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"15 Minutes of Fame" – The Cult of the Celebrity

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DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I confirm to have conceived and written this Diploma Thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the biographical references, either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors have been truthfully acknowledged and identified within the text or in the footnotes.

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HINWEIS

Diese Diplomarbeit hat nachgewiesen, dass die betreffende Kandidatin befähigt ist, wissenschaftliche Themen selbstständig sowie inhaltlich und methodisch vertretbar zu bearbeiten. Da die Korrekturen der Beurteilenden nicht eingetragen sind und das Gutachten nicht beiliegt, ist daher nicht erkenntlich mit welcher Note diese Arbeit abgeschlossen wurde. Das Spektrum reicht von sehr gut bis genügend. Die Habilitierten des Instituts für Anglistik und Amerikanistik bitten diesen Hinweis bei der Lektüre zu beachten.

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Introduction

'Who does not want to be famous? Celebrities live their dreams, are rich, good-looking and well-known around the world. What a perfect life', one might think. They are everywhere on TV, on the Internet, on the radio, in commercials, in the newspapers, in magazines and finally in our minds. Celebrities dominate our everyday-lives with their presence, their looks, their talents, their stories. Daniel Boorstin goes even thus far to say that celebrity is "an art form wrought in the medium of life" (3), because it reflects a number of basic interests and issues of today's postmodern culture.

Yet, there is a paradox at the heart of the matter: celebrities are a phenomenon we all know of and yet we do not quite know why they are so prevalent. Ellis Cashmore puts it into the following words:

> Many are fascinated by celebrities without actually understanding why they are fascinated. They know they are part of the process, yet not sure which part, nor how the process works. Everyone is aware of celebrity culture while remaining ignorant of when, where and why it came into being. Maintaining this paradox is arguably the greatest triumph of celebrity culture (16).

Basically, this is the tension I want to illustrate and crack open in my diploma thesis. It is about the impact the media have when creating fame. Crack open such as with nuts, because as we all are surrounded by this phenomenon, but are only left with less and less clear references or causes why it is flooding our lives, it is worthwhile to investigate more deeply its purpose and meaning and, if possible, to reveal the core of it all.

On the most general level, my thesis is divided into two main parts. While the first part focuses on the presentation of the concept of the celebrity by giving and discussing definitions, outlining the historical processes and pointing out several functions in society, the second part is entirely dedicated to the analysis of three specific texts and their revelations of the 'new forms' of celebrities. *To Rome with Love* by Woody Allen, *Big Brother* and Paris Hilton all stand for particular aspects of celebrity culture as we know it today. In this second part of the thesis, the objective is to critically discuss the symbols these texts stand for and also question the influence of the media in all these processes.

"In the future everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes" (758). Andy Warhol's probably most famous quotation referring to the easiness of becoming a celebrity is the plug I am using to plunge into the world of the rich and famous. The American artist came up with this statement in the late 1960s, a time when the mass media experienced a very considerable boom. He was of the opinion that the mass media were the engine for stars and celebrities to

emerge or, in other words, they were the engine for prominent figures to be made or "constructed" (Aichholzer 85).

Agreeing with Warhol's anticipation, my main hypothesis is, therefore, that <u>being a celebrity in postmodern times is a product of media representation.</u> By taking a close look at three cultural texts, namely a movie called *To Rome with Love* by Woody Allen, the reality TV show *Big Brother* and the ever-present Paris Hilton, my aim is to reveal the constructedness of fame and what is tied to it.

Celebrities have been there for ages, if not for ever. However, the way these figures have emerged, has changed. My second hypothesis here builds on the argument that <u>postmodernism was the fuse that caused new forms of celebrities to come into being and relevance.</u> Before postmodernism, people were famous mainly on account of their deeds and talents. I am not arguing that this is not the case in twenty-first century's society any more. However, there has been a clear, new trend of people becoming famous for no outrageous talents or accomplishments, but for the mere fact of featuring themselves successfully in the media by sharing parts of their lives.

Part of this successful featuring and, in a longer run, part of the rise of celebrity culture then can be put in relation with the three main criteria for the postmodernist era.

First, postmodernism has challenged meta-narratives. The term meta-narrative or 'grand narrative' was coined by Jean-François Lyotard and basically describes presumed generalities that follow irrefutable truths (Brooker 162). In contrast to modernism where these truths were held on to, postmodernism has been an era where these general truths have been questioned and challenged. Postmodernists rather regard meta-narratives as eclectic than unilateral and invariable (ibid.). More open and positive attitudes towards new technologies, new ways of enjoying life, and new perspectives on old-deadlocked issues have been welcomed. This characteristic is very strikingly embedded in celebrity culture. As everything has been becoming appreciated and tolerated and a certain tone of respect for all kinds of diversity is being set up, Lyotard's characterization unites celebrity culture with postmodernism in a very obvious way. Celebrating the different ways people choose to live and do so being free from any judgment is definitely something we can see lived out in the celebrity phenomenon of today. What once were scandals are now events and behaviors that audiences expect from famous people. Let me share an example here: Even though the issue of homosexuality is always a sensitive topic to talk about, I just want to point out the development of its emancipation in two sentences. Since ancient times and up until the twentieth century homosexuality was a taboo in most spheres of life. It was nothing to speak up about, let alone

to 'be like'. Even today homosexuality has not been accepted yet in many cultures and communities. However, postmodernism brought along the undertone of acceptance of whatever it might be and this way of living is now far more tolerated and also positively encouraged than ever before in history. Music stars such as Jessie J, roles in movies such as Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhall in *Brokeback Mountain* and TV hosts such as Ellen DeGeneres are only a few examples of how openly homosexuality has been treated in today's Western society.

Segueing from this characteristic of almost boundless tolerance thinking, which will run like a red thread through my thesis into the second feature, postmodernism stands for an era in which it has become very difficult to see a clear-cut between high and low culture. Synonyms would be 'high art' and 'low art' as well as 'high culture' and 'mass culture'. The issue of cultural distinction has arisen from scratch since the mid-twentieth century, beginning with the Frankfurt school of critical philosophy, in which Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer played important parts. With the beginnings of mass media, low or mass culture has become a significant companion, was even re-named as popular culture as all those new forms of media such as television, pop music, Internet etc. became accessible to so many people regardless their social status (Holze 3). Now, my intention is not to precisely define these two approaches to culture as there have been quite a number of different attempts at defining these concepts. My intention is to lay a general foundation in terms of providing an understanding that the distinction between high and low culture has become blurred to the extent that one can no longer clearly say if, for instance, a movie is high art or low art, either in comparison with other media forms or owing to its very own characteristics. Hence, celebrity culture is also affected by this blurred distinction as the constructedness of celebrities can be seen as both, a very complex and highly sophisticated process or as a merely superficial and artificial money machine.

Before discussing the third, crucial characteristic of postmodernism, I will briefly outline the above-mentioned phenomenon of popular culture by way of an excursus. John Storey calls on six different angles cultural scientists defined popular culture in his *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*[1]. For the purposes of this diploma thesis, I want to focus on only three of these that appear to be the most relevant to celebrity culture as – to my mind – they are all interrelated. One definition John Storey lists, has already come up in the last paragraph.

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[1] These six definitions being: "Popular culture is simply culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people" (ibid. 6) "[I]t is the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture"(ibid.) "A third way of defining popular culture is as 'mass culture'"(ibid.8). "[P]opular culture is the culture which originates from 'the people'" (ibid. 10). "[P]opular culture as a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups in society and the forces of 'incorporation operating in the interests of dominant groups in society" (ibid. 11). "A sixth definition of popular culture is one informed by recent thinking around the debate on postmodernism" (ibid. 12).

Popular culture is defined to be "the culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture" (6) It is said to be a "residual category, there to accommodate cultural texts and practices which fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture" (ibid.). It could now also be argued that popular culture is inferior to the high esteem of high art implying *merely* mass-produced culture of commerce. Very closely related is the second definition mentioned by Storey, which is that of 'mass culture', where mass consumption by "brain-numbed" and "brain-numbing" passive people are its features (ibid. 8). All in all, attempting to define popular culture can be very negative.

The third and final angle I want to mention here is that of embedding popular culture in the era of postmodernism (bringing us full circle to our starting point). According to Storey, the main argument that occurs throughout is that a clear distinction between popular culture and high art is no longer recognizable as can, for example, be seen in the selling of records (ibid. 13). Original songs once were part of high art. However, through mass-production, industrialization and mass-consumption, the question arises "what is being sold, song or product?" (ibid.) as all these factors are features of popular and mass culture (not of high culture) (ibid.). Hence, the line between popular culture and high art is blurred in the sense I have discussed it as a criterion of postmodernism.

The third characteristic of postmodernism, which has a much more obvious and intense impact on the thesis, is captured by the concept of the simulacrum, a term coined by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard. Basically, the simulacrum is the most fundamental concept of hyperreality and is often referred to being a copy with no original. Hyperreality as a meta-term then is "a condition in which the distinction between the 'real' and the imaginary implodes" (Oberly n.p.). As regards consumer society, which has followed a very similar rise as celebrity culture, the blending of reality with its representation consequently assumes that the process of the thing to the sign is reversed. To phrase it differently and at the same time in relation to my topic of research, e.g. the media as cultural discourses stimulate our desires. Vincent B. Leitch explains this by calling our society "precoded" (2), meaning that we are already born into a world full of images that tell us what we desire and want. This extreme exposure does not offer us any other choice but to "process our relation to the world completely through those images" (ibid.). In my case, the image of the celebrity contains fame, beauty and perfection that drive us to want to be like them. Only because we were born into this world of fancy-schmancy lifestyles, many people think all the media convey is the truth. Consequently, disorders such as depression, eating disorders, burnout etc. turn up as many do not see themselves as perfect as they believe the people in the media to be. Stephen R. Covey, the author of the successful book

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, talks about paradigms we grow into. What we see when we look at the world is not what there really *is,* but what we are conditioned to see and has become our identity (28).

We live in response to all these preexisting images that populate our minds and convince us that we are not good enough, not beautiful enough, or not intelligent enough. Therefore, a further hypothesis I pursue by questioning this concept is that the culturally produced hyperreality does have its dark side, both on the part of the celebrities and on the part of the people consuming celebrities. Especially in analyzing the three primary texts, the thesis will strive to reveal what is left of the 'authentic real'.

Generally speaking, a lot of research has already been done concerning celebrity culture. Graeme Turner, Neal Gabler, Joshua Gamson and Daniel Boorstin are only a few crucial authors of the many that could be mentioned here. My intention in this diploma thesis is to analyze and interpret in how far celebrities impact our society, why they do it and how they do so. I hope to compensate for the lack of awareness that people have in their everyday life when they read magazines or watch TV and their eyes and ears skim through the newest scandals and stories of Katie Holmes, Barack Obama or Lindsay Lohan, without knowing why they do so.

Finally, it should be mentioned that my approach to this topic as well as all my analyses are restricted to the United States exclusively. While celebrity culture clearly has global dimensions, this diploma thesis focuses mainly on the USA as it arguably has the most developed and established version of celebrity industry. Furthermore, my overall methodology is based on the field of Cultural Studies and includes several psycho-sociological references.

PART I

1. Clear-cut or Blurred? An Attempt at Defining the Celebrity

1.1. 'Our' Perceptions are Asked for – A Survey

As ordinary as the terms 'famous person' and 'celebrities' may be, as difficult and challenging it can be to differentiate between them. Everyone knows what is meant when a new celebrity or a famous person appears on stage. However, we need to ask whether they are the same thing. Is every famous person a celebrity and vice versa? Often the term 'celebrity' seems to be used in any case, for politicians, sports stars, film stars, musicians etc. In the following I will contrast these elastic terms and elaborate the commonly known definitions. Before doing so, I want to share a few results of a little survey I conducted with friends, family and colleagues of mine that shows the different perceptions of everyday people and how they think celebrities are defined.

The survey consisted of only two questions[2] and the participants were asked to answer as spontaneously as possible. The first question 'In your opinion, what is a celebrity?' elicited a very common characteristic that the clear majority of respondents shared. Out of 30 people, 26 said that a celebrity is someone who is very well-known in many different, public circles. 13 explicitly mentioned the frequent appearance in the media as crucial to being a celebrity. Only four people differentiated between people who are merely famous and people carrying the title of a 'celebrity'. One explained that the term 'celebrities' has rather negative connotations, whereas a famous figure in public is known for special features, accomplishments or abilities. Both have fans, imitators, admirers and critics. As the second task of this survey was to name the first three celebrities that came to mind, this specific person divided her answer into two categories: famous figures and celebrities. The other person, who shared more than just keywords, defined a celebrity as someone who appears in the tabloid press. In contrast, she defined a famous person as someone who is known by many people and who, despite being an actor, politician or very famous businessman like Bill Gates, is no celebrity.

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[2] See Appendix.

Moreover, eleven participants noted that celebrities are famous for specific talents or/and accomplishments. Two of these also added the privilege of being born rich or in an influential family that contributes to fame. Finally, from four people's point of view, people can become famous and be celebrities regardless of any talents or/and accomplishments.

As already mentioned, the second task was to name the first three celebrities that came to mind. The top three on this list are Michael Jackson (8 votes), Barack Obama (7 votes), and "Brangelina" (Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, 6 votes). Besides, Marilyn Monroe, the German politician Angela Merkel, film stars such as George Clooney and Julia Roberts as well as musicians such as Britney Spears, Madonna and Christina Aguilera were mentioned. Very interesting in this context is that a dead pop singer, an American politician and a couple always arousing curiosity with their adoption-stories made it to the top three[3].

1.2. "It's IN Me" vs. "I Earned It" vs. "Just Because"

Let me now turn to academic definitions by which celebrities can be understood.

According to the online etymology dictionary, the term 'celebrity' stems from the Latin word *celebritas* meaning "multitude", "fame" and "festal celebration" ("celebrity" n.p.). The equivalent adjective *celeber* signifies "frequented" and "populous" (ibd.).

By the twenty-first century different attempts at defining the celebrity have been undertaken. First, there was the idea of stars being born this way. In 1991, *USA Today* published an article highlighting that "those who possess star quality have it onstage and off...Star quality can be spotted and nurtured. But it cannot be created. Not ever...Star quality is real and shining – and here to stay" (Thomas 1-2). Outstanding terms such as "star power" and "star magic" were used to not only put famous figures on a pedestal, but to make clear that these people were born different, with something special in them, a particularly natural charisma (Gamson 44). In his book *Understanding Celebrity,* Turner as well defines celebrities in different categories. While Gamson seems to see them as more of a historical development of change in the definition, Turner's perspective simply is one of showing different approaches. He, too, considers the aspect of celebrities being people with "an innate or 'natural' quality" (4).

The second approach implies fame that is earned. Gamson refers to the fulfillment of the American dream when people work hard and achieve celebrity status "through their own blood, sweat, and tears" (44). In this view, greatness came through setting goals, reaching out

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[3] This remark will be referred to specifically in chapter 3.

for them and accomplishing them. Turner does not mention this category, whereas the well-known American historian and writer Daniel Boorstin agrees in stating that there once was a time when fame and greatness were fused. Actual fame was a consequence of accomplished goals (45).

However, this natural combination was no longer adequate in the 1960s of contemporary America which leads me to the third category. Boorstin came up with the term "human pseudo-event" (57) implicating that celebrities are manufactures without essentiality. In other words, to the phrase "a person who is known for his well-knownness" (58) the meaning of superficial hollowness is added (Gabler 2). In his article "Toward a New Definition of Celebrity", Neal Gabler calls this phenomenon the "Zsa Zsa Factor", implying people who become famous for effectively not having done anything of significance, such as ruling a country, shooting a movie or running a 100-meters race successfully (ibid.). He continues to argue that the main reason why celebrities come to be celebrities is the fact that they live out "narratives that have entertainment value" (5). Sharing their private lives, their ups and downs as individuals with the public, is what is fascinating about them. Gabler refers to this as "life movie" (ibid.), indicating that the life of a celebrity is like a movie that can be watched and followed by everyone who wants to see it, embedded in the medium of life itself. This is precisely where the "shift of emphasis from achievement-based fame to media-driven renown" (Cashmore 7) takes place. David Giles concludes that "the ultimate modern celebrity" becomes famous solely via the involvement of the media (25).

1.3. Stardom vs. Celebrities

Consequently, the difference between 'ordinary' famous people and celebrities is that both are at the center of action, however celebrities use the media to not only be visible, but to be transparent with their personal lives, scandals, and opinions. Cashmore epitomizes this beneficial, constant presence in the public verbally by means of Madonna's appearance:

> It was something like: "I will tell you more, show you more about me than any other rock or movie star in history; I will disclose my personal secrets, share my fears, joys, sorrows, what makes me happy or sad, angry or gratified; I will be more candid and unrestricted in my interviews than any other entertainer. In other words, I'll be completely see-through. In return, I want coverage like no other: I want to be omnipresent, ubiquitous, and pervasive – I want to be everywhere, all the time."
> (11)

So, according to this differentiation, Queen Elizabeth may be a very famous person, but she is no celebrity. We do not know her personal secrets or what annoys her. What we know as the audience is still controlled and restricted. Pictures of her in perfect pose, wearing a perfect suit

and engaging with the British crowd is all we get to see. These restrictions keep famous people away from providing "dynamic plots" as Neal Gabler calls them, and consequently from becoming ever known and spoken about celebrities (8). Maintaining a celebrity status has a lot to do with public relations, marketing, one's own availability to the media and of course the fans. All these factors will be looked at in more detail throughout the thesis.

For now, the attempt of trying to make the image of a celebrity more tangible in an accessible, more general way is the objective. A very significant characteristic of celebrities compared to 'ordinary' famous people is the "idea of tangibility" (Gabler 8). This idea comprises celebrities being human in a sense that they go shopping, go out for dinner, raise children and have emotions just like any other person on this planet as well. While Turner refers to this new form as "a symptom of cultural change" (5), he also enumerates columnists and further public intellectuals who rather call this symptom a "worrying cultural shift" (ibid. 4).

Coming back to the survey that was conducted, the majority of people belonging to the Western community share the definition that celebrities are very well-known people whose well-knownness is result of the bigger embedding into the media. Siegfried Mattl even claims that solely the factor of public attention is determining. He argues that being famous is not bound to any privileges, formal regulations, or merits, but that this enhancement of becoming a person of public interest is an option that everybody can consider, even serial-killers (57). The importance of the media in this context is essential as they create "focused attention" (Semrau 225). The aesthetics as well as the purposes of the media's impact on the production of celebrities will be discussed in chapter 3 and when analyzing the primary texts.

Concluding, it must be said that the core of dominant developments of fame has always been this tautology mentioned by Gamson "how do we know the famous deserve fame? Because they have it" (32). The fan magazine *Photoplay* observes that stars were merely the ones "who had that rare gift designated as screen charm or personality, combined with adaptability and inherent talent" (33). It even seems a little mysterious or "ineffable" that celebrities have always had "it" (Eddy 25). Gamson simply describes fame as "natural, almost predestined" as is has been "based on an indefinable internal quality of the self" (32).

In the following chapter, I want to draw attention to the developments celebrity culture had to go through in order to be where and what it is today.

2. Did celebrity culture emerge from postmodern popular culture? - A journey through the centuries

Joshua Gamson points out that the characteristics of contemporary fame are not as new as they might be assumed to be (16). Modern "mass culture" - as he puts this term in inverted comma – is not the mere producer or factor responsible (ibid.). A close look at history openly reveals that modern as well as postmodern technologies, let alone any particular trends like popular, consumer or mass culture, are not the exclusive forces that have been the responsible ones in the processes of celebrity development (ibid.). According to Leo Braudy, fame goes even far back to Roman times when Alexander the Great appeared on stage (32). For him, this character was the first in history to be "remembered not for his place in an eternal descent but for himself" (ibid.). Broadly speaking, Braudy associates the history of fame with an everlasting desire Western societies have always had (10). This history would, one the one hand, offer us an insight to what individualism is and, on the other hand, reveal a new angle of changes in the definition of achievement-based success (ibid.).

Different traditions coined different notions of fame. For example, Roman tradition put emphasis on public actions that contributed to fame (Braudy 152), whereas Christian tradition established a more contrastive notion of the "fame of the spirit" or "fame of being" (ibid.). No matter what striving was behind it, fame was always restricted to "powerful" people of that time who were able to "control their audiences and their images" (ibid. 28). In other words, fame was ascribed to religious and political elites.

This aristocratic discourse of fame became a little unsteady on its feet when copper engravings as well as printing were introduced in **the sixteenth century**. These technologies allowed unforeseen possibilities to spread images on a wide range. Braudy writes that "faces were appearing everywhere" (267). By **the seventeenth century** the democratization of the pursuit of fame took place (ibid. 317). Gamson analyzes that fame was no longer a privilege of the elite, but more and more "normal" people popped up and made their uniqueness visible to audiences (19).

Subsequently, **the nineteenth century** brought along a number of enormous changes. According to Gamson, the rise of the media and their methods of publicity established celebrity as "a 'mass' phenomenon" (19). New technologies such as newspapers and the telegraph came on the market and made communication easier and more widespread. Within this context, the idea of "context-free information" (Postman 65) was established meaning that information did

no longer have to be tied to political or social requirements, but could simply serve as source of interest sharing novelties and evoking curiosity (ibid.). With the invention of the rotary press in the mid-1840s, newswire services expanded and sharing information became a worldwide business (Gamson 20). The newspaper industry really took off at the end of this century, when "yellow journalism" became popular and publishers focused more on stories about people as central features of their journalism (ibid.). The newspaper industry was even trendier when photography took a hold in it. With the possibility of publicizing photographs, Braudy argues that ideas or reputations could publicize people by spreading faces all over the place (497). P.T. Barnum highly contributed to the cultural scene as he became the "innovator in the activity of press agentry" (Gamson 21). To be precise, he was not only very active in the public promotion of performers, but he made the promotion itself a public event (ibid.). Gamson sums his importance up by stating that Barnum "became an international figure for the *way* he focused attention to create fame and illusion" (ibid. 22). The ball of circulation was rolling. Ellis Cashmore acknowledges that news had turned into something that happened hours or days, not weeks ago, information was transmitted "not just quickly, but instantly" (8). The media - to be precise: entertainment, news and potentially the most significant field of advertising - subsequently developed, new borders were trespassed beginning with magazines and the radio, reaching over to television (ibid.). "The media became the machinery of addiction" (Cashmore 74), claims Cashmore by correlating the free flow of entertainment and news with the dependency upon them as entire populations had no other way of getting information any longer, but through newspapers, television or, later, the internet (ibid.).

Turner agrees with Cashmore expressing celebrity culture's dependency with his opinion thinking that "the growth of celebrity is attached to the spread of the mass media (particularly the visual media)" (10). Having said that, Schickel stresses the interdependence and necessity of these two forces:

> [D]uring the period – roughly 1895-1920 – when the first blocks of the modern celebrity system were sliding into place everything was improvisatory, primitive. Something more was needed, something that could, on a fairly regular basis, provide the public with a reliable supply of sensations together with an equally steady, glamorous, and easy-to-follow real-life serial adventure. Something that could, as well, allow the press to return to a slightly more passive role in gathering and presenting the news of these creatures, not force it constantly to risk its reputation in prodigies of invention. (33-34)

It was during **the twentieth century** that the unity of the electronic with the print media had become so powerful that the entertainment industry could - almost exclusively - register 100% success (Cashmore 75). Also, the twentieth century entailed shifts from mere representations of news to the desire of the audience to be trustworthy and believed in. Then, it was more about

promoting the desired image of the audience that would lead to success and greatness rather than simply getting one's attention (Gamson 23). According to Turner, some film historians do highlight an event when publicity for the first time used manipulation on purpose to create interest in a star (11). This single event contains a rumor in a newspaper of an actress and her killing in an accident although she was well alive. Anyhow, for the sake of arousing attention, some mark this event as the beginning of celebrity culture as it is known today (ibid.).

Taking this event as getting the ball rolling, not only the industry of professional public relations grew, but also the American **consumer culture** emerged around that time. "Amusements, leisure pursuits, clothes, appearance, furniture, and automobiles" (qtd. in Gamson 23) - all these consumer goods exploded and became central in everyday American life. Changes in society on different economical and social levels helped this explosion and establishment of consumer culture. Women entered the working population which meant that there was a need of a new market for this target group. Urban areas grew, therefore, provided new markets (May 29-30). Concerning celebrity culture, fame and entertainment grew more into the center as the film industry began to rise (Gamson 23). New York was the first place that established so-called "nickelodeons", small, very cheap cinema-like places (May 35). Within only a few years about 400 mini-theaters showed movies daily in New York (ibid.). Taking a broader look, by that time approximately 10,000 nickelodeons operated around the entire US (Walker 29). Gamson summarizes all these developments by pointing out that "the possibilities for mass, industrial production of film entertainment were becoming clear" (23).

