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WHAT is Fortune, what is Fame?
FUTILE gold and phantom name—
 RICHES buried in a cave,
GLORY written on a grave.

—Henry Van Dyke, *“The Talisman”*

Table of Contents

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR 6

BEYOND THE POKER FACE 7
Annie Szołkowski

KNOWING CELEBRITY 9
Ned Fischer

WHY STEVE JOBS' DEATH MATTERS
(BUT REALLY SHOULDN'T) 12
Phil Sutherland, S.J.

(NOT) HOLIER THAN THOU 15
An Interview with Father C. Hightower, S.J.

THE ~~INDIVIDUAL~~ IN THE POST-CHRISTIAN, CELEBRITY
CULTURE 19
Anonymous

CELEBRITY 25
Chastonie Chipman

A STRUGGLE TO THE DEATH 26
Dr. Eric Cunningham

TONY BENNETT, WHITNEY HOUSTON, AND ADDICTION 30
Dane Westermeyer

WHICH ONE'S WHICH? DOESN'T REALLY MATTER 32
An Interview with Luke Barats and Joe Bereta

CATHOLIC CELEBRITIES 35

Margaret McGuire

... COMES GREAT RESPONSIBILITY 37

Thomas Bryan

THE FEMININE MISTAKE: HOW SEX IS SELLING WOMEN SHORT 39

Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson

CONSUMPTION OF A FEMALE CELEBRITY 41

Analise Thornley

ON CELEBRITY: A POP CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE 42

An Interview with Dr. Ann Ciasullo

IT'S A BARBIE WORLD 47

Leah Beckett

Letter from the Editor

AN UNEXPECTED CELEBRITY sighting is a strange phenomenon. It can include anything from denial (“Is that really Morgan Freeman?”) to shock (“That’s... oh my gosh, that’s definitely Morgan Freeman.”) to rumination (“Should I go up and talk to him and tell him how much I loved *Driving Miss Daisy*? Naw, he probably gets that all the time...”) to revelation (“Wow, he’s holding a Starbucks cup and I drink Starbucks so it’s like we both have a bond or something!”), all coated with a healthy dose of crazy.

It happened to me. No, it wasn’t Morgan Freeman.

As I sat in my gate at the Spokane International Airport, Henry Winkler exited the jetway wearing a windbreaker like any average guy. Apparently he likes to fly Southwest.

Cue the signs of celebrity sighting. There’s no way Henry Winkler could be in Spokane—why would he be in Spokane? No, that has to be Henry Winkler. OH MY GOSH it’s Henry Winkler. The other people at the gate look pretty confused too—it has to be him. Should I go up to him and say “Eeeeyyyyy!” like *The Fonz*? No, he would probably get annoyed. But he flies Southwest, how weird is that? And—

By the time I fully registered the situation, he had disappeared. Eventually I calmed down enough to remember that I’m not that big a fan of Henry Winkler—I have never even seen a full episode of *Happy Days*. Unless my peers remember him in *The Waterboy*, he would barely show up on my generation’s star radar. It seemed that his presence enraptured me and everyone else at the gate for no apparent reason.

My reaction rivaled that of my Arnold Schwarzenegger sighting in 2003 during his campaign for governor. He visited my hometown, giving us all the impression that we played a special part in his mission to “bring Cal-ee-ifornia back.” At 13, I had no interest in his political plans or his action movies—but I definitely screamed with the rest of crowd as he waved and called his opponents “girly men.” I could never decide if it was crowd mentality or the man’s sheer star power that ignited support.

Then again, my George W. Bush sighting was probably the strangest. I stood in a flat-out mob of Knights of Columbus in Dallas as he visited their annual Supreme Convention and spoke choice words about pro-life policy. The cheers were deafening, and I joined in despite my teenage apathy. Again, my fangirl reaction was muddled between a genuine interest in politics and a simple desire to see a controversial figure. How could these people reshape my sensibilities without my prior fandom?

