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Canada

**Celebrity and Power: Celebrity Status as a Representation
of Power in Contemporary Culture**

By P. David Marshall

Graduate Program in Communications
McGill University, Montreal

© August 1992

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Communications



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Canada

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Ph.D. Thesis

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Abstract

The dissertation is an investigation of modern subjectivity as it is expressed in the form of celebrities. First of all, it establishes that celebrities are linked to both the development of a democratic culture, where there is an investment in conceptions of the popular will for political and cultural legitimation, and consumer capitalism, where power and subjectivity are intimately connected to the commodity and a consumer identity that is formed through commodities. Secondly, the dissertation establishes that the significance and meaning of the celebrity in contemporary culture are linked to its dual formation by the culture industries and by the audience which embraces and remakes the meaning of the produced celebrity. A critical reading of individual celebrities that have emerged from different domains of the culture industries is conducted which integrates a hermeneutic of intention into a hermeneutic of reception. Thirdly, the work shows how the forms of public subjectivity privileged in the entertainment industries are elemental parts of the construction of the contemporary political leader.

The dissertation concludes that the celebrity, along with other forms of public personalities that emerge in the public sphere, is an attempt to contain or embody a certain type of power that is difficult to sustain because of its connection to mass sentiment and supposed forms of irrationality. The celebrity then is the continual attempt to embody this affective power in contemporary political and popular culture.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine la subjectivité moderne à travers le phénomène de la célébrité et cerne le type de pouvoir qui en émane. Elle explique d'abord les liens qui unissent à la fois la célébrité à la culture démocratique, dont la légitimation politique et culturelle dépend de notions de la volonté populaire, et au capitalisme de consommation qui lie le pouvoir et la subjectivité aux marchandises et aux identités qu'elles forment. Elle situe ensuite le sens et l'importance de la célébrité au carrefour des industries de la culture et des publics qui en consomment et en transforment les produits. Sous cet aspect, elle entreprend une lecture critique de trois célébrités issues de trois industries culturelles en alliant une herméneutique de l'intention à une herméneutique de la réception. Finalement, la thèse montre que les formes de subjectivité publique moderne privilégiées par les industries de la distraction font partie intégrante du pouvoir politique moderne.

Les personnages publics qui émergent dans la sphère publique constituent donc des tentatives d'enfermement d'un pouvoir rendu volatile à cause de son rapport au sentiment de masse et aux prétendues formes d'irrationalité. La célébrité est donc une tentative permanente d'incarnation du pouvoir affectif dans la culture politique et populaire contemporaine.

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Many people have contributed to this work. I'd like to thank my family members, particularly my brother Neil Marshall — who allowed me to set up shop as a "small town academic" in his offices, and my parents, Robert and Theo — who allowed me some breathing space for research and writing in their own home. My colleagues at Carleton University have also been very helpful over the final stages of completion: Paul Attallah, Eileen Saunders, Mark Langer, Chris Dorman, Will Straw, Bob Jones and Peter Johansen all are deserving of praise for providing advice and support. At McGill, I'd like to thank my supervisor, Marike Finlay for her criticisms and support of my work over the years, and Lise Ouimet for her patience, guidance, and information that helped me navigate around the shoals of graduate study at a distance.

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INTRODUCTION

My objective in the dissertation is to understand the concept and function of the celebrity in contemporary culture. As the title of the dissertation suggests, I am interested in how power is articulated through the celebrity. Celebrities are not powerful in any overt political sense: some may possess political influence, while others exercise their power in less politically defined ways. What I intend to investigate is the cultural and political potency of the category of celebrity status. The dissertation studies the concept of the celebrity, how the celebrity structures meanings, crystallizes ideological positions, and provides sense and coherence to a culture. The celebrity or star embodies a certain configuration of power that not only resonates with a certain political culture, but also is shaped by the culture itself. The celebrity is a form of consensus building, as well as a powerful type of legitimation of the political economic model of exchange and value.

The dissertation develops the concept of celebrity as a *system* of valorizing meaning and communication in society. As a system, the condition of celebrity status is convertible to a wide variety of domains and conditions within contemporary culture. Thus, the power of celebrity status appears in business, politics, and artistic communities and it operates as a way of providing distinctions and definitions of success within those domains. Celebrity status also confers on the person a certain

discursive power: within society, the celebrity is a voice above others, a voice that is channelled into the media systems as being legitimately significant.

In identifying a system of celebrity that may have a certain ideological consistency I am not suggesting that the figure or sign of the celebrity is coherent. The celebrity can be described only as an ambiguous sign in contemporary culture that inscribes within and between its various formations a tension of signification. In one sense, the celebrity represents the success and achievement within the social world. Contemporary culture has conferred on certain individuals we call celebrities or stars the public stage and renown. The recognition and the public fame are part of the act of celebrating their importance and significance. In some generally agreed-upon way, they have earned their position of fame.

In another sense, the celebrity is viewed in the most antipathic manner. The sign of the celebrity is ridiculed and derided because it represents the centre of false value. The success expressed in the celebrity posture is seen as success without the requisite association with work. Thus, there is no substance to the sign of the celebrity and without that embedded significance, the celebrity sign is entirely image. To use a Marxian metaphor to describe the vacuity of the sign of the image lacking materiality and productivity, the celebrity sign is pure exchange value cleaved from use value. It articulates the individual as commodity.¹

¹The relationship between the image and exchange value is a topic in itself as it describes a hierarchization of value in its implicit denigration of the image to surface, nonmateriality, and nonproduction. This categorization is as severe as the classical divisions between high culture and low culture. For a discussion of value and the sign see Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. by Charles Levin St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981. For a discussion of the (advertising) image, exchange value and use value see Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in Consumer Society*, London: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

The celebrity sign effectively contains this tension between authentic and false cultural value. In its simultaneous embodiment of media construction, audience construction and the real, living and breathing human being, the celebrity sign negotiates the competing and contradictory definitions of its own significance. The cementing character of the negotiation is the basic and essential authenticity that a "real" person is housed in the sign construction. In a cultural sense, the celebrity is one form of resolution of the role and position of the individual and his/her potential in modern society. The power of the celebrity then is to represent the active construction of identity in the social world. Studying the celebrity offers the reader of culture a privileged view of the representative forms of modern subjectivity that pass through the celebrity as discourses. What follows in the dissertation is a discussion of the role and position of the celebrity in contemporary culture. Ultimately, the dissertation attempts to provide a conclusion about the kind of power that is expressed in and through the celebrity sign.

Because of the ambiguity of the celebrity, its form of power is difficult to discern. In the following chapters, I define its power in terms of its capacity to house conceptions of individuality and simultaneously to embody or help embody "collective configurations" of the social world. In popular culture, these "collective configurations" are called audiences. It is the social power of the audience which

The critique of the image as false value is not exclusively the domain of marxist inspired criticisms. It is endemic to most conservative critiques of society as well. The celebrity as manifestation of the antithesis of the work ethic is exemplary of a culturally conservative approach to the significance of celebrities.

identifies the type of social power that the celebrity expresses. Fundamentally, it is a power that is unstable in terms of each individual sign, but consistent as a system. It is for this reason it is useful to think of the power of the celebrity in terms of a system that constructs and deconstructs the social world in terms of temporal and transforming audiences.

The organization of the dissertation parallels this configuration of celebrity power. The first chapter deals primarily with the way certain authors have expressed the power of the individual in terms of leadership and notoriety. This investigation begins with a study of the type of individuality that the term celebrity defines through a tracing of its usage to its current inherently ambiguous meaning. From this historical establishment of the significance of the term celebrity in twentieth century Western (though predominantly North American) culture to describe a specific form of representative subjectivity, the chapter then moves to a discussion of the merits of various studies of leadership, stardom and celebrities to determine the limitations of this general approach that focusses on the public individual as possessing inherent qualities.

The second chapter investigates the importance of understanding the development of celebrity power in terms of collective configurations. The historical emergence of the celebrity is linked with the historical movements toward containing the "irrational" mass in western democratic systems. Public personalities, in general,

express the direct connection between the public figure and the populous. In a sense, the celebrity circumvents other structures of power in this direct appeal. The celebrity articulates a tension between the meanings provided by a dominant culture which elevates certain individuals and the readings or rearticulation of those meanings by various collective formations in their selective embracement of these public representations.

The third chapter integrates the insights of the first two chapters into a general theory and technique for understanding the function of the celebrity. In this chapter the key analytical concepts are developed. The celebrity's embodiment of "affective power" is discussed in terms of two forms of rationalization: a dominant culture's rationalization of the fragments of the mass into identifiable and categorizable audience groups; and the various audience groups' attempts to rationalize or make sense of the incongruities of their social world through celebrating the human agency of particular public personalities. The concept of the "audience-subject" is developed to express the simultaneous construction of celebrity power through its intense development of the individual personality's power and its dependence on collective configurations for the maintenance of its public representation of power. The celebrity is reconceptualized as a sign which negotiates these tensions and contradictions in its formation and disintegration. The technique of conducting a hermeneutics or reception and intention is discussed as a method to comprehend the meaning of individual celebrities as audience subjectivities.

Chapter Four, Five and Six analyze the emergence of celebrities in three specific entertainment industries. After an historical investigation of the form of celebrity that has emerged in the film, television and popular music industries, a hermeneutic of intention and reception of specific contemporary celebrities - Tom Cruise in film, Oprah Winfrey in television and New Kids on the Block in popular music - is conducted to reveal the way in which they embody particular kinds of "audience-subjectivity" and in this way house the formation of affective power in contemporary culture. This section concludes with a summary chapter - chapter seven - which maps out the interrelations among these types of celebrities, the categories of reception that are privileged in each popular cultural form, and the systemic properties that operate in contemporary culture to construct the discursive parameters of "public subjectivity".

Chapter Eight describes how the system of celebrity informs the operation of political culture. It argues that the disciplinary boundaries between the domain of popular culture and political culture have been eroded through the migration of communicative strategies and public relations from the entertainment industries to the organization of the spectacle of politics. These strategies of defining the public are accentuated in the construction of the political leader. The categories of reception and subjectivity identified in previous chapters in popular culture are charted onto the representations of political leaders. What is revealed is that politics, like the culture industries, attempts to play with and contain affective power through its intense focus

on the personal, the intimate, and the individual qualities of leadership in its process of legitimation.

The concluding chapter identifies the principal functions of celebrity that have emerged in conjunction with the development of capitalist democracies. The dissertation concludes with aligning the power of celebrity with its capacity to disperse power into the private and individualized sphere of personal affect and affectation.

CHAPTER ONE

TRACING THE MEANING OF THE PUBLIC INDIVIDUAL

The aim of the dissertation is an investigation of how celebrity status inflects our political culture specifically and to investigate how it structures power in contemporary culture generally. To see the political dimension of celebrity status requires an elaboration on the normal definition of the term. This chapter begins by investigating the historical development of the word celebrity. It extends this study of its discursive position into a reading of various critical works on related terms that describe the localization of power and prestige in particular individuals. Weber's and Freud's conceptualizations of leadership are read critically to determine the relationship of the concepts of celebrity status and political leadership.

THE MEANINGS OF CELEBRITY

There is a very slippery slope surrounding the term celebrity which makes it difficult to define. It is a state of being that does not really describe the individual but only how well the person is known. Thus, the utilization of the term celebrity immediately moves to the symbolic realm. Its connection to a clear material reality

is the individual who is never really known except in the form of the mediated symbol — the public personality. In a sense, the celebrity symbol is a sign without a clear referent; it can be attached to and detached from any individual very easily. However, the symbol, like all symbols, is not an innocent and naked form. The celebrity symbol is loaded with cultural significance derived from contemporary society. This significance is the ideological weight of any cultural symbol. The celebrity, with the infinite array of possible identities and meanings that can be invested in the characterization, is central to the prevailing ideology of capitalist society. She/he expresses in the most elemental way the symbolic promise of the system of capital. To understand the relationship of the celebrity to capital is in essence to work toward a definition of the concept.

Through studying the etymological roots of celebrity, a genealogy of the use and position of the term can be established. Much like the concept of individualism¹, the use of celebrity in its contemporary (ambiguous) form developed in the nineteenth century. Through studying examples of prior usage, one can see the transformation of its sense from an affinity with piety and religion to some modern sense of false value. The two faces of capitalism — that of defaced value and prized commodity value — are contained within these transforming definitions. The term

¹Individualism as an English term first appeared in Henry Reeves' translation of de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* in 1862. J.S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 157

celebrity has come to embody the ambiguity of the public forms of subjectivity under capitalism.

In the abridged concise *Oxford Dictionary*, other than identifying its Latin derivation in *celeber* and *celebritas*, the definition goes no further than to say that the celebrity is one who is "famous" or is a "well-known person". This abbreviated definition could be construed as identifying in the most vague way, an expanded stage for public subjectivities; the identification of well-knownness may involve a larger section of the population and may suggest new categories that qualify for popular personal status. Such a transformation of usage becomes evident only when one compares it to prior usages of the term. One sees this transformation by looking in the unabridged versions of the *Oxford* and *Webster's* dictionaries: there, this current, everyday usage is derived from a certain telos. The sequence of usages listed suggests an historical development of the term which seems to parallel a transforming system of power. In the *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* "a solemn celebration" is listed first. The *Oxford Dictionary* identifies the first meaning with the more archaic use of the word: "Due observance of rites and ceremonies; pomp, solemnity". The examples given illuminate the precapitalist, seventeenth-century sentiment in the usage: "whose body was removed with all celebritie and enshrined:" (Weever, 1631). In the second usage listed by the *Oxford Dictionary*, celebrity identifies "a solemn rite or ceremony, a celebration". The third definition comes closest to our modern understanding of the word: "The condition of being much extolled or talked about; famousness, notoriety". Although some examples from the same seventeenth century

epoch are given, the usage seems to have become part of the lexicon of the eighteenth century. Still, the term carried its history's weight of solemnity and religiosity: from Hooker in the sixteenth century — "The dignity and celebrity of mother cities should be respected". An interesting, related example from the late eighteenth century gives evidence that the term celebrity was no longer a moniker of solemnity but rather a term of some derogation: "They [Spinoza's successors] had celebrity. Spinoza has fame.(1863)" In this case, celebrity describes a more fleeting, ephemeral connotation of fame. The fourth and final definition identifies the conclusive transformation of the term into the public personality: "A person of celebrity; a celebrated person: a public character". In the examples given under this fourth definition there is a sense of the inauthentic nature of the celebrity: "Did you see any of those 'celebrities' as you call them"(1849). Even more modern in its assurance of the new status of the term is: "One of the celebrities of wealth and fashion confessed ... that" (1856). The air of inauthenticity that rings through these last examples describes the current meaning of celebrity. It has become a term that announces a vulgar sense of notoriety. In English culture, it may have articulated the separation of old wealth and new wealth. The proclamation of one's new—found position, the quest for fame are not forms of distinction that demarcate the landed gentry from the peasants. Rather celebrity can be thought of as a label that works to differentiate layers of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, celebrity status invokes the message of possibility of a democratic age. The restrictions of a former hierarchy are no longer valid in the new order that is

determined by merit and/or the acquisition of wealth. This democratic sense of the term is drawn from the original Latin *celebrem*, which had not only the connotation of famous but also that of "thronged". The celebrity, in this sense, is not distant but attainable — touchable by the multitude. The greatness of the celebrity is something that can be shared and, in essence, celebrated loudly and with a touch of vulgar pride. It is the ideal representation of the triumph of the masses. Concomitantly, celebrity is the potential of capitalism, a celebration of new kinds of values and orders, a debunking of the customary divisions of traditional society, for the celebrity him/her self is dependent entirely on the new order.

Furthermore, celebrity acknowledges a new sense of the public sphere. Celebrity is derived from the French *célèbre* which expresses something "well known, public". Our modern focus on the new public realm or even the expanded public realm beyond the confines of the Church and somewhat redefined by the growth of the state is another feature of seeing new forms of public representations outside of the classic metaphors and symbols of power and influence. From a connotation of religious solemnity to the representation of agnostic fame, the changing definitional focus of the term celebrity historically demarcates this transformation of power.

Finally, *Webster's Dictionary* provides one other link with Latin in its definition of the word celebrate offering some salience in our understanding of celebrity's current usage. There, a connection is made to the latin word *celere* which means "swift" as in the English word "celerity". This suggests the fleeting nature of

celebrity status, that it is a position without history, without a great deal of cultural import or baggage. Unlike peerage, celebrity draws its power from those elements outside tradition. This power however has a certain liquidity, much like the mobility and exchangeability of capital. Its swiftness, like capital, could also be based on the lack of material basis for the representation of notoriety. The celebrity exists above the real world in the realm of symbols which gain and lose value like commodities on the stock market.

What has been identified so far is the central position that the term celebrity has as a metaphor for value in modern society. More specifically, it describes a type of value that can be articulated through an individual and celebrated publicly as important and significant. The term is linked to past power structures (i.e. the Church) and now has connotations that link it to modern power structures (i.e. capitalism).

This definitional landscape of the term celebrity also provides evidence that celebrity is implicated in new categorizations of the public sphere. It appears that the modern usage of celebrity is connected to the heightened significance of popular culture and democratic culture. The celebrity embodies the empowerment of the people to shape the public sphere symbolically.

Other authors have developed the meaning of the celebrity in this modern context and it is worthwhile to investigate their definitions of celebrity and celebrity status. Not all of these authors use celebrity to describe essentially the same phenomena; terms such as hero, star, or leader are often used. Nevertheless the

common thread in these depictions is the attempt to study this new representation of value articulated through a particular subjectivity. Celebrity thus is the general and encompassing term; whereas concepts of hero, star, or leader are more specific categories of the public individual that relate to specific functions in the public sphere.²

Representative Men and Social Control of the Mass in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, the celebration of heroes and great men was the closest that authors came to identifying celebrities. William Hazlitt, writing in the early 1800s, could be, as Braudy claims, "the first great fame theorist of the modern age".³ His reading of the nature of the celebrity involved discerning whether or not the individual was pursuing the highest of ends, unfettered by the desire for personal glory. Thus, poetry was written to reach the height of an aesthetic, the height of an individual genius. Hazlitt's concern was the origin of fame and immortality. The nineteenth century marked a period in which the audience, now a wider "democratic" public, determined the nature of fame and celebrity. With the French Revolution and Napoleon's rule, Hazlitt also saw the liberation of the individual to pursue these

²A term that is developed in the body of the dissertation that captures the relationship of the celebrity to modern collective and social forms that are expressed through particular individuals in the public sphere is the *public subject*. This melding of conceptions of the collective and the individual and individuality is most accurately expressed in terms of this *public subjectivity*. Public subjectivity is synonymous with the term celebrity status; the critical distinction is that public subjectivity is an analytical term and tool for unravelling the organization of modern subjectivity and the role that the celebrity plays in that organization. For a further discussion of public subjectivity see ch. 3, p. 120.

³Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 434

grand aesthetic moments and achievements, to soar as Byron or Keats. Hazlitt was the first to identify the ambiguity of public fame: "'The Spirit of the Age,' as Hazlitt defines it, is an individual ostentation that has created good when it has awakened people to the spirit of liberty, but has too often displayed only the gestures of mere ambition."⁴

By the middle of the nineteenth century, two cultural critics, Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, saw the need to categorize heroism so that its true characters could be seen through the democratic dilution of virtue and genius into celebrity and fame. The possibility that anyone could be famous was seen by Carlyle and Emerson to necessitate a listing of the ideal types of heroes. For Carlyle, the distinction among a noted person, a markedly lesser realm, and a hero was significant. He isolated six ideal types: heroes of ☺ ♥ ☺ the divine, prophetic, poetic, priestly, literary, and kingly orders.⁵ Emerson focussed less on heroic qualities and more on the genius of the individual to pull from other individuals of society to create some common and public good. Because of that focus on the individual spirit, Emerson was drawn to identifying each genius individually, from Shakespeare and Napoleon to Plato and Goethe. Interestingly, both Carlyle and Emerson seem to be acting as protectors of the public good or arbiters of the massive flux of less valuable categories such as celebrity. Like Hazlitt before them, the role

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 437

⁵Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*. New York: AMS Press, 1969 (first given as a lecture series in 1839)

of the larger public audience in the construction of the celebrity was an area to consider with some concern and criticism.

Detailing the entire nineteenth century position of the celebrity in critical and interpretive writing would require a book in itself and this is somewhat beyond the scope of this project. What can be concluded from this sketch of three nineteenth-century writers on heroes is their identification of the contentious area that is discursively captured by the antinomous celebrity sign since the nineteenth century: the construction of individuality through the new mass public and audience. The mass audience is central in the definitions of individual value and worth. The celebrity embodies the ideal type of hero that emerges from the mass audience. For Hazlitt, Carlyle, and Emerson this new power of determining value needs to be connected to (or critically confronted with) historical models of distinctive and important individuals so that any new form can be truly and authentically validated. The danger of the new celebrity is that it has slipped the yoke of historical validation.⁶

Understanding the New Public Identity: Klapp, Goode and Alberoni

Twentieth-century thinking about public personalities or celebrities has drawn from the sociological discourse of mapping the social world. The celebrity in this form of writing is a new phenomenon that is connected to the modern world of communication technologies and the obsession with the image as opposed to the

⁶The continuation of this tradition of establishing difference in greatness can be seen if one were to trace the history of biography and autobiography from the nineteenth to twentieth century. Such a study is beyond the bounds of this dissertation; nevertheless the biography remains a rich, relatively unmined area for the development of a discourse on individuality and new conceptions of fame and significance in the twentieth century.

substance of the public personality. In some ways, this tradition extends the Emerson, Hazlitt and Carlyle thesis of the threat of illegitimate forms of fame and celebrity. Writers like Goode, Klapp and Alberoni identify the development of a new symbolic system in the twentieth century.

Orrin Klapp's two books on public personalities, *Heroes, Villains and Fools* and *Symbolic Leaders*, are popular psychosociological studies of celebrities. They are not written for academic inquiry; rather, they are written as bridging texts that establish in journalistic fashion the salient points of modern symbolic leaders. His thesis suggests that there is now in place a symbolic system of public personalities that has a great deal of cultural significance (and power). He differentiates between two roles in public life: one that is obsessively focussed on the practical — a "doer" — and one that is obsessed with the image of being and the dramatic weight of that image. Klapp identifies certain requirements that need to be met for any individual to achieve this second role of mythic and symbolic status. Generally, these involve an individual's ability to read and be sensitive to an audience's needs (whoever that audience might be) and then articulate oneself into a typification of those needs: "Every leader of a social movement, every big star of entertainment and sports, every really popular statesman or church leader, has to make this discovery [of type]" in order to move into this domain of symbolic significance.⁷

There are several "stages" along this route to achieve this symbolic status and Klapp lists them:

⁷Orrin E. Klapp, *Symbolic Leaders*. Chicago: Aldine, 196, p. 35.

1. Making a personal-dramatic "hit", which creates demand for a function and may lead to dialectical [response to one's audience and then reformation] perfection of style of performance.
2. Becoming a durable symbol
 - a. Getting a niche as a living "immortal"
 - b. Separating the image from the person so that it becomes viable on its own
 - c. Converting the role actually performed into pure symbol (likeness, story, drama)
 - d. Institutionalization by ritual drama and/or type market
 - e. Passing the intergenerational threshold to become a potentially deathless symbol or myth.⁸

Klapp details the way in which modern society has moved to highlight public drama which is expressed by the various symbolic leaders that are fostered. His conclusion about this focus on public drama is: "leadership in general is more unstable than it would be otherwise. Contretemps, upsets, follies, contests, scandal, make a feast of entertainment or a spinning political roulette wheel..."

Two significant insights can be drawn from Klapp's efforts. Klapp, however well he has attempted to describe this move to the symbolic, misses the fundamental link of the celebrity system to conceptions of power and the way power has been rearticulated through the development of democracies. Secondly, Klapp's reading of this new world of symbolic leaders identifies, in its journalistic style, how underdeveloped the study of celebrities (beyond biographical detail) was in terms of intellectual inquiry. In fact, Klapp's writing on celebrity represents one of the more

⁸*Ibid.*, Klapp, pp. 64-65.

sophisticated and well-developed reading of celebrities up to the 1970s: most other accounts rarely exit the biographical and the journalistic.⁹

While Klapp overlooked the way in which power is articulated through celebrities, other writers attempted working hypotheses concerning the relationship. Goode, in his book *Celebration of Heroes*, states that there is a prestige economy that operates in all societies. The principal function of the prestige economy is, for Goode, a mechanism of social control. In defining social control, Goode is less concerned on its negative consequences than its positive ones. He writes that "all people share the universal need to gain the respect or esteem of others, and that "the foundations of social life rest in part on the universal need for respect, esteem, approval, and honor."¹⁰ Heroes are the recipients of different forms of prestige. Goode investigates how this system of rewards, operating differently from the market economy, establishes objects or goals within different groups and social strata in a society. He has concluded that there is an "inevitability of heroes, of a skewed and peaked distribution of prestige and other social rewards in modern societies."¹¹ As well, the system of rewards is significant for celebrating achievement and recognizing

⁹Two notable exceptions to this reading of the study of celebrities are Edgar Morin's *Les Stars*, Paris: Seuil, 1972 and, to a degree, Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, London: Palladin, 1972. In general, film studies was the site where more serious enterprises in the study of stars were undertaken as the study of film became a legitimate discipline of aesthetic study. I deal with this location of the study of celebrities later in this chapter.

¹⁰William J. Goode, *The Celebration of Heroes: Prestige as a Social Control System*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. viii.

¹¹*Ibid.*, Goode, p. 376.

the highest possible pursuits. It serves to organize the social world into standards of meaning.

Goode's value to this study is limited because he generalizes the activity of establishing what is prestigious. Goode eliminates the distinction that public personalities operate as a different system of prestige from those of a more local and community nature. Although he identifies the relationship between establishing distinctions through heroes as an elaborate system of social control and acknowledges that systems of prestige alter in democratic societies, Goode's thesis becomes primarily an anthropological investigation confirming that something beyond a simple economic model explains the organization of social reality.

Useful about Goode's approach, however, is his idea that the meaning of prestige for an individual is derived from the group. With this, Goode's thesis departs from the "great man thesis" that suggests something innate is central to bestowal of celebrated status. Nevertheless, Goode's identification of the play of prestige is not very applicable to this study of the way in which power is articulated through celebrities.

An Italian sociologist, Francesco Alberoni provides one of the first interpretations of celebrities in terms of a concept of power. In his article entitled "The Powerless Elite: Theory and Sociological Research on the Phenomenon of the Stars", Alberoni makes some distinctions between stars and other public personalities. For Alberoni, stars are a modern phenomena that have emerged from the developing complexity and social fluidity of modern society. They are an elite "whose institutional power is very limited or non-existent, but whose doings and way of life

arouse a considerable and sometimes even maximum degree of interest."¹² What emerges in such a dual system of elites is that each elite is evaluated according to different criteria. Holders of power are evaluated; stars rarely are evaluated in the same way because of their lack of institutional power. Alberoni says that stars are objects of admiration. In contrast, envy often becomes central to the adjudication of political and economic elites. Stars form a second elite community that becomes the centre of gossip and discussion in a complex society because of their apparent accessibility and openness to the larger community. Alberoni tentatively concludes that stars are, in part, a transitional phenomenon that identifies the need by the general community for an avenue of discussing issues of morality — "family, neighbourhood, of production and consumption etc."¹³ — that are insufficiently or ineffectively handled in the rational sphere of evaluating political power elites.

Alberoni's argument centres on identifying what general needs of a community are overlooked in the organization of a modern, rational, and democratic society. Stars and the star system are then positioned to respond to that need. Although Alberoni addresses the notion of power, his focus on the institutional site of power makes his argument of limited utility for this study. Also, the distinctions he makes between power elites and powerless elites are of questionable validity; our relationship to all public personalities is not clearly divided between some rational assessment and some irrational evaluation. It is a false dichotomy.

¹²Francesco Alberoni, "The Powerless 'Elite': Theory and Sociological Research on the Phenomenon of the Stars" in Dennis McQuail (ed.), *Sociology of Mass Communications*, London: Penguin, 1972, p. 75.

¹³Ibid., Alberoni, p. 98

Monaco's New Typology of the Celebrity

As previously mentioned, few critics have used the term celebrity as a starting point for an investigation of contemporary culture. Even fewer have devoted an entire book to that study. James Monaco, in his book, *Celebrity* attempts to establish the various types of celebrity and thereby establishes the meaning(s) of celebrity in contemporary culture. His attempt at accomplishing this task is however disappointing.

Monaco begins by using the root of the word to describe the celebrity function: "We celebrate (proclaim, praise) them. They celebrate(observe, perform) for us".¹⁴ They are our lives as we live through them in the most vicarious fashion. Monaco distinguishes the development of the celebrity as a modern phenomenon, one that is inextricably linked with the media technologies and modern society. His distinction is between the heroes that were championed in the nineteenth century by Carlyle and Emerson and the bald pursuit of fame that characterizes modern celebrity. "[The celebrity] has superseded heroism."¹⁵ Instead of Carlyle's six types of heroes, Monaco offers us a new lexicon of celebrity types.

First is the hero — a famous person who has actually done something in an active sense. Astronauts, scientists, and inventors fall into the category of heroes

¹⁴Monaco, James. *Celebrity: The Media as Image Makers*. New York: Dell, 1978, p. xi.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 5.

because of their active nature. Celebrities, in contrast, are more passive - they are acted upon by the media and constructed into an appropriate icon. The second category is the star. Monaco explains that the celebrity as star is not, as popularly conceived, an actor. Whereas the actor assumes roles, the star works on playing him or herself. Marlon Brando personifies the star; we are more interested in seeing Brando than seeing Brando transform into something unrecognizable. Monaco states that along with a plethora of stars which fill the television talkshows, American politicians since Teddy Roosevelt work towards becoming stars. They attempt to create an effective persona of self for the electorate.¹⁶ Finally, the third and lowest category of celebrity is the "quasar", which Monaco thinks is the most interesting because the individual has virtually no control over his or her image. "It is not what they are or what they do, but what we *think* they are that fascinates us." The media is the centrepin in this construction of the quasar image. The example that Monaco uses is the media construction of the many personas of Patty Hearst in the 1970s.¹⁷ The quasar, who is often an unwilling participant in the celebrity phenomenon, is fabricated into an icon. For example, the poster image of Che Guevera was more vocal than the actions of the revolutionary.¹⁸ The iconic quality of any celebrity is also the zenith of a career. What the icon represents is the possibility that the

¹⁶*Ibid.* pp.8-9

¹⁷Monaco, "The Mythologizing of Citizen Hearst" in *Celebrity*, pp. 65-78.

¹⁸Monaco, p. 12

celebrity has actually entered the language of the culture and can exist whether the celebrity continues to "perform" or dies.

Although Monaco's book begins with a great deal of promise, there is little development of his ideas on the celebrity beyond the first twenty pages of this edited volume. His only marginally systematic analyses of the celebrity are of Patty Hearst and Farrah Fawcett. Even in these instances, the approach is woefully incomplete.

Film Star Studies

By far the most developed work on the concept of the celebrity appears in the extensive writings on films, particularly Hollywood films. Here the name celebrity is rarely used. The star is the usual identification of some persona that has transcended the films that he/she has performed in and created an aura.

If the auteur theory of production has become the ideological mainstream of film criticism, the analysis of the star and his/her influence is found primarily in two related discourses: the popular discourse on movies and the political economic analysis of the cinema. The common and everyday way to identify films is through their stars. It is also quite normal to consider certain stars as being box office draws - a title rarely bestowed on a Hollywood director. The star ensures success for the film, a guaranteed return on investment for the production company. Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Burt Reynolds, Sylvester Stallone, or Tom Cruise in their eras possessed this unofficial title of box office king.

In the political economic analysis of the cinema, the star also figures centrally in the historical development of the industry. The classic history of the development of the star system relates first to the "invention" of the close-up shot by D.W. Griffith.¹⁹ In opposition to the codes of drama, where the entire scene and stage were visible, the camera allowed for the framing of the face of actors. Facial expression, with all its subtleties and intimacies became a sign of the distinctive quality of the film over theatre. Simultaneously, the close-up imbricated the actor more fully into the meaning of the drama. The close-up focussed on the personal in a way that the stage had never done. This new "intimate" relationship between the characters and the audience altered the normal producer/worker relationship that epitomized dramatic production. The connection to the film audience became more centred on the actor. The new social relations around the production and use of film as an entertainment medium established the potential of the star who could develop some personal power outside the production with a direct identification with the audience. In this early stage of Hollywood film production, the star as a system of value was still in its embryonic form. The nascent focus on the persona became the economic motor force of film production from 1910 onwards, essentially paralleling the maturation of the movie industry.²⁰

¹⁹Alexander Walker, *Stardom: The Hollywood Phenomenon*. London: Michael Joseph, 1970, p.21.

²⁰Walker, pp.43-56. More will be said about this in chapter three of the thesis on the concept of the celebrity in the film industry. The key point emphasized here is the genesis of a new system of value in the personality through its articulation in this industry. Also, the particular time of the integration of the feature length film into the mainstream of popular culture identifies simultaneously the degree of societal embracing of the film star as a public personality.

Outside of popular literature, there are two thinkers who have provided the most in-depth investigations of the concept of the star, particularly the film star. The now classic analysis by French sociologist Edgar Morin, entitled *Les Stars*, is generally acknowledged as groundbreaking. It is a treatment of the star as a serious object of social study and it chronicles the formation of the star system. Morin identifies the star system as the *embourgeoisement* of the medium, a way that film could move out of the carnival setting into a legitimate entertainment medium of the middle class. Thus, the star embodies the "exceptional with the ordinary, the ideal with the fundamentally everyday".²¹ The film stars actively work on the merging of bourgeois and working class imaginations. One could surmise that the star is active in placating a proletarian interest that may be separate and therefore threatening to bourgeois cultural hegemony. This is an extension of Morin's thesis.

More recently, a British writer, Richard Dyer, has been instrumental in developing the study of stars as a subdiscipline of film studies. In his most recent book on the subject, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, Dyer formulates an interesting and useful conception of the star in relationship to the audience:

Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed... Stars are also embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have to make sense of their lives, and indeed through which we make our lives

²¹Richard Dyer, *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, 1979, p. 24.

- categories of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on.²²

Dyer explains that the audience is obsessively and incessantly searching the star persona for the real and the authentic. We are aware that stars are appearances, "yet the whole media construction of stars encourages us to think in terms of 'really'."²³ What is Marilyn Monroe 'really' like? Is Paul Newman 'really' the same as he appears in his films? These are the types of questions that the magazines and media ask the stars for us. Essentially, these questions point to the social function and position of the star in contemporary society. As Dyer states the star is universally individualized for the star is the representation of the potential of the individual. From the Enlightenment, Western thought has concentrated on affirming the concept of the individual. Despite evidence to the contrary — the disintegration of individual power through the establishment of mass society, the individual continues to represent the ideological centre of capitalist culture. The freedom of the individual is articulated through our freedom to choose what we consume, or, alternatively, the freedom to make money. Thus, the star is an ideological shoring up of this triumphant individuality.²⁴

²²Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. London: British Film Institute/MacMillan Education, 1986, p. 18.

²³Ibid., p. 2.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8-11.

Dyer explains that the stars embody cultural contradictions in the realm of identity and specifically in the division of public and private realms. As an audience, we are drawn to deconstruct the star, and in that process of reading the elaborate text that goes beyond the screen image, we are compelled to debate the nature of their public and private selves. In this intense study of star personalities, the audience fragments somewhat in its identification with individual stars. Some are drawn to the coherent authenticity of stars who appear to represent the same values off-screen as on. Others are drawn to stars that externalize their private torments in the tradition of Marilyn Monroe. Dyer provides an excellent example of this work of the audience in their reading of John Travolta as the star of *Saturday Night Fever*:

I haven't done an audience survey, but people seemed to be fairly evenly divided. For those not taken with him, the incredible build-up to the film, the way you knew what his image was before you saw the film, the coy but blatant emphasis on his sex appeal in the film, the gaudy artifice of the disco scene, all merely confirmed him as one great phoney put-on on the mass public. But for those for whom he and the film did work, there were the close-ups revealing the troubled pain behind the macho image, the intriguing off-screen stories about his relationship with an older woman, the spontaneity (=sincerity) of his smile, the setting of the film in a naturalistically portrayed ethnic subculture. A star's image can work either way, and in part we make it work according to how much it speaks to us in terms we can understand about things that are important to us.²⁵

Within all this construction of the star by the audience, Dyer also identifies the other dialectic at play in the star's fabrication. The genesis of the star persona is

²⁵Ibid., pp. 15-16.

its ability to be expressed in a commodity form. The tensions between these definitions and the star's own attempts at definition, independence, and distinction are the elements examined in the rest of the book, in which three stars are analyzed and "read" by Dyer in-depth.

Dyer's extensive work on the film star is one of the best sources for a discussion of the various tensions that are involved in the construction of the modern celebrity. His work emphasizes three important aspects of the meaning of stars that are relevant to our analysis of the construction of the celebrity:

1. The celebrity is the epitome of the individual for identification and idealization in society.
2. The celebrity is not wholly determined by the culture industries and is therefore somewhat created and constructed by the audience's reading of dominant cultural representations. Gramsci's conception of hegemony best expresses this reworking of the dominant ideological images into social categories of class, gender, age etc.
3. The celebrity is a commodity and therefore expresses a form of valorization of the individual and personality which is coherent with capitalism and the associated consumer culture.

Another important writer on stars who has emerged from film studies is Richard de Cordova. In an important work, *Picture Personalities* (1990), de Cordova analyzes the development of the film star system. This work is significant because it establishes the intertextual nature of the conception of the star. The star is organized by his/her films, but also by the various discussions about the star that appear in the

press. de Cordova details the development of this connected system to film stardom and stitches together the history of the discourse of autonomous stardom that was ensconced in the twenties. The transformation of the star to the status of autonomy provides an historical discourse about public "individuality" and its relationship to a culture. The categories that de Cordova has developed to describe the relative autonomy of the film star can be transcribed to aid in the determination of the power of the celebrity in contemporary culture.²⁶

Celebrity as a Form of Manipulation

Few others who have written about the celebrity have provided such a comprehensive reading of its meaning.²⁷ However, many other social critics have used the celebrity to emphasize a theory of media manipulation.

The strongest strain of the theory of manipulation derives from critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. Marcuse, in *One Dimensional Man*, is dismissive about the celebrity. The star, he asserts, is a force in the manipulation of consciousness. It serves to placate the individual into an acceptance of the modern condition. As opposed to previous forms of culture which served to negate the power of existing society, the modern industry, through the star, fosters the celebration of the system. The thesis of reassuring the individual through the actions of the

²⁶See chapter four for a further integration of de Cordova's work into the study of the contemporary film celebrity.

²⁷One author not included in this survey of film writers on stardom and celebrity is Richard Schickel and his book, *Intimate Strangers: The Culture of Celebrity*, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985. Although occasionally there is an interesting passage, there is nothing substantially insightful in the book; but I would agree with Schickel in identifying that celebrity status is fundamentally a twentieth century phenomenon.

celebrity/star is further elaborated in Horkheimer and Adorno's classic essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment or Mass Deception".²⁹ Again the idea of the malleability of the masses' consciousness is emphasized. In their discussion of film and radio, Horkheimer and Adorno develop an argument on the modern "cult of the personality" offered by Hollywood. The star is meant to epitomize the potential of everyone in American society. We are psychically drawn to identify with stars as ourselves. This, however, is only appearance. The dialectical reality is that the star is part of a system of false promise in the system of capital, which offers the reward of stardom to a random few in order to perpetuate the myth of potential universal success. The masses are by their very nature psychologically immature and thus are drawn to the magic of these larger-than-life personalities in the same way a child identifies with and implicitly trusts his parents. Mass society has produced a people peculiarly susceptible to these forms of manipulation.

Leo Lowenthal, another member of the Frankfurt School, wrote an entire chapter of a book on popular culture on the transformation of the hero in the twentieth century. His key point was that whereas in previous social systems there was an emphasis on success being based on hard work, in current society the key determinant was luck and circumstance. Moreover, the celebrity was arising from the arena of leisure and non-functional types of endeavours. He called this transformation a progress towards idols of consumption as opposed to the former idols of production (i.e. business leaders, politicians, captains of industry) The heroes

²⁹In Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum, 1972, pp. 123-171

of popular culture simultaneously offer hope for everyone's success and the promise of the entire social system to be open to these moments of luck. Ultimately, the system of modern heroes reinforced the status quo.^{29,30}

The strength of these critiques for this study of celebrity is that they develop a link between theories of the individual and their integration into the meaning of capitalism. Critical theory's combination of Freudian insights with an anti-materialist Marxism derived from the early writings on reification by Georg Lukacs provide the first in-depth study of modern popular culture as an entire system. The construction of the mass-individual dichotomy demarcates a temporal assessment of the twentieth century when the final triumph of a debilitated mass over the potential for true consciousness of the individual is realized. What early critical theory missed, however, was the complex structure of popular culture and the uses audiences made of popular cultural artefacts. Also, their analysis froze the category of the mass into their tableau so that the fragmentation of the mass into other formations and configurations was completely overlooked. This oversight drastically simplified their assessment of stars and celebrities to simple instantiations of a system of manipulation.

²⁹Leo Lowenthal, "The Triumph of Mass Idols" in *Literature, Popular Culture and Society*. Palo Alto: Pacific Books 1961(1944), pp. 109-140.

³⁰An interesting application of Lowenthal's division of "idols of production" and "idols of consumption" is carried out by Barbi Zelizer. Zelizer assesses the relevance of this division in contemporary society as it relates to television journalism in general and Dan Rather's form of celebritydom in particular. See Zelizer, "What's rather Public about Dan Rather: TV Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity", *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 17:2 Summer 1989, pp. 74-80.

Daniel Boorstin's treatment of celebrity status, rather than emphasizing the power of manipulation, tries to reveal the superficiality of the position: "A star is well-known for his/her wellknownness". He adds that what makes a star is a "definable and publicizable personality".³¹ This thesis identifies in outline the postmodern condition of absence of meaning. The interchangeability of celebrities means that no celebrity possesses any meaning of consequence. Thus, the system of signification that it offers, the categorization of value, is pure surface. To a degree, this explains the rapid succession of famous people and the equally rapid decline of any particular celebrity. Ultimately, the surface meaning system means that the system of veneration, the process of succession of valued human identities, is more important than what anyone of the individual celebrities may represent. The convertibility of value, a value that emphasizes inherent "exchange value" over "use value", is the persistent reality.

Considering the celebrity as pure exchange value points to the position of the celebrity in a culture focussed on consumption. Boorstin's point concerning the ephemeral quality of the celebrity sign is articulated as an entire system of value in the work of Jean Baudrillard. In several different works, Baudrillard develops a theory around the ultimate freedom of the sign from the trappings of permanent value. The sign can attach to and detach from objects at will. This detachable sign is exemplified by, for example, the fashion industry. The depth of value of any sign of fashion is not to be found. Fashion is a system which celebrates the possibility

³¹Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*. New York: Athencum, 1962.

that an infinite number of signifiers can be attached to an infinite number of signifieds so that change and transformation of the resultant sign are the constancies of value. In one essay, Baudrillard spoke of this very ecstasy of communication; a certain pleasure and freedom is part of a social system that has moved to the domain of communication and representation.³² To extend that position, the system of celebrity is the expression of the motility of exchange value in the construction of subjectivity. The interchangeability of celebrities, the non-attachment to the individual means that we participate in the "ecstasy" of recombining a new representation of celebrity status.

Baudrillard's approach is important to this study because it re-vivifies the relevant social critique of value of the Frankfurt School. However, there are two areas where the analysis presents a virtual vacuum of insight. First, there is little discussion of people's forms of identification of people to the transformable signs of the social world. The connection is not clearly made. What needs to be undertaken is an investigation of the power of the celebrity as a sign with its audience or public, even if that power is temporary and transferable to new signs of celebrity. The actual forms of subjectivity that are presented and accepted as celebrities need in-depth deconstruction. Secondly, the source of the celebrity sign is not entirely in the

³²Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication" in Hal Foster (ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*. Port Townsend Wa.: Bay Press, 1983, pp. 126-134

Baudrillard develops an argument that there has been the destruction of public and private spheres in the movement to pure communication and representation. He likens the modern condition of experience to that of the schizophrenic where the loss of the attachment to the real makes every experience, every representation so close and instantaneous that the definition of self is lost in the play of images and representations. For further development of Baudrillard's concepts of the "hyperreal" see his *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

manipulative hands of the media or other obvious institutions of power. It is, as Dyer has emphasized, an area of negotiation among the public, the media, and the celebrity. In a form of working hegemony, the celebrity is configured. The more pertinent question may be: why is the celebrity a very active area of discursive negotiation in contemporary culture? Posing this question helps us come closer to the nature of the celebrity's power.

UNDERSTANDING CELEBRITY POWER THROUGH LEADERSHIP

In many ways the celebrity resembles the political leader. Both depend on an audience or public for their legitimation. Both are considered to possess some quality that makes them rise above the everyday to the point where they represent the culture. Thus, both are forms of subjectivity that are sanctioned by the culture and enter the symbolic realm of providing meaning and significance for the culture. They are separated in the social world by categorical distinctions that are meant to identify the power of the political leader and the relative lack of direct power of celebrities. The argument advanced in this dissertation is the idea that there is a convergence in the source of power between the political leader and other forms of celebrity. The categorical distinction of forms of power is dissolving in favour of a unified system of celebrity status, in which the sanctioning of power is based on similar emotive and irrational, yet culturally deeply embedded, sentiments.

Because of its status and power, leadership has been an object of study to a much greater extent than the celebrity. Since the leader possesses qualities similar to

those of the celebrity, the analyses of leaders and leadership is fruitful territory for this investigation of the convergence of the legitimation of power under the sign of the celebrity.

In the social sciences, there are two — appropriately defined — father figures in the study of leadership: Max Weber, from a socio-political orientation, and Sigmund Freud, from a socio-psychological perspective. Neither encompasses the entire field of investigation but the two do figure prominently in most studies of leadership. It should be added that later scholars did not see Freud's or Weber's discussion of leadership as central to their work. For Weber, leadership outside of the prevailing rationality and bureaucracy was a temporary phenomenon and he integrated it into a general theory of rationalization. In Freud's case, his works on the origins of leadership were written after his principal works on psychoanalysis had been published and integrated into a discipline and profession. Since much of his later work contradicted some of his earlier writing on the treatment of individual neuroses, it has been considered to have been written by a man of failing health and intellect and is often relegated to a status of insignificance.³³

Weber and Charisma

Weber's contribution to the study of leadership can be summarized in one word: charisma. Before Weber, this Greek word was rarely used and the general

³³Serge Moscovici, *The Age of the Crowd: A Historical Treatise on Mass Psychology*, trans. J.C. Whitehouse, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985 (1981), pp.219-220.

sentiment was expressed by the term prestige.³⁴ As a result of Weber's reinvestment in the term, charisma, in its modern usage is roughly synonymous with how Weber described it. Drawing from the original Greek definition, Weber identifies charisma as a "gift" from the grace of God. This is its vital attachment to the domain of the supernatural. The charismatic leader arises when "extraordinary needs" can be resolved only through a "transcend[ence of] the sphere of everyday economic routines".³⁵ His power is *ultra vires* of institutional and economic forms of legitimation. According to Weber, charisma is a universal phenomenon: the rational forms of government and power are rejected in favour of a prophet. Thus, the power stems from the *individual* and rarely outlives his/her personal reign. In pure charismatic authority, the leader is entirely independent of the status of an office, position, or rank: "the purer charisma is, the less it can be understood organizationally".³⁶

Weber's interest in charisma is connected to his general theoretical interest in types of rationality and rationalization. In identifying the development of bureaucratic rationalization so prevalent in modern society, Weber chronicled the domain of the irrational in the legitimation process. Charisma identifies this external force in social transformation. Indeed, Weber considers charisma a motor force of

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 289.

³⁵Max Weber, *Economy and Society, Volume Three*. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968, p. 1112.

³⁶*Ibid.* p. 1118.

revolutionary change in society. But, because it is a power that relies on instability, ad hoc organizations of devotees and followers, and the will of an individual prophet, it is inherently precarious:

Every charisma is on the road from a turbulently emotional life that knows no economic rationality to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it nearer to its end.³⁷

All charisma, in the end, goes through a process of "routinization". For example, the formation of kingships is the institutionalization of an originary charismatic warlord. The vestiges of this charismatic authority can be found in the separation of the king from the routines of the bureaucracy so that the semblance of the monarch's affective power is retained.³⁸ In a sense, most of the Christian churches are built on the routinization of the charismatic following of Christ or one of his charismatically inspired followers. The institutions and hierarchy of the Catholic Church exemplify the transformation from charismatic authority to patriarchal/traditional authority. Power is validated through "rational" and normative domains that form the basis of a bureaucracy.³⁹ Weber also classifies this transformation into the bureaucracy of charismatic authority as the "Depersonalization of Charisma": the internal gift of

³⁷*Ibid.*, p.1120.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 1141-1146.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 954.

charisma is rationalized and made external into qualities that are "transferable, personally acquirable and attachable to the incumbent of an office or an institutional structure regardless of the persons involved".⁴⁰

Weber concludes his analysis of charisma with a further discussion of its demise in the face of bureaucracy so that it only resurfaces when the discipline of rationality is occasionally relaxed:

As domination congeals into a permanent structure, charisma recedes as a creative force and erupts only in short-lived mass emotions with unpredictable effect, during elections and similar occasions.... Discipline inexorably takes over ever larger areas as the satisfaction of political and economic needs is increasingly rationalized. This universal phenomenon more and more restricts the importance of charisma and of individually differentiated conduct.⁴¹

The locus of power in the person and personality is absorbed into a structure that represents state power. One senses in Weber's work that the decline in importance of charismatic authority is symptomatic of our society. The tension between charisma's irrational, personal authority and rational, bureaucratic authority is increasingly resolved in favour of the bureaucracy. This is placed by Weber in contradistinction with the former resolution of the irrational with some form of patriarchal and tradition-bound domination.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p.1135.

⁴¹Weber, *op. cit.* Vol. 3, pp.1146,1156.

Weber's arguments concerning the domain of the rational and irrational are central concerns of this project. Like the charismatic figure, the celebrity also demarcates an area of social life and identification which is fundamentally irrational. Weber's hypothesis concerning the resolution of irrationality into bureaucratic rationality offers a useful model in which the study of the "resolution" of celebrity status into a rationalized form in contemporary culture could be applied. For this model to be useful, some modifications would be necessary in order to explain the contemporary condition of accepted domains of irrational or emotive forms of power(i.e. the celebrity) as part of a larger system of rationality. The modifications, I fear, may be too radical to fit into the original Weberian model. Nonetheless, Weber's formulations of charisma, rationality, and irrationality are keys to understanding the nature of celebrity power.

Weber's work on charisma has been used as a model for a number of studies of political leadership since it was originally written in the first two decades of this century. Ann Ruth Willner's application is probably the most faithful to his definitions (to the point of deifying his conception of charisma) and the most complete in determining examples of true charisma.⁴² By looking at her work, we can assess, to some degree, the value of applying Weber's conceptions of charisma to the study of the celebrity.

Willner argues against the idea that charismatic power is disappearing in the late twentieth century. Several writers, including Lowenstein and Schlesinger, have

⁴²Ruth Ann Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984.

attempted to advance this thesis. Schlesinger considers that in democracy there is no room for charisma to operate.⁴³ Lowenstein suggests that charisma is conducive to societies operating without bureaucracies, where the free flow of myth, and religion are central to the governing order. In the post-Cartesian world of highly rationalized and industrialized societies the realm of charisma has been "supplanted".⁴⁴

Willner's counterposition suggests that there may be counterfeit forms of charisma through the utilization of the mass media for the creation of a powerful image.

Willner uses Nixon's media campaigns as examples of this phenomena to create charisma for an individual who possessed very little. However, for Willner, there is persistent empirical evidence that the charismatic leader continues to appear on the political scene. The proof is in the array of historical and contemporary examples of charisma.

Another prevailing assessment of charismatic leadership is the conception that it arises only in times of extreme social crisis. However, Willner's categorization of leaders who possess near-to-pure charismatic authority, shows that only two of the six leaders chosen, Roosevelt and Hitler, emerged from the conditions of crisis. For Willner, the existence of leaders like Sukarno, Castro, Mussolini, and Ghandi prove that other possibly internal factors (to use a Weberian distinction) are involved in the production of the charismatic leader.

⁴³ Irvine Schiffer, *Charisma: a psychoanalytic look at mass society*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973, p.6.

⁴⁴Karl Lowenstein, *Max Weber's Political Ideas in the Perspective of Our Time*, Amherst: University of Mass., 1966, pp. 79,86 from Willner, *SpellBinders*, p.13.

In her analysis of these six leaders, Willner lists four "catalytic factors" that they all possess:

1. The assimilation of the leader to one or more myths of his society or culture.
2. The performance of what appears to be an extraordinary or heroic feat.
3. The projection of the possession of qualities with an uncanny or a powerful aura.
4. Outstanding rhetorical ability⁴⁵

Willner's book emphasizes the qualities of the individual which are the impetus behind the development of a massive following of the leader outside of traditional institutional structures and formats. She does not dispute the masses' importance in maintaining the charismatic leader, although she echoes Weber's assessment of the masses' role in this form of legitimation: "their duty is to recognize his charisma"⁴⁶. Her treatment of the charismatic leaders determines two elements: whether the leaders possess the innate qualities which Weber has defined as charismatic and whether this perception of the masses of the leader's charisma exists.

What Willner's approach reveals is the severe limitations of the Weberian model of charisma. Through the diligent application of Weber's paradigm, Willner's own work seems confined. She writes extensively about the attachment of contemporary leaders to the myths of each culture, but fails to see that this is the

⁴⁵Willner, p. 61.

⁴⁶Weber, op. cit. p. 1113.

formation of a working ideology for the leader. Her "factual" treatment of myths and the leaders rings with the idea that her study is value-free, and is an applied scientific inquiry into the phenomena of charisma. This presents the reader with a jarring sense of contradiction. Fundamentally, charisma deals with the affective, the emotional, and the irrational — elements that clash with the very centre of a scientific application. As a result, Willner's book misses the very key of Weber's concern about charismatic authority: its relationship to rationality. Willner may have discovered the continued existence of charismatic authority and have identified the telling characteristics for others to identify the same phenomena, but she has missed the debate about the position of the charisma's irrational discourse in contemporary political culture. Willner's model therefore has limited value to this project. Her work does provide some descriptions of how particular leaders evoke cultural myths to sustain power which may be useful to compare the way in which celebrities draw on cultural myths to embody their audiences. However, because Willner's application of charisma is so mechanical she provides few insights into the place and the position of affective or irrational power in contemporary culture, the kind of power that seems to be at the core of charismatic authority.

Freud and the Leader

Weber's insight develops from a study of the leader himself and this is its limitation. Freud's work on the leader provides the dialectical insight into the understanding of the followers in the formation of the leader. Also, the qualities

which seem magical and supernatural in Weber's and Willner's analysis are based more in psychical prehistory and each individual's unconscious in Freud's.

Freud's principal study on leadership is in his essay "Group Psychology and The Analysis of the Ego". Other works, including *Totem and Taboo*, *The Future of An Illusion*, *Civilization and its Discontents* and *Moses and Monotheism*, provide elaborations on his efforts to understand the social world from the position of the individual's formation. As mentioned earlier, these studies of the social world are often looked on disparagingly by scholars of Freud. A very good reason for this is that the anthropological "facts" forming the basis of much of these inquiries are suspect or have since been disproved. A very bad reason for this is that they do not fit neatly into the theories that Freud presented in his earlier works.

Freud builds his theory of the advancement of civilization on the repression of libidinal drives which, on their own, promote chaos and anarchy. It is from this relatively negative position concerning the nature of man that Freud writes about the social world. Primitive man was not the positive and cooperative group like the animal herd; rather, the primitive state of man was the horde.⁴⁷ The horde, according to Freud, was a loose grouping of humans ruled by one dominant male leader who ensured his power by the total sexual repression of all other males in the group. Indeed, the leader was the only individual in the entire group. From the subjugation of the rest of the males, there existed a crude form of equality among the

⁴⁷Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego", from the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 18. London: Hogarth, 1955 (1921), pp. 65-143 ch. 9 and 10.

horde; they all desired the despot's reign to end, they envied his sexual freedom, and they all feared equally the despot's power. From this condition is the genesis of the human group that worked cooperatively. In the case of the primitive horde, the result was the murder of the dominant male, an act Freud relates, that was peculiarly collective and cooperative. All subordinate males were equal accomplices in the murder.⁴⁸ Through the combination of collective lament and the new belief that no one could replace the originary father/despot, arose an effort to replace him symbolically. Each of the despot's "sons" recreated the condition of dominance in the family, in which the father was preeminent. As Freud relates, it took the genius of the first poet to further construct the myth of the father, in which the despotic horde leader is constructed into a form of hero who is deified for his strength and power. The myth is further constructed so that this original poet can attempt to assume the role of the original father. Through the power of the ideal and symbol of the hero, the new leader attempts to take on the mantle of power. The rest of the group recognize the reality of their own longing for the same position and so recognize the validity of the poet's construction of the myth of succession.

This is, for Freud, the "primal secret" of society, ritualistically relived in the annual killing and eating of an animal by the tribe that has been given sacred, totemic power. It is a solemn invocation of the necessity of some form of imposed order on the multitude so that there is stability. Unleashed libido is the enemy and the ideal

⁴⁸Ibid. ch. 12 "Postscript", p.168.

father figure serves as a form of identification that is higher in importance than these individual's desires which are divisive to the social whole.

