **Billy Idol** ... fat as **Meatloaf** ... misshapen as **Ian Dury** ... or ... old as **Mick Jagger**."⁷ She says it is "not unusual to find pictures of **Shaun Cassidy**, **Roger Daltrey**, **Meatloaf**, **Pat Simmons**, and **Mikhail Baryshnikov** on the same wall."⁸

It is quite normal for fans to diversify attachments to a vast number of characters. As Toner argues, "All Americans are expected to have a knowledge of a

¹ Levi-Strauss, Claude quoted in Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 132.

² Lang, Veffrey S., and Patrick Trimble "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow? An Examination of the American Monomyth and the Comic Book Superhero." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1988, 161.

³ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 109.

⁴ Klapp, Orrin E. in Price, Stuart. *Media Studies*. 1994, 41.

⁵ Brockway, Robert W. "The Masks of Mickey Mouse: Symbol of a Generation." 1989, 29.

⁶ Klapp, Orrin E in Price, Stuart. *Media Studies*. 1994, 41.

⁷ Tweerksy quoted in Cline, Cheryl "Essays From Bitch." 1992, 75-76.

⁸ *ibid.*

vast number of these ‘people’ we have read about or have even seen on television ... I have not met Dan Rather, yet he is a member of my repertoire of fictional characters,” he says.¹ These figures can derive from any social sector. As Toner suggests, **Dan Rather** blurs formerly separate realms, like journalism and entertainment, while Zelizer argues that stars are merely “idols of mediated production.”²

Ranking

With an ability to diversify their attachments across a spread of stars, fans also seem to form an ability to rank their ‘groups of stars’ in a hierarchy. *The Gay 100*, for instance, is a ranking of the most influential gay men and lesbians, past and present.³ Kiste’s study of comic fans also shows how acutely fans can discriminate between various artists and storyliners, and how “important it is to be able to rank them in a hierarchy,” particularly to ‘canonise’ some and exclude others.⁴ In this hierarchy, some stars might be grouped at the top of the ladder. **Mickey Mouse** is an example. As Belton points out, “today, Mickey’s image is better known than that of any world leader, rock star, sports figure, or any other national or international celebrity.”⁵ *People* magazine defined **Brad Pitt** as at the top of a star pyramid, naming him the sexiest man alive, for a brief period.⁶ Generational stars similarly arrange themselves at the top of the star ladder. Rein describes how **Clara Bow, Huey Long, Buddy Holly, Brigitte Bardot, Jim Brown, Peter Max**, and the **Reverend Ike** achieved hierarchical status, ‘defining their eras’.⁷

¹ Toner, Stephen J. “Television and the American Imagination: Notions of Romance.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1988, 10.

² Zelizer, Barbie “What’s Rather Public About Dan Rather: Television Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. Vol.17. No.2. 1989, 74-80.

³ Russell, Paul. *The Gay 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Gay Men and Lesbians, Past and Present*. 1994, 386.

⁴ Fiske, John “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 35-26.

⁵ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 91.

⁶ Huhn, Mary “Of Men and Letterman.” *Mediaweek*. Vol. 5 No. 5. January 30, 1995, 16.

⁷ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 106.

Stars seem to relate to one another based on their perceived position in this hierarchy of psychological importance. As British singer **Pete Townsend** says “**Eric Clapton** is in there, **Phil Collins** is in there, **Paul McCartney**, **Keith Richards** is in there and everybody inter-communicates in accordance to one another’s position.”¹ Positions on this ladder can constantly change. As Richard Stolley, the founding editor of *People Weekly* magazine says, “Young is better than old. Television better than music. Music is better than films. Films are better than sport. Anything is better than politics.”² All the while, stars try to maintain an upward movement on the ladder. As **Jermaine Jackson** says, “The Jacksons are like a tree,” “Michael’s branch of it may seem a little longer than the rest, but we all cultivate the tree so it keeps growing.”³

Maintenance

The fan seems to maintain an emotional balance if a relationship with the star satisfies two emotional poles. **Rudolph Valentino**, for instance, may have succeeded as a cult figure for a large female audience because he tapped into fans’ desire for both ‘loss’ and ‘presence’. As Hansen argues, Valentino was “an oscillation between passivity and activity, sadism and masochism, which offered the female audience a fantasy of ‘erotic reciprocity’.”⁴ **Elizabeth Taylor** is similarly dualistic according to Belton, presenting herself to fans as both a glamour queen and as the ‘troubled figure’ of a former alcoholic, plagued by recurrent weight problems and a succession of tragic or unhappy marriages.⁵ According to Carey, **Muhammed Ali** also gained notoriety through this type of contradictory image when, while a champion of the most combative of professional sports, he declared his conscientious objection to the Vietnam war.⁶

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 129.

² *ibid.*, 195.

³ *ibid.*, 144.

⁴ Hansen, Miriam quoted in Gledhill, Christine. *Stardom: The Industry of Desire*. 1991, xvii.

⁵ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 89.

⁶ Carey, James W. *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*. 1988, 150.

Pope John Paul II has also succeeded in creating a two-sided image according to Rein, “galvinising liberal Catholicism with his human, down-to-earth appeal, while simultaneously alienating it with dogmatic, traditional pronouncements and rulings aimed at the mainstream constituency.”¹ **Michael Jackson** constantly plays with contradictory meanings. As Rushkoff suggests, he is both dangerously sexual and impotently Disneyesque, deliberately using “both of these sets of imagery ... to balance each other.”² Morphing himself from a panther into a street hoodlum and smashing up a car for the music video *Black or White* is such an example. As Rushkoff argues, the “sight of gentle Michael Jackson in such a rage was too much ... Jackson had that section of the video edited out the day after its MTV premiere ... Many wondered whether that had been his intention all along. Deletion served as a useful media propellant.”³

Madonna also presents a contradictory image to fans. As Rushkoff points out, she is deliberately both “whore and virgin in *Like a Virgin*. She is both show biz star and girl grateful for a humble bouquet in *Material Girl*.” While the “Reagan/Bush era promoted prayer and closeted sexuality, out came a brasher Madonna, pushing *Like a Prayer*, *Papa Don’t Preach*, and the famously censored *Justify My Love* video. As AIDS recloseted sexuality, Madonna reached deep into gay subcultures for *Vogue*, a transvestite style, and the bisexual partnerings in *Sex*.”⁴ As Rushkoff argues, “when the pope deems birth control un-Catholic, she makes sexy videos with Catholic imagery. When abortion and teen pregnancy are in the headlines, she performs songs about a teenage girl Keeping my Baby.”⁵

Ellis describes how stars create these contradictory meanings (and subvert conventional meanings) to hold the interest of fans. This can be observed in photographs of early movie stars. The stars appear in the “most mundane postures,” he says, “feeding babies or just relaxing in old clothes, then in the most exotic

¹ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 307.

² Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 138-139.

³ *ibid.*, 137.

⁴ *ibid.*, 142.

⁵ *ibid.*, 145.

[postures], performing stunts at a lavish party or meeting **The King of England.**"¹ According to Ellis, early movie stars appeared in the "same social universe" as fans, while at the same time being extraordinary, and "separate from the world of the potential film viewer."² Dyer also examines this paradoxical nature of stars, describing them as "both ordinary and glamorous, like us and unlike us, a persona and commodity, real and mythical, public and intimate,"³ while Morin argues that stars condense the extreme opposites of the mind, embodying contradictory desires in "condensed" form, being a "unique synthesis" of "physical beauty and mask," simultaneously a "unique personality and also an automaton."⁴

Provocative

To maintain a 'hold' on the mind of fans, stars often evoke a 'fear' response. **Mickey Mouse** is an example of this. As Schechter argues, Mickey is a trickster, "evok[ing] the shadow ... the seamy side of the personal unconscious ... akin to the Freudian id ... impulses ... which appear morally aesthetically, or intellectually inadmissible, and are repressed on account of their incompatibility ... When the shadow appears in dreams it represents that which is bestial."⁵ Whitmont similarly defines Mickey Mouse as evoking "... a collective shadow ... correspond[ing] to the most primitive, archaic level of the human mind ... the level which links us with our animal past - often symbolised by a beast or some sort of anthromorphized animal."⁶

One of the most powerful star-images to evoke this emotion of 'fear' in fans is the fierce female controller, the cultural image of a powerful woman who is seen as a tyrant or betrayer. Brayfield describes how she is either a "sexually voracious ruler, like **Catherine the Great** or **Elizabeth I**, or a treacherous bitch like **Cleopatra** or

¹ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 94-95.

² *ibid.*, 97.

³ Dyer, Richard quoted in *The Movie: The Illustrated History of the Cinema*. 1981.

⁴ Morin, Edgar quoted in Mayne, Judith. *Cinema and Spectatorship*. 1993, 126.

⁵ Brockway, Robert W. "The Masks of Mickey Mouse: Symbol of a Generation." 1989, 32.

⁶ *ibid.*

Helen of Troy." She says "all the mythology of the female star follows this reasoning. She is temperamental, domineering, overpaid and much married. **Joan Collins, Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Elizabeth Taylor and Barbra Streisand** all fit the myth."¹

Criminals achieve phenomenal celebrity status in the US, possibly because of their ability to tap into fans' desire for 'fear'. **Heidi Fleiss, Baby M, Joey Buttafuoco, Mike Tyson, the "LA Four", John Gotti, "Dr. Death,"**² and **Susan Smith** (the mother who confessed to killing her two toddler sons) are examples.³ Criminals provide the raw material for fictionalised entertainment based tele-movies - particular examples include **Jim and Tammy Bakker, Amy Fisher, Tonya Harding, the Menendez Brothers.**⁴

"It's a heated, hyper-kinetic, absurd time," comments film director Oliver Stone. "We have a woman cutting off a man's penis and she's celebrated for it."⁵ He says, "Crime has been perceived as the number one issue in America ... **Nixon** - law and order; **Reagan** - let's build up our muscles; Bush - Willie Horton, the black parole ... What's the American vision now? **Orwell's** 1984 come true: don't go out because there's a black mugger outside, don't have sex because you'll get Aids."⁶

Fans' seem to absolutely crave 'fear' as part of their relationship with the star. As Williams argues, the audience of **Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho**, "despite its mix of class and gender ... bonded around certain terrifying secrets ... [creating] ... a camaraderie, a pleasure of the group that was both new to motion pictures and destabilising to the conventional gender roles of audiences."⁷ **Margaret Thatcher** excites many people because of her 'strict' image. As Brayfield argues, "London is full of men who blushing confess that they find the British Prime Minister attractive

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 55.

² Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 52.

³ Mann, Judy. "Summer Seething." *Washington Post*. July 21, 1995, E, 3:4.

⁴ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 25.

⁵ Smith, Gavin. "Oliver Stone: Why Do I Have To Provoke?" *Sight and Sound*. 1994, 10.

⁶ *ibid.*, 12.

⁷ Williams, Linda "Learning to Scream." *Sight and Sound*. 1994, 16.

... the more severe her tones and sweeping her decisions, the more attractive they find her ... **Mrs Thatcher** fits closely enough into the mould of Miss Strict to gain glamour from an erotic stereotype.”¹ The top selling covers of *People* magazine featured **Karen Carpenter**, **Princess Grace of Monaco** and **John Lennon** immediately after their deaths.² As King says, “Most adoring fans are eager to read about the private misfortunes of their idols ... when a popular star dies, there seems to be something satisfyingly inevitable about his death. Whatever grief the news inspires.”³

It follows that controversy is a way stars can create ‘interest’ in the minds of fans. **Sinead O’Connor**, ripping up a picture of the **Pope** on *Saturday Night Live* is an example cited by Rushkoff.⁴ **Salman Rushdie’s** agent, concerned about initially poor sales, used controversy to propel the stars image, sending the Ayatollah a copy of the book.⁵ As Rushkoff points out, **Ice-T’s** *Cop-Killer* lyrics became famous because of the controversy they generated and the efforts to extinguish them.⁶

Distance

The ability of the star to hold fans’ minds in balance may also stem from the image appearing ‘removed’ and ‘out of reach’ to the fan. The child star provides an example of this. As Freud says, the “charm of the child lies to a great extent in his narcissism, his self-content and inaccessibility.”⁷ Graham Greene observed this in **Shirley Temple**, saying, “Infancy with her is a disguise, her appeal is more secret and more adult.”⁸ Criminals also maintain their position with fans by being removed and aloof. As Taubin recognises, “... the great criminals and humorists, as they are represented in literature compel our interest by the narcissistic

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth about Fame*. 1985, 57.

² *ibid.*, 81.