As this Charter proves, celebrities sweep us into applause and shock because of fame’s omnipresent allure. We can appreciate them providing water cooler conversation and quotable quotes (“Winning!”), but with appreciation comes awareness that their power can whisk us into admiration, or at least moderate curiosity. You could say that this power mitigates free will—but without them our politics, music, religion, business, and childhood toy boxes would bore us. Would we rather be truly free, or superficially excited?

The Charter you hold in your hands suggests the latter. So please: indulge just once (in secret, if necessary) in the glittery temptation before you. The stories that follow depict figures that, regardless of wealth, number of Twitter followers, or even amount of natural talent, carry mystical power in our culture. The Henry Winklers (or Arnold Schwarzeneggers, or George W. Bushes) of the world, before disappearing in mirages of old tabloid news, has-been status or death, will always leave indelible marks on our experience of fame. Just think twice about them before you start clapping with the rest of us. ■

Amanda Przybyla

Beyond the Poker Face

By *Annie Szotkowski*

LADY GAGA PARADES her own stellar runway. Beyond that catwalk of extraordinary costumes and stunning portrayals of performance get-ups and silhouettes, she is a resonating icon of the current age, adding never before seen attitude and flair to the music industry, putting her a step above marketing experts and business gurus to create an image embodying what Tony Bennett calls “this generation’s Picasso.”

Or does she? In feminist writer Camille Paglia’s article “Lady Gaga and the Death of Sex,” Paglia claims that Lady Gaga has not exhibited qualities that have not been seen before, instead labeling her “a ruthless recycler of other people’s work.” Using a recurring feminist point that fame leads to or comes from over-objectification of provocativeness and paparazzi unrest, Paglia claims that Lady Gaga has built a façade that recalls the glamour, or the days, of Madonna, Cher, Jane Fonda, or Daphne Guinness. Yet noticeably, these iconic women who stood their own test of time portrayed their celebrity status as a mark of beauty and inspiration.

What about the claim that Lady Gaga’s voice for audiences is a mark of unconventionality, of care not heard prevalently in today’s media? Is it possible to have an Aristotelian celebrity, out to achieve the good and inspire others to flourish because they were “born this way?” Yes, if you were broadcasted world over, the motivation to display a positive image would keep the nosy media at bay. But is this the smart way? The considerate way? To direct that attention to others and brand yourself as talented, conscientious, individual, and daringly different?

The label “celebrity” has a certain ring, and the label is temporal. “Celebrity” is a homogenous classification shared with a small pool that owns liberties because of their societal, idolized status. The American media is fanatic; celebrity lifestyles and associations become worthy of being ubiquitous, as encoding into the qualitative make-ups of our cultural conversation

Both Tina Turner and Janis Joplin were unfortunate targets of emotional and physical abuse, but their art does not share a redeeming, empowering force that contemporary audiences can relate to; these talented female performers did not possess Lady Gaga’s current artistic comforts.

points, from small talk to dinner table discussions. Lady Gaga’s utilization of her own ubiquity with her career does not slight her autonomy but emblems a rare call to be inspired by lyrics, to embrace her artistry, and proclaims a call for action to accept people as they are,

where as other celebrities have notoriously made their media presence self-absorbed.

Can a celebrity be Aristotelian at heart? Is there genuine self-love, or too much love for the fame and fortune? Does Lady Gaga seek to define “the good” through her music and her fan’s reception of her lyrics? I predict Lady Gaga will flourish in history and not reduce to a mere flash in the pan. Her song “Born This Way” is an

example of accepting yourself, radiating Aristotle's "self-love" through cool sound barriers into the philosophical application of her lyrics. "Marry The Night" is about addressing your full potential to be the best at...whatever. Aristotle would call this "arête," the best talent. Aristotle writes in *Nicomachean Ethics*, "we exist by virtue of activity...he loves his handiwork, therefore, because he loves existence." Lady Gaga could possibly be an icon of American freedom, creative motivation, and artistic ingenuity. She sings because she exists. Let freedom ring.