The value of Freud's analysis for this study is twofold: it is an explanation of the origin of collective behaviour and it links the development of leadership to the concept of identification. The leader is central to the formation of both collective behaviour and the process of identification. First, the basis of collective behaviour is the originary father figure who, ritualistically, is reborn, revered and sacrificed as a totem in successive generations. His symbolic power is instrumental in the construction of the superego — the internalization of external authority into the psyche of the individual. The strengthening of the superego is, as Freud recounts:

a most precious cultural asset in the psychological field. Those in whom it has taken place are turned from being opponents of civilization into being its vehicles. The greater their number is in a cultural unit the more secure is its culture and the more it can dispense with external measures of coercion.⁴⁹

To use a somewhat different language than Freud's, the development of the superego is the naturalization of a certain configuration of power and its associated ideology. When one understands that the strength of the superego is dependent on individuals' degree of identification in authority and, more specifically, leaders, one can see that Freud's political theorizing positions the cultural leaders in a central role for social

⁴⁹Sigmund Freud, "The Future of an Illusion" (1927) in *Civilization, Society and Religion*, Volume 12. Harmondsworth: Penguin, paperback edition, 1985, p. 190.

cohesion. There is a transference of identification by each individual from the family power structures to the social power structures.

The model that Freud used to describe this form of leadership identification was Moses and the monotheistic religion that is part of Judaism and Christianity. Without going into great detail concerning Freud's flawed conception of the origin of the Jewish people, the key insight to be derived from his work on leadership is that the current leader embodies something of the past leader. He establishes a psychic connection to these originary figures in order to legitimate his own rule. Thus any successive leader of the Jewish people after Moses invokes the name of the father and in this way insures an identification to the powerful origin of the superego. This can be called the "return of the repressed"; the original rejection of parental authority resurfaces in its ultimate embrace in a transferred form.⁵⁰ The transferred configuration can take many forms. The Pope embodies the power of Christ, De Gaulle embodies Napoleon and Louis XIV. The mythic power of identification is taken back to its primal roots for continuous legitimation.⁵¹

The concept of identification with the Other, the common father-figure that forms the super-ego, is useful in identifying the way the celebrity exercises power and influence. It is questionable whether or not the action of leadership chronicled by Freud parallels the relative passive power of the celebrity. One could say that

⁵⁰Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* Vol. 13, pp. 381-383

⁵¹I am drawing this elaboration of Freud from Moscovici's analysis in *The Age of the Crowd*. pp. 300-302

political leadership, in its invocation of the "*imago*" of the paternal authority, shows in a more visceral way the process of identification and idealization that the celebrity embodies for the population. The leader is the instantiation of power; the celebrity is often an example of potential or latent power.

Other Models of Leadership

Weber's and Freud's analyses of leadership have figured prominently in many other studies of the leader in the twentieth century. They have provided grand theoretical parameters for continued work on the concept. However, in much of the research carried out on leadership since the 1920s, Freud and Weber have been used as "strawmen" to emphasize the critical flaw in such grand theorizing.

Epistemologically, the movement toward a form of incremental scientific approach to leadership has been the main current of research. Oddly enough, the focus has not been on political forms of leadership. As Kellerman explains, "political scientists have been reluctant to investigate what motivates the interactions between leaders and led, what accounts for the variations among them, or even to describe precisely the different types of leaders and leadership processes."⁵² The wealth of literature has emerged in organizational and administrative studies. In these disciplines, leadership is investigated in order to make it more "effective" in running an organization more smoothly. The teleological intent behind these studies denies

⁵²Barbara Kellerman (ed.), *Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984, p. ix.

their investigations of critical inquiry as the prevailing form of societal organization is tacitly approved. As a result, the premise that forms of leadership could be part of a legitimated power structure is beyond the realm of inquiry.⁵³ The advances made in this type of leadership study tend to be derived from the behaviourist sciences of social psychology and psychology. Small groups are analyzed in order to assess the "impact" or "dynamics" of the leader. For the current project, studies of this nature are more interesting in the way an ideology of leadership and power is extended than for their "manifest" findings and insights. In many of these cases, the scientific discourse is used to rationalize the essential irrational nature of leadership power.⁵⁴

Summary:

The model of leadership for the study of the celebrity does yield some valuable insights. From Weber's work on charisma, the important relationship between the irrational and the rational in the processes of legitimation and stability was discussed. From Freud, the role of identification in the power of the leader was developed from a critical position. As well, Freud emphasized the importance of the group in the construction of the power of the leader. The literature review of leadership has emphasized two significant domains that are equally relevant in the

⁵³For examples of the centrality of the organizational study of leadership in leadership studies in general see Bernard M. Bass, *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership*. New York: Free Press (MacMillan), 1981 revised edition.

⁵⁴I deal with this form of affective or irrational form of political in greater detail in chapter seven. The attempt to rationalize the organization of leadership is a peculiarly scientific endeavour which melds well with the scientific studies of the populous in the form of opinion polls.

construction of the parallel world of celebrity power: the realm of individual identity and the realm of the supporting group or followers. The celebrity is centrally involved in the social construction of divisions between the individual and the collective. Freud mentioned that it is often only the leader of the tribe who is completely an individual. The rest of the people must sublimate and repress their desires and thus never achieve the same level of ego-identity that allows the leader to exercise his/her power in the most arbitrary ways. The next chapter looks at the relevance of the collective in the formation of authority figures. An in-depth discussion of the individual and identity appears in Chapter Three of the dissertation as I attempt to define the audience-subject.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUALIZING THE COLLECTIVE: THE MOB, THE CROWD, THE MASS AND THE AUDIENCE

Up to this point, I have attempted to study the celebrity from the top down: the personality, whether leader or star, is the focus of investigation. In this section I will turn the analysis around and understand the celebrity as a construction from the bottom up. Whereas the first analysis is logically an elitist strategy, the study of the celebrity as embodied in the collective support of the crowd is by contrast a study of the popular, the common, and the base. My objective in this part of the review of literature is also somewhat redirected. The perception of the popular collective — often called the crowd or the mob — as powerful coincides with the development of mass democracies in western culture in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. I consider this relationship between the crowd and democracy critical in understanding the divisions in modern society between the rational and irrational. What I intend to do is map out the perceived power of the crowd or the threat that the crowd symbolized for the organization of society. Through this review, I hope to elucidate the way in which the rational and irrational were positioned in the eras leading up to the twentieth century and the rise of the celebrity in consumer capitalism.

The Transformed Nature of the Crowd: Power after the French Revolution

The French Revolution serves as a dividing line for many historical transformations. For some, Marx included, it signalled the succession of the aristocracy and the breakdown of feudalism by the bourgeoisie and concomitantly the further establishment of a capitalist system. For others, the Revolution proclaimed the triumph of the rights of man and democracy. For crowd theorists, writing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it heralded not the birth of the crowd but the birth of the power of the crowd. Up to that point in history, most popular uprisings had been ineffectual in transforming society. Indeed, the goals of the prerevolutionary crowd tended to be issue-specific, never possessing the sweeping breadth of the demands for change that were central to the Revolutionary crowd.¹ The Revolution had politicized the nature of the crowd, thereby making it a political force that could rival other power structures and other symbols of authority and legitimation.²

Part of this new power derived from changes in the social structure of European society. The disintegration of rural communities and farm labour and the rapid growth in urban centres created a dislocated group of people who had migrated to the city in search of economic survival in the new manufacturing districts.

Without the connection to family and village, which were powerful technologies of

¹See George Rudé's writing on the crowd, particularly *The Crowd in History: 1730-1848*. London: 1981.

²McClelland argues in his opening chapter that the new power of the crowd was similar to the crowd's power in antiquity. Within the city-states of Rome and Greece, the crowd continued to wield some power, partly because of the public space devoted to its formation, but more specifically because of the limited space and populous that the city-state involved. With the expanse of empire and the construction of state power, the centralized nature of power meant that though crowd uprisings might occur at the peripheries, they were ineffectual at disturbing the centre of power which was often hundreds or thousands of miles away. This same distant authority was the preserve of the Church's power throughout the Middle Ages in Europe. In conjunction with the Church's traditions and rituals which were technologies of social control, the power of the mob was stunted. See J.S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob*. London: Unwin, 1989, chs. 1 and 2.

control and discipline, the new city allowed for the development of the anonymous public person. In a type of xenophobic reaction to the dislocated, the elites of French and British culture considered the new urban proletariat and lumpenproletariat as a threat to order and stability.

Simultaneously, a new economic elite was emerging which had gained its influence and power not through the traditional forms of the primogeniture of the aristocracy, but through the success of new types of mercantilism and manufacturing. Throughout much of the eighteenth century, the economic power of this new elite, often called the bourgeoisie, had not been fully translated into political power. In Britain, the increasing importance of parliament and, specifically, the more unruly House of Commons marked the transition of power into these new hands. One could say that the succession of Oliver Cromwell, a political leader with no hold to the title of monarchy or aristocracy yet whom possessed supreme power in the seventeenth century, identified the genesis of the "evolutionary" transfer of power to the untitled economic elite. In an ideological sense, Cromwell's power symbolically indicated the power of the individual beyond title and tradition even though his authority maintained the most traditional forms of power and succession to follow.

In contrast, the French Revolution dramatically delineated the succession of the bourgeoisie to power. The overthrow of the *ancien regime* also identified an historical moment when the ideological message, *égalité, fraternité, liberté*, embraced the entire disenfranchized culture, thereby including the new working classes of the city as well as the traditional peasants. The heterogeneity of interests and aspirations

within the Revolutionary crowd, in which shopkeepers and merchants were aligned with the urban poor and the new working class - both in a physical "crowd" sense and an ideological sense - is a form of tension that has been negotiated in France, England, and the United States since that era. The power of the crowd for the transformation of society was realized. The inclusion of the mob or the masses in the processes of political change orchestrated by elites necessitated the related need to control the crowd. Certainly the ideologies of equality worked as powerful forces in the construction of American society.³ The symbolic power of an ideology should not be underestimated as a mechanism of control. Nevertheless, the threat of the seething mob borne from the sentiments of equality became a cause of great concern in the nineteenth century. As the power of the bourgeoisie — the dominant class to emerge from capitalism - solidified, the necessity for social control to preserve economic stability intensified.

In England, several strains of thought around the means and methods of controlling the masses developed. John Stuart Mill's liberalism was probably the most successful at maintaining the ideology of equality within the domain of social control. In Mill's liberalism is the basic belief in the equality of individuals. In an extension of Bentham's position that societal happiness is maximized when each individual pursues his or her own happiness⁴, Mill argued for the freedom of each individual to pursue personal forms of satisfaction. Central to Mill's liberalism was

³See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. by George Lawrence, New York: anchor(Doubleday and Co.), 1969

⁴Jeremy Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation*, New York: Hafner, 1948 (1789).

that all should be given this opportunity to reap the fruits of a free society, a communitarian sentiment that transcends the stark individualism of Bentham. Mill wanted the sense of a certain form of community to be part of the conception of all social classes, an idea of community which would ultimately lead to economic and social stability. Thus, education and cultural edification would be essential for the underprivileged so that they would be aware of and respect central cultural traditions. The extension of the school system in Britain embodies the tension between integrating the masses and thus alleviating the threat of the mob and the enfranchisement of the masses as a political force. Within the rubric of Liberalist thinking, the extension of equality demanded the safeguards of creating an "educated", thoughtful, and "individualized" working class.³

The symbolic language that represented Mill's understanding of the functioning of liberalism is not present in the principal French thinkers on the crowd fifty years later at the end of nineteenth century. Instead of a philosophical posture, the crowd theorists like Le Bon and Tarde invoked the language of science. Through that discourse, they were able to represent very easily a conservative conception of social structure, one whose true functioning was based on stability and equilibrium. The isolation of a particular problem or symptom of disorder characterizes these works. The books of Le Bon are therefore constructed as manuals for social control to be used by leaders in order to maintain stability. Tarde writes as the concerned criminologist who attempts to identify, isolate, and, if possible, eradicate the problem

³J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*. Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1976 (1859), particularly pp. 175-180.

of the crowd.

Le Bon, as Moscovici explains, is the Machiavelli of the modern era. No doubt Le Bon would have welcomed such a compliment for he considered that Machiavelli to be the greatest crowd psychologist before himself.⁶ Machiavelli's genius for Le Bon was his development of a means of legitimacy through the crowd while simultaneously maintaining a method of controlling the crowd. By establishing a charismatic symbol of the state, the leader could maintain a power that had neither divine right nor traditional patterns of succession on its side. The Prince's legitimacy rested on his creation of a people that saw itself and its unity through the symbol of the leader.⁷ Le Bon's study of the crowd was, similarly, a method for leaders to adopt in the age of crowd power; the starting point is not the leader, as it was for Machiavelli, but the factual power of the crowd. Most significant about Le Bon's writings is not its accuracy on the psychology of the crowd, but its status as both a popular and influential text. According to Moscovici, "crowd psychology and Le Bon's ideas were one of the dominant intellectual forces of the Third Republic". Moreover, President Theodore Roosevelt, the Chilean president (1924) Arturo Alessandri, and Mussolini, along with a score of other world leaders, sought Le Bon's advice. Horkheimer and Adorno considered Hitler's *Mein Kampf* a cheap

⁶J. S. McClelland. *The Crowd and the Mob*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 77.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 74-81

paraphrasing of Le Bon's work.⁸ This last example makes clear that Le Bon's influence extended beyond powerful leaders to the intellectual community. Le Bon's *The Crowd* had not only thoughts and practices that leaders considered to have practical application, but also a theoretical position that was deemed by many including Weber, Freud, Park from the Chicago School, many from the Frankfurt School, and Freud to be critical for understanding the twentieth century.⁹ It must be added, however, that Le Bon was often thought of disparagingly; his methods were deemed suspect, his insights overstated or plagiarized, his intellectual rigour derided. It is despite these conclusions that Le Bon's thoughts on the crowd had a great deal of salience. At the very least, he identified a sentiment concerning the modern crowd — a sentiment that ran counter to the conception that human society was progressing and evolving. He suggested that the unleashing of the crowd in democracies also had a dark side that needed to be harnessed and controlled.

Le Bon was the trumpeter of the negative side of democracy. In his interpretation of historical change, he identified the modern age as the destructive "era of crowds". He also suggested that it is an age of unreason, as "the divine right of the masses is about to replace the divine right of kings".¹⁰ The inevitability of this transformation was the insight that Le Bon gave to twentieth century leaders and

⁸Moscovici. *The Age of the Crowd*, pp.61-65.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

¹⁰Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. New York: Viking Press, 1960 (1901), p. 16.

propagandists. The new leaders were the ones who could deal with this new crowd power. What is at the centre of this new power is the destruction or substitution of the "conscious individual" for the "unconscious actions of the crowd".¹¹

For Le Bon and his followers the crowd is the site of the unconscious. Civilization, on the other hand, was the result of the few who acted as conscious individuals and not as collectives. Characteristically, the crowd is, as is the unconscious in hypnosis, open to influence and suggestion. The crowd also contained a more primitive being in its formation, for it operates by instinct and sentiment as opposed to reason and logic. The intellect of any individual in a crowd is reduced to the lowest common denominator; the crowd was the great leveller of thought.¹² Le Bon provides a powerful metaphor to encompass these characteristics of the crowd: the crowd is, ultimately, female. He stated that its appeal and use of emotions and affective power, in its weakness and inferiority of intellect, in its more biologically defined nature, and its perceived need for a strong leader, the crowd is defined as feminine.¹³ What is interesting in this characterization is not its misogyny; rather it is the resonance and influence that this description of the crowd had in conceptualization and rationalization of mass society in the twentieth century. From

¹¹*Ibid.* p. 3

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 184.

¹³See Moscovici *The Age of the Crowd*. Part III, "The Crowd, women and madness" pp. 107-154. The relation of woman to the primitive through the linking of the crowd to the female is not specific to Le Bon. Gabriel Tarde may have stated the case more forcefully when he described that crowds of women were the most dangerous and atavistic. To see the breadth of this construction of fear and threat through the symbol of woman see Gusannah Barrows "Metaphors of Fear: Women and Alcoholics" ch. 2 in *Distorting Mirrors*. New Haven Conn: Yale University Press, 1981, ch. 2, pp. 43-72.

the techniques of modern advertising, in which by the 1920s the irrational model of the individual had gained dominance and by the 1930s the entire feminization of the advertising message occurred, to the techniques of propaganda and politics, in which the invocation of a strong leader was critical to the appeal to the mass, mass society was constructed as irrational, emotional, and thus "female". It is incorrect to attribute these movements and conceptualizations of the mass entirely to Le Bon, for there are other strains of thought that contributed to the formulations. Nevertheless, Le Bon's thinking provided a genesis for the elements of social psychology that were applied to the new institutions of mass society.

As previously mentioned, Le Bon's negative spirit toward the mass society spawned by democracy was not an isolated phenomenon. In France, the historian Taine, whose writing predated Le Bon's by more than a decade, was the centre of a reinterpretation of the value of the French Revolution, which was an assessment of the value of collective action and popular uprisings. For Taine, it was a debate about the nature of man. Like Hobbes' negative assessment of man, Taine argued that the development of mob rule in the French Revolution provided indisputable evidence that the nature of man was neither innocent nor rational; thus the revolution revealed the hollowness of two major tenets — man's rationality and ultimate innocence — of democratic theory. Instead, Taine considered each revolution a return to barbarism and a negation of history in the mob's celebration of the moment and democracy's continuous plebiscite mentality of responding to needs. "Society was to be divided between them and us; they, the sleeping mob, and we, the

high-minded keepers of an intellectual and moral culture".¹⁴ Taine's retrospection was also designed to be a warning of the mob's growing power under democracy. The potential for the masses' disruption of society's stability had been solidified throughout the nineteenth century to the point that just the *potential* itself and not any actual violence, was becoming a powerful force of change.¹⁵

Gabriel Tarde continued Taine's positivist destruction of the value of the collective from the most normative discipline of criminology. Thus, Taine's work on the crowd centred on ascertaining culpability and responsibility. In contradistinction to Le Bon, Tarde considered the street crowd as relatively powerless and no real threat. The threat of the crowd was in its form in organizations, sects, and institutions. In this logical segue, Tarde had linked crowd theory to a general theory of the social. The crowd, then, was the metaphor for all collective organizations because it articulated the state of nature for man. In fact, Tarde believed that there were two essential states of nature: the family and the mob. The family, if it achieved ascendancy in the society, upheld tradition, order, and a veneration of the past. Tarde considered Chinese society to be exemplary of a family dominant social model. Societies in which the crowd was dominant were inherently unstable, constantly changing and modelled on "fashion" as opposed to tradition. This articulated the status of the urban society of nineteenth-century France. Neither

¹⁴McClelland, p. 10.

¹⁵See Susannah Barrow's ch. 3, 73-92. Also, see McClelland, ch. 5 pp.138-154.

model emphasized the liberalist centrality of the free individual which, for Tarde, was a myth in the genesis of social organization. Whether the group was family-dominant or crowd-dominant, Tarde believed that its cohesiveness depended on imitation and suggestion from a leader. In the case of the family, this leadership came from the father or father-figure. In the case of the crowd, it was the leader who fomented the masses.¹⁶ For Tarde, "the germ of basic order was implanted in the nascent mind by the appearance of the self, the prime germ of social order was implanted in primitive society by the appearance of the leader. The leader is the social self destined to undergo infinite development and transformation."¹⁷

Another contemporaneous crowd theorist with Le Bon and Tarde was Sighele who also approached the problem of the crowd from a criminological perspective. Assessing blame required explaining the apparent unconscious actions of the crowd. In contrast to the individual, whose conscious actions could be ascertained and blame adjudicated by the system of justice, there was no empirical evidence for the positivist Sighele to explain and thereby determine responsibility for the contagion and the resultant unity of the crowd's collective consciousness. Here Sighele was drawn to the experiments of hypnotism in French mental clinics. The model of the hypnotic relation between patient and hypnotist could explain the movement of emotions among the members of a crowd for Sighele. Believing crime to be a more

¹⁶McClelland, pp.185-186.

¹⁷Gabriel Tarde, *La Logique Sociale*, Paris: Alcan, p.98 quoted from Moscovici *Age of the Crowd*, p. 172.

primitive state of being, Sighele considered the crowd's unified soul to be more susceptible to the baser emotions of a primitive man.¹⁸

In his early writings, Sighele drew from Espinas' work on animal collectivities. In the spirit of a unified scientific approach and social evolutionism, Sighele found little difficulty in linking the natural sciences to the social sciences to explain man's evolutionary path. In this practice, Sighele was not different from many other nineteenth century thinkers. It is Sighele's continued penetration into the relationship between social evolution and the crowd that is most fascinating for the current project. In a gradual transformation of his position, Sighele identifies the crowd as a "modern phenomenon", meaning that it is an advancement in man's social evolution. His conclusions about this determination are less important for this study than the actual positioning of the crowd's importance in the modern world and the struggle with scientific reasoning that it posed for this crowd theorist. He continued to believe in the intellectual inferiority of crowds, but he began to credit the crowd with a certain moral superiority. In his native Italy, this moral superiority could bring a nation together and make the social unit much stronger and more integrated. In a sense, Sighele was marking a place for the importance of the domain of the irrational within the social and the political realms. By calling his new understanding of the crowd's elevated position "proletarian nationalism"¹⁹ Sighele had distanced

¹⁸ Very few of Sighele's works have ever been translated. With the exception of my conclusion about the significance of Sighele's positioning of the crowd as a modern phenomenon, I am indebted for much of my knowledge and argumentation here on McClelland's writing on Sighele in his *Crowd and the Mob*, pp. 155-180.

¹⁹*Ibid.* p. 175-176

himself from the normal conservative conventions of the crowd theorist.

Summary

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century crowd theorists provide insight into how the collective was being reconceptualized in an era of both increased democracy and entrenchment of capitalism. Often the interests of these writers coincided with a conservative elite. In this way, their thoughts represented the fears of the elite in dealing with the contradictions of democracy and capitalistic power. Like Moscovici, whose intellectual project has been to recuperate the texts of the crowd theorists, I am not concerned with whether their reasoning is factually or theoretically sound. Neither am I concerned with their predictive power as theories, although Le Bon has often been credited with accurately foretelling the eras of Hitler and Mussolini which has legitimated or empowered his own writings and opinions. My intent is to identify the connection they have established between the domain and importance of the irrational and its manifestation in modern collectivities and crowds. In a way, I am building a "structure of feeling", to use Raymond Williams' term, around the conceptions of the collective and the irrational at the turn of the century. Through this identification, the ascendancy of the celebrity as a phenomenon of the formation of certain types of collectivities in the twentieth century can be better understood.

There are three principal insights to be drawn from this review of crowd

theorists.

1. In the attempt to engage the popular and the collective in the formation of the modern celebrity, the crowd theorists of the turn of the century have made a complete circle back to the importance of the leader in directing the crowd. As Tarde has explained, members of the crowd are child-like in their allegiance to and blind following of their leader. The leader is seen as central to the collective's formation and incitement. Le Bon admired Napoleon as a leader who came from the crowd and controlled the crowd effectively. Indeed, Napoleon operated as a symbolic representation of what Le Bon thought the modern leader strive for in his persona.

2. Crowd theorists extended the impact of the crowd to encompass larger parts of the social sphere. Effectively, they universalized the phenomenon of the crowd.

Tarde considered all institutions from sects to bureaucracies to embody the features of the crowd. Thus one could see the irrationality of the crowd operating in areas before presumed to be untouched and therefore still operating in a rational way. Le Bon's concentration on the fact that anyone could be member of a crowd made the phenomena not just part of the lower classes but of all segments of society. Even the intellectual group could lose their individual insights in their formation of a crowd. Moreover, Le Bon, along with Sighele, argued that the crowd was not necessarily an evil entity and could produce moments of heroism; it was just that it was intellectually inferior to the individual on any occasion. Sighele's emphasis on the fundamental equality among the crowd members also emphasized the crowd's power to break down barriers of class and distinctions of social rank. All were susceptible

to "suggestion" or "imitation". What this conceptualized was an entire society under threat of becoming members of the crowd, not just the rabble, as it was labelled in previous generations, but anyone. Crowd theorists were seminal for giving credence to the existence of the mass society. Through their works, the concept of the mass gained strength and power as an explanatory category. Concurrently, the explanatory power of other social categories such as class was diminishing.

3. As Sighele emphasized in his later work and as Le Bon also acknowledged, the development of the crowd's power was a modern phenomenon. To label something as modern (or new, in this sense) indicated that it had succeeded former models of the social. All the crowd theorists analyzed earlier considered the crowd phenomenon to have been borne from the investment in the institutions of individuality. To use an anachronistic term, the *hyperindividuality* that had developed from the focus on individual power had left the population without the traditional institutions of authority of family, church, and state. In this new condition, the individual was open to suggestion and influence; the irrational forces of the crowd and its leader became the new locus of power for the crowd theorists. Essentially, the crowd had succeeded the individual by the twentieth century. The category that encompassed this rising tide was the mass society.

It is important to realize what I am not doing at this point in the argument in order to realize what I am trying to accomplish. I am not suggesting that crowd theory provided the only model for the social at the turn of the century. This

hypothesis is entirely indefensible. What I am arguing is that crowd theory was, first of all, instrumental in the conceptualization of the twentieth century mass society and secondly, that at the very core of this conceptualization of mass society was the concept of irrationality. In the development of certain social sciences in the twentieth century, particularly social psychology, one can see the integration of the conception of the irrationality of the mass from these earlier crowd theorists. What follows is an investigation of the meaning of the mass in twentieth century thinking to discern these intellectual strains from the nineteenth century characterization of the crowd as irrational and threatening to civilization. The overall objective of tracing the strains of irrationality is to show that the emergence of the celebrity is connected to both the emergence of the modern mass as a threatening entity and the strategies employed by various institutions to contain the threat and irrationality of the mass.

Diverging Conceptualizations of the Collective as Mass Society: A Comparison Between Social Psychology and Cultural Criticism

Twentieth century writing about the mass can be grouped into two traditions: the mass society critics and the "scientifically"-inspired social psychologists. As a starting point, both of these approaches believed in the fundamental baseness and irrationality of the modern mass — a stance they derived from the turn-of-the-century crowd theorists. However, there were some significant differences that were layered on to the basic starting point of the irrationality of the mass. The principal conceptual difference between the crowd theorists of the turn of the century and the mass society

critics of the early and mid-twentieth century is the transformation of the collective from active as crowd participants to passive as cultural consumers. Mass society critics operated, generally, from the same elitist and conservative position of Le Bon, Tarde, and Taine. However, their concern was the erosion of high culture by the inroads into the collective consciousness of low or mass entertainment. Ortega Y Gasset and T. S. Eliot epitomized this disdain for the popular. For Eliot, the institutions of democracy degraded the culture; he argued for an elite to preserve the transmission of culture from one generation to the next.²⁰ F. R. Leavis and his followers continued the debate about the loss of appreciation of 'good' art and literature. Horkheimer and Adorno, from a slightly different perspective, focussed on this same destruction of consciousness through mass culture.²¹

Crowd psychology also developed a somewhat different approach to mass society. Some writers have said that the tradition of Le Bon and Tarde disappeared. Apart from providing the ground on which social psychology developed, the grand theorizing of these original crowd theorists did, indeed, disappear. However, it would be wrong to say that their insights failed to have an impact. Social psychology quickly became a behaviourist science; but its principal area of investigation was the domain of the irrational in human behaviour. From F.W. Allport onwards, social psychology looked at individual behaviour in order to understand the collective. The legacy of Le Bon and the others was the thinking that the discipline of social

²⁰For a good overview of the conservative critique of mass society, see Alan Swingewood, *The Myth of Mass Culture*. London: MacMillan, 1977, pp. 1-22.

²¹Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, New York: Continuum, 1982.

psychology was embraced by the elite in trying to understand and conceptualize the mass. Social psychology as an experimental behavioural science was instrumental in the development of propaganda and techniques of political influence, as well as advertising techniques. Social psychology helped to rationalize mass society by providing "scientific" tools to explain and predict the "irrational".

From these two conceptualizations of mass society, an odd dialectic arises. While both the cultural critics and the social psychologists (or, more accurately, those employing the social psychologists) feel threatened by the mass society, they are at polar opposites as to its resolution. Social psychology's general objective is to maintain the stability of the social sphere through scientific reason. As indicated earlier, their research served the interests of the entertainment industry, the advertising industry, and political institutions. In contrast, the cultural critics worked from the edge of the social world in the arena of cultural and knowledge elites. Their conservatism was not derived from a desire to preserve the conditions of capital, but rather to maintain and strengthen general cultural aesthetics and tastes. Whereas social psychology acknowledged the irrational nature of the crowd and helped organize it into recognizable markets, cultural critics demanded the pursuit of a higher truth of the individual that could transcend the mundanity of twentieth century mass culture.

The dismissive attitude that mass culture critics had toward the members of the mass society makes their analysis of the relationship between the masses and the celebrity rather barren. In contrast, the behaviourist approach of the social

psychologists applied no standards of taste to their objects of study and therefore provided a much more open analysis of the popular domain and, thus, a richer starting point for understanding the meaning and function of the celebrity in contemporary culture. However, a strong caveat should be added to this endorsement: the scientific approach limited the capacity to see the political import of their research or the ideological sustenance that social psychological research gave to many of the elites. Nonetheless, social psychology in its form as mass communication research recognized the value in studying mass culture to understand its inner logic.

In its behaviourism, social psychology attempted to understand the social from the motives of the individual. F. H. Allport's influential 1924 textbook *Social Psychology* marked the movement of social psychology into the study of the individual. Identifying the collective mind was merely "a convenient designation for certain universal types of reaction".²² The construction of the social sphere for Allport and succeeding generations of social psychologists was derived from what he enumerated as six "prepotent" reflexes whose modification or "conditioning" creates the socialized individual.²³ Essentially, the individual is habituated into certain social behaviours through the reinforcement of these biological reflexes such as hunger or sex or the perceived reaction of struggling or rejecting. According to Graumann, Allport was instrumental in desocializing the individual as well as

²²F. H. Allport. *Social Psychology*, p. 6, quoted in Carl Graumann "The Individualization of the social and the Desocialization of the Individual: Floyd H. Allport's contribution to social psychology" in Graumann and Moscovici (eds.) *Changing Conceptions of the Crowd*, 1986, p. 103.

²³*Ibid.* p. 100.

reducing the social to individual actions.²⁴ Allport discounted any notion of the supraindividual minds and proceeded to rationalize the crowd and the public: "The fundamental drives of protection, hunger and sex are the supreme controlling forces [of the crowd]....The public is an imagined crowd of which an individual believes that certain opinions feelings and overt reactions are universal".²⁵

Allport's research, along with much of the experimental work arising from social psychology, is a form of rationalization of collectives for the twentieth century. There is the reinforcement of the individual despite the reality of the power of various collectives and masses. It is the function of social psychology to reduce the indecipherability of the mass into its elemental parts. Those parts are, ultimately, housed in the individual. Graumann's conclusion concerning the political position that Allport's research implicitly entails is quite accurate. Allport concludes in his textbook that, "Progress, which is the achievement of the individual becomes the heritage of the ages"²⁶, and Graumann incisively adds to this general theoretical position that it also operates as "a manifesto of liberal ideology".²⁷

There are several strains of social psychology in the twentieth century that merit attention because of the way they have aided in the reinvention of the individual's power through universal characteristics of human behaviour. It is not

²⁴*Ibid.* p. 100-101.

²⁵In Allport, *Social Psychology*, 1924, p. 308; quoted in Graumann, p. 104, 108.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 430 in Graumann, p. 110.

²⁷Graumann, p. 111.

within the bounds of this dissertation to investigate the massive amount of experimental literature that has been spawned in this discipline.²⁸ What I intend is to focus on one sub-discipline of social psychology that developed in American mass communication research in order to understand the approach it offered for understanding twentieth century mass society. My objective remains to reveal the construction of both the individual and irrationality by this form of research. Because of American mass communications research's relatively close connection to powerful political and cultural institutions, the conclusions of the researchers were often adopted readily in these other spheres and their impact was societal. Moreover, in understanding the construction, meaning, and cultural positioning of the celebrity, mass communication research indicates the way the mass was defused into conceptions of individual behaviour; the celebrity can be seen as a complementary construction of subjectivity that also individualized the collective sphere.

The development of mass communications as an object of study paralleled the development of the twentieth century technologies of mass dissemination. Thus, the rapid expansion of both radio receivers and radio stations in the 1920s coincided with the establishment of research projects on mass communication. There were a number of hypotheses concerning the incredible influence of radio on the masses. The original models describe this power of the media like a hypodermic needle; somehow the nature of radio allows for the opinions and words of the broadcaster to transmit directly into the minds of the listener. Like early crowd theory, the

²⁸This, as far as I know, has never been done in any systematic way and deserves further attention.

influence of the radio was believed to be similar to mass hypnosis. Thus, much of the early research into mass communication was motivated by its power as a propaganda tool. The dominant figure of this research was Harold Lasswell, trained originally as an economist. At the basis of his work and therefore at the origins of communication research, was this same fundamental belief in the irrational nature of the masses, an entity that is essentially out of control but can be easily influenced to follow certain courses of action.²⁹

Successive models of mass communications investigated the individual relationship to the message. In this way they drew from social psychology to understand the emotive and instinctual basis of behavioural changes. As the media industries gained power and influence in the 1930s and 1940s, much of the primary research was funded by organizations like the National Broadcasting Corporation or Columbia Broadcasting System and MacFadden Publications.³⁰ What these industries wanted to investigate was the nature of the mass as it was defined in terms of audiences. They wanted to know who was listening to what and, to a lesser extent, why. So, the thrust of communication research moved from the political studies of propaganda to the study of the entertainment technologies. The greatest breakthrough in this research occurred during and after the Second World War when a new model of the relationship between media message and audience member was

²⁹See, for instance, Harold Lasswell, *Power*, 1948.

³⁰See Todd Gitlin, "Media Sociology: the Dominant Paradigm", *Theory and Society*, vol. 6 1978, pp. 205-253. For the connection to Columbia and to network research interest, Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media are American: Anglo-American Media in the World*. London: Constable, 1977, pp. 205-206.

developed and quickly gained dominance — at least in academic circles. Katz and Lazarsfeld's extensive study of the influence of campaign messages in the 1940 and 1944 American presidential elections in a medium-sized city indicated that the hypodermic model of influence was incorrect. The media's influence was shaped by opinion leaders within the community who interpreted and explained a position to the rest of the people. Hence, they developed a two-step flow model that they continued to elaborate into the 1950s: the media influenced opinion leaders (who may already have predispositions that were not, in actual fact, influenced by the media messages) who in turn influenced small groups of "followers". The general belief in the awesome power of the media to influence people was debunked and derailed. Katz and Lazarsfeld's research proved that the individual still constructed his/her own opinions, even if they were somewhat mediated by local opinion leaders.³¹

The central connection to behavioural social psychological research and mass communication research crystallized following this breakthrough. Many mass communication researchers attempted to ascertain what kinds of satisfaction were being derived by the audience. It was an attempt to invest in the individual, basic interests and drives that could be manifested in the programmes they watched, the leaders they were attracted to, or any decision that they happened to make. Their use of the media was entirely "functional" and therefore always connected to the satisfaction of some basic need. Uses and gratifications research, as it soon came to

³¹See Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1948; and Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence* New York: Free Press, 1955.

be called, became one of the dominant communication research strategies in the United States from the 1950s to the present. It helped to reposition the identity of the mass in terms of audiences, individuals, and satisfaction. Through that redefinition of the mass, uses and gratifications research developed an implicit conception of rationality and individuality that, like social psychology, defused the fear of the unknown mass:

1. The mass could now be understood as audience groups that were attracted to different forms of consumption of messages for different reasons.
2. The reasons for an audience member to be drawn to a given series of forms of satisfaction rest with satisfaction of basic emotional and psychological needs. These can be ascertained through either clinical studies of individuals or in-the-field investigation of the uses made of media products.
3. By discovering the reasons for the forms of gratification of the audience, one was discovering the elements of human nature that were being expressed in general in the mass society. The apparently irrational choices could be rationalized into natural human tendencies.³²

³²Ostensibly, new debates about mass society occurred in the United States as uses and gratifications communication research was gaining full force. What is interesting about these debates is that in many ways they rearticulated the early twentieth century debates with only variations in what constitutes a mass. Riesman's *Lonely Crowd*, a very popular and widely read text, established that the anomic of contemporary society motivated individuals to construct their meanings from the available offerings of consumer society. Also Riesman explained that society was not made up of one mass but a series of masses that were differentiated by taste and class. Similarly Dwight MacDonald, who provided one of the more pessimistic readings of American mass culture by an American scholar, shifted positions to conform to this sentiment that the mass was much more heterogeneous than previously conceived. Riesman's writings went as far as to link popular culture to training youth among other groups into social roles of consumption that allowed the potential for personal fulfillment. For a reading of the way in which social scientific research of popular culture and communication conformed to the liberal ideology of the 1950s see Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1989. Also, see David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961(1950), pp.149-150.

Summary

The elaboration of crowd psychology in the twentieth century became a study of mass society. From the domain of aesthetics and literary criticism, the new mass society was destructive toward a cultural heritage and a civilization. From the domain of social psychology, mass society was a form of irrationality that could, in the end, be defined in terms of the rationality of the individual. Because of its scientific methods and its attempts at rationalizing, and thus stabilizing, the nature of the mass, the discursive power of social psychology and the related discipline of mass communications was much greater than any form of negative cultural criticism. The tenets of social psychology, in their investigation of the individual within the social, indicated that the individual remained intact in modern society. The believed destructive power of the mass society of the individual was proved to be more mythical than factual. From the crowd theorists' fear of the amorphous mass, the social psychologists had developed the tools for understanding and catering to the needs of the individual. What was ignored in this development were the social, cultural, and economic determinants of needs and satisfaction. The innate quality of needs is as mythical as the amorphous mass. Nevertheless, the tools for comprehending the mass in terms of audiences or consumers were critical for the development of a consumer society, in which needs were understood and satisfied in a market setting.

It is social psychology's central role in constructing the modern individual within mass society that is of interest to the current project. The behavioural

research was essential for supporting the basic structure of contemporary society. It existed as a scientific support structure for a liberalist ideology of the individual's freedom to make choices, to determine needs, and to satisfy them through the choices offered by a capitalist system. Thus, the development of the so-called mass society had not robbed the individual of his/her basic identity and will; the structures of the capitalist and democratic system, if anything, expanded the choices for the expression of that will. The forms of gratification had expanded with the expansion of consumer goods.

The growth in the celebrity's power is contemporaneous with the rationalization of the crowd and the social sphere through social psychology and other behaviourist disciplines. The relationship could be arbitrary; however, the essential nature of the celebrity is individuality, unique identity. In the rationalization of the social, the celebrity performs the same function as social psychology: it celebrates the potential of the individual and the mass's support of the individual in mass society.

At this point, the conceptualization of the celebrity as an ideological support for consumer capitalism remains more of an hypothesis than a proven statement. To complete our reading of the celebrity we should engage in a reading of the social that neither negates the irrational nor substantiates the immutability of the individual in mass culture. Also, we should investigate the ideology behind the construction of popular images in contemporary culture, so the configuration of power can be ascertained in the construction. The next part uses the insights of a cultural studies approach to popular culture in order to understand the construction of the celebrity

from the people. In the final analysis, crowd theorists have presented another elitist conception of the fear of the masses. Also, the social psychologists' research is imbricated in the very fashioning of the dominant conception of the mass by breaking it up into elemental units — the individual. In contrast, many of the popular culture investigations from a cultural studies point of view treat the collective formation of meanings as essential counter-ideologies to the dominant ideologies of contemporary culture. The social and cultural construction of meaning is not deconstructed into individuals; instead it is dealt with as a collective formation of representation and meaning.

Cultural Studies' Conception of the Popular: New Notions of Cultural and Collective Sense-making

Some conceptions of popular culture consider most of the productions to be of minor importance or ultimately harmless. This position is dominant within the culture industries themselves and, by extension, with many people who watch, listen, or read what is often called light entertainment. In fact, within this thinking, popular culture *is* entertainment and is principally defined by popularity, that is, the number of people who watch a programme, buy a record, or view a film. The greater the number, the more the artifact is an example of popular culture. It is a value-free conception of the popular that dovetails well into the uses-and-gratifications conception of the audience. The popular audience uses what it finds satisfying and rejects or ignores the rest. The barometer of popular taste is the box office, the

record sales, or the Nielsen ratings. Programmes like *Entertainment Tonight* or papers like *Variety* chronicle the ebbs and flows of popular culture as entertainment. Even though the identification of the popular is on the basis of the size of the audience, this approach to the popular tends to be production-oriented. The audience is rarely defined much beyond demographic and statistical breakdowns.

A significantly new approach to the definition and conception of popular culture emerged with an increased emphasis on the audiences of popular culture and their practices of making meaning of popular texts. The origins of what has been called a cultural studies approach to popular culture can be seen in the post-war Marxist-inspired scholars of Britain, who began to investigate the productive activities of the British working class, an area virtually neglected in any previous histories. E.P. Thompson, in his seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* began the process in the discipline of history. Thompson studied, how the working class organized itself and emerged as a class.³³ Richard Hoggart, a literary analyst, deepened the meaning and significance of everyday life and habits in his personal (though somewhat condescending in its implicit elitism) accounts of a northern English coal town in *The Uses of Literacy*.³⁴ Probably the greatest influence on the formation of this new approach to the popular are the works of Raymond Williams, another literary critic, who began to analyze the meanings of popular texts constructed by their readers. He developed two very useful terms of analysis to

³³E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Random House, 1963.

³⁴Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Changing Patterns of English Mass Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1957.

describe the way culture defines itself in contradiction to the lived culture of a given generation. A "selective tradition", meaning certain cultural artifacts are preserved while others are discarded, helps to reinforce a rather heavily constructed notion of culture and value. In contradistinction, Williams uses the term "structure of feeling" to describe the complex web of interests and understandings that comprise any culture at any given moment. The complexity of the structure of feeling is never captured by the selective tradition which attempts to provide an official history of a culture. A tension necessarily exists between the two conceptions of cultural experience.³⁵

The development of these new ideas concerning culture and meaning was elaborated upon and extrapolated principally at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS). It is from the writings of students and faculty members of this centre that a cultural studies approach to the domain of popular culture emerged. Stuart Hall, the second director of the Centre, provides a useful definition of popular culture that speaks of a new counterbalancing weight to be given to the audience's construction of significance. He begins by describing popular culture as a tension between the processes that moralize and educate the working class and the people (and demoralise the poor) and the resistance by those same people to these transformations. He writes: "Popular culture is neither, in a 'pure' sense, the popular traditions of resistance to these processes; nor is it the forms which are superimposed on and over them. It is the ground on which the

³⁵Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1965, pp. 64-88.

transformations are worked".³⁶ The arena of popular culture, for Hall, is a type of cultural battlefield, where, in a large measure, the definition and representation of the people is fought over and determined. This is why it is so important to study and understand popular culture:

Popular culture is one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged: it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured.³⁷

This same theme is elaborated upon by John Fiske who uses the same military analogies of struggle in a recent work on popular culture. "Popular culture always is part of power relations; it always bears traces of the constant struggle between domination and subordination, between power and various forms of resistance to it or evasions of it, between military strategy [the power bloc, to use Hall's metaphor] and guerilla tactics [guerilla tactics are the art of the weak]"³⁸ There are two distinctions that are developed in cultural studies' analyses of the popular. First, there is the distinction that mass culture does not exist and, in fact, is more of a construction of the powerful to contain the subordinate segments of the culture. The use of the term popular culture, therefore is a strategy to debunk mass culture and its

³⁶Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular'" in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, 1981, p. 228.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 239.

³⁸John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 19

homogeneity with another definition of the people that allows for more heterogeneity. Secondly, cultural studies underlines the existence of forms of popular cultural resistance. One of the grand traditions within this field is to identify and study subcultural groups to show the reconstruction of dominant cultural forms into different meaning systems that relate to the subculture's particular lived experiences.³⁹ Although often drawn to spectacular youth subcultures because of their overt resistance to the dominant culture's symbols, the general tenet of cultural studies' approaches is that the process of making sense of the social world through the reorientation of given representations is carried on by everyone.

The tension and subsequent reconstruction at the core of popular culture is best articulated by Fiske's aphorism that the "Art of popular culture is the art of making do".⁴⁰ What Fiske means is that, though the people do not produce the various forms of cultural production, from radio and television, to records and films, "they do make their culture from these sources".⁴¹ In other words, the cultural productions operate as raw materials for the representations of everyday experiences. What is accepted or rejected in this domain, what is recombined, rearticulated, or re-presented, is done through the activity of consumption. The audience *works on the*

³⁹The study of youth subcultures (particularly male) has produced a large number of working papers and several books by the Centre. Two early books in the tradition are Paul Willis' *Profane Culture* and Clarke et al. *Resistance through Rituals*. The most widely read book on the subject is no doubt Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979). Other useful examples are Mike Brake's two books *The Sociology of Youth Subculture*, and *Youth Culture*. The latter brings in some studies of American equivalents and debates the class constructions of oppositions.

⁴⁰John Fiske. *Reading the Popular*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989, p. 4

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

cultural product in order for that form to make sense. The cultural studies approach to popular culture has radicalized the process of consumption. Also, consumption can be an activity as opposed to the mass cultural definitions of entertainment consumption as comprehensively passive. For instance, the punk reconstructs second-hand clothes, which are representations of previous dominant cultural fashion, into one of opposition and distinction. S/he acts as a "bricoleur", constructing new meanings and a new sense out of the given and dominant cultural meaning of objects.⁴²

Writers like Fiske and Iain Chambers have extended popular resistance beyond the bounds of the obviously oppositional groups like subcultures. Their approach to popular culture often celebrates the potential and possibility of audience reconstruction or play with dominant symbols and signs of a culture. Fiske explains that the dominant culture consistently attempts to fabricate the "closed" cultural text; that is, a cultural form that permits no reforming of cultural meanings. He adds, however, that there are equally consistent and persistent demands for the "open" text by the popular audience. He describes the realm of the popular as a negotiation between these extremes. His own emphasis is on this general resistance to the closed text. He chronicles, like Chambers, the audience's constructions of meanings by the audience which play with, parody, or actively subvert the constructed text.⁴³

⁴²See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen, 1979, pp.5-19.

⁴³See Iain Chambers, *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*. London: Methuen, 1986.

Summary

Cultural studies offers an identification of the collectivities that exist in contemporary culture and their importance in the construction of meaning and representation. Unlike crowd theory, the collective is not silenced into manipulable automatons. Neither is the collective fabricated into the great harbinger of the irrational. And, finally, within the approach of cultural studies, the collective is not dissected and thereby individuated to identify the biological and behavioural origins of its actions. Cultural studies offers the current project a more useful understanding of the collective and its role in the formation of cultural images like celebrities. The concept of negotiation and struggle provides a metaphor that can aid in the deconstruction of the ideologies around leaders and celebrities. The celebrity is a negotiated "terrain" of significance. To a great degree, the celebrity is a production of the dominant culture. It is produced by a commodity system of cultural production and is produced with the intentions of leading and/or representing. Nevertheless, the celebrity's meaning is constructed by the audience. An exact "ideological fit" between production of the cultural icon and consumption is rare. The audience actively works on the presentation of the celebrity in order to make it fit into his/her everyday experiences.

There are two principal insights to be drawn from cultural studies into a study of the celebrity's power. Cultural studies is an intellectual project that stresses the subordinate classes' active "making sense" of their situation and environment. The process of "making do", as Fiske expressed it, is in sharp contrast to the irrational

conceptions of the masses that are part of both crowd theory and many mass society critiques. There is an explicit notion of rational thought behind the actions of making sense. However, the process of making sense is constrained by the cultural products and forms that are produced by the dominant culture for these subordinate groups. Thus, the process of making meaning and making something cohere with everyday experience is not so much a rational process as a type of rationalization of a very real cultural and political gap in representation and interest. As a political project, cultural studies could be characterized as trying to close the gap between the process of rationalization that occurs in subordinate culture and a new form of rational coherence. This new form of rational coherence of the social would arise in real conditions of equality and democratic culture.

The second insight builds on this first idea of rationalization. Cultural studies recognizes the collective origins of language, meaning, and signs. Again, this is a positive connotation of the activity of the collective, an insight that only Sighele of the crowd theorists even acknowledged. What is of critical importance for the understanding of this collective construction of meaning is that it is constantly forming and reforming to present and represent new forms of commonality. The transformative nature of meaning signifies that it is being renegotiated continually. This is an aspect of the working hegemony between different parts of a culture, including the most powerful and the least powerful groups, so that a loose fabrication of a commonality is in place to maintain a consensus among the population. It also means that subordinate parts of the culture are part of this working hegemony and, in

some cases, are instrumental in changes in the meanings and sense-making processes that shape the culture.

The significance of these two insights for the study of the celebrity is to realize the simultaneous construction that is part of the image of the celebrity. The celebrity is simultaneously a construction of the dominant culture and of the subordinate audiences of the culture. It embodies two forms of rationalization of the culture that are elements of the working hegemony. For the dominant culture, the segment of society that controls most of the forms of cultural production, the celebrity rationalizes both their production (by providing a clear embodiment of cultural power) and their conceptions of their audience. For the subordinate classes who comprise the audience of the celebrity, the celebrity rationalizes their comprehension of the general culture by providing a bridge of meaning between the powerless and the powerful. These conceptions of the celebrity, those arising from "below" (the audience) and those emerging from above (the cultural and political producers) never entirely merge into one coherent form of celebrity identity. They do converge - in a very material sense - on the person who *is* the celebrity. S/He represents therefore a site for processes of hegemony. To use a New Age formulation, the celebrity is a "channelling" device for the negotiation of cultural space and position for the entire culture.

CONCLUSION:

This chapter outlined the way different conceptions of the collective inform

the construction and function of the celebrity in modern culture. The study of crowd psychology and its successor, social psychology, identified prevailing sentiments concerning the nature of the crowd and the mass that are critical for understanding the position the celebrity occupies in contemporary society. Crowd psychology delineated the fear of the crowd as it emerged as a powerful symbolic force from the democratic transformations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Those who tried to comprehend what was believed to be a new phenomena or, at the very least, a new threat to power, came to the conclusion that it was derived from irrationality. The techniques of social psychology can be seen as methods of positioning or rationalizing the irrationality and the threat of the masses through the discourse of scientific reason. The breakdown of the mass into its constituent parts — that is into psychological elements of the individual — can also be seen as a method of social control. The concentration on the individual and the motivation for his/her actions supported the general ideological tenets of liberal capitalism and western democracies. As we have seen, the research of social psychology was well integrated into the political, economic and cultural power structures and was used to comprehend the new mass society.

The contrasting reading of the collective through cultural studies' definition of the popular provided some of the means to understand the process of rationalization that the audience goes through in making sense of their cultural world. The formulation of the mass not as a threat but, rather as an ideological support for the dominant classes' means of maintaining control and order identified a dialectic in the

construction of the celebrity. The celebrity can be positioned somewhere between the dominant culture's rationalization of what it sees as irrational and the popular audience's use, identification, and expression of the affective power that the celebrity as a system of rationalization has been positioned to reflect.

The following chapter provides a conceptual framework that will encompass these two contentious definitions of the social world and how they are expressed through the celebrity. One of the objectives of the chapter is to explain why the celebrity is central to the construction of rationalization in contemporary society. This discussion will involve the importance and the significance of the celebrity in social and individual identity in general. The result is the building of the conceptual framework which will serve as the central tool for the study of individual celebrities that follows in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

TOOLS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE CELEBRITY AS A FORM OF CULTURAL POWER

Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have established the historical position of the celebrity in the conceptions of the individual and the mass in modern consumer culture. I have argued that the development of the celebrity is connected to ways of "making sense" of the social world. The process of making sense through these individuals is simultaneously an activity of the dominant culture who are instrumental in the procreation of the celebrity sign and the subordinate cultures who are for the most part the audience who remakes the sign. The celebrity, as a site of negotiation of significance, because of its embodiment of collective configurations within individual representations is a locus of formative social power in consumer capitalism.

The problem tackled in this chapter is how to unpack the nature of that formative power that is housed in the celebrity. There are a variety of factors in the formation of the celebrity which confuse a simple analysis of the personality. What must be integrated into the instruments of analysis are:

1. The collective/audience conceptualizations of the celebrity;

2. The categorical types of individuality that are expressed through the celebrity;
3. The cultural industries' construction of the celebrity;
4. The relative commodity status of the celebrity;
5. The form of cultural legitimation that the celebrity; singly or as part of an entire system, may represent; and
6. The unstable nature of the meaning of the celebrity: the processual and dynamic changeability of the individual celebrity and the entire system of celebrity.

The complexity of these often competing and contradictory factors makes any discussion of their culturally formative power difficult. The need for larger conceptual tools that address these factors for the study of the celebrity is necessary.

What follows is a development of three overarching concepts which aid in this analysis of the celebrity: celebrity as a form of rationalization, celebrity as a sign and a text, and celebrity as an expression of what I call audience-subjectivity.

Celebrity as a Form of Rationalization:

The discussion above of how different groups in society use celebrities to 'make sense' of their social world can also be seen as a form of rationalization. To consider the celebrity as part of the process of rationalization reimplicates Weber's intellectual project concerning rationality.¹

¹In the attempt to provide a unity of thought, some writers consider Weber's work on rationality to be at the centre of his life's work. Others, like Hennis, have taken the concept of rationality to be secondary to Weber's concern with "the conduct of life": "Weber's deepest concern is for the survival of a 'character' or 'personality' whose life-conduct unites pragmatic rationalism with ethical seriousness".* In its focus on the character and the norms emerging from the character, one can see that representative personalities like celebrities, would be instrumental components in the formation of a just and ethical society in Weber's terms.

*Wilhelm Hennis quoted in Colin Gordon, "The Soul of The Citizen: Max Weber and Michael Foucault on Rationality and Government", in Sam Whimster and Scott Lash, *Weber, Rationality and Modernity*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1987, p. 295.

Weber's categorization of rationality is connected to what he sees as the progressive disenchantment of the world. The magical, mystical and the religious are slowly being eliminated in favour of the rational, the scientific and the bureaucratic. This form of rationality is typified in the development of the modern bureaucracy. What once possessed affective power is 'disenchanted' in its integration into the administration. For Weber, the Protestant ethic was instrumental in the movement of society from the irrational to the rational. In more traditional societies religion served a rationalizing function of connecting everyday life to that of the deity(ies). Religious priests helped formulate and provide a coherent *Weltanschauung*. The Protestant ethic, as a transitional stage towards modernity, served to internalize through conscience and guilt the values that the priesthood were responsible for legitimizing and enforcing. The continuous breakdown of a coherent *weltanschauung* represented for Weber, the very problem of the progression to modernity. Instead of unity within the norms and values of the church, a system of competing value systems developed; scientific reason could not possibly present a unified world-view because gaps persistently would emerge in the schema. Ultimately, Weber argued for the existence of different value spheres that were mutually exclusive. Thus, an effective form of rationality could emerge in one field but should not be presumed to inform another. For example, Weber insisted that there was no value-sphere connection between art and politics. Their determinations of value were mutually exclusive.

In all likelihood, these divisions into value-spheres would have been more conclusively made by Weber if he had completed his project to write a sociology of culture. One could also surmise that a greater investigation of affective or irrational forms of legitimation would have been included in such a study.² Instead, Weber has left the legacy of contradictory claims about irrationally based forms of legitimation. On the one hand, Weber describes the core of the modern project resulting in greater and greater aspects of our lives being subjected to "formal" rationality, where the individual is objectified and often reduced to a numerical representation for administrative efficiency in state and corporate bureaucracies. On the other hand, Weber negates the ultimate power of this rationality by qualifying its pervasiveness and by reinstituting a place for irrational forms of legitimation: as mentioned in chapter one, Weber explains that revolutionary change in a society is driven by the movement to the institutionally-independent realm of charismatic leadership and its associated affective power. Thus, Weber's final position concerning the historical agency of irrational forms of legitimation is not that the irrational is ultimately superseded by the rational, but rather that they are antinomous. The irrational exists side by side with the rational by fundamentally challenging the type of rationality's value ideal. As well, the irrational was seen as innovative, a creative force of history which was rationalized or routinized

²Allan Sica, *Weber, Irrationality and the Social Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 168.

subsequently in the structures of institutions.³ Weber provides several other brief discussions of the position of the irrational which are significant to the current study of modern rationalization. First, he explains that, although there is a movement to a greater integration of rationality, there is a countertendency in modernity to re-enchant the world.⁴ This is driven, Mommsen correctly interprets, by the failure of modern rationality to provide the value ideals that lead to the construction of a coherent world-view. The competing forms of rationalization in the modern world represent a crisis in legitimation. For some writers like Habermas, the solution to the crisis rests in a type of Weberian "substantive rationality" in which a negotiated consensus is reached through "communicative action".⁵ For others, the nihilist condition that Weber has identified concerning rationality and its establishment of a variety of value-ideals is cause for celebration because it breaks down the normative power of the "prison-house of rationality".⁶ For Weber, the retreat to the irrational is one way — albeit an unsatisfactory one — to reunify a fragmented world-view. At the very least we as researchers must be sympathetic to its reality: "The more we ourselves are susceptible to such emotional reactions as anxiety, anger, ambition,

³See Wolfgang Mommsen, "Personal Conduct and Societal Change: Towards a Reconstruction of Max Weber's construction of History", in Whimster and Lash (eds.) *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*. London: Unwin and Allen, 1987, p. 47.

⁴Whimster and Lash, "Introduction" in *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*, p. 7

⁵See Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon, 1975 (1973) and also *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1 "Reason and the Rationalization of Society", trans. by Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1984(1981).