He then asks the valid question "how, then, did the American star system begin to emerge?" (24) Besides the nailed-down event mentioned earlier, the foundation of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) in 1908 was crucial (ibid.). In its essence, this company virtually controlled the entire film industry. During these years, film anonymity clearly broke down as different independent producers tried to use their chances. Film productions were pushed by this competition in the industry and feature-length movies started to replace single-reel programs (ibid.). Simultaneously, in 1910, *Photoplay,* the first movie fan magazine found its way into the market (ibid.). Cathy Klaprat concludes that according to different magazines like *Photoplay,* audiences differentiated movies by actors and actresses that played in them, consequently, the talent of these stars turned into a successful strategy for producers to differentiate (351-54). In the relevant book *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America,* the author makes clear that

> Personality existed as an effect of the representation of character in a film – or, more accurately, as an effect of the representation of character across a number of films. It functioned primarily to ascribe a unity to the actor's various appearances in films. However, although personality was

> primarily an effect of the representation of character within films, the illusion that it had its basis outside the film was consistently maintained. (DeCordova 86)

Knowing the stars became crucial which provided a "more elaborate grid through which the actor's identity could be specified and differentiated, and thus a more supple and powerful means of promotion" (DeCordova 140). Film makers became aware of the benefits the star system brought along and studios quickly institutionalized it. By the 1920s, actors and actresses had become mainly "studio-owned-and-operated commodities" (Gamson 25).

Adding to that rise, the off-screen characters of the film stars were given priority to. The consumer culture had its own strategies. Studios would promote personalities by featuring stories and pictures of them via the tools of advertising. May also enumerates rumors that were started in order to achieve the goal of ubiquity in the media. Finally, premieres of the stars' movies at gigantic places and theaters would highlight "the stars' larger-than-life images" (156-58). The only thing that was left to do for publicists was the matching of the characteristics the stars had on screen with the stars' personal lives (Gamson 26). The industry, of course, was prepared for this kind of dualism: Complementing the stars' private lives with their on-screen identities, was of greatest importance (Cashmore 20). According to Gamson's analysis, "publicity, advertising, and 'exploitation' crews […] would actively create and manipulate the player's image" (26-27). The objective was to let the audience believe that the stars were the same in their screen character as in their real lives (Klaprat 366). If utterly unexpected scandals appeared, they were still under the wings of studio control and were rather transformed into curiosities that would arise an interest in the star (DeCordova 117-51).

Meanwhile, the big question mark of inauthenticity lit up. If a celebrity is all around perfect, how is it possible for the audience to identify with them? This is when the idea of 'ordinariness' changed the up-to-then known system. Generally speaking, the reputation of celebrities "underwent a gradual demotion of sorts" (Gamson 29) during the 1930s. In comparison to earlier times, when celebrities had still been seen as "'elected' gods and goddesses" (ibid.) and the representations of them had thoroughly been positive, industrialism and consumerism seemed to have pushed a change of perspective. By the 1930s, famous figures turned into typical mortals. Ordinariness was the new trend with the purpose of connecting fame with fans of fame (ibid.). Yet, Gamson validly raises the question "if they were so much like the reader, why were celebrities so elevated and watched?" (ibid. 31) As an attempt of giving a satisfactory answer, he interprets

> Celebrity texts updated the early American paradox of egalitarian distinction. Rather than for public virtue or action, the celebrity rose because of his or her authentic, gifted self. A fame meritocracy was reinscribed in the new, consumerist language […] The theme of the discovery of

greatness, earlier termed a greatness of character, was translated into the discovery of a combination of "talent," "star quality," and "personality." (ibid.)

The goal was to make celebrities 'real' and 'authentic' again which alleviated the distrust the public had built up against them. The "personality"-factor as Gamson called it indicated an exposure of the private life, of course only for the sake of regaining authenticity (38-39). Very significant in this context is to acknowledge the power and importance of the audience. Though this will be dealt with in detail in chapter 4, just that much may be said: the public, the audience was given more and more control and responsibility over the rise and fall of celebrities (ibid. 34-35). Also the development of the Internet had dramatic effects on the public's influence to exercise control over this rise and the fall (Turner 20). Mainstream news media also including film fan magazines - which have been the most significant valve for celebrities and their stories – opened doors to different, more down-to-earth presentations of their stars seeing pictures of them shopping in shirt and pants or playing with their kids. Hollywood made it into the homes of the ordinary people. In his book *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry,* May exhibits the representations of this well calling it a "leisure utopia" (166). During the 1930s, Tino Balio confirms that within the USA, Hollywood was the third-largest information source (266).

To dwell on what Turner calls "a generally cultural pervasiveness" (17), the really interesting aspect of celebrity's history is "the degree to which it has become integrated into the cultural processes of our daily lives" (ibid.). Very striking is Leo Braudy's opinion on that stating:

> The idea of fame has been inseparable from the idea of personal freedom. And so, in a perverse way, the more available fame is, and the less 'deserved' it is, the more it operates as means of providing a 'personal justification' for the individual's existence. (7)

In *The Small Screen* by Brian L. Ott, in particular television's influence on popular culture is discussed. There, it does say that TV has become central a source that would have effects on beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the people (viii). By presenting news, entertainment and further interesting information, Ott gives one reason why this medium has turned into such an addictive source. The argument is that one can

> find symbolic resources for confronting and managing the difficulties we face in our everyday lives […] television is a mode of public discourse that repeatedly stages or dramatizes contemporary social concerns and anxieties. In watching their own troubles played out over and over, viewers acquire resources for working through those troubles even if they are unaware of them. Television functions like a therapist, diagnosing our deepest fears and worries, and providing substantive and formal strategies for overcoming them (x).

I agree with him and say that this is not only true for the medium of television but also for all the other media of communication as in the last paragraph already indicated. Basically his

point is that being repeatedly exposed to different technologies and media has power over us to "shape and condition the way we process information and thus our social world" (xi).

Concluding, industrialization, the rise of professional public relations and the great impact of the production system contributed to the mass production, establishment and distribution of entertainment celebrities on the market (Gamson 28).

3. What For? - Celebrity's Functions

Celebrities fulfill several functions that are fundamental in justifying their existence. In the following some of these will be analyzed in more detail as I consider them to be crucial factors for the entire phenomenon of celebrity.

3. 1. Celebrities as commodities

> The celebrity is also a commodity: produced, traded and marketed by the media and publicity industries. In this context, the celebrity's primary function is commercial and promotional. [..] [T]he celebrity is defined instrumentally, in terms of the role they play within the operation of the mass media, promotion and publicity industries. (Turner 9)

Fame is artificially producible and produced, well-knownness a salable and sold commodity, achievement divorceable and divorced from renown. (Gamson 57-58)

The celebrity as a 'commodity' is in a lot of people's views the well-established reason why fame works. However, there are a few consequences to this labeling that cannot be neglected.

First, **from the economic market's point of view**, Turner identifies celebrities as money-makers (34). Their images, names and attitudes are called on to merchandise cosmetics, cars, pills, newspapers, TV programs etc. in order to get consumers' attention. Different target groups are presented different stars for different purposes. For instance, television programs such as *Ellen DeGeneres* invite famous guests to build up their audiences, whereas film producers need the help of stars to gain investors for their film projects (ibid.). Trading celebrities is a serious business. Cashmore starts out by defining this process of "commodification" (72). From "raw material" to developed, refined, packaged wares, stars would get their spotlight (ibid.). Dyer (1986) completely agrees with Cashmore when regarding celebrities also as 'a property'. But there is more to it than that. He adds that these special people are "a property on the strength of whose name money can be raised for" (5). This comment implies that they are a financial fortune to a number of people such as producers, networks and agents, managers and record companies. Rein *et al.* list a range of "cultural intermediaries" (Turner 42) that are required to make celebrity industries work. There, one can also see the different places of employment celebrities have created by their appearances.

So, according to Rein *et al.,* the *entertainment industry,* the *communications industry,* the *publicity industry,* the *representation industry,* the *appearance industry,* the *coaching industry*, the *endorsement industry* and the *legal and business services industry* are the foundations that market celebrities (42-58). In this context, the assumption of Turner that the role celebrities have played in the expansion of the media and that being of "enhanced value" (34), can be argued to be correct, not only for the media, but for the capitalist society on the whole. Media-inflated consumerism has entered into a dependent relationship with capitalism and has led to "an ethic of hedonism and health, excess and extravagance (Cashmore 265). In fact, Turner is of the opinion that that is the main purpose of celebrities' being, namely to keep the capitalist enterprise going by stating that celebrities have shifted to being "represented not only as *useful to* selling and business, but as business itself, *created by selling"* (14).

On the other hand, one should not forget that by selling themselves, they are assets to themselves as well. A commercial estate can be established by creating a public persona which certainly has its benefits for a celebrity's fame (Turner 35). Of course, being marketed all the time and having to stick to certain rules in order to be the "perfect" commodity does have its reverse of the medal. No doubt, celebrities are very limited in their freedom to just *be* and have to endure quite some hardship (only to mention celebrity-gossip at this point), but all the fame and glory still seems to be worth it. This leads me to the **second point of view**, namely that **of the celebrities** themselves. Most likely their personal goals are to build up a solid, feasible career by means of being available to the regulation as well as distribution of their celebrity-commodity. Often a third party, a manager is responsible for that to happen. Even though stars can still voice their opinions on projects and jobs, the manger usually is the one who holds the reins (Turner 35). Jay Bernstein, a personal manager, even claims that

> [..] 65 percent is having the team behind you […] The bigger the team, the better off you are. As long as it's a good team. If not, it's like Switzerland invading Russia. You need an Air Force, Marine Cops, a Navy. You need all the help you can get. (qtd. in Gamson 61)

So, in reference to the last paragraph, celebrities are given functions to by publicists, agents, studios etc. who all work within the system of making stars shine. In that sense, the **third perspective** arouses as the industries' main function is to convey the image and personality of the celebrity to its audience. **The consumer's point of view** after all is the target group and a fueling force for the maintenance of the celebrity status. In chapter 5, a detailed analysis of the importance of the audience is conducted. For now, the following can be anticipated: Turner claims that the industries actually cannot know exactly what audiences want (49). Gamson underlines this claim stating that

> publicists use the *perception* of audience interest as a signal to industry buyers that their client has a reliable market. They do so by bypassing audiences, using the more controllable media coverage as a proxy for audience interest […] The working assumption is that media institutions are in touch with and reflect audience interest. As long as that assumption is maintained by entertainment industry buyers, publicity workers can operate without requiring more knowledge about audiences. (Gamson 115)

I interpret this statement thus far as consumers are primarily manipulated by the media. Manipulated in that sense as to change the paradigms of the people from buying products out of necessity to buying products because one feels led to follow the desire of having them. This shift created this "media […] reflect audience interest" (Cashmore 12), where it should be read as audience interest has become a reflection of the media. Where the original interpretation that celebrities are the ones bought and sold still is valid, with the rise of consumer society, "we, the consumers, are the ones being bought and sold" as well (ibid. 111). Cashmore goes on to elaborate on the dependency of consumerism and celebrities as commodities – so-to-say manufactured by different industries like the advertising industry – that has slopped over to consumers (265). This dependency consists of a pattern of thinking that we, the consumers, think about ourselves as well as about 'them' in a specific way, namely "as freestanding individuals living in a merit-rewarding society; and one, we might add, in which the good life advertised by celebrities is open to anyone with enough money" (ibid. 263).

The economic functions from consumers' point of view cannot be seen separate from the social functions celebrities hold. This is reflected on different levels which will be discussed in the following.

3.2. Celebrities as role models

The first level I am concerned with is the one I will call *the influential representatives*. A lot of authors like Turner, Cashmore, Evans and Marshall argue that celebrities possess a particular power, in a sense as they have a lot of influence on our paradigms of the world.

Jessica Evans realizes that "very complex economic and political arguments" are transformed "into digestible and easily understandable chunks of information that will fit into the contexts of media viewing" (42). Ellis Cashmore is of the opinion that "celebrities have helped keep concerns about, for example, global warming, toxic waste, and animal rights at the forefront of public consciousness" (222). David Marshall refers to celebrities representing "subject positions that audiences can adopt or adapt in the formation of social identities" (65). And coming from the economic side, Steve Bloomfield underlines that

Your mind doesn't look at the product being promoted but the people promoting it. You don't consider whether it's meant for your skin. Celebrities have a lot of influence and we believe them when they say these products work" (qtd. in Cashmore 167).

All these comments demonstrate the power celebrities do have when it comes to building our own identities, raising awareness to global, political issues and being part of a consumerist society. Let me now go through the mentioned statements step by step.

Jessica Evans and Ellis Cashmore share the position that celebrities have paved the way for everyday people to be confronted with be it global issues in an easier, more understandable way. The example that comes to my mind at the moment is Angelina Jolie and her involvements in the *United Nations.* As a special emissary she went from being only an actress to a position of interest in political spheres raising people's awareness for third-world countries. At the very moment, she is in the news owing to a visit in Jordan. There, her goal is to call for help in favor of all the Syrian refugees the civil-wars have left behind. Now, my honest question is, if Angelina Jolie did not use her celebrity status to also impact the world's status quo, would I, as a member of the Western society know about global and political issues in the world at all? Probably I would know a little bit about it, but would not be as concerned or touched by it, if it had not been for celebrities who used their fame to also reveal crucial matters of life. My interpretation to this phenomenon is that celebrities are the mediators – in other words, the medium – that connect world issues with the people via the media. Their presence and ubiquity in the media do have tremendous influence on our beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Concluding, Cashmore puts it like this "like the proto-celebrity gladiators, they serve political ends as well as providing pleasure for the masses" (263).

Very closely related to this positive function of celebs, is the idea of the 'para-social interactions' between stars and their audiences which is neither positive nor negative. Rojek defines these as "interactions which occur across a significant social distance – with people 'we don't know'" (qtd. in Turner 6). Basically, these interactions serve as substitutes for *real,* social relationships within a community that over time have simply changed. By what Turner calls "an affective deficit in modern life" (6), a gradual decline of our closest social relationships such as the family, is meant (ibid.). Maybe or most probably industrialism, democratization, individualism, and several developments in technology have contributed to this shift. Fact is that twenty-first century's people feel touched, encouraged, abandoned, appreciated by stars of all kinds of industries (sports, entertainment, film etc.) and have the impression of *knowing* them only by following the media. The most evident examples that demonstrate the intensity of para-social interactions, discusses Turner, are the deceases of "high profile celebrities" (23). In reference to the survey I conducted to gain information about the perceptions of people on the

topic of defining the phenomenon of celebrities, Michael Jackson was the one person mentioned most when it came down to enlisting celebs they know. Michael Jackson died in 2009 and the resulting worldwide grief has been a good index of the *relationship* people around the world thought they had with the king of pop. The actual fact that the figure whose loss they were mourning was only the media representation they *knew,* has not bothered anyone.

This second level that I call the *para-social value* has a twofold underlying core. One core aspect concerns the identification of the audience occurring with the stars. Referring to the statement made by David Marshall at the beginning of this chapter, I would like to address the *essence of identification,* which also constitutes the third level. Rojek seems to recognize the growing importance of these 'second-order intimacy'-relations people have with stars, because studies have proven that around 50 percent of the population admit they are struggling with loneliness and isolation (52). These studies give Rojek enough reason to interpret that these *unreal* relationships people think they have with celebrities help them identify and offer them a feeling of meaning and recognition (ibid.). His main point in this discussion is that "the physical and social remoteness of the celebrity is compensated for by the glut of mass-media information" (ibid.) In the contemporary world, this means that the amount of contact – highly personal contact – is made available through mass-mediated representations (Turner 94). To be precise, celebrities are mirrors for people to see themselves and what they are and the "who I long to/could be" (Blum 147). Even though the relationship is a one-way interaction, it is regarded as valid as other kinds of social interactions as it is merely unavoidable to have such relationships (Cashmore 80). Moreover, McCutcheon *et al.,* think that this para-social value is "part of the normal identity-development" (68). So, the question arises in how far the admiration of celebrities does shape one's identity.

The fact of the matter is that it is very hard to not catch the newest haircut of David Beckham, the pregnancy of Katie Holmes or Obama's dog's name when living in this world. The worldwide communication network has not only made it possible, but, in fact, has created a means of a depending manipulation between the real world and the representation of it via the media. We are shaped by what we think is right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, morally correct and incorrect. But what we think is among other things also a consequence of what the *exterior* world - meaning people, role models, events, catastrophes, different sciences like politics, economics, religion etc. - has been telling us. Depending on the culture one is born into, we rely on the attitudes, beliefs and values we receive from the exterior. Why? Because that is all we get to know. To us, the paradigms our cultures have lived by are the only *truth* we know.

Not that there has been a constant, unchanging truth, quite the contrary, these truths shift with historical eras, scientific knowledge, events and particular people. Now, my interpretation is that through the unlimited exposure to the media and other kinds of technology, these shifts are not as slowly proceeding any longer. And now, in the twenty-first century a certain non-reflective undertone has been established. Non-reflective in that sense as to where many people are not aware of the manipulative influence, for instance, the media has on them or as to where the "everything is allowed and acceptable, if it's good for YOU"- attitude has held its ground. This attitude is basically a key part of postmodern society (as explained in the introduction).

With this in mind, the second underlying core or the forth level needs to be pointed out. The *economic embedding of the sense of self*, as I call it, is basically the consequence of the previous levels. Celebrities embody meanings such as beauty, manhood, emancipation etc. These meanings are highlighted and fully in bloom when accessed by an audience. To be precise, Cashmore clarifies that when we read about celebrities or see them on TV or the Internet, we tend to wonder whether their possessions, their fame, their looks are all things we could have as well (13). And as several industries, especially the advertising industry, have recognized this *niche* in the market, they have ever since drawn a profit from this knowledge. Our sense of self, in other words, who we think we are, is reflected by the products we buy (Cashmore 178). He notes:

> This is reflected in the way we shop. Shopping is now considered glamorous, not utilitarian. The consumer is encouraged to declare his and her worth by spending money on items that will help him or her look like, play like, or in some other way, be like someone else. That someone else is the celebrity, or more likely, celebrities with whom they feel or want to feel an attachment. […] In this sense, the consumer's enterprise is as much to express a sense of bonding or even identity with the celebrity as acquiring new possessions (13).

Hence, from the other side of the coin, the celebrities are closely connected to the consumption of commodities. Besides the fact, that they are regarded as commodities themselves, beauty products, cars, sportswear etc., and not to forget ideologies are sold to consumers, because they strive after better lives they truly believe these stars would have. By buying what Julia Roberts advertises for, a number of women fall for this "illusion of intimacy" (Turner 91), because they genuinely think that if they have the same skin cream, they look just as perfectly unlined as their star (ibid.)[4].

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[4] According to Turner, there is a "degree of reluctance to regard the celebrity-consumer relationship as a normal component of modern social relations" (91). He explains that this reluctance has its roots in the constructedness by the media which then again has an overtone of inauthenticity.

I also mentioned that celebrities sell ideologies. By this I am referring to lifestyles. As a feature of postmodernism, the meta narratives are questioned, truths become options and scandals are not as scandalous anymore. For instance, in former times founding a family and staying with the partner for the rest of one's life was a fundamental part of life. Cheating on your partner was highly taboo. Having sex with lots of different people before getting married was uncommon. Well, times have changed! The rise of individualism within western culture made things suddenly *acceptable,* if not justifiable. Indeed, stars would start to live out norms that might at the beginning were shocking to the public, but now have shifted to being *normal.* TV shows, movies, songs – all these texts express freedom of choice as well as tolerance of any kind which is very attractive to the "everyday humans" as these implications offer belonging and acceptance. The visibility and ubiquity of famous people by engaging the media, lets audiences experience celebrities as "myth bearers; carriers of the divine forces of good, evil, lust and redemption" (Neimark 56).

Celebrities have become persuasive endorsers when it boils down to the consumption of products and a necessary factor of self-identity. If these functions are good or bad is out of debate. Hence, one could conclude that "the individual has a commercial as well as a cultural value" (Turner 25) which leads me to the cultural function of celebrities (which is undoubtedly interwoven with the social function).

3.3. Celebrities as cultural mediums

The cultural functions are not exclusively to be seen separate from the previously mentioned social and economic functions. On the contrary, I argue that these functions encompass both, the social and the economic approaches to justify the cult of the celebrity. To begin with, Cashmore makes a rather mystic observation: "There is a kind of celebrity pulse beating through society. No matter how we try, we can't fail to feel it" (185). What does he mean by this statement? I believe that all that has been said before in this chapter can actually only lead into this comment. It is about the ubiquity of celebrities in the media, it is about the way they shape our behavior, our speech, our way of presenting ourselves in public. Depending on society one is born in[5],

> [t]he celebrity has a generally cultural pervasiveness, as the cultural meanings of and associations with the star leak into all kinds of locations in our daily lives – as well as a specifically industrial

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[5] Western society certainly differs from African society or Asian culture.

> reach – the range of territories into which the media industries and their 'smiling professionals' now gain (or control) access. (Turner 17)

Leo Braudy justifies the establishment of a distinct culture by celebrities noting that the concept of personal freedom has always been wedded to the "dream of fame" (7). Basically, he sees the American dream people have always been after as a source for this development. The striving for something *special, unique* and *distinctive* has always been in one's heart, since the creation of mankind. Indeed, different theologians and anthropologists agree with this innate longing for more. For instance, Randy Alcorn who wrote the book *Eternal Perspectives* (2012), uses the words "God-given innate sense" that every culture acknowledges of the fact that there is something more to this life (xi). Even if he refers it to the inner urge for a life after death, throughout the book the reader understands the message between the lines. The message that whoever is born into this world has a unique purpose, because he or she is unique and precious him or herself, certainly find its way to the reader's heart. Broadly speaking, Alcorn is not the only, but many more bestselling authors such as Rick Warren, John Ortberg and Stacy Eldridge acknowledge the miracle of life to be unique and the possibility for every human being to fulfill their purposes in a unique way.

The implied function then constitutes that celebrity culture is one way to make the American dream come true. Among other things, the resulting consequences have been the rise of individualism in western society (which makes perfectly sense in reference to the idea of the American dream). According to Marshall, the context is much broader. He ascribes this rise to the "ideological ground of Western culture" discussing that celebrity culture is a significant link between individualism, democracy and consumer capitalism which all contribute to define not only the celebrity, but in particular the individual (x).

These concepts have already been elaborated to some extent in the previous chapters. What has not been mentioned thus far, however, are the parallels with religion. Chris Rojek, a British professor of Culture Sociology and Communications, notices:

> To the extent that organised religion has declined in the West, celebrity culture has emerged as one of the replacement strategies that promote new orders of meaning and solidarity. As such, notwithstanding the role that some celebrities have played in destabilising order, celebrity culture is a significant institution in the normative achievement of social integration (99).

It being a replacement strategy might go a little too far, what is valid to argue though, is that there is a relationship between them, going into both directions. Rojek emphasizes that "celebrities offer peculiarly powerful affirmations of belonging, recognition, and meaning in the midst of the lives of their audiences" (53). In contrast, Cashmore highlights that religion has adopted the style of celebrity culture to some extent. By engaging TV personalities that are

very charismatic and the fact that sermons are brought to the people via satellite or the worldwide web, a certain comparison to the promotion of celebrities cannot be denied (253). Different sociologists also speak about 'celebrity worship'[6] that openly sees a connection with religious norms. According to Cashmore, examples of this connection are "the intensity of emotional involvement, the impact on the life of the believer, the pattern of engagement with the rest of the world (from sociability to withdrawal)" (254) that both concepts seem to have in common.

3.3.1. Celebrity Gossip

The other interesting point many authors mention in this cultural context, is the nature of celebrity gossip. It being a social process that serves as the modification and evaluation of cultural and social norms, identity forming and relationships, Turner illustrates that celebrity gossip is one of the ways through which our daily lives integrate the media representations of stars (24):

> Gossip is a way of sharing social judgements and of processing social behaviour; this is true whether it involves people we know directly or people we know solely through their media presence. Gossip is also one of the fundamental processes employed as a means of social and cultural identity formation (107).