Why, since Lady Gaga exudes abundant wealth and status, would she mimic the notion to care if she really didn't? It is obvious that she cares less of normative approval, so why would approval from the media be different? I remember when Skip Bonuccelli, my Principles of Public Relations professor at Gonzaga, called Lady Gaga "a marketing genius." She knows how to market herself with an image that is memorable, business savvy, and adaptable to the insecure world of show business. The medium is the message and Lady Gaga makes it clear that she will not be ignored.

Paglia claims that "Gaga is in way over her head with her avant-garde pretensions... She wants to have it both ways—to be hip and avant-garde and yet popular and universal, a practitioner of gung-ho 'show biz'. Most of her worshippers seem to have had little or no contact with such powerful performers as Tina Turner or Janis Joplin, with their huge personalities and deep wells of passion." In no way does Lady Gaga exhibit an empty well of force and passionate persistence. Arguably, the well has an endless supply. "Celebrity" is synonymous with "the present moment." Both Tina Turner and Janis Joplin were unfortunate targets of emotional and physical abuse, but their art does not share a redeeming, empowering force that contemporary audiences can relate to; these talented female performers did not possess

Lady Gaga's current artistic comforts.

In a world with countless poker faces and swells of melodic disillusionment, Lady Gaga draws us back to the reason why entertainment can inspire the good within us and the good for others. Superstar and celebrity, Lady Gaga wants everyone to be a showstopper and to appreciate the life outside the taffeta, the wigs...and the meat dress. ■

Knowing Celebrity

Ned Fischer

GROWING UP IN rural Eastern Washington with no TV, my exposure to popular culture was little to none. Not knowing anyone who was a mainstream big shot, I based my life on what I was exposed to. When I was young, my dad was the coach of a local high school cross-country program. As his son I was not exposed to football players, movie stars, or hit singers; I was exposed to world-class runners like Billy Mills and Jim Ryun. My dad's heroes became my heroes, and these were about the only celebrities I knew. I went to track and cross country meets with my family, subscribed to magazines featuring the greats of the running world, read books on how to become a better athlete, and looked up to many of the greats of running. To me these men and women were real celebrities, ones of endurance and grit. But to my peers, the posters of world record holders lining my bedroom walls meant almost nothing. Celebrity wasn't about running at all to them, but about X Games contenders, rock stars, and famous comedians. I don't blame them in the least; they had their own heroes. Like most of America, running was meaningless to them. But the runners I watched and followed were my celebrities because they were the people who motivated and inspired me in one of my passions in life.

When I search for a common definition of a celebrity, I find myself staring an enigma in the face because of my lack of experience with popular culture. For

someone who cannot list more than five football, basketball, hockey, and baseball players, mainstream sport does not seem a good place to find a celebrity. And for someone who had no idea who the Kardashians were until a few months ago, the high rollers of TV offer little promise at finding one. I simply define a celebrity as a person who tickles your imagination and makes an impact on your life. To go further, it is someone who has inspired, motivated, and influenced a part of your life and is important to you. By this definition, my mind immediately jumps to George Washington. A founding father of America, a man who once enjoyed rock star status, is now a venerable painting of a stoic-looking

man in a wig.

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Imagine lining the streets in the City of Brotherly Love to catch a glimpse of the legend ride into town to attend the Constitutional Convention; to watch in awe the man who would be an instrument to creating what

many consider the greatest country in the world. The scene must have been exhilarating. Maybe people in the 1700s understood important human assets—wisdom, virtue, self-sufficiency—as much as the trivial ones.

Now, it seems, celebrities are often those we love to hate. We love the people that make our TV and movies so much that we follow them to oblivion. Charlie Sheen, a man America follows with rapt attention, is a perfect example of someone we would never want to be in spite of our love for his self-destruction. Amy Winehouse and Lindsay Lohan are two more typical examples of celebrity gone wrong. The

personal lives of celebrities are not personal at all, and we eat it up when their lives fall apart. We ponder why people under the spotlight fall apart; maybe it's from all the never-ending surveillance we place upon them. The consequences associated with poor choices and constant attention are commonly understood as part of being a celebrity. A man once said that "this is a reflection on the media of today: if you die and enough people are watching you become a martyr, a hero, you become well

Do you place status on who runs your local government, your favorite sports team, or someone you know who is living their dream?

known. Maybe this is why there are incidents like Columbine where someone is angry, has something to say, and no one's listening, the media sends the message that if you do something loud enough, and it gets our attention then you will be famous for it." The man

behind this quote is not a sociologist, journalist, or psychologist; these words of wisdom come from a different kind of superstar, one who disturbs and disgusts people. Marilyn Manson, a fringe figure, can offer insight into what people look for in celebrity.