⁶Whimster and Lash, "Introduction" p. 12.

envy, jealousy, love, enthusiasm, pride, vengefulness, loyalty, devotion, and appetites of all sorts and to the 'irrational' conduct which grows out of them, the more readily can we empathize with them".⁷ This empathy is as far as Weber goes in working through the legitimate domain of affective or irrational forms of human behaviour. Although he acknowledges that rationality is never pure or ideal, he maintains that for scientific analysis researchers need to maintain that irrationality is ultimately reducible to some form of rationality — it is only that we need to do more analysis of interests to determine the nature of these apparently affective forms.⁸

Nevertheless, Weber acknowledges that irrationalism is a force even in the modern apparently rationalized world. He makes two telling comments that are relevant to the current discussion about the role and place of affective power in contemporary culture. Weber laments that formal rationality is exercising greater and greater control in the modern world. In contradistinction, he also mentions that democratic societies periodically allow for moments of irrationality to be part of the election and the party convention process. These parts of the political culture are partially outside the normal course of rationalization, much like the king's symbolic power is outside the administrative functionings of the state.⁹ On its own, Weber's

⁷Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 6 quoted in Sica p. 205.

⁸Sica, pp. 158-160, 206-208. The preface to the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* which Weber wrote seven days before his death provides the appropriate evidence for Talcott Parsons to fit Weber's intellectual project into the mainstream of positivist sociology: the irrational disappears if more analysis is given to the object of study. Understanding can eliminate the irrational.

⁹Weber, *op. cit.* in ch. 1, p. 39.

commentary provides a critical insight into the way in which "democratic-capitalism" works. If coupled with his comments on the relationship between the irrational power of religion and bureaucracy, one can see the outline of a very useful model concerning the way in which irrationality is positioned in contemporary culture:

A bureaucracy is usually characterized by a profound disesteem of all irrational religion, combined, however, with a recognition of the usefulness of this type of religion for controlling the people.¹⁰

For Weber, ethnicity and nationalism also come under the same rubric of not possessing a great deal of the type of formal rationality of a bureaucratic culture.¹¹ However, as symbolic entities, these affective configurations of power can also be useful for the functioning of the state apparatus.

Can a parallel form of rationalization of the irrational, that is, positioning these undisciplined areas of human life within a prevalent and coherent world-view, explain the role and power of the celebrity? With a certain caveat, I think this is a valid extension of Weber's insight into the cynical and Machiavellian bureaucratic use of the irrational. As Weber acknowledges, some charismatic forms can survive and prosper within institutional settings. The charismatic prophet can be likened to the celebrity. The institutional setting of the church "routinizes" the prophetic statements into a coherent religion so that some semblance of the prophet's significance will

¹⁰Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 476 quoted in Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structure Interest in Weber's Sociology of Religion" in Lash and Whimster, p. 125

¹¹Sica, p. 216 based on Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 389

endure. Similarly, the institutions of the culture industry work to routinize the structure of meaning of the celebrity into a form of some durability. The celebrity articulates the transformation of types of cultural value into the rationalizing system of the commodity. The culture industry is re-presenting aspects of the personality, the emotional and affective and hence irrational elements of human action¹², in the exchangeable commodity form of the celebrity. If the institutional organization of a celebrity system is successful, it has produced a dual form of rationalization:

1. It has effectively integrated the concept of personality differences and individuality into a system of exchange; and
2. It has worked towards the rationalization of the audience to see these representations of personality in the celebrity as legitimate forms of identification and cultural value.

To consider that the celebrity embodies only these types of rationalization creates a lopsided analysis. What has been oversimplified is Weber's identification of the charismatic prophet as being generally outside of institutional boundaries.

Pierre Bourdieu has elaborated on the significance of the origin of this power which

¹²Irrational, for Weber, tended to mean those aspects of a "privatized meaning which are non-interpretable and hence irrational".* In his first use of the word charisma in *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber aligns the term as "a concept intimately keyed to irrationality."¹³ Weber's discussion of "personality" indicates that he used the term to demarcate both the rational (and therefore freedom with control) and irrational. The rational personality is "a concept which entails a constant and intrinsic relation to certain ultimate 'values' and 'meanings' in life, 'values' and 'meanings' which are forged into purposes and thereby translate into rational-teleological action". The naturalistic personality is "diffuse, undifferentiated, vegetative underground of personal life i.e. in that 'irrationality' which rests upon the maze of infinitude of psychophysical conditions for the development of temperament and feeling. This is a sense of 'irrationality' in which both the 'person' and the animal are 'irrational'".¹⁴

*Sica, p. 176

¹³Weber, *The Protestant Ethic...* pp. 178, 232-233 cited in Sica, p. 171

¹⁴Weber, quoted in Sica, p. 178

is not in the individual but rests in the social. Bourdieu demystifies the concept of charisma and its power:

Let us then dispose of the idea of the notion of charisma as a property attaching to the nature of a single individual and examine instead, in each particular case, sociological pertinent characteristics of an individual biography. The aim in this context is to explain why a particular individual finds himself *socially* predisposed to live out and express with particular cogency and coherence, ethical or political dispositions that are already present in a latent state amongst all the members of the class or group of his addressees.¹³

For Bourdieu, in an extension of Weber's position, the prophet's "initial accumulation of the capital of symbolic power arises from his relationship to the laity in contrast to the church".¹⁴ Thus, the charismatic construction of new prophetic symbols "plays an organizing and legitimating role" for the assembling of a group.¹⁵

The unique power of the charismatic prophet is its direct connection to a particular group of people. If this insight is integrated into the interpretation of celebrity power, one can see a third form of rationalization that the celebrity embodies. Like the prophet, the celebrity's formative power rests with the people as an expression of popular culture and social will. The value-ideals of the celebrity are

¹³Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structure Interest in Weber's Sociology of Religion" in Lash and Whimster, p. 131.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 130

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 130

not so clearly delineated as the charismatic prophet. Part of this confusion derives from the competing forms of rationalization that the celebrity figure houses. The contradictions of the interests of capital with the types of configurations arising from the populous is one reason why individual celebrities are inherently unstable. The celebrity works in the culture as a figure who wrests the various forms of affective power into rationalized configurations. For the dominant culture, this usually means working towards an ideological positioning of the subordinate cultures within consumer capitalism. For the subordinate cultures, the celebrity articulates an avenue for the expression of their own notions of freedom, fantasy and needs. The two forms of rationalization occasionally coincide within the same celebrity construction: but since the interests and values that are part of each type of rationalization are vastly different the disintegration of this provisional unity and the subsequent mutation of the celebrity system are two permanent features of the system.

The identification of these types of rationalization within individual celebrities in a system of celebrities will be one of the principal objectives in the case studies to follow in the succeeding chapters. Although the concept of rationalization possesses a great deal of explanatory usefulness around the nature of celebrity power, as a tool for analysis it is difficult to operationalize. In order to establish something of a protocol for the analysis of this rationalizing power, the celebrity itself has to be redefined to house the moving and mutating field of its own significance. Analyzing the celebrity as a sign or a text provides some of the necessary conceptual tools for understanding the celebrity's formative power.

Celebrity as a Sign/Text: Signs, Semiotics and Significance

Several significant consequences arise from relabelling the celebrity a sign. First, as a sign, the celebrity sheds its own subjectivity and individuality and becomes an organizing structure for conventionalized meaning. Like the sign, the celebrity *represents* something other than itself. The material reality of the celebrity sign, that is, the actual person who is at the core of the representation, disappears into a cultural formation of meaning. Celebrity signs represent personalities and more specifically personalities that are given heightened cultural significance within the social world.

In terms of a basic semiotic system, the denotative level of meaning of the celebrity is the empty structure of the material reality of the actual person. Like Foucault's interpretation of the author, the celebrity is a way in which meaning can be housed and categorized into something that provides a source and origin for the meaning. The "celebrity-function" is as important as Foucault's "author-function" in its power to organize the legitimate and illegitimate domains of the personal and individual within the social.¹⁶ This power only becomes activated through the cultural "investment" in the construction of the celebrity sign. In semiotic terms, the cultural investment is the play of connotation in the sign structure of the celebrity.

Connotation, a second-order system of signification that builds on the basic sign of

¹⁶Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

the denotative level, identifies the area of the conventionalization of each celebrity sign. Barthes, in his classic semiological study of contemporary signs, *Mythologies*, attempts to show that the connotative level is the source for the ideological construction of reality.¹⁷ Barthes writes that cultural "myths" are derived from the naturalization of signs: the connotative meanings, meanings that represent specific interests are generalized to represent the interests of the entire society. Semiotically, the connotative level which expresses specific interests of the ruling classes is conflated with the denotative level, so that social members no longer see the origins of the construction of representation and meaning and consider the given meaning as the real or natural meaning. This ideological work of the sign is the glue which maintains the legitimacy of the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie, in the same way that the cultural sign provides an artificial link between the signified and signifier, the connotative and the denotative.

The construction of cultural signs is never so simply described. The term connotation indicates and implicates in its own meaning, a degree of indeterminacy of meaning in any sign. The celebrity sign or any principal cultural sign is never fully determined or "naturalized". It is subject to a process of negotiation of signification. At any given moment there may be a governing consensus about what the celebrity represents, but this representation may be from a variety of positions and perspectives. The process of consensus exemplifies Gramsci's concept of a working

¹⁷Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers, London: Paladin, 1973 (1957).

hegemony within the construction of cultural signs.¹⁸ The stability of a celebrity representation signifies the degree of conventionalization of the sign and the establishment of a stable consensus of its signification. A nearly-completely conventionalized celebrity sign enters into the very lexicon of a culture, its personality instantiated and immortalized into caricature in the tradition of the celebrity icons such as Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. Even in these instances, these celebrity signs transform and mutate, thereby representing different interests to different audience groups.

The movable field of what celebrities may represent, indicates that their signs are part of a system of signs. Meaning comes from a reading of the organization of those signs. Thus the celebrity needs to be analyzed both immanently to reveal its internal structures and relationally among other cultural signs. Oppositions, distinctions and differentiations amongst the various celebrities reveal their function within the culture. To interpret the celebrity as a *text* as opposed to simply a sign is a fruitful way to extend the insights derived from breaking down the structure of signs. What can be revealed is that the celebrity is composed of a system of signs which includes chains of signification. The chains of signification reveal the layering of connotative meanings that are embedded into each celebrity sign.

Critical to the understanding of the celebrity therefore is the *intertextuality* of the construction of the celebrity sign. Although a celebrity may be positioned

¹⁸See Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc" in David Forgacs (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci Reader*, Schocken: New York, 1988. My reading of Gramsci is an adaptation of his use of hegemony in the tradition of Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Iain Chambers, and others associated with British cultural studies. To attach the term culture to hegemony makes the reading and use of cultural forms an active struggle over meaning and consensus, where the reading of cultural texts is an arena for the negotiation of legitimacy and illegitimacy.

predominantly in one mediated form, that image is informed by the circulation of significant information about the celebrity in newspapers, magazines, interview programmes, fanzines, rumours et cetera. The celebrity, in fact, is by definition a fundamentally intertextual sign. Without the domain of interpretive writing on cultural artifacts, the development of the celebrity personality would be stunted. The descriptions of the connections between their "real" lives and their working lives as actors, singers or television news readers is what configures the celebrity status. These secondary sources are primary for deepening the meaning of the celebrity sign and thereby providing the connecting fibres to the culture.

In the investigation of celebrities that follows, the identification of these connotative chains of signification is undertaken. Examining the play of connotation can illuminate the way in which sentiments and emotions are connected to cultural images and objects. Through the study of the celebrity as a sign and text, affective attachments or connotations that are configured around individual celebrities can be revealed. Semiotics allows for the critical investigation of the affective power of celebrity signs so that an extension of Weber's insights into affective power might be operationalized. As well, it provides a technique for deciphering the links between conceptions of the individual and the celebrity sign. The reading of celebrities is designed to deconstruct these sites of highly mediated individuality. What is investigated is how the celebrity is exemplary of what Lipovetsky calls "la logique de la personnalisation" and what can be identified as hyperindividualism.¹⁹ The

¹⁹Gilles Lipovetsky, *L'Ère du vide: essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Paris: Gallimard, 1983, p. 82.

intensification of the concerns of the personal and the psychologization of greater areas of life are parallel and related phenomena to the celebrity as hyper-individual. The hyper-individual is the intense representation of what Lipovetsky has identified as the decline of the social into "personalisation". Hyperindividuality is concerned specifically with the overcoding of the personal in the domain of media representation.

Two applications of semiotics to the interpretation of contemporary culture also inform the current study. Semiotic studies of advertising have demonstrated successfully the usefulness of the signifier/signified dyad in understanding the way in which capital has inserted itself into the production of signs. Judith Williamson's reading of advertisements points to the ability of advertising to expand the connotations of a certain signifier so that it includes the value of the product depicted in some significant social relationship.²⁰ For example, an advertisement for beer attempts to provide an associational correlation between the product and a certain lifestyle. The product is inserted into successful social relations. Sut Jhally's work on advertisements goes beyond the ideological structuring that is the essential work of advertisements. One of his insights relates to considering the semiotic dyad of signifier and signified as correlative to the dialectic of production and consumption. What advertising and by implication contemporary society emphasizes through its images is the consumption or exchange value of a product. In the intensification of images and significance on the construction of exchange value

²⁰Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements*, London: Marion Boyars, 1978.

and consumption, there is a consequential decrease in significance on the use value and the process of production. Advertising, for Jhally, provides for the magical and fetishistic transformation of goods which limits the value of production in the determination of social value of the product. Products are thus only involved in enhancing the social relations of consumption, not production.²¹ The current study will investigate, in part, the implications of the commodity status of the celebrity and thereby assess the ideological function of the celebrity in the construction of consumer capitalism through a semiotically-derived analysis of the production and consumption components of the celebrity sign.

Finally, some work in cultural studies on the body as text is also relevant to the study of the celebrity sign and its power. Hebdige's integration of Barthes' (from Levi-Strauss) concept of the bricoleur provides a semiotic reading of the way that sense is made by cultural groups in contemporary society.²² The modern bricoleur appropriates objects from his/her environment in order to make that environment make sense and cohere. These objects may have a material reality; but they could be just as easily language-objects such as a certain argot. A style of movement, a given style of dress, or a particular type of music are all aspects of what Hebdige calls "subcultural style" which may take objects from the dominant culture and then remake them and establish oppositional or alternative uses for them. The classic example of this form of appropriation is the safety pin which moved from everyday

²¹Sut Jhally, *The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in Consumer Society*, London: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

²²Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Methuen, 1979, pp. 103-104.

object associated with domestic and familial urban life to punk jewelry. The piecing together of an entire style to represent a subcultural identity through an array of signs implicates the audience in the active construction of these semiotic systems. The celebrity system can be likened to the subcultural techniques of appropriation of objects to "make sense" of their urban and subordinate position. Celebrities as signs can be appropriated and integrated into a subcultural system of signs in the same ritual of sense-making.

Within *grosso modo* the same methods, the audience construction of the celebrity can be investigated. Through a semiotic analysis of audience appropriation of the symbols of celebrity, a greater understanding of how the system of celebrity is involved in the making sense or rationalization of the audience's social environment can be achieved. The study will establish the types of distinctions among audience groups that the appropriated celebrity sign represents. The work of Dyer on the gay subculture's appropriation of certain Hollywood stars will form the framework for the current investigation of the audience. The investment by the gay sub-culture in the star's persona and body image as well as the subculture's rearticulation and particularization of the mediatized representation of these images offer the current study a conceptual model on which to understand the use and influence of celebrities by audience groups.

The semiotic deconstruction of the celebrity and its audience provides a partial model of the nature of celebrity power. What still needs to be integrated into the technique is a concept which articulates the central role that the celebrity plays in the

simultaneous construction of collectivities and modern individuality. The celebrity works both to unite the socius into identification with particular types; but the celebrity also isolates and divides through the significant representation of the individual qualities of the celebrity. This pivotal though apparently contradictory attribute of the celebrity sign can be addressed through the development of a companion conceptual tool to the semiotic investigation. A term I use to describe this contained contradiction is a hyphenated neologism: the *audience-subject*.

The Role of the Audience-Subject

A critical feature of contemporary culture is the power of the audience to divide and differentiate the socius. The audience has emerged in the twentieth century as a social category that rivals and, in some instances, surpasses the power of the categories of class and mass. This categorical and formative power of the audience is at the centre of the power of the celebrity. Indeed, the historical emergence of the celebrity sign coincides and correlates with the rise of the audience as social category. It is also significant that both are integrated intimately with the development of consumer capitalist culture. The specific relationship between the celebrity and the emergence of the significance of the audience is the convergence within the celebrity sign of individual expression and personality within a constructed collective (the audience). The celebrity sign then contains the audience through positioning the type of identification in terms of individuality. In order to understand

this relationship it is necessary to backtrack somewhat to explain the way in which the audience is a modern representation of social power.²³

The Audience

As mentioned above, the audience has emerged out of the formation of two other social categories which are powerful in their capacity to position the social world: class and mass. The utilization of class analysis in understanding the social totality arises with great force in the nineteenth century. As a way to differentiate the new industrial class from the mercantile class, and also as a way to distinguish the new capitalist class and the working class from the former landed aristocracy and peasantry, the breakdown of society into classes established a new structure of coherence and legitimation. Fundamentally, class analysis is based on what one *does*. It analyzes society into its forms and relations of production and positions the members of society into appropriate categories. The categorical legitimacy of class conceptions of the socius is dependent on the general acceptance for the defining of one's social identity in terms of one's work. Although other categories of difference may be pertinent to the establishment of this social identity - for example, religion or leisure activities - the strength of the categories of class which described relations of production were particularly salient and powerful with the emergence and dominance

²³This analysis is drawn from my previous writing on the audience. See "Deconstructing Class/Constructing the Audience: Some Considerations Concerning Popular Culture and Power," presented at the Annual Meeting of the CCA, University of Windsor, June, 1988; also *The Construction of Difference and Distinction in Contemporary Cultural Forms: An Analysis of the Magazines of Popular Music* Ph. D Project, April, 1989, ch. 1 and 2.

of a capitalist economy. The categorical power of class not only informed and legitimated the dominant sections of capitalist society, it also served as the central categories of its critique. There was general agreement on the empirical reality of the very structure of capitalist society between those like Marx and Engels who believed capitalist society's contradictions would produce revolutionary transformation, and the "captains of industry" of the nineteenth century who maintained and profited from the organization of production.

Another type of categorization also expanded in its explanatory power in the nineteenth century. Although bearing several monikers — including mob, horde and crowd — because of its less discernible identification and origins, the general category of mass was used to describe the growing power of the dominated classes. The power of the category of the mass did not arise from the relations of production; it does not describe one's social identity through the categories of work. In contradistinction to the categories of class, the mass (or the masses) is a category which emphasizes unorganized political power. As well, the formation of crowds and mob: as described in the last chapter, also represented a potential threat to the established social structure. The mass as social category is *fundamentally a construction of collective social identity in terms of non-work or the use of leisure time*. It embodies the dialectical social category in capitalist society to that of class: where class articulates a social identity of production, the category of mass can define social identity in terms of consumption. To put it grandly but succinctly, the capitalist project in the twentieth century has been intensely working on positioning

and differentiating the category of the mass into recognizable and relatively stable categorical configurations of consumption practices.

The audience has become the principal way in which the mass has been positioned in the twentieth century. As a category, it is more intimately connected to the exigencies of consumer capitalism than the indecipherable category of the mass. Through mass mediated culture, audiences are constructed and defined by the type of programming that is offered. The telos behind the construction of audiences through programmes is their "sellability" to advertisers. The defining of each audience in terms of a specific configuration of consumer needs is an objective of both the programme and the advertisements; programme and advertisement are complementary rhetorical devices in the construction of audiences as consumers. Mass mediated cultural producers, in their quest to define a recognizable audience, use a variety of social markers of consumption to differentiate the mass. Gender differences modalized around certain products and programmes is the most obvious form of audience construction which also avoids an explicit reinvestment in the category of class. Extensive demographic and psychographic research is also undertaken to construct a recognizable audience group that can be further constructed around mediated forms and products.

Because of the close affinity that the social category of the audience has with the practices of consumption and the construction of consumers, it articulates a form of social power. This is not to say that the categories of class and mass have been completely supplanted or have lost their own forms of social power. However, the

category of the audience has been in ascendancy throughout the reconstruction of capitalism into consumer capitalism in the twentieth century. The audience's temporality, fluidity, and its blurring of the lines of class and wealth are all valuable constitutive elements which work in the maintenance of a continuous consensus concerning the function of capitalism as an effective system of satisfying wants and needs.

Like class and mass categorical constructions, the audience construction also provides categorical power for some type of alternative or oppositional formulation. The audience may be constructed but not completely determined by the exigencies of capital. This fundamental indeterminacy around the interpretation by the audience is what cultural production attempts to recapture in terms of representations to maintain the consensus. The audience in this form of construction thus serves as a kind of cultural innovation for the culture industries.

One feature of the construction of the modern audience is its usual positioning within the construction of the individual personality. The array of consumer goods, programmes, films, magazines and books are the tools for the construction of the personality through consumer culture. A paradox is central to understanding of consumer culture's intense focus on the qualities of the individual: working in the rhetorical formats of advertisements, films and television programmes there is a collective construction of individual difference. Simultaneous to the need for "mass" or collective response to products (in order for them to sell massive quantities of identical products) the individual power to build difference is highlighted. In order to

indicate that this fabrication of difference is an ideological form of individuality, I have chosen the less value-laden terms subject and subjectivity. Using the term subject allows me to consider the way in which discourses of individuality pass through the socius without acknowledging any fundamental reality or integrity of the individual. The current use of the term subjectivity is drawn from Louis Althusser's seminal work on identification in his study of various types of ideological state apparatuses.²⁴ The media, operating as a type of ideological state apparatus, offer images with which the viewer can identify. Althusser calls this process "interpellation" or hailing, where the subject is temporarily positioned or called by the cultural text to see himself or herself as having a relational reality to the text. It legitimizes the various social positions in society. As Fiske explains:

Hailing is the process by which language identifies and constructs a social position for the addressee. Interpellation is the larger process whereby language constructs social relations for both parties in an act of communication and thus locates them in the broader map of social relations in general.²⁵

The construction of subjectivities through the various ideological state apparatuses produces an active and dynamic ideology. Interpellation, because of its temporary instantiations allows for a floating form of subject positioning. It is through ideology that we are constituted as subjects both in the way that we accept cultural norms and

²⁴Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy*, London: New Left Books, 1971.

²⁵Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television", in Robert C. Allen (ed.) *Channels of Discourse*, pp. 59.

the way we establish cultural differences and distinctions. Our relation to celebrities then is a dynamic system of interpellation where we see certain kinds of individuality as normatively centred while others are rejected. In some instances we accept the kinds of subjectivity that are represented for us; at other times we actively reject them. The types of subjectivity offered by the celebrities then is a system specifically designed to construct types of subjectivity that emphasize individuality and personality. It is these qualities of the celebrity sign that make its construction of subjectivity so central to the system of capital.

In the forthcoming analysis of individual celebrities, I have combined the concept of subject with that of the audience to form the neologism audience-subject. The audience-subject is in fact what we are attempting to identify within the celebrity sign. The celebrity's power is derived from the collective configuration of its meaning; in other words, the audience is central in sustaining the power of any celebrity sign. The types of messages that the celebrity provide for the audience are modalized around forms of individual identification, social difference and distinction and the universality of personality types. Celebrities represent subject positions that the audience can adopt or adapt in their formation of social identities. Each celebrity represents a complex form of audience-subjectivity that when placed within a system of celebrities provides the ground on which distinctions, differences and oppositions are played out. The celebrity then is an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a culture. The celebrity's strength or power as a discourse on the individual is only operationalized in terms of the

power and position of the audience which has allowed it to circulate. The task in the forthcoming chapter is to identify the types of audience subjectivity that are embodied by particular celebrities. This project entails a two-tiered form of analysis. The process of construction of the audience through the celebrity involves a knowledge of the industrial apparatus that is in place. I have chosen three domains of industrial cultural production, film, television and popular music to focus the study of the celebrity. Other areas, such as sports, business and religion are equally valid starting points for an investigation. The reason for choosing these three culture industries is that they first of all identify clear and openly acknowledged industrial strategies around the making of celebrity signs; there is an economic telos behind each of their celebrity designs. Secondly, I wish to demonstrate how these popular cultural constructions of the celebrity have been appropriated into the construction of the political leader. Other domains such as religion and business resemble the political sphere in their appropriation of the popular cultural models of the celebrity. The domain of popular culture is not often encumbered with conceptions of other forms of rationality and legitimation that are part of the meaning systems of science, business, politics and religion. Thirdly, the interrelationship between these three culture industries allows for the development of a systemic conception of celebrities. When seen as a system, one can see the way in which types of audience-subjectivity are situated in opposition or distinction from other types. Film, television and popular music offer the possibility of identifying the interplay among various forms of audience-subjectivity and how these forms aid in the configuration of the social

world under capitalism. Finally, as discussed above, there is a close connection between the development of the celebrity and the development of the audience in the twentieth century as complementary categories of social distinction where both individual and collective constructions of the socius are housed. Because the audience as a social category has emerged primarily in the domain of the culture industries, I have chosen these three segments of popular culture as my starting point for the investigation of celebrity power.

Reception theory and the Study of the Audience-Subject

The identification of the audience-subject which is housed in each celebrity sign is difficult. What is acknowledged in the construction of the celebrity using this conceptual tool is the central role that the audience possesses. Some of the work in reception theory, particularly that of Hans Robert Jauss, helps in our analysis of the celebrity as audience-subject.

Reception theory offers the current study the integration of textual analysis into an interpretation of the audience. For Jauss, the text — like the celebrity — is not a stable or static phenomenon. Its dynamism is borne from the way in which the text is interpreted by its audience. He describes this constant reinterpretation of the text by the reader the changing "horizon of expectations". Jauss' intervention in literary theory is an integration of cultural factors to determine the reading of a text. The changing horizon of expectations articulates the way in which cultural history

and literature interact as related systems. The value of any literary work is determined by its relation to prior works read. Reception process for Jauss is "the expansion of a semiotic system that is carried out between the development and correction of a system."²⁶ Thus any reception is part of a historical chain of reception, constantly being transformed by the current text's relation to the past. Although his early work represented an evolutionary understanding of the development of literature, this linear telos is played down in his more recent work. Nevertheless his early work represents a new approach to the text because of his recognition of the investment of the readers or audience in its meaning system. This elevation of the audience led Jauss to make conclusions about reception which correlate with much of the British cultural studies approach to cultural formation. In opposition to the so-called negative aesthetic tradition of Adorno and the Frankfurt School, Jauss explains that literature through reception can not only be a representation of the social world, it can also play a "socially formative" role in the identifying of aspirations, needs and desires within the society. The process of reception and evaluation of the text is produced "against the background of their artforms as well as against the background of the everyday experience of life"²⁷. Within Jauss' model of reception theory, the activity of the audience is equated with the process of production. In the current study, reception theory offers the possibility of an investigation of the dual and antinomous nature of the celebrity where audience

²⁶Hans Robert Jauss quoted in Richard C. Holub, *Reception Theory: a Critical Introduction*. London: Methuen, 1984, p. 61

²⁷Jauss, quoted in Holub, p. 68.

forms of rationalization are correlated with those of the culture industries to form an unstable but at least temporarily coherent audience-subjectivity. Jauss, although using different objects of study, identifies the battleground for constructing the meaning of the text as the audience.

The work of Wolfgang Iser, also from the same Constanz School of Literary studies, offers the current project a needed complement to Jauss' model of reception theory. Where Jauss tends to construct his theory of reception and aesthetic experience on a macro-level, Iser locates the construction of meaning not so much between texts as intratextual and is therefore working as Holub rightly identifies at the micro-level.²⁸ Drawing from Ingarden, Iser uses the term "the indeterminacy of meaning" to describe the way an individual text is constructed. The reader creates momentary "Gestalts" which are altered as they continue to read and transform the impressions of plot and character with the new information. With the celebrity "text" a similar audience relationship to meaning of the text is produced. The moving signifier of the celebrity is spawned by new configurations of information known about their professional life and their personal life. New temporary Gestalts are made of the celebrity which can be characterized by the pin-up photograph. The photograph holds the constructed image of the celebrity in place for the audience, at least until it is superseded by competing pin-up photographs of different celebrities who may represent a related configuration of individuality.

²⁸Holub, p. 83.

Both of these writers have invested some effort in attempting to describe the value of literature or at least what produces better literature and it would be an unfair use of their work without including this aspect (even though it has the least "value" for the current project). Jauss and Iser have tried to identify some value in innovation in literature. Jauss, though later to discount its importance, considers the literary project to be built out of disjunctures. Great works emerged from the break with the horizon of expectation. Iser more explicitly discusses the conception of innovation and its positive value as the presentation of something that breaks the normative convention. He believes in the value of making something appear new or fresh to the reader and in that way an aesthetic moment has been achieved in reception. To integrate these normative characterizations into the study of the celebrity is not my intention. Nevertheless, there is at work in the system of celebrity some conception of innovation and continuously creating something anew. I consider this to be a cultural trait that has emerged out of concepts of the individual and how to determine hierarchies of individual merit when past forms of social structure no longer apply; I do not consider the innovative moment as some universal value. I thus treat it as a rationalization of the way in which individuality is modalized in contemporary culture.

Finally, reception theory contributes a useful model to work through the way that the celebrity sign is constructed into a form of audience-subjectivity. Jauss in his more recent work in the area of "aesthetic experience" identifies three domains of

pleasure of reception: poesis, aisthesis and catharsis.²⁹ The third domain, catharsis, considered by Jauss to articulate a form of aesthetic communication, is principally centred on the concept of identification and specifically heroic identification in literary texts. The difference with Jauss' approach to the hero is that he treats the identification as a "modality" of reception as opposed to the origins within the character itself.³⁰ He has identified five types of modalities of identification which will be investigated in the current study of the celebrity. These five types are patterns of identification; all are in existence simultaneously although particular types of reception predominate specific eras. What follows is a list of the modalities of reception that Jauss has developed to describe an entire system of identification:

1. *Associative identification* — The barriers between audience and actors are broken and there is a celebration of active participation.³¹
2. *Admiring identification* - The actions of the hero are exemplary for a particular community: the perfect hero.³²
3. *Sympathetic identification* - There is a solidarity with the character or suffering personality. We place ourselves in the position of the hero.³³

²⁹ Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. by Michael Shaw, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

³⁰ Jauss, "Interaction Patterns in the Identification of the Hero", in *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, pp.153-154.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 166-168.

³³ Jauss, pp. 172-173.

4. *Cathartic identification* - Though similar to sympathetic identification, the cathartic form of reception represents an abstraction or an aestheticized relation to the hero. In this way a morality or judgment can be drawn from the aesthetic experience and the reader feels a sense of emancipation through his/her involvement with the character.³⁴

5. *Ironic modality* - A consistent denial of any expected form of identification represents this form of reception of the text of the character. There is the maintenance of the interaction with the audience without a sense of the closure of character identification. It is the type of modality that is privileged in modernist fiction and post-modern criticism.³⁵

In the current study I will attempt to provide how certain technologies of reception promote certain modalities of identification to proliferate. In general, I will identify synchronous types of identification as opposed to diachronous construction of reception. I plan to link these forms of identification to a discussion of social difference modalized around the types of differentiation activated through the modern audience. Reception theory and the modalities of reception and identification listed above are adapted to the study of celebrity construction in contemporary culture. The analysis itself can be characterized as undertaking a double hermeneutic³⁶ which

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 177.

³⁵Jauss, p. 181.

³⁶Hermeneutics is used here to indicate that what follows is an interpretive reading of cultural texts. Hermeneutics, originally a term connected to exegetical work on biblical texts, has been elaborated in philosophical terms as a way of understanding experience and (possibly) reality without the experiences being reduced to pure empirical evidence or to put it into philosophical terminology, into the domain of logical positivism. Hermeneutics broaches an epistemological question of what constitutes knowledge. The interpretive sciences, which are primarily those disciplines connected to the humanities, are working essentially to constitute understanding from close readings of texts and histories. Jauss' work is, by his own admission, a literary hermeneutic, where meaning and understanding arise from more than just the manifest content

correlates with the dual forms of rationalization that construct celebrity identities. The project works through a *hermeneutic of intention* in its development of the industrial organization of public subjectivity in each cultural form. Also, through a reading of the various popular texts written about particular stars, and a reading of the forms of reception of particular products associated with a celebrity the dissertation forges a correlative *hermeneutic of reception*. The negotiated combination of interpretations establishes the meaning and position of the celebrity in the constellation of public personalities in contemporary culture.

The double hermeneutic, employed to reveal the organization of public subjectivity, represents an approach that has not been well-developed by other writers on celebrity. Some writers, such as Dyer, detail the forms of reception of stars, but fail to develop adequately the apparatus that is in place that attempts to read and produce stars. Other writers, such as Morin, have provided accounts of the industrial organization of the culture industries as a star-making machinery, but fail to recognize that the success of the organization of stars and celebrities is not fait accompli but represents a constant effort to reorganize and refit the public presentation of personalities to match audiences and audiences' expectations. Finally, very few writers have successfully linked the developments and shifts in celebrity

of the words to the contextualization of the text. The current project launches a reading of production and reception of the celebrity through an interpretive reading of the various texts that establish the celebrity as an entity. Also integrated into the hermeneutic is a recognition of the cultural context which shapes and informs the meaning of the celebrity sign/text. Jauss' work is particularly useful because he establishes an approach that moves beyond simply discovering authorial intention through a close hermeneutic of a text, to working to identify a hermeneutic of reception. I am adapting these insights into a study of popular cultural forms and the subjectivity that is constructed through the processes of production and consumption.

For a "reading" of the meanings of hermeneutics see Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics*, Berkeley CA.: University of California Press, 1982; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

form that have emerged from these negotiating processes to the organization of contemporary subjectivity. The analysis that follows identifies the forms of subjectivity that are privileged in the public sphere through the celebrity and then correlates those modalities of production and reception into the organization of political representations of self and identity. Emerging from the identification of the audience-subject and the production of personalities by the culture industries and the political culture is a form of identity that permeates through contemporary culture and is not arrested by its designation as an entertainment phenomenon or a political phenomenon. The term that captures the special qualities of this identity is the *public subject*. The public subject refers to a representation of individuality and personality that operates in the public sphere; the public designation of this form of subjectivity refers to the involvement of the public (through different audience groups in its formation) and the conception of a common and accepted cultural valuation of fame and significance. The subject designation in the term refers to the individuating construction that is an essential feature of the public personality. Also, subjectivity entails, as described earlier in defining the audience-subject, a structuration process that includes the audience who identifies the celebrity, the institutions in place that organize these representations of celebrity identity, and the celebrity him/herself. The analyses of celebrities that follow, work to flesh out what contemporary public subjectivity entails and thereby identify how this form of subjectivity is elemental in all domains of the public sphere.

Unifying the Approach: Foucault, Discourse and Power

I have established to this point three kinds of approaches to the study of the celebrity. My intention in the follow-up chapters is to analyze particular celebrities by integrating these three approaches into a unified thematic about the general type of power that is represented by an entire celebrity system. The conceptualization of the celebrity as a form of double rationality is illuminated through the general techniques of the analysis of the sign and the text offered by semiotics and cultural studies. I intend to use Jauss' characterizations of heroic reception as a way to structure the reading of any celebrity within the constructs of the audience.

Ultimately what binds the analysis of the celebrity together is the way in which power is articulated through these cultural texts. There is a nebulous quality about what the concept of power entails in a study about celebrity. In the chapter that follows the analysis of celebrities, where I undertake an analysis of the political discourse that is informed by the system of celebrity, the more classic understanding of the term surfaces. I intend to link the political nature of power to celebrity power through a Foucauldian conception of the term. Foucault discusses power not in terms of opposition between those who possess power and those who do not. It is a much more pandemic term, where power exists in both the institutional setting and concomitantly in the organization that opposes the institution. The linkage between these two formations identifies the site of power. What fundamentally unifies diametrically opposed organizations is the commonality of a "discourse". Discursive strategies are attempts to maintain the primacy of certain form of knowledge

concerning the discourse. The play of power is the positioning of the discourse to represent a certain configuration of interests, needs and institutions.³⁷

Foucault has provided through his writing several examples concerning the way in which power is expressed through discourse and discursive strategies contained therein. He calls his tracing of these discursive power matrices a genealogy. For example, the discourse of madness is traced from its classical roots, where the insane were thought to be truthsayers to the nineteenth century, where madness became an illness which needed to be cordoned off from the sane. As a discourse, it had been repositioned for insanity marked the post-renaissance domain of reason, sanity and the individual. Madness became a visible threat to a structured system of knowledge.³⁸ In another work, *Discipline and Punish*³⁹, Foucault isolates on the movement of disciplinary strategies from physical punishment to the internalization of discipline into conscience. In terms of prison systems, Bentham's

³⁷It may be worthwhile to have an explanatory note here to elaborate on what Foucault understands power to be. It would wrong to interpret Foucault's work as, in the end, seeing power as repressive. Foucault has said that power relations are "everywhere":

"Power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization forming a chain or a system, on the contrary, the dysjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies." *History of Sexuality*, p.92.

Foucault then does not necessarily link power with the state; he considers dysjunctions to be loci of power and strategies. It is evident, however, that certain discourses predominate and an example of a predominant and thus more powerful discourse is contained the operation of the "state apparatus".

³⁸See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard, New York: Vintage (Random House), 1973 (1961). In the above account of this organization of knowledge and madness, I have reread Foucault's earlier work through the terms and terminology that he developed in his later writing. His development of the concept of an archaeology of a discourse is clearly developed in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1974). The use of the term, genealogy, which he considered more accurate in describing the processual development of a discourse and its relationship to a power/knowledge matrix emerges in his work *History of Sexuality*, 1980 (1978). An excellent interpretation of Foucault's intellectual movement to a greater concern with the organization of power, see Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983, chs. 7 and 8, pp. 143-182. Specifically on the use of genealogy pp. 104-115.

³⁹Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Random House, 1979.

panopticon articulated, at least metaphorically, the way in which modern discipline achieved its ascendancy through the maintenance of the belief among prisoners of continuous surveillance.⁴⁰ The discourse on the internalization of discipline proliferated because it expressed the means and methods of control of each isolated individual in an era that championed the individual.

In his final major work, *The History of Sexuality* Foucault develops his concept of power more fully.⁴¹ What interests Foucault about sexuality is its discursive power or what he calls its "biopower".⁴² In volume one, Foucault seeks the way in which sexuality has been positioned in the nineteenth and twentieth century to explain a host of mental ailments as well as a means to freedom and liberation. Instead of identifying a discursive discontinuity between Victorian sexual censorship and mid-twentieth century sexual liberation, Foucault sees a clear continuity in using sexuality as a means of explanation. Discursively, sexuality continues to position and construct the modern subject. Sexuality as discourse thus articulates various configurations of power.

The celebrity, like sexuality, allows for the configuration, positioning and proliferation of certain discourses about the individual and individuality in contemporary culture. The celebrity offers a discursive focus for the discussion of realms which are considered outside the bounds of public debate in the most public

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 202

⁴¹Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1, New York: Random House, 1980.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 140-144. "If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life." p. 143.

fashion. The celebrity system is a way in which the sphere of the irrational, emotional, personal and the affective are contained and negotiated in contemporary culture.

Affect and Power

I have identified throughout this chapter on the tools for analyzing the celebrity that the concept of affect is central for understanding the meaning and power of the celebrity in contemporary culture. It has arisen in the way in which Weber has tried to define the process of rationalization. I have attempted to demonstrate in a previous chapter that the mass has been perceived and positioned as the prime location for volatile affectivity, the centre of irrationality. I have also indicated that in the signifying system the realm of connotation can be classified as the site of affective activity. As well, in my integration of Foucault I am privileging the term affect to identify the organization of a discourse about individuality through celebrities. To complete the discussion of techniques and tools for the study of celebrity and power, I will conclude by elaborating further on how I use the term affect in the forthcoming analysis.

Affect, as a term, has been used principally in psychological research. In behavioural psychology, affect is the middle ground between cognition and behaviour: the affective realm is connected to this chain of causality between something experienced and then the formulation of a reaction to that experience.⁴³

⁴³I am simplifying a great deal of research into affect. The model I have just described is generally known as the CAB model. For further discussion of this research see Bert S. Moore and Alice M. Isen (eds.), *Affect and Social behaviour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Much of this research has focussed on locating how affect led to abnormal behaviours in people and then working out how to transform the chain of causality between experience, affect, and effect.

Freud, in his early writings that focused on establishing the frameworks for the science of psychoanalysis, also developed a reading of affect. Freud's thesis was that people virtually automatically assume rational grounds for their feelings; affective experience therefore leads to a new launching ground for the reinterpretation of situations so that the affective experience becomes plausible and integrated into a world view.⁴⁴ What can be drawn from Freud and to a lesser degree the behavioural psychologists is that affect is constantly "attributed" to something. Attribution of affect, the process of rationalizing emotional reactions echoes Weber's reading of the relationship between the charismatic leader and his followers. My use of the term then is drawn from this reading of affect and the attribution of affect; the celebrity represents a site for the housing of affect both in terms of the audience and the institutions that have worked to produce the cultural forms that have allowed the celebrity to develop.

Although I use this reading of affect and attribution as a launching point to understand the negotiation of meaning that occurs in the organization of the celebrity as cultural text, I extend the meaning of the term to encompass a general cultural condition related specifically to questions of meaning and significance. Different authors have described this breakdown in signification — where meaning itself is in

⁴⁴ See Cornelis Wegman, *Psychoanalysis and Cognitive Psychology: A Formalization of Freud's earliest Theory*, New York: Academic Press, 1985, pp. 247-249.

flux — as the post-modern condition. Lyotard, who has written about the breakdown in meta-narratives, can be reread faithfully as describing the lack of attribution of affect in contemporary culture.⁴⁵ There is a decentring of meaning; affect itself becomes the endpoint in the causal chain between cognition and rationalization. Similarly, Jameson has taken the clinical diagnostic term of schizophrenia and reconfigured it as a general cultural condition.⁴⁶ He expresses it as the dissolution of hierarchies of value and the living in the perpetual present. In his words, the general culture is experiencing "isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence."⁴⁷ Baudrillard's identification of the "ecstasy of communication" is related to the disintegration of a clear cut relationship between signifier and signified; the ecstasy emerges from the actual play within a long chain of signifiers.⁴⁸ Like the schizophrenic, the culture's experiences are intense and undifferentiated as the context of past and future disintegrate as points of reference. As well, the contemporary culture experience although intense also dissipates quickly and reforms on another site.

Grossberg, in several articles, has used the term affect specifically to describe this modern cultural condition. In discussing postmodernity, Grossberg isolates on

⁴⁵Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. by Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984 (1979).

⁴⁶Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Culture" in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, Port Townsend WA.: Bay Press, 1983.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴⁸Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication" in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-aesthetic*, pp. 126-134.

the incapacity of individuals in contemporary culture to "articulate meaning and affect":

"post-modernity, then points to a crisis in our ability to locate any meaning as a possible and appropriate source for an impassioned commitment. It is a crisis, not of faith, but of the relationship between faith and commonsense, a dissolution of what we might call the "anchoring effect" that articulates meaning and affect. It is not that nothing matters — for something has to matter — but that we can find no way of choosing, or of finding something to warrant our investment... Meaning and affect — historically so closely intertwined — have broken apart, each going off in its own direction."⁴⁹

Grossberg's conception of articulation between affect and meaning can be reread as a form of attribution, albeit with a decidedly political connotation. With television, there is "an indifference to difference even as it constructs differences out of the very absence of difference".⁵⁰ What Grossberg sees is an "affective economy" (as opposed to a representational economy) in operation where there is a focus on affective investment without the concomitant association of a political investment. Thus a particular song like Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA" can be appropriated as an affective investment by both Ronald Reagan and Walter Mondale in the 1984 presidential election: the connection to a clearcut meaning, which for Grossberg represents an "articulation" of meaning in terms of political action, is elided from the affective moment.⁵¹

⁴⁹Lawrence Grossberg, *It's a Sin: Politics, Postmodernity and the Popular*, Sydney: Power Publications, 1988, p. 42.

⁵⁰Grossberg, "The In-difference of Television", *Screen*, 28:2, Spring 1987, p. 41

⁵¹Grossberg, "Rock and Roll in Search of an Audience" in James Lull (ed.) *Popular Music and Communication*, Newbury Park Ca.: Sage, 1987, pp. 175-197.

In the analysis of celebrities to follow I interpret the way in which this affective economy is configured in the organization of a celebrity system. The forms of affective power are linked to the power of the celebrity text to move effortlessly between the public and the private sphere.

The concept of affect is used in two complementary ways in the rest of the dissertation. First of all, it is used to identify the way in which celebrities are positioned by the culture industries for the attribution of affect. As well, audience groups attribute certain meanings to the celebrity figures. Secondly, I use the term affect to describe the way the celebrity system is also a technique for the organization of cultural investment into the attributes of personality and sentiment, individual subjectivity and private experience.

Conclusion

The next three chapters operationalize the techniques of analysis proposed in this chapter through a study of celebrities that have emerged in specific institutional sites of the culture industries. Each institutional site is first analyzed in terms of the way in which the celebrity has been configured historically. This is followed with an analysis of the meanings and various forms of signification that are embodied in specific contemporary celebrities in film, television and popular music. The objective of the investigation of these celebrities is to work through the nature of the discursive power of the celebrity system — by charting the double form of rationalization and the dual hermeneutic of intention and reception — in order to see how it may inform

the general public sphere and political leadership in particular. Following the analysis of the celebrities, a concluding summary chapter provides the linkages between the celebrities in order to identify systemic properties. Following this, I will apply these insights to the study of contemporary political culture and political leadership and discuss how the celebrity system is a central element of political culture.

SECTION TWO

THE ANALYSIS OF CELEBRITY TYPES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF AUDIENCE SUBJECTIVITIES

General Introduction:

The next three chapters will be analyses of types of celebrities that have emerged in the American film, television and popular music industries. I will use particular celebrities in order to represent a dominant configuration of celebrity type that is best articulated in each mediated form.

The division of categorical types in terms of technological mediation is not arbitrary. The three entertainment technologies have established quite different means of conveying distinction and difference within their domains and have utilized the celebrity form to express various hierarchies of form, meaning and power. Similarly, the audiences have worked in the construction of these hierarchies and means of differentiation through the different entertainment technologies. This is not say that any of these entertainment technologies are exclusive in their construction of celebrities, for there are many performers who traverse the boundaries of each medium. Nevertheless, their emergence from a particular industrial configuration of celebritydom is central to their meaning and significance. The first part of each chapter will begin by identifying the kinds of celebrity configuration that are predominantly expressed through each technological form. After the establishment of this general genealogy of the industry's construction of the celebrity, the particular

celebrity is analyzed in all its intertextuality. This reading of the particular celebrity involves an elaborate hermeneutic built and substantiated from a number of sources. Media texts, those produced by the particular culture industries, as well as those organized for the fan's consumption, are interpreted to identify both the institutional organization of the celebrity and the audience's work in the construction of the celebrity. It is in this analysis that the kinds of audience-subjectivity offered by the celebrity will be investigated.

The fourth chapter in the section will discuss the interconnections of the three celebrity systems and develop the notion that it is more accurate to speak of a system of celebrity at work in contemporary society. The celebrity as a system will be investigated to determine the way in which it shapes the public sphere in general.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CINEMATIC APPARATUS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FILM CELEBRITY

The emergence of the cinema star according to Richard De Cordova, was intimately linked with the decline of the allure of the apparatus of motion picture projection. Until about 1907, the focus of attention was on the technical feat of displaying images and stories on the screen.¹ Most of early cinema was documentary in nature, where aspects of everyday life, circus performances, sporting events were depicted on screen.² This transformed somewhat because of the constant need for new and interesting (at least unseen) film product. The early connection of film to the craft of illusionism and magic could be seen in two ways: the films of Georges Méliès, an illusionist turned film-maker, and the position of the exhibition of

¹Richard de Cordova "The Emergence of the Star System and the Bourgeoisification of the American Cinema" in *Star Signs*. London: BFI Education, 1982. p. 66

²The exception to this could be seen to be Edison's film made in studios; nevertheless, the emphasis was still on the "wonderment" of the technology and the novelty of moving images.
For a thorough reading of early cinema see: Charles Musser, *History of the American Cinema Vol. 1: The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.

films as a type of novelty act in vaudeville theatres.³ In both cases the enigmatic quality of the production was not so much related to the plot but more to how the images were created and juxtaposed. Early films (pre-1907), according to Cordova, could be characterized by their close connection to "action" and movement. The construction of the film celebrity emerged only after an initial decade of exhibition. It is part of traditional — although now challenged — film history to mention that the large production houses like Biograph impeded the development of the star by not releasing the real names of the actors involved in any film. The impetus behind the development of stardom then was the audience's construction of intertextual continuities: the audience according to Walker began identifying screen personalities not by their names but by a nickname that attempted to capture the face, body type or hair of the performer. "The fat guy" or "the girl with the curls" became a way for nickelodeon exhibitors to advertise their short features through a recognizable audience interest.⁴ Hampton's *History of the American Film Industry* (1931) and Jacobs' *The Rise of the American Film: a Critical History* (1968) served as guides for this reading of early film and its relationship to the construction of personalities. More recent scholarship has disputed the simplicity with the development of the film star system. Some like Staiger have been able to identify forms of identification that

³For an account of the connection of vaudeville to film see Robert C. Allen's *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*. New York: Arno Press, 1980 (originally published as a Ph. D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1977)

⁴Walker, p. 29

predate previous designations of its development in the early to mid-teens.⁵ As well, the interconnections to other entertainment industries, like theatre and vaudeville which had well-developed star systems, further complexifies the reasons and rationales behind the organization of a film star system. What can be safely concluded is that the reluctance to release the names of performers gradually gave way to an industry that used its performers as one of the primary forms of promotion and marketing of its product.

A more accurate way of describing the emergence of the film star is to see that the film industry was in the process of determining its categorical position in the entertainment industry. In its affiliation with vaudeville, the film industry was part of an already established and successful cultural industry that possessed its own system of fame, prestige and celebrity.⁶ *Variety*, the trade magazine for most of the vaudevillian performing arts in the early part of the twentieth century regularly displayed large photos of vaudeville stars on their first page; the featuring of one of these acts became one of the central means that the trade newspaper attached itself to the glamour of the industry. Moreover, as Allen points out, vaudeville had successfully produced what he calls a mass audience which included not only the

⁵Janet Staiger, "Seeing Stars" in Christine Gledhill (ed.) *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp. 6-10 (first published in *Velvet Light Trap*, 20 (Summer 1983)).

⁶The pervasiveness of the star system in vaudeville could have operated as the crucial limiting structure on the development of film stars in the early 1900s. Allen explains that there was an economic impetus of exhibitors to move into the showing of films because of the escalating salaries demanded by vaudeville stars. The hybrid form to emerge out of the relative cheapness of films in comparison to mounting an entire vaudeville show was what was called small-time vaudeville: here fewer acts were shown with more emphasis on the film. They were generally in smaller venues but "nicer" more "acceptable" (to the middle classes) than the rougher and dirtier nickelodeon houses. As the power of the vaudeville stars increased, the promoters and exhibitors, and the new cultural entrepreneurs who competed with vaudeville moved on to productions which kept the performers anonymous and cheap: film performers. This argument is inferred from Allen's discussion of the development of small-time vaudeville, who does not specifically extend his economic argument to include this point concerning the obvious impeding of the film star system. See Allen, pp.230-273.

working class but large segments of the middle class in its audience. So the film industry had expanded its audience beyond the limited circulation of penny arcades and variations of peep-shows to a national audience which encompassed both the working class and the middle class. Film was also positioned in relationship to traditional theatre which attracted a much wealthier clientele than most vaudeville houses. One can see in the way in which the film magazine of the period *Moving Picture World* differentiated between the true "acting" of the theatre and the idea of performance in movies that a clear hierarchy of the arts was at work. Prior to 1907, *Moving Picture World* described movie actors usually as "picture performers". To perform was more a display of natural action. To act had the connotation of creating the nuances of character, the artifice of becoming the personnage. In the development of techniques like the close-up, in the gradual appearance of narrative structure, and in the movement to "feature" length one can see the attempts to build into the cinematic structure elements that would be emulative of aesthetic value perceived in theatre-going. The increasing focus on individual performers and the codes of character as opposed to the dominant code of action of early twentieth century film, moved the film industry into an investment in a star system that at the very least emulated the theatre star system. Indeed, Adolph Zukor attempted to inject the aura of the theatrical star into film by contracting famous stage actors for films. The most famous of these, Sarah Bernhardt, played the lead in an artistically successful though less financially successful *Queen Elizabeth* (1912). However, the strategy contained a slightly flawed conception of the movie audience because the

most famous contract players to emerge out of his Zukor's Famous Players Company in the teens were in fact only known as film stars.⁷ The development of the star system thus is most indicative of a cultural industry attempting to capture a certain legitimacy and cultural space. Stars and dramas that emphasized the psychological development of characters articulate an attempt to establish the cinema's affinity with the theatre. The actual meanings of the film star of the teens or twenties never achieved this aesthetic connotation because the audience's investment in the star, an audience that was comprised of primarily the working classes and the middle classes, expressed a distinctively filmic aura for the screen celebrity.

Edgar Morin's discussion of this aura of the film celebrity of the twenties emphasizes the god-like quality that was granted to these select few. One of the first instances of name recognition came with Nick Carter, who was still known only by his screen name. Only after playing a number of different heroic roles did the star become recognizable as a hero himself.⁸ By 1919, the star crystallized as an entity distinctive from his/her screen personas. As an entity, the star and the industry that by this time surrounded him/her began to protect the image he/she conveyed to the public. For example, Valentino maintained the image of the romantic and heroic lover throughout his career by actively choosing his film roles to support the construction. For Morin, Greta Garbo epitomized the separate and aloof quality of the film stars of the nineteen twenties: she "remained mysteriously distant from the

⁷Walker, *Stardom*, pp. 44-45.

⁸Morin, p. 18.

mortals"[her audience] both in her screen presence and her lifestyle in her grand Hollywood mansion.⁹

However, the film star aura was never so simply maintained. It was built on a dialectic of knowledge and mystery. The incomplete nature of the audience's knowledge of any screen actor became the foundation on which the film celebrity was constructed into an economic force. The staging ground for film actors to enter the world of celebrity was publicity. Publicity describes the extratextual movement of the screen actor into other forms of popular discourse. The staging of publicity on behalf of individual celebrities became the province of agents and specifically publicity agents. The most famous of these publicity innovators, Carl Laemmle - owner of the Imp studio, was effective in separating the economic power of the individual actor as celebrity from the rest of the film industry. He staged the "death" of the Biograph Girl, Florence Lawrence, through a news release to newspapers throughout North America. Three days later he staged her reappearance in St. Louis which included an exclusive feature interview and full-length photo of the star. Within that interview certain personal details about Florence Lawrence were released which circumvented the Biograph studio's ban on the release of names or information about their film actors. Her audience learned of her love of horseback riding and of the stage along with other details of her early life.¹⁰ The publicity agent has

⁹Morin p. 21

¹⁰Walker, p. 36

continued to assume this role of enlarging the meaning of any actor in the public sphere and expanding the audience's knowledge and their will to knowledge of the celebrity's personal life. Walker considers the creation of the film star as public property an industry that was very quickly "10,000" times larger than that which occurred in the theatrical trade: there were more photos, more venues, more fan and movie magazines, and the power of simultaneous releases that made the extratextual business of film star publicity so central to the entire industry. Between the 20s and the 1950s the extratextual discourse concerning movies and their stars in Hollywood was estimated by one writer to be 100,000 words a day. In terms of quantity, this made Hollywood the third largest source of information behind Washington and New York. Also between the 1920s and the 1950s roughly 5000 correspondents were stationed in Hollywood to feed the world the secrets of the stars.¹¹

The Independence of the Film Celebrity

At various times in the history of film, the film star has operated as a symbol of the independent individual in modern society. This crucial symbolic value has demonstrated and reinforced the ideology of potential that is housed in all members of capitalist culture to supersede the constraints of institutions for the true expression of personal freedom. As the film star transformed into the clear economic centre of film production between 1910 and 1920, he/she became able to determine the form

¹¹Morin, p. 11

and content of that production and thus act independently.¹² By 1919, a group of film stars that included Chaplin, Pickford, Griffiths and Fairbanks demanded salaries and contracts that could no longer be supported by any studio. They organized their own production and distribution company, United Artists, in order to control their own films.¹³ Although only having limited success in its early years, the existence of United Artists nevertheless underlined the top film stars' ability to express the independence of their wills and desires. It is interesting to note that that expression of independent will in the form of United Artists eventually adopted the corporate structure of the other major film companies.¹⁴

The economic independence of the film celebrity has always operated as a symbol of freedom within the industry and for the public. The ability to own a mansion, the opportunity to partake of prohibitively expensive forms of leisure like yachting or polo, and the time to travel widely are all kinds of pursuits associated with stardom. They are the rewards of an industry that is connected to a paying public through the perceived "qualities" of their stars.

¹²See Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990. DeCordova's analysis of the early star system defines quite accurately this investment of the industry and the extra-textual industry in the construction of the public personality. The author makes a distinction between the "picture personality", which were film actors between 1910 and 1919, and "stars", which were film actors after 1919, in terms of the relative investment in a discourse of intimacy and personal knowledge. Picture personalities for deCordova are defined publicly as homologous to their roles. Stars articulate the establishment of public personalities that literally have lives of their own in terms of extra-textual (i.e. outside of their films) discourse. These classifications of de Cordova continue to define the way in which stars are constructed in the American film industry. See below in the analysis of Tom Cruise.