³ King, Barry. “Stardom as an Occupation.” 1986, 156.

⁴ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 145.

⁵ *ibid.*, 42.

⁶ *ibid.*, 37.

⁷ Taubin, Amy. “My Time is Not Your Time.” 1994, 23.

⁸ Mathews, Tom Dewe. “Clocking the Censor.” *Sight and Sound*. June 1994, 34.

consistency with which they manage to keep away from their ego anything that would diminish it.”¹ Brayfield notices this in the movie stars of the late silent era, “screen idols, whom fans worship from a distance.” She says “**Greta Garbo’s** reclusiveness, was memorialised in the utterance for which she has become most famous, “I want to be alone.” Brayfield notes how Garbo symbolised the “quasi-religious divinity that early movie stars possessed in the eyes of the movie-going public.”²

Androgynous stars appear to maintain fans’ interest by being ‘difficult to interpret’. **Jodie Foster** has mastered this, according to Christina Lane, presenting herself as a “perennial open text.” Lane believes Foster has exploited “significant binary oppositions of masculine/feminine, public/private, in her roles and projects, as well as interviews and images away from her work. She says “Jodi Foster has succeeded in forging her own compellingly ambiguous identity.”³ A fan magazine profile of **Marlene Dietrich** in the 1930’s illustrates how the early movie star also achieved a ‘hold on the mind of fans’ through her androgynous image. As Mayne points out, the article focused on her off-screen role as a “devoted hausfrau and mother,” suggesting that the androgynous sexual figure projected on screen required some form of counterpoint.⁴

Rock stars are constantly using androgyny to achieve this ‘removed’ image. Ehrenreich examines the “faintly androgynous affect of the **Beatles**,” the “frank bisexuality of performers like **Alice Cooper** and **David Bowie** ... [and the] outrageous antimasculinity of eighties stars like **Boy George** and **Michael Jackson**.” She describes how, by the eighties, female singers like **Grace Jones** and **Annie Lennox** were denying gender too.”⁵

¹ Taubin, Amy. “My Time is Not Your Time.” 1994, 23.

² Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 100.

³ Lane, Christina quoted in Greenberg, Harvey Roy. “Desiring Images: Sex and Sexuality.” 1995, 146.

⁴ Mayne, Judith. *Cinema and Spectatorship*. 1993, 65.

⁵ Ehrenreich, Barbara et. al. “Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun.” 1992, 104.

Repetition

Stars repeat successful formulas over and over as a way of holding their place in fans' minds. **The Rolling Stones** are an example of stars continuously peddling the same 'routine' as a way of maintaining their star status. The Stones' lead singer, Mick Jagger, typifies this with comments like "I mostly eat baked beans when it comes down to it really," always juxtaposed, according to Ellis, with details of "musicianship and statistical information ('Number one for six weeks', 'two gold discs', 'three-quarters of a million pounds')." ¹ Rein identifies the multiple swan songs of **The Who**, **The Rolling Stones** and **Frank Sinatra** as evidence successful stars merely repeat the same formula over and over. ² Likewise, movie stars use formulas as a way of holding the attention of fans. As Belton argues, "**Stallone** and **Schwartzneger** play a narrow range of character types. **Conan** and the **Terminator** or **Rocky** and **Rambo**." ³ Belton identifies how a star like **Humphrey Bogart** consistently plays hard-boiled, anti-authoritarian, romantically vulnerable tough guys. He illustrates how **Marilyn Monroe** is regularly cast as a gold digger or dumb blond, **Woody Allen**, a neurotic, New York Jewish intellectual who "quotes Kierkegaard, hates Los Angeles, and fantasises about love and death," while **Julia Roberts** always plays "street-smart, lower-class working girls." ⁴

This suggests personalities are consistently playing the same 'type' over and over gain. As Brayfield argues, "Public personalities are identical ... No other group is as homogenised as public personalities." ⁵ Consistency may therefore be a pre-requisite for creating lasting fame in the minds' of fans. *The Home Testing Institute* of Manhasset, Long Island reinforces this. It produces the annual Q Ratings, which rank more than 1000 individuals from a sample poll of 54,000 Americans, and argues that fame is characterised by a stars' "stability and consistency." ⁶

¹ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 107.

² Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 325.

³ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 108.

⁴ *ibid.*, 88.

⁵ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 116.

⁶ *ibid.*, 10.

Because of this need to repeat a formula over and over, a star may only have to exhibit a small degree of colour. As **Andy Warhol** says, "Tell the story of your life, and somewhere along the way take off your pants."¹ However, there still needs to be a touch of 'inconsistency' in an image to create texture. Tolson explains how a star's public biography sustained through 'subsidiary circulation' achieves this, serving less to reveal the 'real person', than in fact to authenticate the star persona.² Rein points to **Franklin Delano Roosevelt's** cigarette holder, **Dan Rather's** sweater, **Cyndi Lauper's** orange hair and jangling jewellery as an example of the "unique identity characteristics" stars employ to create this impression of texture.³ According to Ellis, the effect of reality might be as simple as a star personality providing distinctive dialogue, like **Marlon Brando** mumbling.⁴ These media texts then become markers that indicate lack of control, lack of premeditation and privacy. According to Dyer, these return us to notions of truth "behind or beneath the surface."⁵ It may not matter however what 'exclusive' material is used to create this texture. As Dyer argues, "There is no need for what-is-uncovered to corroborate the particular character traits incarnated at the most obvious and familiar level of the star's image."⁶

Thus, it is suggested that fans are attracted to stars in accordance with certain psychological factors which provide the basis for the satisfaction of affective and cognitive needs in the fan. Stars, on the other hand may collaborate in this process through constructing and reinforcing particular elements in the process over which they have some control. As a result, the relationship between fans and stars becomes a symbiotic one, which has the effect of preserving the cycle.

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 112.

² Tolson, Andrew. *Mediations: Text and Discourse in Media Studies*. 1996, 128.

³ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 220-221.

⁴ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 83.

⁵ Dyer, Richard "Charisma." 1991, 137.

⁶ *ibid.*, 136.



Elvis Presley ... Depriving fans of Elvis made them want him all the more. See Page 4.



The Beatles ...the appropriate reaction to contact with the Beatles was to sob uncontrollably while screaming "I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die." See Page 5.



Marilyn Monroe ... An ideal "playmate" fans could command. See Page 16.



James Dean ... Fan-rumours had him entering a Buddhist monastery. See Page 38.

CHAPTER THREE

DECLINE OF ATTACHMENT

Erosion

After a period of time, the bond between the star and the fan eventually seems to slip in status. As the title of a *Newsweek* article suggests, “The Berlin Wall Fell. **Will Madonna Be Next?**”¹ The way stars’ status fades in the mind of the fan can be identified by examining the *Wigley Publishing Poll*, a survey of movie theatre owners over 50 years. Between 1981 and 1976 only **Clint Eastwood** and **Burt Reynolds** remained in the Top 10 stars in Hollywood. Between 1981 and 1971, Eastwood was the only star still ‘alive’ from the 1981 list. Between 1976 and 1971, only Eastwood and Hoffman still made the Top 10 list.² As Dyer says, there are “so many layers ... so many, slippages,” in the world of stardom.³

The implication is that ‘old stars’ are constantly being replaced with ‘new stars’. Like the period when Hollywood bought up foreign stars such as the Polish-German **Pola Negri**, the Hungarians **Vilma Banky** and **Bela Lugosi**, and the Mexicans **Dolores del Rip and Lupe** - all ‘eclipsed’, according to Robinson, by the arrival of the Swedish **Greta Garbo**.⁴

So, why does a fan’s attachment to a particular star erode? Stepping out of ‘the mould’ can create an erosion. This was the fate of **Shirley Temple**. As Mathews highlights, once Temple lost her girlish innocence, the image of the Depression-era

¹ Ingrassia, Michele. “The Berlin Wall Fell: Will Madonna Be Next.” *Newsweek*. Vol. 122. October 4, 1993, 91.

² Goldman, William. *Adventures in the Screen Trade: A Personal View of Hollywood Screenwriting*. 1984, 7-8.

³ Dyer, Richard quoted in Cohen, Steven and Ina Rae Hark (Eds.) *Screening the Male*. 1993, 233.

⁴ Robinson, David. “Super Stars.” *The Chronicle of Cinema* 1994, 37.

princess fractured. "The real Shirley married and valiantly struggled with a withering acting career before involving herself in conservative international politics," he says. Today she is no longer recognisable as real person or even a Hollywood actress, but instead has become "a marketable commodity, a shining but hollow symbol of an otherwise dark bygone age."¹ **Ingrid Bergman** also 'stepped out of her mould'. As Harris observes, a number of people felt that the birth of an illegitimate child to Bergman so undermined her saintly 'Joan of Arc' image, built up by the studio, that they reacted with "bewilderment and rejection."²

Fatty Arbuckle suffered a similar fate for contradicting his image stereotype. The "much-beloved" silent comedian did this, according to Belton, when he was accused of raping a young actress at a wild party in 1921, an act going "completely against the grain of his image."³ This mirrors the experience of Paul Reubens, the creator of **Pee-Wee Herman**. In 1991 he was arrested for self-abuse in an adult movie theatre. *CBS* immediately pulled the repeat schedule on his show, his star was removed from the *Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame*, and his doll was taken off toy-store shelves.⁴ As Belton warns, the "public that makes stars can also break them, especially if stars violate the image the public holds of them."⁵

Stars might also slip in status in fans' minds by becoming 'too well known to fans'. **Bob Dylan** experienced this when he 'broke his silence' to promote his film **Renaldo and Clara**. As Shelton notes, "Suddenly you had the sphinx who was willing to talk, so long as he could sell the visiting rights. So he started to talk and break up his mystique. A guy who was never in the process of merchandising anything - suddenly he was hustling."⁶ **Bob Dylan**, according to Brayfield, sold papers in massive quantities before he "got in the habit of giving revelatory interviews."⁷ **Bette Midler's** manager also recognises that stars need to 'keep their

¹ Mathews, Tom Dewe. "Clocking the Censor." 1994, 34.

² Harris, Thomas. "The Building of Popular Images: Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe." 1991, 40.

³ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 94.

⁴ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 107-108.

⁵ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 94.

⁶ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 103.

⁷ *ibid.*, 94.

mystery'. "You lose the mystique when you get to know someone too well," he says. "If you see someone on the **Johnny Carson** show spouting all their lifelong secrets, you lose interest."¹ **Madonna** is a star who has suffered by becoming too well known by her fans. As Rushkoff argues, "America has begun to develop a cultural immunity to Madonna,"² while Coates argues that Madonna has changed images so much you can't trust her. She is "a lonely mediator ... the fitting icon of a confused, contradiction laden society."³

Perhaps the fan, in this state, has been removed from the 'wild uncertainty' that the early stages of the star relationship created. Fiske refers to the French phrase *Plaisir*, to describe this mundane pleasure.⁴ The fan now merely has a confirmation of a sense of self. As Fiske says, the pleasure experienced is primarily "confirming, particularly of one's sense of identity."⁵ "We have discovered culture," argues Carey, "which has its tragic side, or separation from what the Germans more elegantly call the *Umwelt*."⁶ Pleasure may now seem to merely take the form of acknowledgement. Jenson identifies this as "'Bravos' after concerts; crowd murmurs at polo matches' attendance of 'big-name' sessions at academic conferences."⁷ Most people in society seem to experience their pleasure in this form. As Barthes argues, today, in mass culture, there is an enormous consumption of "dramatis" and little *jouissance*.⁸ *Jouissance* translates from French into English as bliss, ecstasy, orgasm, a pleasure of the body, experienced through heightened sensualities,⁹ a pleasure relating directly to "human nature, rather than culture."¹⁰ In other words, few people experience pleasure in the form of a highly emotionally charged state, but instead as a more sober, intellectual type of pleasure.

¹ Lewis, Peter and Corinne Pearlman. *Media and Power: From Marconi to Murdoch*. 1986, 36.

² Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 145.

³ Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 149.

⁴ Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 228.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Carey, James W. *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*. 1988, 12.

⁷ Jenson, Joli "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 20.

⁸ Barthes, Roland quoted in Modleski, Tania. *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*. 1986, 157.