Why do we love it when people ruin themselves? Is a crucial part of celebrity being hated as well as loved? Under this new standard, does Ted Bundy qualify for celebrity status? Is a man who ruthlessly raped and murdered dozens of young women a celebrity? Why not? This man fascinates and disgusts us to the umpteenth degree and has shared his time in the limelight. Bundy's hated status may not be much different than any other hated celebrity except that his claim to fame was

something truly horrendous. Bundy may not be a household name, but his crimes leave one's mind reeling much more than common celebrities. Someone like Bundy, while not an ideal celebrity, still disturbs and fascinates me much more than the common drama many stars exhibit. What about the best-known bizarre criminal of our time, Charlie Manson? Manson has been elevated to being a prophet of sorts, one who supposedly questioned what is wrong with society. Manson claimed we created him, which suddenly became insight into the wrongs of society. One can subscribe to his conspiracies and even buy his t-shirt; does that not make him a celebrity?

So far I have regarded celebrities as those who can inspire and disgust, not necessarily at the same time. And yet inspiration and disgust are two very different emotions. Can one use such a black and white interpretation? Does the ability to either disgust or inspire us make a celebrity? Mel Gibson inspired me in *Braveheart*, but has apparently disgusted many people with his recent anti-Semitism. This may be another case where being in the public eye for too long caused Gibson to snap. I don't condone racism or violence, but do I really care about what Mel Gibson is doing outside of making movies? Even in the movie business I don't care what he's doing. It is quite possible that my ideas on popular culture are skewed and I have missed out on a big source of provoking thought and inspiration, which comes from popular culture. My focus may not be directed on mainstream celebrity, but I still feel I can create celebrities of my own.

Allow me to step back for a moment and digress. A friend of mine in high school is now a professional ski bum. He keeps his old high school friends entertained on a fairly regular basis with postings of his exploits in the mountains of Utah. Every so often he will indulge our curiosity with

a video in which he throws himself off a sheer rock face while performing mind-boggling, gravity-defying feats on skis. Jarrett Smith, one of the best friends I have ever had, is more a celebrity to me than anyone in the mainstream media. Unlike the celebrities of ESPN, MTV, and any other medium of fame, my friend, the ski bum, has made a huge impact on my life. Not only is he an extremely talented on the snow, he is also a grand person under all the winter attire. I'd rather spend time out in the mountains with him than shake Kobe Bryant's hand any day.

Who or what holds significance to you? Do you place status on who runs your local government, your favorite sports team, or someone you know who is living their dream? These do not need to be mutually exclusive or ranked by importance, but maybe it is good to reflect on what inspires you and why. How do the people you look up to influence your choice or inspire you and make you think? Are your celebrities part of who you are, or are they accessories to your daily life? They do not have to be the talk of the town; you define their celebrity status. Whoever you are, the people and things you care about build fame just by talking about them or supporting them. The people you choose don't have to be significant to anyone else. You know your passions, and you know who and what is important to you; if you have to place celebrity, place it on someone that matters. ■

“I’m shy, paranoid, whatever word you want to use. I hate fame. I’ve done everything I can to avoid it.”

-Johnny Depp

Why Steve Jobs' Death Matters

(But Really Shouldn't)

Philip Sutherland, S.J.