¹³Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*. London: BFI/MacMillan, 1986, pp.173-180.

¹⁴The only real difference between United Artists and the major studios was that United Artists did not become completely integrated with ownership in exhibition as well as production and distribution. Also, it should be added that most of the studios arose out of the corporate culture of exhibition and distribution.

For the industry, the stars' economic value transcends the nature of his/her work and thus his/her wage far outstrips the wage earned by the generally unionized film worker. The celebrity's independent connection to the audience permits the configuration of a separate system of value for their contribution to any film. This connection to the audience is on an affective or emotional level that defies clear-cut quantification of its economic import. In recent film history, the star's wage is one of the principal costs of production. For a star of the first order, like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, Meryl Streep or Dustin Hoffman, contracts between two and five million are not uncommon. Over and above this salary, the star may also receive a percentage of the box office.¹⁵ In these arrangements, not only is the star guaranteed a very high salary, they are also permitted to be involved in the creation of surplus value or profits like the corporation itself. The star has become an individualized corporate entity, with recognizable brand and hoped-for audience loyalty.

¹⁵In 1990, Sylvester Stallone signed a multi-picture deal with CarolCo. for between 12 and 17 million dollars per picture. Willis supposedly received 8 million dollars for the *Last Boy Scout* (1991). Schwarzenegger received a jet for *Total Recall* (1991) and 12 million dollars for *Kindergarten Cop* (1991). There is an entire hierarchy of top-paid actors in Hollywood. In 1989-90 the estimated incomes for the stars were:

Sylvester Stallone	63 million
Arnold Schwarzenegger	55 million
Jack Nicholson	50 million
Eddie Murphy	48 million
Bruce Willis	36 million
Michael J. Fox	33 million
Tom Cruise	26 million
Michael Douglas	24 million
Harrison Ford	22 million

Source: Peter Bart, "Stars in Studios: Pass the Bucks - Top Talent Seeks to Break Video Profits Barrier", *Variety*, Sept. 24, 1990 p. 1, 108. Because of the financial clout of these artists, they are also able to fight the studios in the court for even greater returns. With 35 to 50% of film revenues coming from video sales and rentals, the stars and their lawyers are working to negotiate an even greater revenue share from their films. Since Heston's groundbreaking deals of taking a percentage of the film box-office gross in the late fifties, other stars have moved into similar financial arrangements which have often shifted the financial power to the individual stars.

It is also significant that although female stars such as Whoopi Goldberg, Meryl Streep or Goldie Hawn may receive million-plus pay packages for films, their earnings come nowhere near matching the highest paid male stars.

Also see Lawrence Cohn, "Stars Rocketing Salaries Keep Pushing Envelope", *Variety*, Sept. 24, 1990, p. 3.

The capacity of the star to conform to the form of a company entails the celebrity's commitment to the organization of capital and the general operation of the film industry. The independence of the current top film celebrities is built on a long history of film studio development of their stars. From the 1920s to the 1950s the studio system of starmaking machinery was in place. By 1930, the consolidation of the industry established five major studios and three minor studios in Hollywood. The major studios, not only produced films but also distributed them and owned the exhibiting theatres.¹⁶ Their performers, particularly the women, were often signed at a young age to long binding contracts where the actor could only appear in that particular studio's productions. As a young performer their transcendent power and related connection to the audience discussed above was virtually non-existent. They depended on the studio to provide them with a venue and film "vehicle" in order to establish their unique economic value. Not surprisingly, the studio always had a surplus of potential stars that could be featured or relegated to the filmic version of a chorus line. The idea that a stable of actor/stars was affiliated with each studio describes the original dependent relationship that any Hollywood actor had to their studio. Once an affective relationship was established with the movie audience, the movie performer suddenly enjoyed the benefits of being the economic centre of the studio system. The film actor in this process exited the private world of studio politics and entered the public world of film exhibition.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 1-25

Agents representing actor/stars since Laemmle have worked at the interstices of the private and the public realms of the movie industry. Their fundamental intention is to construct the star as a clearly separate economic entity quite distinct from any individual film and any studio. The agents' intervention in the typical employer-employee relationship that the studio attempts to maintain, is to articulate the closer relationship that the star has to the audience than that of either the movie or the studio. The agent actively works to shift the economic ground so that it is centred on the public construction of the star and away from the studio's original construction and investment in the star. At times, the work of the agent may be in concert with the publicity and promotional work of the film studios. However, when contracts are renegotiated, the public nature of the film celebrity's power is the working space of the agent.

The centrality of the Hollywood agent in the separation of the star from the exigencies of the studio is significant. The way in which the film industry now operates with its most famous celebrities is a general industry-wide consciousness of the star's independence and closer connection to an audience. Films often become centred around the star in terms of narrative and financing. For instance, if a star of the stature (i.e. audience allure) of Eddie Murphy agrees to be involved in a proposed picture then the financing of the production becomes all the more realizable. The story may also try to conform to the public's representation of the star so that the

audience's expectations are met. The film character and the star's public personality are coordinated so that a continuity is maintained and reinforced.¹⁷

The building of the public personality of the film celebrity is the work of the agent in their efforts to forge an independent relationship between the star and the audience. The activity of creating a celebrity from film involves coordinating the reading of the star by the audience outside of the film. The character in the film may set the heroic type that the star embodies, but the relationship to the real person behind the image completes the construction of the celebrity. It is the solving by the audience of the enigma of the star's personality that helps formulate the celebrity: the audience wants to know the authentic nature of the star beyond the screen. Through reading the extratextual reports about a particular film celebrity, the audience knits together a coherent though always incomplete celebrity identity.

Film celebrities' identities that are made from the material of interviews, media reports, images, and films by the audience are invested with conceptions of freedom, independence and individuality. The stars' luxurious lifestyles now depicted in a syndicated television program entirely devoted to this theme (Robin Leach's *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*), would seem to distance the film celebrities from the everyday experiences of their audiences. And, indeed, the stars of the twenties had an ethereal quality that placed them quite above their audiences. However with the institutionalization of the Hollywood press corps and the related growth in the

¹⁷In a recent review of the power of publicists, Charles Fleming discovered that publicists were increasingly interventionist in determining the editorial content of magazines that featured their clients on the cover: "the balance of power between news organizations and the publicity machine that supplies them with celebrity photos and interviews has shifted -... the publicist is now in the driver's seat." Charles Fleming, "Star Hungry mags find flacks flexing muscles," *Variety*, July 4, 1990, pp. 1,23.

extratextual discourse circulated about film stars, film celebrities became a blend of the everyday and the exceptional. The combination of familiarity and the extraordinariness gives the celebrity its ideological power. One can see the construction of this unity in the type of acting and performing that has been central to the institution of film.

The Extraordinary and the Ordinary in Film Performance

Once the narrative film had come to represent the mainstream of commercial cinema during the second decade of the twentieth century, film performance became principally a form of professional acting. The decline of the documentary, the sports and newsreel as the centres of the filmic experience was furthered by the growth of radio as the preferred new media for the discourses of news and information. Film acting, however, was perceived to represent the "real" and the "natural" (which are, of course, cultural constructs) to a much greater degree than stage acting. Part of this naturalistic aura surrounding film acting is derived from film's documentarian origins. The theatre, with its proscenium, its staging, the clear artifice of the presentation, and the projection of the actors, is not physically present in the film. Instead we are given an apparently less constructed scene, where the camera takes us into, for example, the livingroom of a house after showing its exterior. In concert with this conception of the naturalness of the film and the artifice of the stage, it was generally believed that a good stage actor did not necessarily make a good film actor. The stage actor had to build the believability of his/her character: he had to become

the character. To the stage critics, acting entailed creating a temporary artifice of character and the artifice had to be discernible. The good film actor, on the other hand, was believed to be someone who did not use the craft and artifice of acting: they performed naturally. D.W. Griffiths chose his film actors more on the basis of their appearance than their acting ability. Eisenstein searched the streets to find the faces that would typify the characters in his scenarios. Qualities of beauty, youth and stereotypical appearance became central to the profession of film acting to a degree they never achieved in stage acting. The ability to not act also became a valued commodity in the search for film stars.

The attention to the naturalness of the film performer is also connected somewhat to the historical development of acting in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sennett has chronicled the transformation in stage performance from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, actors assumed clearcut social positions and classes on stage, particularly in melodrama. Thus, stereotypes of performance were common where an actor became an expert in assuming one type of class/character. Sennett explains that in the nineteenth century great acting rested on the development of a unique interpretation of the character; in other words, actors like Frederic Le Maitre in Paris achieved renown through their ability to personalize their roles and transcend the text.¹⁸ They were thought to possess some superior quality because they could shock the nineteenth century audience with their ability to act naturally and therefore overcome the limitations of

¹⁸Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 204-205

the play's character.¹⁹ The personalization of the acting profession grew gradually from the late eighteenth century throughout the nineteenth century. As Elizabeth Burns points out, the practice of linking actors' names with those of the character they played began in the eighteenth century. As a result, it would be Garrick's *Hamlet* or Irving's *Shylock* where the self and the personality of the self became a clear factor in the understanding of the theatrical text.²⁰

In the early twentieth century, the acting techniques of Stanislavsky were gaining influence roughly simultaneous to the narrative development of film. Although, it wasn't for another three decades that the techniques of Stanislavsky were formulated into the Method School of Acting in the United States, the technique's investment with the construction of the self through the personalization of the character matched much of the development of Hollywood film acting. The method technique demanded internalizing the psychological make-up of the character by the actor. In this way, the actor would achieve a more natural presentation of the character.²¹ This technique was in opposition to the character acting tradition of the British and American stage. The theatrical tradition of observing behaviour and accent from the world around could be seen as developing the character from the outside inwards, where meticulous detail was given over to the manifest signs of class

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 205

²⁰See Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality* London: Longman, 1972.

²¹See Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating a Role*. Trans. by Elizabeth Hapgood, Hermine I. Popper (ed.), New York: Routledge, 1989 (1961).

and habit. Method acting in contrast was psychologically deep when it was taken to its extreme of character development. Its salience in film stemmed from three factors.

The first factor is linked nominally to technological distinctions. Because film dealt with faces and expressions in close-up, the grander and sweeping gestures of a stage performance looked oddly inauthentic. The close-up possibility of film psychologized and internalized the meanings of filmic texts. With sound film, the developed and resonating stage voice, the very grain of the voice also appeared unnatural and forced. New ranges and new constructions of character intimacy were possible when voice projection to a theatrical audience was no longer necessary. This relationship between technological change and the personalization of the screen performer is not simply a cause and effect. The use of film technology is positioned around the articulation of certain kinds of powerful discourses. Film, as a type of mass media, was involved in the expression of forms of individuality that were possible within modern mass society. Film provided a channel for the proliferation of a discourse on individuality and personality to flourish. The technology of film is therefore connected to the expression of this discourse on the forms of modern individuality.²²

The second factor that led to the relative dominance of the Method form of acting in film is that the technique allowed for the expression of the personality of the actors involved in the production. On its own, this may not seem to carry much

²²This could be likened to the function of the novel in the nineteenth century. The form of characterisation and the investment in the personal constructed and then naturalized the conception of a kind of bourgeois individuality. Likewise film, according to Morin, actively worked in extending the bourgeois understanding of individuality to the working classes. Claude Morin, *Les Stars*.

weight. But if one thinks of the various interests involved in the production of a film, one can see the impetus behind constructing characterizations in films that transcend the individual film. As mentioned above, the film star's agent is actively working to create a unique use value and exchange value for the film actor that can be represented. Barry King has argued quite effectively that the actor as celebrity or star expresses a value that is quite separate from the individual film production.²³ Thus the film star represents the wresting of control of the production away from the producers and the directors. If directors, like Griffiths and Eisenstein among others, chose their leads on the basis of appearance, age, beauty or features, and not on the ability of the performer to act, then the control of the production rests with the director. His ability to edit, to construct the scenario, to juxtapose a series of images into his(her) story diminishes the productivity and use value of the actor to the finished product. However, if the uniqueness of the personality of the star is critical to the success of the film production, then control of the film moves toward the star's perceived interests. Method acting allows for the permutation that the internal expression of a character can also be a playing out of the psychological dimensions of the star him/herself. For King this is imbricated in the control of the economics of production and the division of labour in the film industry: "Under such circumstances, a potential politics of persona emerges insofar as the bargaining power of the actor, or more emphatically, the star, is materially affected by the *degree* of

²³Barry King, "Articulating Stardom", *Screen* 26:5, Sept.-Oct 1985, pp. 45-48

his or her reliance on the apparatus (the image), as opposed to self-located resources (the person) in the construction of persona... "24

King goes on to conclude that "impersonation", which is the ability to play a particular character, becomes less valued in the economies of film production than the capacity for "personification" — the ability to construct a continuing personal and individual mark in each film role.²⁵ He explains why:

"...the ramifications are complex, but basically personification serves the purposes of containing competition amongst the tele-film cartel companies by representing the star's contribution as resting on his or her private properties as a person... The centrality of personae (stars) as an index of value provides a form of control - shifting or ever threatening to shift, signifiers from the actor to the apparatus -over the detail of performance in favour of those who have control over the text."²⁶

The third factor that led to the interiorizing of character and actor in films is connected to the audience construction of the celebrity. Method acting has deepened the significance of the mundane, the everyday life of relatively ordinary people. In coordination with the conception that film acting does not involve the abstraction and impersonation that stage acting utilizes, the audience is positioned much closer to the

²⁴Barry King, "Articulating Stardom", *Screen* 26:5, Sept-Oct. 1985, p. 45

²⁵King draws this distinction in relative value from Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood: The Dream Factory*, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1950, p. 206

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 48

enigma of the identity of the film celebrity. Moreover, the psychological identity of the film actor is more central to understanding any of the film's texts. Actors like Marlon Brando and James Dean were able to build careers on combining the interiorization of method acting with the search for their true selves. They were able to include the audience in this search for the ur-text of their star personalities.

The Audience's Pleasure and Play and the Construction of Significance with Intimacy and Enigma

The relationship that the audience builds with the film celebrity is configured through a tension between the possibility and impossibility of knowing the authentic individual. The various mediated constructions of the film celebrity ensure that whatever intimacy is permitted between the audience and the star is purely at the discursive level. The desire and pleasure are derived from this clear separation of the material reality of the star as living being from the fragments of identity that are manifested in films, interviews, magazines, pin-up posters, autographs et cetera. Depending on the level of commitment of the audience member, certain types of fragments or traces of identity are deemed adequate. For some, the characters of the films themselves which among them construct their own intertextual framework of the celebrity's identity is quite sufficient. For others, those called fanatics or fans, the materiality of identity must be reinforced through the acquisition of closer representations of existence and identity. The autograph and the pin-up poster are the epitome of the committed fan of a film celebrity. Belonging to a fan club entails an investment into the maintenance of a coherent identity as members circulate

information about the celebrity that for the members establishes a somewhat separate and distinctive epistémé concerning the star's true nature.

Morin, in his book on film stars, lists some of the requests that fans have made on their favourite celebrities. Some asked for locketts of hair, others for small possessions which would allow the fan to enter the private sphere of the star through the fetish object. Most asked for a photograph. Some were driven to ask their favourite star's advice on their own personal matters.²⁷ According to Margaret Thorpe, a studio would have received up to 15,000 letters a week in the thirties and forties. A first-class star would have received directly 300 letters a week.²⁸

The range of audience participation in the construction of the film celebrity sign is wide and varied. Nevertheless, stars do possess a general allure in their combination of the everyday and the extraordinary which is modalized through a discourse on intimacy and enigma. The ordinary elements of the film star are important as a marked entrance point for the audience to play with kinds of identity and identification. Since its inception, the film industry has produced stars that have emerged from apparently "normal" backgrounds. The mythology of stardom which has been circulated in the trade literature since Laemmle's Biograph Girl media event is the possibility that anyone could be a star. Because of the more sustained focus on external appearance as opposed to acting ability, the film star appeared to be chosen

²⁷Morin pp. 75-83

²⁸From Morin p. 66

quite randomly. Merit was secondary to luck and circumstance. In this way, the Hollywood film industry perpetuated a myth of democratic access. The concept of merit and ability was transposed into the language of character and the personal history of the star. Humble beginnings, hard work, and honesty were the extratextual signs of the film celebrity that supported this myth of the democratic art. The extensive discourse on their personal and private lives often was constructed on how fame and fortune could corrupt the ordinary human being housed in the star personality. This theme became one of the central film storylines of a progressively self-reflexive Hollywood.

In contradistinction to the democratic nature of access, the image of the film star also expressed the inaccessibility and the extraordinary quality of their lifestyle. In the double sense of the word, the image of their wealth was typically *classless* and in this way was compatible with the democratic ideology that surrounded Hollywood movies despite their oligopolistic economic structure. The mansions of the movie stars had all the signs of wealth and prestige but none of the cultural capital to reign in the appearance of excess. The swimming pools with their unique shapes, the immodest and therefore grandiose architecture which was pillaged from countless traditions without cultural contextualization, and the elaborate grounds and gates were all signs of a *nouveau riche*, a class excluded from the dominant culture because of its inability to coordinate the signs of wealth. The movie star's prestige was built on the signs of consumer capitalism and their decadence and excess were celebrations of the spoils of an ultimate consumer lifestyle. Their wealth, generated through the

expansion of leisure as an industry and the entertainment consumer as a widening domain of subjectivity, was a cause for celebration — not cultural responsibility. To use Bourdieu's typology of taste and distinction, the movie star's ostentatious presentation of wealth exemplified an aesthetic that was obvious and overdone. In opposition, those who possessed not only capital but cultural and intellectual capital constructed their distinctive taste in terms of abstraction and distance from these more obvious and overt expressions of wealth.²⁹

The power of the film celebrity's aesthetic of wealth and leisure in the twentieth century can not be seen to be static. With its close connection to the construction of consumer lifestyles, the film celebrity's forays into recreational pursuits helped define the parameters of pleasure through consumption for all segments of society. Perhaps the best example of this expansive and proliferating power to influence the entire *socius* is the growing centrality of the Hollywood image of the healthy body. Tanned skin had connoted traditionally the evidence of physical labour, specifically farm labour. Although there may have been a bucolic connotation to the image of the tanned and brawny farmhand, it contained no further signification of an easy leisurely life. To be tanned was evidence of hard work under the sun. The Hollywood film star helped construct a new body aesthetic as each attempted to look healthier before the intense lighting of the film shoots. The activity of suntanning achieved a glamorous connotation because it now indicated the time to do virtually nothing but lie in the sun. The film star worked in this domain of

²⁹See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, "the Aristocracy of Culture", ch. 1, pp. 11-96

breaking down and reconstructing conceptions of distinctions. Thus certain expensive or class-based outdoor sports such as yachting or tennis provided a conduit between these new body images of health and fitness that demanded time and energy in the sun and the other moneyed classes. Leisure and wealth became in the twentieth century associated with having a tan and a well-toned body; however, these new signs, appropriated from the labouring class, must have been achieved through sports and hobbies and not work.³⁰

The classlessness of the film celebrity despite their clear wealth aligns them as a group with their audience. Their wealth, if thought of as an extrapolation of a consumer subjectivity also aligned them with an ethos fostered in late capitalism. The construction of identity in the domains of consumption as opposed to production made the film star an image of the way in which a lifestyle/identity could be found in the domain of non-work. The star then, to borrow from Ewen's study of the development of a general consumer consciousness in the twentieth century through advertising and general business objectives, performed as a "consumption ideal": a representative of the modern way of life.³¹ Anyone has access to the goods of the large department stores and therefore can play in this democratic myth of identity construction through consumption.

³⁰Dyer, *Stars*, pp. 43-45

³¹See Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. Here Ewen speaks of youth as a "consumption ideal" and the idea is integrated successfully into David Buxton's critique of rock stars in *Le Rock: star système et société de consommation*, Grenoble: La Pensée Sauvage, 1985, ch. 3.

The chasm between the type of lifestyle constructed by the film star and that constructed by the audience is continually filled in by the rumours, gossip and stories that circulate in papers and magazines concerning the complex and tragic lives that are led in Hollywood. In early Hollywood, the reported excesses of lifestyle and success were treated in a disciplinary manner by the press. If one thinks of a film star as a consumption ideal, then failures and tragedies were the result of a consumer lifestyle that was incongruous with the personal roots of the star. Much of the writing of the personal life stories of the stars, particularly that form of gossip writing that focussed on failure, emphasized the traps of success. The discourse on film star tragedy then was concerned with the reconciliation of the personal and the psychological with the manner and means of consumption. The root cause for the diversion of lifestyle from the person's true nature was the instant success gained by the film star. The disciplinary morality offered by these scandals of the stars for the audience was the need to match one's psychological personality with an appropriate lifestyle and consumption identity. The stars represented the extreme constructions of lifestyle. The audience member had to work towards some kind of balance. Finally, what is also learned by the audience is the essential human frailties and personality types of these distant stars. Despite their larger than life presence on screen, the film stars were essentially human and covered the gamut of personality types.

Summary

The film celebrity as a general discourse occupies a central position in the development of the twentieth century celebrity and it is for this reason I have provided a rather lengthy genealogy of its formation. Because of cinema's history covering the entire twentieth century and because the cinematic apparatus's development and growth coincided with the growth and extension of consumer capitalism, the film celebrity has provided a way in which the discourses of individualism, freedom, and identity have been articulated in modern society. With the film star's relative non-attachment to material forms of production because of his/her work solely in the manufacture of images, the discourse on and about screen stars was particularly concerned with the manner of consumption and the associated construction of lifestyles. The discourse on film celebrities and their consumption was also integrated into a study of personality, character and general psychological profile. Through the various extratextual sources, the celebrities provided the ground for the debate between the way in which new patterns of consumption could be organized to fit the innate patterns of personality.

In the section to follow, the contemporary film celebrity is analyzed in depth to reveal the way in which these various discourses are modalized through a particular celebrity sign. Within that discussion of the intertextual and extra-textual elements in the sign/text construction of the celebrity a typology of celebrity and audience subjectivity will be developed as it relates to film.

TOM CRUISE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CONTEMPORARY FILM

CELEBRITY a. The Channels of Knowledge:

Tom Cruise is classified from a variety of sources as a movie star. To achieve this status, Cruise articulates through various texts and representations that he possesses certain qualities that are not possessed by others. He exits the realm of the everyday and moves into the representational world of the public sphere. For Cruise, the filmic text, where he performs various roles that are constructed into clearcut narratives, becomes the primary means by which he becomes identifiable as a recognizable public figure. Surrounding the particular moments of each film release is the intersection of several strategic discourses that work to construct the celebrity quality of the film star. On one level, the agency that represents Tom Cruise, along with the corporation and production company that has produced the film, attempt to promote an organized conception of Tom Cruise that is connected with the specific release of the film. Cruise, then, is both contained by the package of the film and also is the package which works to draw the attention of the press to consider the film significant or of interest. The film star works in the arena of publicity that predates the exhibition date of the film.

The Origins of Film Stardom: The Physical Performer

The specific constructions that are strategically operated in the release of the film can be likened to Richard de Cordova's historical categories of the development

of the star persona.³² In the early twentieth century, the knowledge about the performers in cinema was limited. Thus, we see the development of monikers that were connected to their performances on screen rather than their real names. They were identified by the audience and the film industry as mentioned above through their physical characteristics. We can call this first category of identification, in line with De Cordova's analysis, the physical performer. What is identified by industry and audience are the physical characteristics that make them unique in the field of film performers. Thus it is a discourse that emphasizes their beauty or lack thereof, their nose, their smile, their eyes, their entire body type. It is an objectification of the performer that is more often than not metonymic, where one element/feature represents the entire performer and connects his/her reality from one film to the next. The metonymic process should not be seen as emerging solely from the industry or the audience. The industry, attempts to read the public based on a variety of polling techniques as well as less scientifically and more culturally defined conceptions of beauty and attraction. The historical organization of this pretesting can be captured by the screen test where a "performer" is filmed to determine their commodity potential and value to the studio. If the test is successful, then the performer would be released in a feature film and marketed as a starlet, a rising star. Audience reaction to the new performer would be fully tested after the release of those first films. A determination of star quality would be determined from this rereading of

³²De Cordova, *Picture Personalities*, pp.1-23

the film's audience, general public reaction and the associated press coverage of the individual performer.

Cruise as Physical Performer

In the transformation of de Cordova's categories into an individual celebrity text, one can see that the construction of the physical performer emerges at the beginning of any film celebrity's career. The extra-textual knowledge of the actor is limited. Even their on-screen presence is often constrained to only moments of screen time - they are not often the stars of their original films. Nevertheless, there is a particular quality or group of qualities that become the way in which the actor becomes recognizable as a specific type. When the celebrity is identified in these physical terms, there is the risk of being type-cast, where the star becomes arrested in the formation of their celebrity status in some clear-cut stereotypical image/quality.

Tom Cruise's emergence as a film actor and star is first connected to the physicality of his performance. The category of identification by both industry and audience of Cruise was in terms of youth. In his second film *Taps* (1981), Cruise, although originally cast for a much smaller part through, according to the biographical information made significant when he began to star in films later in his career, his apparent innate screen presence was able to expand his role into something much larger and significant. He played a gung-ho arms-obsessed cadet at a military college for boys. His role presented youth as pure action: unthinking

instead of contemplative, assured, confident and narrow-minded in his choice of actions. His character, David Shawn, is willing to murder and quite willing to die. All of this is done with a certain bravado that is expressed in Cruise's use of his smile and grin, something that becomes a trademark in his movement to celebrity status. In terms of the film's character, the smile and the grin indicate the reckless insanity of the personality. It is with this role, that Cruise's name moves into the popular press.

His debut was also in a film designated specifically for a youth audience. In *Endless Love* (1981), a Zefferilli-directed film about modern obsessive teenage love, Cruise plays a small role that is not mentioned in any of the reviews. What is significant is his position once again in terms of categories of youth. The film industry worked to establish a legion of youthful stars in the 1980s. Connected with their rise was a cluster of coming-of-age films as well as the construction of a group of actors that came to be known through the popular press as the Hollywood brat pack.³³ As a market segment, the youth audience was considered to be the very centre of the film industry. The development of films that focussed on generational themes and through those narratives established the territory for the elevation of certain young actors to stardom could be seen as a general industrial strategy.³⁴

³³A publicity still for the Coppola film, *The Outsiders* (1982) identifies most of the principal members of the bratpack: Emilio Estevez, Rob Lowe, C. Thomas Howell, Matt Dillon, Ralph Macchio, Patrick Swayze and of course, Tom Cruise. Virtually every member of this group established themselves as a star through their construction of the new youth-oriented film of the 80s. The still is included in Louis Giannetti's *Understanding Movies*, Englewood Cliffs N.J., 4th ed. 1987, p. 205.

³⁴The list of films that could be included in this general strategy of understanding that film's principal market was connected to youths and young adults who were constructing their distinctive entertainment practices outside the orb of television, is very long. To name a few, *Break'ng Away* (1979), *The Outsiders* (1983), *Flamingo Kid* (1984), *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Valley Girls* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1983), *Spring Break* (1985), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), *The Lost Boys* (1987), *St. Elmo's Fire* (1985).

Cruise was part of this organization of the film industry around its principal exhibition market.

In these earliest of incarnations, Cruise possesses a character type which is closely aligned with his own physical look. He is a physical performer, where our knowledge of his private world is virtually non-existent. He is characterized by his engendering young male handsomeness. As well, he must be structured and structure himself into the construction of filmic youthful maleness. The gendering of his physical presence then is carried out in reference to past icons of what is a male film star. He is thus engendered into cultural pattern of representation.

What this means is that Cruise as a new potential star, is mapped into the types of male stars that predated his appearance. In the post-war period, the intersection of male and youth has been represented as confused rebellion in past stars. The images of Marlon Brando and James Dean along with Elvis Presley established this dominant construction of male youth. No doubt the extratextual elements that revealed aspects of their personal lives also enhanced the image of these stars beyond their filmic type. Generally, however the consistency of character type in their films operates as the primary focus for the rearticulation of filmic maleness in future male stars. Cruise's construction of male "physical performer" must reply to the way in which these past stars exhibited strength and presence. Fundamentally, we can see that Dean, Brando and even, to a degree, Paul Newman represent the interiorization of male power: there is a repressed fury in their performances that is

represented by their brooding character portrayals and their bursts of aggressivity and violence.

These past film stars then operate as icons or archetypes which work to define the organization of new types of stars in their originary or emergent forms as physical performers. Cruise's physical performance must also work in response to the anti-heroic male film stars of the 1970s: De Niro, Pacino and Hoffman.³⁵ In their representations of ethnicity, working and underclass, the designation of heroic qualities to these stars seems a misnomer. Nevertheless, they represent film stars: they are instrumental in the organization of film investment capital, they can demand high payment fees as well as a percentage of the box office revenues, and they are easily and readily recognizable in the public sphere. Tom Cruise's emergence as a physical performer then must negotiate these filmic identities to establish a certain continuity in the construction of the male film star and the uniqueness or differentiation of his particular example of the lineage. What this entails for the emerging star is that an attachment to the cultural icons of male representation produced by filmdom must be made evident so that subsequent extension of the icon can be made in the growth of the individual star.

What is interesting is that Cruise's first six films are intensely focussed on youth and more or less on rebellion. In *The Outsiders* (1982), Cruise is involved in mid-western youth gang encounters between the rich and the poor. In the first film that features Tom Cruise in the leading role, *Losin' It* (1983), the emphasis is on loss

³⁵Walker identified this group of actors as anti-heroes in his book *Stardom*, ch. 7.

of virginity, adventure in Tijuana, and a red convertible sports car. It is a generic and low-budget male-oriented teen-age sex comedy. His two successive movies established the clear nature of the physical performer of Tom Cruise. In *Risky Business* (1983), Cruise plays an upper class teenager who plays out his fantasy when his parents leave him alone for the first time. Finally, in *All the Right Moves* (1983), Cruise plays a very talented quarterback for a working class town's high school. Success on the football field is seen as the way out of the deadend setting of the steel factory community.

As mentioned above, all of these films provide a unified theme concerning Tom Cruise as performer. All of them emphasize his youth. By implication, this emphasis on youth also emphasizes the youthful body and his face. Cruise's screen presence is then constructed specifically around his embodiment of male beauty. His confidence in movement is part of this construction. His athletic build becomes another marker of his success as engendered representation of filmic male. Iconically, Cruise is connected to stars that represent the very mainstream of American film beauty. In the tradition of Newman and Redford, Cruise embodies the American-ness as opposed to some Other of ethnicity. In terms of appearance he is neither exotic nor enigmatic.

The emergence of the film celebrity is dependent on this original construction of the physical performer where the actor is celebrated as a "type". The actor remains relatively anonymous except for these screen images. There is no deepening of the meaning of the actor beyond the screen presentations. However, the screen

presentations provide a certain redundancy of image, an overcoding that is directed towards a decoding by the audience of the physical performer's reason for being celebrated, the material that can be used to determine the legitimacy of his elevated public stature.

There is a danger that the process of development of the screen star could be arrested in terms of what we have labelled as the actor as pure physical performer. The categorization of "type" overcomes the possibility of creating subjective differences in character portrayal by the actor. If the "type" is replicable by other performers then the inherent value of the emerging screen star is limited. One sees this operation of the economics of film production in relationship to stardom most starkly in the relatively rapid positioning and replacing of female screen presentations. For example in the James Bond series of films, there is a consistency in the actors who played Bond between films. Sean Connery became synonymous with the Bond persona through the 1960s, as did Roger Moore in the 1970s and eighties. In contrast, the Bond women were constructed to be infinitely replaceable because the nature of their fame was built entirely on their physical performance. The basis of their physical performance was dependent on their ability to present alluring images of the female body. Although the Bond character clearly represented a "type", the patterning of that type engaged an elaboration of performance beyond a clear aesthetic of beauty. Built into the type was a construction of masculine allure which permitted a greater degree of action, power and will. The very legitimate characterization of this group of female actors as the "Bond Women" underlines the

film industry's systematic maintenance of a female stardom stalled and often imprisoned with the confines of the category of the physical performer.³⁶

The Picture Personality

The progression from physical performer to that of picture personality is the principal subject of De Cordova's in-depth analysis of the early history of screen stardom.³⁷ It is also analogous to the progression of individual stars from clearly formulated representations of "types" on the screen to the substantiation of the character type through the development of a public profile of the actor that is fundamentally extratextual. The key difference between the picture personality and the physical performer was that the actor's name as opposed to the character's name or type became recognized by the audience and was used to link films together to provide a consistency around the actor's public persona. As De Cordova reveals in his reading of the popular presses of the early twentieth century, the first biographical profiles of the screen stars of the teens were focussed on this link between screen presence and their personal lives: an homologous private world was established that would not challenge their filmic characters.³⁸ It is interesting to see in the genealogy of the construction of current film celebrity the same substantiation occurs as the

³⁶The physical reconstruction of predominantly female performers represents the persistence and dominance of the category of the physical performer in the film industry. The actual reorganization of the body to match an aesthetic has its own genealogy, from the capping of teeth by many actors and Max Factor's cosmetic work to the more interventionist removal of Marlene Dietrich's molars to maintain an angular facial bone structure to Jane Fonda's and Cher's removal of ribs, to the de rigueur in the film and model industries of breast and lip enlargements. The intensity on the body and its reformulation is central to the construction of the female star. The body itself becomes the expression of and the control of the public personality.

³⁷Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities*, particularly pp. 50-97

³⁸*Ibid.*

physical performer begins to be constructed as a public personality. The example of Tom Cruise's transformation is exemplary.

Tom Cruise as Picture Personality

The line of demarcation for Cruise between physical performer to recognizable screen personality which identifies his representation beyond the screen occurs with the release of the feature film *Risky Business* (1983).³⁹ Through this film, Cruise generates a great number of articles not about the film but about the star. The process of working out the internal nature of Tom Cruise begins. Articles start appearing first in the youth-oriented magazines.⁴⁰ The film role becomes the basis for determining the real Tom Cruise as something of an homology is constructed. Cruise, in the photos, plays with the image portrayed in the film - his public image becomes conflated with the ray-ban sunglasses used extensively by the character. For more mainstream magazines and reviews, the movie provides the centrepoint for discussion. In these magazines, Cruise is interpreted as not only representing a role, but also representing a generation of youth through his role and his "cool" attitude best articulated through his use of the Ray-ban sunglasses and his relative detachment

³⁹*Risky Business* was a profitable film. It earned 30.4 million in box office revenues in North America alone and was number one on *Variety's* weekly list of box office leaders on November 23, 1983. It scored particularly well with the young adult demographic. It could also be labelled as Cruise's first film that was a "star-vehicle", that is a movie that showcased his talents. See *Variety* November 23, 1983, p. 9 and May 11, 1989.

⁴⁰Several articles appeared that established the first evidence of Cruise as a recognizable star. These include: D. Hutchings, "No wonder Tom Cruise is sitting Pretty - Risky business has paid off in stardom", *People*, Sept. 5, 1983, pp. 107-108; also "Tom Cruise Makes all the Right Moves", *Teen*, Dec. 1983, pp. 54-55; and E. Miller, "Tom Cruise: an actor with Heart", *Seventeen*, Feb. 1984, pp. 63-64. The first article to appear in *Rolling Stone*, the magazine most closely associated with youth and young adult culture was coordinated with the release of *Top Gun*: C. Connolly, "Winging It" *Rolling Stone*, June 19, 1986, pp. 36-38, 89.

and distance from indicating the significance of experience. Again there is a conflation of the role with the public world; a connection is made to the resonance of the star's image and deportment in the film and life with the audience segment which has celebrated the film. The image of youth proliferates in other ways as the look of the star becomes the way in which "Youth" and the interests of youth are represented in various forms of mediated culture.

Critical at this point in the development of the film celebrity is the necessity not to present contradictory evidence concerning the nature of Tom Cruise. His "real" persona is, at this stage, very much connected to that portrayed on the screen. Thus, the elaborate extratextual discourse on Cruise that appears in newspapers and magazines works to bolster the new screen personality. Cruise's own publicists also maintain the integrity of the screen persona in an effort to maintain Cruise as a significant and marketable commodity. His commodity status is dependent still on the screen presentation or what the character on the screen embodies. The production company, the studio, and the star's developing team of publicity agents begin to manage the consistency of the image. In this way, Cruise establishes a new variation on the male film celebrity, one that builds on the previous constructions but provides markers of distinction and differentiation. The form of those distinctions relate to the way in which a new "structure of feeling"⁴¹ envelopes the production of new film celebrities.

⁴¹From Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (1965, 1961) pp. 64-88

To use Raymond Williams' term, "structure of feeling", lends a certain vagueness to the way a new film celebrity emerges. The vagueness relates to the manner in which the audience may interpret this constructed subjectivity embodied in the celebrity as well as the temporality of that construction, where the concrete reality of the celebrity is grounded in the moment. Through his screen image, Cruise has been positioned as a new generation of male stardom that has been connected to the way in which youth has rethought their imbrication in the social world. We can see in this formative version of Cruise as a celebrity sign/text that there are certain elements which provide a correlation of Cruise to this new attitude.

Youth — which connoted rebellion in previous film stars — is reconstructed through Cruise: youth is correlated with confidence and savvy. The difference with the adult world in this new configuration was not based principally on challenging the models of success and value in contemporary society as previous youthful male heroes had emphasized; rather, the Cruise persona made coherent the inherent value of a higher sensitivity to the way in which the system of success worked so that it could be more effectively used for personal success. The connotation of youth to confidence through Cruise's persona could be characterized as a celebration of personal will, not to transform the system, but to move smoothly through the system to occupy already designated positions of power and influence. The screen personality of Cruise has had a certain consistency from 1983 onwards. The film texts worked to reinforce the reconstruction of this new conception of the power of youth, youthful action and agency. It is significant that the character in *Risky*

Business, which has been so formative for Cruise's public personality, is depicted as relatively well-off, probably upper-middle class teenager. It is the type of image which indicates a clear connection and affinity to forms of cultural and economic capital and the forms of influence they imply. Most of his subsequent films rarely represent images of the upper classes; but they do present the Cruise character as embodying the outward features and appearances of wealth as well as the clear aspirations of his apparent natural right to be part of the wealthy. In most cases the films emphasize the ease at which Cruise can become comfortably successful.

In the filmic texts, this relationship to the ease of success is manifested around either sports/ athleticism or the managing of sophisticated technology. In all cases, Cruise is something of a natural, but also a natural risk taker that goes beyond the bounds of the technology or game to demonstrate ultimate human predominance of will. In *All the Right Moves* (1983), Cruise is a high school football hero that through his sheer talents can transcend his humble origins. In the enormously successful *Top Gun* (1986), Cruise portrays a character whose nickname is Maverick. He is chosen for an elite fighter squadron because of his capacity to supersede the talents of a technically good pilot. Cruise has not had to work hard to develop this skill; he manifests a natural affinity for handling this technical hardware.

Reinforcements of Cruise's screen personality can be seen in other films. In the more sophisticated film, *The Color of Money* (1986), Cruise plays a naturally gifted pool player who is relatively unaware of more subtle techniques for the winning of money until he meets the old pool hustler played by Newman. There are

a number of layers of meanings in this film in which we will engage later in this chapter. What is significant with reference to the construction of a screen personality is that there is a consistency in the representation of Tom Cruise between these films. The organization of his public persona coheres between these various filmic texts. A particular and idiosyncratic celebrity sign is clearly established that intersects with a given set of values concerning youth, success, and appearance.⁴²

Top Gun established the stability of the commodity aspect of Cruise's celebrity sign. It signalled its differentiation from other constructions of stardom that predated Cruise and its clear relationship to a general restructuring of the attitudes of youth and success in the 1980s. It also heralded the power of this particular configuration of screen personality to produce virtually on its own construction of character a successful film. Two years following the release of *Top Gun* and *The Color of Money*, Cruise starred in a film that demonstrated his commodity power in the construction of audiences. *Cocktail* (1988) in its opening scenes seems to provide a narrative continuity for the character, as if this character in this distinct movie had, in fact, emerged like Tom Cruise from *Top Gun*. In the opening sequence, we see Cruise as Brian Flanagan being dropped by his army buddies to catch a bus to "New York": he has completed his army service and is about to go on and achieve fame and fortune in the big city. The Flanagan character in this film never separates from our image of the Cruise star and, in fact, the film — through camera angle, through

⁴²It is interesting to see this chronicling of a category of youth in the 1980s in Cruise's regular appearance on the cover of *Rolling Stone* from 1983 to 1990. Cruise's form of successful rebellion embodied the construction of youth that dovetailed into the editorial structures of the magazine and its advertisers. For a reading of this construction of the particular form of youth audience that *Rolling Stone* developed and honed as valuable market segment see my "The Construction of Difference and Distinction in Contemporary Cultural Forms: An Analysis of the Magazines of Popular Music", Ph. D. Project, unpublished, April 1989.

an obsessive filming of the Cruise smile and grin, and through a celebration of Cruise's body and movement — actively plays and integrates the Cruise screen personality into the meaning of the text. Cruise as Flanagan becomes very quickly a bartending star which allows him to act within the narrative as the star. The character is thronged by adoring fans in several sequences in the film. Predominantly these throngs of bar patrons are women and their adulation of his acrobatic bartending skills is connected through the film text to the sexual aura of Cruise as male star. He acknowledges their looks and responds through further histrionics. His success is further measured in this film by his success in sleeping with women. The women bar patrons in the filmic text represent for the producers of the movie a construction of the form of female adulation perceived to exist in the film audience (the public) for Cruise himself. Through an uncomplicated plot, Cruise's character is constructed as a divided personality, where physical prowess and beauty become separated from the moral integrity of character. The film ends through a reconciliation of the Cruise character so that his outer beauty is matched by his inner morality and integrity. With this unification, the plot is resolved and Cruise as Flanagan is permitted his version of success: he owns his own bar and possesses his own woman. In terms of a developing screen personality, the meaning of Cruise's celebrity sign is also unified: his physical attractiveness is constructed to be contained by his strength of personality.

Cruise's latest film, *Days of Thunder*(1990) represents the triumph of his "picture personality" or the overcoming of the filmic text with the consistency of his

form of public personality/celebrity. The actual filmic text is surrounded with extratextual detail about Cruise and this very personal project. Magazines, in their efforts to anticipate the success of the film at the box office, provide this deepening of the significance of the film before the film's release. As anticipatory stories, there is little analysis of the content of the film - the dearth of information ensures that what is discussed coheres with the strategies of the publicity agents and the production company behind the film. In this particular film production, the organization of production is inevitably connected to Tom Cruise's management.

What we find in these reportages is the building of an homology between the film content and the person and personality of Cruise. For instance, we learn that Cruise's interest in auto racing stemmed from his involvement with actor and professional race car driver and manager Paul Newman three years earlier in the film *Color of Money*.⁴³ Although this interest is outside any filmic text, it is inside the world of public personalities and celebrities — it is in the realm of public knowledge. The film, *Days of Thunder*, works to maintain the coherence of personality on-screen and off-screen. Again this personality emerges fundamentally in the realm of filmic texts. We also are told that Cruise has indeed become a respectable racer. In several articles, his track time is mentioned as the fastest non-professional lap clocked at the track.⁴⁴ The truth of the movie text is borne out in the "real" Cruise. Likewise we

⁴³Jeanne Marie Laskas, "CarCrazy: What's Driving Tom Cruise?" *Life*, June 1990, p. 71. The same detail is repeated in virtually all of the magazines that released stories about Cruise and the film before its release.

⁴⁴This ability of Cruise is most graphically detailed in the June 11 edition of *Sports Illustrated*: Kenny Moore "Cruise Control" pp. 50-53. Cruise has in fact raced some with the Newman racing team. Rick Hendrick, who heads a stock-car racing team is quoted as saying that Cruise almost established a race track record in non-racing tires: "He ran six miles per hour faster in that than I thought he could," says Hendrick. "he has no fear, he has the need all great drivers have to extend themselves, to drive aggressively. He'd make one hell of a race driver, and in not

are made aware in this extratextual discourse that Cruise is credited with "the story idea". This connection is further substantiated in the film's opening credits.

The extratextual discourse which is coordinated with the release of the film is organized specifically around the star and the star's relationship to the content of the film. Several of the interviews and features were written at the set. One female writer centred her story on her experiences as a passenger with Cruise in the stock car used in the film. What is being articulated in this story is the proximity of the writer to the "real" Cruise. Although no real interview took place, the writer provided evidence for the establishment of the real Cruise personality. Very few words were spoken. Instead there was the evident action and experience of driving at high speed around a track. Cruise, like his filmic characters in most of his previous movies, was a man of action. Words then became extraneous to the experience.⁴⁵ Also, the story provided ample evidence that the film role and Cruise had certain common interests and common characteristics. The separation of the private world of Tom Cruise and the public world of his filmic characters is not constructed. The screen personality predominates the decoding of the Cruise celebrity sign.

too long a time, either..." p. 50

⁴⁵Jeanne Marie Laska, "CarCrazy: What's Driving Tom Cruise?" *Life*, June 1990

Forms of Transgression: Establishing the Autonomous Nature of the Film Celebrity Sign

In the intense construction of a screen personality, the star builds, in effect, an overcoded representation of him/herself. This has a certain utility for the recirculation of the screen personality in future films. With Tom Cruise, we can see this most evidently with films like *Cocktail* and *Days of Thunder*, where he reinvents variations of his previous performances. There continues to be the risk however that, like the category of the physical performer, the screen personality is arrested in his/her construction of a type even though that type has been particularized and deepened by the actor him/herself into a coherent personality.

The maintenance of the celebrity status for the film actor involves what I call transgression. De Cordova considers the development of stardom is related to the way in which Hollywood actors of the nineteen twenties became the object of intense search for their meaning and coherence beyond the screen into their private lives. There was a proliferation of the extratextual discourse concerning stars' lives and lifestyles, a discourse that began to fill the entertainment pages of newspapers and the motion picture magazines of the period.⁴⁶ To a degree, these exposés complemented the characterizations these screen actors represented in their films. There were other tendencies as well: as described in our discussion of the screen apparatus and its construction of stardom, it should be repeated here that the stars were depicted in all their grandeur. Their mansions and their extravagant lifestyles became objects of intense scrutiny. Their lives, though sometimes presented as

⁴⁶De Cordova, *Picture Personalities*, pp. 98-105

ordinary in their rituals, were more regularly represented as quite extraordinary. For De Cordova, stardom was intimately connected to this heightened scrutiny of the actors' private lives. From that close examination, a whole discourse on their transgressions from the norms of behaviour became available to the public. Knowledge of their marriages and their divorces, hints of improper liaisons, and scandals that involved sexual indiscretions were commonplace in the press.⁴⁷ Film stars, like their theatrical forbears, began to be examples of how the perversions of wealth led to the breakdown of norms. The extratextual discourse that was intensely involved in mapping and charting the private lives of the stars provided a public discourse on intimacy and a constructed narrative or morality tale that implicitly expressed where the normative centre of that discourse should be.

Transgressions that emerged from the search of the private lives of stars could lead to several scenarios for the construction of the film celebrity sign. In the instance of Fatty Arbuckle and his trial for manslaughter after one of his "famous" wild parties, the transgression virtually destroyed his power as a celebrity sign. The scandal represented too large a moral transgression.⁴⁸ Reporting on Hollywood life would rarely reach this level of normative transgression. More typical in style were affairs of the heart and, if that were impossible or implausible, then a revealing portrait of the everyday life of the Hollywood star. In each of these cases, the level of revelation would not destroy the actor's sign as a celebrity. It would function to

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 117-121.

⁴⁸DeCordova, *Picture Personalities* pp. 125-130.

enhance primarily their independence from the screen image. A common discussion of stars was how they lead normal lives and in this way, their lives were in contradiction to the screen personalities' extraordinary lives. Another common area was the development of a discourse that served to deepen the text of the star as glamorous. Gossip columnists and Hollywood reporters would chart the public appearances of the stars for magazines and newspapers in restaurants, premieres, galas and parties. In all these cases, the actor achieves an independence from the way in which his/her films had painted him/her. I describe this transformation as a kind of transgression that builds into the star an autonomous subjectivity.

A second form of transgression must also occur in order for the film celebrity to construct a certain autonomy of his/her cultural sign: he/she must break the filmic code of his/her personality. The screen personality must be denaturalized into a code of acting. The roles chosen must break the conventional mold of the specific screen personality. This construction of the autonomous film star through acting is analogous to the historical development in the industry of invoking the code of acting to legitimize the cultural form. Producer Adolph Zukor's Famous Players, as discussed above, epitomizes this use of theatrical codes of acting to deepen the cultural significance of the filmic text. Zukor brought in stars of the theatre to sell film to a "cultured" audience. In a similar fashion, the screen star, in order to demonstrate that they have abilities that go beyond the limited construction of their screen personality, work to establish their abilities as actors through playing roles that transgress their previous sign constructions. For example, a comedy star like Robin

Williams plays a dramatic role and thereby works to establish his range as an actor. Female stars, like Farrah Fawcett in *Burning Bed* or Jessica Lange in *Country*, play roles that quite deliberately soil their images of beauty with mutilations of their faces and bodies as a way to transgress their "picture personalities" that have given them little room to manoeuvre and negotiate. The code of acting serves to deepen the celebrity text by demonstrating that skill and talent are elemental in their fame.

Tom Cruise as transgressor

The mode of transgression takes on a number of forms and narratives. For Cruise, along with other film celebrities, this implies an extensive study of their personal lives. We begin to find out about the development of the Cruise personality outside of the filmic texts in the images of mass circulation magazines and newspapers. Biographical details begin appearing which establish the autonomy of the star personality. We learn that he grew up dyslexic and continues to have difficulty in reading scripts. We learn that this disability has led him to be a more determined and focussed actor on the set. As well, with no father present and only sisters we are told that Cruise is very protective of his family in a very paternal way. Profiles of Cruise that have mentioned these kinds of private details have appeared since his appearances in *The Color of Money* and *Top Gun* in 1986.⁴⁹ It is also evident that there is a general lack of information about Tom Cruise: there have been very few interviews and, in the few that have been granted, they are invariably

⁴⁹"Cruise Guns for the Top: An All-American Kid wins over audiences". *Newsweek*, June 9, 1986, p. 73

closely connected to the film project that is being promoted at that time. There is also very little merchandise made and promoted that celebrate the star Cruise outside his film roles. In this way, Cruise maintains his aura, the enigmatic quality of the star. For example, there are no posters which work to maintain and concretize Cruise's independent value from his films.

It is only with his more recent work that the maintenance of image control has been broken. The various celebrity organized functions, the work of paparazzis, and the gossip columnists among others are operating in the space between the film image and the supposed "real" person. He is "caught" by these investigators of public personalities as he leaves celebrity functions, restaurants, and film premieres where the defences of publicity agents are supposedly lacking. It is an elaborate investigation of the truth of a character. The various magazines and television programmes compete for the way in which they can reveal the intimate realm of the star. The interview, a strategy that maintains the apparent control of the celebrity, is often used by the more mainstream press and entertainment-oriented press. *People* and *US* magazine tend to ensure the compliance of the star whenever they produce a feature. This may involve a tour of the inner sanctum of the star: we see the inside of their homes; alternatively we are taken on a "typical" day with the star. In the cover story by *US* on Cruise, the photos are artfully done of the interior space of a cavernous livingroom. The rest of the photos are publicity stills from his various movies. The text is an interview that attempts to uncover the authentic Tom Cruise. Part of the questioning is to determine the validity of rumours and gossip that have

circulated about the star, a function of the more respectable entertainment magazines to operate as the more legitimate source of knowledge as opposed to the supermarket tabloids. We discover that Cruise's nickname is Laserhead because of the intensity he can muster for any project. As well, there is a discussion about the importance of his dogs:

US: .. They also said that your dog was in therapy.

Cruise: (laughing) My dog?! Get the hell outta here! Are you serious?

US: Dead Serious

Cruise: Oh my God. give me a break! Where do they get this stuff?

US: So it's not true?

Cruise: Yeah right, like my dog is sneaking out and going to therapy!

US: Do you have a dog?

Cruise: I have two golden retrievers. They travel with me wherever I go. they're really good. They're just kinda there and they're always happy to see me. I love them.⁵⁰

A *National Enquirer* article typifies the other type of story about Tom Cruise. With the lack of compliance of the celebrity, the story is seen to be more uncensored, less controlled by the star himself. It is in this story that we discover that Cruise's friend's consider him a "womanizer" and after only a few short months has, as the headline proclaims, bought a large \$200,000 diamond ring for his future bride. The scandal, of course, is that his previous marriage was so quickly supplanted by his co-star in his last film *Days of Thunder*. Accompanying the text is a series of snapshots of Cruise embracing the new love, Nicole Kidman, outside a Hollywood restaurant. In contrast to the pictures appearing in the glossy *US* magazine feature, these are

⁵⁰"Tom Cruise and His Movie Machine", *US Magazine*, August 6, 1990, p. 25.

black and white and clearly unsolicited by either Cruise or his companions. The *Enquirer* photos allow us entry into the private world of Cruise. This visual entry is enhanced by the inside reports on the difficulty that Cruise had in convincing Kidman to marry. There are also direct quotes from Cruise from these inside sources that further the illusion of intimacy for the reader:

"I couldn't be happier. Nicole's a one in a million girl and I knew that if I didn't propose to her, I might lose her to somebody who did. Even though marriage didn't work out with Mimi [Rogers], I love being married. And I know in my heart that Nicole and I are made for each other."⁵¹

For the current argument, the details of Cruise's personal life are not significant; what is significant is that these various constructions of Cruise that appear in the different presses establish the distinction between Tom Cruise on the screen and Tom Cruise the celebrity. In other words, whether the stories and images are controlled by his personal management team, as is the case with interviews, or have emerged out of the heightened presence of his image as a cultural commodity in the selling of magazines, newspapers and advertising, Cruise's public persona begins to be distinct from his screen persona. This form of autonomous subjectivity is very important for establishing the power of the film star as a distinct cultural commodity that is transferrable to other domains, other cultural projects and can be separated from his past films.

As Brownstein has chronicled, film stars have also worked actively to situate themselves in activities generally unrelated to the film industry. Cruise, along with

⁵¹*National Enquirer*, July 17, p. 20.

other stars, has aligned himself with a number of what are described as liberal political positions on the environment and nuclear disarmament.⁵² In fact, a whole political consultancy business has developed in Hollywood to aid celebrities in choosing issues with which to become involved. Although Cruise is not a prominent member of the politicized community among the film stars, the movement into the political sphere generally works to establish the relative independence of any film celebrity. The connection with charities or political campaigns deepens the character profile of the celebrity. Instead of being characterized as simply beautiful, handsome or a mouthpiece of the scripts, the connection to these more serious domains adds the possible connotations of depth, intelligence and commitment to their public persona. The public personality then demonstrates a subjectivity that goes beyond the self to the conception of selflessness and public leadership.

The autonomous Cruise is only partially constructed by these extratextual documents that establish his distinctness from his screen presence. Principally, Cruise has focussed on establishing his depth of personality through the code of acting. Cruise's transgression into a form of autonomous subjectivity that bestows upon him a certain economic power in the film industry, is modalized through performing in films that work to shatter his picture personality construction. This can be characterized as acting "against type", which means working against how one is constructed in terms of physical presence, and also acting in what are labelled as quality films. In terms of the trajectory towards some level of autonomous stardom,

⁵²Ronald Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter: The Hollywood-Washington Connection*, New York: Random House, 1990, p 298.

this form of acting transgression follows the construction of a clear film personality. In order to transgress, the clear delineation of screen presence must be firmly in place; thus, Cruise's first film that begins to break the boundaries of his film character, *The Colour of Money* (1986), is produced and released several years into his career. The difference in this first transgressing film is quite subtle: although Cruise continues to play the talented and naturally successful character, he is surrounded by an actor and director who are both known to be serious and well-respected. Paul Newman is Cruise's co-star, an actor who has a very legitimate and lengthy list of film acting credits. As well, Newman is known to be a "serious" individual who has been involved in a number of liberal political campaigns over the last twenty years. In addition, the film builds on the sediments of Newman's own career and film history: Newman recreates the character Fast Eddie Felson from the 1961 film *The Hustler* twenty-five years later. And finally, the director Martin Scorsese is the pre-eminent "quality" American director of the last twenty years. The various sediments of meaning that surround Cruise's performance construct the atmosphere for the invocation of the acting code.⁵³

With *Rainman*, the 1988 film, Cruise further constructs a tension between his overcoded screen personality type and the transgression of the type through the discourse of acting. Once again, Cruise is surrounded by quality: Dustin Hoffman, his co-star, is a multiple winner of the Academy Award for best actor. Levinson, the

⁵³Indeed, the various forms of film references in *The Color of Money* insured that many articles treated the film and the actors in terms of an aesthetic code. The best example of this integration of the film and the actors into a canon of quality can be found in David Ansen, "The Big Hustle", *Newsweek*, October 13, 1986, pp. 68-74.

director, had produced a series of "thoughtful" and artful comedies. The code of acting was central to the construction of the entire film of *Rainman*. Cruise continued to play within the general range of his previously constructed screen personality; however, it was the content of the film that ensured a different reading of Cruise. Hoffman's portrayal of Raymond Babbitt, the autistic brother of Cruise's character, Charlie Babbitt has been described as "acting non-stop" where Hoffman was immersed in the mannerisms of his character.⁵⁴ This was the textual detail that became the central theme of most reviews of the film in the critical and non-critical movie press. From *People* we are given to understand that Hoffman stayed in character in everyday life in his complete employment of the psychological aspects of the Method form of acting. *The New York Times* labelled the film a star vehicle for Hoffman in his continuous quest for the accolades of the Academy Award. Cruise was carried in this tour de force of the film acting profession. As Canby relates in the *New York Times* review, that although Hoffman upstaged everyone in the film Cruise was "the real centre... It may be no accident that Charlie (and Mr. Cruise) survived *Rain Man* as well as they do."⁵⁵ Cruise, through this film, is working to transform his public image from malleable and predictable male film star to serious actor who chooses very carefully the productions with which he is involved. A new series of connotations become associated with a Cruise film. Because of his new-found capacity as an actor as well as the proven ability to attract other quality actors and

⁵⁴Vincent Canby, *New York Times*, December 16, 1988, C12

⁵⁵Canby, *ibid.*, Dec 16, C12

directors to any given project. Cruise now becomes a moniker that has a certain guarantee of quality. Among the cultural production of films, the name Cruise develops a brand name status that not only includes his promise of being an alluring symbol of filmic masculinity, but also a symbol of serious and quality films. It is in this brand-name status that the star's subjectivity becomes melded with his commodity status. The establishment of brand name status that represents quality also is a sign of star autonomy. It indicates that the actor has in fact moved to the centre of the production and that his/her status could be equivalent to the auteur or the producer or both.⁵⁶

Cruise ensures this construction of his autonomous power through his involvement in the film *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989). It is here that Cruise employs the acting code to fully transgress his "naturalized" film persona. Indeed, the very plot of the film is organized around the transformation of an athletic young man to a paraplegic Vietnam veteran. Cruise in portraying this changed man, also indicates his ability to provide a sense of his own commitment to the code of acting that in its intensity rivals the work of Dustin Hoffman in *Rainman*.⁵⁷ Much of the textual material to be written about *Born on the Fourth of July* is concerned with

⁵⁶These two transgressor vehicles for Cruise also are able to stitch together two marketing niches for the film industry: Hollywood art/academy-award potential film with traditional potent masculine box-office king allure. For instance, *Rainman*, received exhibition box office revenues in North America of over \$6.8 million. That amount of box-office revenue ensured that *Rainman* was the 12th highest grossing film of the 1980s and the most successful film Tom Cruise film. In comparison, *Top Gun* was ranked 20th for the 1980s with North American revenues of 79.4 million. It should also be noted that "quality" films like *Rainman* and *Born on the Fourth of July* also have a second life with their video release following their success and publicity at the Academy Awards. *Variety*, May 6, 1991.