What he characterizes here is actually a very new and interesting insight. Never before have I looked at gossiping as a means of "social and cultural identity formation" (ibid.). Joke Hermes continues explaining gossip's functions by remarking that, on the one hand, celebrity gossip would enable the celebrity to get off their high horse and become part of the ordinariness of humanity (71). On the other hand, she refers to the essence of celebrities as media texts claiming that these texts would come to have meaning when being integrated in our everyday emotional and cultural experience (ibid.). The role of gossip in our identity formation thus is clear, namely constructing our community: "[...] celebrity discourse [are] motivated by 'a wish for and a forging of community, a quality that is inherent in all gossip'" (qtd. in Turner 117). Shaping a community in that sense as to where celebrities are treated such as family members, however, without the network of obligation and responsibility what normally is included in relationships, has been the new trend (Turner 115). Discussing famous people intimately has become part of our daily, personal lives. This phenomenon of integration is what Hermes

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[6] This will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 4.

describes as the "'extended family' repertoire" (qtd. in Turner 115). The second repertoire she talks about is referred to the "repertoire of melodrama" (qtd. in Turner 116) consisting of the emotions celebrities evoke in the audience when letting them know about their highs and lows. In this case, celebrities become "the locations for the discussion and evaluation of the dramatic happenings of everyday life: divorces, deaths, disappointments in career and so on" (Turner 116). The relation between the misery of others and the audience's feelings towards this distress contributes to new emotions in the audience. Mostly they then feel as if these drama-stories would help them deal with their very own struggles in life (ibid.).

3.4. Stardom and its Discontents

As I see it, celebrities do not only fulfill positive functions, but also negative ones. In the following I distinguish between the *dark side* of being a celebrity and the *dark side* of being the consumer of this culture.

First, I have already sounded throughout the thesis that it is also quite a responsibility to be famous in today's society. This responsibility of being in the spotlight all the time regardless of celebrities' demand for privacy, can be so fatal for several people that it feels as if their lives dangle on a string on account of that limitless exposure. Examples such as Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan and actors like Hugh Grant and Sean Penn have all been "victims of all seasons" (Cashmore 30).

Sara A Wright attends to this matter in more detail investigating the public image of celebrities. She is of the opinion that "many pressures rest on the shoulders of today's celebrities", the main reason for this being the constant attempt to maintain a perfect, positive image in every public context. The problem, however, is that these constant pressures can result in a lot of different mental and physical problems. Only a few to mention here, Wright enlists possible anxiety disorders, eating disorders, depression, insomnia etc. The repression of sadness, fear, anger and the feeling of humiliation can even cause cancer or lead to committing suicide (11-12)! One of the major roots is the frequency of media coverage, especially when it is negative. Dr. David Giles even claims that "celebrities are the lifeblood of the media" (qdt. in Wright 11).

So many famous figures cannot escape the sensationalism the media conjures up around them. The prime example of such a source of exposure are online blogs as studies show that blogs are considered to be the most credible media form in existence (qdt. in Wright 6). In

particular, I would like to draw attention to celebrity-basher Perez Hilton[7], who is known for humiliating and disgracing those in the spotlight regardless whether the statements are in line with the truth or not. The internet tracking firm ComScore Media Metrix found out that over seven million viewers worldwide access Perez Hilton's site on the net to share his tacky comments on celebrities' lives. The point I want to make by presenting these data is that the negative effects of the media on celebrities implicate functions for both, the celebrities and their audiences. I see it as a knock-on effect: Celebrities suffer from different kinds of embarrassments and humiliations conveyed through the media; consequently, they react to these humiliations by ending up having disorders, illnesses or showing behavioral changes; and finally, these changes entail a new, distinct the way of how audiences see them.

On the one hand, audiences are being pushed into an addiction to the newest scandals and stories they hear. They always crave for more and more information about stars. To my mind, this is also true if they are only witnessing the news incidentally. And on the other hand, the generations of teenagers and young adults learn something by watching the news. The rate of teenagers suffering from depression is at least as high as 20 percent and can - besides family-related or/and environmental problems - certainly be seen in connection with the over-exposure to the media ("Teen Depression Statistics" n.p.) as they compare themselves with their idols or as they get the impression that being mentally challenged is *cool.*

Generally speaking, the effects celebrities can have on populations of all sorts are not to be sneezed at which represents the second aspect I intend to address. Especially youngsters are concerned as they are still part of the identity development process at that age. What celebrities wear, how they look like, the way they behave can have tremendous effects on their audiences. That is because being public figures, stars serve as role-models, both in a positive and a negative way. For example, Virginia Blum as well as Ellis Cashmore describe the conception of beauty and ugliness in more detail. They observe that, since the 1930s, Hollywood has implemented a new standard of beauty which has been unbroken ever since. The skinny, tanned, tall supermodels are what young women look up to when it comes to good looks. On the other hand, the tall, tanned, round-eyed guy with a six-pack represents the ideal figure of man. However, even if we are flooded with images conveyed via the media, it must be born in mind that these are *only* two-dimensional images. Thus, people do not actually identify with real human beings when looking at the pictures of celebrities, but merely with mediated images (Cashmore 106-109). This type of behavior seems connected to the culture one is born into. Cashmore maintains that

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[7] In addition, it must be said that Perez Hilton has become a celebrity in his own right which is discussed in more detail in chapter 6.4.4.

> Beauty might be in the eye of the beholder, but unless that beholder has been raised as a feral child without human company, his or her evaluation will have been affected by the culture in which he or she operates. (107)

Apportioned among Western society, this imprinting can have very harmful effects. People looking up to celebrities can develop disorders of all kinds to look or be more like their idols. To only mention a few here: eating disorders, depression and anxieties can result from comparing oneself with the mediated images that seem so perfect. Also attitudes that can lead to addictions like alcoholism or drug abuse can be consequences of admiring stars that have had, for instance, dark records. Further and certainly not to forget, celebrities turn their audiences into consumers of any kind, be it that people pay for cosmetic surgeries to look more like their idols or that people buy magazines to read about new scandals of the Hollywood icons. We, the people, are led into a capitalist dependency that enables us to play an active role in this society. Fraser and Brown summarize the general interdependency between people's attitudes and the existing of stars remarking that audiences "reconstruct their own attitudes, values, or behaviors in response to the images of people they admire, real and imagined, both through personal and mediated relationships" (187).

Concluding, celebrities embody role model functions that can be helpful[8] or strikingly devastating for their audiences[9]. In any case, it must be remarked that the audience plays a crucial role in the celebrity-making process. This importance is dealt with in the following chapter.

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[8] See chapter 3.2.

[9] It is important to say at this stage of the thesis that all mentioned ideas, concepts and comments pointed out by different authors or by myself are to be seen from an unbiased perspective. My intention is not to judge anything or anyone, but to explore and analyze what is known about the phenomenon of celebrity.

4. Audience as a Fuel

"We consumers have more power effectively than at any time in history." (Cashmore 4) Starting with this powerful statement, this chapter will deal with the audience's impact on celebrities on different levels. The levels I am exploring in more detail concern the relationships between fan and celebrities (4.1.), celebrities and their fans (4.2.) and among fans (4.3). All these relationships are driving forces when the fame of the celebrity seems certain. Hence, Cashmore does not have any problems claiming that "without an audience, no one can be famous. Fans genuinely make certain people famous" (66).

First of all, it must be remarked that especially teenagers and young adults are groups of people that spend an average of 2.8 hours each day in front of the TV being sprinkled with images, stories and events that do affect them in their individual worldviews. Besides television, further media outlets such as magazines, music, the Internet etc. serve as basis for this shaping of worldviews. "Indeed, over 75% of those questioned in a recent study reported a strong attraction to a celebrity at some time in their lives and 59% claimed that a celebrity had an influence over their attitudes or beliefs" (qtd. in Roberts 55).

Resting on this observation, the striking introducing questions to this chapter are assumed to be 'what is an audience?', 'what is a fan?' and 'are there any differences?' A number of scholars[10] argue that audiences can either be passive or active. The original concept of a 'passive audience' was developed by the Frankfurt School of philosophy claiming that the individual was an easily influenced and irrational being (Wicks 15). In contrast, an 'active audience' would decode the text as a joint group sharing "certain frameworks of understanding and interpretation" (A. Gray 27). Similar approaches to media and practices as well as shared meanings and similar interaction about the texts are what make up the common traits of such a community (Costello 126). Subsequently, fans are "viewers who act outside the common expectations for a member of the audience" (ibid.). Their "activities go beyond the norm" (ibid.). Schickel as well as Gamson strike a more negative note when defining fandom. While Schickel *et al.* are of the opinion that by watching and talking about celebs, people chronically attempt to balance these activities with evident "personal lack of autonomy, absence of community, incomplete identity, lack of power and lack of recognition" (qtd. in Jensen 17), Gamson enumerates a list of weaknesses that fans are *accused of:*

> needing people to look up to and believe in and imitate, mistaking appealing manufactured images for appealing reality, leading unfulfilled lives from which they require constant distraction,

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[10] For more information see Morey (1980, 1993), McQuail (1997) and Carragee (1990)

> desiring attention and fortune they cannot attain, needing reassurance that the success ladder is still open to anyone, or simply being addicts hooked on fame's "contact high". Most critics typically assume that "needs," first of all, are being met by the relationship to celebrities themselves, by means of fantasy, imitation, diversion, or learning. Most also assume that the superficiality of the activity is a sign of the participant's superficiality or even stupidity. (Gamson 141)

However, these lists do not display sufficient defining value. There have been numerous attempts of categorizing fans into different types. My focus is limited to the types Joshua Gamson came up with as his categories represent very good and adequate examples of different kinds of fans. He distinguishes five audience types namely the *traditional*, the *second-order traditional*, the *postmodernist*, the *game player – gossiper*, and the *game player – detective*.

The *traditionals* or the *believers* are probably the ones why the celebrity system has come thus far as they do not see or are aware of any manufactured production system behind fame. "They are ignorant of its production, passive in encountering it, and powerless in the face of its ideas and effects" (147). They simply admire celebrities, because they are of the opinion that these deserve such admiration owing to innate talents or extraordinary achievements. In comparison to the *believers*, the *second-order traditionals* are said to live by a more "complex compromise […] in which merit is preserved despite a revelation of artificial techniques" (ibid.). There is, however, also the possibility that fans are completely skeptical which actually ends up in more interest in how everything is manufactured than in turning one's back on celebrity culture. This type is referred to as the *postmodernists* or the *antibelievers* who

> know about celebrity manufacture and seek out its evidence and its details, rejecting or ignoring the story of the naturally rising celebrity as naive and false; the text is read as essentially fictional. Theirs is an engaged disbelief, and the revelation of technique feeds rather than damages their interest. (147)

The last main audience type, Gamson claims, seems to combine all the models before by considering celebrities to be opportunities rather than beneficial or harmful models. This group is called the *game players* as they "play freely with the issues they [the stars] embody (the construction of the self in public, for example)" (148). Unlike the other types, *game players* read celebrity texts in their very own language, not rarely playing with the vagueness of these texts."They leave open the question of authenticity and along with it the question of merit. For them, celebrity is not a prestige system, nor a postmodern hall of mirrors, but, […] a game" (173).

As Turner concludes all these types make use of celebrity material in different ways namely for experimentation, as source for audiences' cultural activities and for play (111).

4.1. Celebrity Worship

Celebrities are being talked about, watched, heard of, identified with which can be summarized in the term 'celebrity worship'. These behaviors can occur separate from each other which actually is what most of us do to some extent or they can occur together which in its most extreme sense then is referred to *absorption.* Although fans have existed as long as there have been famous people around, as Cashmore observes, with the rise of technology and media communications, there has also given rise to the development of "worshipful fans" (90).

With worshipful fans the relationship with celebrities, i.e. the objects of fandom, has transgressed a new level, where fans appropriate their idols as "part of the publicly performed self" (Sandvoss 111) It can and has "become an integral part of their [the fans'] identity, vision of self, as much as their perception by others" (ibid. 163). As Dyer (1986) points out, the fascination of stars finds its footing, because celebrities

> enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production […], with its particular organisation of life into public and private spheres. We love them because they represent how we think that experience is or how it would be lovely to feel that it is. Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed. (17)

Therefore, fandom is often compared to religion. When taking a closer look at the mere definition of the word 'fan', Cashmore traces it back to the Latin adjective *fanaticus* meaning "of a temple" (79). His subsequent definition then is that a fan is someone "who is excessively enthusiastic or filled with the kind of zeal usually associated with religious fervor" (ibid.) Even though what we know today as 'fans' has dramatically shifted to a mere description of basically being admirers, devotees, or followers of considerably anything or anybody, the religious connotation cannot be neglected (ibid.). Such as in religion, people position and reflect about themselves when they are part of this society where celebrities do to some extent call the shots. One prime example of religious practice in celebrity culture is certainly the attraction of attention when big stars pass away. Michael Jackson, Elvis and Lady Diana have memorials, shrines and fans who gather regularly even years after the deaths of their idols (Turner 94). Fans praise and worship their stars as if these were their gods and goddesses. To flatten the hype of this unusual act of worship, it must be said though that this bestowing of divine status on mere mortals is not as unusual as it might look. Cashmore examines that history exhibits plenty of examples like the Ceasars or the Pharaohs that encouraged their followers to render divine status on them (78). The point that I am trying to make here is that nowadays celebrities do not have to tell anyone to do so anymore, but that society with the help

of the media already does this unconsciously. Drawing a line to the study I mentioned in chapter 1, Barack Obama was among the most mentioned celebrities that come to mind when asking thirty people about their opinions. The question now is 'why him?' In the context of worshiping, Cashmore gives an adequate answer saying that " in the modern world, millennial cults are typically led by charismatic figures claiming messianic powers.[...] Their influence makes the veneration comprehensible" (78). In other words, Barack Obama may be so famous, because he is not only charismatic, but he also promises to change the world with slogans such as 'yes, we can' or 'we are the ones we've been waiting for'. His speeches, his history as well as his powerful performances let audiences gain faith in the *one who saves* them.

A further aspect concerns the scale of celebrity worship that Maltby *et. al* came up with in their article about attitudes and behaviors in connection with celebrity worship (25-29). This scale defines how *hardcore* a fan is, low worship referring to what many of us do consciously or unconsciously: catching news about celebs by watching TV, surfing on the net or reading about them in magazines and newspapers. The more extreme level is that of the worshipful fans that show "a mixture of empathy with the celebrity's successes and failures, over-identification with the celebrity, compulsive behaviours, as well as obsession with details of the celebrity's life" (McCutcheon 67). On the scale this group of people is called 'borderline-pathological' as they tend to not be able to distinguish between their very own lives and their idols' lives anymore. Created out of the two-dimensional material shown on the screen, celebrities "become so real to us that we feel we know something about them – or, in the case of [..] the Borderline Pathological fans, feel we actually know them and have feelings that are reciprocated" (Cashmore 81). The danger of such obsessive behavior must not be neglected however. David Giles remarks that "the obsessive fan who camps on the star's doorstep has the potential to become either a murderer or a marriage partner. The difference between the devoted admirer and the dangerous 'stalker' may be alarmingly narrow" (146). The explanation for a more extreme settlement of celebrity worship is suggested by John M. Grohol who claims that

> people who have the most extreme celebrity worship look to the outside world for explanations, and believe celebrities might hold a piece of that cure. […] And maybe that's the real key... That we're seeking a sign of humanity that we can relate to and that feels familiar to us, despite how far away, unreal, and unattainable such lives really are. (Grohol n.p.)

This explanation might be formulated in a rather positive way, nevertheless, I am of the opinion that deep down in every hardcore-fan's heart the mentioned 'real key' does apply, because having answers to questions life poses - even if they are filtered through the media and/or publicity purposes – simply secures each one of us a sense of alleviation. On the other

hand, Maltby *et al.* associate obsessive celebrity worship with rather negative patterns of behavior that actually lie in the health system of an individual. Poorer general health, particularly mental issues such as depression, social dysfunctions and/or anxiety problems would be prevalent factors in people who show more than just admiration for their stars. (qtd. in Gibson Nov. 20, 2008) Furthermore, a low self-esteem of fans showing obsessive features towards celebrities (which can be put into the same category as 'poor general health') is illustrated by Karl A. Roberts:

> […] stalking could be considered an abnormal attachment pattern similar to the preoccupied attachment style. Individuals with this attachment style may indulge in approach and stalking behaviour because they overvalue others and perceive that contact with others is a means by which they can gain personal validation, which they can use to challenge negative views of the self. (59)

Now, I personally believe that one cannot make general assumptions about the why and the how of celebrity worship. What is elaborated by many different authors, though, is the fact that all these behaviors are part of the para-social relationship patterns that I have already mentioned in chapter 2. In the context of audiences' importance, these kinds of relationships serve social and emotional functions people need when growing up. Even though these connections can follow negative roads, celebrity worship can also be a good thing. As Gibson points out "idolizing or admiring someone for their accomplishments, and then pushing yourself to excel in the same way are positive elements." (Nov. 20, 2008) Even more when being a teenager, for example, a romantic para-social relationship with a celebrity can serve as a good preparation for an adult relationship as it is a "relationship at a safe distance" (qtd. in Roberts 56).

All in all, celebrity worship certainly is a driving force when it comes to the phenomenon of celebrities as worshipers keep the fire of fame burning, no matter if in a positive or a negative sense.

4.2. Not only voyeurs, but performers

The important aspect in this sub-chapter is that fans have not only been fans for the sake of fandom, but have turned into consuming fans which probably is the most evident contributing factor to why audiences serve as a fuel. With the rise of the media, fans have been more and more in the sight of advertisers, publicists and producers. The target group, the audiences have become more central as well as significant in the process of celebrity production as they "find empowerment in their consumption of popular culture" (C. Harris 43). Cashmore underlines

the stating of empowerment by saying that audiences "operate in a culture of consumption and are, as such, not joyless victims of commodification, but cheerful contributors in the process" (95). As the title suggests, fans then are not only voyeurs any longer, but performers themselves. Being a fan involves active deeds by the fan. Buying Pink's CDs, going to concerts of U2, watching the premiere of Twilight, sending letters of admiration to one's big idol are all active deeds that are crucial for an artist's existence. If no one had gone to see Twilight, the movie would never have become such a success. This condition leads me to the rhetoric question I ask myself every time I try to align celebrities on a meta level with their audiences: If not for audiences, if not for people to see them, why then would famous figures perform in public?

There is this tendency to see the relationship between celebrities and their fans in a sense of 'quid pro quo'. To put it differently, the proverb 'I scratch your back and you scratch my back' seems to be very adequate here. Celebs exist to be seen, be visible, be praised in public for whatever kind of reasons. This enormous aspect of visibility only works if there are people watching them. Audiences whether they like what they see or not, serve as the filter for celebrities to appear on stage. Consequently, my hypothesis is that to some significant extent, fame is measured by the amount of audiences. People do not become great rock stars if nobody on this earth listens to their music. People cannot become worldwide-known politicians if nobody votes for them. People will never be adored or rewarded for their acting accomplishments if nobody ever goes to the movies to watch them act.

All of these assumptions heavily rely on people's pervasion via the media. The media are the means that make people visible. Be it newspapers, television, the Internet, the radio – they all have contributed to forming the engine to not only driving celebrity culture, but also driving consumerism. Cashmore elegantly describes the media's influence on our lives emphasizing that

> with the expanding presence of the media in the twentieth century came a new and unprecedented influence. Circulating with the endless supply of words was an endless supply of images, representations, or signs that indicated or suggested the direction of our taste.[...] Every ingredient of what we've come to regard as the good life arrives at our senses through the media. Think about what would make you happy. They probably involve either having or appearing. (108,112)

This statement basically involves that our consumerist behaviors are built upon the illustration of successful celebrities that are covered by the media and, therefore, shape our senses. Seen from the merely consumerist perspective, Derek Layder writes: "The pervasive effects of consumerism link identity and social status to the market for commodities" (53). I interpret this

comment in a way as to where celebrities are treated as commodities, which in a long run represent Western society's needs and longings, consequently, we, consumers, are trapped into buying *what we need* or *long for.* From the perspective of consumerist culture then, Gamson states that owing to the constant visibility of stars, audiences have become "simultaneous voyeurs of and performers in commercial culture" (137). An aspect that comes into the picture as well is the power that fans experience when they act like their idols: "To be acknowledged by them – to meet their eyes – is to briefly feel their power" (ibid. 132). Thus, this equally felt power-status naturally encourages audiences to perform themselves in culture and buy advertized products or adapt patterns of behavior of the celebrities.

Nevertheless, on a personal level, celebrities have suffered from being traded as commodities. Giles puts emphasis on the resulting loss of privacy as well as the loneliness on account of visible fame (96). Having fans and paparazzi following you wherever you go has its prize. As I believe this aspect to be important as well, I shortly want to outline the implications of celebrities' sufferings in a broader sense. Audiences also serve as a fuel when it comes to making stars be stressed out. Being followed and photographed every step of one's way, celebrities can clearly develop anxiety issues or other kinds of disorders as they are not granted to have any private lives for themselves any longer. Also eating disorders, drug or/and alcohol abuse can result from the expectations stars nowadays have to live up to, because they are of the opinion that their audiences want perfect role models. Unfortunately, "the private self is no longer the ultimate truth. Instead, what is most true, most real, most trustworthy, is precisely the relentlessly performing public self" (Gamson 54).

To conclude, what it all probably boils down to is that the relationship celebrities have with their fans can end in a vicious circle for both, for stars as well as for their audiences. For stars, as they are constantly ought to be visible, and for audiences as they are trapped into addictive consumerism[11].

4.3. On the Same Side of the Red Carpet

This sub-chapter deals with fans among themselves and their importance as regards celebrity production via the media. Joshua Gamson basically dedicates major parts of his book *Claims to*

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[11] A final note here: This constant visibility is exactly what Daniel Boorstin meant by "human pseudo-event", being "fabricated for the media and evaluated in terms of the scale and effectiveness of their media visibility." (Turner 5)

Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America (1994) to significant developments fans go through when they share common celebrities worthy of praise. These developments can be summarized as follows:

> Paying attention to celebrities is, first of all, as much a social activity as a personal one. Although there are certainly important processes of psychological identification and projection at work, visible celebrity-watching activities are focused mostly on collective experience. [..] Instead, much of the activity is laterally or horizontally focused: rather than looking "up" at celebrities, people are looking "over" at each other. Watchers are connecting with each other through the "sport" of sighting, identifying and categorizing celebrities, exchanging bits of information, or through their common experience of and role in the spectacle. (132)

Here Gamson reveals that sharing the experiences of watching celebrities together with other people plays an important role in developmental, social processes human beings go through. Funnily enough, he even states that the mere fact of waiting for an event is at least as exciting as the spectacle itself (134). Referring to watching as 'a game', he is of the opinion that "the attraction of many celebrity-based events is not so much the celebrities as the opportunity to witness moments in the continued creation of celebrity and to participate in the media of celebrity" (137). The crucial point is that audiences not only intentionally witness the spectacle, but in fact, help create it. In a broader sense one could say that fans "embrace their place in the celebrity system" (ibid.).

Especially Carol Brooks illustrates what this 'embrace' consists of: people who are interested in celebrity culture have the opportunities to share their interests with others who fall for this (n.p.). In other words, one's social circle cannot only be expanded, but also deepened when following the same interests. This, of course, is true for basically all hobbies or interests a person has. There will always be someone in the world who shares the same ones as you do. However, Brooks does emphasize one aspect that, to my mind, makes celebrity culture stand out. By talking about celebs, following them on the Internet, watching their movies or listening to their music, "we collectively define who we are and what we value as a culture" (ibid. n.p.). As already pointed out in chapter 3, celebrities do fulfill several functions among which they also encompass the function of role models and people who have the power to shape and influence our society. Connecting this reminder with the statement made by Carol Brooks, I conclude that living this life collectively is, on the one hand, significant for the developmental processes of identity and, on the other hand, brings along a particular, shared, new system of values within a culture. In this sense, "the position audiences embrace includes the roles of simultaneous voyeurs of and performers on commercial culture" (Gamson 137). As they share this activity of exchanging information about a celebrity, they automatically come up with new

contexts, opinions, values they live out ('perform') in culture. As a commercial consequence, Gamson analyzes that the perceptions of audiences are then what publicist use "as a signal to industry buyers that their client has a reliable market" (115). Publicits and media representatives cannot know what audiences want, but checking on the audience's perception of events, people, products, appears to be enough to maintain the industries.

To sum up, audiences serve as a production element on the part of celebrity-making and at the same time create shared values as they enjoy the existence of celebrities in groups.

PART II –

"Every medium of communication creates and presents a unique view of reality"

(Chesebro and Bertelsen 1996: 22)

5. Big Brother

'I need to watch the show tonight to see whether Nick gets ejected!' or 'I don't understand why people seriously watch reality TV. Don't they have lives of their own?' are two comments that can be associated with the reality TV format of *Big Brother*. People are drawn to watch *Big Brother* all over the world. Until now, over two billion people have seen it as it has been screened in over 21 countries[12] (Turner 59). Even though the details generally vary across the markets – meaning that the amount of broadcasts within a week can range from daily screening over 3-4 times a week to once a week -, the regular episodes usually all share the supplement of highlights packages including promises by the program to see intimate or conflict-laden scenes. Be it weekly episodes, monthly seasons or internationally realized versions: the reality show *Big Brother* has made it into our homes. When seeing it from celebrity culture's perspective, the contestants of such a show achieve their fame in two different ways. Above all, participating in a show that implicates 24/7 media exposure already entails the "15 minutes of fame" Warhol referred to. And second, owing to this continuous exposure to the media, *Big Brother* provides a platform for future fame following after the show for a number of contestants. Both quests for fame are discussed in the following by starting out with providing the answer to 'what is the aesthetics of the show?' Moreover, questions as 'why does a culture need shows like *Big Brother*?' and 'which effects does *Big Brother* have upon its audience?' will be addressed.