⁹ Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987, 228-229.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

Replacement

The fan may react to a decline in the status of a star by adopting a 'new star' which seemingly takes the 'opposite style' of the preceding image. Movie stars provide an illustration of how fans can attach to a new star - opposite in style to the original. As Robinson reports, **D.W. Griffith** popularised a style of Victorian innocence typified by **Lillian Gish**, **Mae Marsh** and **Blanche Sweet**, then "along came" dark and brooding **Theda Bara** who supplanted them with the "vamp" style of femme fatale. Similarly, towards the end of the 20s, **Clara Bow**, the "It" girl, ushered in an era of aggressive, liberated sexuality finding full expression in the 30's with **Jean Harlow** and **Barbara Stanwyck**, and parodied by **Mae West**.¹

While some stars might be 'sensational', others then arrived on the scene returning the audience to levels of normality. As Dyer points out, **Greta Garbo**, **Fred Astaire**, **Lillian Gish** and **Douglas Fairbanks Sr.** had shown that there were "other, more marvellous ways of being alive than the merely everyday."² Stars like **Doris Day**, **Rock Hudson**, **June Allyson** and **Gregory Peck** then "insisted that the everyday was best."³ Belton observes a similar phenomenon in stars of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Stars such as **Rock Hudson** and **Doris Day** combined clean good looks with sexual propriety in tongue-in-cheek sex comedies, which disappeared in the late 1960s giving way to action and adventure stars like **Sean Connery**, **Clint Eastwood**, **Harrison Ford**, **Sylvester Stallone**, and **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴

The establishment of **Elvis Presley** in the national psyche is an example of how a 'new' star can mark a switch in 'style' from an old star. As Goldman observes, "... Elvis was the flipside of [the] conventional male image ... His fish belly white complexion, so different from the 'healthy tan' of the beach boys ... his brooding

¹ Robinson, David. "Super Stars." 1994, 37.

² Dyer, Richard quoted in *The Movie: The Illustrated History of the Cinema*. 1981, 1101.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 95.

Latin eyes, heavily shaded with mascara .. the thick, twisted lips .. the long, greasy hair ... God! what a freak the boy must have looked to those little girls ... and what a turn-on!”¹ By the same token, the **Beatles** were the ‘flipside’ of the conventional definitions of masculinity when they arrived on the scene. As **Paul McCartney** observes: “There were men in America, all getting house-trained for adulthood with their indisputable principle of life: short hair equals men; long hair equals women. Well, we got rid of that small convention for them. And a few others, too.”² “The Beatles display a few mannerisms which almost seem a shade on the feminine side,” observes Ehrenreich, “such as the tossing of their long manes of hair. These are exactly the mannerisms which very young female fans (in the 10-to-14 age group) appear to go wildest over.”³ The Beatles illustrate the way ‘new stars’ can ‘tip the balance’ in terms of what constitutes a star image with popular appeal, once again reversing the popular notion of masculinity.

Productivity

The fan may choose to remain attached to a particular star, even when the bond has faded somewhat. As a result, the fan seems to move into a phase of anxious productivity. This might involve the fan almost ‘becoming’ the star and re-interpreting the meaning of the relationship. According to Fiske, *Star Trek* fans behave this way by writing full length novels, filling in the “syntagmatic gaps in the original narrative,”⁴ then circulating these novels amongst themselves through a distribution network.⁵ According to Jenson, fanzines function much the same way, publishing fans’ nonfiction essays, speculating on technical or sociological aspects of a “programme world,” creating fiction which “elaborates on the characters and

¹ Goldman, Albert quoted in Ehrenreich, Barbara et. al. “Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun.” 1992, 100-101.

² *ibid.*, 102.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Fiske, John “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 39.

⁵ *ibid.*

situations proposed by the primary text,” and pushing them into directions quite different from those conceived by the original textual producers.”¹

‘Fan’ writers, who work for mainstream magazines can similarly reinterpret the star through ‘invented stories’. Howlett points to James Dean as an example. He describes, how, in the two years following his death, 198 magazine articles appeared in America alone.² Invented stories about the star included, “Is Natalie Wood Betraying James Dean?” “Jimmy Dean Suicide Rumours,” “Did Jimmy Dean Leave a Son?” “Did Jimmy Dean Really Die?” “Jimmy Dean’s Hidden Heartbreak”; “Death Drive”; “I Almost Married Jimmy Dean”; “The Ghost Who Wrecked Pier Angeli’s Marriage”; “The Strange Love-making of Jimmy Dean”; “You Haven’t Heard Half About Jimmy Dean!”, “James Dean’s Black Madonna”; “Jimmy Dean: Why Parents Fear Him.”³

Fans also ‘produce’ the star through music production. *MTV*, in association with **Madonna**, provided a forum for this type of activity, running a competition for fans to produce their own videos for her song *True Blue*, then devoting 24 hours to playing a selection of the videos that poured in, almost swamping the studio.⁴ **Barry Manilow** fans engage in this productivity. Vermorel describes how Manilow fans took fragments from albums and then ‘dub-edit’ them into what they describe as a, “continuous Manigasm.” The following is an extract of a fan-produced re-interpretation: “... Come on! come on! come on! come on! ... One more time ... And here we go again ... You pulled me down and gave me ... Oh! oh! ah! beautiful! ... Gets hard, gets hard, hard, hard ... I want to do it ... Now, now, now, now ... Ohh, ohh ... More, more, more ... Ah! Ah!” The temperature now heats up. “... More! more! more! ... Ohhh, ohh ... Huh! huh! ... Uh! ... Oh, God! ... Uh! uh! uh! ... Ah! ah! ah! ah! ... Lonely boy, lonely boy ... Ah! ah! ... God! ... Come, come, come, come ... Ah! ah! ... !!!”⁵

¹ Jenkins, Henry “Filking and the Science Fiction Community.” 1992, 214.

² Howlett, John. *James Dean: A Biography*. 1975, 165.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Fiske, John “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 39.

⁵ Vermorel, Fred and Judy “A Glimpse of the Fan Factory.” 1992, 199-200.

In addition to producing their own texts, fans also re-interpret star-texts through 'fan talk'.¹ **James Dean** was the subject of much fan talk when he died. As Howlett reports, fan-rumours had James Dean entering a "Buddhist Monastery or Roman Catholic Church, defecting to Russia along with the suggestion that he would pay visits if girls left their photographs and addresses at a box number in a local newspaper."² **The Beatles** are a similar example of how fans 're-interpret' stars through their 'talk'. A female fan describes the way she and her friends would talk endlessly about the Beatles: "I especially liked talking about the Beatles with other girls," she says. "Someone would say, 'What do you think Paul had for breakfast?' 'Do you think he sleeps with a different girl every night?' Or, 'Is John really the leader?' 'Is George really more sensitive?' And like that for hours."³

The fan may go so far as assuming the physical characteristics of a star as a way of 're-interpreting' and 'producing' the star. *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* provides an illustration of this. As Boberman and Rosenbaum observe, fans dress like the characters, joining in favourite lines of dialogue, throwing rice during wedding scenes, shooting water pistols in thunderstorms, and adding in their own lines of dialogue. When the "straight-faced narrator" in the show describes the storm clouds as "heavy, black, and pendulous," the pause before his line is filled by the audience shouting "describe your testicles."⁴

Stars can function as actual role models for fans who partake in 'artificial social relations' with them. As Caughey points out, many "fans ... pattern their lives after fantasy celebrity figures."⁵ This can be witnessed in the 3,000 **Elvis Presley** impersonators in America.⁶ Snead identifies this in the teenagers who copy TV stars throughout the US, "imitating the looks of their favourite TV stars from the show

¹ Fiske, John "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." 1992, 38.

² Howlett, John. *James Dean: A Biography*. 1975, 165.

³ Ehrenreich, Barbara et. al. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." 1992, 87.

⁴ Boberman and Rosenbaum quoted in Fiske, John "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." 1992, 41-42.

⁵ Caughey, quoted in Jenson, Joli "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 11.

⁶ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 119.

Beverly Hills 90210.”¹ Fiske similarly examines star imitation in sports crowds wearing their teams colours or rock audiences dressing and behaving like the band to become part of the performance. This “minimises differences between the artist and the audience,” according to Fiske.² In the case of British soccer fans, many who are socially and economically disempowered males, Fiske believes they can, when wearing their teams colours and in their own community of fans, “exhibit empowered behaviour.”³

Possession

Fans can become highly possessive of the stars they have previously enjoyed healthy ‘relationships’ with. As Fiske points out, *Crossroads* fans, often began to feel that the leading character, **Meg**, belonged to them rather than to the producers.⁴ Fans often feel that they can “write better storylines than the scriptwriters and know the characters better.”⁵ Possession of knowledge about the star may be one way fans attempt to ‘own’ stars. Ellis discusses the phenomenon, describing the **Barry Manilow** fan who makes an effort to know intimately every recording of Barry’s songs or the Joyce scholar who knows intimately every volume of Joyce’s oeuvre.⁶ According to Ellis, ultimate mastery of the star is based on the ability of the fan to “see more than anyone or anything else.” He says in a fiction film, “vision is equated with access to truth, those who can see more of the truth.”⁷ We should remember however that this is only a cognitive power. As Ellis argues, this is “the power to understand events rather than to change them.”⁸

Acquisition of star-related property may be a way fans gain possession of stars. In the case of the **Beatles**, Ehrenreich observes how a fan got hold of hotel

¹ Snead, Elizabeth. “Teen Fans Tune to the 90210 Look.” *USA Today*. January 16, 1992, D, 1:5.

² Fiske, John. “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 40.

³ *ibid.*, 38.

⁴ *ibid.*, 40.

⁵ Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. 1987.

⁶ Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 16.

⁷ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 84.

⁸ *ibid.*, 81.

pillowcases that had purportedly been used by the Beatles, cut them into 160,000 tiny squares, mounted them on certificates, and sold them for a \$1 apiece to 'needy' fans.¹ Vermorel points to the way the British newspaper that reported **John Lennon's** death became a collectors item as an example. A classified advertisement read: "JOHN LENNON TRAGEDY. Liverpool death announcement issue 9.12.80 ... Only 200 available. Rare collector's item. 6 pounds each with DIY picture frame moulding (inc. post and packing). Send cheque or postal order to - Pop Memories, 10 St Marywell Street, Beaminster, Dorset."² Even the words of the song *Imagine*, in Lennon's handwriting, were sold for 6,600 pounds to a Tokyo department store.³

Jacqui Onassis also provides an example of how fans possess star property. *Time* magazine reports how a four day US showroom of auctioneer Sotheby's recently conducted a public sale of 5,914 of her personal items. Fake pearls valued between \$500 and \$700 sold to 'upper-class fans' for \$211,500. A Rocking Horse estimated at \$2000-\$3000 sold for \$85,000. Cushions estimated at \$50-\$100 were purchased for \$25,300. Golf clubs (JFK's set of MacGregor woods with a black and red monogrammed bag) estimated at \$700-\$900 sold for \$772,500, Galvanised flower holders estimated at \$150-250 sold for \$4,025' A silver cased tape measure with Jacqui's initials estimated at \$500-\$700 sold for \$48,875. Humidor estimated at \$2,000-\$2,500 sold for \$547,500, while Ashtrays estimated at \$400-\$600 were purchased for \$27,600.⁴ Bourdieu examines the way upper socio-economic groups, as opposed to more 'traditional fans' horde 'star-related' property. "Objects of an aficionado's high culture," he says, "include **Eliot (George or T.S.)** not **Elvis**, paintings not Posters, the *New York Review of Books* not the *National Enquirer*."⁵

Fans of any socio-economic position therefore appear to acquire property as a way of possessing a star they have previously only formed a mythic attachment with. As Carey says, "the simple subjectivization of all experience, turning reality into a

¹ Ehrenreich, Barbara et. al. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." 1992, 86.

² Vermorel, Fred and Judy. "A Glimpse of the Fan Factory." 1992, 194.

³ *ibid.*, 202.

⁴ Gray, Paul. "What Price Camelott?" *Time Magazine*. No.19. May 6. 1996. NZ 55-61.

⁵ Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 19.

form of private property, is the deepest American impulse.¹ MacKay also talks of the importance of star-related property for possessive fans. He says, "The love for relics is one which will never be eradicated as long as feeling and affection are denizens of the heart. It is love which is most easily excited in the best and kindest natures, and which few are callous enough to scoff at."²

Communication

As the star-fan bond continues to decline, the fan may attempt to interact with the star. Vermorel cites a letter sent by a fan to **David Bowie** as an example. "David, You are living in my heart and in me," it reads. "Your lovely hair your lovely head and you David words not enough anything's not enough to express to you the feeling I belong to you they are yours which I had like everything belongs to you. To talk to you without stop without stop to want you without stop to hear you God, I want to hear you God, I want my thinking to belong to you ... For all the way with love Yours Mollie."³ **Adam Ant** is sent scores of these types of letters by emotionally starved fans. "Pink, mauve and flower-printed [letters], with tender messages on the outside of some envelopes to save the idol the chore of opening the letter," were observed by Brayfield during research. "None of them were opened by anyone," she says. "The perfumed pile was stuffed into mail sacks and kept in the fan-club office for a few weeks until the staff had the heart to chuck it on a skip."⁴ Another letter written to **Ann Landers** by a female fan says she has "fallen head over heels in love with a local television star" and now can't sleep, finds other men to be 'childish,' and is bored by her modelling job.⁵

Criminals also receive these letters of adulation by love-struck fans. Brayfield notes how "**Claus von Bulow**, on trial for the murder of his wife, received sackfuls of

¹ Carey, James W. *Media, Myths and Narratives: Television and the Press*. 1988, 13.