⁵⁷What is interesting is that a previous male star, Marlon Brando, established his film acting credentials by playing a paraplegic veteran of the Second World War film, *The Men* (1951). The degree of transformation is part of the acting challenge. As well, Brando is famous for his use of the method acting technique which pushes him into constructing a psychological dimension to his characterizations which aids in establishing the "reality" of the representation on the screen.

Cruise's complete transformation of self in the role: this transformation indicates the depths with which he has committed to the character. What is often focussed in the background articles is that Cruise, like Hoffman in *Rainman*, stayed in character to test his believability in everyday life. For Cruise, the success of the test was determined by his unrecognizability as the star "Cruise" to the point that he was treated "like any other wheelchair confined person": he wanted to feel the frustration and anger that would arise from the disability and the inaccessibility of the world to physically handicapped people.⁵⁸ To be able to dismantle the star's image in the "real" world was the clear mark of a star able to transgress his/her categorization as star and integrate the professional dimension of serious actor into his/her celebrity and concurrently commodity status.

CONCLUSION:

What must be remembered about these various constructions of a film celebrity is that they are modalized or operationalized in the audience. The film industry, the coterie of personal agents surrounding the star, and the star him or herself are involved in this active building of a public personality. Integrated into that structure is some measure of the response of a public and then the reformulation of that response (in whatever its form) into the further cultural production of the celebrity. The audience then for Tom Cruise is not necessarily very involved in the

⁵⁸Richard Corliss, "Cruise Control" (cover story) *Time*, December 25, 1989, p. 59. What is interesting about these various lengthy stories about Cruise is the way in which the *oeuvre* is reread to coordinate with this new autonomous stature of the actor. Causality is reinforced to establish the inevitable trajectory of the star as their film works are canonized into historical significance.

meanings of his public personality. For some in the possible audience, there is an absolute abhorrence to his physical presence. For others, there is a mild acceptance of his various constructions of self. The audience then moves in and out of using the film celebrity to represent idealizations of self or alternatively dystopian visions of self and others, or even of allowing the celebrity's public personality to mean nothing at all. The full complexity of the interaction of the audience to the celebrity apparatus is beyond the bounds of this dissertation; what can be seen is the outlines of celebrity construction that are actively used by the audience.

The film celebrity emerges from a particular cultural apparatus. In its diverse incarnations, the film celebrity represents the building and dissipation of the aura of personality. The filmic text establishes a distance from the audience. The extratextual domains of interviews in magazines, critical readings of the films, television appearances are attempts at discerning the authentic nature of the film celebrity by offering the audience/public avenues for seeing the individual in a less constructed way. It is important to realize that these other discourses that try to present the "real" film star are in themselves actively playing in the tension between the film celebrity's aura and the existence of stars' private lives. The will to knowledge about their private and personal domains is coexistent and dependent on the constructed aura or controlled domain of knowledge provided by the narratives of the film texts.

Finally, the film star has been constructed to represent the ultimate independence of the individual in contemporary culture. In the most obvious way,

the film star is granted economic power to fabricate a lifestyle of wealth and leisure through the income earned from each film release. In a less obvious way, their private lives are chronicled to demonstrate their relationship to the normative centre of the society. Film stars, collectively and historically, have been granted this normative leeway in the organization of their personal lives. Their lives become the idiosyncratic markers that demonstrate the expansive limits of individual independence in the culture. However the normative leeway is only granted to those who can actively construct their individual autonomy from other constraining apparatuses. The ultimate film star or celebrity then has *individually* transgressed the constructions of public personality that have been placed by the film apparatus and the public. With this status, the film star is constructed to possess a great deal of power for determining their own future, their film projects, and their own public image.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MEANINGS OF THE POPULAR MUSIC CELEBRITY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF DISTINCTIVE AUTHENTICITY

The transformations of popular music in the twentieth century can be attributed to a number of factors that include the use of new technologies, the size of concerts, the growth of a recording industry, and the segmentation of the mass market. Discursively, all of these factors have been modalized around concepts of authenticity. At the centre of these debates concerning the authentic nature of the music is the popular music performer; how s/he expresses the emotionality of the music, how s/he expresses their own inner emotions, feelings and personality or how s/he is faithful to the intentions of the musical score are all manners in which the individual performer is determined to be authentic. What follows is an examination of the genealogy of the popular music celebrity and how the focus on the star has shaped these debates concerning the authentic quality of popular music. Like the movie industry, the popular music industry has become located primarily in the United States. Aside from a few deviations, the study of the industry-celebrity relationship in popular music will concern itself with American popular music.

The Industrial Construction of the Popular Music Star

The development of celebrity status in the production of popular music is closely connected with the mass reproduction of songs. In the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, sheet music production and distribution was the economic heart of the music industry. The performer at music halls and vaudeville theatres became the principal means of expanding the market for a particular composition beyond regional boundaries and interests. As a vehicle for the promotion of the song, the status of the song performer was very important for the music publishing companies. At the same time, poor material — that is, unpopular songs — could hurt the singer's performance career. In the construction of the sheet music commodity, the singing star was simultaneously developed. Above the illustration on the cover page of most sheet music productions, the name of the performer would vie in size with the name of the song. In this way, the buying public was able to link song with singing star. Million selling songsheets were not uncommon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, between 1900 and 1910, 100 songsheets sold a million copies and occupied therefore the very centre of the music industry.¹ The audience was comprised primarily of the middle classes where it was popular to perform and sing the pieces with piano accompaniment in their own livingrooms. The arrangements were quite simple so that the singing and the playing could be handled by a large amateur population.

Essentially, there were two overlapping markets for song production: the stage performance and the song publication. The performer, working with a more elaborate orchestration and arrangement, created the professional version of the song - the official text. At the turn of the century, the nascent recording industry built on

¹David Buxton, *Le Rock, société de consommation et le star-système*, Grenoble: Pensée Sauvage, 1985 p. 30

the reproduction of these official texts of music and song. To establish its authenticity, the most famous performers would be enlisted to sing the recording. Thus the recording industry used the system of stars established by the music publishing business for its foundation.

The industry, centred in New York, rapidly developed a division of labour in order to maintain a level of production to satisfy the primary market of songsheets and the secondary market of records. This entailed the employment of what were called "tunesmiths" to manufacture new songs for performers and publication. It was critical to the organization of the industry that these composers were employees because the principal means of revenue/profit accumulation for the industry was the copyright which was held by the music publishing company. This gave the company, not the individual, the recording rights and the publishing rights to any song produced by their employees for fifty years. The tunesmiths themselves were usually paid a flat rate per song. For example Charles Graham, the writer of the popular song of 1891 "The Picture That is Turned Towards the Wall" received about fifteen dollars.² The writers for Tin Pan Alley remained relatively anonymous for the first two decades of the twentieth century. Other than their titles, star performers — also employees of the recording industry — were the usual way in which songs were identified other than their title.

The other critical transformation of musical culture that the music industry fostered was the active generalization of regional differences. The tunesmiths were

²John Shepherd, *Tin Pan Alley*, London: Routledge, 1982, ch. 1, p. 9

often involved in the appropriation of regional folk music — which was intimately connected to the particular community's system of meaning — and homogenizing its appeal. Buxton connects this transformation to the industrialization and urbanization of American culture and the new social needs that emerged were divorced from these regional contexts. The songs produced maintained an abstract stylistic connection to the regional folk music, but were new in their appeal to persons living and working in the cities. The types of songs produced could be said to contain traces of a social memory of regions; these traces from an array of sources, however, were now used to construct differences and variety in popular song production.³ The repetition of a folk song which was without copyright generated no capital; variations in composition and lyrics of folk songs allowed for the application of copyright and the generation of capital. As many authors have attested, one of the key (because it was free) sources for appropriation was black American music of the ante-bellum.⁴ This appropriation of black musical style into the mass production of popular music established one of the dominant strains of contemporary popular music.

Singers of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were part of this process of generalization for the mass market of regional styles. Buxton describes most vaudeville and music hall singers as local celebrities.⁵ They came from outside of these communities and presented a musical style that was not of the

³David Buxton, *Le Rock: star-système et la société de consommation*, ch. 1 and 2

⁴See Steve Chappell and R. Garafalo *Rock 'n Roll Is Here To Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry*, Chicago, 1977. Also Le Roi Jones, *The Blues People*, New York, 1963.

⁵Buxton, p. 27

region. But their market reach was somewhat limited. He uses the example of the transformation of country music to detail the change that performers underwent for the developing mass market. The original country musicians recorded in the 1920s were older part-time musicians who had achieved a certain celebrity status within their region playing a particular style of music. Performers like Fiddlin' John Carson and Charlie Oaks were well into their fifties when they first recorded. According to Buxton, record sales and radio play fostered the attribution of the distinctive regional styles to the personal style of the recording artist. The recording artist, because of the consumption demands of an audience whose use of the music was less connected to the cultural significance of a particular regional musical style and more connected to a general capitalist culture and leisure, quickly depleted his/her traditional repertoire of songs. Because of this different relationship to the music, where it had been abstracted from its regional source, the recording artist himself became the centre for production of new songs in a similar style. By the 1940s, musical styles became a resource for the performer upon which to construct new melodies and thus new "personalizations". The incorporation of regional style had been completed through the development of the versatile country music artist.⁶

The Technology of the Popular Music Celebrity

It was through the use of the technologies of reproduction and distribution that the possibility of a fundamentally different relationship to the pleasures of popular

⁶Buxton, pp. 27-29

music and their stars became manifest. The breakdown of difference on the basis of region became reconstituted in the urban setting in terms of taste, likes and dislikes. New conceptions of authenticity had to be developed in popular music that integrated this new relationship to musical style.

The technology of reproduction problematizes the concept of authenticity. In the development of the popular music celebrity, the recording technology has worked to authenticate the particular and individual performance partly through the progressive perfection of sound recording and sound reproduction technology. However, the construction of the technological reproduction of songs has also changed the meaning of the live and in-person performance of concerts. The music industry, through their stars, has constructed two sometimes contradictory levels of the "real" and authentic. The record has become the true representation of the music; the concert has become the faithful reproduction of the "authentic" recorded music.⁷ It has become a common experience of concert audiences to sense the inadequacies of the live performance in producing the recorded music that they associate with the performer. Studio technology and studio sound, with its 24-track editing capability, cannot be matched by the indeterminate acoustics of the concert hall/stadium, the fallibility of the performers, and the inability to produce all of the same recorded

⁷Simon Frith has recounted:

"A couple of years ago I went to see Al Green in concert in the Royal Albert Hall in London. At one point he left the stage (and his microphone) and walked through the audience, still singing. As he passed me I realized that this was the first time, in 30 years as a pop fan, that I'd heard a star's "natural" voice!" "The Industrialization of Popular Music" in James Lull (ed.) *Popular Music and Communication*, Newbury Park Ca.: Sage, 1987, p. 53.

sounds within a less controlled environment.⁸ In some instances, the stars of the concert no longer actually sing or perform; instead they lip-synch and dance to the reproduced sounds of their records in front of the audience.⁹ I shall return to the new meanings of the live concert in a subsequent part of the chapter. What I want to deal with specifically here is the different meanings and experiences that are offered by the technology in the production and consumption of records and how these have constructed the type of celebrity figures to emerge in popular music in the twentieth century.

First of all, as I have mentioned above, the record further sanctified a particular performer's rendition of a song. The song in essence became a sign of the performer. It was quite common therefore for a particular popular music celebrity to "possess" a signature tune. Roy Rogers' "Happy Trails", Sinatra's comeback "My Way", Garland's "Over the Rainbow", and Robson's "Ol' Man River" are all examples of songs that were inseparable from their performers.

The same focus on the correct or original version by a particular star changes the uses made of music by the audience. With songsheets, the audience was involved in their own reproduction of the work. With records, the use of music became oriented towards an audience of listeners, not amateur performers. The record

⁸For useful reading of the construction of sound in studio space and its implications for its use in other settings see Paul Théberge, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 10, no. pp.

⁹The rapid expansion of Karaoke bars in North America and Europe represents the blending of the authentic background track with the personal for the representation of performance. It is an active positioning of a cultural practice in the interstices between the authentic (and the public) and the private (and the personal).

A recent example of this revelation of inauthenticity was Milli Vanilli's 1991 confession that they did not sing their songs on record or at concerts. They were purely actors of the songs and lipsynchers. It resulted in the groups being stripped of their two Grammy awards. Likewise the group, *New Kids on the Block*, has been accused on many occasions of using a great deal of prerecorded vocals and music in their programs over the last four years.

professionalized the means of musical production through its coding of orchestration and the performer's singing, codes that far surpassed the capacity of the amateur piano player and singer. To hear a particular song in the home increasingly meant either listening to a record or the radio.

The domestic nature of the technology of reception worked in the reorientation of the perception of the popular music performance and performer. Within his/her own livingroom, the listener could enjoy the very best and most popular singers and performances. The record player privatized the technology of exhibition. Moreover, the activity of listening permitted the investment of personal experiences into the meaning of the music to a greater degree than concert performances. In the privatized world of consumption the listener, through his purchasing of the record, could sense the personal possession of the song and performer. Though distanced through technological apparatuses, listening to recorded music brought performer and audience closer together by domesticating entertainment and the performance of the popular music star

In successive technological inventions, the private and personal activity of listening has been privileged. The development of the 45 rpm-speed record and record player in the fifties was a way to increase the sales of smaller format, more portable machines for the rapidly expanding youth market. The middle-class teenager would potentially have his/her own record player and singles record collection in his/her room. Similarly, transistor radios, because they no longer needed large vacuum tubes, could be produced cheaply in compact, lightweight sizes for

personalized uses.¹⁰ Popular music, through the portable transistor radio, became an integral part of a variety of leisure pursuits. The transistor technology was embraced particularly by youth in their attempts to construct distinctive social spaces. Finally, the consumer acceptance in the early eighties of the Sony Walkman, the entirely personalized stereo radio and tape player, articulates the ultimate privileging of private listening practices. With headphones, the Walkman listener isolated his/her pleasure in a manner that the radio speaker never achieved. The tape player also allowed for the personal programming of taste; the listener, with complete portability, was also independent of the radio station's programming style. Each of these technological innovations has served to personalize the relationship between the musical artist and the listening public.

Technology and Performance

In terms of the technology of musical production, one can identify a trend which has also been configured around the privileging of the personal and the individual. This movement can be seen in the changes in the popular music performing style that resulted from the integration of electronic recording and the use of the microphone.

¹⁰Simon Frith, *Sound Effects*, p. 113.

The first performer to sell in excess of a million records was the opera star, Caruso in 1901.¹¹ Caruso possessed the technical perfection of the voice - at least as it was understood in the aesthetics of classical music. In contrast, popular music singers of the last thirty-five years have eschewed the classical perfection of the voice in favour of expressing the emotionality and personality of the voice. The other model of the professional vocalist from the early recording era of popular music — equally rejected by most contemporary performers — was the music hall and vaudeville star. Like the opera singer, the popular singer was able to project their voice to the very back of the concert hall. Al Jolson epitomised this early twentieth century style of singing, where the power of the voice — its depth and range — qualified the singer for star status. However, the invention of the microphone made the need for a large and full voice less central in popular music. Al Jolson with his half- singing/half-talking, minstrel/vaudeville style never adapted to the microphone. Rudy Vallee, the megaphone star, was the first to work comfortably with the microphone in expressing the new possibilities of intimacy that it allowed. Bing Crosby, along with a host of other singers known as crooners, managed to use the microphone as if they were singing quietly to one other person.¹² The relaxed nature of the crooning style became dominant in the nineteen thirties' radio shows hosted by various big bands of the swing era. This movement to intimacy and

¹¹Buxton p. 26

¹²Shepherd (1982), pp. 103-105

personal style complemented the developing receiving technology of popular music. Since the crooners, vocalists have continued to experiment with the "grain of the voice"¹³, that texture of vocal style that can express intimacy, individuality, and a range of emotions.

Popular Music's Performance Codes

Performance also emerged from the structure of the popular music industry. With specific people employed as composers — the tunesmiths of Tin Pan Alley — there was a complementary network of stars to interpret those songs. The division of labour between stars and the relatively anonymous writers was further accentuated by the major Hollywood studios' purchase of the principal music publishing houses of New York during the nineteen thirties. The movie musical, which served as a promotional vehicle for the introduction of sound, also aided in the construction of identifiable images and personalities connected to the popular songs that were heard on the radio. The emphasis on the vocalist was in sharp contrast to the big band/swing era's emphasis on the band leader. In retrospect, it seems surprising to learn that Crosby, the most famous of the crooners was relegated to the back row of Paul Whiteman's orchestra and, like other vocalists of the early swing era, was treated like any other musician with an instrument to play.¹⁴ Film and radio

¹³Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice", in *Image, Music, Text*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, pp. 179-189

¹⁴Buxton, p. 33.

exposure gradually changed the orientation of the music industry towards the star vocalist. In sharp contrast to the construction of the star vocalist in mainstream popular music, the black popular music tradition of the twentieth century presented the model of the singer-songwriter. But within black blues and jazz, there was a gender division which articulated the acceptability of having black female performers sing for a white audience and the inacceptability in most clubs of having a black male performer sing for a white audience from the 1920s to the 1940s. Bessie Smith, the renowned female blues singer of the 1920s, was a veritable star. The black male blues performer, like Blind Lemon Jefferson or Robert Johnson, performed and played in relative obscurity even though their music formed the basis of much of the blues repertoire of Bessie Smith. It was impossible for these musicians to become included in the culture industry's starmaking machinery.

The integration of this other contrasting tradition in the production of popular music into the mainstream of the industry is connected to two labour and copyright disputes in the early forties. First of all, ASCAP, an organization that represented composers and publishers and collected the royalties for the use of songs on radio and by performers demanded an increase in that rate of 200% in 1941.¹⁵ The radio networks refused and subsequently organized BMI, their own copyright organization and started to play records that were not under ASCAP's jurisdiction. This led to the use of non-Tin Pan Alley songs, which generally meant the use of country and western and blues music. In 1942, the musicians' union strike meant that once again

¹⁵Shepherd, p. 97.

radio no longer had the records, programmes and shows which it had relied upon for the previous decade. The radio networks turned to the only non-unionized musical worker — the vocalist. According to Buxton, this led to a further reliance on the vocal stars in popular music and the decline in influence of the big bands.¹⁶ The temporary dependence on marginal musical sources by radio combined with the fostered maturation of the solo singing star permitted the development and acceptance of the performance style in the rock 'n roll of the 1950s.

Several writers have considered the singer Johnnie Ray as the transitional figure in the development of the contemporary popular music performance style.¹⁷ Ray freely acknowledged that he was not a very good singer. Instead of professionalism, Ray could be characterized as an expressionist. He integrated the body and sexuality in his often tearful plea to his audience, where his movement was described by one music critic as "writhing" in torment. He gesticulated wildly with his arms, unlike the controlled virtually unmoving professionalism of Sinatra whose only bodily gesture of individuality was the snapping of his fingers. His finish to his songs was punctuated by a dramatic falling to his knees as he caressed the microphone. The characteristic roll of the hips and snarl of Presley carried on the tradition of expressing one's individuality in performance through the public codes of sexual gesture. The stances of the male rocker, the guitar as phallic symbol, and the energy and vitality of stage movement and acrobatics have all become the codes of

¹⁶Buxton, p. 37.

¹⁷See in particular Shepherd, pp.135-138; Buxton, pp. 64-68 and Richard Middleton in his discussion of subjectivity in *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990, p. 266.

rock performance. The rock performance style emerged out of the confluence of black performance style with the need to express the sincerity of personality and individuality of the performer/star.

The Rhetoric of Performance

Although the integration of sexuality and expressivity into the performer's style identifies a break with some of the past traditions of twentieth century musical representation, there is also a continuity of form in performance. The mode of address, unlike the play or the film, is constructed to be direct. Whether on record or in concert, the vocalist includes the audience in this address. In the lovesong, the address is quite direct; the audience replaces the lost or new-found love. In the blues song the address is often one of lament; it remains a story directed at the audience as if they were another individual in the conversation. Indeed, structured into the blues song is the call and response between guitar and vocals. It is quite common for the audience to "respond" in simple affirmations as if engaged in conversation. The directness of the address of the musical performer has always constructed the relationship between performer and audience at a very personal level. Classical and professional performance codes attempt to distance the singer from the content of the music. In the attempt to express the emotions of the musical and lyrical content of the song, the contemporary popular music performer has worked to authenticate his/her performance through acknowledging the direct nature of the address. The personal sentiments expressed in the song's lyrics are freely exposed in action and

voice. Audience participation and response are encouraged in the concert setting during the performance of most songs. In this way, a ritualized dialogue is maintained between performance and audience.

There also exists a rhetorical dialogical relationship between the concert and the records of the performers. The audience's use of the concert is mediated by their prior use of the records. In the production of popular music, most of the stars' records predate any concert appearance. The concert is used by the band and the recording company as a method of promotion of the record commodity; it sustains interest in the product beyond its release date in the press, trade papers and with the fans.¹⁸ The concert is therefore not an introduction to the music for the fans, but a form of ritualized authentication of pleasure and meaning of the records through a "lived" experience; it heightens the significance of the records and the pop star. The fan is demonstrating their solidarity with the artist's message and the rest of the audience. The concert then becomes much more of a display and an expression by the audience member of a personal commitment to and a celebration of the performers than an appreciation of their skill and technique.

Youth and the Construction of the Contemporary Popular Music Star

Central to the construction of the popular music star of the last forty years is the capacity for its sign to express the difference and significance of youth. It has

¹⁸It is generally acknowledged that most concert tours are money-losing ventures. Thus, in recent years most major tours of rock bands are sponsored by beer or soft drink corporations in order to defray the expenses.

been argued by Frith and others that the teenager became a kind of categorization that broke with the usual form of differentiation on the basis of class.¹⁹ Youth was one of the ways in which categories of consumption could redefine the social world and therefore it became a useful passageway for the elaboration of a new consumer subjectivity. The potential youth market in most Western societies grew enormously after the second world war. In England teenage disposable income grew by 100% between 1938 and 1958; similarly in the United States, teenagers' average weekly revenue grew from \$2.50 to \$10 a week.²⁰ Their income, without the weight of family obligation, could be devoted completely to the construction of a style of leisure consumption. The cues for the construction of a distinctive style were drawn from the movies and popular music which began servicing the social needs of this new market.

Several authors have interpreted the new divisions in society created by the development of a separate and distinct youth culture in terms of the way the dominant culture viewed the transformation as a threat.²¹ The fifties are thus construed as a period of moral panic, where the dominant culture considers the new ethics, the new focus on sexuality, the emphasis on leisure, entertainment and pleasure as assaults on the traditional values of hard work and just reward. Teenage films of the period

¹⁹Frith, *Sound Effects*, pp. 182-194

²⁰Buxton, p. 71.

²¹See in particular the development of British subcultural studies: Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, London: McGibbon and Kee, 1972. Also see Hall et al.(ed). *Resistance through Rituals*, London: Hutchinson, 1976 and Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New York: Methuen, 1979.

oscillate between depicting the pleasures of the new morality and the dangers of excess. Popular music — specifically rock 'n roll — stars represented the incarnation of excess, decadence, and pleasure without connection to morality. For parental culture, according to this interpretation, rock 'n roll stars presented the emulatory material for the corruption of their teenagers. A clear-cut generational opposition is at the centre of the moral panics hypothesis, where from the writers' perspectives the progressive forces of change aligned squarely with youth and its representatives in popular music and the disciplining nature of the dominant culture was articulated through the category of parents. Popular music then became a kind of battleground of ideal representations to include youth. On one side, black performers like Little Richard and — more dangerously because their turf was the racial and economic centre of American culture — white performers like Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis who had integrated black performance styles represented the out-of-control nature of teenage lifestyle. On the other side, the disciplined singing and performing style of performers like Pat Boone who reinterpreted rock 'n roll with larger orchestrations and less sexually suggestive lyrics, represented the acceptable form of youth culture for parents and the dominant morality.

What needs to be integrated into the moral panics hypothesis which continues in various forms to be at the centre of the study of contemporary popular music, is the oppositional structure between parents and youth is an opposition that has been fostered by elements of the dominant culture itself. The fifties therefore not only represents the clear distinctiveness of a youth culture, it also represents a clear-cut

emergence of a market segment for the circulation of goods and services. The new threat of youth is the integration of a consumption ethic into the general culture. The clash between a production and consumption ethos, openly displayed in the fifties and sixties, is configured through a generational conflict. Implicit in structuring a conflict in generational terms is its ultimate resolution through the succession of one generation by the next. Thus, consumption in the succeeding generation can be seen as a positive form of constructing one's social identity. The division of the social world into patterns of consumptions generally configured around the concepts of style and lifestyle becomes naturalized and is no longer in opposition to a morality of work and production. The oppositional structure of the fifties and sixties is reconfigured in the seventies and eighties into stylistic differentiation. In terms of the market, the differentiation is labelled market fragmentation or segmentation.

Popular music and its celebrities have operated at the nucleus of the production of stylistic differentiation through consumption and leisure. The presentation of the star, their musical roots, their style of dress, their manner of speech and their public display of sexuality are all significant markers for the structuring and differentiating of youth culture. In the nineteen sixties, differentiations of style were modalized around the display of authenticity as a rupture from the performing styles of past generations. The largest and most enduring transformation was the writing of one's own material and the related celebration of the singer-songwriter. In this way, the new artist appeared to the audience to control their own destiny and thereby directly shape the entire recording industry to reflect

specific aspirations and desires. Top stars demanded and received "artistic freedom" partly through the opportunity to produce their own records and also partly through the financial rewards of large royalties and record sales that allowed them to experiment. The star's cultural power depended on a very close affinity with a specific and loyal audience. The star then was actively engaged in the construction and differentiation of audience groups in terms of style and taste and authenticating their elevated position. The popular music star, more than other forms of celebritydom, had to be a virtual member of his/her own audience in order to sustain his/her influence and authenticity and the commitment of the fan.

In the nineteen sixties, some performers constructed their authenticity around naturalness and the rejection of performance codes. Folk performers, like Joan Baez eschewed the concept of spectacle in dress and appearance to be more closely affiliated with the audience. Barefoot, without make-up or an elaborate style of dress, Baez would sing with only the accompaniment of an acoustic guitar. The stylistic configuration she portrayed became emulated by a generation of women. Rock performers, like the Rolling Stones built their authenticity on their musical and lyrical roots. Their musical and performance style of more overt sexuality was built on black rhythm and blues. Bob Dylan's authenticity depended on a literary aesthetic code of the genius creator.

Innovation and Transformation in the Popular Music Celebrity

A recurring technique to establish authenticity in popular music performance is the breaking of codes and establishing of new or transformed codes of style. Style

may indicate for example a different musical code, a new form of dance, or an altered way of dress. The new look is invariably drawn from a particular audience group or subculture which is then rearticulated by the popular music band. Style represents a statement of difference as well as a statement of solidarity with the particular audience. A change in style indicates a reassertion by the band of its own authenticity. Any style eventually loses its power to represent difference as the marketplace continuously appropriates the idiosyncrasies of codes of style for commodity innovation. Thus the popular music performer is also continuously appropriating new representations of individuality through style.

There are two implications that are connected to the instability of the codes of style of popular music. First of all, popular musical style is defined through collectivities. The subcultural and marginal origins for the appropriation of style demand an affinity to the meaning and significance of subcultural style by the popular group. It is also relevant to understand the collective nature of popular music to remember that the dominant structure in rock music is not the individual performer, but the band. The band may have a leader or a key figure that comes to represent them publicly; nevertheless the band's adopted name usually is better known than any of the individual players. Collective forms of identity then are central to contemporary popular music. The individual star may emerge from this emphasis on collective identity; but in distancing him/herself from the band, the individual is drawing on codes of performance that are more connected to the conceptions of the singing star of the thirties and forties.

Secondly, popular music's attempts to break and remake codes bring the form into a closer alignment with the movements in modern art than other culture industries. The popular musician's play with style can also be thought of in aesthetic terms. Moreover, many of the British popular music groups of the sixties and seventies were formed in the art schools opened in the fifties.²² The artistic movements, which included the avant-garde, dadaism, impressionism, abstract art, surrealism and most significantly pop art, entered into popular music partly in the form of album covers and partly in terms of the claims and pretensions of practice that the musicians maintained in their pose as popular artists. There are a number of romantic connotations of the nineteenth and twentieth century artist that have been integrated into the posturings and style of the contemporary popular music celebrity. The pale pallour recalls the consumptive starving artist or the genius whose body has been ravaged by excess and drugs. The liteness and thin frame refer to the youthfulness of the romantic poets who, like the near mythic Thomas Chatterton, died before they were thirty.²³ The experiential lifestyle refers to a number of artistic movements to emerge out of the twentieth century. The anarchy and nihilism graphically depicted by the Who's ritualistic destruction of their instruments hearkens back to the dadaists. The bohemian lifestyle that surfaced in many European cities in

²²See Simon Frith and Howard Horne, *Art into Pop*, London: Methuen and Co., 1987, ch. 2.

²³Chatterton, who attempted to create a long lost poet named Rowley from a previous century, committed suicide at the age of seventeen in the late eighteenth century when his faked discovery and his faked poet gained no attention. What made this rather insignificant event of even greater resonance was how his life (and death) was celebrated and relived by 19th century romantic poets like Wordsworth and Byron, Keats and even a young Coleridge. See Leo Braudy, *Frenzy of the Renown: Fame and Its History*, New York: Oxford, 1986, pp. 421-425.

the nineteenth century serves as a fecund ground on which to construct the pop star's public presence.²⁴ Finally, the ultimate play with the pretensions of artistic posture are articulated in the music videos that are produced to embellish the image of the popular group. Videos are populated with surrealism, and avant-garde filmmaking that serve to associate the popular star with the style and romantic connotations of the innovative artist.

Summary

The celebrity of popular music is constructed from quite different elements than the film celebrity. These elements are related to the technology of production and reception, the form of address that is peculiar to the singing of a song, the industrial and commodity configuration of the musical product and the audience's collective and individual relationship to the music and performer. Fundamental to the construction of the popular music celebrity is the conveyance of both commitment and difference. Commitment refers to the audience's close and intimate relationship to the pop star as well as the way in which the artist conveys their authenticity in representing the audience. In some cases, authenticity is displayed through emotional sincerity: the performer's direct and personal address in the song is further individualized through the private forms of reception. This kind of personal relationship between performer and audience describes the more classical construction of the popular music star to emerge in the twentieth century. In other cases,

²⁴See Robert Pattison, *The Triumph of Vulgarly: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*, New York: Oxford, 1987. Pattison maintains that rock music epitomizes a contemporary version of romantic pantheism.

authenticity is expressed through the performer's communication of solidarity with an audience. The focus in these instances is on the creation and maintenance of codes of difference and particularity by both audience and performer.

The development of this second discourse on authenticity in popular music coincides roughly with the emergence of rock music. Within rock music, the appeal to authenticity has been developed by industry, artist and audience into the formation of taste cultures, where the expression of a particular consumption style becomes more central to the public presentation of identity. As discussed above, popular music has been at the interstices of the formation of a new consumer subjectivity. Its active work in construction of new collectivities and new social categories on the basis of lifestyle and taste has bestowed on its representatives -its celebrities - social power. Occasionally the social power that has congealed in popular music has facilitated the organization of social movements that are opposed to the general organization of the social structure. In a sense, the configuration of power in popular music identifies an elemental risk in the organization of new social identities in consumer capitalism. Differentiation and innovation to create distinction are fundamental parts of commodity production; however they necessitate an active play with the meanings and social needs that are embodied in the commodity for the consumer. The popular music celebrity represents the continuous reorganization of consumer subjectivities into collective forms of identity.

In the following section, the group *New Kids on the Block* will be analyzed in terms of the way their celebrity signs have emerged in the public sphere from the

organization of the popular music industry. The discourses of authenticity, commitment and difference operate in the formation of any popular music group and the following hermeneutic will reveal the particular manner in which these discourses operate in the formation and success of *New Kids on the Block*.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF A "PHENOMENON": *NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK*

An integral part of the lexicon of the popular music industry and their forms of self-promotion is the concept of the "phenomenon". Because of the 90 per cent failure rate of any recording that is manufactured to generate a profit, the industry is organized towards "hitting".²⁵ The 10 per cent of records that actually generate earnings not only subsidize the failures but also account for the substantial profits of the entire industry. Thus, in actual fact, very few of the recordings generate most of the revenues. As a result, the industry appears to be disorganized; it seems to be incapable of determining with any consistency which records and acts are going to sell well and which acts are going to be financial losses. The industry attempts to solve this problem in three principal ways: the reissue of compilations that have previously sold well (the Greatest Hits records); the concentration in production, distribution and promotion on established acts (i.e. The Rolling Stones are what is often called a "bankable" act); and intense promotion of specific new acts with costly videos, tour support and advertisements.

²⁵Frith, *Sound Effects*, p. 147. In fact, this statistic about the success of records roughly parallels the success rate for the introduction of a new consumer product.

Nevertheless, the popular music industry is often described as volatile and unpredictable. The product that the industry is dealing with, possibly more than other cultural products, is much more in the domain of affect and outside of the realm of reason and the rational. Music and the uses of music are very much connected to the emotive side of human existence. The recording industry is constantly trying to tap this emotive side through the production of music. In a sense, it is attempting to contain a feeling so that at least temporarily it can be defined by a group or a song.

The "phenomenon" in popular music is the recording act which has somehow captured a massive audience. The language of the industry is that these phenomenon are out of their control. The term phenomenon, which has been used to describe the Beatles in a previous era and *New Kids on the Block* currently, borrows from the manner in which nature is described: much like a hurricane or a tornado, the popular music phenomenon is a naturally occurring event that appears to be unpredictable in its time, place or force. It "hits" with incredible power and if strong enough may "hit" more than once. A rash of sales statistics chart the power of the phenomenon.: in 1989, *New Kids on the Block* sold more than 14 million records in North America composed of 10 charted albums and singles; their **Hangin' Tough** album was the second best-selling album of that year; in terms of concerts, the group made 73.8 million dollars in ticket sales in 1990 which places second in all-time concert tour

revenues.²⁶ *People's* cover story on the *New Kids* revels in the language of powerful nature: "the Kids are riding the crest of the most frenzied pop-music phenomenon since Beatlemania."²⁷ Integrated with this force of nature conception of popular music's construction of the relationship between its audience and the cultural product, is the language of warfare. New musical groups "explode onto the scene". There was the dance music explosion. In the nineteen sixties, the plethora of successful British bands in North America was described as an "invasion". Following the punk "invasion" of the nineteen seventies there was the "new wave", which in its terminology successfully blends militaristic language with another metaphor from the forces of nature.

This use of natural phenomenon/battlefield terminology by the popular music press and the industry itself has developed over time into a shorthand method of trying to describe the irrationality that is at the centre of the way in which the industry operates. As well, the description of popular music changes and transformations, often described in previous decades as "crazes", has functioned as a central metaphor in the discourse of cultural change itself, of a culture in constant transformation and upheaval. It is a discourse which, through its emphasis on unpredictability coupled with the inevitability of change, reshapes people's actions

²⁶Paul Grein, "New Kids have Blockbuster Year", *Billboard*, Dec. 23, 1989 p. 10. Also, "New Kids Top Tour List" *Variety*, Dec. 13, 1990, p. 52. Most of these statistics do not indicate international sales of *New Kids*. Comparable levels of sales and success were recorded in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, (to a lesser degree) Japan, and Europe. For example, see *Billboard*, International charts, Dec. 16, 1989, p. 66. Other statistics which demonstrate their "phenomenal status" include their release of their 1990 album *Step by Step* established a first day sales record. As well, *New Kids* have released a series of videos that have coincided with their albums. Their first two music video releases became the first music videos to have sales of over one million copies. See Ed Christman, "New Kids' Step by Step Sells by Leaps and Bounds", *Billboard*, June 16, 1990, pp. 6, 92.

²⁷Steve Dougherty, "The Heartthrobs of America", *People*, August 13, 1990, p. 78.

into reactions to these various phenomena. The invasive discourse that surrounds popular music is constructed to encourage us to be caught up in the wave of sentiment that affirms the significance of the latest phenomenon. In that affirmation and acceptance of the new musical sound and group we collectively are encouraged to let the sentiment of the last phenomenon dissipate into history. With *New Kids on the Block*, the mainstream press explains that the "fever" they have created has "reached delirium status".²⁸

The framing of popular music discourse in the language of spontaneous and explosive phenomenal change is also constructed to emphasize the cultural products' close relationship to the audience. What is being underlined is that the audience is determining the style of music, the types of personalities that are elevated to superstar status and the timing of change and transformation. The industry becomes in this construction merely a form of channelling of popular will. As it is explained in one of the myriad of biographies that have accompanied their emergence, their popularity "may be because they care about their fans so much".²⁹ Popular music phenomena like the *New Kids on the Block* are pure expressions of popular will which is represented as pure sentiment.

To describe the nature of these phenomena of popular music which are organized around personalities and groups is thus a very difficult process. They are packaged in a discourse of change and are intimately tied to the way in which cultural

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Grace Catalano, *New Kids on the Block*, New York: Bantam, 1989, p. 5

change is articulated in post-war American society in particular and Western society in general. This discourse of change is elemental in their formation in the culture and elemental in their construction of power. As well, they house formations of collective sentiment and feeling; in other words, they are defined to a degree by the audience that through a specific array of cultural products feels connected to the phenomenon. In embodying a form of collectivity, the popular music phenomenon represents the modern crowd in all its irrationality and emotionality. To extend logically from this, the popular music industry in its perpetual construction of new phenomena is an apparatus that tries to organize and focus the intensity into recognizable forms and products of consumption. The industry is an apparatus for the congealing of emotions and sentiments into recognizable sounds, images and personalities that work to maintain the intensity of emotion. When the emotional intensity dissipates, the industry works to construct new forms of intense sentiments around new images, sounds and personalities. In many senses, the popular music industry works to manage the contemporary crowd and to, in fact, organize its irrationality.

The Established Structure

The industry in its massaging of public tastes has developed certain patterns or structures in the way in which they present new popular music celebrities. What appears to be new and is presented as new and different to a large degree is organized around these structures of representation. Thus, *New Kids on the Block*, in

terms of marketing positioning, style of promotion, and industry support has certain precursors. The group is also positioned by the industry in clear opposition and distinction from other forms of music and celebrity images. This form of distinction and opposition is also a well-trodden path; apart from differences that emerge from musical style and the contingency and lived experience of their core audience, *New Kids on the Block* follow this structure.

First of all, central to the identity and position of *New Kids on the Block* is their youth. Within popular music minor differences in age can be constructed as crucially significant. The emergence of any new stars is often organized to present their youthfulness in contradistinction to established acts. The new stars represent the vitality of their music. They also are constructed as a form of initiation for new music buyers. The bulk of the record buying public is roughly between the ages of sixteen and thirty-two and overwhelmingly male.³⁰ As discussed above, the music industry has been involved in the servicing of a youth market that was coordinated with the growth in disposable income among youth in North America following the second World War. In terms of age, the popular music stars since the nineteen fifties have been the same age (and generally sex) as the central record-buying demographic. But there have always been some pop stars who have been marketed to appeal to a demographic much younger and more female than the central record

³⁰This is also the rough demographic of MTV and Muchmusic, two video music channels in North America. Particularly the teenage demographic is seen to be an extremely valuable commodity to "capture": the value of their audience for advertisers is one of the principal motivations for the development of these specialty channels that focus on youth culture.

buying public. *New Kids on the Block* is a group that has been positioned to appeal to the neophyte consumer of popular music.

If one looks at the history of the series of pop stars that have been marketed and positioned in this role as "teen idol", It becomes readily apparent that though each is a musical performer, music is often less central to their profitability as a celebrity than other products. The marketing generally focusses on their image which is circulated in a number of formats that go beyond the musical product: posters, animated television series, Barbie-sized look-alike dolls, comic and photobiographical books, fanzines, clothing, lunch pail designs to name a few of the more visible and successful examples. The intense focus on the image has often been the line of demarcation between male and female audiences, preteen and young adult audiences, and in terms, of musical categories pop and rock.³¹ The teen idol is structured to appeal to the preteen and young teen female pop audience member and children in general. Teen idols are generally scorned by older music buyers as inauthentic and fabricated. For the younger record buying market, the teen idol is the conduit for the move from the toy market of childhood into the market of youth. They are positioned as transitional icons for the youthful audience that would ultimately form the future mainstay of recording industry sales. It is because of this transitional quality that teen idols are commodified in forms and images that are less threatening to this young audience and to the ancillary market of parents. Indeed, the teen idol is himself generally managed and chaperoned as an entirely dependent being throughout

³¹Frith developed the significance of these distinctions between pop and rock in *Sound Effects*, pp. 27-38

their entire (which is invariably brief) career as a teen idol. In this way, the teen idol never appears to be autonomous and therefore never threatening as an adult; they remain as long as they are popular, perpetually childlike and dependent. Their images are similarly controlled and work to reinforce their lack of full independence.

The structure I have outlined concerning the teen idol that emerges from popular music varies somewhat with each incarnation. One can see that often the organization of the popular music star then is organized around their relative autonomy. The less autonomous and independent the star is, the more they are structured purely as teen idols. In the nineteen fifties and sixties, Elvis Presley surfaced as a popular music star of enormous influence and market appeal. However, unlike other teen idols of the same era, Presley cultivated a clearly sexualized image which constructed a code of independence, adulthood, and autonomy in his celebrity sign. In contrast, stars like Fabian, Frankie Avalon and to a degree Pat Boone, represented unthreatening types of personalities that were not constructed to present a harmless form of sexuality. Their predominant musical form was the ballad; Presley's original claim to fame was his raucous treatment of rock'n roll songs.³²

The question that arises from this delineation of type with the larger structural type of teen idol is why do these differentiations exist? The teen idol's image is structured to be ambiguous, particularly with reference to rebellion and sexuality. What must be remembered is that the teen idol is a transitional commodity that must

³²In his 1955 famous appearance on *Ed Sullivan Show*, Presley's sexually provocative hip gyrations were not shown. Only his upperbody were televised. The image was thought to be too dangerous to be left uncensored for the young female audience members.

in some instances appeal to parents' sensibilities as well as represent the youth culture and its spirit of difference and sometime opposition to parent culture. For example, there is an ambiguous quality in most teen idols' representation of sexuality. First, there is the clear structural division between predominantly male performer and young female audience. The male performer, though more often than not a young adult and therefore somewhat older than the younger female audience, is constructed not to be an adult. In terms of image, the obvious signs of puberty are underplayed so that the male performer is seen as a "representationally removed" image of maleness. The male teen idol is overcoded to have a baby-face where the absence of facial hair is significant in its articulation of non-masculinity. The Beatles bobbed long hair, lack of seriousness and clean hairless faces when they became famous can be seen as once again a play with sexuality where they represented maleness and non-masculinity simultaneously to their young female audience. Similarly, teen idol pop stars of the seventies, like David Cassidy, Leif Garrett and Shaun Cassidy, possessed these same qualities of prepubescent maleness; they were physically slight, and possessed boyish looks and hairstyles which resembled the predominant fashion of the period.³³ Serious transgressions of these ambiguous codes of non-masculinity/masculinity would remove the teen idol from the circulation of commodities aimed at this transitional market.

New Kids on the Block has built on these patterns of the teen idol music star.

The industry operates as the cultural memory of what is effective in this construction

³³David Cassidy, in the tradition of the early seventies, had shoulder length extremely straight hair; Leif Garrett, a mid-seventies teen idol, had flowing locks in the style of Farrah Fawcett; Shaun Cassidy emblematic of the boy-man had the characteristic dimples and baby-face.

of the transitional commodity. The Beatles, the Monkees, the Jackson Five, the Osmonds, and the Bay City Rollers have provided the structural framework for the development of the concept of *New Kids* on the Block. It is interesting to see that most types of commodities that are now associated with *New Kids* have been previously tested and marketed for these precursors. Much like the Beatles, *New Kids* have their own Saturday morning animated television series. The animated series also indicates that these musical groups have been positioned to entertain children and, when defined as commodities, they move between toy products and promotional products of the recording industry. Their level of rebellion then is somewhat muted. The marketing of *New Kids* has produced a plethora of products that are aimed at public school age children. The folders for school notes, the lunch pails, the t-shirts, the dolls (which come in several sizes and materials), the concert videos, television shows, the games and comic books, have made *New Kids* into a sign that serves to sell a host of other commodities beyond their music. They have also expanded into new techniques for expanding the reach as cultural commodities for a specific audience group. With the 1-900 telephone numbers, 100,000 fans a week were calling in 1989 and hear their favourite New Kid reveal a "secret".³⁴ A sales estimate for the 1990 *New Kids* line of merchandise was put at 400 million dollars. Over and above this figure were concert earnings, video and record sales.³⁵ For the last three years, *New Kids* have been on the cover of preteen magazines in

³⁴Catalano, p. 4

³⁵*People*, August 13, p. 78.

the magazine's efforts to ensure high sales. Their ubiquity through the attachment to a host of commodities has made them the most financially successful pop group ever.³⁶

Partly because of this ubiquity, and partly because of their appeal as clear pop stars, the popular music press has generally considered the group as the epitome of inauthenticity.³⁷ Teen idols are therefore not only significant in terms of their core audience, they are also extremely relevant in establishing the authenticity of other forms of music and performers in the music industry. *New Kids on the Block* establish the domain of the authentic in their obvious commerciality, their overt appeal to children, their studied and controlled rebellion, and their generally non-threatening masculinity. These qualities provide the binarism which operates through the music industry between pop music and rock music, between the banal and the serious. *New Kids* have been declared a contrivance and a marketing scam, the ultimate example of pop music's commercialism and superficiality.

New Kids emergence does provide virtually all of the appropriate markers to indicate that they are a marketing invention that has been fabricated to be teen idols.

³⁶In an extended advertising insert in *Billboard*, there is an estimate of the various revenues that New Kids have amassed from the spring of 1989 to December 1990. Merchandising revenue dwarfs all the other categories: 400 million of a total of 861,373,000 dollars of earnings were derived from merchandising agreements. By comparison, record sales totalled 143.8 million domestically and concerts totalled 120 million. The article also identifies the products that *New Kids*' images were connected with: "posters, t-shirts, hats, banners, buttons (the regular concert fare) ... then the merchandise diversified -postcards, poster books, jewelry, baseball-type trading cards, sleeping bags, bed sheets, poster puzzles, beach towels, watches, jackets, cups, laundry bags, balloons, boxer shorts, pajamas, water bottles, rainwear, umbrellas, gloves, scarves, mittens, shower curtains, sunglasses, sunglass cords, lunchboxes, mirrors, slippers, paper tattoos, belts, socks, sweater, storage trunks, bedspreads, and of course, Hasbro Inc.'s two lines of dolls—one in concert clothes with stage set available, and one in street clothes." Karen Schlossberg, "Merchandising: The Amazing Business of Defining, controlling and Marketing an Image Explosion" in an Advertising supplement of *Billboard*, Dec. 15, 1990, pp. NK-22,32,34. The actual supplement is an interesting phenomenon on its own. It indicates, through a series of congratulatory inserts, the number of companies that have been involved in the *New Kids*' success.

³⁷Typical of reportage can be found in D. Wild, "Puberty to Platinum", *Rolling Stone*, Nov. 2, 1989, pp. 15-17. What is even more typical is the general overlooking of the band in many press pieces including *Creem*.

There is a subtle distinction being made here. In popular music that is usually called rock, the audience is believed to be independent and therefore can discern what is good music from bad or contrived music. As well, the performers are likewise independent thinkers and creators. In contrast, the audience of groups like *New Kids* is considered to be manipulated, duped by the marketers and promoters. It is for this reason that *New Kids* only appeal to children; anyone else would realize the marketing scheme and identify the inauthentic nature of the group. Like their principal audience, so this argument goes, *New Kids* themselves are controlled and managed by a team of marketers and coaches.

The verity of most of these claims is borne out in any study of the group's formation. But what is missing in such an analysis is that *New Kids* itself is used as a foil for the legitimation of other forms of music which appear to be less contrived and, in comparison to *New Kids*, less commercial. In the entire field of popular music and popular music meanings these comparisons are useful to define the various markets and market fragments which use music to define their social identity.

Briefly, here is the now overcoded story of the emergence of *New Kids* from the position of a discourse of authenticity. Maurice Starr, a former moderately successful singer-songwriter of the group the Johnson Brothers, had by the nineteen eighties begun developing and managing popular singing groups. In the early eighties, he had conceived and developed a young black group called the Fifth Edition. In terms of the popular press, Fifth Edition was immediately compared to the Jackson Five of the late sixties and early seventies. Songs were organized around

the youngest member of the group, whose voice had not deepened, singing lead vocals. Starr composed and produced virtually all of their songs, managed their promotional tours, and helped choreograph their stage shows. The members of the groups were purely performers. The group was moderately successful. In the mid-eighties, Starr in association with Boston talent manager Mary Alford attempted to produce a similar group with all white boys.³⁸ He scoured the Boston racially mixed inner city schools for the white performers who had some interest in black dance and rap music. Auditions were held for six months before the right blend of personality was constructed by Starr. From that search he chose the members of *New Kids on the Block* (originally called Nynuk). The average age of the performers at the beginning in 1985 was around fifteen years old. The youngest, Joey, sang lead vocals for the first recordings in a high soprano voice. Once again, Starr wrote and produced all of their original songs. The highly choreographed concert show was also developed by Starr. *New Kids on the Block*, much like the Monkees in the 1960s, still do not play instruments; occasionally in their performances they use taped vocals so that they can continue their choreographed dance routines without interruption. However, the use of taped segments in their programmes has led to a steady stream of criticism in the press and from some parents of fans that claim they are either too manufactured or they are not really the singers.³⁹ After an initial

³⁸Catalano, p. 16

³⁹This controversy has plagued the group and continues to plague their claims to legitimacy or "authenticity". In early 1992, the latest claim is that they in fact did not sing major parts of their albums. So, in this latest variation not only is their authenticity of performance challenged, but their authenticity in the "official" records of their music is put under suspicion.

album that did poorly, the three follow-up albums have all sold multi-platinum.⁴⁰

They tour for months on end; hence the slogan, "the hardest working act in showbusiness".

As is evidenced by this standard history of the group that has been reproduced in magazine profiles, fanzines and books, they possess all of the qualities of illegitimacy: they don't write their own songs; they don't play their own instruments; they were chosen in a talent search and didn't develop independently of the music industry apparatus; they have made a great deal of money; they appeal to preteens; they are managed very carefully. All of these truths about *New Kids* underline their illegitimacy in rock music. Their emergence then is more clearly in line with the showbusiness origins of singing stars like Frank Sinatra and — to a lesser degree — Elvis Presley than groups like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones or R.E.M. What makes them doubly cursed is that they have the appearance of being a group or band that has come together on its own, when in fact their origins were highly planned. The irony of this entire discourse of authenticity which envelopes rock and popular music is that it is dependent on the existence of these examples for the maintenance of the mainstream of what rock means for other audiences. *New Kids on the Block* operates as a highly successful scapegoat that maintains an equally fabricated sense of purity of the authentic in other examples of popular music.⁴¹

⁴⁰The original album, after the success of their second album has also gone platinum (i.e. sales of over 1 million).

⁴¹ The age of listeners attracted to *New Kids* was soon to be seen as a "problem" for radio programmers throughout North America. For example, Mike Edwards, a programmer for a Buffalo station explains that "some of our research has shown burn on the New Kids and that the perception of play too much of *New Kids* can be a negative for you. We have to be very cautious." Other programmers indicated that by April 1991 stations were getting a lot of hate calls about the group. Many stations chose not to play the group except during certain early evening hours. The fear of stations was that they were losing an older listening demographic, a demographic much more lucrative to their advertising

Building Difference - Music Celebrities Embodying Subcultures

In the construction of social identities among youth, music figures prominently. Likes and dislikes are represented through one's musical taste which betrays a series of connected tastes. A celebrity that arises from the popular music industry is thus positioned by both the industry and audience to represent aspects of difference and differentiation. It is a system of celebrities, where each celebrity sign is partially constructed in opposition to, or in contradistinction to, or in relation with other popular music celebrities. *New Kids on the Block*, much like other groups, has established a close rapport with their audience through differentiation from other performers. They have made their public identities valuable social markers for their audience. Although not entirely a synonymous term, the fans of *New Kids* have constructed a series of codes based on these celebrity figures which resemble the structures of meaning of a subculture. The level of commitment to *New Kids*, the level of what is often called fanatical support determines the level of understanding of the various codes and histories. This loyalty and solidarity for the *New Kids* among their fans is expressed in a number of ways. Buying their records and videos, knowing the words to each of their songs, attendance at their concerts, collecting their images in posters and magazines⁴², buying "officially" produced authorized

clientele than 6 to 10 year olds. Sean Ross and Thom Duffy, "Radio Gridlock on New Kids' Block?" *Billboard*, April 28, 1990, pp. 4,74.

⁴²The female preteen magazine has a heavily overcoded structure. Operating as fantasy magazines organized around male adolescent stars, *Tiger Beat*, *Bop*, *Teen Machine*, *Superteen* build each of their segments around the full page or two page photo spread of these individual stars. Thus from 1988-1991, the members of New Kids on the block individually were featured repeatedly in these photo features. The utility of the magazine was for using these one-page or two page photos for decoration of the bedroom. The magazines constantly must reorganize themselves so that the images that are presented are in concert with the new stars of television, film and popular music. In order to maintain this there are a plethora of contests and polls interspersed with the profiles of the idols. The contests represent the marketing technique essential for the magazine industry to continually re-present fantasy materials for the preteen female audience.

New Kids paraphernalia, knowing the "personalities" of each member of the group and defending their music and the integrity from attackers are among the most prominent signs of support. The depth of commitment to *New Kids* can be determined by how well one knows the codes.

Although I have generally spoken of the image as being the key variant in the meaning of *New Kids*, this image must be contextualized in terms of the kind of music that they perform because the music establishes a clear form of delineation of audience groups. The full meaning of music is difficult to conceptualize. It is embedded with affective associations of the listener which makes any reading of its meaning a game of searching for commonalities in idiosyncratic decoding. Nevertheless, the music does have social contexts worked into its rhythms, its musical notation, in the words and phrases and topics that are part of any group's repertoire.⁴³ *New Kids* have drawn principally from three sources: dance music — which has part of its origins in the Motown sound, western love ballads and rap/hip-hop music. Each of the origins has a great deal of significance to the sound and meaning of the sound of *New Kids*.

Dance music indicates that their music is not appealing to some intellectualized aesthetic. It is music for the movement of the body. In their concerts, the performance is very much focussed on dance and movement. The group moves often in unison through a song in the tradition of the black groups like the Temptations, the Four Tops and others, of the 1960s. No doubt this expression of

⁴³See John Shepherd, *Music as Social Text*, 1991

black dance music had been orchestrated to a large degree by their songwriter and manager, Maurice Starr. The use of young white boys to work through a music that has arisen in African American culture has been a common technique of the entertainment industry of the twentieth century and the New Kids further this tradition. Like Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the Bee Gees, *New Kids* have used this resource to extend the reach of a certain type of music to a suburban American and youthful population. In the biographical details that have appeared in the teen magazines, the biographies, and the various interviews that they have given there is an emphasis on their intimate connection to black culture or the music of the street as they often refer to it.⁴⁴ Their Boston accents are identified in *People* as "coming from the wrong side of the tracks". For Donny Wahlberg, the recognized leader of the group, he thinks of his music like basketball because it kept him away from the dangers of the street. There is a degree of celebration of the working class roots which allows for the public representation that they have come to this form of music honestly: once again the discourse of authenticity is articulated in the meanings of any popular music celebrity. Four of the five are from the same elementary school and their poor Irish Catholic families with large families reinforced their legitimacy to sing music of the street.