5.1. *Big Brother*'s aesthetics

Big Brother is a reality TV show that has been present in the media now for 13 years being first broadcast on television in Holland in 1999. Being defined as a reality TV show, a definition of what reality TV is first has to be established. According to Jonathan Bignell, reality television "is a recent form of factual programming emerging from the established mode of television

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[12] These countries being: Australia, Holland, the USA, the UK, Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Italy, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Hungary, Poland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

documentary" (8). Although it was initially marketed as a "documentary featuring a social experiment" (72) simply comprising of an exploration of different modes of interaction between people "under various kinds of 'natural' and 'artificial' pressures" (ibid.), Bignell argues that distinct genres, in fact, have been blended and blurred into what we today know to be *Big Brother*. So, what different genres are merged and consulted when *Big Brother* is the result? As already mentioned, the basis of this show is grounded in the genre of documentary. Basically a documentary "concerns itself with representing the observable world, and to this end works with […] the raw material of reality" (Beattie 10). Adding as well as expending this definition can be done by the genre of the docusoap that is a blend in itself (documentary + soap). This genre emphasizes personal stories and is more established around entertainment (Bignell 18). Third, *Big Brother* can also be seen as a gamedoc implicating that contestants have to compete against each other which leads to "periodical[..] eliminate[ion] until only one [is] left to claim the grand prize" (Barton 463). The point is to bring in "competition, strategy and suspense" (Rausch n.p.). Even though *Big Brother* focuses more on the documentary aspect, it certainly features game show elements such as the existence of contestants, rules, a host as well as a prize. All these elements contribute to an increase of drama where the actual thought behind is to put ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances (ibid. Rausch).

Now that the foundation for such a reality TV show is laid, let me turn to the general structure of *Big Brother*.

5.1.1. Key Components

The *Big Brother* format consists of an interaction between a group of contestants, a setting (most often a house), hidden as well as openly accessed cameras and an audience.

The group of contestants are initially strangers to each other and "are drawn from among the ordinary public" to live in a house for a certain period of time (Bignell 21). During this set period, "every moment of their lives will be captured on camera" (Turner 59). Important to acknowledge is that these people have been casted beforehand with the main purpose of having particular personalities on the show (Cecil n.p.)[13]. The resulting participants are "cast for certain aspects of their personalities or aspects the producers feel they can mold into these people's personalities" (ibid. Cecil). Besides this casting process, it must be said that what

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[13] An additional information though very interesting: There are even schools that have been established with the purpose of teaching "people how to be cast for a reality show" (Cecil Casting Reality TV). An example of such a school is The New York Reality TV School that teaches students how to perform in front of a camera, how to pack their life-story into one sentence etc. For more information about the school, see www.newyorkrealitytvschool.com/mainpage.htm

these individuals do, is voluntarily "sacrifice their privacy for an audience" (Little n.p.). As they are limited to rules (e.g. No sleeping during the day, having to wear the microphones 24/7) and as they live inside this box without any access to the outside world that would tell them how they are perceived, the producers have the power to "expose them in any way they please, which might be embarrassing or exaggerated" (ibid. Little). Paradox in that sense though is that most contestants are not only well aware of their rights, but voluntarily stoop to give them away, because "[m]ost of these contestants would do anything to be on camera and have their fifteen minutes of fame" (Farris n.p.*)*. What is striking as well is that every country that broadcasts *Big Brother* casts for distinct "internal dynamics" (Turner 60). Turner gives the examples of the US where the producers cast for conflict and of Australia where the focus is on community (ibid.).

Once the group is fixed, these people move into a house prepared and built for them. This location is restricted and does not allow the contestants to leave it nor is it possible for outsiders to penetrate the area (Bignell 21). The locations that differ in each broadcasting country are littered with cameras, both hidden meaning behind mirrors or in items and public so that the inhabitants of the house can see them. What most formats of *Big Brother* share, is that there is a so-called 'Diary-Room'[14] contestants are daily invited to go to and share their thoughts with the outside world (embodied by the camera that is set right in front of them). Cameras are also installed in the backyard of the house. The intention is to not leave any room for hidden activities of the contestants that the cameras would not catch. In that sense the construction of such a location is not only very professional, but virtually perfect.

As far as the audience is concerned, *Big Brother,* as all the other reality TV shows would not exist if it did not imply several functions. Even if I go into more detail in chapter 5.2., I already want to anticipate the purpose of entertainment that *Big Brother* pursues. At least to the extent that such a show would have very little value if it was not planned to be broadcast and consequently watched by the public, *Big Brother* is dependent on an audience. Of course questions such as 'why should one watch such a show?' and 'is there a need for today's society to expose supposedly 'ordinary' people to the media?' are definitely worth asking and very valid questions[15]. However, considering the aesthetics of *Big Brother*, the general assumption that audiences are part of the overall format, is of importance.

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[14] Furthermore, the 'Diary Room' is a setting that is used across different reality TV shows. A fairly current example is the show *I'm a Celebrity..Get Me Out of Here!* where celebrities are separated from the rest of the world, living in a jungle. There, they have to achieve several tasks in order to get food or other material for living. Such as in *Big Brother*, this show starring celebrities offers a 'Diary Room' for the participants to share their personal experiences with the outside world.
[15] Will be discussed in chapter 5.2. and chapter 5.3.

Thus, a very basic component of *Big Brother* is that it needs an audience in order for the format to work and to have success. The audience has the power to vote for their favorite contestants, to eject their least loved contestants as well as to keep the associated industries going. By associated industries I am referring to particularly the Internet including online websites representing each of the contestants, gossip websites and online shops, all reflating the market (besides the ratings that are achieved via watching the episodes on television).On an economic level, the supplemental revenue that is furthermore won by iPhone applications, video games and text messaging, highly contributes to the overall success of the show. Additionally, on an emotional level, this so-called "interactive media" has been a successful method to emotionally tie the audience to the contestants (Waller n.p.).

A different key component of *Big Brother* taking the audience into account, implicates a narrator.

> […] [T]he function of the narrator is to establish a link between the audience and the programme narrative, by inviting the viewer to involve himself or herself in the ongoing process of the programme structure […]. (Bignell 75-76)

Basically, the narrator functions as the creator of the "framing narration with control over the text" (ibid. 76). In other words, "the voice-over stands outside what has been recorded in order to explain, contextualize and identify turning points or forthcoming attractions" (ibid. 76). While, in the live shows, the role of the narrator is taken over by the presenter who influences the audience's perception of the ongoing show, the voice over within an episode connects the audience with what they are shown on screen. An example of such a voice over can be seen in the first episode of the 14th season of *Big Brother* that started to broadcast on July 12, 2012 in the US. The following paragraph comprises the content of what the voice over commented in the first few minutes of the first episode broadcast on television:

> It's a house like no other where fifty-three cameras follow your every move and ninety-eight microphones capture your every word! This..is the Big Brother house! Tonight, a new group of house guests will enter this house with one goal in mind: to be the last one standing! They will live in total confinement, cut off from the outside world. Every week, the house guests compete..for food, luxuries and most importantly: HOH. Each week, they will vote to evict one of their own, until only one house guest remains to claim the half million dollar prize. And tonight: which four of these Big Brother legends will be back in the house? And how will they change the game? And in a second-twist, one of the new house guests will leave before the night is through. It all starts tonight.. on Biiiig Brother. ("Big Brother 14 Episode 1" n.p.)

After having highlighted the most basic components of the show, I consider the next to-be-asked question to be 'Categorized as a reality TV show, yet constructed on so many different levels, what about *Big Brother* is 'real'?'

5.1.2. Really 'Real' Or 'Hyperreal'!?

According to the MacMillan Dictionary, a "scripted reality" is "a type of television series featuring real people who talk naturally but are put in situations which are pre-arranged by the production company" (Maxwell n.p.). *Big Brother* is no exception when it comes to creating a specific reality as its producers "create situations that would not have existed, so that observational programme makers can shoot them" (Bignell 68). It is very misleading to say that *Big Brother* represents "an authentic reality in an unmediated way" (ibid.), because even the mere fact that people are being filmed implicates "the likelihood if not the necessity of manipulating the real in order to shoot it" (ibid.). A major characteristic defining the genre of reality TV draws on its cinematography. Even though the camera attempts to "act as passive observers", already "the mere presence of the camera might encourage contestants to overact or to put on a show" (Little n.p.). To put it differently, Dovey expresses this process of creating a fake reality explaining that solely *because* there is a camera capturing events, these events happen in the first place (11). Turner then boils this 'reality', which results from its construction, down to its essence which consequently is the production of a representation (62). This representation is what Jean Baudrillard defines to be a 'simulacrum':

> Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. […] It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself. (Leitch *Jean Baudrillard*)

In the case of *Big Brother*, substituted 'signs of the real', such as the just mentioned cinematography, contribute to the becoming of a hyperreal show as manufactured copies have replaced the original, yet still are claimed to be 'real'.

In the context of the camera work, a further 'sign of the real' that actually is the premise for shooting events is that there are human beings involved (=actors). Where the objective is to cast 'real' people in order for the audience to identify with the contestant, the fact of the matter is that even these people do not seem to be as 'real' and authentic as we are told. As pointed out in chapter 5.1.1., the contestants have to go through a long process of casting that should help the producers of *Big Brother* to find out what personality would fit perfectly into the show. Frances Bonner puts the selection process of these ordinary people on a different pedestal claiming that "there are limits to how 'ordinary' such people can be" (Turner 80). Essential is that these pre-selected people are able to "project a personality on television" which implicates that some "are more usefully ordinary people than others" (Bonner 53). Also, she is of the opinion that "for the most part, though, the people who appear on ordinary

television seem […] just a little better looking, a little more articulate, a little luckier" (ibid. 97). I cannot help it, but agree with her. My impression is that the most 'normal' people on *Big Brother* most often get evicted within the first few weeks, because they are not 'interesting' enough. Polarizing personalities, women with a grand bust measurement and/or contestants with an extraordinary sense of humor are preferred to over 40-year-olds whose only 'accomplishment' thus far is two kids and a secretary job in a small enterprise[16]. My point here is that what is conveyed to the audience via the media, are not really 'real' people, but people who appear to be 'real' for the sake of the show.

One further aspect that questions *Big Brother's* authenticity concerns the editing procedures. After shooting all the material, the editing procedures actually are based on manipulation as "sequences shot at different times [,] can be linked together to give the impression of continuous action, and cutting between sequences shot at different times give the impression that they happened at the same time" (Bignell 68). From hundreds of hours of material of the surveillance cameras, the producers get to choose what footage they will use "to create the program's narrative" (Little n.p.). Depending on their decisions, they have the power to alter the direction the storyline goes into. Quotes can be manufactures and scenes can be stitched together. (ibid. Little). Thus, it is not uncommonly for audiences to indeed view certain behaviors of contestants on television which originally were displayed in a completely different context. This device, also referred to as 'frankenbiting', is used to create whole new conversations and dialogues between the contestants "in order to help tell a story the producers want in the show" (Cagle n.p.). Accurately defined by Washington Post reporter William Booth, it is an "art of switching around contestant sound bites recorded at different times and patched together to create what appears to be a seamless narrative" (n.p.). Generally speaking, frankenbiting can happen in two distinct ways:

> The first type is when producers run a piece of audio relatively unedited, but out of context. The second, which the technique gets its name from, is selecting pieces of several sentences that have nothing to do with one another and editing them together into a new sentence. These audio bytes are accompanied by video cuts which help to cover up the splices as well as make the whole situation believable. (Diehl n.p.)

The purpose is to make the viewers believe that the conversations actually happened the way they are shown on television even though scenes have been cut together. For that reason the term 'reality' TV show ultimately is a misnomer as stories can end up being entirely fictionalized (Cagle n.p.).

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[16] More on ordinariness vs. extraordinariness see in chapter 5.2. and 5.3.

What turns *Big Brother* into a hyperreal television show then can be summed up by the outlined three most evident characteristics which are the attempted use of passive cinematography, the pre-cast contestants and the manipulating editing procedures that all basically say: "it no longer makes sense to distinguish between fake and authentic or image and reality, as it is simultaneously both – a hyperreality" (Ott 63).

5.2. Why does our culture need a show like *Big Brother*?

In the following analysis I intend to highlight three major functions *Big Brother* serves, namely that it provides commercial benefits, it supplies our want of voyeurism which correlates with the third aspect of the praise of ordinariness that concedes everybody to get their 15 minutes of fame.

5.2.1. The commercial background of *Big Brother*

From an economic point of view, *Big Brother* – such as other reality TV shows – can be captured very easily and in a rather short amount of time on screen. From establishing a new concept to getting producers for the project to finally shooting the program, a timeframe of five weeks can be enough (Bignell 23). What I am driving at is that *Big Brother* can be a very useful fill-in when there are "sudden ups and downs in television markets" (ibid.). As there are no scripts needed (because it is a 'reality' show), no stars that have to be requested (ordinary people are the plug), and low capital costs, Bignell argues that reality TV shows are "much easier to plan than drama" (23). The author Thomas Fenoglio validly asked the question: "How did a genre with such obvious low production values and reliance on gritty, emotional depictions of what is intended to be perceived as 'real drama' become such a widespread phenomenon?" (n.p.) A comprehensive explanation is provided by Chad Rafael. In his article "The Political Economic Origins of Reali-TV", in one sentence he sums up: "Confronted with rapidly rising above-the-line production costs, producers took it out on below-the-line labor and sought cheaper forms of programming" (136). Fact is that reality television shows do not need above-the-line staff and story editors are paid less, because they do less than lead writers of bigger formats. In most cases, the director is entirely removed from the show and as already mentioned the participants on screen intentionally are not famous actors and actresses, but ordinary people (Fenoglio n.p.*)*. What it actually boils down to is that "in order to pursue a

more 'authentic' depiction of reality", "cheap production is a must" (ibid.) which is certainly also guaranteed by a fluctuating economy.

These cheapening factors help *Big Brother* make a lot of money and capitalize the existence of the show. Generally compared to the times before reality TV shows were common, the example of *Big Brother* demonstrates that the para-social value that emerged from identifying with people picked from our own rows spurred commerce on far-reaching levels. The format does not only make money with the broadcasting of the show, but with different outlets that the show incorporates. First, the broadcasting of the show has drawn millions of people in front of the screen. The first version of *Big Brother* in Holland recorded over 6 million viewers at peak periods (Bignell 53). In Britain, BARB[17] figures have shown that the top ten rated programs on Channel 4 in 2003 were headed by reality TV shows, *Big Brother* topping the list recording 7.2 million viewers (qtd. in Bignell 43). Undoubtedly, *Big Brother* has made a lot of money with its ratings. Second, though, the incorporation of outlets such as online shops, websites, text messaging etc. have underpinned its commercial success. For instance, viewers are encouraged to text in their choices for their favorite contestants or the ones that should be evicted via text messaging. Smart as *Big Brother* is, the format added a "premium text messaging charge" of one dollar per text (Stern n.p.). This strategy is just another, yet a very useful way of capitalizing with the help of new media, because honestly speaking, most viewers in contemporary society do not think twice about submitting a vote via text message as it has become such a common practice (Hagadone n.p.).

5.2.2. The voyeurism of ordinariness

Although voyeurism normally tends to be associated within a sexual context, more generally speaking, it refers to "an unseemly interest in others as curiosities" (Penzhorn 68). Basically, it is the pairing of television's dissemination as a source for news gathering with "the insatiability of the public's desire for information" that has resulted in the concept of voyeurism. To put it differently, the public has a right to know what is going on in the world and by gazing at the television screen this access to information is guaranteed (ibid.). In *Big Brother*, the audience nurtures itself from the public depiction of the contestant's otherwise private lives. Interestingly enough, the relationship between these two, the audience and the participants, "lies in the desire of the audiences to watch and the desire of the participants to be

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[17] BARB = Broadcasters' Audience Research Board

watched" (ibid: 69). What lies behind the surface is that by watching how others live their lives, the audiences are given "a sense of power and control" (ibid.).

> Since the voyeur is receiving information, the audience has a privileged vantage point regarding the person being watched. The voyeur has access to knowledge that the person being spied on does not. (ibid.)

However, one cannot deny that people are simply curious. Watching ordinary people that are supposed to be just like the rest of us human beings, confirms the feeling that television can be authentic. As Wong points out, reality television offer its audience socially accepted as well as legitimate access to observe other people's private affairs (492). Furthermore, implicated in people's curiosity is the sense to make comparisons. People who watch *Big Brother* unconsciously or consciously analyze their own behavior with thoughts in mind such as "would I do the same thing?" or "If I was her, I would never have gone for that." Even though this question why people watch shows like *Big Brother* will still be discussed in chapter 5.3.1., my intention is to illustrate that voyeurism provides a platform that helps us realize how we perceive reality and truth. This is also why, according to Bignell, "factual programmes about other nations and unfamiliar cultures will be less interesting than programmes about ordinary people who are recognizable in the context of the generality of British life" (10). This is certainly not just true for Britain, but for all nations that have dared to broadcast a reality TV show like *Big Brother*.

Funnily enough, at a different point in his book *Big Brother – Reality TV in the Twenty-first Century* (2005), Bignell expands his previously made statement about how ordinariness is much more interesting to the viewer by addressing the issue of 'actually not quite like us'. While ordinariness is represented by supposedly ordinary people who are just like the viewers on the opposite side of the screen "being on television in itself makes these people not 'like us'" (67).

> [T]he dividing lines between television and everyday reality, programme and audience, celebrity and ordinariness, are fine lines which can easily be crossed. The blurring of these boundaries contributes to the confusion of social categories […] (ibid. 67)

Concerning the contestants of *Big Brother*, this crossing of the fine lines has happened very evidently and purposefully, and, above all, very often[18].

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[18] A very good example of this is provided by the German contestant Zlatko Trpkovski. In the next chapter an extract of his career is cited.

5.2.3. A platform to fame

Big Brother provides a platform to fame. The title is to be understood twofold that is to say that a major number of contestants experience their 15 minutes of fame while being on the show. The second approach concerns the opportunities they use in terms of gaining a foothold in different industries after they leave the show.

Within the scope of this chapter, I now will elaborate on this twofold interpretation. In an interview with BBC Radio 1's Jo Whiley[19], the pop-diva Kylie Minogue once commented on fame saying that:

> Fame used to be a by-product.
> [Now] it's like "What do you want to be when you grow up?"
> "Famous."
> "What for?"
> "It doesn't matter." (qtd. in Turner 52)

Contemporary society has made this illusion come true. Solely because the media do have the power to manufacture celebrity, they do so with the vast consent of 'ordinary' people who have not achieved anything in particular, but who strive after fame and know how to become visible. Turner gets to the heart of this shift pointing out that

> [s]ome sections of the media, particularly commercial television, seem to have decided that rather than being merely the end-user of celebrity, they can produce it themselves. Increasingly, they have done this by using 'ordinary' people, with no special abilities and achievements, as the 'talent' in their programmes. […] Those who participate do not want to be singers, or actors, or dancers, necessarily: they just want to be on television. (53)

Without a doubt, that there have never been more 'ordinary' people visible in the media than in our postmodern culture (qtd. in Turner 83). Visibility constitutes the key component of being famous. And it seems as if people who attend reality shows like *Big Brother* have understood that and have started to make use of this knowledge. Cashmore even states that visibility has been "the most important feature" implying that "doing [has become] less important than just being in the public gaze" (10). Giles underlines Cashmore's opinion noting that the responsible source for visibility is due to mere "media involvement" (25). Consequently, one has to acknowledge that reality TV is the prime example to prove that there has been a shift from achievement-based renown to media-driven fame.

Referring back to Daniel Boorstin's shaping statement "a celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knownness" (58), the manufacture of celebrity via reality television

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[19] Interview took place on November 12, 2002

can certainly carry this title. In this respect, Turner very elegantly coins the phrase "the demotic turn" meaning that the construction of the 'ordinary' has proliferated immensely in contemporary media (91). In his opinion, this "explosion of the ordinary" has been utilized by the media and turned into a "kind of media ritual" (ibid. 83) which on the part of the media is considered to "generate the performance of endless and unmotivated diversity for its own sake" (ibid.). Even though this idea that Turner mentions seems a little biased, I do agree. Especially, when I think of the contestants on *Big Brother*, it is the media that enjoy being the "'authors' that produce their own texts" (Hellmueller 8) using their well-thought-through strategies[20].

As the media's goal is to manufacture celebrities via shows like *Big Brother*, the next question is how they get ordinary people to manufacture them. As easy and trivial as it may sound, on earlier stages in this thesis I have already pointed out that "the desire for fame has been a fundamental component of Western societies over many centuries" (qtd. in Turner 10). In addition to it, Braudy details this more or less innate "dream of fame" (7) discussing for him obvious reasons why people pursue it. His main argument surrounds the idea of personal freedom that comes along:

> As the world grows more complex, fame promises a liberation from powerless anonymity. In search of modern fame, we often enter a world of obvious fiction, in which all blemishes are smoothed and all wounds healed. It is the social version of a love that absolves the loved one of fault, restoring integrity and wholeness. […] To be famous for yourself, for what you are without talent or premeditation, means you have come into your rightful inheritance. (7)

Therefore, fame serves as a "personal justification" (ibid.) which is not only allowed by the principles of reality television – in particular Big Brother-, but even encouraged. As Turner justifies: "What *Big Brother* offers is precisely what such a desire creates: the promise of media validation for just being who you are, every day" (63). Real people without any special talents are put in a house and literally observed 24/7. Every move they make is broadcast on television, and this simple method establishes the key for the contestants to get their 15 minutes of fame and for the media to cover new stories. "It is being on television that makes the difference, and given how voracious the medium is, surely we can all achieve that" (Bonner 97). Even though for many of the contestants their fame will have vanished as soon as they are evicted, they enjoy the short-termed visibility and subsequently short-termed fame as "the real prize is the chance to be on television for months" (Turner 60).

The second approach addresses those contestants that literally use being part of the show as a platform to advance into other industries after they are ejected from or have won the show. Turner even claims that "the Big Brother housemates are the epitome of the fabricated

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[20] As discussed in chapter 5.1.

celebrity" (60). A very good example of this kind can be read in the following paragraph that makes reference to one of the contestants who was part of the first German version of *Big Brother* in 2000:

> During its first season Big Brother in Germany became one of the most popular television shows ever to appear on German TV. Consequently, Big Brother fans were shocked when Zlatko Trpkovski, the show's most popular participant got evicted from the house. The Reality TV participant became famous thanks to his lack of knowledge about high culture leading him to ask, for example, "Who was William Shakespeare?" and thanks to his close friendship with roommate Jürgen. Shortly after the eviction his celebrity status further flourished. He produced his first record, climbed to the top of the singles charts, got his own TV show, and several times adorned the front page of the German teenage magazine BRAVO. One of the latter's headlines then said "Zlatko: Star aus dem Nichts" [Zlatko, a star out of the blue" (Nr. 24, 2000). Only one year later, this same man got booed off of the TV stage for his singing performance at the national contest to represent Germany at the Eurovision Song Contest. Zlatko's former and "out of the blue" celebrity status had hit rock bottom. (Hellmueller12-13)

Zlatko perfectly exemplifies the potentially anticipated rise and fall of celebrities. He, as many others, unambiguously is a typical "celetoid" as coined by Rojek (20). While Rojek defines a 'celetoid' to be "the accessories of cultures organized around mass communications and staged authenticity" (ibid. 20-21), Turner paraphrases this type to be someone who "enjoys a hyper-visibility but also an especially short and unpredictable lifespan" (22). In other words, *Big Brother* contestants are to be called 'celetoids', no matter if they have their 15 minutes of fame during the broadcasting of the show or afterwards. However, I argue that the latter are more easily labeled as 'celetoids', because their celebrity status is more widespread throughout different industries and not just limited to the participation of the show. The key factor, Bignell elucidates, lies in the "character of ordinariness and [..] the added frisson of fame" (96) that melt together and consequently create this new form of celebrity. He continues bringing about an example of Britain's *Big Brother* contestants stating that "[s]ix months after the first edition of Big Brother, nine of ten original contestants were working in the media as radio disc jockeys or reporters, and the tenth became a professional musician" (ibid.).