² MacKay, Charles quoted in Vermorel, Fred and Judy. "A Glimpse of the Fan Factory." 1992, 202.

³ Vermorel, Fred and Judy. "A Glimpse of the Fan Factory." 1992, 205-206.

⁴ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 51.

⁵ Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 16-17.

fan mail and took incessant telephone calls in his hotel room from female admirers.”¹ The volumes of fan letters received by stars is truly incredible. In the late 1920’s, it was estimated that over 32,250,000 fan letters were received each year by movie stars in Hollywood.²

Gift-giving is also a common way fans try to fuse the gap between themselves and the star. As Brayfield recognises, every family occasion of the Royal British House brings “truckloads of presents” to Buckingham Palace, almost all from private individuals. She says the famous are likely to be given anything from “egg cups to legacies; they are even offered people, in the form of marriage proposals.”³ Brayfield cites flowers as a “universal symbol of love, and the paths of the famous are often ... literally strewn with roses, from the posies children offer to the **Princess of Wales** to the formal bouquets given to statesmen and dignitaries.” She describes how racing car drivers are weighed down with “flower-decked laurel wreaths,” while “singers, dancers and musicians are honoured with flowers at the end of each performance,” “cellophane-wrapped ... arrangements carried by the liveried attendants or loose blossoms rained down by fans from the upper levels of the auditorium.”⁴

Many other types of gifts arrive on the doorsteps of stars. Brayfield notes how, “Housewives send newscasters half a pair of split-crotch panties with their telephone number attached ... or audio tapes of themselves masturbating and gasping the star’s name ... [or] ... dying women leaving actors money in their wills.”⁵

Seeking

Emotionally ‘needy’ fans may physically seek out stars as a way of satisfying their hunger. A pilgrimage to **Jim Morrison’s** grave at the famous Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris is particularly popular with ‘starved’ fans,

¹ Brayfield, Celia in *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 54.

² Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 83.

³ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 22

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*, 52.

according to Mooney.¹ This 'follow instinct' can be witnessed in the 20,000 fans who gazed at Studio Two in Abbey Road Studios during an official Beatles tour. The studio's assistant manager Peter Vince talks of the fans' "**Pope Paul** style" reaction to their first sight of the Fab Four's hits factory. "They've been kissing the floor," he says. "We've even had Americans kneel down on the zebra crossing outside."²

Elvis Presley fans often 'mobilise' themselves in 'search' of the star. The 1987 celebration of Elvis in Memphis is an "astonishing exercise in festive and shricing activity," according to Combs. He describes the tours of his birthplace, a candle-light vigil at his grave, an Elvis memorial service and revival meeting, and Elvis Presley Memorial Karate Tournament. He asks, "is the worship or veneration of Elvis simply a new way of sanctification and canonisation, a popular method of making a new god?"³ In America, "they line up, row upon row, at his altar," says Hinerman, "dreaming their dreams, making their wishes ... For them there is no doubt. Elvis will always be alive."⁴ **James Dean** was 'followed' in this manner by thousands of fans' shortly after he died. Clubs like the *Dedicated Deans* drew a membership of 430,600, *Dean's Teens* - 392,450, *Lest We Forget* - 376,870 and the *James Dean Memorial Club* - 328,590 members. Fan club membership totalled 3,800,000 paying members. Today, according to Rein, fans in more than 1,200 active clubs worship soap opera stars, musicians, actors, dead stars, race car drivers, and many others."⁵

In the US, there seems to be no limit to the number of stars 'followed' by fans. As Combs says, with a visit to Gatlinburg, Tennessee's Christus Gardens, you can see "Diorama" of the life of **Christ**, "life-like wax figures complete with human hair and medically approved eyes," and "authentic costumes." At the History Museum

¹ Mooney, Carolyn and Christine Spolar. "The Groupies and the Grave." *Washington Post*. December 8, 1991. E, 1:3.

² Vermorel, Fred and Judy. "A Glimpse of the Fan Factory." 1992, 202.

³ Combs, James. "Celebrations: Rituals of Popular Veneration." *Journal of Popular Culture*. Spring 1989, 75-76.

⁴ Hinerman, Stephen. "Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis." 1992, 132.

⁵ Trinajstick, Blanche. Editor of *The Fan Club Directory*, quoted in Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 120.

there is a wax figure of **Lee Harvey Oswald** about to shoot **Kennedy**, assassination memorabilia such as Oswald's, **Bonnie & Clyde's** and **Jayne Mansfield's** death cars, along with the ambulance that took the dying Oswald to the hospital, and the stretcher he was on.¹

The disturbing trend is a growing belief by fans, according to Rein, that stars, living or dead, are "approachable."² Many audience members form this desire to see traditional story lines embedded in celebrities' real lives as well as their public, media-delivered "performance" lives.³ The problem is that fans and fanatics can now know the whereabouts of celebrities "just as intimately as their own families and neighbours."⁴ As Rein points out, 'Where Are They Now' type books like *The New York Celebrity Locator* for \$5, will tell fans that **Henry Kissinger** lives at 435 E.52nd Street.⁵ In a way, this response must be expected. As Horton and Wohl argue, with the "prolonged intimacy of para-social relations ... it is not surprising that many members of the audience become dissatisfied and attempt to establish actual contact."⁶

Panic

As the bond between the fan and the star continues to erode, fans might become 'obsessive' about their perceived knowledge of the star. Rein points to **A.J. Weberman**, stealing and analysing garbage from **Bob Dylan's** home, allegedly for the purpose of "compiling a concordance of every word from every song Dylan has written," as an example.⁷ Fiske similarly refers to literary scholars, who "try to uncover what Shakespeare really wrote in preference to what has been widely performed."⁸

¹ Combs, James. "Celebrations: Rituals in Popular Veneration." 1989, 75-76.

² Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 329.

³ *ibid.*, 26.

⁴ *ibid.*, 329.

⁵ *ibid.*, 62.

⁶ Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 16.

⁷ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 125.

⁸ Fiske, John. "The Cultural Economy of Fandom." 1992, 36.

The pop/showbiz column of the *Sun* newspaper receives countless letters from fans desperate to 'discover' more and more information out about 'their star'. In one of the letters, a 16-year-old boy wants **Paul McCartney's** address. He describes how he knows that McCartney has a house in Kent and "once caught a train towards that direction but ended up lost." In another letter, a housewife requests **Michael Jackson's** address "immediately" so she can "fly to the States, find him and ... be a friend to him." A mother writes that her son is so desperate at not being able to get a ticket for a **David Bowie** concert that "we have had him in hospital with his nerves," while a man complains that **Elton John** has not replied to his "seven letters" offering to be Elton's bodyguard. He says he has unsuccessfully attempted to visit Elton John's home in Old Windsor and now wishes to be **Rod Stewart's** bodyguard.¹

Brayfield points to some of the 'useless facts' fans might acquire in their attempt to 'hold on' to the star, like the revelation that "**Michael Jackson** takes baths in Perrier water," or that "**Margaret Thatcher** needs only four hours sleep a night."² Ellis describes such 'trivia' as "**Bette Davis's** recipes, **Audrey Hepburn's** affinity for Givenchy clothes, [and] **Errol Flynn's** big game hunting."³ Stars themselves recognise how fans form an obsessive tie to 'trivial' pieces of information about them. "People only want to know how tall you are or whether your teeth are capped," says **Robert Redford**,⁴ while **John McEnroe** says, "People even ask me what colour toilet tissue I use".⁵

The fan may get on a circular quest for the 'truth' about a star. Dyer observes this in the way fans 'vigorously' looked for the 'real' **Judy Garland** when viewing the film, *A Star is Born*. He argues their interest was in the way Garland betrays her "real personality," while acting out her role.⁶ According to Dyer, these "poignant moments" become the only remaining route to the truth or the essence of the star for

¹ Vermorel, Fred and Judy. "A Glimpse of the Fan Factory." 1992, 201-202.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 9.

³ Dyer, Richard quoted in Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 94-95.

⁴ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 9.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Tolson, Andrew. *Mediations: Text and Discourse in Media Studies*. 1996, 127.

the fan, “incidental moments with the star caught unawares, a glimpse of the secret personality that disappeared or destroyed itself in the unresolvable paradox of the star image.”¹

As Dyer argues, the fan that has only glimpsed the star during a performance now requires “more consumption of forms of subsidiary circulation, the desire to see more films, and even films-that-never-were: the out-takes, the screen-tests and so on.”² “If we haven’t seen enough of **Joan Crawford**,” he says, we can “always go and get photos of her doing the chores at home and cuddling baby Christina. And if we think these activities are a put-on job, then we might get a candid camera shot of her without makeup or uncover a snapshot of her scowling at Christina. And so on in an infinite regress by means of which one more authentic image displaces another.”³ The fans’ attempts to gain ‘privileged’ information about the star is, in many ways, in vain. As Dyer argues, “Authentication afforded by the ambivalent star-as-image: star-as-real person nexus,” resembles nothing so much as a “hall of mirrors.”⁴

As Tolson points out, both the public and private life of the star are public, are ‘untappable’ by the fan. He says, “In the face of all this interest in what the stars are really like, perhaps we need to remind ourselves of a simple and obvious point - that we will never really know. For the ‘real personality’ of the star is just as much a media construction (albeit in different media) as his or her appearances in films.”⁵ He says “no matter how many programmes, films, newspapers, or biographies a fan consumes to ‘discover’ a star’s private self, this is never enough to satisfy their need to see their ‘real’ personality.”⁶ Mercer identifies this ‘chinese box’ in her analysis of **Michael Jackson**, saying it may be impossible for the fan to establish any real meaning through identification with the star. She argues, it is “impossible or simply beside the point to distinguish truth from falsehood. He is neither child nor man, not

¹ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 100.

² *ibid.*

³ Dyer, Richard. “A Star is Born and the Construction of Authenticity.” 1991, 135-136.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Tolson, Andrew. *Mediations: Text and Discourse in Media Studies*. 1996, 128.

⁶ *ibid.*

clearly black or white, an androgynous image that is neither masculine or feminine ... Jackson's star image is a social hieroglyph."¹

Consumption

Fans might feel so anxious that they are losing their 'hold' on a star, that they engage in extreme sexual behaviour as a way of 'getting the star back'. **Van Halen** fans have been recognised as behaving in this 'animated' way after concerts. As Cline says, "After the concert ... the party spirit extends backstage ... two young women climb up on the banquet table and cheerfully strip down to their boots and panties, to the rowdy delight of the men and the silence of the other women, [while] Eddie Van Halen [hangs] out at the rear of the room."² In the **Beatles** movie, *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, Pam's discovery of the **Beatles** hotel room evokes this response. "Finding her way into the Beatles hotel room," says Lewis, the once 'reluctant fan' "makes love to each and every item touched by the Beatles - the guitar, the soiled napkin, the foodstuffs ... She pulls out hair residue from a Beatle's brush and rubs it over her face."³ Any type of sexual antic can occur, as the fan exhibits what mental health experts often refer to as "erotomania."⁴ As Cline argues, the fan might be "so grateful," for being in the presence of the star, "she'll perform any grovelling, humiliating, masochistic sexual act the rock star is capable of dreaming up ... [the] infamous **Led Zeppelin** 'fish fuck' is a prime example."⁵ One briefly notorious group of girl fans, the *Chicago Plaster Casters*, went so far as making plaster moulds of rock stars' penises, "memorialising," among others, **Jimi Hendrix**, according to Ehrenreich.⁶ "Voyeurism, group sex and a bit of mild sadism," according

¹ Mercer, Kobena quoted in Gledhill, Christine. *Stardom: The Industry of Desire*. 1991, 301.

² Cline, Cheryl. "Essays From Bitch." 1992, 73.

³ Lewis, Lisa A. "Fan Stories on Film." 1992, 142.

⁴ Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 11.

⁵ Cline, Cheryl. "Essays From Bitch." 1992, 73.