⁴⁴Indeed, the choice of the five members by Starr had a great deal to do with their familiarity with black street culture and breakdancing. For instance, Donnie's claim to fame was dance imitations of Michael Jackson and the bravado to spontaneous rap performances in the local Dorchester Park. Jordan and Dannie were part of rival break dance groups who would practice and perform their moves in downtown Boston every Saturday well before they became *New Kids*' members, white kids engaged in what was an essentially black youth activity. As fellow breakdancer and friend David Harris described it: "We would select a suitable store and start break-dancing on it, with cushions in our hats....We'd perform for half an hour or so then move on to another store. By lunchtime, we'd have earned around forty dollars, which wasn't bad for thirteen and fourteen year olds." Robin McGibbon, *New Kids on the Block: The Whole Story by their Friends*, New York: Avon, 1990, p. 16

It is the incongruity between the black dance style and song construction and their white American looks which is also used to discredit the *New Kids*. *New Kids* are used to articulate various sentiments about the realm of the authentic and the inauthentic. Their complete commoditization buttresses the rock discourse of musical rip-off and sell-out of black musical culture. Moreover, their virtual lack of involvement in the writing of their lyrics and songs, makes them appear vulnerable to the same kind of rip-off that Chappell and Garafalo have chronicled in their writings about black performers in the 1950s.⁴⁵ The vociferousness of the attack on their credibility serves not only to galvanize some fragments of youth culture and popular music criticism against them, but also serves to construct a siege mentality among their fans and the ancillary teen press that supports them. The intensity of the discourse of authenticity works to establish much clearer uses of popular celebrities for the articulation of social identities and distinctions.

The second source of music presents a different line of demarcation for the use of audiences. The popular ballad which forms one of the three sources of musical style in their recorded and concert performances, follows in the tradition of the Broadway and movie musical love song and is firmly ensconced in Western European popular music. What it does identify is a line of demarcation in terms of the principal audience's gender.

⁴⁵See Chappell and Garafalo, *Rock 'n Roll is Here to Pay*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall

Susan McLary has done some work on the way in which music is defined as masculine or feminine which is relevant to the current discussion.⁴⁶ The feminine ending is a term used in music criticism to describe a weak or softening conclusion to a part of a composition. Principally, the term was used in a negative sense. Although McLary begins her discussion from a study of the way patriarchy inflects the meanings of classical musical texts, she adapts it successfully to the organization of popular music in her treatment of Madonna and Laurie Anderson.⁴⁷ Similar readings can be made of the love ballad although with a much greater emphasis on its social uses than on its textual configuration. The feminized popular musical text has been constructed as the love song which in its softened sound, its entreating (male) voice, and in its romantic construction of love, works to construct a female listener. Paralleling the development of the romance novel and the soap opera, the female listener has embraced the love song text in a proprietary way. The *New Kids*' core audience of young adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, has taken the love song and not only incorporated its general message into their own lives and everyday experiences but also has constructed a close connection to the artists themselves. The bedroom shrines of *New Kids* images that many female fans have created indicate that the celebrity figure himself has been thought of directly as a romantic possibility. In their choice and performance of these love songs, *New Kids on the Block* are playing within these social constructions of a feminized text. The love song is a wilful

⁴⁶Susan McLary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991

⁴⁷McLary, ch. 6 and 7

acknowledgement of their own fans and a way in which to "talk" to their fans' fantasies directly.

Implicit in the relationship between female fan and the boys of *New Kids on the Block* is the play with proximity and distance. The love song, in its direct appeal to another individual, is an intimate declaration and an indication that the fan is hearing the personal and private realm of the singer. Popular music works in the affective realm quite specifically, where sentiments and feelings are conveyed. In this sense, the love song of *New Kids* breaks down the distance between the popstar and the individual audience member at the very least in the level of fantasy for the audience member. Simultaneously, the emotion and intimacy that the song expresses is being conveyed to thousands, if not millions, of other core audience fans. The subjective experiences that develop from listening to the love song, while not identical among all the fans, would be correlative in the play with the fantasy of intimacy and the reality of distance. For the young female fan, the distance from the personal maintains the pop icon as a non-threatening personality. The sexual innuendoes are real at the emotive level but perfectly impossible at the level of the real. It is this wonderful combination of the feeling of intimacy and the structure of distance which makes the teen idol so powerfully appealing at the level of fantasy.

New Kids typically present themselves as personally open and intimate while objectively distant and unknown except through their images and sounds. The bedroom shrine discussed above articulates the way in which intimacy is connected between the images of the teen idols and the private world of the fan's bedroom.

The music then is coordinated with the various other sources of information that the fan can collect about the members of the group. One of these, a glossy photo album of the band members peppered with their commentary on how they feel, provides the typical play between accessibility to the group members' intimate world and the impossibility of fully entering that world. Various bedroom pictures are juxtaposed beside performance images in each 30 page section devoted to each member. Superimposed on an image of a performing, shirtless Jordan surrounded by fans' hands trying to reach out and touch him is the question, "How do you feel about all the girls reaching out to touch you at shows?" His reply maintains the possibility of his fans possessing him: "If I know they can't reach me I love it. I feel in control of the situation, but sometimes I'd like to get attacked. It seems like it'd be fun."⁴⁸ In another "intimate" photo of Jonathan in a terry towel bath robe, the anchoring text invites the audience to complete the romantic sentiment in fantasy: "I think romance is very sweet. I don't think there's too much of it out there these days. Men try to be too macho."⁴⁹

While the love song is central to the maintenance and organization of the *New Kids* audience, its construction as a feminized and preadolescent discourse also serves to delegitimize the group in the eyes of others. Heavy metal music which, it could be argued, is a celebration of the masculine text and is talked about in masculinized terms of power and hardness operates as the antithesis to much of *New Kids* music.

⁴⁸Lynn Goldsmith, *New Kids*, New York: Rizzoli and Eastman Kodak, 1990, no page number

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Rock music in general also functions as a masculinized discourse which in its self-criticism often tries to purge the feminized love song from the lexicon of what constitutes good popular music. Derogatory terms such as bubble gum rock and teeny-bopper music are used to separate the female-constructed popular music audience from the mainstream of male rock culture.

What surfaces from this type of audience differentiation is the kind of identification that is central to each audience group. With *New Kids* there is an emphasis on what I would call a completing identification: the audience does not identify with the group members directly but rather in relational terms. The performers are male and the audience is primarily female and thus the normative discourse that underplays this organization is heterosexuality which in this construction is played out at the level of a fantasy of intimacy. In contrast, the heavy metal performer, or the punk rocker, or the thrash metal idol works to construct an emulating identification with their audience members. The performers are predominantly male and the primary audience is also predominantly male. The performance is meant to empower, so that the audience members see themselves as if they were the performers. In a sense, both forms of identification are the invocations of a normative discourse of patriarchy. The relational completion form of identification that is proffered by *New Kids* establishes that one's social power is derived from the male figure; the emulative form of identification establishes first, the bond between the male audience and the male performer and secondly, that empowerment flows along these gender lines.

A different layer of meaning is constructed through their use of another musical/cultural source that is simultaneously built on their relational forms of identification with their fans. Through the adoption and adaptation of rap music and hip-hop into their performance *New Kids on the Block* have established a connotational connection. The general social context that is connected to this type of music — that is, urban street culture and black ghetto culture — provide two principal meanings for the construction of the celebrity signs of *New Kids on the Block*: authenticity and contemporaneity.

With the use of black urban form of music and dance, the *New Kids* underline their own humble origins and thus their own claim to a discourse of the authentic. As well, the musical form connects a social text of populism and non-elitism to their positions as public personalities. Drawing on the conventions of current street music is a way of connecting to the audience and indicating there are no barriers to the music and meanings that they convey through song and dance.

Secondly, rap music provides a social context of currency and contemporaneity. To position *New Kids* as in fact something unique to this cultural moment and thereby distance their constructed sign from previous popular music idols, the new currency of musical expression ensures their status as a contemporary phenomenon. In this way, *New Kids* and popular music continue to fill the role of constructing a discourse of change and transformation. And each new phenomenon represents a celebration of change itself. Not only does this celebration of change aid in the circulation of new commodities that are connected to new social constructions

of signs, it also works to reconstruct peripheral cultural phenomenon as economically valuable forms of innovation for the mainstream of a cultural industry. Thus New Kids' sign operates as a signal of the successful integration of popular cultural forms previously marginalized as now aesthetically manipulable cultural commodities.

The Meaning of the Group

On one level, *New Kids* operates as a cohesive moniker of public identity. Like other popular music groups, the name *New Kids on the Block* is a brand name for a commodity. Although there are five members in the group, there is a concerted effort to maintain the cohesiveness and solidarity of the group behind the group's name. The name stands for their distinctive sound and by implication a particular audience. Maintaining a consistency around the name ensures a degree of brand loyalty among music consumers. Thus, one of the meanings of the group identity is to organize the popular music market.

On another level, group identity for *New Kids* grafts them on to a tradition of rock music. At least in the romantic connotations, the musical group is a collective, where the various interests of each band member contribute to the musical sound. As mentioned in the analysis of popular music formations above, the group identity also represents a democratic solidarity among the artists and ultimately the fans. New Kids, even though the group was orchestrated in its formation by a manager, connects itself to this collective spirit of rock music. Instead of an emphasis on the individual, group identity becomes paramount.

New Kids, however operates under another tradition which often works in contradistinction to the meaning of the group: the highly individualized and mediated teen idol or pop star. In terms of the fan literature and printed interviews, the members of the group have been presented as possessing individual though very typecast personalities. Thus we have Joey, the youngest member, chosen for his youth to attract younger audience members.⁵⁰ Jordan represents the leading boy-man and is constructed as the best-looking member of the group. Donny, who has frequently appeared in the tabloid press — most recently for alleged arson — is constructed as the rebel. Jonathan is the quiet introvert; while Danny represents the more mature masculine personality. Photographs and texts reaffirm and reinforce these constructed categories for the play of relations with their fans. For example Danny, is frequently depicted as a body builder, thereby evoking a connotation of hypermasculinity. In contrast, Joey is desexualized where in at least one book (and in a network TV special) he is represented as a young performer in the mold of Frank Sinatra; the image of Sinatra as pop icon for Joey establishes his own image as something that predates and circumvents the overt sexuality of the entire history of rock music.⁵¹ In sum, what has been constructed is a rather simplistic series of caricatures of boy-types that can be reread and distinguished for use by their predominantly young female audience. The extensive personal knowledge about each New Kid is presented to help one choose favourites. In that choice of favourite, the

⁵⁰For example, one recent teen magazine feature about Joe McIntyre is entitled "Get Cozy with Joey" *Superteen*, February, 1992, p. 20.

⁵¹Goldsmith, *New Kids*

female fan plays with the conception of a greater intimacy and empathy with that particular member. The meaning of the constructed heterogeneous group then is not only to establish a brand name and a connection to the romantic tradition of popular music, but also to construct a series of celebrity signs within the group which allow for fans to play with notion of a more personal attachment to one of the members.⁵²

Conclusion: Dissipation of Celebrity Status

More than any other form of celebrity, the popular music celebrity and in particular the celebrity to emerge from the adulation of a preteen or young teen female audience, demonstrates the rapidity of dissipation of the power and influence of a public personality. The reason for part of this dissipation is the way in which the popular music industry has helped to construct itself as a symbol of change and transformation. Thus each new popular music star represents virtually simultaneously the moment of innovation and the moment of replacement. In popular music's reconstruction of a youth culture, the succession of apparent new images and sounds constitutes the representation of change which is often used by the culture at large as a representation of the vitality of the entire culture.

To explain the particularly rapid dissipation of teen idols one needs to also consider the way in which the audience has been constructed by the various cultural industries. As mentioned above, the audience of the teen idol is considered to be irrational, in a frenzy of devotion to the idol. The fan's relationship to the teen idol

⁵²According to their lawyer, Barry Rosenthal, an integral part of the marketing of *New Kids* was to construct them as five individuals, who "have their own set of fans. Our concept was to make these kids bigger than the group so they cannot be replaced. Fan appeal to the kids as individuals was the insurance that we did for our clients." *Billboard*, Advertising Insert, Dec. 15, 1990 pp. NK-32,33

can be thought of as built on an incredible level of emotional intensity. Thus the economic power of the pop star is configured around affect. However the challenge of affective power is that it is very difficult to maintain. It is by its very nature subject to dissipation. Since the recording industry has organized itself around the momentary capturing of expansive affective power, it is also organized around losing that power of any given commodity to produce that affective power. The industry's solution to their own construction of successive waves of affect is to produce new commodities that allow for the containing of collective affect. The pop music celebrity then is the convertible personality who can capture youth's affective intensity.

What can be concluded about *New Kids on the Block* is that they have achieved through the industry that status of a powerfully affective commodity. Their sales worldwide of albums alone are truly staggering and indicate their economic clout. However, what also can be concluded is that new Kids on the Block's power as a commodity will dissipate. They will be succeeded by new so-called phenomena which maintain the discourse of change that is at the centre of the popular music industry and the culture in general. Indeed, by all indications the performer, Vanilla Ice, has led many fans of New Kids to pull down their shrines. For a moment, several of the characters from the television series *Beverly Hills 90021* overflow the pre-teen magazines while *New Kids* now only occupy the mail-order pages. The succession of the play with affect continues with the young and temporarily loyal female fan.

CHAPTER SIX

TELEVISION'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE CELEBRITY

The institution of television has positioned their celebrities in a much different way than those of either film or popular music. While the film celebrity plays with aura through the construction of distance and the music celebrity develops codes that signify difference and distinction, the television celebrity is configured around conceptions of familiarity. The familial feel of television and its celebrities is partially related to the domestication of entertainment technologies from the nineteen twenties to the nineteen fifties. Like radio, its precursor, television brought entertainment into the home. And in terms of the common space of the family, the television occupied a privileged location in the livingroom of most homes in North America. The uses made of television were also modalized around its position as a family entertainment technology.¹ The work of television production in its first two decades (from the late 1940s to the late 1960s) was the maintenance of a large mass audience, where the same programme could be acceptable to all members of the family. Although different time periods were targetted by producers and advertisers for different audiences (i.e. daytime for women with the correlative program, the soap opera; Saturday morning for children; Saturday afternoon for men and sports) there was a relative lack of audience differentiation beyond this level.

¹For a thorough discussion about the way in which the domestic nature of viewing shapes the way television is, in fact, used, see David Morley, *Family Television*. London: Comedia, 1986.

The television celebrity embodies these characteristics of familiarity and mass acceptability. Part of their expression in the televisual world has emerged from the way in which radio personalities were constructed in the period prior to and including the second world war. Radio, like television, had become a form of home entertainment and a source of information. In the 1920s and 1930s, radio established the domestic quality of broadcast technology and it is this quality of the home mass audience of radio that was inherited by television.

The way television disseminated its message, that is, through broadcast also established a similarity of its celebrities to that of former radio stars as well as making both groups qualitatively different than film stars. On one level, the difference in exhibition between film and broadcasting has led to different organizations of capital in each entertainment industry. Box office receipts from film exhibitions established the requisite exchange relationship with the film audience. Film stars' box office value could be at the very least partially determined by these direct payments by the audience. In contrast, the broadcasting audience makes no clear designation of allegiance to stars and personalities. More critically for the broadcasting industry, there are no receipts that are derived from the audience when a programme is broadcast. As long as one owns a receiver and is within the signal range, one can be a member of a broadcasting audience. Originally, the selling of receivers generated enough capital to sustain programming. However, once the market was saturated with radio receivers, broadcasting as an industry for the

generation of profits was no longer lucrative.² In the U.K., the servicing of broadcast programming came from annual licensing fees and the establishment of a national public corporation, the BBC.³ In the United States, broadcasting became modalized around the selling not of receivers but of audiences and, more specifically, audience's time to advertisers. The development of the CBS network in the late 1920s was indicative of the way in which broadcasting, both radio and television, became an industry. CBS, without ownership of stations guaranteed sponsors that their particular programme would be broadcast over a wide geographical area at the same time through a network of affiliates who had agreed to set aside airtime in return for the specific programme content. Thus, an advertiser, through a specific weekly programme, could reach a massive audience. The personalities of radio and then television were intimately connected to this form of generation of capital. Bob Hope's 1930s programme for instance was connected with its sponsor Pepsodent. Other corporate- or product-named programmes included the *A&P Gypsies*, the *Everready Hour*, *General Motors Family Party*, the *Cliquot Club Eskimos* and the *Palmolive Hour*.⁴ Somewhere in the middle of any programme, there would be an endorsement of the sponsor's product by the show's host or star. In some cases, the

²For a concise history of the precursors to television and television technology in see Roy Ames, *On Video*, New York: Routledge, 1988, ch. 2.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 44-45 There was also originally a royalty in Britain on the selling of receivers which was abandoned in 1924. The main source of financing then became an annual licensing fee.

⁴Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 2nd revised edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 57-58

product would be integrated into the show's content. In terms of early American radio, the radio personality could seldom divorce him/herself from the organization of broadcasting around advertising. Although with the advent of television, the full sponsorship of individual programmes was drastically reduced as networks attempted to gain control of programming and the construction of audiences, the advertiser and the sponsor have always been central in the shaping of American broadcasting.

The implications for the construction of the television celebrity of this historical association of broadcasting with the generation and selling of audiences to advertisers is hard to discern. What can be said is that because of the obvious and omnipresent advertising function of television, the celebrity that arises from television programming is associated more directly with the industrial nature of entertainment. In contrast to the film star, the television personality is surrounded by other messages which are unconnected to the narrative focus of his/her programme. These disjunctures are normalized into the flow of television. The film star's filmic text is relatively integral, uninterrupted by other messages, other images. The film star maintains an integrity of being; the television star is pulled out of an aesthetic into the bare economics of production and consumption. Whereas the film celebrity maintains an aura of distinction, the television celebrity's aura of distinction is continually broken by the myriad of messages and products that surround any television text.

It would be unfair to say that film production companies are not in the business of constructing audiences and use certain stars to give human and cultural

shape to their products so that they resonate with their audiences. Clearly this is part of the manner in which scripts and films are chosen for funding and production.

However, in the television industry, this task of constructing audiences is the *essential* work. The packaging of audiences for advertisers may produce a television programme that is somehow not contradictory to consumer culture and, ideally, connected to the products advertised. Once again, the sponsored nature of American television tends to construct celebrities that are inoffensive to the way in which television is involved in the perpetuation of consumer capitalism.

The aura of the television celebrity is reduced therefore because of these three factors:

1. the domestic nature of television viewing,
2. the close affinity of the celebrity to the organization and perpetuation of consumer capitalism and
3. the shattering of continuity and integrity of character through the interspersal of commercials in any programme.

The Unique Types of Television Celebrity

There is an active construction of a different relationship to the audience by television personalities that in effect creates more an aura of familiarity rather than one modalized around distance. John Langer, in an article entitled "Television's Personality System"⁵ argues that this construction of what he calls intimacy is the

⁵John Langer, "Television's personality system", *Media, Culture and Society*, 1981, 4, pp.351-365.

reason why television does not produce stars but rather personalities. He elaborates on this point by explaining how television is positioned "to personalize wherever it can, rarely using a concept or idea without attaching it or transforming it through the 'category of the individual'".⁶ He calls this elaborate development of a personality system, borrowing from Stuart Hall one of the "preferred codes" of television. His conclusion is that the personality system works as a form of symbolic product of television that provides totems of personality types for the audience.⁷ In this way, the personality system for Langer is configured around its ideological work to draw in the viewer into an acceptance of a capitalist culture and political structure. The argument that follows focusses very specifically on the intense focus on the familiar in television and in this way builds on Langer's discussion of the function of the television celebrity. A large part of this familiarity emerges from the modes of address that are possible on television. One can see this in operation in the types of personalities that are relatively unique to broadcasting in general and television in particular. What follows is a discussion of those types of address that are common to television.

The Presentation of News and Live or Simulated Live Television

A dominant feature of the televisual universe is the host, the familiar face and personality who guides the viewer through the discontinuities of any television

⁶Langer, p. 352

⁷Langer, p. 365

program. Here the mode of address is direct: the viewer is spoken to and looked at quite directly. There is no pretense that the audience is not there as in most dramas. In this way, the host serves as the means by which the audience is included in the program. The host speaks to the audience, but within the program s/he represents the audience's point of view.

Complementing the direct form of address is the implication that a great deal of television programming is live. This construction of time operates at several levels on television. News programs like their radio precursors are actively working to produce the simultaneity of their news and reality. In contrast to the newsreels shown in the cinema or the morning newspaper, news broadcasts are changeable to the last moment of airtime.⁸ Their distinctiveness is derived from this characteristic of immediacy and thus constructed sense that what is reported is much closer to the real events. The news anchor serves to validate this close relationship to the real by working in real time even though many of the news reports have been taped well in advance and have been drastically edited for broadcast. The news anchor knits the fabric of reports into a connotation of currency. This verisimilitude in recent years has been enhanced by the use of satellite and telecommunications technology so that anchors talk directly to reporters on the scene of an event after the taped report has been given. CBC's *The Journal* and PBS's *MacNeil/Lehrer Report* rely primarily on the use of interviews which, though often taped hours before broadcast, are edited to seem as if the entire event is occurring at the very time of the newscast.

⁸Early television, from dramatic programming to news programming, was often presented live. This era before prerecording shaped the meaning of television in its representation of immediacy.

The news anchor is also principally involved in the live broadcasting of crises and special events which pre-empt the regular television schedule. S/he (predominantly male) becomes directly associated with the significance of events and in a mutually complementary signifying system both substantiate the significance of the event and the significance of the news anchor. As opposed to other actors in events, the anchor is inserted into the construction of all these significant moments. Thus, the explosion of the space shuttle is remembered and associated with the news anchor who provided a frame for the experience. Similarly, the live reporting of the San Francisco earthquake becomes framed in the way in which say Dan Rather appeared to construct the crisis. The Liberal leadership convention, where Jean Chrétien was elected, as a televisual event is constructed through the apparent interpretation of objectivity provided by, for example, CBC's Peter Mansbridge. It is in these moments of live television, the times when a crisis is covered, that television moves to the very centre of cultural experience. Not only do the images of the spectacular explosion of the space shuttle become burned into our cultural memory, but also the anchor is legitimated as cultural interpreter. Indeed, the anchor represents a stability and continuity despite the apparent chaos of a crisis or the incomprehensibility of an event. There is a security provided by the presence of an anchor, particularly when the anchor has built up a history of covering a succession

of special events and crises.⁹ Where the rest of the universe is in flux, the anchor remains in control as a monitor of its threat to the audience.¹⁰

Because of the anchor's work covering these live 'historical' events along with his daily appearance on the nightly news, s/he begins to represent the network itself. The institutional identity becomes blurred with the news personality. In American television, Walter Cronkite embodied the spirit of CBS for two decades, while Huntley and Brinkley represented NBC. In Canadian television, Peter Mansbridge becomes the generalized spokesperson for the network: he, like other network anchors, represents the ultimate integrity of the network.

The host role is not specific to television news. It arises in a variety of other programmes, from talk shows and variety shows to game shows, sports programming and commercials, as a way of indicating some reference to the real time of the programme, that, in fact, the programme corresponds to everyday life and responds to everyday events. In the talkshow format, the contiguous address of the host to the audience through his/her looking and talking directly into the camera is a technique of inclusion. The studio audience further buttresses the construction of the currency of the event of the talk show. The audience also works as a representation of the television viewing audience. The questions of the studio audience to the guests are meant to represent our own queries. The host organizes the entire event so that his

⁹The idea of the anchor in television can be thought of conceptually as very similar to Barthes' *anchorage*: Barthes is referring to the way in which photos are anchored by the written caption that positions the reading of the photo by the viewer. The news anchor similarly helps position the world for the viewer. Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" (1964) in *Image-Music-Text*, 1977, pp. 38-41.

¹⁰Langer, p. 357.

own position is seen as sensible and rational. Talk shows are formatted around what is perceived as topical. Topicality is related to the show's construction of the currency and significance of the show. Talkshow's topicality is more significantly the way in which each show competes for an audience. In recent years, topicality for American daytime talkshows has centred on a kind of voyeurism by the mainstream culture for the margins of personal and collective behaviour. The host in this configuration of the audience as voyeur is both the privileged viewer and the moralizer about these more marginal micropractices. S/he rationalizes and makes coherent the cultural centre's interpretation by, first, labelling the marginal and then constructing the ethical field in which the marginal/ized cultural activity can be positioned. Thus, the host legitimizes a mainstream construction of self through its systematic delegitimization of the margins. The nebulous quality of what the mainstream of the culture actually is, is grounded in the very physicality of the host.

In more entertainment-centred primarily late-night talkshows, the construction of the live nature of the program is organized around its resonance with other media events. The guests are primarily performers, writers and actors who are promoting recently released films, books, theatrical or concert productions or recordings. Again, there is a live studio audience which constructs an atmosphere of an event that is particularized in time and place. The host's role is to produce a setting in which the guests will reveal something about themselves that goes beyond their intent of either personal promotion or cultural product promotion. This is the promise of the programme and the allure for the audience. The *entrée* into this more hidden world

of the stars is through humour which persistently hints at the breakdown of the barrier between the personal realm of the guest and the public persona.

The format and style of late-night live television talkshows, with their combination of humour and news of the unseen world of entertainment, emerged during the golden years of television. The role of host has been predominantly a recognized comic. From Steve Allen and Jack Parr in the nineteen fifties and early sixties to the current hosts of Johnnie Carson, Jay Leno, Arsenio Hall and David Letterman, the use of humour for transgression of public discourse into the personal has been established. Talk shows re-enact one of the central functions of television: to familiarize. The film stars in their live appearance on the programmes break the narrative closure of their filmic texts. Instead of the displaced time of the filmic text, they enter into the current time of live television. The dialogue between host and celebrity guest plays with the open address of the conversation. The studio audience and the home viewing audience are acknowledged and looked at directly. This acknowledgement of presence serves to reduce the aura constructed by the narratives of films, where the film actor lives in a quite separate world from the film viewer. The late night talk show decontextualizes the aura of the star and recreates the possibility of the star establishing a more personal and familial public personality. The celebrity guest enters into the daily circulation of images and meanings of the audience. Indeed, their new non-narrative-centred discourse is that of conversation with the programme's host; the style of discourse is itself heavily invested with the ordinary, the everyday, the familial.

The host is in these various formats of live or simulated live television is also a celebrity figure, but a type that is specifically created by the institution of television. A central part of this unique type of celebrity is its ultimate dependence on the system of celebrity that exists in other political and cultural domains. The television host's status as a celebrity is built on proximity to other celebrities and celebrity systems. The proximity is created by television's active work in the familiarization of the public sphere and the personalities of the public sphere. What this entails for most television hosts is to deepen the private textual quality of celebrities so that their images possess some sort of "characterized" depth of personality. Their own status as celebrities is also modalized around familiarity. Their daily presence on television punctuates the televisual world for the audience with recognizable faces and personalities with recognizable characteristics. The hosts provide the consistent frame for television, a frame that builds audience familiarity.

The Stars of Soap Opera

Other formats that are relatively unique to television also produce recognizable personalities for the viewing public. One of the dominant forms of daytime television in particular is the soap opera. In this form, one can see the prevailing televisual discourse of familiarity clearly in operation. There are several components of soap operas which underline the discourse of familiarity. It is in the origins of the genre that one can see the way in which an intimacy and familiarity with an audience was constructed.

The genre of soap opera emerged originally on radio in the 1930s. Indeed, some of the programmes were transferred to television in the 1940s and fifties and one of these, **The Guiding Light**, still is in production and on network television. Prior to the appearance of soap operas, there was very little daytime programming on radio. Most of the budgets of sponsors and work of the networks was focussed on evening programming. The soap opera represented an attempt by radio producers to sell the idea of daytime programming to sponsors of household products. The key attraction for the sponsors was that the audience in the daytime would be predominantly women who were involved in daily household chores, the kinds of activities that were connected to soaps and cleaners that these manufacturers offered. Women were also the principal buyers of household cleaning aids. The soap opera was a form of drama that conformed to the exigencies of the sponsor to insert the utility of these household products into a compatible setting. Thus, the action of the soap opera invariably occurred in a domestic setting in these early productions and, more often than not, around a kitchen table. The actual promotions for the products were inserted into the drama in the form of helpful hints. Often the matriarch of the soap opera, the central older sage-like figure, was also the spokeswoman for the product. Ma Perkins would incorporate the values of Proctor and Gamble's Oxydol into her general comments on the importance of family values in times of tragedy.

By the mid 1930s, Proctor and Gamble was the largest sponsor of radio programming in the world. According to Allen, Proctor and Gamble sponsored more

than 664 daytime hours of programming.¹¹ Other manufacturers followed suit including General Foods and Pillsbury. In the organization of broadcasting, the structuring of programmes to recognizable markets was critical. Equally significant was connecting the content of the program with the products being advertised. Generically, soap opera was about the home, the family and the neighbourhood. It dealt with intimate though often tragic details of a particular family.

It was also a neverending saga. As an open-ended text where there were no complete resolutions, the soap opera attempted to parallel the domestic life of its audience. The soap opera was for its first thirty-five years of existence on radio and television broadcast live each weekday. This established the currency and the uniqueness of each programme and the requisite audience loyalty to its continuous development. In combination with this currency and its intense focus on the domestic setting, the soap opera attempted to insert its drama, and by implication the sponsored products, into the everyday life of its audience as a kind of ritual catharsis.

Most of these components of the soap opera continue to be central to its current form on television. Although programmes are now taped and some scenes and sequences are videotaped in exterior settings, the soap opera maintains a concentration on domestic, textually open-ended drama that is broadcast daily. Thematically, soap operas are concerned with intimacy. The level of intimacy we learn about characters perhaps goes beyond the familial level of the early soap

¹¹Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p. 117

operas. The audience is invited into the bedrooms of the characters, into the intimate details of their relationships through private conversations, and into the dream sequences which identify characters' desires and aspirations. The invitation of the soap opera to the audience is to fully comprehend the motivations of each cast member. This entails an incredible investment by both writers and audience into the character's psychological profile. In fact, the intense investment in the psychological make-up of characters is the principal transformation of the soap opera form. Full familiarity in soap operas now implies an understanding of the character as individual which goes beyond the exterior appearances into the hidden world of their dreams.

The full sense of knowledge of the individual, soap opera character by the audience impedes the possibility of the actor in a soap opera becoming known beyond his/her role. Although, there are several magazines which talk about the stars of soap opera as real people outside of their work, the actors continue to be identified, even in these magazines, principally by the characters they portray on television. In a sense, the characters' inner lives is what interests and intrigues the reading audience. Unlike other celebrities there is decidedly less interest in their personal lives as real people.

The Situation Comedy Star

Television is populated with a parade of celebrities in its process of familiarization of the audience with significant individuals. In a general sense, television provides a cultural space for the deepening of the cultural texts of the

celebrities that emerge in other domains of the culture. Television does construct its own specific types of celebrities and works to enter some individual celebrities in the system of celebrity. As I have discussed above, the host is one example of this self-generation of public personality. Prime-time television drama is the other active centre in the creation and construction of celebrity figures. The most unique form of celebrity in prime-time television emerges from a genre of television which is more or less idiosyncratic to television: the situation comedy.

Throughout its history, the family is central to the situation comedy genre. Answering the question of why this is so once again substantiates the claim that television is involved intensively in making the world familiar. From the earliest examples of the situation comedy on television, specifically *I Love Lucy* and *The Honeymooners*, to more recent incarnations such as *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*, the dramatic tension and resolution is organized around the family. Even in shows which on the surface appear not to be based on the family are structured to make the work environment resemble a family environment. These include programmes from the seventies like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, and its current form in *Designing Women* and *Murphy Brown*. Because of its family orientation, there is an implicit assumption that any conflict contains within it a resolution which will not substantially alter the relations among the cast of characters. The family, in all its various forms of televisual presentation, is ultimately immutable. The characters must return to their mapped out roles within the family each week. It is the seriality of the situation comedy which helps reinforce the constancy of the family

in the situation comedy. Moreover, the seriality also aids in the construction of television as a visual landscape that is populated with familiar images.

The situation comedy also represents the way in which television is constructed to attract audiences for sponsors. The seriality of the programmes not only creates familiarity for the audience, it also helps establish a recognizable and repeatable construction of the audience for the advertisers. Once network television achieves a certain standard of popular success with a given programme, it freezes the general structure into a serial form. In this way, some of the indeterminacy and risk surrounding the way in which mass broadcasting audiences are formed for the generation of capital and profit are limited.

The stars produced through the television situation comedy have several clear-cut tendencies. The familiar characteristics of the star, because of the seriality of the form, determine the way in which his/her public personality is decoded by the audience. The character's name often dominates over the actor's name in public memory. Thus we remember Archie Bunker and less the actor Carroll O'Connor.¹² In more recent situation comedies there is an active conflation of the character with the actor's public persona. Roseanne Barr plays a variation of her public self within the family comedy setting. Bill Cosby's character Cliff Huxtable is not a character clearly separable from the way in which Bill Cosby is conceived in other spheres. What situation comedy develops is a concentration on the star's features as they are expressed in the weekly appearances of his/her character. Over time there is a

¹²Langer, p. 359.

convergence of the star's personality with the character portrayed. The resource for new developments within the serial draws on the psychological deepening of the lead character through the personality of the star.

CONCLUSION

With reference to the system of celebrity, television is generally an ancillary system. It is less active in the generation of new celebrities than in the process of substantiating the significance of public personalities that have emerged in other domains. I have called this the familiarization function of the medium. I have used the term familiarization in a number of senses to demonstrate the manner in which television is involved in such a process. Briefly, these include its domestic use and the related family structure under which it is viewed by its audience, its predominantly live or simulated live format style where recognizable hosts provide the anchor that helps to determine the significance of the wide array of representations and meanings channelled through the medium, the primary function of selling audiences to advertisers which makes the institution of television construct generally an inclusive as opposed to an exclusive audience, the serialization of content, and the intense focus on the personal, the psychological and in some cases the intimate in the actual content of programmes. The celebrities that do emerge from television either service the process of familiarization (i.e. the hosts) or work in the domain of the familiar and the intimate (i.e. situation comedies and soap operas).

In the following section, a study of Oprah Winfrey will be analyzed to particularize the study of the emergence of celebrity within the institution of television.

OPRAH WINFREY: FAMILIARIZING THE UNFAMILIAR

Oprah Winfrey is a star of television. Her status as celebrity is connected to her continual presence on the eponymous daily nationally syndicated talk show which she hosts. Television, as discussed above, tries to develop familiarity with the individuals who are presented. Winfrey, similarly, works to establish herself as a familiar face and personality within the format of an "issue-oriented" daytime talkshow. In contrast to film stardom, the television star that emerges as host and interpreter of the culture for the audience is treated as someone who everyone has a right to know fully. Their television lives are subjected to daily scrutiny through their shows. Their opinions are obvious and forthright; their level of knowledge, their humour, and their idiosyncrasies are their own even though they are presented for public consumption. Where the film celebrity projects a number of public images through their performances as actors, the television talkshow host, though constructing a public persona, is also constructed as clearly presenting themselves. The gap between the fictional or mythical level and the real-life of the celebrity is narrowed through the relationship of the programme to real time and the relationship to a live audience. The construction of sincerity and conviction is supposed to be parts of the authentic host. There is less mystery and less aura. Television works at

constructing the familiar and talkshow hosts are the examples par excellence of the form of familiarized subjectivity that television constructs for its audience. Oprah Winfrey is a particularly rich example of how the discourse of the familiar is modalized through the stars of television. The capacity of the television host to play in this construction of the familiar usually determines their success. Oprah Winfrey is not only seen every week day by millions, she is also the perpetual subject of the ancillary press which further constructs her as the familiar figure — indeed someone whose behaviour the public can actively influence.

I have divided the analysis of Oprah into a number of specific categories in order to reveal the institutional factors at play in the structuring of this specific television star. The first of these, the ritualization of personality, details the way in which Oprah is structured into a specific and recognizable personality through her programmes. The second, the Discourse of the Other, attempts to map the terrain that Oprah negotiates between audience and self-identity. The third category, which builds from the Discourse of the Other, Women, Television and Social Issues tries to discern the way that Oprah's constructed public personality is a blend of the ordinary with the extraordinary. The final category, the Uses of Oprah, moves to detail the way Oprah is reviewed and talked about in the magazines, other talkshows and newspapers and how she engages in responses to that coverage directly and personally. The personal and familiar details of Oprah Winfrey are public knowledge as she continues to represent televisual familiarity.

Ritualization of Personality

Much like most of North American television programming, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* is slotted into a regular time period.¹³ Moreover, in keeping with the structure of daytime programming, the show is produced daily. It is presented as a live programme. In this way, in its study of issues and problems it constructs the conception of currency, where the issues discussed are of vital concern for that particular moment. Very quickly, the format of the programme begins to determine the varied content of the programme as the ritual of viewing by an audience must be maintained.

There are several forms of ritual that are part of the programme and serve to shape what Oprah Winfrey represents as a personality. The format of the programme, although it has variations from show to show, establishes certain conventions and thereby positions Oprah's role in the ritual. We can think of the format as a narrative which is subject to repetition and some type of closure. In the simulated live-talk show, the narrative appears to be totally changeable; however, the repetition of codes indicates that roles and positions are clearly defined.

The programme is constructed with a series of characters that have clearly defined roles and scenarios in each programme. Oprah is the central and continuing personage. The audience, the guests with "problems", and the professional expert, operate as infinitely replaceable characters and yet fulfill roughly the same function in each of the show's narratives. What follows is a discussion of the ritualization of

¹³In our particular television market, Oprah Winfrey is shown regularly on CFCF Television (a CTV affiliate from Montreal) at 4 p.m. daily.

personality through a critical review of the principal characters that are part of the talk-show narrative which has become ritualized into a format.

Oprah as Narrative character

From the opening still images, which depict Oprah in various fashion-like poses as well as stills from previous programmes, the talk show narrative establishes the central character. The images imply that Oprah has an alluring, exciting personality. The programme then is organized not only around the issue or problem of the day, but also around Oprah's own interests, her own ranking of concerns. Oprah's personality is structured to envelope the treatment of any issue. The preferred or dominant reading of the programme's content then is to look for the codes of transformation of Oprah herself as she works towards some resolution in her own mind. In a programme on children bullying their parents (Monday, March 10, 1991), Oprah, in a very typical way, resolves the apparent impasse of attempting to assess blame by concluding that it is a family problem as opposed to any individual family member. It is a temporary solution; nevertheless Oprah's form of resolution is pivotal to the narrative construction of the show. Although the programme's content is organized generally around crises and conflicts, the programme's narrative does tend to progress toward the resolution of the disequilibrium which is repeatedly affirmed by Oprah. Oprah then directs the programme to follow her transforming embodiment of concern, from the introduction of the problem, to the discussion of the problem, to the organized confusion reflected by the audience's various questions, to the resolution of the problem through Oprah's interpretation of the expert's advice.

Each new episode follows the same patterned format that is articulated through the Oprah character.

The role of the Studio Audience

The construction of the Oprah character is dependent on the relationship to other principal characters in the narrative. The studio audience serves a number of functions. In the construction of the celebrity sign of Oprah Winfrey the audience is centrally engaged in the expression of her popular sentiment and support. Oprah establishes an intimacy with her studio audience. She moves among them with her microphones servicing their questions for the guests. Often she holds their hands as they prepare to become the centre of attention of not only the studio but the home viewing audience. Their questions may contain a degree of anger or hostility but generally that hostility is directed at the guests. Oprah remains their ally. She also represents their channel and avenue to public discourse. In a reciprocal relationship Oprah Winfrey symbolically represents empowerment. Much like the radio phone-in shows or other talk shows, the audience members become key participants in the programme's content. Their involvement however also operates at an ideological level of representing the way in which the general public opinion is sought in political discourse. Their active participation, their keen interest, and their level of investment in the programme's content are symbolic presentations of democratic action and will. Although the involvement of the studio audience is active and concerned, it remains ideological because of its function as representing the concern of society in general. The studio audience, in their activity, is representative of the massive home audience

and it is this connection which endows them with a particular form of representation of society. In a sense, the unseen and unheard large home audience also empowers the studio audience; the studio audience members' voices enter directly into public opinion because they are being heard. For a moment, the studio audience members are part of the array of public personalities who are granted a voice and personal opinion in the public sphere.

Permission into this restricted territory of the public sphere is through the celebrity sign of Oprah. In turn, Oprah's power as a celebrity is dependent on this intimate connection to a loyal studio and home audience. Her connection to her audience is imbedded in her celebrity sign. This power is reconfigured within the institution of television into the language of guaranteed audience ratings which in their turn can be used to sell Oprah as a commodity for the selling of other advertised commodities. Within the institution of television, the maintenance of a close connection of a celebrity to a large, stable audience works to secure the commodity status of the celebrity. Oprah Winfrey has made the audience itself, as expressed through the live studio audience, part of her identity as a celebrity.

In the show's structure, the solidarity between the studio audience and Oprah Winfrey is ritualistically established through the applause which punctuates commercial messages, through the close proximity of Oprah to her audience, through Oprah's periodic displays of emotional empathy with individuals, and through their periodic provision of anthemic statements of support for Oprah and her point of view.

The Expert

There is a dialectic which occurs in most episodes of *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. After hearing from the "problem guests" and after the series of questions from the studio audience and Oprah herself, an expert is positioned in the mediating role centre-stage between the guests. His/her role is to provide the solution to whatever the dilemma happens to be that day. It is clear that they are operating as the voice of authority. In this capacity they bring a certain knowledge and power to their reinterpretation of the problem. Often the expert has a doctorate; in addition many have written books on subjects related to the specific topic. The authority's expertise and identification of a social problem no doubt has been the organizing impetus behind many episodes of the programme.

The authority however does not provide the necessary closure and the resolution of the problem for the programme. They are instruments essential for the way in which Oprah works the programme to a resolution. The experts provide the raw material for Oprah's reinterpretation. Oprah positions herself as, once again, the representative of the audience and, by implication, of the ordinary people. She rewords the professional's advice into the language of practicality and usability for the audience. The experts' advice then is transformed into the everyday language of Oprah and therefore her loyal audience. The experts' advice works to legitimize the transformed advice of Oprah. Oprah once again becomes the channel for the organization of the programme's narrative.

Problem Guests

Although not always the case, the programme's guests push the narrative to a temporary state of disequilibrium. They represent what has to be resolved in some fashion during the programme to provide a closure. They become the personalization of an issue or concern. The core issues of the programme revolve around interpersonal issues that are given a social dimension because of their pervasiveness in the United States. As Oprah has said, if one person has a personal concern or problem, then the likelihood is that millions of audience members may have had similar experiences and problems. In a sense, Oprah's programme operates as a public confessional where, in its public presentation and its generally secularized form, the various participants invest themselves in a variation of the talking cure. The voicing of problems and the articulation of conflicts are seen as ways in which they can be solved. The programme, through its guests primarily and then by invocation some audience members are drawn into involvement, is often designed to break open secrets and taboos of discussion so that they become the subject of public debate. The guests then are coaxed into confessionals of their private worlds; the objective of the programme is that there will be a resonance of similar concern once those private worlds are exposed for public consumption. The guests then operate as the entrée into a discourse of intimacy and privacy on a public stage. Oprah is once again the channel for such disclosures.¹⁴

¹⁴Foucault's reading of the development of discourses about the self and the discourse of the self in his discussion of the history of sexuality are applicable in assessing the talk show as a contemporary site for the crossover between the private and the intimate and the public and the social. The Catholic Church confessional allowed for the revealing of the most sordid and/or intimate details of affairs "of the flesh" with the hope that absolution would follow one's prescribed penance. Similarly, psychoanalysis' talking cure, which can be read on one level as a secularized version of the Confessional, is a powerful way to implicate sexual transgressions into personal problems and solutions. Sexuality,

Summary

Through these various principal characters the television personality of Oprah is constructed. She is built on two principal elements that relate to the personal and the personality. First Oprah's subject matter, her relationship to her studio audience, her empathy and her relaxed manner, indicate that her celebrity is dealing with the institution's construction of personality around familiarity. For Oprah this is often extended to a level of intimacy. Secondly, Oprah's close proximity to her audience is constructed so that she is represented as a populist, someone who has emerged from the people to articulate their concerns. From the assemblage of character types, a ritual of performance is organized for Oprah. In its daily serialization, the personality Oprah becomes the lynchpin for the temporary resolutions of the narrative.

A Discourse of the Other

The emergence of Oprah Winfrey as a television celebrity is built on a series of binarisms which work to differentiate her presented subjectivity. The function of this construction of differentiation is to establish a reconfiguration of a committed television audience. Changes and transformations in the construction of television audiences are difficult to chart; but I think they can be represented through an

for Foucault, becomes a discourse that through its revelation of perversion and difference also establishes the normative centres of control of a society. The talk show similarly provides the revelatory discourse in its address of problems and perversions in the social world. Oprah's programme can be read as mass catharsis, a public version of the talking cure. The authority figure who works toward absolution transforms into the populist television celebrity, Oprah Winfrey. The cure or treatment in this televisual transfer of therapy, of course, lacks the depth of individualization found through psychotherapy and therefore represents a surface representation of help and a deep structure of establishing norms. See Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, pp. 17-21 and 123-129. Also see my reading of the radio talkshow *Sexually Speaking* "Normalizing the Subject: Power, Liberation and Freedom through Dr. Ruth", unpublished paper, 1987.

analysis of the forms of new celebrities that are allowed to develop in new programming. Programmes attempt to carve up the possible audiences into large and recognizable units. Television programming is designed to construct a connected series of programmes that resonate in some way with the social context of a section of the population who may have similar patterns of consumption and lifestyle. I am condensing here the elaborate lengths to which programmers attempt to construct and maintain audiences for television and it is not my intention to detail those techniques. However, an essential part of this work — to determine the connection of a potential programme to a potential audience — is to ensure that the central characters are compelling enough to the viewer that the viewer will continue to watch. The television celebrity's primary task, in terms of the programmer, is to somehow embody this affective attachment to the audience. With new programmes the celebrity must somehow embody a difference which is connected to some new way to configure the mass audience.

The Oprah Winfrey Show was designed through its star to reconfigure daytime audiences through its construction of difference. The show is an attempt to recast the social world and the categorization of groupings in the social world in terms of slightly different definitions and distinctions. To use terminology not normally associated with the apparatus of television, the positioning of a new television programme is a construction of a discourse of the Other. I want to try and explain how Oprah is constructed as a different daytime television talkshow host. The Other as it is inscribed in mass mediated culture establishes an inclusionary discourse for

normally excluded peoples from positions of power. The construction of Oprah's subjectivity is therefore a new televisual construction of an inclusionary hegemony. The marginal figure embodied by Oprah's blackness and womanhood can be modalized as a representation of populist sentiment in the televisual universe.

Women, Television and Social Issues

Oprah's celebrity sign is built on differentiations from its predecessors. Television targetted specifically for a predominantly female market is not a new phenomenon. As discussed above, the genre of soap opera which was intimately connected to the advertising of household consumer goods that were believed to be purchased by housewives emerged as a broadcasting form in the 1920s and thirties. Various phone-in talkshows, entertainment interview programmes and current affairs' interview programmes have become a relatively cheap staple of broadcasting in primarily the non-primetime hours. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* is in this lineage of daytime talkshows that were sandwiched between the daytime serials, gameshows and the commercials for household products.

The direct predecessors of *The Oprah Winfrey Show* were the various women-hosted talkshows of the fifties, sixties, and seventies daytime television. *Dinah* hosted by Dinah Shore and *The Victoria Graham Show* are two of the more widely syndicated programmes of that era. Local programmers also often produced women-hosted programmes that bore a resemblance to these nationally syndicated shows. The format was organized around the social ritual of the women's morning coffee klatch. Guests who were treated with familiarity, deference and a high degree of

sycophancy, talked about their latest trials and tribulations. It was a format that comfortably encompassed actors, authors and singers on publicity tours. There were male-hosted daytime talkshows which also emulated this structure: *The Merv Griffin Show*, *The Mike Douglas Show*, and later *The John Davidson Show*. Most of the male hosts of these programmes were crooners or romantic balladeers, the kind of popular music directly associated with and targetted for a female audience and thus perceived by television programmers as "natural" celebrity hosts for daytime "women's" television.

Oprah Winfrey's programme has been placed in opposition to this generally quiet and unobtrusive form of daytime programming. As opposed to much of the programmes on daytime television which are organized around the possibility of missing portions of the programme, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* is obtrusive in its insistent demand for listening and watching. Whereas much of daytime television can be thought of as an ambient medium that accompanies household chores, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* is designed to be watched intently. This form of programming for daytime television emerged with the popularity of *Donahue* during the mid-seventies. Instead of the myriad of talkshows filled with the non-controversial, the mildly revealing discussions of stars, a cooking segment, and possibly some form of entertainment, Donahue's programme constituted its form of entertainment specifically around controversial social issues. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* is built on these same foundations of entertainment programming that the Phil Donahue Show established as viable commercial television a decade earlier.

Both programmes arose from local success to national syndication and thereby worked independently of network television contracts.¹⁵ This gradual building of an audience from a regional base has become an essential component of both Oprah's and Phil's construction of their celebrity status. It established their celebrity signs as something more authentic, more grounded to the day-to-day conditions of everyday people. And in the programme's style, as discussed above, the audience is included in the programme's content. The microphone is thrust by the host into the audience so that these members can participate in a discussion. The hosts guide an often chaotic and raucous, though ostensibly more democratic discussion. The traditional host's proximity to the guests and relative distance from the studio audience is transgressed. The audience speaks and questions. The mythic construction of a form of populism is the dominant sign of the new programme and the populist persona of the host.

In the domain of public personalities, Oprah Winfrey and Phil Donahue share the same status as representatives of those members of society that are generally excluded from positions of power. They are constructed as indefatigable champions of non-elites. Like the radio open-line show they symbolically represent the people and their interests as they attempt to raise public awareness about particular social issues.

Because of their positions as outsiders, they try to present the various discourses of

¹⁵Oprah began hosting a very typical women's chat show in Chicago entitled A.M. Chicago on WLS-TV in 1984. Through King Productions it was syndicated as the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to other markets. By 1988, Oprah had usurped Donahue as the ratings winner for day-time talkshows in all of the principal American markets. Moreover, she was generally proclaimed by 1991 to be the best-paid person in show-business with estimated earnings over 40 million dollars and possibly as high as 60 million. Sources: H. F. Waters, "Chicago's Grand new Oprah" *Newsweek*, December 31, 1984, p. 51 and *Les Brown's Encyclopedia of Television*, 3rd Edition, Detroit: Gale Research, 1992, p. 604.

the excluded and marginal in the social world to determine how they can be reintegrated into the social mainstream. Oprah and Phil represent a cast of American liberals whose main approach to social problems is articulated through the slogan that "something should be done about this". Their concern, their seeming commitment, and their intensity during each programme work to reinforce their positions as crusaders of political and social rights and responsibilities for the underrepresented. In this way, they resemble the investigative journalist who is also committed to particular political positions. Oprah, like Phil begins from a point of involvement and commitment to social responsibility; this commitment serves as the launching board for the drama in each programme.

The question that arises from this development of a type of television celebrity that is very much attached to at least the publicization of social issues is how did it emerge within the traditional conservative institution of television? Fundamentally, this becomes a question of how this form of debate is connected to the construction of sizable audiences that can be sold to advertisers? The answer lies in the way that the programmes attempt to rearticulate the daytime television audience into new patterns. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* specifically is built on the success of *Donahue* with several significant differences and oppositions. The Phil Donahue programme developed in response to the growing political awareness of women in the 1970s. Television's rearticulation of this discourse of empowerment came in several forms. For prime time television, serials such as *Mary Tyler Moore*, and *Rhoda* depicted single career oriented women surviving in the modern world. In daytime television, the plots of

soap operas transformed to include female leads with professional positions. Phil Donahue's programme, in this social context, can be seen as television as an institution recasting the female audience as a politically and socially sensitive population. This new form of talk show then is an expression of the empowering sentiment concerning women's rights within the structure of television programming. Donahue, the liberal Catholic father, epitomized the type of American male most sympathetic to the rights and interests of women. The programme translated these new issues and concerns into a conflictual, emotionally-charged relationship which worked to provide solidarity among women in the audience in support of Donahue on particular issues.

The Oprah Winfrey Show, which began in the mid-eighties, is constructed as an outlet for general outrage primarily for women. As a programme, however, it had to differentiate itself from its predecessor and now competitor, *Donahue*. Like its predecessor, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* was first a local programme which in head-to-head competition produced better ratings than Donahue in that regional Chicago market. When it was nationally syndicated, it was also enormously successful at attracting large audiences. Most critics attributed this to the frankness and "sassiness" of Oprah's personality. In comparison to other programmes this characterization of Oprah may be quite true; but what is more significant about this presentation of a television celebrity is that the celebrity more closely represented the audience itself. Oprah was a woman — not a man — sensitive to women's issues; Oprah also was a black woman. With her rounded heavy figure, she also did not

possess the physique of a beautiful actress or model. In all these ways, the celebrity sign of Oprah was constructed to represent that she had herself in her own lifetime become empowered. She, at the very least, represented symbolically the potential of empowerment of women, of marginalized groups within the American system. She represented, above all, a personality that emerged from the more common people that maintained a sensitivity to their needs. The programme was organized around a presentation of Oprah as an accessible figure who was passionately interested in a host of issues. She then became the channelling device for providing the form of dramatic tensions and resolutions between persons and issues that have become the entertaining element of the programme. Once Oprah's integrity is established within this format, which essentially can be translated that her celebrity sign has a certain stability, the topics themselves become less significant. Thus we find innocuous themes discussed or Hollywood celebrities being the object of scrutiny for certain programmes. Oprah is the populist channel to empowerment no matter what the object of discussion might be.

The Uses of Oprah

Because of this construction of the celebrity sign that maintains its distinction through a form of familiarity and populism with an audience, Oprah as celebrity is seen to be approachable by that same audience. There is a tension in the construction of any celebrity whose fame is built on approachability and proximity to their audience. The familiar cast of the Oprah celebrity sign also emphasizes its ultimate

vulnerability: because she is constructed as "from the people", the rationale for her position among public personalities cannot be based on her unique merits or gifts to any great degree. Her reason for possessing an exalted status then is never secure and is always the subject of debate and inquiry. Because of the nature of Oprah's celebrity sign there is no real distinction in textuality between the textual and the extratextual as in the case of film stars. Her continuous presence on television and her ubiquitous presence in the various news sources means that her ability to construct a distance and aura is limited.¹⁶ Oprah is constantly being accused of something in the tabloid press. In 1991, her status as a single but long-engaged woman was the object of a certain frenzy of concern. In the tabloid *Globe*, Stedman Graham, Oprah's fiancé, was exposed as someone hiding his family and their inbreeding past.¹⁷ At the same time, she also either is defending herself or being defended by others in the various more legitimate press accounts.¹⁸ Indeed, the debates that circulate about Oprah indicate that as opposed to film celebrities, Oprah

¹⁶It should be added that part of Oprah's celebrity sign is her work as an actor. Contemporaneous with her rise as a television talkshow host, Winfrey starred in Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple* and earned an Oscar nomination. Since that time she has been involved with a number of other fictional productions including the television mini-series, *The Women of Brewster Place* (1988), and a sitcom entitled *Brewster Place*. On the basis of her massive earnings she also owns her own production company, Harpo Productions, which not only produces her own programmes but also looks for other worthwhile stories to bring to television or film. From this perspective, Oprah Winfrey has established a certain autonomy in her construction of celebritydom; her autonomy has emerged from her earnings of over 60 million a year. Whatever the source of that income, Winfrey represents like other stars that have channelled their resources into further capital enterprises, a potential individual subjectivity that can express their will in determining what stories are produced. Her emphasis at least to date has been on stories that have focussed on black culture, although she denies that she is a spokesperson for the black community: "If other people perceive me to be the representative of black people in this country, it is a false perception. The fact that I sit where I sit today, you can't deny there have been some major advances. But I'm still just one black woman." - Oprah Winfrey in Richard Zoglin, "Lady with a Calling", *Time*, August 8, 1988, pp.50-53

¹⁷*Globe*, "Shocking Secrets Stedman hides from Oprah", May 7, 1991 p. 13

¹⁸The most common sites for defenses of Oprah's integrity are printed in the more mainstream black magazines *Ebony* and *Essence*. See for example, *Essence*, "Oprah in Her Own Words", June 1989.

is much more familiar and also susceptible to the advice of her audience and the press.

The Use of the Name

In terms of the ancillary press and in relation to her own programme and her own fans, Oprah Winfrey is known simply as Oprah. This may seem of minor significance; but under closer comparative inspection certain insights about the construction of celebrity intimacy can be discerned. With film actor Tom Cruise, his last name Cruise becomes his signature. The use of the first name connotes a familiarity and lack of distance. The use of the last name emphasizes formality. On one level, the use of the names is clearly an effort to provide differentiation. Oprah and Cruise *are* unique names. But on another level, it indicates a gendered difference in the construction of celebrities and also a difference in institutional construction of celebrities. One can identify through this subtle difference, that familiarity and intimacy are much more central to the construction of a female celebrity than a male celebrity and for a television celebrity over a film celebrity. Where Cruise was an object of some mystery and his power related partly to the control of information, Oprah is constructed to be an open book, where the intimate details of her life are not only well-publicized but also subject to debate. Indeed, we are invited into a debate about what is proper for Oprah in her life. Cruise, in contrast, builds respect through establishing a private and autonomous life - we are offered only illicit glimpses into his private affairs. Our knowledge is restricted.