TIME MAGAZINE LOST much of its credibility in my eyes in 2001 when it chose Mayor Rudy Giuliani “Person of the Year” over Osama bin Laden.¹ The political calculations were obvious; had the editors actually chosen bin Laden it would appear that the magazine was honoring a terrorist and murderer of thousands of Americans. Yet what was patently obvious in the aftermath of September 11 is even clearer today: Osama bin Laden remains one of the most influential leaders of the 21st century. But the error in judgment made by *Time*'s editorial board is indicative of the complex relationship between American cultural values and the interests of the media. If one assumes that the media is primarily interested in selling information, then these seemingly bizarre decisions about what and how to report the news suddenly become much more intelligible. *Time* magazine conformed its news coverage

to the prevailing patriotic fervor felt across the country in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

So it has not surprised me that the death of Steve Jobs instigated such a windfall of positive coverage. Certainly the man deserves the encomiums. Not only was he a passionate visionary who came back from a stunning fall from grace, but he changed how people thought about computers, the design of consumer technology and even human resource management.² Indeed, many people have felt a close connection to Mr. Jobs, not only because of his technological vision that has changed so many lives in the digital age, but also because of his struggle with the cancer that would eventually take his life.³ He was a visionary leader with great passion who inspired many people. Certainly much of the extensive media coverage is warranted for such an influential figure.

Yet Jobs was not the saint that he appeared in the media. By many accounts, he was a highly critical micromanager at Apple, once telling an engineer that he baked a “lovely cake” but used dog feces for the frosting.⁴ And by Apple's own admission, 91 children under the age of 16 years were discovered to be working in Chinese factories owned by Apple's suppliers in 2010.⁵ Nor, would it seem, did Jobs care much for public philanthropy in the vein of Bill Gates or Warren Buffett. Despite amassing an 8.3 billion dollar fortune he has no public record of philanthropy, and Apple has been dubbed one of America's least philanthropic companies.⁶ Certainly Apple is not the only American company to employ child labor

1. See the cover at Time Archive, *Time*, Dec. 31, 2001, web, 9 October 2011, <<http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20011231,00.html>>.

2. See Steve Lohr, “The Power of Taking the Big Chance,” *The New York Times*, October 8, 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

3. The many tributes to Steve Jobs on the internet are amazing, see for example, Jenna Wortham and Tara Parker-Pope, “Around the Web, Memories of Steve Jobs,” *The New York Times*, 6 October 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

4. See David Streitfeld, “Defending Life's Work with Words of a Tyrant,” *The New York Times*, 6 October 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

5. Malcolm Moore, “Apple's Child Labour Issues Worsen,” *The Telegraph*, 15 February 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

6. Andrew Ross Sorkin, “The Mystery of Steve Jobs' Public Giving,” *The New York Times*, 29 August 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

in China, nor is it the only company to have been accused of sparse philanthropic giving. And Jobs' abrasive style was the shadow side of a focused passion that built Apple into the visionary behemoth it is today. My point is not to tear down the man; after all, he was simply human. But very little of the shadow side of Jobs or of his company have been reported in the mainstream press since his death. Instead, he has been declared a secular American saint.

Steve Jobs was an American celebrity before his death, and his virtue has only been magnified in the public's perception since then. Fortunately, he was already beloved by the American public when he died. Other celebrities are not so lucky. Heath Ledger's death sparked a great deal of news coverage as well, though only a fraction of the coverage Steve Jobs is getting. And Osama bin Laden's death—yes, he was certainly a notorious celebrity even if not popular—was greeted not with sadness, but with great glee and even some resurgence of the post-9/11 patriotism that boosted the celebrity of Mayor Giuliani. Indeed, Mr. Giuliani ran an entire presidential campaign upon the wave of good-feeling and celebrity status that carried him into the annals of *Time* magazine. Celebrity, whether positive or negative, is the main factor that determines the quantity and quality of the media coverage. Very rarely do the celebrity obituaries present a nuanced and complex view of the deceased's life.

At no time in recent history was this distorted media coverage more apparent than one week in 1997 when both Princess Diana and Mother Teresa died within days of each other.⁷ Mother Teresa certainly got a great deal of media coverage, but her

death was overshadowed by the coverage of Princess Diana's death, the fate of her two sons, and the tension that had characterized Queen Elizabeth's and Diana's relationship for years. And, to be fair to the media outlets, the international outpouring of grief after Diana's death was indeed quite intense. Diana connected to the public in a way that Mother Teresa never did. The media's coverage of the dramatic ups and downs of the royal family certainly contributed to the public's connection and perception of Diana's life and death. And that perception, in turn, dramatically influenced the type and level of coverage that the media gave to Diana after her death.