However, it must be remarked that those people's shots at fame are as the definition implies very short-termed. In this context, Turner investigates the interdependency between the fame of the contestants and the program that has made them visible in the first place (54):

> Since the construction of celebrity is thoroughly incorporated into the programming format, any potentially conflicting personal and commercial objectives (that is, those of the celebrities-in-the-making, and those of the producers or networks) are structurally accommodated to each other from the beginning. (ibid.)

A very adequate example of such a limitation to the programming format is shown by Collins who investigated the contractual arrangement the network CBS has installed when signing formats like *Big Brother*:

CBS controls its contestant's access to celebrity status in two ways. First, the contract stipulates that contestants are subject to authorization by CBS for *any* [highlighted by the author] media contact or appearances for three years after the show airs. Not only does CBS protect the show's "trade secrets" through the confidentiality proviso, but contestants are also prohibited from accepting paid celebrity work not sanctioned by CBS long after the show's winner has been disclosed to the public. A breech in contract entitles CBS to sue the contestants for damages. In addition, the contract includes a "life story rights" section that effectively binds the signatory into relinquishing control over his or her life story and public image. (98)

To put it differently, the out-of-the-blue stars virtually do not have any other platform than the *Big Brother* format from which they could address an audience (Turner 54).

A further reason why their shot at fame is rather limited has been found out by Turner, Bonner and Marshall. They came to the conclusion that often times their celebrity status is "built on their exposure in a particular, low-prestige vehicle" (Turner 37) which is simply not sufficient to be credible enough to make it as an actor or actress or become a really good musician. Their fame is based on the "portraying of their 'real' selves in front of the camera" (Hellmueller 16), so what other plug could they come up with? Compared to professional actors and actresses, it thus more easily is the case that cultivating a public persona seems impossible (ibid.). After all, the truth remains – and we shall not forget that – that these people do not display any 'real' talents. Of course, one could argue that "appearing in a reality TV show is *something*" (Cashmore 205), however, it does not lay a profound foundation for further possibilities regarding a long-term career.

Completing this chapter, I want to remark that while conventional celebrities often are trying to keep their private lives out of the picture of their fame, precisely the reverse is true for *Big Brother* where "private revelations are offered as the opening move in a process that runs these people into celebrities" (Turner 63).

5.3. *Big Brother's* agency

As a reality TV show, *Big Brother* has repercussions that I assume the majority of people who watch it are not even aware of. In this chapter my intention is to analyze the effects *Big Brother* has upon us the viewers. Biased opinions will be swept out of the way providing answers to the following questions: "Boring: then why do so many viewers watch them? Passive: then why do millions vote? […] Patronizing to viewers: then why don't they switch channels?" (Cashmore 189-190)

5.3.1. Why do people watch *Big Brother*?

In my opinion, there are three underlying reasons for the existence of viewing audiences when it comes to *Big Brother*. All these reasons are subject to an acknowledged democratizing opening of reality television to invite audiences to become active by letting them "express their preferences" (Cashmore 200) via Internet, text messaging and phone calls.

This being said, the first reason revolves around the simple factor of entertainment. *Big Brother* is an entertaining hybrid show that offers its viewers a lot of drama, competition, fun, as well as emotional bonding (as these 'ordinary' people are selected from 'our own rows'). Implying elements of a soap-opera, a lot of viewers like to follow the narratives (the different stories) that are told by the different contestants representing distinct constellations within the house. Themes such as romance, integrity, and fidelity "are among the fundamental attractions […] in popular culture" (Turner 49). Moreover, competition-based tasks the contestants have to complete, rewards as well as punishments give the show the necessary thrill. Viewers feel entertained when they see how other people battle for a prize and also when challenges need to be won. A feeling of excitement runs through their veins when they, having an outside perspective, know that time will be up soon, but the contestant still has to go through the course. Turner expresses it that way as to where there is an "insatiable appetite for ordinary people" and it is reality TV that manages to assuage this appetite by "offer[ing] to display our everyday identities as a spectacle, as an experiment, as entertainment" (ibid. 62).

Coming from a different angle, the value of entertainment also includes – if not above all – the characteristic of curiosity. As the program can be "promoted as news, as a cultural phenomenon, as the launching pad for raft of new celebrities, as a contest to be played over the phone or through SMS and, finally as just television" (ibid. 59), viewers cannot help it, but pursue their innate curiosity of the new and unknown. Funny enough they even follow the events that happen in the house even though they can easily predict what is going to happen. In this case, they want to have their predictions confirmed which is why they continue watching the episodes.

Very notably interpreted from this perspective is Annette Hill's comment on viewers' strategies. She describes the viewers' curiosity in a slightly different way by arguing that their curiosity is nothing else but a quest of "the moment of authenticity when real people are 'really' themselves in an unreal environment" (324). As the majority of viewers of contemporary society are educated enough to know that a massive manufacture lies underneath such reality TV shows, she highlights that "the 'game' is to find the 'truth' in the

spectacle/performance environment" (ibid. 337). And it is for this reason that shows like *Big Brother* attract so many viewers.

.   A second access to approach the question of the *why,* has already been outlined throughout this thesis[21]. When watching celebrities, people, or stars, audiences create para-social relations with them. This is an important and an inevitable process that contributes to one's identity development. I argue that this is even more true with 'ordinary' people that are seen on TV. 'Ordinary' people are praised to be 'everyday people' who are supposed to behave and be 'just like the rest of us'. If they manage to get their shot at fame, why would not anybody else make it then!? To my mind, the potential to identify with people representing normality and ordinariness simply appears to be more likely. However, this para-social relation has to be looked at from two distinct ends, namely it can have positive as well as negative implications. Certainly evoking the feeling that really everybody can get their shot at fame (as just outlined), it must be said that the contestants' ordinariness guarantees a particular role-model-function as they are reflections of the values of contemporary society. Diehl so appropriately notes that "television shapes people's perception of reality and what they consider to be normal or acceptable" (n.p.). Especially contestants of reality TV shows approve this 'normality' factor of society as they are labeled as 'ordinary' in the first place and, when taking a closer look, in many ways really display nothing special but normality. Therefore, it happens to be fairly easy to identify with them as 'we all sit in the same boat'. In the case of *Big Brother* contestants, I interpret that positive identification includes comparable life stories, jobs in the outside world, and, above all, attitudes and values those people hold and represent within the house. Their behaviors can validate the opinions and attitudes of viewers who, as participants from the outside, have the ability to allow themselves to take out the bits and pieces they want.

On the other hand, the para-social relation can also work in a negative manner. Viewers often consider the contestants on shows like *Big Brother* to be 'stupid', 'dishonest' and/or 'superficial' owing to their behavior in the show. This actual rejection stirred up in the viewers, paradoxically indicates a generating bonding. The following example is taken from the 11th season of *Big Brother* in the United States and shall offer more insight into this contradictory bonding. During this season, Nathalie Martinez caused quite some annoyance not only for her co-housemates, but especially for the viewers of the show. According to Ken Tucker, the editor of the online *Entertainment Weekly,* the too often too emotional and yet blank comments she makes, are simply nerve-wracking expressing the following example:

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[21] Especially in chapter 3.2.

> To run around last night, as Natalie did after winning a foolish HOH competition that was just a lousy guessing-game and crowing triumphantly, "I did it by sticking to my word!" was kinda infuriating. Her "word" (a) had nothing to do with her win and (b) meant nothing anyway, since she'd broken her word to Jeff and others repeatedly.[…] Natalie is a lot more unintelligent in the way she has no self-awareness, no strategy. She just piggybacks onto any player who's doing well. (Tucker n.p.)

Reactions of viewers to Natalie winning a contest were enormous. In blog format many commented on their attitude towards this contestant ("Comments" n.p.)

I really don't want to watch at all. i wanted natalie to be evicted this wk so bad. if she wins the whole thing, i will be livid. (Kat)

I had to turn the tv off in disgust after Nat won HOH. I absolutely cannot STAND her. I cant even watch the feeds at all this week unless Michele wins veto and at least can get kevin out for god sake. If nat wins this season it will be the worst since Maggie. (Nate)

I don't think I can watch a week of Natalie being HOH. If she gets into the final two I won't watch at all. She does not deserve to be there at all. (Jackie)

BB handed HOH to the most hated player of the season. Natalie was incapable of winning anything but a crap shoot and that is what they handed to her on a platter. sickening. Thanks BB, you want to kill the show because why exactly?? (Sara)

In total 286 viewers commented as a response to one eviction show where obviously Natalie did not get evicted but a more likeable person. What I find striking, is the fact that even though Natalie is such a nagging person and so hated by the audience, being this way keeps the people watching as if they needed a scapegoat they could pour out all their anger and frustration on. Hence, this is what I mean when referring to contradictory bonding.

To put it in a nutshell, both positive as well as negative para-social relations with the contestants of *Big Brother* lead people to watch the show as in the participants' 'ordinariness' the game for many is to find the truth (as stated earlier in this chapter discussing Annette Hill's approach) either by totally identifying with the characters or by a hostile way of bonding with them.

5.3.2. The Loss of Privacy – "Big Brother is watching…society"

I dedicate this last chapter of the analysis of *Big Brother* to the effect particularly this reality TVshow has on our society. My main argument is that the reality TV show *Big Brother* is to be seen as a concrete metonymy of the ever-increasing surveillance system of western society as a whole. The 24/7 monitoring of the contestants by outside, the recording of every move on tape and the fact that after a while or in particular situation the contestants even forget that they are

being filmed, all are aspects that effectively can be apportioned among western societal structures. For instance, in the United States the surveillance system has been on the increase:

> There are over 30 million closed-circuit television cameras in America recording 24-7, catching the average citizen on film nearly 200 times daily. Every American has a 9-digit government Social Security number assigned to them at birth. We require government licenses to drive, to get married, and have pets, government passports to travel, and corporate credit cards to book tickets, make reservations, and shop online. Our phone lines are tapped and our emails are compiled and saved. Intelligence agencies and corporations share and maintain huge databases full of information on every citizen. The government, corporate, and media interests have all melded into one cohesive unit, propagating the "official" version of reality through every newspaper and TV set. (Dubai n.p.)

Also in the UK an investigation by *The Sunday Telegraph* has shown that the government as well as private companies and law enforcement agencies collect quite an alarming amount of personal data about their citizens:

> In one week, the average person living in Britain has 3,254 pieces of personal information stored about him or her, most of which is kept in databases for years and in some cases indefinitely. The data include details about shopping habits, mobile phone use, emails, locations during the day, journeys and internet searches. In many cases this information is kept by companies such as banks and shops, but in certain circumstances they can be asked to hand it over to a range of legal authorities. (R. Gray n.p.)

These examples reveal in what kind of society we are situated in! Very reasonable one can question whether one's privacy can still be protected in some way then. To be honest, I do not believe there is a possibility left. Taking into account the massive freedom the Internet has brought along, I would not know how to get back to life without these technological devices[22]. Additionally remarked must be that society itself actively engages in the surveillance as platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook excessively show.

In the context of the reality show *Big Brother*, my argument is that while the people who attend this show do not seem to be fully aware of what they are getting themselves into, the audiences in front of the television screen are not either. It seems as if the actual hidden fact that society is imprisoned in a surveillance system is purposefully made obvious in such a way that it does not entirely feel true to us anymore. To put it differently, the reality of distinct mechanisms of surveillance within our society is undermined by the hype of inauthentic 'reality' television shows that again from a broader perspective reflect contemporary societal structures.

To conclude, *Big Brother* is a vital example of today's success to offer random people their 15 minutes of fame. As analyzed in these chapters about the reality TV show, there are quite some layers that constitute its aesthetics, its functions as well as its effects. The dynamic

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[22] The reason for this being that all the technological developments have brought along so much good as well that it is hard to argue that the dark side of them would outweigh the benefits.

processes of the show give us insight into what is really 'real' and what is 'hyperreal' and in how far our perception of reality is shaped by this knowledge.

6. Paris Hilton

"Their chief claim to fame is their fame itself. They are notorious for their notoriety." (Boorstin 60)

Paris Hilton epitomizes this introductory statement by Boorstin. Who? Why? How? – These questions will be addressed in this chapter as I am drawing on different concepts that all together generate the representation of Paris Hilton. Contemporary society has made it possible for this woman to emerge and shine like a star. Although a lot of people question her success, it must be admitted that there are not too many people who have managed to shine so brightly. Thanks to considerably thought-through strategies, Paris Hilton's "15 minutes of fame" are still counting. These strategies (as will be outlined step by step) basically all build on the media: the concept of Boorstin's 'human pseudo-event', the concept of becoming a brand as well as keeping up a concrete image and the proliferation as well as maintenance by the media (e.g. Perez Hilton's online blog).

6.1. The Human Pseudo-Event

Before digging into the mere analysis of the incarnation of the 'new' celebrity, Paris Hilton, I would like to refer to Daniel Boorstin's 'human pseudo-event' seen in the context of Paris' appearance (9 ff.). In his book *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* he firstly refers to the prefix 'pseudo' to mean "intended to deceive" and "false" questioning public appearances of famous figures (ibid. 57). Using Boorstin's tautology "a person who is known for his well-knownness" (ibid. 58), I generally understand this concept of the 'human pseudo-event' to be a staged, manufactured event or performance by a public persona to generate interest and press coverage. To my interpretation, Boorstin adds that, indeed, there is no substantiality to this process of construction (Gabler 2).

He lists different characteristics that such a pseudo-event possesses (Boorstin 11-40). For the sake of this chapter being dedicated to Paris Hilton, the following features are selected and associated with Paris in order to demonstrate how much of a pseudo-event she herself represents.

The first mentioned feature is that pseudo-events are not spontaneous, but "planned, planted, or incited" (Boorstin 11). Basically, this criterion can be applicable to all celebrities we see in Hollywood. An example is the illustration below, that imply celebrities who would not be celebrities if they did not *pose* in public. Going to a movie premiere, attending some kind of

Awards show or launching a new product – all these events serve as platforms that are carefully thought through, organized and constructed with the intention to get new narratives for the audiences.

Figure 1 - Posing in front of the world ("Paris Hilton hat einen Wellensittich" n.p., "Paris Hilton bei der 'Dirty-Dancing' Premiere" n.p.)

Second, the success of pseudo-events is determined by the immediate report and reproduction by the media. The more immediate and 'live on site' they are captured, the wider circles they can draw from there into everyday humans' homes through television, the Internet or the radio. To my mind, Paris always draws on this feature when she leaves her home. As many other celebrities, she would never go out unmade-up. As she embodies a trademark herself[23] she would also never go out without any of the numerous products she promotes (for instance a handbag), nor would she not be faithful to her slogan she let be trademarked "that's hot" in a conversation. All this, because she knows that the public eye gazes at her whatever step she takes.

Third, pseudo-events are more dramatic as they are preplanned and constructed to present certain images the public expects from them. In Paris Hilton's case, I want to highlight her TV shows she played in. I argue that *The Simple Life* or *Paris Hilton's New BFF* are really well promoted pseudo-events as so much drama, deliberate elements of a game show, strong emphasis on the participants' feelings and intended bad behavior in the shows not just contributed to their success, but, in fact, created that success. This is also why, for the most

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[23] This will be discussed in chapter 6.3.

part, participants are selected to be part of the shows that are of "newsworthy and dramatic interest" (ibid. 39).

Forth, for the public, the knowledge of pseudo-events can be seen as a "test" of "being informed" (ibid. 40). Quiz questions not necessarily about what has happened, if not more about the names that appeared in the spotlight and their dress codes etc. become of more interest. Games in talk shows about associations with celebrities have become common. An example I always like referring to is the *Ellen DeGeneres* show. In most of her shows the hostess Ellen has a celebrity as a guest, thus, doing a great job in being a further medium for these people to promote themselves. As a special element of her show, she often plays the game *Celebrity* with guests (be it audience members or famous figures) that in connection with pseudo-events very vividly illustrates how well informed one can be when it comes to the entertainment industry.

Finally, pseudo-events are "intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy" (ibid. 12). I will go into more detail when discussing Paris Hilton as a brand in chapter 6.3., however, for now, I just want to outline the surface. Coined by Robert Merton, a self-fulfilling prophecy describes "a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior, which makes the originally false conception come true" (Merton 477).

Paris Hilton is a self-proclaimed entertainer, actress and fashion designer and by defining herself 'falsely' (because, above all, she is not perceived to have talent for any other these roles by the public) she certainly has managed to make these false conceptions realities in her life. Some still might say that she is talentless, but fact is that she has accomplished quite a number of things for only being 31 years old. To only list a few, she not only has played the main character in different reality shows, but she has opened clubs around the world, established her own record label Heiress Records, released different perfumes and different sorts of accessories and has worked on clothing lines. My assumption is that all these efforts have been endeavors to reinvent her as 'hot' which – admit it or not - has worked.

All these characteristics imply that Paris Hilton serves as a prime example of the 'human pseudo-event'. However, the rise of the occurrence of 'human pseudo-events' – which can be synonymous for the rise of the celebrity – could never have been so steadily going upwards, if it was not for the remarkable technological developments our society has gone through, especially during the last decades. Without the remodeling of the printing press, the invention of photography, the proliferation of television and the explosion of the World Wide Web, celebrities would lack access to their audiences. Consequently, mainstream fame and prominence could neither develop nor be distributed in public. According to Boorstin, the

celebrity system could not exist if it was not for the diverse possibilities of reproducing images and stories (ibid. 13). And this is what he refers to as the "Graphic Revolution" that has changed so much of the benchmark we set for human greatness (ibid. 45). It implies the shift from the "'natural' way of becoming well known" to the increasing demand for "Big Names" that has been manifested in the manufacture of fame that is of interest in this thesis (ibid. 47).

In the following chapters, the focus is on this manufacture that very beautifully is shown by the general image of the living queen of the famous-for-being-famous-phenomenon, Paris Hilton.

6.2. The Image

Paris Whitney Hilton, born on February the 17th 1981 in New York, sister of Nicky, Barron and Conrad Hilton, daughter of Rick and Kathy Hilton is by far one of the most significant socialites the world has ever seen. Being the heir apparent to the real estate dynasty, meaning the vast Hilton's hotel chain, Paris has been living a certain "glitzy socialite life" from early on including being visible at exclusive parties in order to be in the spotlight for the gossip press (IMDb *Paris Hilton*). According to Chris Rojek, Paris Hilton is a representative of the celebrity being determined by blood which includes an inherited prominence and is granted a lot of respect and admiration. He calls such a type of celebrity the *ascribed* celebrity by adding that such figures "may add or subtract from their ascribed status by virtue of their voluntary actions, but the foundation of their ascribed celebrity is predetermined" (17). This view is taken up by Graeme Turner who differentiates ascribed celebrities from achieved celebrities by stating that on account of their social status, these people are often protected from several alterations celebrities from other industries (such as entertainment, media, sports) often have to go through. He exemplifies his opinion explaining that

> where the celebrity from the entertainment world is subject to shifts in fashion and taste that can wipe out their professional careers completely, the royal celebrity's continuity is more or less assured. They may move in and out of the public gaze, take a more or less active role in public life, but they will continue to occupy the same status for life. (95)

Regarding Paris Hilton, I only partly agree with Turner's inference. Paris may always be a celebrity owing to her status, however, to me, she embodies the perfect medium for shifts of whatever kind, as she is a brand herself. This daring statement will be elaborated in more detail in chapter 6.2.1. For now, I intend to raise the question of why she has become such a celebrity disregarding her social status.

A lot of people around the globe know many things about Paris Hilton, for example, that she made a sex-tape with her Ex-boyfriend and made the video publicly available or that she looks like a barbie doll – tall, blond, blue eyes – or that she is used to speaking in a rather high tone of voice (more or less in a baby voice). However, very few, if any, can tell why she is so famous. What is it that has made her obtain such a celebrity status?

My answer to that is her constructed image. Boorstin shares his opinion expressing that in our age it has become possible to produce this new kind of eminence called 'celebrity'. It is possible to fabricate images in order to "satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness" (57-58). Furthermore, he states that the image of a celebrity is

> The product of no conspiracy, of no group promoting vice or emptiness, [it] is made by honest, industrious men of high professional ethics doing their job, "informing" and educating us. [It] is made by all of us who willingly read about [them], who like to see [them] on television, who buy recordings of [their] voice, and talk about [them] to our friends. (ibid. 58)

So, Paris has become a 'big name' - as one would say in trade jargon – owing to the help of people such as PR managers, agents etc. and owing to the audience[24] that consumes celebrities like her.

However, I see that Paris has undertaken different steps herself that made her famous. Paris began a pricy and exceptional campaign to come into the limelight drawing on different media outlets such as the television industry, the music industry, and the fashion industry. Before the public eye could gaze at her as a celebrity, she underwent a considerable amount of physical alteration. Referring to what I stated a few sentences earlier, looking like a barbie doll, for instance, took her substantial plastic surgery, change of hair color (originally she is a brunette) and blue-colored contact lenses (her eye color originally is brown) (IMDb *Paris Hilton*). In her book *Confessions of an Heiress*, she comments on these changes:

> I'm a brand, an entertainer. The brand Paris Hilton is like a fantasy life. I think people think of me as like an American princess fantasy. I want to be an icon. It's just something I always wanted to be. Madonna is an icon and just amazing. The color of my eyes is part of the image I want. (qtd. in M&C n.p.)

Even though she claims that all this image-creation is what she had always wished for, Turner believes that this construction of a public persona certainly results in some kind of loss of one's autonomous identity. He further examines this thought by saying that this image, in other words, the on-screen character, has to be preserved also when not being on camera anymore. Regarding the use of this baby voice, Paris herself openly justifies in an interview with the

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[24] Will be discussed in chapter 6.3.2.

ABC News' reporter Dan Harris that this voice serves as a tool she developed for the on-screen persona:

> Reporter: "Is it true that when you're not on camera, your voice drops and you are much more serious?"
> Paris: "Definitely. [..] It's the character I developed for "The Simple Life". They wanted someone who is an airhead and kind of had the baby voice. So, that's a character I had to do and continue to do for five seasons. Uhm..so sometimes when I'm on camera, I rev it back a little, 'cause I'm just so used to it. I did it for so long." (D. Harris)

However, these behaviors and attitudes seem to be wrapped up when the celebrity industries see them as "reasonable trade-off[s] for increased market power within the industry" (36).

Another example treated as part of the image-making concerns the sex-tape that revealed the original inventor of the "famous-for-being-famous" lifestyle Paris Hilton. Basically, the tape that stars her, was used as an initial platform to leave the rich-man's daughter-image and become a scandal-stirring IMDb even writes that this home video was part of the "publicity stunts" to keep her exposure on a high level. Or to put it differently, releasing the video online was actually part of this campaign and it obviously worked. "For better or for worse, it made Hilton a household name overnight, and was even widely marketed as a video, 1 Night in Paris (2004)" (ibid. IMDb).

Indispensable when talking about Paris' construction of her image are all the attempts, successes and failures she has had in different industries and displayed to the world. At the beginning of Paris' career, it seems as if many distinct designers, producers and managers were relying on her notoriety as the *it*-girl from the noble Hilton house. She did some modeling, appeared in different TV commercials and held guest-star roles in TV shows such as *O.C. California* (2003). Besides further minor roles in movies as *House of Wax* (2005), she started producing and acting in her own reality TV series. Until now she performed five distinct seasons of *The Simple Life* (2003-2007), different versions of *Paris Hilton's My New BFF* (2008-2009) and recently *The World According To Paris* (2011) starred her and her everyday life (ibid. IMDb).

I argue that especially the reality TV series she launched in the last 10 years have manifested her image in the media and made her the 'blond, dumb, spoiled girl' we see when turning on one of her shows on TV. This observation is supported by a little survey I did on 'Paris Hilton' for the sake of this chapter. I asked 36 people to answer the following two questions[25]: 1. What spontaneously comes to mind when you think of Paris Hilton? 2. Why do you think is Paris so famous? A lot of participants actually did not answer the questions

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[25] See Appendix!

independently from each other. However, the overall results are very informative: Answers to the first question can be categorized into personal traits (perceived by this audience), the image and products (including everything she has actively done to promote herself). Four people explicitly declared Paris Hilton to be a *broad.* Seven added adjectives such as dumb, superficial and spoiled. Two others' first connotation was the label 'prostitute' and many, to be precise, ten people associate part of her image – blondness – with her. Three times she was labeled as "party/it-girl" and also three times as being very troublesome and nerve-racking. In total ten times, Hilton was associated with her products such as her canned champagne, her TV-Show *The Simple Life* or the video *1 night in Paris.*

The second question revealed very evident results as well: Eleven participants are of the opinion that her family of origin (or at least the last name Hilton) has mainly contributed to her fame. Six others added that thanks to being born rich (so, referring to her wealth) she simply can afford being famous. However, the main argument throughout this survey emerged to be that Paris Hilton is an incredible business woman. Over 16 participants are of the opinion that the reason for her fame must lie in her sense of business. She simply knows how to market herself.