With Oprah our knowledge of her behaviour is much less restricted, and the debate moves to a debate among her attackers, her defenders and her own defences of her well-publicized actions.¹⁹ We are given information about Oprah *as if* we could give advice directly to her. With Cruise, it is often a type of voyeurism into the exclusive domains of the celebrity.

The Use of the Body

The celebrity sign of Oprah, like other female celebrities, is very much focussed on the corporal. Their bodies become objects of intense scrutiny and, among the audience, debate about their beauty, their attractiveness, their transformation. The camera itself is blamed for the transformation of the natural body; according to popular wisdom one looks ten pounds heavier on camera. The image of the body of female stars provides some of the raw materials for the construction of norms and normative positions about what the body should represent and what the ideal body should be. As mentioned in the section on film, the body is seen to be something to be altered to fit into the structures of the normative range of what is beautiful. It is now de rigueur surgery in professional modelling to have breast enlargements. Plastic surgery to improve the shape of the nose, to make the lips fuller, or to remove a rib to improve the look of one's torso is a regular occurrence in the reconstruction of predominantly though not exclusively, female celebrities.

¹⁹Op. cit. *Globe*. In the tabloid press, although there is an effort to shock, the articles are often written in a way that is sympathetic to Oprah's plight.

As a female public personality, Oprah is implicated in this discourse of representation of the body. In the context of her position as a television host, Oprah's body has become the way in which a discourse of the body has been debated and discussed. Her body image has in itself formed the foci of a number of issues and topics; the distinction between programme and personality are blurred and melded. Oprah is constructed as an issue in the extratextual realm of newspapers and magazines as well as an object of concern in her daily programme.

Oprah has gone through several transformations of the body which have been used to substantiate her celebrity sign in some way. When she emerged as a national celebrity with her syndicated programme in 1986 Oprah is heavy set and does not conform to the exigencies of the positive public presentation of the female form; she is outside of the normative construction of beauty because of her weight. What her figure does emphasize is that success can be achieved by women who do not conform to the current body aesthetic. Her body represents and subsequently organizes a discourse of defiance and independence. Along with being black in a mediascape dominated by white culture, Oprah's body image represents a challenge from the margins. It is perceived as less acceptable as a public presentation of women; but within the context of a program that deals with human issues it is seen as complementary to the show's content. The body image builds authenticity and sincerity.

In 1988, Oprah went on a severe diet. In the course of the season she unveiled herself in a pair of tight designer jeans. She demonstrated her capacity to transform,

to construct a new body image through apparent willpower. Unlike forms of cosmetic surgery, weight loss is a form of body transformation that is conceptually within the realm of possibility of a large sector of the American population. Oprah engaged in a type of body transformation that could be understood and appreciated by a vast audience. She announced triumphantly in both tabloids and the mainstream entertainment magazines that "I'll never be fat again". In an article in the black women's magazine *Essence*, Oprah writes an article about how the weight loss has given her a freedom and that now she was truly happy:

When I was overweight, I was living a lie. I could say "I feel great about myself," but I really didn't. There were times when I could get dressed and think that I looked okay, but there was always that feeling of being blocked. It was like having a brick wall in front of you that keeps you from moving forward."²⁰

She also solemnly intones that a weight problem is "not going to control my life ever again".²¹ She has engaged in a public discourse about her self and her problems. There is very little attempt to separate her personal transformation and her public persona - we are aware of both the public and personal sides of Oprah. We appreciate the transformation.

Within a year of these interviews and articles Oprah had started to gain the weight back. In a February issue of the *National Enquirer* the headline announces that "She's fat and happy at last."²² In a cover story in *People* the same resolve that

²⁰*Essence*, June 1989, p. 46

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 102

²²*National Enquirer*, "She's Fat and Happy at Last: Exclusive Oprah Wedding Plans - 'I want to have two babies', February 5, 1991 Cover story.

was in evidence about losing weight is now invoked to proclaim that "I'll never diet again".²³ In November 1990 she integrated her new body transformation into her show. The title of the show was "The Pain of Regain". And she explained to her audience that "if you lose weight on a diet, sooner or later you'll gain it back."²⁴ The text is surrounded with images of Oprah when she was slim, juxtaposed with images of Oprah's fatness before and after the diet. Questions concerning her possible marriage to her boyfriend are framed in terms of her weight in several publications.

Conclusion

The slide from public to private realm, which is expressed in the public debate concerning Oprah's weight-loss and weight-gain, leads to two overall conclusions about television celebrities and celebrities and forms of celebrity construction in general. The first is related to the way in which gender determines the interpretation of legitimacy in the realm of the public personality. Oprah's body transformations functioned as a way in which discourses about the body and body image could be openly discussed. A woman's body is seen to be problematic and therefore necessitating transformations. Oprah positioned her own body as the physical embodiment of the debate. The level of debate, though apparently conflictual also ended up conforming to the structure of her construction of human and social issues in her television program: the personal struggle which is the core of

²³*People*, January 14, 1991

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 84

the content of the program is the domain of the public struggle. This leads to the second conclusion; the debate about Oprah's body is also a function of the way television constructs familiarity. The television host is a celebrity whose separation from the audience and audience concern is never clearly made. The real life of the host, if the host is constructed as Oprah as authentic and sincere, is never elided from the stage performance. This unity of being goes beyond an homology between the person and the celebrity; it is actively developed each day by Oprah and other hosts in their programmes. The private person and the issues of the private person are the subject of the talk show. The public person who guides this discussion is reconstructed to be familiar and accessible; in other words their public persona is intensely invested with issues and concerns of the private sphere and the associated subjectivity of that sphere.

Oprah Winfrey presents the full complexity of the television celebrity who is often a form of public personality that depends upon their proximity to and their powers of explaining other celebrities. Oprah articulates the way in which the apparatus of television works to recast the audience through its identification with new faces of familiarity and new constructions of social concern. Winfrey is a constructed television celebrity that is built on a reconfiguration of the women's television audience. Although not obvious, this reconfiguration of the television audience is very much connected to the organization of the industry around the sustainability of audiences which are retranslated as markets and consumers.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY: THE SYSTEM OF CELEBRITY

In each of the three preceding chapters of section two, I have outlined the institutional structures that have organized historically the development of celebrities in the film, television, and popular music industries. I have conducted a dual hermeneutic which charts the construction of celebrities in each of the entertainment industries; in the historical preamble and in the specific genealogical interpretations of individual celebrities, I have combined a hermeneutic of intention and a hermeneutic of reception. In terms of resources, I have worked through this dual hermeneutic from the various readings of stars detailed in both the popular presses and the industry trade journals. In congealing these two elements, I have developed the way the celebrity is an embodiment of its industrial/institutional setting as well as the expression of an audience/collective that attaches meaning to the public figure. The form of attachment that is intensively worked upon by the industry and also embraced by the audience is affective. The concept that public forms of subjectivity represent the organization of collective affect identifies the central contribution that this dissertation makes to the study of stars and celebrities. Also, the representation of affective power that runs through the array of public figures provides the unifying thread that links entertainment celebrities to other public personalities and indicates that a system of public subjectivity operates in contemporary culture.

It is my intention in this summary chapter to indicate first how each apparatus constructs particular forms of celebrities and how there are in operation subsystems of a system of celebrities. What will be emphasized here is that the celebrity system presents a structure for the organization of public personalities as well as a structure for the models of modern subjectivity. The celebrity system principally addresses the organization of concepts of individuality and identity for the culture. In this summary chapter I want to identify, then, the various privileged constructions of subjectivity and affective attachments that are fostered in our current system of celebrity.

Two primary insights can be drawn from our study of the formation of the celebrity in the various domains of the entertainment industry. First of all, the formation of the celebrity in the entertainment industry is not couched in the language of rationality and reason either in its articulation by the industry or its rearticulation by the audience. As opposed to the political sphere of leadership politics or the rational rhetoric that envelopes business discourse, the entertainment industry celebrates its play with the affective, emotional and sentimental in its construction of public personalities. Because of this open and avowed relationship to the irrational, a study of the entertainment industry permits an entry point into the way in which affect is housed in public personalities.

Secondly, the study of entertainment celebrities has allowed us to see two levels of celebrity construction in operation and thereby identify subsystems within a larger system. Each industry produces a range of celebrity types that not only are constructed to have a distinctive quality when compared to other celebrities within that industry, but

they are differentiated from the production of celebrities in each of the other domains of the entertainment industry. This double layering of construction of public subjectivity describes the way in which the larger system of celebrity formation operates. The active play with affect by the strands of the entertainment industry is also an attempt at producing viable differentiated categories of popular taste. The work on distinction and differentiation is the industrial construction of audiences or markets; viability of a celebrity can be translated as the celebrity's capacity to appeal to an audience through a specific array of commodities or services. The various social constructions of taste intersect with the industrial construction of celebrity figures to produce a system of "functioning" public personalities and forms of subjectivity.

As outlined in the previous three chapters of this section, each of the entertainment industries organizes its production of celebrities around particular characteristics. These characteristics within each industry work to form types of binarisms that operate to distinguish the formation of personalities within their particular industry and among the industries. My intention in this summary chapter is to use the principal characteristics of the celebrity sign that have emerged from film, television and popular music and relate them to the categories of identification that Jauss developed to identify the "modalities of reception" that define types of identification of heroes in fiction. Celebrities, like fictional heroes, do not often figure in only one modality of reception; however I would argue that each industry has attempted to privilege a particular formation for reception that can be correlated to the binarisms that operate in the cultural production of celebrities to emerge from each field/domain.

Identification with the Film Celebrity: Auratic Distance

Autonomy figures centrally in the formation and solidification of the film celebrity. In the historical/institutional reading of Tom Cruise, one can discern that the film star works to create a distance from its audience. There is active work on controlling information concerning the non-screen meanings and representations of the screen star. There are two realities of the film stars proffered in the public sphere: their representations in films where the heroes they portray are fixed images, and thus relatively fixed conceptions of their identity can be made. In contrast, the supposed "real-life" of the film celebrity, the private and intimate as well as the various public lives are less obvious, less explicit and much more controlled (in comparison to other entertainment industries). The fictional presentations generally then determine the nature of the identification of the film star. In order to gain an autonomy from these screen images, as I have discussed, the screen star invokes a number of codes to indicate their ultimate independence. The code of acting, the active reworking and then publicly performing his/her private life for public consumption, and the playing of "serious" or against-type roles all work to concretize the star as a more permanent sign of the public sphere.

The way in which this autonomy from the screen image and the fictional representations is achieved determines to a high degree the modality of reception that inscribes the film celebrity with significance for the audience. The screen image provides an aura for the film celebrity which constructs a form of "*admiring*

identification",¹ to use Jauss' terminology, to envelope their celebrity sign. From these images the audience can construct the "perfect hero" where the star's actions serve as exemplary models for a particular community. Film stars are constructed in this first order of identification in a manner that hasn't changed significantly from the inception of narrative cinema: the star is born through the playing of a leading (that is, central to the narrative), generally sympathetic character. Although there has been little change in this organization of stardom, there have been transformations in the construction of the film star which indicate how the industry has repositioned itself through the public representations of individuality. The film star has become progressively more representative of artistic practice. An aesthetic distance is conveyed even in the most entertainment-oriented star like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Billie Crystal or Steve Martin. These stars have achieved film stardom through emerging in other industries or other cultural forms. The celebrity sign of the film star that they now embrace and embody is made to be superior to those celebrities of other technologically mediated performance arts. The careers of performers like Crystal and Martin are coded with the connotation of progression from live comedy performance, to television, to the ultimate form of film. Film signifies through its performers/stars the pinnacle for the expression of one's metier, one's own individual creativity and genius. The conception of a serious aesthetic to emerge in film is substantiated in a number of ways. The development of the art film and the associated audience have become established since the nineteen forties and since the teens in Europe. The appearance and growth of film departments in universities that

¹Hans Robert Jauss, "Interaction Patterns of Identification with the Hero" in Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. by Michael Shaw, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982, pp. 168-172

have courses that look specifically at the aesthetics of films also indicates the institutionalization of film as a legitimate form of cultural practice. Many of these departments emerged from Literature departments and used the constructs of genres, periods and authors as a model for the study of film. Finally, an entire avant garde cinema practice has paralleled the development of the Hollywood movie industry in a number of settings. All of these practices have worked to solidify film as a legitimate form of cultural expression. The stars of film are associated in the expression of these artistic pretensions.

To achieve celebritydom in the context of film also connotes the pinnacle of the individual star's commodity value. With the demise of a studio system in the nineteen fifties the star's salary came to reflect their central value for the profitability of production. Currently, most of the major film stars receive not only a guaranteed salary of millions of dollars, but also a percentage of the box office receipts.

The star thus possesses within the film industry two forms of capital which because of their correlative power begin to determine the direction of film production: cultural capital — because each star is one of the key representatives of individual creativity and artistic practice, and economic capital — because the star emerges as the economic centre of any production. The industry, it must be made clear, has not fallen victim to this increasing power of the celebrity. The film industry has been an instrumental accomplice in this construction of a public personality. Within the cultural industries, the film industry has attempted to maintain their pre-eminence in the organization of an entertainment culture by establishing film as ultimately more

significant than specifically television. Since the nineteen fifties, it has worked to construct the celebrity to maintain this "larger-than-life" persona for their stars to differentiate them from the everyday celebrity constructions of television. The film star's appearance in other settings, either in person or on television is constructed as a significant event - in essence, a change from the everyday. The film star is the special guest of the talkshow. Their films are treated with a certain reverence on television, whether in the form of a promotional clip or in their full presentation which, when they premiere on broadcast television, will preempt the regularity of the television schedule.

One can see in this objective of differentiation how the various celebrities are part of a loosely defined system of celebrities. The generally "admiring identification" which contains a certain aloofness and distance has been constructed for the film star in contradistinction to the meanings of the television celebrity. The admiring form of identification entails a distance from the audience. This aesthetic and "larger-than-life" distance is intended primarily to maintain the film industry as the centre of cultural capital. Of course, the intention is to parlay that form of cultural capital into economic capital. The film industry attempts to maintain its preeminence through constructing its production environment as the main source of creativity and ingenuity. Through this form of creative hegemony, the industry can generate revenues from the various types of releases and spin-off productions that can occur from a successful film production. A successful film, like *Batman*, can produce for the industry a number of sources of revenues; the selling of exhibition rights, the releasing of the film on videocassette and

videodisc, the selling of the pay-television exhibition rights and the network broadcast rights, the selling of an album soundtrack, the marketing and selling of toys, games and apparel that are associated with the character, the production of a film sequel, the production of a television series and/or an animated series, and so on. Being at the origin of such a proliferation of commodities and different sources of revenues to emerge from the same original commodity is the central impetus behind why the film industry has moved to maintaining its hold on cultural capital in the entertainment industry. The particular development of the aura of the public personality of the film star is part of this general industrial strategy.

Devising the Television Celebrity: Identification with the Familiar

As I have mentioned above, the loose system of celebrity is built on differentiation. The key differentiation that operates in the construction of the television celebrity is its relation with film. While the film celebrity exhibits a great deal of control over their celebrity sign and thereby constructs distance, the television celebrity works to break down those distances and develop a conception of familiarity. In the study of Oprah Winfrey, I have identified several ways in which television has constructed this discourse of familiarity and there is no need to elaborate here on that discussion other than to connect those features to a form of identification by the audience. In terms of Jauss's categories of heroic identification, the television celebrity is generally organized around a *sympathetic identification* where "there is a solidarity with the personality" and

"we[the audience] place ourselves in the position of the hero".² Again I should add the caveat that other forms of audience identification are part of television's construction of the celebrity and indeed can occur within the same celebrity. What I am emphasizing is that television tends to privilege a form of sympathetic identification which make its distinctive from the production of audience identification in film.

With the television celebrity we are drawn to think of the talk show personality or the news anchor as standing in or representing our interests. Their interests are painted as if they originate from an audience. In the talkshow format, a style of television production that predominates the televisual universe, the host constructs familiarity with the studio audience setting and the continuous touring of the audience for questions and comments for the assembled guests. In the case of Oprah, this familiarity leads to a sympathetic form of identification and is buttressed by her occasional programmes which have personal relevance to her life. Occasionally, programmes focussed on themes which were directly related to her "private battles" of child abuse or, alternatively, her battle with diets and weight loss. Oprah as hero is presented as vulnerable and subject to weaknesses that others suffer. Audiences are thus constructed to be loyal and therefore regular viewers of her programme; they are drawn to her candour and honesty which allows her to move seamlessly from the public sphere to the private in her presentation of self. There is a virtual public acknowledgement that her audience is aware of her "private battles"; her private life, in general, is not

²Jauss, p. 173

constructed as a separate and private realm and is unified with her public performances. Her power as a sympathetic hero is dependent on presenting herself as both honest and open.

The specific case of Oprah reveals some general features about the construction of the television celebrity that relate to television's difference as a medium. The familial feel of television and its celebrities is also a play with verisimilitude. The general *vraisemblance*, the construction of a news reality, and the various forms of live and simulated live television which predominate the television schedule, are all aspects of television's efforts to represent a truer to life form of cultural expression. While film has moved to the fictional and sometimes an aesthetic construction of its meanings, television concentrates on representing the real. Even in many of its special dramatic programming the often favoured formula is the docudrama where a specific and topical issue is tackled in a fictionalized way. Although these special programmes tend to be moralistic and heavyhanded in their presentation of what is right and wrong, they are also exemplary of how television often eschews the presentation of an aesthetic code and attempts to move to the non-fictional and the news-like. Indeed, the general of look of television images, the generally acknowledged flatness of the images is often placed in contradistinction to the depth and richness of the filmic image. The television image can be seen as less embellished and crafted and therefore closer to the real and the everyday. One can see television's different play with the real through the soap-opera's generally poor production values and the continuity of story lines so that they resemble everyday life. In situation comedy genre, the general familial feel of their stories and casts also

makes them closer to the everyday. Both sitcoms and soap operas are constructed to fit into the rituals of everyday life through the regularity of their presentation. Again, these features of regularity and their fit into an audience's leisure and consumption patterns are examples of how television constructs its strength of connection and proximity to reality.

The implications for the television celebrity is that s/he is structured to reinforce the feeling of close proximity to the real and the familial. The celebrity is more accessible. They are seen on a more regular basis in the serial format of television programmes. The auratic distance is less central to the television celebrity. The pretensions of an aesthetic abstraction are also underplayed. The codes of acting are replaced by the similitude of the television character with the television star's supposed real life; the break which defines the independence and autonomy of the film star is less significant in the construction of the television celebrity.

This difference between the television celebrity and film celebrity, however is also constructed as a hierarchy of public subjectivity. The successful television celebrity, like the film star, is rewarded through an incredibly generous (and incredibly inequitable) system of remuneration. In different periods of the last decade, two television stars, Bill Cosby and Oprah Winfrey, were considered to be the highest paid entertainers, each earning in excess of 40 million dollars in a single year.³ Thus like the film star, the television celebrity begins to accumulate economic capital and associative power. Both Oprah Winfrey and Bill Cosby have their own production

³Different years of the 1980s, these two black stars were seen to have had the highest income. See *Fortune* magazine's regular surveys of top-income entertainers.

companies which not only are involved in the production of their own programmes but also have developed other cultural productions. The difference between television and film celebritydom lies in the organization of power through cultural capital. The film celebrity evokes aesthetic conventions in their production of their public image. These aesthetic conventions, as I have detailed elsewhere, are essential to the larger-than-life meaning of the film star and the film commodity in general. The celebrities cast large shadows of artistic significance and thus, in comparison to television, construct a hierarchy of culture through the difference in meanings of the celebrities that emerge from the two industries. The distinctions demarcated by this difference in celebrity formation maintain the aura of film as a significant event and television, in contradistinction, as a form of routine consumption. The stars of television — and here I mean network television in particular — are working toward the construction of a mass and relatively undifferentiated audience. In contrast, the stars of film are positioned to construct more specific taste cultures and more differentiated forms of audiences, where specialized knowledge may be essential for decoding their significance. Although both film and television are certainly popular cultural forms, they have constructed a form of differentiation which resonates with the categories of high culture and middlebrow culture. Celebrities are the industrialized products of this subtle differentiation in cultural form.

Celebrating the Community: The Popular music celebrity and the claim to authenticity

Where film and television have developed a dyadic industrial relationship which is reflected in the formation of each of their celebrities, popular music's construction of public personalities tends to be modalized around intrinsic differentiation as opposed to extrinsic distinctions. The key characteristic of popular music and its construction of subjectivity that leads to these intrinsic differentiations is the claim to authenticity. To adapt this conception of popular music's claim to authenticity to Jauss' categories of identification, one would have to conclude that popular music celebrities are centrally involved in an articulation of *associative identification*: "the barriers between audience and actors are broken and there is a celebration of active participation."⁴ The crowd and the reactions of the crowd are a central metaphor of the meaning of popular music. It is a collective celebration, a celebration of a community that considers the representation of specific performers and their music significant. The concert is the ritualization of this claim to authenticity and this associative identification with the audience.

The expression of the close proximity of performance to audience is one of the principal ways popular music has established its authenticity. As I have mentioned in the institutional study of popular music celebrities in chapter five, the various incarnations of popular music since the Second World War have attempted to reclaim a solidarity with their audiences that has been lost with previous forms of music. Thus mid-twentieth century folk music, with its simplicity in dress and performance, worked

⁴Jauss, p. 184

to fabricate a community where the performer and the audience were virtually inseparable. Likewise punk rock, with its simplicity of expression, also celebrated the virtual inseparability of performers and their audiences. Even current dance music, with its clubs using primarily recorded music, makes a claim to authenticity for the eschewing of the importance and significance of star performers in favour of the dance, rhythm and movement of the club patrons.

Thus, popular music plays out a tension between artifice and authenticity in its construction of celebrities. In the example that I have used, *New Kids on the Block*, this tension is vividly displayed. According to some conventions, *New Kids* is entirely fabricated and therefore possesses no "authentic" value whatsoever. For their supporters, their youthfulness, their sincerity, and their contemporaneity are their legitimate claims to authenticity and stardom. Other performers actively assault the canon of rock authenticity through a demonstrative and flamboyant display of artifice and transformation. David Bowie or Madonna are examples of popular music celebrities that build on the authentic soul of popular music. They transform and transfigure themselves and through these reincarnations present a moving subjectivity, and ultimately an enigma about their authentic self. Their enigmatic quality is reinforced by the centrality of authenticity to popular music discourse. Their play with identity and image is often an ironic modality to the claims in rock for authenticity. Indeed, their claim could be construed as an appeal to an aesthetic, where the performer has the "genius" to transform like the brilliant actor. The key to their continuing appeal is the continual deferral of the resolution of the enigma; the authentic self is never revealed completely.

Within this tension between artifice and authenticity, the audience is drawn to particular performers and their expressions of this tension. What is characteristic of the fan of the popular music performer, no matter how they deal with this tension between artifice and authenticity, is their loyalty. Through this loyalty a representation of community develops around the popular music celebrity composed of those people who are committed to his/her music and identity. This close connection to their audience is what makes popular music celebrities so attractive to advertising agencies: in the last decade the use of popular music performers in advertisements for Coca Cola and Pepsi has been one of their principal advertising strategies. As well, most major concert tours are sponsored by beer or soft drink companies. The popular music celebrity offers the advertiser an entrée into an audience that has made a commitment to a certain entertainment product; the advertiser wants to piggyback that loyalty so that their products are seen in a cluster formation around the particular celebrity and his/her identity with definable audience. Each popular music celebrity that moves into marketing other products is selling their capital as a kind of brand loyalty to the advertising company. The advertising company then is searching for a resonating wave of brand loyalty that provides a liaison between the celebrity and the advertised commodity.

To summarise the forms of power that are held by the popular music celebrity, the close connection of the performer to his/her audience demarcates his/her power from other celebrity forms. While television has its regularity of serial performance *broadcast* to each individual home, popular music has the *physically live* communal ritual of the

concert to provide concrete evidence of their audience and their audience's support. Although film has concrete evidence of box office and audience numbers, it denies the possibility of interaction between performer and audience. The close connection and apparent commitment of the audience in popular music bestows on the popular music celebrity a connection to the power of the crowd, or more accurately, they provide for the public sphere a representation and embodiment of the crowd and the crowd's power in contemporary culture. The frenzy of the rock concert, the active play in the realm of sentiment and affect make the rock star an alluring representative of cultural power. Apart from the performer, there is a reduction of the individuals of the crowd into some organized collective force.

The popular music celebrity does possess other forms of power although these forms of power are connected symbolically to the representation of the solidarity and unitary strength of the concert crowd. S/he can achieve a certain amount of artistic freedom through the selling of massive numbers of recordings and thereby begin to construct economic capital to fit certain ends. For instance, the Beatles established their own recording company, Apple Records, to manage and produce their own artistic adventures and those of others. Madonna has organized an entire managerial team of hand-picked female executives to run her complete operation. On a much more basic level, successful performers often set up their own recording studios in their houses to facilitate their creative and productive processes. All these examples underline the way in which the celebrity reorganizes the flows of capital in the popular music industry to suit particular objectives.

The close association with his/her audience also has bestowed on the popular music celebrity a greater sensitivity on the part of performers that they are representing something, however vague that something might be. In some instances the conception of what they represent may be just that of a large group of people: often popular music celebrities are constructed to represent a generation of interests. On occasion this representation of a group of interests manifests itself more directly as a form of political power. The celebrity figure/sign operates as a way in which discourses about interests are focussed and shaped by opposing groups. In the sixties, the close connection of performers to specific political causes can be understood as the manifestation of how issues and interests of different groups of people are represented in the public sphere in the form of public individuals. The celebrity serves a simplification function, not only in their message which is channelled through the indirect form of a song, but also in the way a collective formation of will can be better comprehended and positioned when it is housed in particular public individuals.

The expression of this political power has continued to operate at the centre of popular music for the last thirty years. In some instances popular music celebrities are positioned in the public sphere as threats; Elvis in the nineteen fifties embodied a moral panic along generational lines in the United States. Other popular music stars, like Mick Jagger or later incarnations of the Beatles, were similarly constructed as public threats. The connection between popular music and youth culture has also often been articulated as a threat to the established order. The celebrity then represents the potential for societal transformation or even the catalyst for its breakdown.

The discourse of the Threat, if it can be so labelled, works not only to formulate and focus the established position, but also to congeal a community of interest that is opposed to the established position. Popular music, in its constant reformulation into new songs (which may or may not resemble past forms) represents change itself and the chaos that change could potentially produce. The popular music celebrity then is often the public representation of change. The large crowds that are associated with the performance of popular music celebrities (here we can think of the massive crowd at Woodstock and its many reincarnations since 1970) serve to substantiate the organization of power behind these representatives of change.

It is this relationship to the crowd which continues to foster political ambitions and formulations by rock stars. In the nineteen eighties, the world witnessed a proliferation of popular music events that were organized around specific issues and concerns. Bob Geldof's Band Aid and subsequent Live Aid were intended to focus world attention, support and food to help the drought-stricken regions of Eastern Africa. To marshal that support, various pop stars performed in front of massive crowds in both London and Philadelphia; it was watched simultaneously on television by an audience estimated to be in the hundreds of millions. Similar concerts, tours and albums were produced in support of other causes: Farm Aid to work against foreclosures of the American family farm; Rock Against Apartheid/Racism Sun City recording organized to help raise public support against the South African regime; Save the Rainforests political action by Sting and others; Amnesty International tour organized by Peter Gabriel and others. In every city in North America, smaller benefit events have been

and still are being organized by popular music celebrities to focus attention on a variety of social issues. The celebrities of popular music have been used as the way to organize a clear link between entertainment and issue politics. They are used both to extend the reach of the political message as well as a source of funds for the particular causes.

To conclude, there are two valuable components of the popular music celebrity that demonstrate the form of power that is part of their public subjectivity. The amount of capital that circulates in and around the popular music celebrity establishes the celebrity as powerful; however, the symbolic power that the popular music celebrity possesses is equally significant. More than other entertainment celebrities the popular music celebrity is close to a living audience and not only a living audience but one that is committed to their persona and their music. The popular music celebrity then represents the physicality of affective power of the people. In countless commercials, the popular music celebrity is used to rearticulate this affective power, where the image of crowd and its adulation is juxtaposed with the image of the celebrity and the image of the product so that the celebrity's sway over the crowd is connected to the product.

The use of music itself reinforces this concentration on the affective realm of performance and crowd. The appeal of the celebrity and his/her music is not to the rational but to the emotive and the passionate.

Conclusion: The Concept of a System of Public Subjectivity

In the preceding summaries of the formations of celebrities and the way that they represent forms of power through audience identification, I have isolated on three types of celebrities which I have connected to specific domains, technological and cultural, of the entertainment industry. The relative close relationship among these three forms of celebrity construction allowed the study to emphasize the differentiations and distinctions that are at play in the emergence and sustenance of any celebrity sign.

The complexity of the celebrity signs that emerge in the entertainment industry is difficult to unravel. I have attempted to provide clues to the ways that celebrities are differentiated and thus convey different representations of public subjectivity through a study of what kind of audience identification is privileged in each of the technological forms. In general, what has been revealed is that the three entertainment forms construct different predominant channels through which affective power is housed in the public individual. The film celebrity is organized around distance and a relatively controlled text. The television celebrity is constructed around a conception of familiarity. The popular music celebrity represents variations on the themes of authenticity and communality with the audience. Within each of the technological forms there is a range of celebrity identifications that are offered; nevertheless each is organized in relation to each of these three types of identification.

My objective in working through these specific formations of celebrity was to develop the conception that a system of celebrity is in operation in contemporary culture. In the current study, I have emphasized the process of differentiation in terms of specific

types of technologies and industries of dissemination. Each cultural form can be thought of as establishing a way in which the public individual is constructed; as well, each entertainment industry's construction of celebrities provides an interconnected subsystem of public individuals that work to form a system of entertainment celebrities. My privileging of the entertainment celebrity system is not to say that other forms of celebrity construction do not operate in contemporary culture. It is quite evident that sports celebrities, business celebrities, political celebrities and other public figures emerge and disappear with equivalent regularity to entertainment stars. However, the emergence of any celebrity depends on the various technologies of dissemination for its connection to a massive audience. For instance, both the sports celebrity and the political celebrity are at least partially constructed as significant public signs through television coverage. Entertainment celebrities provide examples of intense connections to these technologies and industries and allow us to identify most clearly the way in which public subjectivity is articulated through these forms. Certainly, the forms of public subjectivity that I have identified in this study do not provide an exhaustive archive of the way in which public personalities are formed in contemporary culture; but the study does uncover its construction in a domain that is unfettered by appeals to rationality. The entertainment celebrity plays intensely in the world of affect and affective attachment of an audience to these public signs of the individual. Where other forms of celebrity are rationalized into the disciplines from which they emerge (i.e. into the structure of rationality of business, science or politics) the entertainment celebrity allows us to see the workings of affect in the relation between a public and a celebrity.

The following chapter establishes the way in which the structures of public subjectivity that I have identified as emerging in the entertainment industries inform the production of political leadership and political culture in general. Through this extension of the constructions of public personalities into the political sphere, I hope to demonstrate that leaders, like other celebrities, perform similar functions; they are means and methods of housing affective power. The three categories of affective power that I have identified at work in the three entertainment industries' construction of celebrities will be mapped onto the organization of politics and political leadership.

SECTION THREE

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EMBODIMENT OF AFFECT IN POLITICAL CULTURE

For the sake of presumed clarity of analysis, it is the usual course of research to separate cultural activities into categories that are believed to operate autonomously. Thus, it is rare to see the domains of politics and entertainment linked in any fundamental sense. What I plan to identify in this final chapter is that there are linkages between the political and entertainment spheres. One of the critical points of convergence of politics and entertainment is their construction of public personalities. In politics, a leader must somehow embody the sentiments of the party, the people and the state. In the realm of entertainment, a celebrity must somehow embody the sentiments of an audience. These functions construct celebrities and political leaders that identify a general system for the construction of public subjectivity and conceptions of subjectivity. They are representations of the individual in contemporary culture; they do, however, represent a peculiar form of individual and individuality because of their active construction and deployment in the public sphere.

The Convergence of Public Identities in Capitalist Democracies

I have argued that there are public forms of subjectivity that are privileged in contemporary culture because they are connected to particular ends and interests in the organization of power. Within that argument, I have avoided the conception that this

organization of public subjectivity is somehow a master scheme for the subjugation of the people into accepting the powers that be. What I have tried to identify is that there has been an intensified interest in the disciplining of the mass or in its metaphorical construction, the crowd, in the last two hundred years. This intensity has worked to produce a system of celebrity which is positioned as a means of comprehending and congealing the mass into recognizable and generally non-threatening forms. Simultaneous to the emergence of the popular will and democratic constructions in government was the building of means and methods of understanding and controlling the expression of that popular will. The system of celebrity is one of the ways that the crowd/mass is housed/categorized and understood.

To categorize politicians as celebrities is to include their activities in a more generalizable project of constructing public subjectivities to house the popular will. The celebrity category also permits looking at the meaning of the politician that identifies their "affective function" in the organization of interests and issues. I am not concluding that this is the political leader's only function in politics; but it is a principal function. The affective function is also difficult to ascertain in the political sphere because of the layering of other forms of rationality that are connected to the actions of leaders. For instance, the election is constructed as a rational expression of the people's will and is positioned as such for the sake of the legitimacy of democratic governments. Without this re-presentation of the political campaign and the electoral process as rational and therefore legitimate, the very authority of democratic regimes would be severely undermined. The affective function, although being a central component of the political

leader's campaign to gain and maintain power, is obscured in the final meaning behind a shroud of rationality.¹

This paradox of political rationality is made abundantly clear in the way that political campaigns are presented for the public. Television advertisements for political candidates, as Diamond and Bates have chronicled, are often organized around the emotions of an issue rather than the development of rational debate.² As well, the use of political polling by the politician's campaign is more often than not to help create a bandwagon effect where success of the candidate is used as a kind of affective leverage to encourage others to follow with their support. Ginsberg has attempted to describe the very action of political polling of all sorts as a technique for the expansion of power and jurisdiction of government itself because results of polls can be used to indicate, with quantitative legitimacy, that a massive number of people are supportive of a particular issue, position or leader.³ In their active attempts to contain the mass in various messages and images, political leadership campaigns can be thought of as intense efforts to connect to affective power so that it can be expressed through the individual

¹The forms of rationality that are layered over the process of decision-making in contemporary democratic politics can be linked to Weber's work on types of rationality and forms of rationalization. The end-point of the political process, that is, the election of a candidate to be the leader, is layered with forms of purposive rationality which become a form of technical rationality or "instrumental rationality". What is incompatible in the development of a "disenchanted" world is the affectual realm: "Action is purposive-rational [*zweckrational*] when it is oriented to ends, means, and secondary results. This involves rationally weighing the relations of means to ends, the relations of ends to secondary consequences, and finally the relative importance of different possible ends. Determination of action either in *affectual* or traditional terms is thus incompatible with this type."^{*} What seems evident in our democratic system is the incompatibility between the general instrumental rationality which forms the ideological base of the democracy and the forms of affective legitimation that are accentuated in political campaigns. The intense play with affect in the organization of public subjectivity, including our political leaders, could be evidence of a legitimation crisis in contemporary capitalist democracies.

^{*}Max Weber, quoted in Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol. 1, Boston: Beacon, 1984 (1981), p. 168; from *Economy and Society*, Berkeley: University of California, 1978, p. 26.

For further writing on questions of contemporary legitimation and its problems see Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, Boston: Beacon, 1973.

²Edwin Diamond and Stephen Bates, *The Spot: The Rise of Political Advertising on Television*, Cambridge, Ma.: M.I.T. Press, 1988.

³Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1986.

candidate.

The two layers of political rationality of leaders, that of reasoned, rational legitimacy and a form of affective consensus building, describe the organization of contemporary political campaigns and elections. This double system of rationality has emerged in concert with another double system of rationality that is the framework of consumer capitalist culture. The lynchpin of legitimacy in consumer capitalism is the consumer. The centrepiece of contemporary political culture is the citizen. In contemporary culture, there is a convergence in subjectivity towards the identification and construction of the citizen as consumer. What this convergence entails is a reinforcement of the dual system of rationality in politics. The citizen becomes reconfigured in political campaigns as a political consumer who like any consumer must make purchasing choices between several different commodities. On one level, the consumer is constructed as ultimately rational: the entire legitimacy of the organization of markets and the discipline/science of economics is built on the conception of the rational consumer and his/her capacity to make rational selections depending on a variety of variables. Simultaneous to this conception of the consumer as ultimately rational, there is the complementary organization of the consumer through advertising as motivated by irrationality. According to historical research by Leiss et al., there has been an expansion of advertising products through irrational and emotionally charged imagery and a diminution of rational argumentation in display advertisements.⁴ The product advertising campaign provides the underlying model of the political election

⁴William Leiss, Stephen Kline and Sut Jhally, *Social Communication in Advertising*, Toronto: Nelson, 1990, pp. 281-283

campaign. Both campaigns instantiate the prominence of the irrational appeal within a general legitimating discourse of rationality. Both campaigns are attempts at establishing a resonance with a massive number of people so that there is a connection between the campaign's message and the interests of each consumer/citizen. To provide some form of connotative connection is the central objective of the advertisement and likewise with forms of promotion featured in an election campaign. The effort to provide cultural linkages between a candidate/product and a massive public is an intense play in the realm of affective power. The cultural linkages or forms of connotation that momentarily make sense are appeals beyond the domain of the rational consumer to the realm of affect which is perceived to be a more powerful and expansive way for people to make decisions. Enormous capital expenditures are made to provide the images and forms that can at least momentarily encompass the affective power of the mass public.

The convergence of a consumer capitalist discourse and the forms of political discourse transform the types of subjectivity that are constructed for both political leadership and citizenry. The leader is reconstructed as a commodity to some degree as he/she enters into an election campaign couched in the discourse of consumption choice. Also the citizen's subjectivity is reconstructed to be a variant of the consumer, that is, simultaneously constructed as a rational individual and irrational collective. The meaning of political choice is also transformed in this link between the world of consumption and politics. Consumption is also allied with the connotation of the expendability of the commodity consumed; the political commodity is either consumed, used up or, in some instances, constructed as only momentarily useful and easily

superseded or replaced. The supposed telos of this infinite manufacture of commodities and the images that surround commodities works as one of the foundations of the system of economic growth: new commodities and the consumption of new commodities provide for the circulation of capital which is equated with increasing prosperity. With the absorption of the commodity structure into the political system there is also the acceleration in the production of the images of politics. There is a concurrent production of political leadership and the production of new ways of presenting that leadership which parallel the circulation of commodities in other spheres. Politics through leadership is constructed as a game of product differentiation and the establishment of market share in the electorate. It is also constructed through the commodity structure as a system which affords a surplus of political images and leaders; in a sense, there is an overproduction of political forms even though the variations in these political forms may be within a limited range. Thus, part of the contemporary political process is the expendability of positions, issues and, ultimately, political leaders.

Two institutions of contemporary political culture, press agencies and public opinion polling, have been involved in the proliferation of a political discourse that conflates the exigencies of capitalism/the marketplace and the organization of a democracy. By looking at each of their origins and their function related to organizing public forms of subjectivity, one can identify the links between other systems of celebrity, which are more obviously connected to consumer capitalism, and the political celebrity.

The press agent's primary function is to prepare the politician for public consumption. S/He attempts to massage messages and meanings so that they are interpreted favourably by the media first and then the public itself. Press agents are involved with the organization of public appearances of the political leader, the construction of media events, and the reconstructing of events and issues in a way that augments the authority and legitimacy of the political leader. Some agents now have very specific titles which describe their role of handling the proliferation of a discourse that is seen to affect the power and prestige of the leader. Spin doctoring refers to this particular function of press agents to handle the "spin" or general direction and news angle of an issue.⁵ At other times they operate as a shield for the political leader; instead of the media being permitted to talk directly to the leader, they are given the press agent who interprets the position of the leader without the authority of the leader. The intention may be a dissipation of a threatening issue to the leader.

The press agent role articulates the efforts to control the image and representation of a political leader. The extensive development of this industry of control in the twentieth century also identifies the centrality of the political image in definitions and

⁵Here is an example of an advertisement by the political consultancy firm, Smith/Williams, that specializes in spin doctoring:

The Wind-up.

Your campaign or organization probably spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on paid media. But when it comes to free media, dealing with news outlets, you probably rely on a staffer. Think about it... all that money to buy TV and radio, but when it comes to the press ...it's usually catch as catch can.

The Fitch.

Our company focuses on free media. We can do an initial set-up. We'll help your press secretary plan and implement your campaign strategy. We can help map out a press plan for an upcoming debate. We know how to handle indictments, arrest, or a candidate that simply falls down stairs a lot.

It's in the Dirt.

Campaigns can often take unexpected turns. These turns almost always surface in the free press. Be ready for them. Be confident that you can shut them down, or milk them for all they're worth. Call us.

Advertisement published in: *Campaigns and Elections: The Magazine for Political Professionals*, 12:3, September 1991, p. 29.

meanings of legitimacy in politics. As well, in a kind of binarism, the effort to control the image betrays its opposite: that the image in its play with affect could produce uncontrollable consequences in the mass public. Canetti's metaphors concerning the nature of the crowd are apt to explain the threat perceived by political consultants in the play with affect: the "wrong" message could easily spread like a wildfire through the public sphere.⁶ In the age of democratic politics where legitimation is established by a representation of public interest through elections, the industry of public relations has grown to inhabit the political sphere and to provide a layer of meaning that envelopes most political discourse and particularly that discourse which informs the construction of political leaders.

The origins of this layering of political discourse with a form of public relations and press agency has been connected to the development of the publicity agent for the entertainment industry in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Most histories of public relations identify this direct link between the craft of the press agent and the publicity agent. Indeed, public relations tries to distinguish itself from the practice of press agents while acknowledging their fundamental link in terms of beginnings:

Most texts on public relations make a clear distinction between public relations and press agency, the former being a sober effort to inform the public and create good will, and the latter involving flamboyant and exploitative events designed to achieve space in the media with no thought of truth or sobriety. Yet, while tawdry press agency is hardly to be condoned, the press agent was

⁶See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, Trans. by Carol Stewart, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973 (1960)

clearly the precursor of the professional publicist, and some of these publicists have been responsible for the creation of interesting and frequently entertaining and contrived news events.⁷

In the American setting the acknowledged forerunner of the profession of public relations and press agent is P. T. Barnum, who in the nineteenth century constructed a series of "media events" to corral attention to his museums and/or circuses. Public relations proliferated from this origin. The craft involved, in its nascent form, two forms of knowledge that were seen to be valuable for both corporations and governments: a knowledge of the codes and practices of the media, particularly the news media, and secondly, a knowledge of the means and methods to attract the public's attention. The discipline of public relations can be understood as the bridge for both industry and government to use media forms in containing the expression of the affective power of the mass. The publicists of the entertainment world were seen to have an intuitive capacity to *know* their audience and to know how to affect their audience. The form of knowledge that they were seen to possess was translated into a structure that both industry and government could use: by the 1950s, public relations departments became standard appendages of any political party, any governmental department, and any large corporation in the United States.

A number of factors have been identified as the impetus behind the investment in this form of knowledge of the public sphere that public relations offered. For the industrial sector, the Pennsylvania Railroad disaster of 1906 was seen to be the first

⁷Charles S. Steinberg, *The Creation of Consent: Public Relations in Practice*, New York: Hastings House, 1975, p. 27.

full-fledged public relations campaign. Ivy Lee, the virtual father of public relations organized the campaign for the company: instead of suppressing information Lee transported reporters to the wreck site with company funds.⁸ In this way, the information was more controlled by the company because the public relations division was able to establish the "reality" of the event before other sources could establish credibility. The success of the campaign to mitigate the negative publicity of a human disaster caused by a corporation has been read in retrospect as the stimulus for the expansion of the profession of public relations. Corporations such as AT&T were quick to establish in-house public relations departments to shore-up their legitimacy as a virtual monopoly by the 1920s.⁹ Other large corporations followed suit in either establishing their own public relations departments or hiring consultants to manage crises of public confidence. For governments, the setting up of propaganda departments during wars led to the institutionalization of public relations into the daily control of governmental information. In the United States, George Creel set up the Committee on Public Information which served as "the first bona fide government communications program".¹⁰ According to Steinberg, individuals involved in the first world war communications program formed the nucleus of the first generation of public relations consultants for industry and government. Finally, in this official history of the origins of press agency and public relations, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was instrumental in

⁸Stanley Kelley Jr., *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958, pp.17-18

⁹Kelley p. 19.

¹⁰Steinberg, *The Creation of Consent*, p. 29.

constructing the legitimacy of public relations practices and techniques in American presidential politics and image-making. In the inexorable proliferation of the techniques, Eisenhower's 1952 presidential campaign is considered by many to be the first that was dominated by press agents and public relations. Eighty million dollars was reportedly spent in the campaign to elect Eisenhower and after his election, public relations consultant Walter Williams became a permanent staff member of the White House.¹¹

The integration of press agents and public relations into political discourse identifies the dissipation of disciplinary boundaries between various domains of the public sphere. The entertainment sphere operates as an originary source for methods of shaping public interest in other industries and politics. Moreover, distinctions between the requirements of business and industry and those of politics and government in terms of communicative strategies and efforts to control the flow and meaning of information have been dissolving as the discursive strategies of public relations have become universally applied. The public personality that is constructed in one sphere is informed by the methods and manners that a public personality has been constructed in another public sphere because of the commonality of discursive strategies that have emerged with the general rise of public relations. Political leaders, along with other public figures, are part of a general system of constructing public images that are intended to reply to the people's position as a collective power. Press agents and public relations firms have developed an expertise in reading the affective power of the populous and providing the

¹¹Kelly, *op.cit.* p. 2.

symbols that will contain that power within the current institutions.

The development of opinion polling is similarly an elaborate way to understand the mass and place their interests within the bounds of existing institutions. Public opinion polling provides the scientific evidence of what the people think; it provides the authoritative counterbalance to the less scientific craft of public relations in establishing a symbolic link between political leadership and the people (the mass).

Ginsberg's work on the origins of public opinion polls identifies their function as intimately connected to two political agendas: the expansion of state power and the institutionalization of conservative elites as natural holders of political power.¹² The progressive enfranchisement of the population not only gives the concept of consultation of the people in the form of elections, but also legitimates the expansion of the domain of the state. Elections, in Ginsberg's insightful analysis, are designed as representations of democratic will that channel political action into one of the more passive constructions of involvement. The vote works to diminish the development of active dissent that could manifest itself in a number of other forms. The sheer number of participants in the process of voting allows for governments to consider that they, in fact, represent the will of the people. Elections also serve to delegitimize other forms of political action. Historically, elections can be read as formal consultation with the crowd or the masses which work to diminish the threat of violence and other forms of civil disobedience that

¹²Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power*, New York: Basic Books, 1986.

have been traditionally the shape of resistance of the underclasses.¹³

Public opinion polling is an extension of the process of "domesticating" the concept of the mass and the power of the mass. It has been used extensively since the early part of the nineteenth century to survey the desires of different groups of the populous to determine their needs and interests. On many occasions, the opinion surveys were used to provide evidence that various labour leaders and working class representatives were not representing the interests of their union members. In the American presidential election campaign of 1896, the conservative *Chicago Tribune* polled 14,000 factory workers to prove that labourers were 80 per cent in favour of the Republican candidate McKinley as opposed to the Democrat, Bryan.¹⁴ The practice of surveying "the people" on a regular basis expanded beyond newspapers and magazines in the 19th century to include governments and numerous large corporations in the twentieth century. From the early to mid-twentieth century, virtually all of the clientele of the principal pollsters - that is, George Gallup and Elmo Roper - were aligned with the conservative end of the political spectrum.¹⁵ There are two reasons why opinion polls were more significant in the politics of the conservative elite of both business and government. Firstly, their knowledge of non-elites and working classes was limited. Without polls and with the organization of modern politics around the representation of the masses, the conservative elite knew very little about the rest of the social world that

¹³Ginsberg, *The Captive Public*, particularly ch. 2, "The Domestication of Mass Belief", pp. 32-58.

¹⁴Ginsberg, p. 78

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 79

it needed so desperately to know in order to construct common symbolic ground for the maintenance of power. Secondly, polling served to undermine the power of the labour leaders as different polls gave clear, quantitative evidence that the union members had different interests from their leaders. Because industry and government funded these various polls, the questions asked were geared to produce responses that could be used favourably by businesses against labour organizations and by governments against organized opposition movements.¹⁶ In terms of political leadership, the objective of many polls was to separate the support for a given political leader from any specific issue that might harm the support of that political leader. The ultimate achievement of this dissociation of interest and policy desires that were diametrically opposed to the political leader's position from overall approval for the leader occurred in the Reagan presidency; for several years a massive majority opposed virtually all of the major political positions of Reagan and yet an equally massive majority supported the president. An overriding link between the political leader and "the people" had been established so that unpopular policies did not necessarily threaten the politician's power and would not substantially threaten the execution of the unpopular policies.

In general, opinion polls provide a categorization of the mass, where the unknown quality of the mass can be reconfigured into something quantifiable and concrete. For instance, George Gallup's polling service spanned the needs of business and politics. For the Hollywood film industry, Gallup was used originally to determine

¹⁶Ginsberg, pp.75-80

the attractiveness of certain film titles to the mass audience.¹⁷ The company was instrumental in helping to maintain the connection between the entertainment industry and its audience. This service of providing the reading of the mass audience was also used in the political sphere: Gallup's services were commissioned by parties and media outlets to determine the popularity of political leaders. The statistical accuracy of the readings — its framing of the affective sphere into quantitative, verifiable categories — established a conception of the mass that was more real and more expansive than any interest group representation or its leadership. Polls therefore work to reinforce the politics and leaders that are already in positions of power while, at the same time, work to subvert the power of politically active groups.

The combination of opinion polling and public relations has produced an entire specialized industry called political consultancy which services the legitimization needs of political leadership. Political consultancy is the maintenance system of modern capitalist democracy: the consultant attempts, through various scientific techniques of polling and unscientific means of reading the mass public, to help establish the "cultural frames" for the election of the politician. The term cultural frames is drawn from Leiss et al.'s assessment of the function of modern advertising. They conclude that advertising helps to situate the cultural reference points for the consumption of products. The ad works to surround the product with images of well-being and of connections to culturally

¹⁷One of the earliest uses of Gallup was in test-marketing the title of the 1939 film *Gone With The Wind*. Another discovery by ARI, a division of Gallup, was that audiences prefer one-word titles. The studio can be seen in these efforts of polling to be trying to protect their investment as much as possible and thereby maximize the audience reach for their product. Polling and pre-marketing strategies for the entertainment industries are a form of investment insurance that the mass can indeed be temporarily captured. For a history of the early surveying of the audience, see Garth Jowett, "Giving Them What they Want: Movie Audience Research Before 1950" in Bruce A. Austin ed. *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics and Law*, Vol. 1, Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1985 ch. 2, pp. 19-35; on one-word titles see p. 31.

imbedded values and desires to make the product resonate with the lives of its target audience.¹⁸ Similarly, the political consultant constructs a frame for selling a political candidate to the electorate through the attachment of culturally-imbedded meaning to a particular issue or to the particular personality of a candidate. The cultural frames are structured as the support structure for the establishment of the legitimacy of any candidate to actually represent the mass public(s).

The expansion of political consultancy along with its sister professions of opinion polling, press agency, and public relations describes the development of a layer of mediation between institutions and the public. Fundamentally it is a proliferating interpretive discourse; it operates as a sense-making apparatus/technology for the organization of a capitalist-based democracy that depends on a knowledge and an inclusion at some level of the entire public. Integrated into the discourse is the organization of social and political reality into the conceptualization of the marketplace. Thus part of the interpretive discourse of political consultancy and public relations in general, is the organization of identities into the structure of commodities. The citizen is reconfigured as a political consumer; the candidates and leaders are reconstructed as political commodities. The interpretive discourse of political consultancy provides correlations between these two spheres of the political market through establishing a language of common interest.

To further extend the significance of this reconfiguration of politics, political consultancy also identifies the intense work that is pursued in contemporary culture to

¹⁸Leiss et al. *Social Communication in Advertising*. pp.327-348

maintain a connection between political and cultural hegemony. If political hegemony can be characterized as a moving consensus among various institutions and groups in society to maintain power, cultural hegemony can be thought of as the symbolic structures that are in place or developed to provide a commonality among the various groups in the society. The nation and nationhood, the family, the folksongs and culture are the most obvious examples of symbolic structures which operate as the bases of cultural hegemony. These universal experiences within a culture are used to provide linkages between disparate groups and interests. Fundamentally, these symbolic structures are techniques for establishing the very existence of a particular polity. Cultural hegemony is institutionalized in the political process at the level of leadership. Cultural hegemony is another connecting fibre for the housing of the mass public in the political process. The leader must be structured continually to correlate with this cluster of universal cultural sentiments. The leader, although institutionally an element of the political sphere, must work to embody what is perceived of as universal interest or common experience that is defined primarily in the realm of cultural life. These are mass experiences and general sentiments that cannot be seen as evidence of divisions or forms of cultural distinction. The political leader in capitalist democracies functions to wed the political hegemony to a successful characterization of cultural hegemony.

The political leader thus actively works at a form of cultural legitimation which is perceived as the means to establish contact with the mass public that is not generally part of the ruling political hegemony. Political consultancy is primarily involved with servicing this aspect of the leader's public personality. They rework cultural sentiments

so that they can be integrated into the constructed *character* of the leader.

The political leader, in terms of function and as a form of political legitimation, then is constructed in a manner that resembles other public personalities that have emerged from a variety of cultural activities. First, the political leader like the celebrity is produced as a commodity. Secondly, the symbolic content of the political leader as commodity arises primarily from the similar groundwork of common cultural sentiments. Entertainment celebrities, like political leaders are working to establish a form of cultural hegemony. The meanings of masculinity and femininity, the meaning of family, and the definition of common cultural identity are the various territorial domains upon which popular cultural celebrities navigate in their formation of public personas. Popularity, or the temporal establishment of a connection to a significant configuration of cultural symbols, is essential for both the politician and the celebrity.

In the following sections, I will establish linkages between the forms of celebrity developed in the entertainment industry and the forms and functions of political personalities. The central constructions of public subjectivity developed in the film, television and popular music industries will be mapped onto the organization of political culture and specifically the organization of political leadership. In contrast to the previous analyses of celebrity, these sections will begin from the forms of identification and construction of celebrity types that have emerged from the entertainment sphere and then will read constructed political events as techniques for the development of these forms of identification. The examples drawn for this survey of the political construction of affective forms of identification will be from recent leadership campaigns and

elections in the United States and Canada. It is not meant to be an exhaustive or all-inclusive survey; rather it is meant to indicate the way in which these forms of affective power are rearticulated in the construction of the political leader.

The construction of the Familiar and familial leader

Television provides for the political leader a site through which a politics of familiarity can be developed and constructed. In terms of Jauss' categories of hero identification television privileges this cathartic identification. I have spoken before about the regularity of television, its serialization of characters and its construction of a group of familiar faces that are structured into a pattern of repetition. On one level, the political leader must enter this system of familiar faces and familiar narratives in order to establish his/her continuing legitimacy with the mass public.

The Political Leader as News Form

Within the television apparatus, news programmes are the primary location for the production of the celebrity of the political leader. The determination of television news is shaped by several criteria that may or may not conform to the exigencies of the politician. One of the central criteria for the production of news is the identification of something new. A crises, a war, a natural disaster, and a fire are all events which are naturally newsworthy because they provide obvious representations of the extraordinary and appear to be something new.

The media event, constructed by both the aspiring and the established politician,

is a technique to constitute the politician as news. Boorstin has described these incidents as "pseudo-events", that is, events which are fabricated to attract the news apparatus for the sake of attaining airtime.¹⁹ Because of the prefabrication of these stories, television news is often quite compliant in permitting these events to be part of the newscast; instead of an investigative search for televisual stories, it is often much simpler to take what is provided by the politician which is organized to conform to the codes and conventions of what constitutes a news story. For example, Bob Graham, while campaigning for the governorship of Florida in 1978 constructed a series of events which maintained the interest of the media. In order to understand the people of Florida, he worked in various settings, as a building construction worker, a policeman, a farmer etc . As well, this campaign constructed each of the work sites where he engaged in the labour as media events. Not only was the campaign constructed into an image and slogan of an advertising campaign (slogans included "Bob Graham Worked Here" and "The Story of the Man Who Worked for Governor" and "Bob Graham: working with people"), Graham and his media consultant Bob Squier were also successful in establishing the candidate, a virtual unknown before the campaign, as a legitimate contender for election through massive exposure on nightly news.²⁰

The established political leader does not have to resort to the construction of media events nearly so often as the unknown. Instead, the Prime Minister in the

¹⁹Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*, New York: Atheneum, 1977(1961).

²⁰See Kathleen Hall Jamieson's and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's analysis of the campaign in *The Interplay of Influence: the Mass Media and their Publics in News, Advertising and Politics*. Belmont Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983, pp.233-237. Graham won his election campaign and became Florida's Governor in November 1978.