Yet the timing of the two deaths certainly begged the question of what makes a good life for a human being. Both women lived remarkable lives worthy of admiration. But it is clear that the media's coverage of Diana had much more to do with her position as a former royal than with her campaign to end land mines or her dedication to her sons. Conversely, the media coverage of Mother Teresa was comparatively short-lived, though it did focus on her self-sacrifice to the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. But the coverage of Mother Teresa could not sell as many newspapers and advertising as the round-the-clock coverage of Princess Diana.

People achieve celebrity status in our society, not by heroic virtue and selfless devotion, but by embodying our deepest cultural values. Diana embodied the desires many of us possess for fame, money and power. We are intrigued by the relationship drama in other people's lives (what else could account for the popularity of *Jersey Shore?*), and we often feel Schadenfreude when

7. Princess Diana died August 31, 1997. Mother Teresa died September 5, 1997.

8. Charles Duhigg, "With Time Running Short, Jobs Managed his Farewells," *The New York Times*, 6 October 2011, Web, 9 October 2011.

9. Ibid. Jobs said this in his 2005 Stanford commencement speech, given after his original diagnosis of pancreatic cancer.

encountered with others' misfortunes. The media knows this and is able to tap into those same emotions to sell its information.

But the media's presentation of celebrities cannot withstand the harsh light of a nuanced, balanced view of a person's life and character. Jobs and Mother Teresa were both human beings, with great virtues and great vices. Jobs followed his vision with great passion, and that is to be admired. But admiration is far different than veneration, and we should acknowledge the type of life that Jobs embodied.

Mr. Jobs' celebrity is primarily a result of his embodiment of the cultural values of hard work, money and capitalistic enterprise. He was an amazing visionary who was able to amass great wealth and change the course of technology for the next several decades. Apple's products have influenced, directly or indirectly, the lives of most Americans and indeed much of the world. He was a successful capitalist in a country that often views the exportation of that same market capitalism to the rest of the world as its primary foreign policy goal. Perhaps some have connected personally to Mr. Jobs' story because of his battle with cancer or his reputation as the comeback kid after being fired and rehired by the same company a decade later. But the majority of the media coverage has focused on his vision and his passion to amass great wealth and build up the company that he helped to found. Certainly Mr. Jobs' life embodies our culture's idea of success and the good for a human being, and it is in stark contrast to the direction that Mother Teresa took her vision and her passion.

Both Mother Teresa and Steve Jobs embodied great passions and relentless pursuit of their own visions, but they directed their passions in very different ways. And it is fair to ask which person modeled the good for human beings. Are people primarily fulfilled in their lives, are they made happiest, by pursuing the

types of things that Jobs pursued? Instead it seems that when Jobs neared death, the intense drive that he used to put into Apple was redirected to his family and friends. He would frequently turn down dinners and farewell ceremonies in order to be with his wife and children, and he would often look forward to leaving his office to have dinner with his family.⁸ For somebody who famously declared, "Death is very likely the single best invention of life, it is life's change agent," it would seem that the inevitability of death did in fact change Jobs' life and turn his passions elsewhere.⁹ When Jobs understood that he was near death, he focused his remaining energy on what he most valued.

Every culture embodies its values in the heroes that it presents as exemplars of the good life. In Homer's day, the celebrities were the warriors like Achilles who embodied courage, excellence and honor. And it is no less true in our own day. When archaeologists study our society in three thousand years, who will be the heroes that embody our most cherished moral principles? I'm sorry to say that right now those heroes would include Snooki and Paris Hilton. Socrates questioned the prevailing wisdom of his time precisely because he knew that often the conventional wisdom was wrong. It is time for us to do the same. ■

(Not) Holier than Thou

FATHER C. HIGHTOWER,
S.J. DISCUSSES
INSTITUTIONAL SCANDAL,
HUMANIZING THE CHURCH,
AND CELEBRITY ETHICS.