⁶ Ehrenreich, Barbara et al. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." 1992, 104.

to Herman, "are all important parts of the groupie scene ... the groupies maintain the high standards one might expect of a ... brothel."¹

Interestingly, stars are often willing participants in the star-fan orgies of consumption. **John Lennon** describes the Beatles' during their hey-day. "You know, the Beatle's tours were like *Fellini's Satyricon*," he says. "If you could get on our tours, you were in. Wherever we went there was always a whole scene going. If we couldn't get groupies, we would have whores and everything, whatever was going."² Other stars, are however, less willing to engage in sexual revelling. As **Al Pacino** comments, "It does happen - the offers, I mean. A girl will just walk up and ask to go to bed with me. Like buying a bus ticket. I decline, as politely as possible, thanking her for the proposition and saying something to the effect that I am very flattered." He says, "but in all, you know, I think there is something very hostile and aggressive about women like that. In many respects they frighten me. They are not liberated. They are slaves to something they cannot control."³ Brayfield talks of these more sexually aggressive types of fans, saying "there is not, quite simply, a more aggressive, predatory pack of human beings to be found than a group of girl fans hunting for their star ... girls will grab, grope or proposition their fancy without any of the inhibitions they may later show in relationships with their peers."⁴

Many fans exhibit a violent response when 'starved of stars'. Lewis describes, how fans in the Beatles movie *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, react with lawlessness. She says fan's actions take the form of "unlicensed driving, police evasions, attempted break-ins, bribery, blackmail, prostitution, property damage, drinking, theft, and civil disobedience."⁵ Fans of the rock-band, **The Who** reacted this way before a 1979 concert. As a newspaper reported, "The barbarians ... stomped 11 persons to death [after] having numbed their brains on weed, chemicals, and Southern Comfort."⁶ This type of 'accelerated' fan behaviour also occurred when **Elvis Presley** died. As

¹ Herman, Gary quoted Cline, Cheryl "Essays From Bitch." 1992, 82.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 50.

³ *ibid.*, 49.

⁴ *ibid.*, 52.

⁵ Lewis, Lisa A. "Fan Stories on Film." 1992, 144.

⁶ Jenson, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology." 1992, 12.

Stomberg reports, 80,000 fans swamped his home in Memphis to pay their respects.¹ When **Rudolph Valentino** died suddenly in the summer of 1926, more than 100,000 fans, most of them women experienced this rise in nervous energy, mobbing the streets of New York outside the funeral home.² When **James Dean** died, Howlett reports, police kept security on the cemetery for body snatchers,³ while Griest says, in many parts of the US, cemeteries are refusing to bury the remains of celebrities, such as rock star **Kurt Cobain**, because of the vandalism problem faced when fans will “not let celebrities rest in peace.”⁴ According to Walker, fans of **Marilyn Monroe**, desperate for a reunion with their idol will pay up to \$15,000 to be buried in the same Los Angeles cemetery.⁵

A particularly ‘deprived’ fan might go so far as killing a star. This is described as “Othello’s Syndrome” by mental health experts.⁶ Here, according to Schickel, the psychopathic fan kills the star in order to share the stars’ power and fame.⁷ Alternatively the fan might kill themselves. As Phillips reports, after **Marilyn Monroe** committed suicide, the U.S. suicide rate temporarily increased by 12%.⁸

Why do fans kill stars? It may be to achieve an intimate bond with the star. As Freedman observes, desire to fuse with **Jodie Foster** may have fuelled **John Hinckley Jr.**’s attempt to kill **President Reagan**.⁹ The fan might, alternatively, desire to become ‘the same’ as the star. Mark David Chapman’s “compulsion” to ‘become’ John Lennon, for instance, is seen as the reason why he murdered him. Rein points out that Chapman’s identification with Lennon was “so complete that he taped Lennon’s name over his own employee ID badge, adopted Lennon’s handwriting

¹ Stromberg, Peter. “Elvis Alive? The Ideology of American Consumerism.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. Winter 1990, 16.

² Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 100.

³ Howlett, John. *James Dean: A Biography*. 1975, 165.

⁴ Griest, Stephanie. “Undying Devotion: Cemeteries Turn Down Celebrities Whose Fans’ Won’t Let Them Rest In Peace.” *Washington Post*. July 15, 1995. D, 1:2.

⁵ Walker, Martin. “Good Buy, Dead Near Marilyn.” *Guardian*. August 15, 1994. 1, 1:4.

⁶ Jenson, Joli. “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 11.

⁷ Schickel, Richard quoted in Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 19.

⁸ Phillips, David P. quoted in Vermorel, Fred and Judy “A Glimpse of the Fan Factory.” 1992, 212.

⁹ Freedman, Dr. Lawrence Z., a researcher of aberrant personalities, quoted in Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 125.

[and] married an older Japanese woman.”¹ The fan might also kill to achieve a similar level of status as the star. As Brayfield points out, the *Warren Commission's* report on the assassination of **President Kennedy** determined that **Lee Harvey Oswald's** motivation was his ‘desire for a place in history.’² According to Jenson, in this scenario, the “Loner ... achieves public notoriety by stalking or threatening or killing the celebrity.”³

While it seems a disturbing concept, there may not be a large division between normal and this excessive type of fandom. As Jenson argues, the “fan-as-pathology” model, implies that there is a thin line between ‘normal’ and excessive fandom.⁴ The model of fandom Caughey develops is also one in which pathological fandom is simply a more intense, developed version of common, less dangerous, fan passion.⁵ He argues the shootings of **Eddie Waitkus**, **John Lennon**, and **Ronald Reagan** were not exactly “abnormal behaviour.” In each case a fantasy relationship existed with a media figure.⁶ Caughey believes intense imaginary relationships through fantasy, media, dreams and the stream of consciousness are “characteristic of contemporary America.”⁷

So, perhaps we all desire to ‘jump the fence’. As Fiske argues, the official barriers that separate fans from the field of play - police and security guards, fences, walls, and in extreme cases, moats and barbed wire, illustrate fans’ “desire to participate.”⁸ Schickel warns we “dare not turn too quickly away” from “these creatures” who lead “mad existences” because “the forces that move them also move within ourselves in some much milder measure.”⁹

¹ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 125.

² Brayfield, Ceila. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 6.

³ Jenson, Joli. “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 11.

⁴ *ibid.*, 18, 22.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Caughey quoted in Toner, Stephen J. “Television and the American Imagination: Notions of Romance.” 1988, 11.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Fiske, John. “The Cultural Economy of Fandom.” 1992, 41.

⁹ Schickel, Richard quoted in Jenson, Joli “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 11.

The normalisation of violence in the United States has played a big part in the problem of fans exhibiting a desperate attempt to physically contact stars. As Jenson argues, the US has “been embarking for a long time on a field experiment in the use of violence on TV.” He says, “It is common-place to watch people getting blown away. We’ve given the losers in life or sex a rare chance to express their dominance.”¹ Taplin supports this argument highlighting how there is a “passive acceptance of heroic violence in order to confront violent forces, seeing it institutionalised as a way of life. He points to “Heroic adventure stories where violence, power and dominance remain central to the ethic of American manhood.”²

Our collective love of violence is often disguised according to Clover. She makes a direct correlation between low-budget, rough-edged ‘nasties’ and high-profile, high-budget glossy shocker-thrillers: “Today’s ‘meat movie’ is tomorrow’s block-buster ... Scratch the glossy surface of *Silence of the Lambs* and you have a slasher film,” she says. “Scratch the surface of *Basic Instinct* and you have a straight-to-video erotic thriller with a bigger budget.”³

Having reached an intense peak, the fan’s desire for the star can now only fall away. A fan called Sherry Sklar illustrates the ‘aftermath’ of the star-fan orgy. As Nolan describes, the teeny-bopper is “glomming through Tiger Beat, Teenset, Goi ... [her] quest finally lands her in bed with a girlfriend and two members of ‘**Philly Whitesoul** group.” From there its onward and upwards to the ‘real stars’ - the **Stones**, the **Monkees**, **Paul Revere & The Raiders**. “From there, of course she spirals downward to oblivion.”⁴ In Coates’ words, the fan has now satisfied “both ... the death instinct and outlives a death redefined as the moment of orgasm.”⁵ A wave of release is experienced. Fans’ “thrill” of a Michael Jackson performance, according to Fiske, creates this release, the sense of “jouissance,” the “reading with the body.”⁶

¹ Jenson, Joli. “Fandom as Pathology.” 1992, 10.

² Taplin, Ian M. “Why We Need Heroes To Be Heroic.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. Vol. 22 No. 2. Fall 1988, 133.

³ Sheehan, Henry. “The Fears of Children.” *Sight and Sound*. Vol.3 No.7. July 1993, 14.

⁴ Cline, Cheryl. “Essays From Bitch.” 1992, 81.

⁵ Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 135.

⁶ Fiske, John. *Understanding Popular Culture*. 1989.

Remembering

The fan may experience a resurgence in attachment to the star after a period of time. As Metz argues, “the lack of what it wishes to fill ... always ... survives as desire.”¹ He says desire is very quickly reborn after the “brief vertigo” of its apparent extinction, and is largely sustained by itself as desire.² **Hitchcock** saw this as the “renewal of appetite.”³

At any point, when witnessing the image of the star, the fan might be ‘transported back’. **Dustin Hoffman** experienced the way fan’s can ‘trigger off’ an image. In 1978, at 18 West Eleventh Street, New York, ten sticks of dynamite exploded, making a hole in the living room of an apartment next door to his. A large crowd gathered to watch Hoffman and his wife salvage their belongings despite the danger. As Brayfield reports, three people had died in the explosion, and about seventy sticks of dynamite were dug out of the rubble with the bodies. During the commotion, one of the firemen picked up a cowboy hat among the debris and asked Hoffman if it was the hat he had worn in *Midnight Cowboy*. When told that he could keep it, he stopped fighting the fire to show the hat to all the other firemen. Then one of his colleagues also stopped and asked for a signed autograph.”⁴ **John Lennon** experienced a similar phenomenon. When **Yoko Ono** gave birth to son Sean, she was given a transfusion of the wrong type of blood, according to Brayfield, went rigid and began to shake with pain and trauma. Lennon called the doctor into the room. The doctor rushed in, ignored Ono, went up to Lennon, shook his hand and said, “I’ve always wanted to meet you, Mr. Lennon, I’ve always enjoyed your music.” “My wife’s dying and you wanna talk about music!” shouted Lennon in disbelief.⁵

For this triggering to occur, stars must somehow become embedded in fans’ minds. Take the way DC comics killed off **Superman** after the 1938 to 1946 run,

¹ Metz, Christian quoted in Williamson, Judith. *Decoding Advertisements*. 1978, 66.

² *ibid.*

³ Williams, Linda. “Learning to Scream.” *Sight and Sound*. December 1994, 16.

⁴ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 13.

⁵ *ibid.*, 15.

only to succeed with a new edition in 1986 with Vol.2 No.1, which sold more than 400,000 copies.¹ The movie *Pulp Fiction* similarly brought **John Travolta** back from a near “career oblivion.”² For the same reason, Rein believes **Chuck Berry** should sing 50s songs as “a way of retrapping old audiences.”³ Perhaps stars may not be able to ‘shake off’ the meanings they have previously created for fans. As McArthur argues, **Humphrey Bogart** is selections we have made from his roles as **Sam Spade**, **Phillip Marlowe** and others,⁴ while Belton notices Bogart’s transformation from 1930’s gangster to 1940s romantic lead “brings something of the gangster to his roles as a good guy.”⁵ **Hitchcock** played on this by mis-casting **Cary Grant** in the film *Suspicion*.⁶ As Ellis suggests, the stars image played “havoc with the role.”⁷

Arguably, there is an entire bank of ‘old images’ lying dormant in the head of fans, memory traces lurking under the surface. **Madonna**, for instance, has seeped into the consciousness of a number of American women, argues Rose, including “appearing in their dreams.”⁸ These ‘rememberings’ might take the form of fixed images. Stacy highlights how memories of 1940’s and 1950’s Hollywood stars frequently take the form of particular ‘frozen moments’ in fans’ minds. She points to **Bette Davis**’ flashing eyes, **Rita Hayworth**’s flowing hair, or **Doris Day**’s ‘fun’ outfits.⁹ Ellis adds **Garbo**’s laugh, **Cary Grant**’s eyes, and the way **Rock Hudson** bites his lip in *All That Heaven Allows*.¹⁰

The lasting appeal of deceased stars is an example of how star images remain ‘floating’ about in fans’ minds. Koch points to the “seeming ubiquity” with which dead celebrities such as **Fred Astaire**, **Jimi Hendrix**, **Marilyn Monroe** and others

¹ Lang, Veffrey S. and Patrick Trimble. “Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow: An Examination of the American Monomyth and the Comic Book Superhero.” 1988, 157.