Canadian situation or the President in the United States relies on the institutional weight of the office to produce a guarantee of a certain amount of coverage. Also, the organization of television news leads to the institutionalization of reporters and camera crews to cover the leader in power. The press that is directly connected to covering the president or prime minister is a complementary institution that leads to the production of newstories that are centred on these political leaders. For reasons of cost, simplicity, and the perceived news status of the incumbent, the political leader achieves a seriality in newscasts where his image and his comments are almost assured to be presented every night. As a television performer, the incumbent political leader enters the community of familiar public personalities constructed by the continuous flow of television. S/He is an integral element in the continuous narrative of news.

Opposition leaders can also be part of the seriality of political performance on television. In terms of the codes of objectivity, the Canadian political opposition leader is often used as a means to provide the objectivity of the newscast. If the words and image of the Prime Minister are part of a story, they are often balanced by the words and image of the Leader of the Opposition. The two images of leaders often become the way in which an issue is constructed and reinforces the very limitations of the debate.

There is a further construction of the incumbent political leader which differentiates him/her from this simple televisual seriality of an organized binary opposition concerning issues. The incumbent leader can also represent a form of neutrality that allows him/her to be constructed as above the game of politics and

involved with the larger symbols of the nation-state. This symbolic function of leadership can best be observed in what are thought of as largely ceremonial affairs: a political summit, the official government welcome of a Royal Visit, or the touring of a foreign state are all examples of how the incumbent leader is positioned into a domain of perceived and constructed neutrality. Television news is very accommodating in presenting the "drama" of these ceremonies and the performance that attempts to embody the nation and its people.²¹

The Familial in the Construction of Political Leadership

The invocation of the familiar is presented in terms of deeply embedded cultural categories of legitimate power and authority. These categories of authority are genderized and placed within a familial context. The presentation of leadership often becomes represented in politics as a masculine trait. Layered on to the construction of leadership as a form of masculinity is the division of power in the family itself. The political leader then is generally painted as the father-figure for the nation and its people. It is an authoritarian presentation of leadership that invokes a form of paternalism into the organization of politics. Ronald Reagan's familiarity was variously described as avuncular and grandfatherly. In Canadian politics of the 1950s, there was an active public relations campaign to construct the aging Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent as "Uncle Louis" so that his childless and bureaucratic life could be reconstructed within

²¹For an interesting reading of the meaning and significance of these public spectacles and the way in which they shape the meaning of legitimate culture see David Chaney, *Fictions and Ceremonies*, London: Comedia, 1979.

familial boundaries of representation.²²

Positioning the political leader into the family context must be understood as working in concert with the meaning of masculinity in contemporary political discourse. Masculinity continues to connote power, control and mastery. Political leaders must demonstrate these qualities of masculinity to establish their legitimacy. In George Bush's final thirty minute campaign film shown on all three national networks on Election Eve, November 7, 1988, this combinatory construction of masculinity was presented: in the opening scenes Bush is presented as a military leader, first as a second world war hero, then as a leader reviewing the American troops in a vaguely defined Middle Eastern setting; and then in a later sequence, the militarism which can be defined as evidence of his masculine power is contextualized with a lengthy series of edited clips involving his family, his grandchildren and his wife participating in a family picnic. Within Bush's specific campaign, the combination was to reveal that Bush would be "strong", to counteract perceptions of his "wimpiness" or effeminate posturing, yet compassionate, to provide evidence that he would attempt to foster a "kinder, gentler America" than his predecessor Reagan. The family operates symbolically in this construction of political leadership as an acceptable feminized version of masculine power. To put it crudely, the family patriarch is represented as the benevolent leader whose power is tempered by his responsibilities for others. The family represents the citizens of America and is correlated with the father figure representing the natural form and style of the President. The homologous relationship between the familial and the nation, the father and the

²²*The Big Sell, CBC's The Journal*, September, 1988
Also see David Taras, *The Newsmakers: The Media's Influence on Canadian Politics*, p. 135.

political leader is a form of affective transference: the acceptability and the "warmth" conveyed by a "good" and "strong" family structure becomes a legitimate model to structure the organization of the political sphere.²³

There are countless other examples in the construction of political leadership which attempt to organize the representation of power and benevolence through codes of masculinity and codes of the family. The various members of the Massachusetts' Kennedys who have run for political office in the United States are constructed as simultaneously virile but connected to a strong family. Indeed, although John F. Kennedy has been dead for nearly thirty years, his constructed image as a youthful, virile and sexually attractive leader who was also part of a strong and cohesive family, has remained an archetype of what contemporary leadership should embody.

In the Canadian context, the 1968 election version of Trudeau implicated an extensive construction of the code of masculinity through youthful virility. His representation of leadership was positioned in clear contrast to Robert Stanfield whose image of power was hampered by his comparative lack of athletic grace and representation of youth/virility. However, in subsequent years, Trudeau's constructed image was seen to be not contained within the conception of the familial and the family. The homology of family to nation was never clearly established in the Trudeau image.

²³What is interesting to note is the acceptable way the wife of the President is also positioned into this patriarchal structure of authority. Mila Mulroney and Barbara Bush have adopted appropriate roles where they have served as chairs of various charities. When there is a transgression of these passive, social support roles, there is perceived to be a challenge to the coherence of the political leader. Examples of the unacceptable wives who do not play out the mythic sign-system of family solidarity are Maureen McTeer, the wife of former Prime Minister of Canada, Joe Clarke. Similarly, in the 1992 presidential campaign, questions about the "strength, brilliance and ambition" of Hillary Clinton are constructed as threats to the legitimacy of her husband Bill Clinton's candidacy.

Over time, Trudeau never embraced the familiar and familial constraints of representation and was thus accused of "arrogance, insensitivity and a lack of connection to the people".

Summary

Virtually every politician surrounds himself with their family at the close of any election. It is an image burned on to the collective retina of the citizenry . As well, the clichéd representation of the politician kissing the baby is yet another evocation of the manner in which the familial is central to the affective construction of the populous through the political leader. Although these connections to the familial appear to be natural they must also be seen to be techniques which provide the sentiment of a common bond with the people. The unknownness of the electorate is shaped with these rather simple symbols of commonality to a certain political meaning that is connected to the meaning and significance of the leader. Power becomes articulated through a masculine code that is positioned in terms of national interest through the family structure.

Similarly, familiarity is essential for the political leader to achieve and maintain power. The regularity of news and the seriality of the leader's images ensures that the leader becomes the focal point for the organization of political sentiment. The television apparatus symbolically embodies the electorate in its audience construction. The mass television audience may not be identical at any moment; however, its symbolic representation as the mass and thus the public sphere is nevertheless continuous. The

leader's regular appearance in the structure of the flow of television establishes, at the very least, a semblance of connection to this massive citizenry and, at the very most, commonsensical status of legitimacy as a public personality who represents the political sphere.

The Political Leader and the Construction of Solidarity

The political leader's image must also be attached to representations of the people in order to legitimize the conception of mass embodiment. In the preceding analysis of the production of popular cultural celebrities this connection to the crowd, in all its physicality, is privileged in the organization of popular music celebrities. Politicians are similarly involved with representations of intimate connections with a fragment of the mass that is affectively deeply involved with the candidate and the candidate's message. One can see this construction of solidarity in a number of settings in the display of the political leader. In televised images of the campaign, there are attempts to shape the images so that the daily scene of a crowd of people attempting to shake hands with the candidate are everpresent. Once again, these images often become clichés of campaigns and lose their affective power of establishing the conception of massive support: the candidate shaking hands and talking to workers at the factory gate; the ubiquitous image of the candidate addressing a hall of supporters in different locales; the persistent attempt to construct an intersection of a campaign stop and a crowd scene organized by another event or setting such as a county fair, a crowded shopping mall or a popular sporting event. Nevertheless at a symbolic level, all these settings work to establish the

connection that the leader has to the "common" people.

In contemporary politics in North America, the political convention serves as one of the best examples of how the leader attempts to establish the message of solidarity with a group of voters. At a number of levels the convention provides symbolic evidence of committed support. What follows is an analysis of the political convention and its significance in the construction of the legitimacy of the democratic political leader.

The Significance of the Participants: The Remaking of the Power of the Crowd

The participants in North American political conventions are a highly constructed representation of the public sphere. Each party has an elaborate process for the selection of delegates. In the United States they are selected through presidential primaries and are thus committed to specific candidates before their arrival at the convention site. Canadian political parties, although several are currently reevaluating and transforming the process of their election of party leader, select delegates at the riding association level who are forwarded to the national or provincial convention. Unlike their American counterparts, they are less committed to any particular candidate; what they are more committed to is the institution of the party itself. In all cases, the delegates represent the mass, the people and the people's will in a highly partisan and committed fashion.

The convention delegates collectively are the representation of an active democracy. Where the election represents the formation of individual decision-making through the isolation of the vote and the protection of anonymity in the casting of the vote, the convention is a celebration of a collective commitment to a candidate/leader

and of blatant forms of support. It is the invocation of the crowd as a symbol of massive support and democratic will. The convention is also an attempt to channel the crowd's power into leadership; the uncontrollability of the crowd's affective power is directed towards the leadership candidates each of which houses the emotion, commitment, and affection of different groups on the convention floor. The convention thus operates as an institution that represents the rationalization of the potential irrational democratic polity.

The symbolic function of the convention participants is ultimately a constructed spectacle of participation. Ostensibly the focus of the television cameras is on the stage of the convention, where leaders present their speeches and where the votes of each ballot are announced; however, this would represent a nonsensical level of staging without the convention crowd. Thus, the television text of the convention is a series of shot-reverse shots between the stage and images of the delegates. Members of the convention crowd are the arbiters of support. The television commentators work to decipher the meaning of the crowd through the size of demonstrations, the number of signs, the volume of applause, and support for each candidate. It is a competitive game of competing collectivities of the crowd who attempt to establish the overwhelming mass of support for each candidate. The delegate demonstration for each candidate in Canadian conventions is highly orchestrated. At the June 1990 federal Liberal convention, several of the candidates employed bands to lead the entourage of enthusiastic supporters. At the centre of these convention floor spectacles, where the sound, images and movement of the supporting delegates would occupy up to thirty

minutes, the candidate him/herself would slowly make their way to the stage and podium. Indeed, the size and length of each of these demonstrations of support would become the focus of television commentary to determine resolutely the relative levels of support for the various candidates.

In these moments of massive crowd support the actual candidate is subsumed by the representation of the power of the crowd. In a sense, the separation between the crowd of supporters and the candidate is for the moment indiscernible. The leader is constructed to emerge from this massive support to assume its mandate in his/her arrival at the stage. This unity of the crowd and the political candidate, the momentary lack of separation, is similarly constructed as a form of public subjectivity in the popular music industry. The convention supporters can be translated into fans. The loyalty for the particular performer parallels the sensation of blind loyalty to the particular candidate at the convention. The crowd in both instances is part of the meaning of the public personality. The use of a particular music to herald the arrival of the candidate at the convention hall also is a signal of the momentary movement of political legitimation to this realm of affect and emotion. For the Steve Langdon campaign for the NDP leadership in 1989, Tracey Chapman's "Talking about a Revolution" was adopted as the theme song. Whenever Langdon was about to speak or had just finished speaking the song was played so that an indissoluble union between the emotive song about social change and Langdon's campaign was established.

Within the parameters of the convention hall, the various stylized and emotively overt demonstrations of support serve the function of establishing the credibility of the

candidate as popular and capable of engaging the general public in this competitive game of collective sentiment. It has become a distinction of leadership to be able to generate a form of hysteria that can be controlled and channelled into an image of a particular leader. Max Weber would have called these elaborate rituals of establishing the legitimacy of leaders as a form of institutionalized charisma.²⁴ In any case, the displays of the convention crowd are displays of strength as they are manifested in these signs of numbers, volume and apparent commitment of people.

The meaning of the convention crowd for the general political culture is specifically one of democratic spectacle. The images of the convention are mediated by television and television news to be constructed into narratives of the operation and function of democratic politics in contemporary culture. There are two forms of identification that are placed before the television viewer. First there is the identification that the convention delegates actually represent the various groups and interests of the society. Various policy programmes have been in place in several of the parties in North America to ensure that a cross-section of ethnic groups, gender and race are represented in the pool of delegates chosen. The television cameras survey these constructions of difference and distinction and display quite effectively the representation of diversity in their images of the convention delegate crowd. The party convention thus works to represent symbolically the people. In this symbolic representation, there is also a defined performative act of the people: the people as convention crowd are situated to present their significance in terms of displays of affect and emotion. The politically

²⁴Weber, *op. cit.* see pp.37-39, 93-95 of the dissertation.

active convention crowd is constructed to respond not so much in a rational way but in an emotive way. The convention crowd's reaching for a consensus in the choice of a political leader is a collective reaching for an emotional gestalt; the chosen leader embodies the features and characteristics of leadership that are teased away from the issues and political positions so that an intense form of legitimation of leadership *in and of itself* can be enacted. The convention crowd as the representation of the citizenry/electorate then is called on to perform a very isolated function in the political process: to define leadership and elide the concept of leadership from other forms of issues and rationality.

Secondly, the television audience is also called on to identify with the leader, specifically the leader that is chosen. In Canadian political leadership conventions, where a greater number of candidates usually appear on the convention ballot than in the American system, the process of selection is a progressive series of elimination of the weakest candidate until one candidate receives an absolute majority of delegate votes. The televisual spectacle establishes the domain of choice for the viewer amongst these candidates and thereby structures for the period of the political convention that the array of choice represents the political spectrum. The difference between the highly selected party delegates and the general population is temporarily backgrounded while the competitive spectacle of the leadership candidates is foregrounded to define political difference. The interest of the audience is once again transposed in the televisual presentation to an intense focus on the defining characteristics of leadership. The narrative is structured to solve the enigma of who will actually win the leadership, where

the viewer and the panels of experts and pundits employed by the television networks attempt to decipher the most likely choice.

The American mainstream political conventions are rarely fora for the production of competitive political spectacles. The primary system of election works to eliminate contenders until by the time of the convention, the outcome is virtually assured. The convention spectacle then tends to move quickly to the establishment of unanimity. The integration of former opponents into the orb of the chosen leader, the establishment of consensus through images and scenes of rapprochement (through the selection of the vice-presidential candidate), the invocation of an historical tradition of leadership, and the integration of the current leader into a form of legitimate succession of leadership are all examples of the active attempt to represent a forming consensus. The convention crowd and the television audience are positioned to be witnesses of the significance of the presidential candidate by their sheer numbers. The convention delegates are again the representation of the people and are used to express in the most visible and graphic way the way in which the chosen presidential candidate commands the adulation and support and emotive commitment of a massive number of people. The crowd's solidarity with the message of the political convention and the message of the leader, their virtual unflinching devotion to the chosen one, stand in for an active citizenry.²⁵

To summarize the meaning of political conventions, they are principally involved in the establishment of the affective solidarity between a leader and the people. Unlike

²⁵A good interpretation of the organization of the spectacle of American political conventions and a reading of the dual role of the convention as a forum for establishing party solidarity and conveying that solidarity in a televised form is Byron E. Shafer, *Bifurcated Politics: Evolution and Reform in the National Party Convention*. Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 226-289.

other representations of the legitimacy of the leader, the convention is structured to underline this link between the crowd and the leader. The physical presence of support, the proximity of the leader to the crowd, and the emotive outpouring from the convention crowd for the leader are all significant in establishing this fundamental connection between the modern political leader and his/her audience. This capacity to house the crowd is the very core of the legitimizing process of political leadership. The leader works to embody in the convention what could be described as democratic sentiment. Their form of public subjectivity must project this capacity for affective attachment.

The control of collective affect which emerges from this process of the legitimation of political leadership also works to define the parameters of power of the political leader. The democratic moment is defined as affective and is organized as such; as a result, this primary construction of political representation of leadership is partially elided from the rational and in its connection to the democratic is increasingly defined by the irrational. For the organization of government, the leader establishes a social bond with the people. The basis of choice in the bureaucracy which supports the government is built on a system of rational selection on the basis of merit. The articulation of the democratic moment in terms of affect and sentiment makes the selection of the leader susceptible; the selection process escapes the rationality of a meritocracy. Thus the solidarity that the leader establishes works simultaneously to deflate his/her power expressly because it is separated from the ideology of rationality that forms the basis of value in contemporary culture. The ideology of rationality

expresses itself in human form in the concept of merit. The organization of leadership conventions and their connection to collective sentiment challenges the basis by which merit is established for individuals. The convergence between the celebrity's power (particularly here the popular music celebrity) and the political leader's power can now be identified more directly. The modern celebrity is constructed on the basis of a relationship with the people and is dismantled because that relationship to the people is seen to be disconnected from merit, skill and what are perceived to be traits of individual value. In their election to be public personalities, the political celebrity and the entertainment celebrity are structured to be perpetually vulnerable.

To understand this vulnerability, it is useful to connect public subjectivity to a hierarchy of cultural value that is generally described as "taste".²⁶ The forms of mass culture and mass entertainment are positioned at the lowest end of the hierarchy of taste and value. Individuals who emerge from these domains then are tainted with the construction that they are unsophisticated individuals whose appeal is to base and undeveloped tastes. Their appeal is not to some level of abstraction or an aesthetic, but what may be described as verging on raw sentiment and affection. In contrast, the organization of the higher arts of serious musical, artistic or intellectual production produces identifiable artists, geniuses and innovators; in this sphere the characteristics of individuality are established as universally valid. There are demonstrable standards, levels of skill and expertise that must be met or in evidence in order to achieve a public status in these domains. However, in the domain of popular cultural production the

²⁶My reading of taste differentiations is derived from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: The social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, 1984

same criteria are not in place to establish clearcut evidence of the superiority of the chosen public individual. Their exalted position as public personalities is their capacity to win the affection of a crowd or an audience, a form of skill that is believed to be unrelated to individual superiority. Likewise, the politician's legitimacy as a public personality is expressed in this same capacity to sway the mass audience. Neither form of public subjectivity, because of this connection to the mass, is naturally or automatically connected to the higher values of individuality.

Thus, the capacity of a political leader to be solidly connected to a crowd is a circumscribed construction of power that resembles the forms of power that the popular cultural celebrity possesses. To expand beyond this construction of embodying the crowd/electorate, political leadership must actively invest in connecting to these higher qualities of individuality. The following section attempts to unravel the way in which the leader must also construct an aura and a distance to sustain their legitimacy as political leaders, and to sustain their right to human agency.

The Profilmic Text of Political leadership: Establishing the Aura

As I have discussed in previous chapters, the film star is constructed to be at the pinnacle of the celebrity hierarchy. The clear distinction in types of celebrity is a form of binarism between the television star and the film star. The television star, because of his/her familiarity is constructed as more common, more related to the everyday. The long history of stardom surrounding the film industry, its establishment of a canon and a recognizable aesthetic criticism and its attempts to differentiate its production of

celebrity from that of television has led to a production of stars who have a greater distance from their audience. Their power is partially constructed through the fabrication of this distance between their image and personality and their audience. I have previously grouped this form of celebrity construction around the term aura as Benjamin has used it. In addition, I have linked this celebrity construction to Jauss' heroic emulatory identification to describe the way in which audiences are structured to read the various texts that surround the film celebrity.

This construction of aura and distance that is embodied in the film celebrity category is the form of public subjectivity that is also invested in the political leader. Not only must leaders embody the crowd, they must also attempt to distance themselves from that embodiment in order to legitimize their differentiation from the crowd, the mass or the public. In political culture, the hierarchy that the film industry actively works upon to create is at least partially in place. Political leadership implies hierarchical relationships where authority and responsibility can be thought of as progressively moving up a pyramid to its apex. The pyramid's apex represents the leader, the ultimate point of decision-making and power.

However, in the structure of legitimation in a democratic polity, the concept of leadership is a permanent problematic. Without going into great detail of this paradox of democracy, it is quite obvious that leadership entails inequality as opposed to equality. The leader has more power, more influence and more resources than other people. One of the key symbolic processes that must be accomplished in the organization of a democratic political culture to maintain its rationality is that the institution of leadership

itself is legitimate and permanent. Political leadership not only embodies the crowd, but also must embody simultaneously a virtual authoritarian legitimacy of difference that is deserving of its status. An element of this transfer of power to specific individuals can be understood in Weberian terms of the institutionalization of charismatic authority: the office of the president or prime minister carries a certain aura that because of its connection to an institution and tradition can be transferred from one individual leader to his/her successor. In symbolic terms, the President, for example, becomes an instantiation of the Presidency, the office and the tradition. The institution of the presidency carries the semiotic weight of connotations of past presidents which helps establish new presidents as "presidential", where presidential refers to their legitimacy to exercise power. There is a great deal that is imbedded in the symbolic construction of the presidency or prime ministership as an institution which helps connect the connotation of leadership to a consideration of the people. There is also a great deal imbedded in the sign of the presidency or prime ministership which celebrate these two institutions' ultimate power. Each individual leader negotiates the two terrains of legitimation of leadership. The leader must provide evidence of familiarity while providing evidence of exceptionality and hierarchical distance. A successful model for these apparently contradictory representations for political legitimation is provided in the construction of the film celebrity. The film star provides evidence that he/she is in fact connected to his/her audience: box office returns and fan mail help to quantify this connection. At the same time the film star, as we have detailed, has constructed an aura through distance from the audience. Similar strategies of constructing a public

personality are in operation in the construction of the political leader.

Constructing Narrative Distance

The relationship between the narrative of film and the star is emulated in the construction of the political leader. Part of the film star's public persona is contained within the film narrative and the film's character. The film characterization essentially has a certain closure and distance. There is a tension and a resultant enigmatic quality to the film star in the separation between character and the 'real-life' star. What is fundamentally constructed from this tension is a play with information and knowledge about the film personality. The distinctive quality of the film star is built on the control of knowledge about the star beyond the filmic text and within the audience a desire to know more. The political leader is often constructed to express this narrative distance in public appearances. One of the most common patterns for establishing this narrative distance that works to separate the audience/citizenry from the activities of the political actors is the televised images of what could be described as the silent leader. In attempting to cover the news of the president or prime minister, television news often presents the image of the leader without his voice and in its place a reporter's narration of events. The constructed "private" consultations with foreign dignitaries are presented in the silent form: we see the leaders conversing but we are not permitted to hear their conversation. There is a separation of their role as political actors and agents and the audience's role as viewers and witnesses. A hierarchy of significance is reinforced by the use of the silent images of actions and conversations, where what we cannot hear is

believed to be of ultimate significance and consequence. The silence also establishes an enigmatic quality to the leader's persona; the reporter's voice-over is then an element in attempting to solve the enigma of the leader's actions. The viewers are drawn into attempting to solve the occulted domains of political action in the same way the audience is drawn into the film narrative by the enigma and mysteries of the plot and character. Finally, the silence establishes in the name of security that there is a private world of action in the public sphere of political leader, a domain that is impenetrable to the citizen viewer.

The apparent impenetrability of the leader's private world of decision-making is the driving force behind two types of narrative construction. News reporting of political leaders can be interpreted as the constant quest to solve the enigma of political action. In television news in particular, the reporter's narration is the layering of coherence on the images of the leader which often on their own cannot present coherence in the context of a 30-second or two-minute story. A narrative of political action is at least partially resolved in each of these newstories into a simple code of action. A description of the actions of the leader are presented as the facts of the day's events as the leader is used to embody the sphere of politics for television news. The sound-bite, which can be described as the moment in the structure of leadership reporting on television (or radio) when the leader's silence is broken, becomes the object of intense investigation, editing and work. For the managers of leaders, there is an active attempt to orchestrate what is chosen as the sound-bite in order to control the public image of the leader; the television news gatherers are on a similar quest of discovering the moment which

provides the most revelatory utterance of the meaning of the political leader or the meaning of his/her political actions. The sound-bite then operates as the momentary conduit between the public and private sphere of political action. In its status as the revelatory agent, the brevity of the sound-bite also maintains the enigmatic quality of the separate and hidden sphere of political leadership and the constant effort to reveal the machinations of political power.

The second form of narration that is driven by the impenetrability of private sphere of political actors and agency is the reconstruction by the audience/viewer. Television news provides the material for establishing a narrative of politics. Political leaders, in this reconstruction, become leading characters in a continuously unfolding drama. Indeed, leaders provide the anchors on which the narrative is constructed. The audience's relationship to these televisual texts of leaders can be thought of as voyeurs who recognize the inability, or possibly, the absurdity of crossing into the text as (political) actors. The distance of the actions, the employment of the code of action, and the maintenance of the aura of the private sphere of political action work to position the viewer/audience as a witness and not a participant. Television news and its focus on political leaders is positioned like the film narrative. The audience watches the news with the hope that there is some resolution of the dramatic tension which will emerge immanently and not actively engage the viewer in action. In a sense, this relationship to politics by an audience works to maintain the aura and legitimacy of the various political actors.

There are other events and situations which work to establish and maintain the

aura of the leader through a sealed narrative. Inaugurations, political summits, the formal speech given at the close of political conventions, and national television addresses all establish the distance and distinction of the office and the event into the meaning of leadership. Televised news reports, at least in their live versions, are overwhelmed by the constructed narrative of the event or ceremony itself. The chaos of the press conference is eliminated in these ceremonial narratives. The leader is permitted to adopt the conventional code of leadership unencumbered by interventions and interruptions of the public or the crowd.²⁷

The Controlled and Constructed Leader: Campaign Films and Advertisements

The most obvious source for the construction of the aura of leadership is seen in campaign advertisements. From the point of view of the production of political leadership, the advertisement allows for the greatest control of the meanings of a political leader with the elimination of their mediation by news reportage.²⁸ The advertisement is a sealed visual and oral text that provides a coherent frame for the

²⁷The press scrum symbolically represents the crowd in most television news. Here we have the instantiation of chaos, the expression of uncontrollable will to know, to decipher the meaning of leadership as well as the unabashed connection to the crowd/public and the leader. Ceremonies structurally eliminate, through the institution of protocol, this crowd-like intervention into the proceedings. They work to construct the leader as rising above the mass and operating in a narrative that is entirely distinctive from that mass. Indeed, its power as a narrative of legitimacy is tied to this separation.

Interestingly, in both Canada and the United States there have been active attempts to control the press scrum and to regulate the press conference. Trudeau banned the scrum on the steps of the House of Commons and organized news conferences on his terms. Likewise in the United States, to save Reagan from the confusion of press conferences, the audience was seated and a rough order of who would be allowed to ask questions was instituted. In both cases, the elimination of the scrum and the unruly press conference were techniques to "ceremonialize" the access to the leader. For a review of the formalization of the press scrum see Colin K. Seymour-Ure, "Prime Ministers, Political News and Political Places in Canada", *Canadian Public Administration*, 32(2), Summer 1989, pp. 311-319. Also see David Taras, *Newsmakers*, pp. 72, 128.

²⁸This is not to imply that some direct path of influence is established to the viewer/citizen through the advertisement; such is not the case. The point here is that advertisements, as elements of a system of meaning, are constructed as if they could have this direct persuasive impact.

meaning of the particular candidate. It is a constructed vehicle for the containment of political messages about the individual candidate, where the candidate is circumscribed within a refined and defined text. These qualities of the contained leadership text which make the function of the political advertisement resemble the film's functional construction of the film celebrity.

The staging of the political advertisement often demands that the political leader "act". In the first series of televised American presidential campaign advertisements, Eisenhower had to play the role of responding to the questions of the people. In the *mise-en-scène*, the questions were of course predetermined; indeed, the questioners were also chosen to "represent" the electorate. Even Eisenhower's responses needed extensive retakes and editing. In its final version, there appear to be instantaneous responses by Eisenhower to the posed questions.²⁹ The significance here is not that there is an integration of acting and therefore falsification of what or who the candidate really is. At some level, political rhetoric has always possessed a dramaturgical component. What is more important is that the television advertisement feeds into the proliferating discourse of the identification of the authentic "private" person. The constructed nature of the image, the distinctiveness that is encoded into the image of the candidate works to intensify debate around the aura and the attempts to breakdown the aura of leadership. The modern politics of aura and distance is drawn into the constant search for the politics of the personal and the intimate so that the portrayed image can somehow be matched by the "real" activities of the individual candidate. In the same way, the film

²⁹Eisenhower commercials are one of the most written about in the history of political advertising. See Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency*, ch. 5, or Diamond and Bates, *The Spot*, 1984, pp. 51-60.

celebrity is constructed between his/her filmic aura and how that intersects with his/her everyday behaviour, the political leader becomes the object of scrutiny not so much on policies but almost in terms of personal habits. The momentary breakdown of the aura of the president allows for the transgression of the "presidential" which is read in this new politics as a moment when the "individual" surfaces and reveals his/her true self and the way in which they govern. The principal difference between the film celebrity and this transgression into the personal and the politician and their revelations of their private sphere is that the politician must maintain the conception of a continuity between the public presentation of self and the images of the private self. On the other hand, the film celebrity, in order to establish their distinctiveness from the apparatus and to concretize their ultimate form of autonomy must transgress the type that they have established. In contrast, the politician is overcoded into type. The politician's autonomy and power is built on their ability to establish the similitude of the meaning of the office with their meaning and demeanour in the private sphere: their individuality must be compatible with their public role and persona to the point where there is a natural link made between the individual and the office.

In the development of television political advertisements of political leaders in North America a gradual concentration on the establishment of an individual character profile of the leader can be identified. The advertisements have been organized to present connections between an idealized representation of the leader and the utopian conceptions of a society. Or alternatively, in negative campaign advertisements an entire dystopian vision is created of the other candidate and the other possible future world.

Both types of advertisements represent intense investments in the construction of the political character and personality. From those constructions, the personality profile has become the primary means to assess the future actions of the candidate. The indeterminacy of the future is temporarily positioned through the campaign advertisements into these vague affective categories of hope and faith in the leader. The form and format of campaign advertisements vary a great deal. For instance, their length varies from the thirty- and sixty-second spots that can be inserted into the normal flow of commercial television in the United States and Canada to the two standard longer versions of four minutes and twenty seconds and the half-hour profile advertisements. The spot advertisements are generally attempts by candidates to establish linkages and connotations between their candidature and a particular sentiment concerning an issue. Tony Schwartz's classic "Daisy" advertisement sought to link the general fear of nuclear war to the apparent trigger-happy candidacy of the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater. Without mentioning names or using images of recognizable people, and through using a voice-over of President Johnson, the ad was an attempt to resonate with the cultural trepidation that followed the Cuban missile crisis with having a president appear to be too willing to use nuclear weapons. The ad begins with an image of a young girl with a daisy and ends with the mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion. This 1964 technique of providing a form of cultural resonance in the structure of brief advertisements has been emulated in countless generations of spot advertisements. The candidate is linked to a particular sentiment and in this way attempts to solidify the

support of significant portions of the electorate.³⁰

The longer versions of advertisements which Devlin identifies in his reading of campaign advertisements as profile ads, establish very clearly a filmic code of character for the candidates. Bush's election-eve half hour film, shown on the three principal American television networks provides an excellent example of the way in which the filmic code of the control of the public personality is engaged in the political sphere. I will use this text to summarize the construction of filmic aura for the politician.

To begin, the quality of the image of Bush's final commercial message of the 1988 campaign sets it apart from the organization of live television and news television, the normal places that a presidential candidate is seen. Two-thirds of the thirty-minute commercial had been recorded on film as opposed to video. As a result, the images appear to be richer, the colours deeper and luxuriant than the "flatter" feeling of the videotaped image. In terms of form alone, the advertisement is a deeper image, the same way that the film star through its reproduction on film is a richer image than the videotaped image of the television star. The significance of this technical differentiation of image for the political image of the candidate is similar to its significance in the organization of the entertainment industry: the filmic code of production connotes quality and in that evocation of quality also establishes a hierarchy with the televisual

³⁰ "The Bear in the Woods" spot used in the 1980 Reagan campaign has become famous for establishing a mood that rivals the Daisy ad. Without using the image of Reagan and substituting an image of a roving Bear, the voice-over highlighted the threat of the Soviet Union to the United States way of life. The ad was structured to resonate with certain cultural connotations that a weak leader would allow the Soviet "Bear" to dominate the West. Reagan's strength was juxtaposed with the careful technocratic style of Jimmy Carter. The binarism of strength versus strength in global relations was linked to the candidacy of Reagan.

Similarly, the negative ad campaign against Dukakis in the 1988 campaign that linked the parole release of convicted killers to the softness of Dukakis could also be read as an attempt to establish cultural connotations and sentiments about the relative strengths of leaders. It is interesting to note the way in which strength has been naturalized as a quality of the right and conservative politics. In contrast, the technocratic and cautionary has been constructed as a symbol of leadership "naturally" from the left. For readings of these advertisements see Diamond and Bates, pp. 127-133, 25-30 and L. Patrick Devlin *Political Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, 1987 ch. 18.

image. The filmic code of quality then is used in the campaign film to establish a legitimacy and a significance for the political candidate. To establish "presidentialness", the connection to the most superior technological form is desirable because it places all other representations as inferior and therefore of questionable legitimacy. The election is a form of competition; in the United States it is constructed into a clear binarism in presidential elections. Cultural linkages between the candidate and other representations of distinction and quality aid in this game of product distinction.

The filmic code, as discussed above, is a permissible site for the shaping of reality into a narrative. In contradistinction to television news, where narratives are supposed to match conceptions of reality in terms of time, space and causality, the filmic code allows for the more active and open shaping of a message and reality. For the campaign film, the shaping of reality entails constructing the political character from a wide variety of sources and contexts that do not necessarily follow causally or temporally. The organization of the political image of the candidate is subject in this form to massive amounts of editing. Bush's film is a massage of various images of Bush that are edited to provide not information concerning Bush's position on the issues, but rather a feeling for the man and his integrity. The film is organized into three nine-minute segments: the first is background on the man; the second segment focusses on the campaign; the third eliminates the filmic and is simply a televised and apparently live address to the nation.

There is a montage effect in the opening profile segment. However, it is not a montage where the meaning is left to float aimlessly to be situated by the audience;

rather a rich male voice-over narration works to guide the viewer through the various highly edited segments shown. The narrator, specifically because he is not the presidential candidate speaking, functions also as the complementary voice of the president. He provides much of the material that would be considered to be too immodest for the candidate to say himself. Indeed, the opening segment is a carefully developed film that establishes the personality of the president, first through a series of stills and action shots of Bush in various roles - as a military hero, as a family man, as a statesman reviewing foreign troops - and then builds on these narrated segments through various testimonials of family members or anonymous citizens of his integrity. Family members are constructed as the witnesses of the true and real George Bush. We learn from George Bush Jr., as his wife sits passively supportive beside him, that his father is "the most thoughtful person I know... He's famous for writing letters and phoning. This is true George Bush." He concludes his revelation of his father with a vignette:

I can remember campaigning in Cooperstown New York and the night bellman of the hotel walked up to me and said I have a memento that I treasure and it was from Dad, that said thank you for getting a suit pressed at an unusual hour and George Bush is that way.

Another son, Jeb, reaffirms that Bush "can be very nice" and then goes on to explain that "but in a competitive setting no one is going to outhustle him or outwork him. He is just tenacious, extremely tenacious". The testimonials continue at what appears to be a family picnic: Neil Bush explains the importance of getting the "families together" once a year and that the gathering, with "Gampy"[Bush] driving the wedges and building

the tent, is "a tradition that is really special". Doro Bush Le Blond provides further evidence of his caring in another family anecdote:

I was sitting at home and just watched this fiery interview with my dad and I'll never forget it because I was on the edge of my seat and I couldn't believe it and the phone rings and it's Dad and he says, Doro, I just had to call you -Is your car okay? I heard your car broke down - and I said Dad! You just had this wild interview! But that's typical of my father because he doesn't think of himself; he thinks of other people at times you know he has the most pressing things on his mind and the whole country is watching and crazy over it and he thought of me."

His wife Barbara Bush provides the ultimate explanatory narrative about the candidate Bush that pieces the affective dual attachments surrounding the Bush candidacy; gentle yet firm:

It's a wonderful thing to have your husband behave like that [talk warmly about their "strong family" in the presidential candidates' debate]. He doesn't get furious or, it's not to say he doesn't get mad or his adrenalin doesn't flow because his adrenalin flows.

In an earlier segment Barbara explains that "I think the reason he has done so very well is he's not a fella who reacts to thing; he acts. He doesn't get upset. He is a quiet man and he does hear people and then he makes up his own mind. And I think that's what people are seeing..."

Barbara Bush is positioned in the film to provide the final and thus most intimate and complete portrait of Bush the candidate. The family members give the audience various character profiles that connect to Barbara's ultimate assessments of the man. In these edited sequences what is constructed is a sensation of a growing accord about the

man from the various sources that is unified through the seamless construction of family images, slow motion pictures of a smiling and warm Bush, the smiling faces of various archetypally displayed Americans and the overcoded display of the "innocence" and thus faith of the Bush grandchildren in George Bush.

Functionally, and in the best possible light, the insights provided by these character profiles are insights for the audience/citizenry to understand the way in which decisions will be made by the future leader. Although the audience learns about Bush through these testimonials, the film ensures that there is a certain elusiveness to the man. Our contact is through these various intermediaries, so that the image of Bush remains above these witnesses; his actions are ultimately more significant. When Bush does speak it is framed most frequently in the standard forms of public address: we see the beginnings of a speech, the fragments of a candidates debate, the carefully edited sequence of answers to citizens' questions. In all of these forms of address the public Bush is maintained. Within the structure and meaning of the film, the testimonials are used to connect the private and the public sphere of Bush to establish that there is continuity between these two spheres. The family members operate as "witnesses" for the audience of what Bush would be like as President when and where much of the political process will be hidden and veiled behind such concepts as national security. It is a filmic reconstruction of the process of witnessing that is essential to the construction of democratic politics. The film works therefore to provide revelatory moments about Bush while simultaneously sustaining the heroic distance of the man from this everyday world — his public image and character are buttressed through these momentary private

revelations.

Much like the narration, music provides signposts for the organization of the meaning of the filmic text. The use of a virtually continuous background/foreground musical soundtrack also establishes the clearly filmic quality to the construction of character; it is a break from the way in which news presents personalities. In contrast, the music helps to link the presentation of the political personality to the building of a leading film character. It washes over the various commentaries in the campaign film to establish the fundamental interconnectedness of the comments, images and the candidate. Where a great deal of visual editing has been carried out in the production of the film, the musical soundtrack sutures and stitches the narrative into something that gives the sensation of a seamless fabric.

There are moments when the music builds to a dramatic crescendo; from the sparse high register piano accompaniment of most of the commentaries an occasional crash of a full orchestral wave punctuates the heightened affective moments of the text. In the most rhetoric-filled speech-bite culled for the film, the orchestral wave builds simultaneously:

I say it without boast or bravado: I've served, I've built, and I'll go from the hills, to the hollows, to the cities, to the suburbs, to the loneliest town on the quietest street to take our message of hope and growth for every American to every American moving forward, always forward. This is my mission and I will complete it.

The music makes the meaning, providing the tension and the resolution of the phrasing so that its emotive impact is heightened. In concert with a series of images of smiling Americans, the campaign film attempts to provide an emotive connection between the

nation, the people and the candidate. The music moves to its resolution and, as Bush evokes his "mission", we are visually guided through a series of sepia-toned images of suburban Americans; various ethnicities are faded in and out sequentially building to idyllic scenes of children. The music, in concert with the images is meant to provide an inclusive space within the meaning of the presidential candidate. Bush can embody the various desires and aspirations of Americans for those aspirations are fundamentally the same.

To express the speed and energy of campaigning the music abruptly moves from the relatively serene piano music to frantic-paced fiddle music. The use of American fiddle music (orchestrally produced however) is to evoke the folk quality of the candidate, his innate connection to the people. The fiddle music constructs the scenes of Bush trying to shake hands in the classic mainstreeting fashion. What the musical and the film sequences emphasize is the accessibility of the president, the lack of distance of the public individual from common people. The massive security which usually surrounds a presidential candidate is absent virtually in these carefully culled silent images of a smiling Bush.

Music also becomes foregrounded in the final two minutes of the film. In fact, an entire country and western patriotic song is played to images of the President campaigning and being presidential. "I'm Proud to be an American" attaches the Bush candidacy to several forms of affective attachment. Country music first connotes an indigenous form of popular culture that is seen to be authentic to the values of American family culture. Indeed, the lyrics of the song emphasize the importance of family and

its centrality to American values. As well, the song evokes the authenticity of country music as genuine to American emotions. The song is an attempt to establish cultural linkages between the recent past in the construction of the symbolic president and the current incarnation in the presidential candidate Bush. The populist simplicity of Reagan is echoed in the declaration of the song:

*I thank my lucky stars to be living here today.
Because the flag still stands for freedom and they can't take that away.
And I am proud to be American for at least I know I'm free!
Because there ain't no doubt about it
God Bless the U.S.A.!*

Here the song is used to speak the continuity of the form of populism, nationalism, conservatism that allowed Reagan to maintain the support of the masses of working class electorate. It is the formation of an affective alliance that Hall described in the British context as national populism.³¹ The song allows the emotions to be expressed through association; Bush uses these signs to help reinscribe a form of hegemony established by the Reagan candidacy since 1980. The work of elections is to sustain a mass support for conservative policies through an expression of nationalist sentiment and patriotic pride. For Bush, the song allows for the expression of this patriotic emotion to be spoken for him through its emotive coding in a popular song. The work of the song for the construction of the Bush presidential character is to reassure his continuity with the Reagan legacy.

The song is connected to a series of edited images which establish the presidentialness of the Bush character. In several sequences, still images of Bush beside

³¹See Stuart Hall, "Popular-democratic vs. authoritarian populism: two ways of 'taking democracy seriously'", in ed Alan Hunt (ed.) *Marxism and Democracy*, London, 1980. The approach is drawn from Grossberg, *It's a Sin*, Sydney: Power Publications, 1988, pp. 25-28

a foreign leader like Thatcher or Gorbachev are framed inside a television screen in individuals' homes; these still images are transformed into images that come alive as the television screen is dissolved into the actual footage of these meetings. The televisual image is used to establish the legitimacy of his position on the national and international stage. An entire narrative is constructed to present the candidate as presidential; he is depicted in a crowd (of children) as towering above his supporters. The closing sequence pictures Bush raising his youngest grandchild into the air; the connotation is one of emotive uplifting and hope for the future.

What must be kept in mind is that the variety of techniques and edits in the campaign advertisement are there to construct a recognizable character that is connected to a series of affective positions that can be embodied in the cultural definitions of leadership. It is a controlled series of images and sounds that allow for the affective message of the candidate to be best expressed. The tone of the character-building film is not one of information. In fact, whenever the discussion of Bush in the narration or in the testimonials veers towards identifying an exact position on issues, the filmic code of establishing the aura of the political character steers a wide birth. It is not until the last five minutes of the broadcast that a specific issue is even mentioned. When an issue is broached in the final direct address of Bush it is framed visually in the simple style and video-like format of a presidential address to the nation.

Summary

The campaign film privileges the code of character to the point where all other types of information are either neglected or structured into the code. The political

character code in the Bush film is built on affect. The affective structuring of the meaning of the Bush political character is designed to appeal to the audience of voters without placing possible forms of information that could lead to a negative affective linkage with the candidate. The image then is ultimately a controlled representation of idealized conceptions of what comprises a leader; a good father, a strong family man, an international statesman are all configured in the constructed image of the Bush political character. Into this mix of providing positive affective linkages for the audience, the film is structured to only partially reveal the candidate in order that the presidential aura of difference and distinction which are elemental in conveying the conception of leadership are maintained. The audience is offered glimpses and testimonials which serve to establish the authenticity of the aura without eliminating the evocation of distance. In this way, the knowledge of character is limited to a play with the intersection between the private and the public individual. The political character is modelled in campaign films to convey only this type of affective information. What the audience is left with is not the kind of information for rational decision-making; rather the audience is inundated with affective messages which are there to provide for an instinctive feeling about the candidate that resonates with the construction of the individual's feelings around the judgement of character. This controlled image of the presidential candidate constructs a political character devoid of clear articulations of ideology and political position. The audience/citizenry works on establishing a normative gestalt about the integrity of the political character. The political sphere is constructed then in the way in which we relate to the construction of identification with

filmic heroes.

CONCLUSION

In this review of the way in which the political sphere is configured into the system of public subjectivity so well established in the entertainment industries, I have attempted to provide examples of how various codes of public subjectivity that have been privileged in television, film and popular music have been reused and reformulated in the domain of politics. My categorization does have the limitation that there are overlaps in the way in which political characters are constructed; political events and political forms do not naturally and neatly fit into the structures of the system of celebrity. Nevertheless, the three forms of celebrity privileged in the three entertainment industries functionally identify the way in which public personalities are used to embody the mass or, in its visceral incarnation, the crowd. Inscribed into the meaning of any political leader is the three forms of affective association I have outlined above. Political leaders are weaved into the fabric of public subjectivity in contemporary culture so that through their reconstruction as, what could be described in a shorthand, *legitimation commodities* they resemble other representations of active human agents in the culture. The political dimension of the political celebrity implies a symbolic layering of the meaning of the leader with the representations of democratic culture. A connection to the mass must be established and reinforced. As well, the connection to the mass must also function as a technique for controlling the mass. In terms of control and embodiment, the political leader can be expressed as an amalgam of the construction of

solidarity with the mass or crowd, the expression of familiarity with an audience, and the expression of the aura of distinction and differentiation. These three forms of constructing a functioning form of public subjectivity and a political celebrity identify the way in which power has been housed in contemporary culture into individualized representations. What is privileged in the construction of public personalities is the realm of affect. Affect moves the political debate from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling and sentiment. It is the basis of the formation of a cultural hegemony in contemporary culture; where disunities are obvious, the leader affectively is used to stitch together a functional unity. The political leader functions as a legitimizing apparatus for the symbolic representation of the people. What I have attempted to reveal in this chapter is this operation of affect and the irrational in the organization of contemporary political culture. The modern political leadership campaigns can be read then as intense sites for the organization of affective power of the mass/crowd/public into recognizable symbols of public subjectivity. The apparent agency of the crowd/mass/public is repositioned into the individualized agency of the political leader. The fields of public relations, press agentry, and opinion polling, which flourished originally in the entertainment industries, now provide the models and mediating discourses for the organization of contemporary political culture in which the political leader attempts to embody *affectively* the mass public.

CONCLUSION

FORMS OF POWER/FORMS OF PUBLIC SUBJECTIVITY

I have attempted in the preceding work to provide connections and links between what are often perceived to be unrelated phenomena. The concept of the celebrity, I have maintained, is a modern idea that is very much linked to the developments of mass democracies and the concerted efforts to contain the power of the mass in those democracies.

The underlying fibre that establishes a connection between popular cultural figures and the realm of politics and power is their common ground in the formation of public personalities. I have argued that the public personality or celebrity is the site of intense work on the meaning of both individuality and collective identity in contemporary culture. It is the capacity of these public figures to embody the collective in the individual which identifies their cultural signs as powerful.

Symbolically, democratic culture, as it has been articulated in the large modern western democracies like the United States, Canada and Britain, is represented by two sometimes contradictory representations of the people and conceptions of personal power. First, there is the underlying ideology in the democracy that each individual has an equal amount of power and can express that power in the most rational fashion. There are two avenues for the exercising of rational action by the individual: as a consumer, the individual makes market choices and, as a citizen the individual makes

rational choices concerning who is best to represent his/her interests in government. Secondly, the democracy elevates the significance and importance of the mass as a politically potent force that can direct change in society and in the polity. The conception of this collective will is expressed in the organization of nation-states and their attempts to embody the common will of a people. The collective will has a number of representations which indicate that it is not clearly aligned with the rational organization of society. In fact, the conception of the mass in its various representations as the people, the crowd, the group, the mob is generally linked with the non-rational, the emotional and the domain of sentiments.

These contradictory representations of mass democratic culture have produced specific apparatuses which attempt to resolve the contradiction between the rational and the non-rational, the meanings of the individual and the collective. I have presented the three entertainment industries as apparatuses which construct a privileged discourse about individuals as well as providing sites for the organization of collective sentiments. Through a hermeneutic reading of particular celebrities as texts, I have identified that these apparatuses in their intense construction of individuals highlight specific types of individuality. These types of individuality also demarcate domains of human agency in contemporary culture. The celebrities that emerge as stars in these entertainment industries work to form "audience-subjectivities", a term that I have used to describe the constant negotiation of their identities through both individual and collective representations by particular audience groups and particular culture industries. At any

one time there are clusters of celebrities in each entertainment apparatus which provide avenues for the development of audience meaning through identification of the individual celebrity's subjectivity. The meaning, significance and power of the celebrity therefore is constructed from a double rationality; the various cultural industries help manufacture and elevate individuals to stardom, while the audience rereads, rearticulates, sometimes rejects in its own efforts to rationalize their quotidian with this public sphere of presented personalities.

It is important to realize that the development of the apparatuses of public personalities in these entertainment industries is historically linked to the development of mass democracies. The celebrities articulate agency and activity in democratic culture. In their often "unique" or, perhaps idiosyncratic, personalities and in their attempts to achieve autonomous status, one can see the work of an active human agency. The celebrity, then, is the public representation of individuality in contemporary culture, where their movements and personality transformations are significant.

Moreover, the celebrity figure is constructed by these apparatuses to contain the public — in effect, to represent the public. Unlike television programmes or films where the audience as a mass is temporarily contained as a distinct audience, the celebrity allows for some continuity between these discrete cultural units. Celebrities thus work to organize the markets of the cultural industries to provide some degree of stability.

Thus, what cannot be overlooked is that celebrities are *attempts* to contain the mass. The mass is the site par excellence of affective power, a kind of power that is seen

to be very volatile and dangerous but also very desirable if it can be effectively housed. In the culture industries, celebrities are then aligned to strategies for the connection of cultural commodities to this volatile affective power.

What has unified the domains that are often constructed in our contemporary culture as relatively unconnected is the organization of affect and the perception of affect as a form of power. In politics as well as popular culture, the capture or containment of affect is central to the manner in which political leadership is determined and critical to the organization of risk and risk capital in the culture industries. In this dissertation, I have identified the development of a mediating discourse which has migrated from its first home in the entertainment industries to envelope the organization of our political culture. Techniques for surveying and appealing to the masses — from press agency, public relations, demographics and psychographics to social psychological research, opinion polling, and political consultancy — are also discourses for comprehending and containing the mass through representations in the public sphere.

There are several insights about contemporary culture that can be discerned by a study of celebrities and the various integrated systems which develop types and categories of celebrities. I want to conclude with highlighting these insights and thereby identify some future directions for research. The ubiquity of celebrities, as well as their intangible nature make them difficult to define and thus establish their material impact on a culture. In this dissertation, I have attempted to locate that intangible quality in terms of their various functions in contemporary culture. The insights to follow are identifying the function of the celebrity and the celebrity system.

1. *The Celebrity as Human Agent*

The celebrity is both a proxy of someone else and an actor in the public sphere. To describe this dual role, the celebrity can be defined as an agent. The term agent expresses a tension in meaning and significance that is homologous to the meaning of the celebrity. On one level, the proxy of the celebrity relates to their close proximity to the institutions of power and their dependence on those institutions for their elevation to the public sphere. The politician arises out of the institutions of political parties, while the entertainer is dependent on the institutions of the culture industries which are connected to the institutions of a capitalist economy. From this proxy, their agency is the humanization of institutions, the simplification of complex meaning structures, and a principal site of a public voice of power and influence. On another level, the celebrity expresses the more radical conception of human agency as it has developed in the Marxist tradition. There are limits to this conception of revolutionary force that is expressed through these public personalities; nevertheless, where the economy is believed to operate in an autonomous fashion, where technology is often organized ideologically as developing a telos that is entirely self-contained, the public personality or celebrity conveys the meaning that their actions both are significant and can produce change. Celebrities, because they emerge from a legitimation process that is connected to the people, and because their emergence is not necessarily purely associated with merit or lineage, represent active elements of the social sphere. They are the proxies of change. Celebrities then often define the construction of change and transformation

in contemporary culture, the very instability of social categories and hierarchies in contemporary culture. They are the active agents that in the public spectacle stand in for the people. The assuming of this secondary agency role has led many stars to become spokespersons for political causes and issues. Their activity then can be seen as the site of agency and activity in a culture: their limited success allows one to discern the circumscription of agency in the culture. The agency of the celebrity is more often reduced to a privatized, psychologized representation of activity and transformation - it rarely moves into a clear social movement.¹

2. The Celebrity as a Stable Configuration of Collective Formations

Collectivities in contemporary culture are inherently unstable. In North American culture in particular, the development of consumer culture has led to layers upon layers of cultural meaning that have clouded the fixity of social identity. Class distinctions are unclear in the development and fostering of a composition of a mass society of consumers. Ethnicity is weakened in favour of collective formations that are defined by consumer identities where a clustering of consumer choices establishes a recognizable pattern. The patterns of consumer culture indicate the way that marketing and advertising have reconfigured meaning and significance of collectivities in the social sphere. With the consumer economy constructed to permit variability, transformation,

¹The celebrity can be restructured and retooled to fit into the structure of feeling of a particular cultural group. Dyer's reading of gay culture's appropriation of Judy Garland, where her personal and public struggles, provide for dramaturgical expression in gay subcultures, is an excellent example of the use of a celebrity sign/text within a particular social movement. Examples in Camp, celebrity impersonation and "voguing" by different marginalized subcultures are also examples of how celebrity signs can be integrated into sartorial elements of social movements.

See Richard Dyer. *Heavenly Bodies*. 1986; Andrew Ross. *No Respect*. pp. 135-170.

obsolescence and cultural fatigue of products and their significance, there is a correlating fluidity in the consumer identity.

Celebrities, in this fluid construction of identity through consumption represent flags, markers or buoys for the clustering of cultural significance through patterns of consumption. In consumer culture there are other stabilizing devices that parallel this celebrity function. Brand-names are attempts to structure continuities in consumer culture, where a sense of trust and security is indicated by certain symbols and companies. The celebrity operates as a brand name for the organization of production and consumption of cultural commodities. The celebrity functions as a semi-stable identity and cultural icon that runs through several cultural forms and establishes an identity through which an audience can establish the cultural forms' relative value. Consumer culture's persistent use of celebrities to endorse products positions their function between commodities and collective formations of the social world. The celebrity endorsement provides a cultural pattern for products that can be seen as the integuments between the world of goods and the world of individuals using those goods. Celebrities function in consumer culture as a connecting fibre between the materiality of production and culturally contextualized meaning of consumption and its relation to collective identity. The celebrity then is a commodity that possesses in its humanness and familiarity an affective link in consumer culture to the meaning that is bestowed on consumer objects by groups.

For instance, Michael Jackson is employed by Pepsi to help stabilize the meaning of Pepsi in the realm of consumption. He provides an affective code of attachment that

can link the Pepsi product to an audience to the point where collective identities of these two cultural commodities are melded into a significant meaning system for a cultural group. It is less significant to know whether this specific example of linkage actually is successful for the advertiser; what is more significant is to realize that celebrities function at the interstices between commodities/products and collective patterns of meaning and identity in consumer culture.

3. The System of Celebrity as a Spectacle of Individuals

There is an ideological function that is also part of the functioning of the celebrity system. The interaction of the celebrities as it is reported on television, radio and in magazines and newspapers establishes a code of individuality that is central to the meaning of any celebrity. Generally their behaviour is representative of the expression of individual preferences and desires and the acting on those preferences and desires. The celebrity is the independent individual par excellence; they represent the meaning of freedom and accessibility in a culture. The close scrutiny that is given to celebrities is to accentuate the possibility and potential for individuals to shape themselves unfettered by the constraints of a hierarchical society. Celebrities are icons of democracy and democratic will. Their wealth does not signify their difference from the rest of society as much as to articulate the possibility of everyone to achieve the status of individuality within the culture. As a system, celebrities provide a spectacle of individuality, where will itself can produce change and transformation. The spectacular quality of the code of individuality that is enacted by public personalities works

ideologically to maintain the idea of a continuity between wealth and the disenfranchised rest of society. Celebrities reenforce the conception that there are no barriers in contemporary culture to the individual.

4. Celebrity and the Defining of the Private and the Public Sphere

I have argued that celebrities are manifestations of the organization of culture in terms of democracy and capitalism. They are the privileged form of what I have called public subjectivity. Their privilege is partly related to their capacity to act as discursive vehicles for the expression of such key ideologies as individuality or new consumer collective identities. In that capacity to house a discourse on individuality, celebrities, as I have identified in several parts of the dissertation, are intense sites for determining the meaning and significance of the private sphere and its implications for the public sphere. Fundamentally, celebrities represent the disintegration of the distinction between the private and public. The disintegration as represented by celebrities has taken on a particular form. The private sphere is constructed to be revelatory, the ultimate site of truth and meaning for any representation in the public sphere. In a sense, the re-presentation of public action as a manifestation of private experience exemplifies a cultural pattern of psychologization of the public sphere. The formation of a public subject is reduced to various psychological motivations, pressures at the micro-level, the expression of family interest and personality traits.

The celebrity is the avant-garde of this movement to vivisection public action through identifying the originary private experience. It functions as a discursive vehicle

which reduces the cultural meaning of events, incidents and people to their psychological make-up. The celebration of affective attachment to events and moments is represented by the celebrity, where further cultural connections are dematerialized. The celebrity can be seen as instrumental in the organization of an affective economy.

The affective economy, where there is reduction of meaning to psychological motivations, has become central to the way in which our politics and culture operate. Daniel Bell's famous expression of the end of ideology in the late nineteen fifties can be reread as the rise and celebration of affective meaning.² Similarly, the end of the Cold War can be reread as the end of the effort to fabricate social meaning and the elevation of the moments of feeling that are provided by an affective economy.

Celebrities, as the affective economy's construction of public individuals, are sites for the dispersal of power and meaning into the personal and therefore universal. They represent the reorganization of collective identities into the affective economy of the contemporary capitalist democracy.

²Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*. New York: Free Press, 1962.

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Step by Step

Tonight

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