These results lead me to my second chapter that deals with Paris Hilton's extraordinary talent to merchandize herself as a brand in different areas.

6.3. The Brand

In her book *Confessions of an Heiress,* Paris reveals that it is all about strategy to be in the focus of public's attention:

> The way I keep people wondering about me is to smile all the time and say as little as possible. Smile beautifully, smile big, smile confidently, and everyone thinks you've got all kinds of secret things going on. And that keeps them wanting more. And when they want more, you're automatically interesting. If you give too much away, no one needs to know anything else. You've given it all away – and for free. And if you do that, well, you're never going to have any money. Or make any money. It's what they call "supply and demand. (8)

'Keeping them want more'; it sounds so simple and yet only very few people embody such a 'supply and demand' as perfectly as Paris Hilton. It is her public persona, her image she had worked on for years that established the basis for all the product productions, promotions and new commodities on the market. The website *Lemons black*[26] published a very interesting article about Paris in May 2012 that deals exactly with this embodiment of supply and demand.

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[26] Lemons black is a website that explores and provokes certain challenges for the digital world emphasizing the interrelation of technology with traditional life, media, art and culture

According to this article called "Paris Hilton – Self-Fulfilling Prophecy As A Business Model", Paris is a master in the art of business:

> Her core business is not acting or singing. It's promotion. She promotes people, places and products. And she does that by promoting herself and then attaching herself to the things she promotes through appearances and various media forms. (Scheers n.p.)

This woman is the born promoter. In different areas such as fashion and accessories she created a self-fulfilling prophecy. As strategies of fame, she used adversity situations that businesses hold for her benefit. Usually adverse situations consist of problems that are prevalent and the solutions to solve these difficulties that then lead to making profit. Paris approached this usual procedure from a slightly different angle. The article points out that her business model is built upon the premises of creating a problem to which her solutions fit in order to accumulate money. Therefore, she created mainly two problems: The first one is that, by now, her brand has grown so strong that if media outlets would decide to not cover her any longer, they would lose viewers to those outlets that would remain faithful to her coverage in the media. Second, actually resulting from the first act of dependency is that the more she is visible in and through the media the less there is a need to report about other people. Consequently, people be it celebrities like Lindsay Lohan or to-the-world-unknown managers such as the president of the DT Model Management David Todd are forced to resort in Paris' presence in order to 'be seen'. These dependencies on herself fuel her business and very impressively demonstrate that supply and demand can be achieved by providing for both, a problem and a solution. (Scheers n.p.)

It is the individuated personality that is defined to be the brand. While Deena Weinstein has apportioned this idea among musicians arguing that it is of crucial importance to "get listeners to fall in love with the person rather than the song", she concludes that "there's a better chance fans will buy the next album – and concert tickets, T-shirt, video book and poster" (65). Turner agrees with her by simply claiming that "the whole structure of celebrity is built on the construction of the individuated personality" (37). In Paris' case, the way in which her fame is structured, cannot be detached from the products, people or events she promotes either. And it is exactly her celebrity persona that increases her marketability day by day (Gamson 84). Boorstin very nicely concludes that "to be known for your personality actually proves you a celebrity. Thus a synonym for 'a celebrity' is 'a personality'" (65).

Turner so eloquently puts this aspect of Paris Hilton in a nutshell noting that she is a "*branding* mechanism for media products that has assisted [her] fluent translation across media formats and systems of delivery" (Turner 34).

6.4. Why Do We Need A Paris Hilton?

Why do we need a Paris Hilton? The main title of this chapter actually starts from the premise that we not only acknowledge socialites such as Paris to exist, but that we do need people like her in our society.

On the one hand, I want to draw on the connection between the audience and Paris that Daniel Boorstin exemplifies. From his point of view, the Graphic Revolution has spawn celebrities that ultimately are only substitutes for "heroes" (being people who have really accomplished something) (60). The rise of these celebrities has been influencing our experiences that have resulted in emptiness as there is no more profound information shared. To put it differently, "our experience tends more and more to become tautology – needless repetition of the same in different words and images" (ibid.). He gets to the heart of this shift suggesting that

> [p]erhaps what ails us is not so much a vice as a 'nothingness'. The vacuum of our experience is actually made emptier by our anxious straining with mechanical devices to fill it artificially. What is remarkable is not only that we manage to fill experience with so much emptiness, but that we manage to give the emptiness such appealing variety. (ibid. 60)

This is exactly it! I completely agree with him, because it is a valid reflection of the necessity we feel nowadays to manufacture celebrities. With the help of the Graphic Revolution, celebrities are made to "please, comfort, fascinate, and flatter us. They can be produced and displaced in rapid succession" (ibid. 74). And all of this has continually been happening, because our society is passionately dedicated to filling the voids inside of us.

Grounded in this hypothesis, he lifts the consumption of celebrities on a next level. Floating the suggestion that "the celebrity is usually nothing greater than a more-publicized version of us" (Boorstin 74), Boorstin touches on a very interesting perspective here. When taking Paris Hilton into account, this would mean that we are ultimately simply looking in a mirror when gazing at her. Referring to what I already discussed in chapter 3.2., talking about the social functions of celebrities, Boorstin's perspective does not seem to be too far away from the *para-social value*. Having 'unreal' relationships with celebrities are part of the usual identity development. They help people to identify themselves and provide a feeling of recognition and meaning (Rojek 52).

6.4.1. Love Her or Hate Her

To my mind, there are two ways to interpret the *para-social value* in terms of Paris Hilton. On the one hand, there are possibilities for audiences to identify with her. She is blond, tall, and slim; she has a very capturing personality which is always on the spot and she is idolized by the press, agencies and industries. In the course of my research I found very interesting that a lot of people really admire Paris for the way she presents herself. The mystery she embodies seems to be attractive to a number of people. By 'mystery' I mean, for instance, the character she puts on when on camera that foments the illusion that she is dumb and dumber, yet she runs several, very successful businesses with global dimensions. These contradictions can be very attractive as one can never fully know what she can be capable of, be it in a positive or a negative way. According to Boorstin, this attraction factor primarily has something to do with the rise of the 'mass' that is much more interested in "the mystery of new findings" than the findings themselves (55-56). And as just discussed, it seems to be the same with Hilton's mysterious ways of being that Western societies fall for today.

On the other hand, there are also possibilities for audiences to intentionally not identify with her. Turner states:

> Not only do they remind us that these people are not especially gifted at managing their lives, but they also provide us with entertaining narratives to follow through the news. Such pleasures are among the fundamental attractions to the representations of celebrity in popular culture. (9)

The sex-tape she starred in, different occasions in several of her TV shows where Paris behaves – I can't say it differently – stupid, and her being convinced that she is the princess of this world are not necessarily dreams other people on this earth strive after. As Turner suggests, she simply provides us with 'entertaining narratives' and some like these narratives, some hate them and some just do not care.

6.4.2. Excursus: Paris representing the postmodern mixture of high and low culture

To gain a more general understanding of the picture of Paris, I would like to very shortly make an excursion that serves as an embedding in postmodern celebrity culture. The mystery of Paris Hilton can be looked at from another perspective, namely that of high versus low culture. Personally, I believe that Paris deliberately epitomizes a mixture of both in her public persona. She seems to know the features of low culture and she has no fear of making use of them in her own representation.

Thus, low or 'mass' culture generally is defined by Richard Bolai, author of the website *thebookman*[27], as "the shoddy manufacturing in inferior materials of superficial *kitsch*" (n.p.). Analyzed from the postmodern perspective, *kitsch,* then, is referred to be a "reduction of aesthetic objects or ideas into easily marketable forms" (Felluga n.p.). In Paris' case, such *kitsch* is manifested in her actions and in the persona she performs. While her actions include the several reality TV shows she was starring, her public persona is nurtured by all kinds of consciously seeded factors such as the high tone of her voice and the excessive use of the sentence 'that's hot'.

In contrast, Bolai's definition of high culture builds on it being very much interrelated with "intelligence, social standing, educated taste, and a willingness to be challenged" (Bolai n.p.). While one can question Paris Hilton's 'educated taste', she certainly can put forward the other characteristics. If it was not for her 'willingness to be challenged', the dimensions of her businesses would never have been qualified enough on the local markets, let alone on a global level. And it is this specific trait of hers called smartness that has gotten her thus far. Of course, her social standing has certainly contributed to the successful and less successful efforts she has made. However, I would argue that her deeds had a greater influence on her social standing than vice versa.

In summary, it can therefore be said that Paris Hilton's celebrity status represents a perfect example of the 'new' forms of celebrity in postmodern times as it fulfills specific criteria of this era.

6.4.3. Loving Vs. Hating Her ONLINE

Both extremes – loving and hating her – have taken on new dimensions in relation to the ever-increasing significance of the Internet. Particularly the Internet has turned into a resource that helps us to keep track of the star system and its effects on us.

Looking through the pink lenses of the Internet, twitter, for instance, is a social network with the goal of bringing people together by offering ways of sharing what is important to them. "Every day, millions of people turn to twitter to connect to their interests, to share information, and find out what's happening in the world right now" ("What is Twitter" n.p.). At the moment, twitter counts 140 million active users among whom Paris Hilton has over 9 million followers. Serving just as examples of 'what's important to' Paris, here a few tweets:

"Loving my new looks for my Honey Bunch line in Japan." (and a picture added)

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[27] For more information see http://thebookman.wordpress.com/2008/03/01/postmodern-terms-habitus-to-kristevan/

"Hey FalguniPeakcock & ShanePeacock! So excited for my upcoming trip to India, I want to wear something fabulous from your collection! #YES!"

"This is the 5ᵗʰ store in Saudi Arabia, and store number 42 in total! So proud to keep growing my brand!"

"Happy Friday! What's your favorite weekend fragrance? This is mine! #DAZZLE bit.ly/[…]"

Funnily enough, after what I have discussed so far, these tweets also provide fabulous examples of Paris' function as a brand.

On facebook, her fan-page has over 1.5 million likes ("Paris Hilton" n.p.) , her YouTube-channel counts over 14 million invocations of videos she posted ("paris hilton" n.p.) and her different fan-based homepages such as www.parishilton.com and www.parishiltononline.net are visited by thousands every day. Paris Hilton has definitely planted a fan-community that follows her, writes her encouraging and sweet messages, and that see a role model in her.

In contrast though, there are also opinions revealed in the Internet that do not put Paris in such a positive light. Different musicians have mentioned Paris in their songs; the band Citizens for a better America even wrote an entire song for Paris. This song is called "Go Away Paris Hilton" and has mainly been distributed via the online source YouTube. Without any metaphorical euphemisms the lyrics go as follows:

I saw a story on the news today / It made me wanna throw up
About a girl who just won't go away / I think we've all had enough
And now I heard she said the N word / Then she said she's just like me
Well I don't have 50 billion dollars in my family / So, here's to you…
Paris Hilton / Could you help me when I say
You've got everything you want / So could you please just go away
Here's to you Paris Hilton / Could I say what's on our mind
Go away, go away, Paris Hilton / Leave America behind
I saw her picture in the magazine / I saw her book in the store
And she had sex on my computer screen / But I just can't take it anymore
Now am I alone in thinking / That she's really just a snot
And if she never said another word / We all would say that's hot

These lyrics highly express the media coverage some people from the consumer's perspective consider too extensive and even annoying.

6.4.4. PerezHilton.Com

Perez Hilton is probably the most known and most successful online gossip columnist in the United States. Being the namesake of Paris Hilton, his name serves as a pseudonym in order to reach a larger community. Originally named Mario Armando Lavandeira, Hilton provides

uncensored and raw pictures of celebrities often added by personalized written comments ("Perez Hilton: The Most Infamous Celebrity Blogger" n.p.). Judging after his comments and what he highlights as newsworthy, he appears to be fearless and actually mean as the following examples show:

Figure 2 – Calling attention to attempts at image construction – "Victoria Beckham would be so pretty…if she hadn't had so many damn procedures." (Petersen n.p.)

Figure 3 – "Aww..what's goin' on here, sleepy bears?? We mean, we hope those are just the faces of exhausted *Breaking Dawn 2* actors touring in Berlin! We wouldn't want Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson dealing with any more drama now would we!?" (PerezHilton.com)

What can be remarked is that particularly Perez Hilton's gossip blogs generally follow the same format.

> A picture is posted; the picture is accompanied by a comment, story, or a link to a more detailed article. The picture itself is the focal point of the post, but the text influences the manner in which the picture is received. (Petersen n.p.)

Remaining faithful to his formatting, Perez Hilton's website has become a leading go-to site for celebrity gossip being accessed by over 300 million people per month since its launch in 2004. In 2007, 2008 and 2009 the *Forbes Magazine* ascribed him the most famous and successful Web Celeb (out of a ranking of 25) also rewarding him for creating an entire online empire implying extra sites for fashion (cocoperez), celeb's kids (perezitos), fitness/health and wellness (fitperez) and pets (teddyhilton) (PerezHilton.com).

Anne Petersen wrote a very interesting article about celebrity gossip, in particular referring to Perez Hilton and the massive impact he exercises by blogging in an era where the Internet is known for its immediacy and easy accessibility. By making use of these benefits of the Internet and combining them with the massive mechanism of gossip, Perez Hilton represents "the newest component of the Hollywood star machine" (Petersen n.p.). According to Petersen, Hilton's function entails utilizing Hollywood's mechanisms that have become visible in order to influence consumption. "Bloggers illuminate the star system, and in so doing, alter our expectations and understanding of stars and their importance in society today" (ibid.). She goes on highlighting Richard Dyer's five key aspects of star production that are very professionally taken up by bloggers such as Perez Hilton (qtd. in Petersen n.p.).

First, the <u>economic</u> value of a celebrity is dependent on the gossip that is disseminated about that person. For instance, posting different sorts of news continuously throughout the day, Hilton's posts increase public awareness as they are read by millions of people monthly, weekly, and daily. If those 'news' are true or not, is beyond debate. Fact is that the image of a celebrity is being molded each time it gets gossiped about. The economic value, thus, resides in the extensive media coverage of a celebrity which can either break or bolster it.

Second, <u>manipulation</u> plays an essential part in star production and is dearly transferred to the new phenomenon of Internet gossip. Serving as manipulators themselves, Perez and other bloggers moreover manage to be critical of the manufacture of stars by commenting and putting emphasis on particular aspects[28].

The example Petersen points out, concerns a comparison of Perez with Paris Hilton. Both are solely signifiers of celebrity. Dyer (1998) defines these kinds of people as "appear[ing] to be meaningful but in fact [being] empty of meaning" (13). It is this appearance of meaning that lets them be manipulators and simultaneously critics of the star production system as they are "a definable, publicizable personality: a figure which can become a nationally-advertised trademark" (Boorstin 162). However, it is Perez Hilton who not only acknowledges Paris'

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[28] See examples in figures 2 and 3

"immaculate self-construction" (Petersen n.p.) but also praises her for having managed to become such a great pseudo-event. Interpreting some photos he had posted, Petersen justifies

> The fact that the photos are sweaty, somewhat unattractive, ordinary, and even boring, affects the star of both Hiltons in a different way. By posing for and posting these photos, Perez reifies the pseudo-event of both Paris and himself; at the same time, he calls attention to the fact that Paris has normal, boring house parties like anyone else – exposing the cracks in her image as impeccably styled socialite. (ibid.)

Third, "fashion may appear the purest, most superficial form of star manipulation" (ibid.). As Perez' CocoPerez-site demonstrates, fashion serves as a means of production. "With each picture, one is immediately drawn to comment on appearance – clothes, face, hair, shoes, skin tone, hands – and use it as a starting point for interpreting the meaning or significance [..]" (ibid.). PerezHilton.Com, furthermore, distinguishes between two components namely categorization and reader-response. Giving pictures specific titles such as "Gay Gay Gay" (see figure 4), Perez sorts this picture into this established category and consequently, determines its meaning.

Figure 4 – A photo of Jake Gyllenhaal and a male friend working out – Once filed under 'Gay Gay Gay', the picture takes on new meaning. (Petersen n.p.)

Reader-response then is the experience of a consumer that changes once they select such a category, because they then see the picture in a completely distinct form, context and order it was denoted. Through the implicated power of this authorship on behalf of the consumer the meaning of the original post can significantly change. Figure 5 shows Kirsten Dunst, for example, in an outfit that interpreted via Perez's gossip blog has the power to establish a sense of rejection or acceptance in society if 'read correctly'. In Hilton's world, Dunst's fashion choice can indicate the following:

> [She] doesn't care about fashion, which connotes she doesn't care what the public thinks about her, which in turn conveys the idea that Dunst is disinterested in her fans and ungrateful for her success. Ungrateful may be translated as unworthy – if she were a worthy star, then she would care about her appearances in public." (Petersen n.p.)

Forth, the production and consumption of a star is certainly influenced by a star's <u>magic and talent</u>. Here Perez provides two resources for those who are 'talented' and those who are not. By being a critical observer in his posts and at the same time a pure fan, he manages to create 'talents' that are newsworthy. An example for a 'talented' celebrity is Angelina Jolie. After the birth of her daughter Shiloh Nouvel, she literally manipulated the media to dance after her pipe. In a blog, Perez comments on that: "She's such a smart cookie! On the same day The Baby was born, Santa Angelina had her lawyers snatch up the domain name ShilohNouvelJolie-Pitt.com. Crafty!"(PerezHilton.com) Reading this comment, the audience's focus is being put on Jolie's control and knowledge of the media. It is not based on any of her acting skills, but she is praised for the *other* talent namely for the control over the media and it is this control that, according to Petersen, extends to the control over one's image. Consequently, "the tighter control a celebrity possesses over his/her image, the more authentically magic and talented he/she appears" (n.p.).

On the other hand, the example of Tori Spelling shows that not being able to produce nor sustain her image makes her untalented and uninteresting of media attention. She simply has not done enough for her fame apart from coasting from *Beverly Hills 90210* and a few tumults in her love life.

Besides these opposite examples, Perez Hilton's own talent cannot be neglected. 100 % of his talent is due to his acidness and his ability to draw photoshop arrows. Even if this statement may have just sounded acid in itself, it is beyond dispute that in so being and doing, he further exposes the mechanisms of star production (Petersen n.p.). Creating avenues for

consumption (having audiences look at a picture, listen to a song, read comments) as well as personal evaluation ("Let us know what you think!"), Perez makes it possible for audiences to become authors of a star's image as well and, at the same time, makes it possible for himself to "promote his individual taste and discernment of talent" (ibid.). To put it differently, "by allowing comments, Perez' opinions of magic and talent are questioned and pressured, effectively exposing himself as part of the very mechanism that he, in turn, blogs to expose" (ibid.).

Fifth, images of stars have become a simulacrum. <u>The nature of the medium</u> – as the fifth and final aspect is referred to – not only questions the 'realness' of celebrities' images, but also provides answers to that.

> "With New Media, we have moved to yet another iconographic age: from awe to charm to disbelief. If the face of Garbo is an *Idea,* and Hepburn's face is an *Event*, then the face of Jessica Simpson, of Angelina Jolie, or of Paris Hilton is a *Question.* Is the photo real?" (Petersen n.p.)

The question whether the photo is real, has been taken up by gossip bloggers by constantly highlighting and addressing the implied issues of manipulation. From the point of view of the stars, the point is that "stars succeed in connecting to the individual through their ability to best select pre-established traits, poses, ideas, and images to form a composite of a likeable star"(ibid.). Expending their point of view, the perspective of people like Perez Hilton comprises partly the perpetuation of this cycle (by reifying images and republishing the photos) and partly the drawing of attention to the "cracks in a star's carefully crafted image" (ibid.). Therefore, both the questions are asked and the answers are provided.

To sum up, I argue that Perez Hilton's strategies not only seem to work on so many different levels, but that by picking himself a pseudonym that phonologically is actually identical to the already headlines-hitting Paris Hilton, he has managed to stir up and alter the star system with his blog.

7. Criticizing Celebrity Culture by Reference to Woody Allen's To Rome With Love

As enormously captivating as celebrity culture is, as can be admitted that it is often criticized for the way it is represented, constructed and perceived. Throughout the thesis, a number of insights have already been gained into what celebrity culture consists of and critical perspectives have already been given some room.

This last section of the analysis of contemporary celebrity culture deals with the criticism of celebrities. As my main hypothesis is that celebrities in postmodern times are mere products of media representation, the predominant emphasis is put on the manufacture of celebrities through the media. Embedding the argument I make in Woody Allen's critical portrayal of stardom in his movie *To Rome with Love* (2012), I touch on the aspects of superficiality, non-reflexibility, as well as the consumerist thought behind it all.

I will begin with an overall contextualization of my criticism by first outlining a general summary of the movie, second, by going into more detail looking at one narrative thread in particular, and third, by analyzing one specific scene from this thread that will provide the basis for my subsequent arguments.

Let me now start with the general features of the movie *To Rome with Love*.

7.1. *To Rome with Love* by Woody Allen

To Rome with Love was written as well as directed by Woody Allen in 2012. Produced by Letty Aronson, the movie lines up in Allen's European-centered storylines, each time depicting a different prestigious city. After *Midnight in Paris* (2011), he chose Rome to constitute his new setting for the adventures of his characters. Lasting 112 minutes, the movie encompasses an American as well as Italian and Spanish production. Critics towards the success of the movie vary. Some say that this movie is just as good as all previous ones carrying the prominent Woody Allen note. Others, however, say that compared to his previous pieces of art *To Rome with Love* cannot live up to the expected standards. Although he makes great use of clichés, a number of questions remain unanswered and a little blurred[29].

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[29] For more critical reviews see: http://www.filmstarts.de/kritiken/192634.html and http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/kinofilm-to-rome-with-love-woody-allens-dolce-vita-a-851954.html (critics in German) (27 November 2012)

7.1.1. A Short Summary

Intended to be a comedy, Woody Allen depicts four different stories that all appear to happen in the eternal city Rome[30]. What all the lines of fate have in common are the themes of love and the peculiarities of stardom. One story surrounds a developing affair between a young student of architecture (Jesse Eisenberg) and an inefficient actress who is a professional confidence trickster (Ellen Page). Although he is in a relationship, the actress' charm captivates the young American. While falling in love with her, he is accompanied by a – probably to the public – invisible mentor (Alec Baldwin) who comments on the actress' manipulating behavior. Parallel to these happenings, a young couple (Alessandra Mastronardi, Alessandro Tiberi) from the countryside spends their honeymoon in Rome. Due to unexpected circumstances they lose each other and experience their very own adventures in Rome. While the young wife gets seduced by one of her favorite actors (Antonio Albanese), her husband needs to make a good first impression in front of his relatives. For this first impression all he can offer is a prostitute that personates his wife (Penélope Cruz). The third storyline revolves around Woody Allen himself who plays the role of an American father visiting Rome with his wife (Judy Davis) in order to get to know the Italian fiancé of his daughter. When getting to know the parents of this young man, he discovers a beautiful talent in the man's father (Fabio Armiliata). As a former opera director, the insisting and stubborn character of Allen hears this man singing in the shower and pursues turning him into a big star. Last but not least, Leopoldo Pisanello (Roberto Benigni), a plain, homely Roman citizen, struggles with his out-of-the-blue fame. Literally overnight he becomes famous without any real reason. At the beginning he is very surprised by all the paparazzi and reporters that follow him and want to know things about him concerning his breakfast or his preferences in terms of underwear etc. His facial expression reveals this incomprehensibility very clear-cut (see figure 6). As the question continually strikes him 'why him', he is so overwhelmed by this stunning fame that he constantly tries to get rid of the paparazzi. That he actually also enjoyed his notoriety becomes clear when the paparazzi and reporters have found a new 'victim' to cover and nobody cares about him any longer.

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[30] The following information is taken from the German website to the movie: www.toromewithlove.de/film.html (28 November 2012)

For the criticism of celebrity culture, the story of Leopoldo Pisanello is used as it perfectly underlines the achievement of one's "15 minutes of fame" on account of their constructedness through the media.