² Saunders, Fred. “Travolta.” *Rolling Stone*. No. 728. February 22, 1996, 40-43.

³ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 323.

⁴ McArthur, Colin quoted in Gledhill, Christine. *Stardom: Industry of Desire*. 1991, 215.

⁵ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 105.

⁶ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 102.

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Rose, Cynthia. “Do You Dream of Madonna.” *Guardian*. September 8, 1993, 2: 92.

⁹ Stacey, Jackie. “Hollywood Memories.” *Screen*. Vol.35 No.4. Winter 1994, 318.

¹⁰ Ellis, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1982, 99.

make “comebacks.”¹ According to Belton, **Elvis Presley’s** stardom, similarly continues to thrive in the tabloids, even though he died in 1977.² As Hinerman points out, images of Elvis live on to one degree or another in the fantasy life of almost all who live in the Western world.³ Appadurai recognises the ‘Elvis’ phenomenon in the Eastern world. He says, “The King never played Bombay yet by the early 1960s, images of Elvis were as familiar to Indian urban youth as those of Pandit Nehru or the Mahatmah.”⁴

Renewal

How does the star come back? ‘The copy’ can ‘jump start’ a fans desire to re-attach to ‘the star’. **Madonna** is an example of a ‘copy’ of **Marliyn Monroe**. As Ruskoff points out, the Material Girl came from **Monroe’s** *Diamonds are a Girls Best Friend*. At the 1992 Oscar ceremony, she dyed her hair blonde and performed as if she was Marilyn.⁵ As Kaplan points out, “we know that the Material Girl is not Marilyn, but we assent to her self-presentation as such, which draws lost time back into the fetishized moment.”⁶ A Professional Marilyn Monroe look-alike illustrates how adopting the characteristics of a ‘pre-established’ image like Monore can make people ‘fall’ back into an attachment. “One of the things that frightens me about doing this is that you do get nutcases,” she says. “You do. I had this guy keep phoning me up: ‘I just want to talk to you. I think you’re wonderful.’ I said: ‘Listen, I’m not Marilyn’ ... I mean he just talked to me as though I was this person of his posters. Which was not on.” She says, “But what’s even stranger is that even other guys, like art directors or photographers ... get physically turned on. Now that is strange, because these people certainly deal all the time with beautiful girls - a

¹ Koch, Jim. “Gone to Their Reward.” *New York Times*. June 5, 1994, 9.

² Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 83.

³ Hinerman, Stephen. “Fans, Fantasy and the Figure of Elvis.” 1992, 118.

⁴ Appadurai, Arjun. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” *Public Culture*. Vol.2 No.2. 1990, 51.

⁵ Ruskoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 142.

⁶ Kaplan, E. Ann. *Rocking Around the Clock*. 1987, 96.

lot more beautiful girls than me, and girls doing nude. And yet they keep fiddling around, adjusting my bra or trying to get my towel to slip off. Or they come into the dressing room and they want to see my body.”¹ A *Chanel No. 5* ad airing in the US, demonstrates how **Marilyn Monroe** can return in the form of a ‘copy’. As *Advertising Age* magazine reports, in the ad, “a young woman is munching on popcorn. A button pops open on her dress and out bursts ... cleavage! Next, her dark hair becomes blond and thanks to digital metamorphosis,” she becomes the “convincingly ravishing Ms. Monroe ... Digitised, colorized, flipped and morphed ... She’s been dead for 32 years and still men are having their way with Marilyn Monroe.”²

Michael Jackson created a ‘boost’ to his star status by ‘copying’ the image of **Diana Ross**, according to Rushkoff. “He made himself look like Ross,” he says “slenderised his nose and straightened his hair, made sure he was seen with her in public events, developed the Ross habitual gesture of smiling, tipping the head to the side, and brushing the now relaxed hair off his forehead.”³ US president **Bill Clinton** may also have achieved an image boost by ‘copying’ the image of **Elvis Presley**. As Rushkoff reports, during the last election, the press labelled him Elvis because of the way he sneered like the singer. Clinton even agreed to sing a verse of *Don’t Be Cruel* during a *CNN* interview. Rushkoff describes how Bush tried to use this against him ““He’s been spotted in more places than Elvis Presley,”” said Bush. ““America will be checking into Heartbreak Hotel. Now I know why they say he’s like Elvis. The minute he takes a stand on something, he starts wiggling.”” As Rushkoff points out, Bush only hurt himself with these comments. “No one speaks badly about the King and gets away with it or the votes of white American Southerners.”⁴ Paradoxically, the copy can often be more powerful than the original. As Young suggests, the “mimic dethrones the Original from its assumed position of Truth.” He says, “because

¹ Vermorel, Fred and Judy. “A Glimpse of the Fan Factory.” 1992, 203.

² Garfield, Bob. “Wondrous Chanel No. 5 Spot Deftly Nurtures the Product.” *Advertising Age*. Vol. 62 No.52. December 12, 1994, 3.

³ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 135-136.

⁴ *ibid.*, 86-87.

the ... copy ... cannot claim to be copying anything but itself, it creates the 'original' retroactively ... so that the copy precedes the original in a ghostly ... repetition."¹

Stars can 'return' to the forefront of fans' minds in the form of different objects. As Paige points out, **Marilyn Monroe** is a simulated projection that "lives forever in death ... She appears everywhere."² She describes the extent to which Marilyn Monroe is preserved, years after her death on T-shirts, calendars, postcards, ashtrays, soap dishes, and ceramic mugs, "suggested by diamonds, signified by blondes, impersonated by rock stars, fans, and other actors and actresses." As Paige says, she "graces" the cover of *A Dictionary of 20th Century Biography*, appears in her own encyclopaedic text - *The Unabridged Marilyn: Her Life from A to Z* - focusing exclusively to the details of her life and work. She features on a bottle of wine called *Marilyn Merlot* and has been the "inspiration" for a number of songs, including **Elton John's** *Candle in the Wind*.³ As Paige indicates, "It appears that we as culture cannot forget Marilyn Monroe, so we make her up again and again."⁴

James Dean, is an example of a star that 'returned' through an inanimate object - in the form of his car. As Howlett reports, after James Dean died in a horrific car accident, a couple got the wreck and exhibited in a Los Angeles bowling alley charging people twenty-five cents to see Dean's crash car, fifty cents to "sit in his death seat and touch the twisted, broken, blood-stained steering wheel." 800,000 tickets were sold before they were persuaded, or coerced to stop the show. As Howlett reports, "the car was broken up and sold for souvenirs, rings were sold with 'authentic' chips from his tombstone set like diamonds."⁵

Star might even 'return' in the form of a second generation of star. Belton explains how contemporary stars enable us to see the ghost of Hollywood past in the faces of Hollywood present.⁶ Such examples of second-generation stars include **Jane**

¹ Young, Robert quoted in Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." 1990, 66.

² Paige, S. Baty. *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic*. 1995, 73-74.

³ *ibid.*, 3-5.

⁴ *ibid.*, 3-5.

⁵ Howlett, John. *James Dean: A Biography*. 1975, 167.

⁶ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 109.

and **Peter Fonda** (children of **Henry**), **Liza Minnelli** (daughter of **Judy Garland**), **Michael Douglas** (son of **Kirk**), **Jeff** and **Beau Bridges** (sons of **Lloyd**), **Emilio Estevez** and **Charles Sheen** (sons of **Martin Sheen**), **Keith**, **David** and **Robert Carradine** (sons of **John**), **Isabelle Rossellini** (daughter of **Ingrid Bergman**), **Melanie Griffith** (daughter of **Tippi Hedren**), **Laura Dern** (daughter of **Dianne Ladd** and **Bruce Dern**), **Carrie Fisher** (daughter of **Debbie Reynolds**), **Jamie Lee Curtis** (daughter of **Janet Leigh** and **Tony Curtis**), **Kiefer Sutherland** (son of **Donald**), and **Timothy Hutton** (son of **Jim**).¹ The 'new star' might also acquire well-knownness derivatively by being born into a 'famous' family. As Rein reports, members of the **Ford**, **Rockefeller**, and **Kennedy** families gain instant visibility.²

The troubling thought is that when stars 'return', their power can be ferocious. As Coates warns, "There is something rather chilling in the mass of one-arm salutes that greet the performers in a **Bon Jovi** or **Van Halen** video."³ In other words, nostalgia for stars of the past is expressed in a variety of forms which preserves the memory of the star for fans and creates a certain retrospective memory which adds to the original attraction and mythology.

¹ *ibid.*

² Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 91.

³ Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 141.



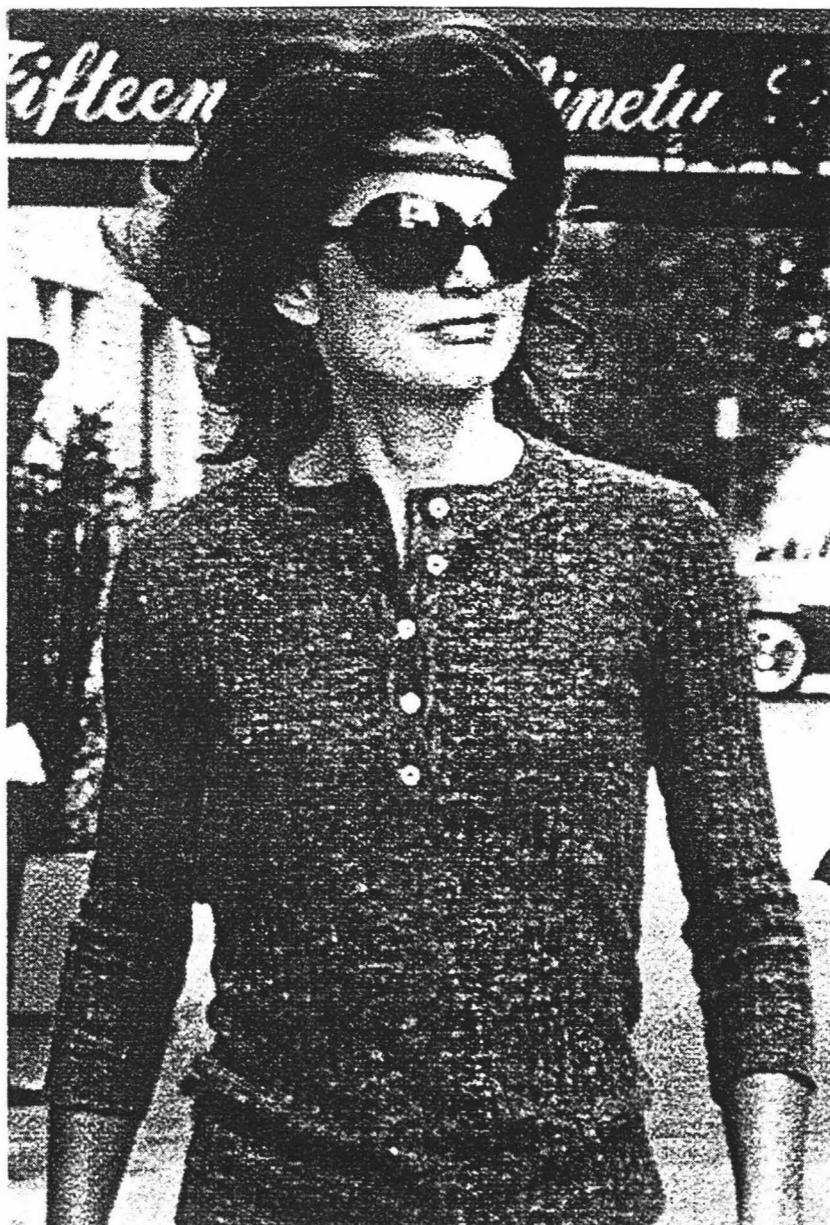
Dustin Hoffman ... Firemen stopped fighting a fire to ask for his autograph. See Page 52.



The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger ... 'Selling his soul'. See Page 67.



Madonna ... appears in women's dreams. See Page 53.



Jacqui Onassis ... Her fake pearls valued between \$500 and \$700 sold to 'upper class fans' for \$211,500. See Page 40.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELINQUISHING ATTACHMENT

The Illusion of Stardom

Could the ‘world of stardom’ be an illusion? “I was never impressed by my work” says **Marlene Dietrich**.¹ “I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve it through not dying” says **Woody Allen**.² “Although the movie camera is my best friend, my buddy, I am still paranoid about having my picture taken on the street,” echoes **Jodie Foster**.³ **Van Morrison** is as equally cynical about stardom saying, “When you get to that place they call success you realise it is a figment of other people’s imagination,”⁴ while **Janis Joplin** summed this up in an interview during her tragically short life. “Well, I have to go now and change into Janis Joplin. She’s upstairs in a box.”⁵ As Lahr identifies, “Fame’s pageant of ambition is more important to society than to the individuals who achieve it”⁶

Journalists also recognise stardom’s inherent falsity. Celia Brayfield, who has worked as a contributor to the *Times* in London notices this. After a period of interviewing stars, she says, I “began to realise that a star is an artefact, a humanoid owned but not controlled by the person who hides behind it. ‘What was it like to meet **Paul McCartney**, or **Robert Redford**, or **Alain Delon**?’ my friends asked, and my instinct was to reply, ‘I don’t know, I didn’t meet them.’”⁷

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 41.

² *ibid.*, 6.

³ *ibid.*, 65.

⁴ *ibid.*, 196.

⁵ Lewis, George H. “Uncertain Truths: The Promotion of Popular Culture.” *Journal of Popular Culture*. 1986, 37.

⁶ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 209.

⁷ *ibid.*

Ironically, interviews with journalists may actually assist stars in understanding their own mythology. At *People* magazine, stars often answered the questions we never asked, reports founding editor Richard Stolley. "They just volunteered things," he says. This was "particularly true of people in show business, or sports, where fame comes very fast ... very fragile personalities who understand that they don't really deserve this at all." He sees stars as "privately puzzled and apprehensive," using reporters as "shrinks ... they make an effort to validate themselves through journalists ... by dumping their personalities into the lap of the journalists ... hoping that the journalists would then write a story and tell them who they are."¹

So, perhaps the star isn't particularly special. Could anyone become a star? "Feed the grub royal jelly and it may become a queen," says **Winston Churchill**.² Take **Bob Dylan** when he made his first tape for *Columbia Records*. According to Lewis, executives were concerned that the folk market was too small to warrant a release, and decided not to produce an album, instead burying the tape in their vaults. He says the decision was only overturned by concerted lobbying by John Hammond, a respected producer with a strong track record at Columbia, and **Johnny Cash**, at the time one of Columbia's largest recording stars.³ Perhaps Dylan is a normal musician who might 'never have been'. **Simon and Garfunkel's** success may similarly be a matter of 'chance'. After 'failing the first time' they were changed from an acoustic duo to a folk rock group by producers at *Columbia Records*. **The Beatles**, similarly were convinced by their manager, Brian Epstein, to exchange their tight black leather outfits for neat suits and ties.⁴

Despite knowing that what they have created is a facade, stars still seem willing to play the 'illusion game' to satisfy fans. **George Michael** and **Andrew**

¹ Stolley, Richard quoted in Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 200.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 19.

³ Lewis, George H. "Uncertain Truths: The Promotion of Popular Culture." 1986, 37.

³ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 32.

⁴ Lewis, George H. "Uncertain Truths: The Promotion of Popular Culture." 1986, 37.

⁴ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 37.

Ridgeley, for instance, who formed the rock group **Wham!** ('Wholesome, Handsom, Adorable Mega-stars!'), freely admit that they make statements like "Dark women arouse my animal passion" or "I can honestly say that I'm a great lover" in interviews to tell the media what they believe the public wants to hear."¹

Some stars nevertheless believe stardom was always their destiny. As **Placido Domingo** says, "I do believe that I am here in the world with a special mission which is bringing happiness and peace into the world."² Others recognise the 'rewards' of stardom As **Steve McQueen** comments, "Stardom equals Freedom ... it's the only equation that matters."³ However, to a majority of stars, 'stardom' is an emotionally hurtful state. As **Larry Gelbart**, creator of the TV series *MASH* says, "The pride is in what we did. The pain comes from no longer being who we were when we did it ... that wonderful time where we were innocents, not an institution; when we were blissfully ignorant, yet to become icons."⁴ **Marilyn Monroe** is a striking example of a 'normal person' consumed by the star-machine. As **Laurence Olivier** reflects, "Popular opinion, and all that goes to promote it, is a horrible, unsteady conveyance for life and she was exploited beyond anyone's means."⁵

Florida State University research points to 10 major stresses affecting high profile stars. These include the celebrity press, critics, threatening letters or calls, a lack of privacy, the constant monitoring of their lives, worry about career plunges, stalkers, lack of security, curious fans, and worries about their children's lives being disrupted which creates in stars, feelings of depression, a loss of sleep, a lack of concentration, bad moods, stomach problems, paranoia, over spending, makes their children misbehave, generates an overall lack of trust in others and stimulates a sense of self hatred.⁶

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 46.

² *ibid.*, 36.

³ *ibid.*, 167.

⁴ *ibid.*, 179.

⁵ *ibid.*, 11.

⁶ Figley, Charles. Director of the Psychological Stress Research Programme at Florida State University, quoted in Loftus, Mary. "The Other Side of Fame." *Psychology Today* May/June 1995, 51.

Fear of failure is a particularly big concern among stars. "Success is a double-edged sword" said **Sylvester Stallone** on *Saturday Night Live*. "After a while fear sets in. You don't want to lose what you have."¹ Ironically, many stars crave for fans to see them as merely 'normal people'. As **Bruce Springsteen** says, "The biggest gift that your fans can give you is just treating you like a human being, because anything else dehumanises you. And that's one of the things that have shortened the life spans, both physically and creatively, of some of the best rock n' roll musicians - that cruel isolation."²

Artefact

The star is arguably, not real, but a 'media artefact'. **O.J.Simpson** is an example of a star who is merely an image, transported through a media machine. Paige examines the extent to which the media has propelled the image of Simpson. She describes the "mass mediated circus," in which stories about O.J.Simpson were simultaneously broadcast on *ESPN*, *CNN*, *ABC*, *CBS*, *NBC*. Shows like *Larry King Live* and *A Current Affair* produced re-enactments of the crime. Tabloids like *The Enquirer* and *The Star* delivered readers "The Juice" claiming he was being "squeezed" by an unnamed enemy, his father was a drag queen who had died of AIDS and that his handwriting proved he was guilty, and had a cocaine problem, while a *New York Times* article discussed what to do for "O.J. withdrawal" during the empty weeks between the hearing and the trial.³

Ben Kingsley, is another example of how stars are 'images' channelled through a media machine. To promote his film **Ghandi**, Kingsley did 174 interviews in four days.⁴ According to Lewis, in the 1950's, **Elvis Presley**, similarly became a "symbol" radio, film and record industries were able to exploit,⁵ while Turow

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 132.

² *ibid.*, 117.

³ Paige, S. Baty. *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic*. 1995, 43-44.

⁴ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 111.

⁵ Lewis, George H. "Uncertain Truths: The Promotion of Popular Culture." 1986, 107.

explains how the image of **Brooke Shields**, “might appear in a new movie, on a magazine cover, and on a TV talk show in the course of the same week.”¹ **David Bowie** is an example of the ‘normal human’ converted into a media simulation. As the *Daily Express* report, “He slid behind a blue curtain into a vast auditorium like a gleaming blond snake, the dandy soul boy himself ... Mr. David Bowie. Instant pandemonium. Four hundred cameras swivelled towards him. He chewed amiably on gum, offering a twisted grin as he turned to face death by media firing squad.”²

“I feel like David Bowie ... sometimes,” says Bowie’s media publicist Alan Edwards, “especially touring in Australia when Bowie hardly had any interviews and all the press came to me and I’d tell them what was going on, and it would come out next day as a David Bowie interview.” He describes how it “was strange to read all these things I’d said under someone else’s name. Say he’d done an interview in London, I’d be noting it down, memorising it so I could regurgitate it. So a lot of it I wasn’t inventing at all - it was slightly changed about. So the same David Bowie interview appeared fifteen times.”³

It is the media machine that delivers fans with a constant stream of ‘private’ and ‘exclusive’ information about stars that they have formed relationships with. **Marilyn Monroe** was delivered to fans through the media. As Harris notes, the marriage of Marilyn Monroe and **Joe DiMaggio**, their Korean tour, their divorce, Monroe’s controversy with her studio, marriage to **Arthur Miller** and her audience with **Queen Elizabeth II** were treated as “international news that fan’s world-wide consumed ... [she] was newsworthy enough to merit a Time cover feature.”⁴ **Julia Roberts** is an example of a star whose ‘love life’ is constantly delivered to fans through media manufactured information. As *Time Magazine* reports, the media has linked Roberts with **Ethan Hawke** (they danced), **Richard Gere** (they walked), **Brad**

¹ Turow, Joseph. *Media Industries: The Production of News and Entertainment*. 1984, 34.

² Vermorel, Fred and Judy “A Glimpse of the Fan Factory.” 1992, 203.

³ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 111.

⁴ Harris, Thomas “The Building of Popular Images: Grace Kelly and Marilyn Monroe.” 1991, 43.

Pitt (no reason; it just made for a good read), **Daniel-Day Lewis** (a former flame rekindled) and a Venetian gondolier.¹

Hollywood has a long history of manufacturing personal information about stars for fans' consumption. In 1911, *Vitagraph*, *The Motion Picture Story Magazine*, *Modern Screen*, *Silver Screen*, *Movie Star*, and *The Independent Photoplay* (which was published once a month from 1911 to 1980 with a circulation of 2 million in the 1920's) provided a constant stream of information on the private lives of stars.² By the 1950's, over 500 journalists and newspaper writers were in Hollywood generating over 100,000 words per day about the film industry for fans to consume, making Hollywood the third largest source of "news" in the country behind New York and Washington DC. According to Belton, "Most of that news concerned the public and private activities of movie stars."³ Today, fans are still 'feeding' off media manufactured star information. As Turow reports, 700,000 women buy a copy of *Soap Opera Digest* every two weeks.⁴

To assist the delivery of their 'message' to fans, stars shape themselves to fit popular expectations of what a star 'should look like'. As Rein says, **Marilyn Monroe** is an example of a star who consciously adapted her physical appearance and mannerisms to fit what middle America pre-conceived a sex-symbol should look and behave like.⁵ Stars may use a grab-bag of techniques to build this meaning. The effective use of "signs and symbols like a name" are particularly important in 'shaping' the mythic star image according to Rein.⁶ Examples of name changes include Allen Konigsberg becoming **Woody Allen**; Charles Burchinsky, **Charles Bronson**; Issur Danielovitch Demsky, **Kirk Douglas**; Melvin Kaminsky, **Mel Brooks**; Bernard Schwartz, **Tony Curtis**; Robert Zimmerman, **Bob Dylan**; and

¹ Luscombe, Belinda. "Really, They're Just Friends." *Time Magazine*. Vol.147. No.4. January 22, 1996, 71.

² Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 84.

³ *ibid.*, 83.

⁴ Turow, Joseph. *Media Industries: The Production of News and Entertainment*. 1984, 55.

⁵ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 219.

⁶ *ibid.*, 214.

Arnold Dorsey, **Engelbert Humperdink**.¹ Clusters of actions to indicate 'star type' are also important. As Goffman observes, stars "infuse [their] activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure,"² to fans. Stars can go to extreme lengths to 'transform' themselves into media products. As Rein points out, it was in Hollywood that it became common to fix noses, straighten teeth, eliminate body hair - to generally create "perfect" people.³ Stars will pay up to \$3,000 for eyelifts, \$7,750 for face lifts, \$5,000 for tummy tucks, \$4,500 for breast enlargements, and between \$1,500 and \$4,000 for cellulite suctioning, to turn themselves into perfect human beings.⁴ After refining the 'product', stars then literally sell themselves to fans to devour. As boxer Larry Holmes says, "All fighters are prostitutes and all promoters are pimps."⁵ Landon Y. Jones, former executive of *People* magazine, agrees, describing stars as 'lifestyle pioneers', who trade their right to privacy for the rewards of fame, while Alan Edwards, the **Rolling Stones**' publicist says, "Let's face it, it is selling your soul."⁶

Detachment

The problem for the fan, is that it is so very difficult to let go of the illusion of stardom. We appear forced to keep falling back into the world of pleasures. Dahlgren noticed this in analysing his own personal reading habits of 'sensationalised stories' about personalities in newspapers. "Why in spite of many years involvement in rational, intellectual pursuits was I interested in them? And why, when reading 'serious' broadsheets would I find my eye caught by, and my attention starting to drift to stories, about similar affairs, or the proceedings of trials in which the 'great' and 'good' and their illicit affairs have been involved?"⁷ He identifies how

¹ Rein, Irving J. et. al. *High Visibility*. 1987, 216.