7.1.2. From Rags to Riches and Back to Rags – the Uncanny Story of Leopoldo Pisanello

As already pointed out, Leopoldo Pisanello is a very inconspicuous person. Being married, having two children, working in an office – all these activities do not really make him stand out in any way. He is average looking and "dependable, agreeable,..predictable" (*To Rome with Love*). One day he leaves the house, walks to his car and suddenly is surrounded by a crowd. Paparazzi, reporters and fans (see figure 6) encompass him and ask questions like what he had for breakfast or if he likes his bread toasted or not. The next thing Pisanello realizes is that he is sitting in front of the camera being part of the show on channel TG3 where, although he does not understand why he is there, he answers the questions the host asks him. Completely shocked, he tries to embrace this sudden new life he was given. A new office with a personal secretary is given to him; he and his wife are invited to premieres where he finds himself answering more random questions and even his wife gets into the spotlight with her ladder in the tights. Whether or not he wants to accept it, fact is that he has become a big celebrity overnight. The media follow him throughout his days: reporting his daily routines such as shaving, going to the hairdresser and going to the restaurant. Slowly but surely he seems to get used to it, at least when it comes to sleeping around with different models.

Pisanello's very significant facial expressions and his constant questioning of 'why him' follow him just as the paparazzi do. Even though the viewer does not get a satisfactory

answer to his valid question, there is one scene where he has a conversation with his chauffeur: (my translation)

> P: Roberto, I can't take it anymore. Why me, Roberto? […]
> R: You are very, very famous.
> P: But why?! […] Why am I famous?
> R: Why? You are famous for being famous.
> P: But I have not done anything, Roberto.
> R: Excuse me, but, as I see it, don't all those who are famous deserve it?
> P: I don't know! […] All I do is answer questions. My life is a living hell! […] Everyone asks me things.. "Pisanello" "How do you scratch your head? With the right or the left?" "With both hands." "Oh, he scratches with both!" There! I scratch my head with whatever hand I think is best. Okay?
> R: Some secret! – The way I see it, Sir, I kind of agree with them. Being a celebrity, excitement, special privileges…The adoring crowds who want an autograph, every woman's dream. […] (To Rome with Love)

Then, one day, when Leopoldo steps out of a restaurant and talks to the reporters again, one reporter suddenly spots another man walking down the street. Shouting out "Who is that? He looks interesting!" (*To Rome with Love*), the pack of paparazzi immediately leaves Pisanello behind and interviews this 'new celebrity' they just found. As a side-note: I have chosen this scene to analyze in more detail as far as the cinematic features are concerned (see 7.1.3.). Before that, it is interesting to acknowledge the ending of this narrative thread. By the time he got rid of this fame, he was so happy and finally relieved. However, it did not take long until the viewer can observe a striking change in Pisanello's behavior. In the last scene dealing with him, he walks along the street with his wife wishing himself back to the time when he was no longer a 'nobody', but seen, known and loved by everyone. He literally acts like a maniac, screaming on the street, taking off his pants in public thereby trying to show how interesting and newsworthy he is. Entirely discouraged that nobody really cares, he meets his former chauffeur who leaves him with the following words: "I told you: Life can be cruel and unsatisfying whether you are famous or poor and unknown. But, between the two, it is definitely better to be famous" (*To Rome with Love).*

7.1.3. Cinematic, critical analysis of film sequence

Before starting the analysis, I want to say that the methodology used in this chapter is based on Susan Hayward's *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (1996) and Amy Villarejo's *Film Studies – The Basics*. Therefore, terms like 'shot' or 'straight-on angle' will not be defined explicitly, but for further information the texts can be looked up autonomously if desired.

The scene I chose for a more detailed analysis is taken from the second third of the movie. I chose the following sequence, because it very beautifully shows the choice the media makes when it comes to turning ordinary people into celebrities. Throughout the entire movie Leopoldo Pisanello wonders why the media decided to give him a shot to fame and this sequence provides a glimpse of a possible answer.

The sequence depicts Pisanello who leaves a hair salon and immediately is besieged by an unbridled and innumerous crowd of reporters, paparazzi and camera men. Annoyed by their breathtaking presence he answers questions and gives autographs. Simultaneously, a man walks down the street that the camera almost randomly captures until suddenly, a female reporter takes notice of this man and calls out to take pictures of this man, because he seems more interesting. Within seconds, the mass of media representatives drop Pisanello like a hot potato and besiege this 'new celebrity of tomorrow'. While the new victim is annoyed and does not understand what all these reporters want from him, Pisanello is visibly relieved and runs home to his family.

7.1.4. Cinematic Description

The sequence is set in a real location in one of the numerous side roads of Rome. The storyline takes actual place on the street which enhances the impression that the chosen space is open. In a particular sense it also is. By filming the sequence on the outside, on a 'real' street of Rome, the environment that is not visible through the camera lens is still tangible for the viewer. This perceptibility that is successfully created, marks the openness of its composition. I believe that Woody Allen purposefully chose an open composition. In many reviews[31] there is talk of Allen' attempt to capture the Italian atmosphere. By composing open spaces, filming many scenes outside and also by grossing typical Italian music into scenes, Rome is not just a good setting for the movie, but it becomes a real adventure as a viewer to see all the sights and to almost feel the Italian heartbeat. The goal is to emphasize the familiar, intimate and the immediate aspects of reality that let Rome glance in a new light and sow desires in the viewer to go visit Rome as well.

However, when taking the crowdedness of the assemblage of paparazzi and reporters surrounding whoever into account, the viewer can get a feeling of constriction which characterizes a more closed space. Looking closer at figure 7 (see subsequent page), the shot

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[31] For more information see: http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/sep/13/to-rome-with-love-review and http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/kino/kinofilm-to-rome-with-love-woody-allens-dolce-vita-a-851954.html
 (1 December 2012)

evokes a strong feeling of incommodiousness. Owing to the camera work, the viewers are automatically cajoled into identifying with Pisanello as he almost gets asphyxiated by these media people. This created impression in the viewer is intentionally conjured up. The siege of the media representatives does not leave much room (in the sequence referred to as spacial room) for anything. Celebrities suffer from a loss of privacy, of freedom, and subsequently often of control as the media is constantly striving to expose them in every way possible. Therefore, the constriction that can be seen in this sequence, particularly in the shots where the media people surround Pisanello and the unknown, new man, symbolizes more than just a local and spacial staging.

Taking a closer look at the sequence, we are dealing with four clear shots (the last two being bridged by a pan of the camera) within a time frame of approximately one minute. Taken together these shots function as a dramatic sequence as they highly contribute to the common theme of this narrative thread. The transitions between the shots consist of cuts and one panning within the forth shot.

The first shot implicates the siege of Pisanello in front of the hair salon. Considering the mise-en-scène, he cannot really move in space as the crowd of media people not only surrounds him, but even imprison him. Figure 7 shows two versions of the first shot. Labeled as a medium long shot, it is used to depict a group of people interacting with each other.

Figure 7 - Medium Long Shot (*To Rome with Love*)

Interesting in this shot is the representation of Pisanello. While many celebrities often are staged from a low-angle shot to make them appear bigger and more glamorous, the camera's focus when filming Pisanello is to catch him at an eye level. This stylistic device is a rather conventional one known and often used in film studies when the director has a specific interest in shooting very 'authentic' movies depicting realities the viewers can easily identify with. The

purpose of the eye-level shot is to depict the leading actor as if he was 'one of us'. Hence, the ordinariness of the character is highlighted. Besides the role the actor is playing, by the take of the camera alone, Pisanello is made more 'real' to the viewers and, thus, more authentic and ordinary. To give a contrastive example (as indicated at the beginning of this paragraph), celebrities in movies are often filmed from a different angle. Thereby "the importance of what is shown tends to be enlarged" (Liebert 5). Figure 8 illustrates Whitney Houston in *Bodyguard* from a low-angle shot:

Figure 8 - Contrast: Low-Angle Shot ("queenofthenight")

Comparing figure 7 and figure 8, it becomes clear that Pisanello symbolizes a different concept than Whitney Houston. While he stands for ordinariness and authenticity, Houston embodies the glamour and superiority of a celebrity. Even though both are celebrities, their approach to fame is a completely distinct one that can be very nicely illustrated by different camera angles.

The second shot shows a single man walking down the street. At first sight, this shot seems to be randomly taken, a reason for this also being the total duration of three seconds. It seems as if the camera only intended to capture the environment surrounding the extraordinary event. Figure 9 comprises a view of both the setting and the situation from a distance being labeled a long shot.

Figure 9 - Long Shot (*To Rome with Love*)

The third shot is as short-lasting as the second one, demonstrating a female reporter who notices this single man walking down the street. It is referred to as a medium shot. The person in the picture is neither showing her entire body nor just her face (see figure 10).

Figure 10 - Medium Shot (*To Rome with Love*)

Finally, being the longest in terms of duration (30 seconds), the forth shot includes two distinct actions with distinct framing heights. This randomly appearing man gets besieged by the mass of media representatives which automatically leaves Pisanello out of the picture. Starting off with a full shot showing the man's entire body (figure 11), the camera turns to the medium long shot again in figure 12:

Figure 11 - Full Shot (*To Rome with Love*)

Figure 12 - Medium Long Shot *(To Rome with Love)*

The mise-en-scène here again is worth mentioning as the reporters, paparazzi etc. find a new victim which is comparable to the over-crowdedness in figure 7 and the complete opposite of figure 9. Then the camera pans smoothly from this claustrophobic place to Leopoldo Pisanello

who suddenly is 'free'. Stunned by the luck of finally being left alone (see figure 13), he raises his arms to the sky (see figure 14) and runs home to his family. The panning from one to the next picture indicates a switch of the framing height, now using the medium shot and ending the sequence with an expansion of the camera to a full shot showing Pisanello leaving the scene:

Figure 13 - Medium Shot (*To Rome with Love)*

Figure 14 - Full Shot (*To Rome with Love)*

In both figure 13 and 14 a considerable move of convention is made obvious. Pisanello's facial expressions as well as his gesticulation underline a further remarkable aspect that gives room for interpretation. Being played by Roberto Begnini, the character of Leopoldo is very skillfully staged drawing not only on a fairly stereotyped personification of an Italian as perceived by the world, but also symbolizing the incomprehensibility of how ordinariness and celebrity culture should go together. Comparing figure 7 to figure 13, two clearly distinct

reactions to Pisanello's fame can be interpreted. In figure 7, his expression implicates doubt, annoyance, and the ever-nagging question 'what do you want from *me*?', whereas his expression in figure 13 shows relief, happiness and no question mark in his eyes anymore. Actually, figure 13 exhibits even more: His standing by himself on the street holds a character of liberation. The media people do no longer stick to him like wax, but let go. This freedom is also found in figure 9, where there is this full shot of the stranger. Comprised in both shots is the, what I call, 'plain-Jane'-phenomenon. Being in control of one's own life, making one's own choices, living without the fear of exposure – living the life of an ordinary person might not seem very exciting, but it might be the better life. As seen in figures 7 and 12, it apparently does not seem to be exactly brilliant either to be in the spotlight, have no privacy at all and lose one's own identity,. Here I see a great criticism of celebrity culture that Woody Allen implanted into the movie. A more elaborate analysis of this criticism is made in chapter 7.2.

Coming back to the cinematographic analysis, it can be summed up that the dominating shots are certainly the medium long shots and the medium shots. Moreover, important to say is that besides the straight-on angle that is used most of the time, the point-of-view shot is also used, in particular in the sequences when the media representatives talk to the 'old' (Pisanello) and the 'new' celebrity. Within these sequences camera work seems to be taken over from a camera person that is right in the happening filming the interview (being referred to as hand camera shot).

Further striking aspects comprise the visual composition as well as the sound within this film sequence. On the one hand, a great contrast in the use of colors can be seen. While Pisanello as well as the stranger walking down the street (becoming the 'new' celebrity) wear colors that are not really outstanding such as grey[32] and beige[33], the mass of paparazzi, reporters and camera men wear all kinds of colors such as red, white, green and blue[34]. On a connotative level, the use of the contrastive color again underlines the difference between the ordinariness of the chosen celebrities and the diversity and overwhelming presence of the media.

Regarding the sound, "[a]dding music to images is an art form. Music creates mood and atmosphere, often by manipulating the emotions experienced while viewing" (Wilson). This is certainly true for the chosen sequence as well. The first shot is exclusively shaped by the noise level of the media crowd. From the second shot onwards a fine traditional Italian piece of music is grossed. To be precise, the appearance of the stranger on the screen allows the

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[32] See figure 14
[33] See figure 9
[34] See figure 12

interplay of an accordion and a guitar. Still kept in the background, the music continues simultaneously to the noise level of the crowd when this stranger turns into the new attraction. The end of the sequence is marked by the gradually increasing volume of the music. From an analytical perspective, the use of the sound truly manipulates "the emotions experienced while viewing" (ibid.). The music is given priority to in the 2 shots when Pisanello and the stranger are by themselves in the picture, while the noise level of the media people seems to be the interruptive source. The display of the two actually cookie-cutter characters every time is highlighted by the piece of music. To my mind, here again the sound provides a stylistic device that by the choice of giving the music more or less room in the sequence, the contrast between the ordinariness of the characters and the seeming incompatibility with celebrity culture becomes clear-cut.

7.2. Criticizing Celebrity Culture

The critical aspect that fame is manufactured could not be more obviously shown in the selected scene and, above all, in the entire movie. Pisanello frequently asks himself and the people around him why he was given the shot to fame and what it is that he is famous for. "You are famous for being famous" (*To Rome with Love*), his chauffeur justifies. Is this enough? Even if it does not seem as if it was a good enough reason for Pisanello, it certainly seems to be for the media. Taking a closer look at the entire narrative thread, this average citizen would never have moved into the spotlight if it was not for the intrusive behavior of the media that created his fame. Christopher Cook gave a very interesting and relevant lecture on my topic at the London Gresham College in 2011. His topic was *The Making of Modern Celebrity: Famous for fifteen minutes – and longer.* Very eloquently he argues that "talent is no requisite for contemporary celebrity status" (n.p.). In fact, he observes that we, the audience as well as part of the media, often enough "seem willing to imagine talent where none exists" (n.p.). This is exactly what I believe the media symbolizes. Often quoted in this context, Daniel Boorstin came to the very same conclusion.

> For Boorstin, today's celebrities suffer from narcissistic self-obsession. They stand for a culture where instant gratification is preferred over more long-term rewards and where surface is valued more than the substance underneath. (Evans 16)

And this has been turned into reality thanks to the media. It is their job to present things, people, and events in a certain light and it is this presentation, in other words, this representation, that "has become more important than what they might mean" (Cook n.p.).

Consequently, manufactured celebrities are superficial, because keeping up appearances has become of greater value than looking under the surface. Cook even states that "we happily settle for the superficial because that's what we are given by the media" (n.p.). In my opinion, this criticism of the media is very legitimate as proven by the analysis of the scene in the last section. As quickly as the world devoured Pisanello, as quickly it disgorged him again. For '15 minutes' the media made him famous, turned him into 'somebody' and made him 24/7 newsworthy. Even though he himself realized that this sudden fame was not achieved, deserved, and simply not reasonable, he soon was well reconciled with this thought.[35]

This being said, one other way of approaching the critique of celebrity culture can be found in the media's convincing power of 'randomness'. At least the way I see it, the non-transparent concept of random choice shall not be underestimated. Of course there are criteria that the media rely on, as for instance, in reality TV shows like Big Brother[36]. Ordinariness by itself is not quite enough, but, as already pointed out in chapter 5.1.2., Frances Bonner measures ordinariness on a different scale arguing that some people "are more ordinary than others" (53). This statement implies that the media very well chooses different kinds of 'ordinary' people to invest in. However, it is the justification for the public eye that is missing which lets this decision often appear completely random as these people really do not display any talents. In regard to Woody Allen, this randomness is shown in a fairly exaggerated manner, though the point behind it is comprehensible.

Therefore, celebrity culture can surely be criticized for the media's control in and of it. Especially when it comes to turning 'ordinary' people into celebrities, the media are to be blamed for *a lot*. Confirmed by the narrative thread of Leopoldo Pisanello, Cook notes that celebrities serve as "poles between which all theories about the manufacture, dissemination and consumption of celebrity on our culture swing" (n.p.). While Boorstin's definition ranks on a more pessimistic scale, Andy Warhol's view towards the manufacture of celebrities is more optimistic. To put it differently, Boorstin seems to be more critical of this process expressing that "our fascination with 'celebrity' is a symptom of the collapse of traditional cultural values" (Cook n.p.), whereas Warhol sees opportunities in the "elevation of ordinary people" (ibid.). As they "need [to] posses neither talent nor any ability beyond flourishing in the public eye", the creation of stars via ordinary people "are a challenge to the old cultural elitism" (ibid.). Warhol's shaping statement 'in the future, everybody will be famous for 15 minutes' indicates a cultural democratizing (ibid.). I understand where Cook is coming from and I also agree with

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[35] As I see it, the mere fact of questioning the current events all along as well as his constantly annoyed look have been habit-forming.

[36] See chapter 5.1.

his interpretation, nevertheless, Boorstin's critical access to celebrity culture attracts more of my attention.

This approach also seems to be more the one Woody Allen is coming from. Even though he did not fully accomplish to provide an answer to the 'how' and 'why' people get their 15 minutes of fame. However, he certainly indicates a possible partial one by drawing attention to the "satirical sketch about the ridiculousness of celebrity" ("To Rome with Love – review" n.p.). The way the movie is shot (as discussed in the previous chapter) includes an interpretation of the implications the media have when turning people into celebrities. Very much highlighted by camera, sound and setting, Pisanello is gradually taken away his very own personality. Even though his behavior throughout the movie does not always explicitly illustrate this, the underlying tone of Allen nevertheless is visible when considering the scenes he sleeps with different models or especially the scene when he literally takes off his pants in the middle of the street, because he misses the attention. This scene, at the very end of this narrative thread, in particular displays the loss of identity Pisanello feels after he has lost the interest of the media. In this respect, the media is not only criticized for the manufacture of celebrity, but even more for the manufacture of characters that used to be different before their fame. In other words, being a media-created celebrity brings along a media-created personality that eventually becomes one's entire self. When the '15 minutes of fame' are over and the media that portray a person the way they want them to, are gone, then what is left? Therein lies the critique to celebrity culture Woody Allen offers in this movie. Besides losing one's privacy, one's uniqueness falls by the wayside when pressed into an image the media portrays.

From the point of view of capitalist market society, it must be remarked that this manufacture of celebrities - be it of ordinary or of talented people – of course reaps a lot of benefit. Attracting audiences sells products. This too is an aspect that deserves criticism. As already outlined in chapter 3.1., celebrities serve as commodities. What I argue now is that especially when entirely created by the media, these celebrities are dependent on the industries they are constructed by. People such as agents, publicists, reporters, bloggers, fashion designers and especially paparazzi live from those '15 minutes of fame' at least as much as the short-term celebrities do. If it was not for their job requirements, celebrities would not exist in the first place. My critique here lies in the honest motives of these industries. Is it really because these people think that they are promoting talents, stars, and extraordinary people that need to be acknowledged by the public or is it merely because it is their job to market celebrities? Of course paparazzi, agents, producers etc. have to live from something as well. However, I wonder whether their motives are honorable. If not, then this again can be related

to the 'randomness' I mentioned in the second to last paragraph. 'Randomness' in thus far as the process of choosing people to be turned into celebrities, does underline the mere principle of creating work for all kinds of people from the different industries.

Concluding this chapter of criticism, celebrity culture is a phenomenon full of shooting star moments such as being important, being seen, earning good money, and living a lifestyle a lot of people dream of, nevertheless, it is not all roses. The range goes from being constantly followed over losing one's privacy to even losing one's self all of which the media can play a decisive role. The current pop-diva Lady Gaga once said: "Celebrity life and media culture are probably the most overbearing pop-cultural conditions that we as young people have to deal with, because it forces us to judge ourselves." Both phenomena offer our society representations of beauty, fame, and glory that evoke desires in us to strive after these things. Especially since it has become so easy to get one's 15 minutes of fame, the level of comparison, in other terms, judging, has been constantly on the rise. So, I agree with Lady Gaga! With this in mind, I just want to add that coming to this conclusion is truly odd considering the indisputable fact that all criticism, all comparing and judging always makes reference to the *representation* of celebrities, the media or events. What we as viewers get, has always already gone through filters. Be it via the media or by word of mouth[37], information is manipulated as the individual medium reports subjectively and therefore, rather helps create meaning than merely reflects the world. And that is what the viewers see through the lens of the mediums namely the representations that then shape them in either way, positively and negatively.

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[37] To gather information in the 21st century, these two approaches actually seem to be the only ones possible (besides the possibility of being an eye-witness).

Conclusion

In my thesis, I have shown that the new forms of celebrities are mere products of the media. By the new forms, celebrities are meant that hold the title 'famous for being famous'. Through different processes initiated by the media, this celebrity status is bestowed on people that initially do not show any talents or achievements. To illustrate the connection between celebrity-making and the media I have chosen three distinct primary texts namely the reality TV show *Big Brother,* the astounding Paris Hilton and a narrative thread of Woody Allen's comedy *To Rome with Love*, all of which reflect celebrity culture in a specific manner.

These cultural texts have been the basis for three pivotal hypotheses I established in the introduction to get to the bottom of my research. One hypothesis has dealt with the historical era celebrity culture is said to have emerged to the way we know it today. The assumption is that postmodernism was the fuse that caused new forms of celebrities to come into being and relevance. Throughout the paper I have corroborated this statement on two levels. Being "an art form wrought in the medium of life" (Boorstin 3), postmodern society is not only surrounded by celebrity culture, but shaped by its representation implicating that issues of today's postmodern culture are reflected. This influence happens on distinct levels that is to say on a historical level out of which new trends have emerged (consequently new approaches to define celebrities), and on the level of the functions they fulfill in and for society.

First, coming from the historical approach, the rise of the celebrity has been argued to be clearly interrelated with the spread of mass media consisting of television, newspapers, the radio, the Internet etc. With every new medium expanding on the market, information was published and spread easier and faster, including the proliferation of famous people. Up until the 20th century, fame was rather a privilege of the so-called 'elite'. People of higher social status, politicians, people who achieved something extraordinary were labeled as celebrities. However, with the 20th century and even more with the 21st century, more and more 'normal' people made their uniqueness visible via these media. To put it differently, a shift in possible approaches to fame took place, which was also confirmed by the growing desire of audiences to get believable information of the world. The "idea of tangibility" (Gabler 8) came to the fore. With the parallel rise of consumerism in the United States starting from the 1920s, "many people could buy items not just because of need but for pleasure" (Brinkley 636). Brinkley notes that "no group was more aware of the emergence of consumerism (or more responsible for creating it) than the advertising industry" (ibid.). The merging of the audiences' desires

with the consumerist flow created room for the advertising industry to use celebrities as gimmicks to sell their products.

Second, these processes in economics and the subsequent reinventions of celebrities have further resulted in a greater concernment with celebs. Celebrities have been given more and more priority over the last century. Their growing importance in distinct industries as the advertising, the entertainment, the film industry etc. has brought along a certain tone of responsibility they have towards their audiences. In other words, celebrities fulfill crucial functions in society. My argumentation dealt with the identification function on the levels of economics and identity development of audiences when being well-known in the public. As already indicated in the last paragraph, audiences started striving after the products that celebrities advertised for which Turner sums up in saying "celebrities are developed to make money" (34). Being a financial asset to a number of people including networks, managers, producers and companies, their representation is also used to manipulate consumers in such a way as to not only literally make them buy products they use, but also make them believe that by spending money, people can gain access to the glory and fame these celebrities have and live out. Simultaneously, these desires created by the media are not limited to material achievements, but also encompass achievable meanings such as emancipation, manhood, beauty and fame. In this respect, Turner gets to the heart of it saying that

> [t]he celebrity has a generally cultural pervasiveness, as the cultural meanings of and associations with the star leak into all kinds of locations in our daily lives – as well as a specifically industrial reach – the range of territories into which the media industries and their 'smiling professionals' now gain (or control) access. (17)

Furthermore, I hypothesized that being a celebrity in postmodern times is a product of media representation. Actually, this statement has been the basic research interest of mine when writing the thesis. Particularly, the analyses of the primary texts have demonstrated what impact the media have on the new forms of celebrities.

When looking at *Big Brother*, I have discussed its very media-based aesthetics, its functions and its effects on the audience. The reality TV show is the epitome of constructedness of the celebrity via the media. If contestants did not participate in this kind of show that was broadcast, 'ordinary' people would not be able to live their 15 minutes of fame. Fact is that shows like *Big Brother* provide very easily accessible steppingstones for people without extraordinary talents or achievements. The particularity is that this format takes everyday people and monitors them 24/7 which has broken the world of celebrities down to a level where Andy Warhol's shaping comment (therefore also the choice of the title of the thesis) 'in the future everybody will be famous for 15 minutes' has become a tangible reality to

every viewer. Be it on account of implications of entertainment, identification, gossip, or voyeurism *Big Brother* has changed the once so distant approach to fame to something everybody who wants to live out their uniqueness publicly, can have.