² *ibid.*, 214.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*, 56.

⁵ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 158.

⁶ *ibid.*, 11.

⁷ Dahlgren, Peter and Colin Sparks. *Journalism and Popular Culture*. 1992, 68.

easy it is to become 'caught up' in the myth of stardom. The stars themselves also appear to be consumed with the illusion. As actor **Maximilian Schell** says, 'The real **Marlene Dietrich** has never been visible. Her mind is filled with the creation of a legend, as she conceives it.'¹

Interestingly, the audience seems to almost 'know' but 'not know' that stardom is false. As Paul Coates says, "We know this is not so, but ...we suspend our disbelief ... one we refuse to separate from what it represents."² Ien Ang studied this in women watching *Dallas*. She noticed that while women maintained a positive self-image and a 'critical' awareness of the programme, they also derived pleasure from it.³ As Barthes says, fans voluntarily accept the rules of the text in order to participate in the practice that those rules make possible and pleasurable.⁴ Rushkoff's analysis of how mythic characters in the show **Murphy Brown** interact with one another is such an example. The make-believe Murphy Brown character was attacked by Vice President **Dan Quayle** for being a solo mother. The real *New York Daily Times* then carried the headline "DAN QUAYLE TO MURPHY BROWN: YOU TRAMP." The make-believe characters on the show read the newspaper. Murphy Brown addressed the Vice President in defence on the show asking Quayle whether he should "broaden his vision of family." As Rushkoff reports, the real Quayle then sent a stuffed elephant to Murphy Brown's fictional baby. Real newspapers cited *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* as the closest cultural reference to Quayle's "immersion into a fictional world," while *Time* journalist Lance Morrow criticised the Vice President for "wagging his finger at hallucinations of the popular culture."⁵

Mickey Mouse is another star 'fans' knowingly recognise as false, yet have still 'worshipped'. After being created in 1928, Mickey's fiftieth birthday was celebrated by a black tie party at the Library of Congress attended by the President of the United States. As Brockway observes, by 1933, George V declared there must be

¹ Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 103.

² Coates, Paul. *Film at the Intersection of High and Mass Culture*. 1994, 135.

³ Ang, Ien quoted in Boyd-Barrett and Chris Newbold. *Approaches to Media: A Reader*. 1995, 501.

⁴ Fiske, John. *Visible Fictions*. 1987, 230.

⁵ Rushkoff, Douglas. *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*. 1994, 80-82.

a Mickey Mouse cartoon at all film performances attended at the palace by the royal family and their guests. The Emperor of Japan wore a Mickey Mouse watch. *Who's Who* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica* devoted an article to him.¹ Despite knowing that Mickey is a total fabrication, fans 'play-act', offering him the status of being real.

So, merely recognising the falsity of stars does not necessarily mean a fan is 'free' from the illusion of stardom. As Dyer says, "there is nothing sophisticated about knowing they are manufactured and promoted, it is a sense that is common ... Yet in the very same breath as audiences and producers alike acknowledge stars as hype ... they are declaring this or that star as the genuine article."² Belton similarly argues, "audiences are quite aware of the machinery that studios and others set in motion in their attempts to produce stars ... they knowingly participate in the manufacturing of stars. Indeed, much of their enjoyment of stars comes from this knowledge."³ To be truly 'free', fans may need to completely separate themselves from a reliance on stars. As Downing argues, to be genuinely free and individual, "one must free oneself from a whole system of pleasures, consumption, and entertainment."⁴

The modern image of the 'robot' may represent the challenge fans face in 'breaking free' of an attachment to stars. According to Telotte, the star image of robots like the **Terminator** or **Robocop** symbolises the "atomised, hollowed-out, modern self - an image that underscores a degree to which we have become mechanised, programmed beings, bodies detached from all spirit." He sees the 'dehumanised' robot as a detachment, however one that "might help us to know ourselves once more, to discern our humanity," and therefore "reconstruct our sense of self." The mechanised robot, as a mirror of ourselves, introduces the possibility for "subversion, individuality, and self-realisation." According to Telotte it does this by

¹ Brockway, Robert W. "The Masks of Mickey Mouse: Symbol of a Generation." 1989, 25.

² Dyer, Richard. "A Star is Born and the Construction of Authenticity." 1991, 135.

³ Belton, John. *American Cinema / American Culture*. 1994, 94.

⁴ Downing, John et. al. *Questioning the Media*. 1990, 253.

suggesting that the “schizophrenia this world seems to foster, the imaginary it constructs, might eventually be turned against it, to free up the self.”¹

To truly ‘free the self’ from a need for stars can be a painful process. The Russian Roulette phenomenon described by psychotherapist, Dr. Anthony Clare describes the pain a person experiences while going through any major psychological shift. He says it is painful for most people, however there is a certain abandonment and luxury in starting to develop a hitherto less, or undeveloped personality (a personality reliant on stars). Brayfield points out how **Graham Greene** got this exhilarating psychological ‘high’ from playing Russian Roulette, the release associated with finding you are still alive. She says non-achievers shy away from taking these risks. But change is a luxurious feeling, the “luxury of standing up for your conscience,” she says. Anxiety is inevitably the result of this psychological change, however, according to Clare, because the sense of self is being altered. In his view, achievers must therefore relish the anxiety or exhilaration of altering the mind’s patterning, whereas most tend people to evade it because it is a threat to the known self.²³ 3

Ultimately, we invent the star. As **John Lennon** observed when watching a horde of fans destroy his new Rolls Royce. “Let them have it ... they paid for it.”⁴ As Brayfield argues, without “realising it, we are linked into a circuit of self-deception. The star before us is our own creation.”⁵ Sartre noticed this in his early life, saying ‘I never stopped creating myself, I was both giver and gift’ ...” What he describes here as part of his growing up is also one of the most alienating aspects of advertising and consumerism. As Williamson identifies, “We are both product and consumer: we consume, buy the product, yet we are the product.”⁶

¹ Telotte, J.P. “The Temulous Public Body.” *Journal of Popular Fim & Television*. Vol.19 No.1. Spring 1991, 22.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 37-38.

³ *ibid.*, 38.

⁴ *ibid.*, 155.

⁵ *ibid.*, 12.

⁶ Williamson, Judith. *Decoding Advertisements*. 1978, 70.

Despite our best efforts to break free, we can easily fall back into an attachment with stars. As Robert Altman, who co-produced and directed *The James Dean Story* for Warner Bros in 1957 notes, "I started with the idea of taking Dean to bits, but in the end I guess we all got caught up in the mystique of the man."¹ **Marlene Dietrich's** observation is a poignant 'last word' about our susceptibility: "I look at my face on the television screen, and I remember how every tooth was capped, how every hair in that head was dyed ... how every inch of skin on that neck and face has been pulled and shaped, and in spite of knowing all that, I sit back and say to myself, 'That is still the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my life'."²

¹ Lewis, Lisa A. "Fan Stories on Film." 1992, 159.

² Brayfield, Celia. *Glitter: The Truth About Fame*. 1985, 63.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The Development of Stardom: Celebrity, Image and the Media is an exploration of the relationship a fan forms with a star and the 'cycle' that the relationship follows from its birth, maintenance to eventual demise. After analysing the various facets of the fans' relationship, several conclusions can be made about the 'cyclic' relationship fans experience with stars.

In relation to the first phase, or 'growth' of a fans' attachment to a star, it may be concluded that fans form bonds with stars because of feelings of personal anxiety. The intensity of the fan's relationship with the star may therefore be based on the particular level of 'emotional need' of the fan. This suggests a star's power is the product of the mind of the fan. It is perhaps because of this foundation of anxiety, that many stars assume powerful positions in the minds of the fans, often taking on a type of religious authority, or appearing sexually desirable to fans. Being 'fed' by the star seems to build the fans 'reliance' on the star as a 'provider', resulting in fans often forming intimate bonds with stars that mimic 'real relationships'. After a period of time, the fans' relationship with the star shifts however. The fan moves away from occupying a passive role in the relationship to forming a control over the star. It is in this position that the fan seems to experience a sense of 'self-actualisation'.

Some fans may no longer perceive that they are even 'in a relationship' with the star, assuming a perception of independence. In this state, fans may demonstrate an increased tendency to control their own emotions, using the star in a variety of ways. The fan's self esteem may now move through a phase of being enhanced, to the degree that they begin to diversify their attachments away from a single star source, and transfer their attachment to a range of different stars. Part of this process might involve fans 'ranking' stars in a ladder of perceived importance. Fans' may then remain loyal for a considerable period of time.

It appears however, that a 'healthy' relationship between a fan and a star is 'finite'. The bond between a fan and a star inevitably begins to diminish. The lessening of attachment might occur because the star steps out of a 'mould' that the fan has become familiarised with, or simply because the star becomes too well known to a fan and an immunity is created. The reaction of the fan to this diminishing attachment to the star might be to replace the 'original' star with a 'new star' that is opposite in style to the original. Alternatively, the fan might attempt to remain 'fixed' on the 'original star'. Because the bond is fading, the fan might over compensate for this, and move into a phase of anxious productivity. Here, the fan might assume the role of the star and begin to 'become' the star. This might involve writing 'new stories' about the star which are a dramatic diversion from the original star's meaning. Fans even begin to imitate stars as a way of maintaining the attachment.

Through this phase of 'decline' fans seem to become particularly possessive of stars. Their possession might involve the acquisition of star-related property as a way of 'solidifying' their fading relationship. As the bond slips further, fans seem to move into a 'communicative' phase, whereby they attempt to establish contact with the star. Fans may even go so far as attempting to establish actual physical contact with stars, embarking on pilgrimages to deceased stars' graves, for instance, or paying visits to stars' households.

A level of panic often eventuates as 'fans that can't let go' become increasingly dissatisfied with the diminishing levels of 'nourishment' they are receiving from a star. When sufficiently anxious, grief-stricken fans can act in a particularly radical manner going so far as committing acts of violence, perhaps even killing stars. Alternatively, fans might vent their repression in the form of a sexual release. This might take the form of a 'star-fan orgy' after a rock concert.

Arguably, a stars meaning is never erased from the memory of a fan, but merely becomes temporarily latent in the fan's mind. Perhaps, at any time, a fan's addictive response to a particular star-image can be reactivated, beginning the cycle all over again. It seems difficult for fans' to truly 'let go' of their need for stars. Despite being conscious of the falsity of stardom, fans' may inevitably become

reattached to the original star/s. This can be witnessed in studies whereby female soap opera fans are often conscious of the mythic nature of the programme they are viewing yet still partake in the pleasures associated with watching it.

Perhaps only an extreme psychological shift will allow fans to remove themselves from the cycle of star attachment. The process of change appears to be particularly isolating however. Change inevitably marks a shift from the 'known self'. What the thesis crucially points out is that self esteem and independence is often inextricably linked to our attachment and 'mastering' of our relationships with stars.

The question remains then, why must we break free from a reliance on stars? Perhaps the cycle of establishing a relationship with a star, maintaining it for a period of time and then moving through a period to eventual demise is the natural human process. It seems the vast body of theorists compiled in this work all condemn fans for their 'folly' of attachment to stars. Many appear to maintain a critical standpoint whereby they stand outside of the world of attachment. 'Attachment', may however, be the only way we can experience 'living'. Perhaps any emotion we feel is an attachment of some form. Questioning attachment, is a vastly different concept from condemning it. Further research into the nature of 'star attachment' might therefore have an open acceptance of the way all fans attach themselves to stars. This would include fans of any gender, age, or socio-economic level, and seek to understand how 'star attachments' can be effectively managed and maintained by fans. Rather than taking the approach that the world has become merely a 'simulation' and that stars are part of our 'confused, contradictory' society, perhaps we need to gently acknowledge that star attachment is part of everyday life.

A 'new path' might see fans achieve almost a 'dual consciousness'. While still following a cycle of adopting, growing, maintaining, losing and re-generating a relationship with a star, a higher level of consciousness may simultaneously be maintained, whereby the 'cycle' of attachment is always 'kept in check' and is always controllable. The fan might no longer fall into 'blinding' levels of addiction, but have an awareness of the pleasures they experience through their relationship with a star. Fans might continue to attach themselves to stars, while maintaining increased levels

of awareness and control. Fans might therefore, still 'fall in love' with the star, but form an ability to simultaneously 'watch' themselves falling in love.

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