The striking observation I have made though, involves the questioning of its 'real' realness. A crucial characteristic of postmodernism embraces the thought of a hyperreal condition of things, people, and events that are sold as being 'real'. Baudrillard writes "[i]t is the generation by models of a real without origins or reality: a hyperreal" (2). An additional observation is made by Eco stating that "the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake" (8). The format of *Big Brother* certainly equates such a manufactured reality. As argued, methods such as frankenbiting, cinematography, and even the selection process of the producers to find ordinary people who are a little more interesting or correspond to the hidden intentions of the show[38], are used to make the show appear 'real'. In fact, it is nothing else than "the absolute fake" (ibid.) presented in a professional way.

In contrast, the analysis of Paris Hilton emphasized the image she constructed for and through the media. Being the, as Boorstin calls it, ultimate 'human pseudo-event', she generates public interest by staged and created performances of herself in front of the camera. I have shown that Paris Hilton manages to keep up a certain image of herself that was induced by the media examples being her looks, her baby voice and her reality TV shows she starred in, while simultaneously being an incredible brand by promoting products, people, and events. Her success as a living brand is internationally accepted which can be seen when looking at sales rates of different lines of her, for instance, on the Japanese market. A comparison of her persona with the mixture of high and low culture has been discussed as she genuinely is a phenomenon. Basically, my conclusion on Paris Hilton is that there is probably no other person on the planet who has managed to manipulate the media in such a way as to play both sides of the fence – representing a constructed image by the media and at the same time using this same media for pursuing her own interests revealing her cleverness - paradoxically successful.

As fascinating it has been to see how the media creates celebrities from literally nothing, as important it has been to me to also criticize the media for their influence in celebrity culture. For this argument, I have drawn on Woody Allen's *To Rome with Love* who himself satirizes the often ridiculous randomness of the media in terms of their choice when giving people without any special talents or achievements the shot to fame. Leopoldo Pisanello, the epitome of ordinariness is turned into a celebrity, because the media choose him

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[38] By this, I am referring to the fact that different versions of the show (depending on the country) cast for different issues of life such as conflict, relationships, or a touch with nature

apparently deliberately to be their new victim. This depiction of the media in celebrity culture has been analyzed to be superficial, to draw profit and to have generated a shift of real content to mere representation. For the '15-minutes-famous, lucky victim' these implications bring along fame – of course –, but also a loss of identity as embodied by Benigni's character.

My final hypothesis has been that the culturally produced hyperreality – that all three primary texts hold as a crucial element of their existence – does have its dark side, both on the part of the celebrities and on the part of the people consuming celebrities. Throughout the thesis I have argued that celebrities affect our lives in a positive as well as a negative way. Positively, they can act as role models as many of them use their fame to raise awareness of issues like cancer, environmentalism and all kinds of disorders. Negatively, the striving after perfection by celebrities can lead audiences to fall for addictions and disorders as they cannot reach the ideal their stars appear to inhabit. Actually, celebrities themselves are not immune to their own idealized image and, therefore, can develop disorders or addictions. The red thread I referred to throughout the entire paper has been that the media are to be blamed for a lot of developments like the ones just mentioned. Representing images of celebrities and stories of their success carries a great potential to conjure up insecurities in audiences as well as the stars themselves. "Celebrities are the lifeblood of the media" (qtd. in Wright 11) seems to be an appropriate title here. The term 'gossip' has come up in this context as well. Especially in the analysis of Paris Hilton's namesake Perez Hilton, the reader has gained an insight in the power of gossip. Millions of people are attracted by this exchange of opinions and attitudes towards celebrities. Even playing a significant role in the celebrity-making processes, five aspects in celeb gossip, also seen in the blogs of Perez Hilton, have been outlined. As elaborated, celebrity gossip implies manipulation, draws attention to fashion, makes comparisons between talents and wannabes, highlights the economic value of celebrities and purposefully highlights the concept of simulacrum when modifying pictures and questioning the realness of events, stories and images. Perez Hilton has been a good example to analyze, because he has become a celebrity in his own right by criticizing the representations of the celebrity in the media. The striking observation though is that he does that by using the Internet which is a media device itself.

To conclude, I believe that all three primary texts have been fairly appropriate for the critical perspective I have had on the '15 minutes of fame' that almost seem taken for granted in today's postmodern world. I want to finish with a quote of the American journalist Anderson Cooper who formulated the following: "The whole celebrity culture thing – I'm fascinated by, and repelled by, and yet I end up knowing about it" (n.p.).

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Appendix

<u>Survey for chapter 1:</u>

1. Was ist für dich ein Celebrity, eine Berühmtheit? (kurze Definition, die dir spontan gerade einfällt)

2. Welche 3 Berühmtheiten fallen dir als erstes ein?

celebrity = person die in der öffentlichkeit zu hohem Pronzentsatz bekannt ist
Madonna, Peter Maffay Thomas Gottschalk

jemand der hart gearbeitet hat und immer noch hart arbeitet. dem zu folge: jemand der im tv gesehen wird. jemand der von vielen gekannt und erkannt wird. jemand der mit einem gewissen talent öffentlich wurde. leute die für menschen vorbilder sein können, gute vorbilder oder auch schlechte.
bruno mars, beyonce, jessie j. = nicht weil ich ihre musik liebe und ihre stimmen. NEIN! denn sie haben alle drei hart gearbeitet um dort zu sein wo sie heute sind!!!

Eine Berühmtheit definiert sich als eine Person, die sich allgemeiner Bekanntheit aufgrund besonderer Merkmale, Leistungen, Fähigkeiten oder Taten erfreut (oder auch nicht). Eine Berühmtheit zieht positive und/oder negative Aufmerksamkeit auf sich und hat Fans, Nachahmer, Bewunderer und Kritiker. Eine Berühmtheit wird beobachtet, fotographiert, befragt, zitiert und kritisiert. Das Englische Wort "celebrities" hat für mich eine eher negative Bedeutung, das Wort "Berühmheit" hingegen klingt stilvoller. In meinem Wortschatz stellen diese beiden Wörter eine unterschiedliche Gruppen von bekannten Menschen dar
Aufgrund meiner in Frage 1 differenzierten Betrachtungsweise der beiden Wörter folgt auch hier eine Gliederung in a) "Celebrities" wie zum Beispiel • Michael Jackson • Christina Aguilera • Britney Spears und b)"Berühmtheiten" wie zum Beispiel • Kaiserin Elisabeth "Sissi" • Mutter Theresa • Barack Obama

Celebrities sind für mich Personen die oft in den Medien vertreten sind und deren Name vielen Menschen ein Begriff ist.
Spontan fallen mir jetzt die Person ein: Obama, Angela Merkel, Mark Zuckerberg.

Eine Berühmtheit ist eine Person, die entweder aus einer berühmten/einflussreichen Familie stammt oder aus einem künstlerischen Talent, einer wirtschaftlichen oder politischen Spitzenposition heraus bekannt wird und zumindest zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt ihres Lebens aufgrund ihrer Arbeit oder ihres Privatlebens in den Medien sehr präsent ist.
Julia Roberts, Alicia Keys, Heidi Klum

schön, reich, und erfolgreich!

angelina jolie, jennifer aniston, brad pitt

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celebrity: jemand, der in der klatschpresse vorkommt

berühmtheit (davon abweichend): jemand, den die meisten leute kennen, also neben schauspielern auch top-politiker oder sehr bekannte geschäftsleute wie bill gates, die trotzdem keine celebrities sind

george clooney
brad pitt
angela jolie

Eine Berühmtheit ist ein Mensch/Tier, dass überdurchschnittlich sehr viele Leute kennen.

Britney Spears, Bud Spencer, Lasie (der Hund)

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jemand der ununterbrochen in den medien ist (müss nichts besonderes "drauf" haben oder so ..)

christina aguilera, beyonce, rihanna

Celebrity: a person who is not ordinary, but well-known, exposed to public life, regardless of accomplishments or importance, and having become famous out of some unknown reason :)

Michael Jackson (RIP) :) ; Marilyn Monroe (RIP) :) and Mary mother of Jesus :)

Ein Hollywood klatch-prominente person

Paris Hilton, Brad Pitt u Angelina, und dann lange nix... Und dann Tom cruise..

Ein celebrity ist für mich jemand, den man aus den Medien kennt. Und wenn man sie/ihn auf der Straße sieht, erzählt man es stolz seinen Freunden. J

Barak Obama
Bill Clinton
(dann wird´s schwer…) Prinz William und seine Kate

---

1. jemand, den sehr viel mehr leute kennen als ihm/ihr bekannt sind, und der auch allgemein zelebriert wird, meistens über die medien.

2. John Lennon, Dalai Lama, Mozart (W. A.)

Eine Person, die aus irgendeinem Grund im Rampenlicht steht. Name
und-oder Gesicht oder unbekannt. zB der Mörder von XZ der gesucht wird
und täglich im Fernsehen ist wäre genauso eine Berühmtheit wie John
Wayne eine Berühmtheit ist

George Clooney
Barack Obama
Justin Bieber

Schauspieler, Musiker, Politiker, Sportler, herausragende Persönlichkeit... tod oder lebendig.
Leute, die in der Öffentlichkeit auftreten und/oder über die in den Medien berichtet wird.

Alle die im "Madam Tussauds" stehen :-)
Nachdem wir aber nur 3 nennen dürfen:
Falco, Michael Jackson, Robert Pattinson

- jemand, der aus film und fernsehen berühmt ist,
- den man mehrmals wöchentlich irgendwie bemerken MUSS (durch fernsehen, illustrierte, tratsch, tageszeitung), den man einfach KENNT ob man will oder nicht
- immer SCHÖN, über das normalmaß herausgeputzt

angelina jolie, brad pitt, julia roberts

Das ist ein Mensch, der durch besondere Fähigkeiten, oder durch besondere Taten, oder durch besondere Charakterfähigkeiten oder einfach durch Wichtigtuerei öffentliche Aufmerksamkeit

erworben hat.

Barack Obama, Angela Merkel, Michael Jackson

---

jemand der etwas außergewöhnliches leistet

lady gaga, barack obama, michael Jackson

---

menschen die durch außergewöhnliches talent zu einem schnellen bekanntheitsgrad in der öffentlichkeit, gesellschaft kommen
können aber auch schräge typen sein die die leute faszinieren, aufregen oder hassen

rita ora,jay z michael Jackson

Ein Celebrity ist jemand, dem Ruhm fuer etwas zugemessen wird. Das koennen verschiedene Dinge sein. Entweder der oder die jenige ist ein Kuenstler, wie zB Schauspieler, Saenger oder Taenzer, der im Rampenlicht (Scheinwerferlicht) steht und somit Aufmerksamkeit bekommt. Es koennen aber auch Leute zum Celebrity werden die durch ihre Aktionen Aufmerksamkeit erregen und in die Schlagzeilen geraten. Aktivisten wie Ah Wei Wei sind somit durch die Medien auch zu einer gewissen Bekannheit gelangt. Man sollte aber unterscheiden zwischen Leuten, die Arbeit erledigen und somit beruehmt geworden sind und zwischen Leuten, die durch die Medien bekannt gemacht worden sind.

Clint Eastwood (wegen der Republican Convention)
Michael Jackson (hab grad den Song von das Racist im Kopf)
Julia Roberts (mit deren Namen ich mich vorstelle fuer Leute die nicht wissen wie man Julia buchstabiert)

---

ein celebrity ist eine Person mit einem hohen Bekanntsheitsgrad (heutzutage leider unabhängig von vom Charakter der Person)

Mel Gibson
Bill Clinton

---

jemand der einer großen Zahl von Menschen aus den Medien bekannt ist

Barrack Obama
Tom Cruise
Madonna

Eine Berühmtheit ist für mich eine Person, die aufgrund ihrer Geburt, ihres Berufes oder eines besonderen Verdienstes für die Weltgeschichte eine Bekanntheit erlangt hat, die über
den Bekanntheitsgrad einer Person, die demselben Umfeld entstammt, hinausreicht. Diese Bekanntheit ist oft weder zeitlich noch räumlich gebunden, spielt sich jedoch immer innerhalb einer bestimmten Community ab, die bestimmte gemeinsame Merkmale hat und nur darum die Berühmtheit einer Person erkennt.

Queen Elizabeth, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley

---

berühmt ist jemand, der der Allgemeinheit bekannt ist und auffällt durch etwas besonderes.

Jesus, whitney houston, und der Mann, der italienische Ex- Formel 1 Fahrer, der jetzt bei den Olympischen Spielen gewonnen hat - Name fällt mir leider nicht ein.

---

jmd, der etwas besonders gut kann und keine scheu hat, es zu zeigen in der öffentlichkeit.

romy schneider
michael jackson
madonna

Jemand der praktisch als Image/Marke in der Öffentlichkeit existiert. Allein sein/ihr Name erweckt sofort bei den meisten Leuten ein Bild oder eine Emotion (egal ob positiv oder negativ). Wie beim "Coca-Cola", "Batman" oder "McDonalds" sozusagen... Ein Celebrity hat es geschafft, seine eigene Marke (sich selbst) in die Masse zu verbreiten.

Lady Gaga (welche Überraschung haha ^^): für mich ein typischer Fall der heutigen Berühmtheit, die

größtenteils durch das Internet und die Social Networks (Twitter, Facebook…) existieren kann. Sobald eine neue Performance, ein neues Video oder ein neues Kostüm auftaucht, wird's sofort online gestellt und durch Millionen Menschen geteilt und so verbreitet sich die Marke.
- Michael Jackson: The King of pop, ein klassischer Fall…
- Lady Diana: die Ikone von der "Tabloid-Berühmtheit", die eigentlich nicht wirklich wegen ihres Werks oder einer Begabung (sie war keine Künstlerin), sondern durch ihre persönliche (tragische) Geschichte eine richtige Faszination bei Millionen Menschen erwecken konnte. Ein trauriges modernes Märchen.

A celebrity is a person who has become famous through the media. While most have made a successful movie, a successful music album, or are rich, there are certainly many people throughout the world who are very rich and successful, yet they are not 'covered' by the media and therefore never become a celebrity.

The way to becoming a celebrity usually corresponds with a rather unique personality that people can 'follow.'

Brad Pitt, George Clooney, David Beckham

Celebrity = Jemand der in den Medien präsent ist, von dem man auch Geschichten aus dem Privatleben in den Medien hört. Ich assoziiere damit vor allem Leute aus der Film- und Musikbranche, die bekannt/erfolgreich sind.

Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie, Amy Winehouse

---

eine Person, die sei es durch Sport, Kunst, Politik, Gesellschaftsstatus berühmt geworden ist.

Kate, Hermann mayr, Obama

Jemand den viele Leute kennen so dass nicht nur persönliche Freunde und bekannte über Ihn reden.

Michael Jordan, Mose, Alexander der große

Survey for chapter 6.2.:

1. Was fällt dir spontan als erstes zu "Paris Hilton" ein?

2. Warum ist sie deiner Meinung nach so berühmt?

---

reich, offiziell ein partygirl und inoffiziell glaub ich schon dass sie eine beinharte Geschäftsfrau sein kann....

Sie weiß sich zu vermarkten...

---

blondes partygirl mit hoher stimme

reiche eltern??

---

guter PR Manager

sie weiß ihre inszenierten Exzesse und 'Ausrutscher' gut zu vermarkten

---

Partygirl

weil sie es sich leisten kann und es irgendwie (PR Manager, Geld) geschafft hat, aus der Not eine Tugend zu machen

---

Barbiepuppe

clevere Geschäftsfrau

Prostituierte

extrem gescheite Geschaeftsfrau, die es schafft, diese geniale Seite erfolgreich zu verstecken, um noch

erfolgreicher zu sein

Dämlich

weil Ihr Vater eine Hotelkette hat

bewusst blöd, so blöd is sie nicht.

hinter ihr stehen glaub ich gute Geschäftsläute, die wissen wie man Sie, oder Sie sich vermarkten kann. z.B. bei "simple life" dass war insziniert und teilweise wurde Sie dazu überredet.

Paris Hilton: hat doch einen eigenen Sekt, oder so ein inn Getränk, oder? Blodine, wäre dann mein zweiter Gedanke.

berühmt, weil sie die Tochter von.... ist, aber wir sind ja alle irgendwie die Töchter und Söhne von irgendjemanden ;-)   berühmt, weil sie nicht nur die tochter von ist, sondern sich irgendwann ganz offensichtlich dazu entschieden hat in der medienwelt präsent zu sein.

Reich und dünn

Warum sie "berühmt" ist kann ich beim bestem Willen nicht nachvollziehen. Wahrscheinlich hat sie irgendwann mal ihre Unterwäsche vergessen.

blond, oberflächlich!

Berühmt ,weil sie eine gute pr-agentur hat offensichtlich

it girl, blond, hund

hilton familie, it girl, mtv, events

Tussi

gesponsertes Girlie einer bekannten Hotelfamilie

one night in paris

weil sie sich selbst einfach gut vermarkten kann ^^

Nervensäge, uninteressant

Weil sie die Kohle hat, sich wichtig zu machen

Slut

weil sie ALLES tut, um sich in Szene zu setzen

Sekt

Sie bedient das Klischee eines verwöhnten, reichen Kindes aus gutem Haus, das ausschließlich das macht, was sie möchte. Und vermarktet dieses durch ihr Auftreten als it-Girl, das alle Promis kennt und auf jeder angesagten Party ist, von der das gemeine Volk ausgeschlossen ist.

dummes, verzogenes Gör

weiß genau wie sie 1. zu ihrem Vorteil nutzen kann

Blond

Sie kommt aus einer bekannten Familie und kann ihr Klischee vom IT-Girl gut vermarkten

blonde Tussi!

weil sie alles tut um in die Medien zu kommen!

Dummtussi

weil sie sich in den Vordergund spielt und aus reichem Hause ist

Blond

weiß wie man sich vermarktet

Blond

Selbstdarstellung

Chihuahua

Hilton Tochter

würde ich nicht von der Bettkante schmeißen *ggg*

Exzesse, Peinlichkeiten und eh klar maßig Kohle

nicht sehr helle und verwöhnt

weil sie sich recht gekonnt in Szene setzt

lebt davon, sich als Partygast bezahlen zu lassen - wie geil ist das hahahahaha

das frag ich mich auch - finde aber, alle Menschen die schaffen berühmt zu werden ohne was Konkretes zu leisten ein echtes Phänomen. Wäre nur ihr Vater dafür verantwortlich, wäre ihre Schwester gleich berühmt und das ist sie definitiv nicht.

bauernhof, sekt (echt seltsame assoziationen xD)

reich, verwöhnt und hat es halt geschafft sich einmal richtig in szene zu setzen so dass ihr danach die medien halt hinterherliefen und jetzt ist sie halt sowas wie eine marke..

reich, verwöhnt, überheblich, etwas beschränkt

wegen der bekanntheit der eltern und ihrer hotels und dann eben durchs partygirl-dasein und vielleicht hat der ein oder andere skandal geholfen

alle klischees die zu typisch blonden passen

sie kann sich super vermarkten!

Nervtötend

genau, geplante " unabsichtliche" peinlichkeits-Auftritte

trägt fast nie Unterhose,

Bekannt wegen den Familiennamen

Der Name ist die Marke
keinesfalls dumm, weiss aber wie man sich vermarktet

chihuahua am arm
wegen dem Familiennamen

Prosecco aus der Dose
Sie weiß, dass man vor allem im Mittelpunkt steht, wenn sich die Leute über einen aufregen können und dieses Wissen nutzt sie gekonnt.

Mühsam
weil sie sich selber gut vermarktet. Also ich interessiere mich ja echt null für die, dafür ist mir meine Zeit zu kostbar. Ich persönlich glaube aber dennoch nie und nimmer, dass sie dumm ist. Ich meine, sie kommt aus Hause Hilton – hat also bestimmt eine dementsprechende Ausbildung genossen! Aber selbstverständlich gibt sie sich äußerst dumm und billig, scheint aber meiner Meinung nach durchdachtes Marketing zu sein und sie ist ja auch erfolgreich damit. WARUM man so ein Image allerdings aufbaut ist mir dennoch unklar und da stell ich sehrwohl ihren Charakter in Frage, nicht jedoch zwingend ihr Bildungsniveau. Der Erfolg gibt ihr recht - ob sie mit dieser Existenz glücklich wird bzw ist oder nicht, is mir relativ egal.

Index

Abstract

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich ausführlich mit dem Phänomen der Berühmtheiten, um genau zu sein, mit den ‚neuen' Formen der Berühmtheiten. Mit den ‚neuen' Formen sind jene Prominente gemeint, die dafür berühmt sind, dass sie sich mithilfe der Medien gekonnt in Szene setzen und weniger deswegen, weil sie etwas Großartiges geleistet hätten. Andy Warhol hat diese ‚neuen' Formen bereits in den 60er Jahren mit seinem prägenden Ausspruch „In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes" vorausgesagt und damit Recht behalten. Mit dem Boom der Massenmedien in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts, dem Aufschwung der Verbraucherbewegung sowie der aktiven Ausrichtung unterschiedlichster Industrien (wie zum Beispiel der Unterhaltungsindustrie, der Modeindustrie und der Werbebranche) auf Zielgruppen, wurde ein erweiterter Fokus auf die Präsenz von Berühmtheiten unumgänglich.

Mit den 15 Minuten, auf die sich Warhol bezieht, sind jene gemeint, die Prominente in den Mittelpunkt der Aufmerksamkeit stellen, diese jedoch nach kurzer Zeit wieder vergessen sind. Zu verdanken haben solche Berühmtheiten dieses kurze Aufscheinen am Star-Himmel den Medien, die sozusagen die ‚Quelle' allen Ruhms sowie allen Übels repräsentieren. In meiner Arbeit erläutere ich genau diesen Einfluss der Medien auf die Celebrity-Kultur und argumentiere, dass diese ihren Machtbereich von der Berichterstattung von Berühmtheiten dahingehend expandiert haben, dass sie mit dem Eintritt der Postmoderne nun selbst zu Erzeugern von Prominenten mutiert sind.

Aufgrund dessen, ist die Arbeit in zwei Teile aufgeteilt. Während der erste Teil den unterschiedlichen Definitionen von Berühmtheiten, dem geschichtlichen Hintergrund sowie den vielfältigen Funktionen von ‚Celebrities' und dem Zusammenspiel der zugehörigen Zielgruppe gewidmet ist, werden im zweiten Teil folgende kulturelle Texte zur genaueren Analyse herangezogen: Die Reality-TV Show *Big Brother*, die medienpräsente Paris Hilton und Woody Allen's *To Rome with Love*. Alle diese Texte repräsentieren unterschiedliche Aspekte der Celebrity-Kultur und versinnbildlichen die von Warhol getätigte Aussage.

Curriculum Vitae

Personal Data

Name:	Patricia Todjeras
Address:	Gentzgasse 129/1/47, 1180 Vienna
E-mail:	pjmtodjeras@hotmail.com
Date of birth:	01.03.1987
Place of birth:	Amstetten / Lower-Austria / Austria
Citizenship:	Austrian

Education

1993 – 1997:	Elementary school of Elsa Brandström Amstetten
1997 – 2005:	Secondary school of Ostarrichi with emphasis on modern languages
2005 – 2006:	Diploma studies in law at the university of Vienna
Since 1.10.2006:	English and Spanish studies for teaching certification

Professional experience

July 2003:	Internship at a small firm (dealing with timber) - Amstetten
July 2004:	Internship at BILLA (Austrian supermarket) – Amstetten
July – August 2006:	Volunteer at a Christian camp (counselor, staff) – Minnesota / USA
July – August 2007:	Counselor at a Christian Camp – Lower-Austria ; counselor at a recreation center (TED – Ten English Days) – Upper-Austria
July – August 2008:	Volunteer in a nursery – Guatemala / Central America
July 2009:	Volunteer in a community doing projects for the homeless as well as for elderly people – Chicago, Illinois / USA

Teaching experience

– Within the scope of different didactic classes at the Department of English and the Department of Spanish at a wide range of different schools (vocational schools, secondary schools, Karl-Popper school)

– Within the scope of the FAP (pedagogical teaching internship) I taught at the Sacre-Coeur school

Special skills

Languages:	German, English, Romanian, Spanish, French, Latin
Computer skills:	MS Word, Power Point

Miscellaneous

- Complimentary occupation as a freelancer in domains of non-denominational youth work in Vienna (JAM) and social projects in Vienna (Next Generation)
- Private tutoring in English, Spanish, Latin and German
- Since early adolescence different babysitter jobs

- Complimentary occupation in an international church in Vienna (child care, welcome team, youth)
- Driver license B
- TOEFL test taken in 2008
- Trips abroad: Europe – Austria, Germany, Romania, Hungary, France, Great Britain, Serbia, Spain, Belarus (mission's trip), Switzerland; USA – Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin; Central America – Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Belize, Mexico
- Hobbies: people, cultures, music, faith, traveling, languages