Charter: Your positions as Director of University Ministry and chaplain of the basketball team place you in prominent roles on campus. Do you see yourself as a celebrity among Gonzaga students?

Fr. C. Hightower (FHT): No. I would say that my role as chaplain is really to Athletics, as I work with a number of different teams and coaches. It just so happens that basketball has the highest visibility. I am associated with basketball, but I also work with the soccer teams and cross country, Sister Laura does women's basketball and baseball, Janeen [Steer] is doing more with crew, so University Ministry provides that service for the school. I do not think I am a celebrity in any way, shape, or form—but I do think I have more of a high-visibility role, both because of my positions and because we do not have a whole lot of younger Jesuits on campus. It is not that I am a celebrity, but I get called upon to do things more often than not just because I am available.

Charter: Are we meant to identify with church leaders? Would a personal connection to them as celebrities strengthen our faith, or simply look like misprioritizing?

FHT: A relationship with Church leaders is obviously going to be healthy because relationships increase trust. The amount of trust is going to influence how you follow through on faith. However, with that in mind, I do not think that the celebrity worship and cult worship we have in our culture today is healthy; that being said, I think the relationship with the clergy and the religious leadership, being transparent, is healthy in the long run. I will use the example of having Jesuit chaplains living in the residence halls. For people who did not go to a Catholic high school, they may have only seen a priest up on the altar, and they or their families may not have had a personal relationship with a priest. They do not see the everyday minutiae of life. When a priest is living down the hallway, that helps to build faith and it makes the church more human. Those relationships are good.

Charter: In cases of public celebrity ties to religion, such as Madonna with Kabbalah, Tom Cruise with Scientology, and Mitt Romney with Mormonism, how much does a celebrity's religion affect the public's view of them?

FHT: I would say not very much. The question is how authentic they are to the practice of the religion. Madonna was born and raised Catholic, and now proclaims that she is an adherent of Kabbalah. That being said, our Jewish brothers and sisters would say that she is not because that particular style of worship and adherence to the covenant and to the Torah is for males only. So they would say she cannot be—not that she cannot be Jewish, but that the practice of Kabbalah is not an available part of their faith. The second part of that is if you noticed the interviews leading up to her performance at the Super Bowl, she had a rosary on her wrist and she was wearing a cross. It would appear that in this case, her

faith practice is more about marketing than it is about authenticity. I have no ability to judge the interior working of her soul, so I can only look at what is portrayed.

That is very different than someone like Martin Sheen and his son Charlie Sheen, both baptized and practicing Catholics. Martin Sheen has put his faith very upfront, both in his personal life, i.e. the way he publicly practices his faith, and in the way that he practices his craft. He makes a very authentic and public point of putting forward religion-based movies. He walks the walk much more than, quite frankly, one of his sons. Our relationship with Christ is private, but is played out in a public sphere. We get confused sometimes when that public sphere does not match that of the private.

Charter: Should religion be more publicized (through megachurches or televangelism) to bring in more believers, or should it promote a more private and intimate relationship with God?

FHT: Again, I think it all goes down to authenticity. Faith is not marketing, because marketing is a product to sell. We are not selling a product, we are promoting a lifestyle and a choice that allows one to grow closer to God. To be authentic to that we cannot hoodwink people; we will come up with snappy slogans and such. We will go in their door and use things that we normally would not use, like Facebook or Twitter, but take them out through our door, and that door is always going to be a door of faith. It is never going to be secular.

Charter: The Pope is arguably one of the most familiar religious figures in the world.

How do you think the media has affected his reach over Catholics and non-Catholics?

FHT: I think it takes a very talented journalist to write in a nonbiased way because one always writes with cultural heritage in the background. I think that they can either be overly naïve because they are adherents to a religion or they can have an ax to grind because they are not—that can be problematic. The Holy Father is a bishop; he is a cardinal bishop, but he is only a bishop, and it happens to be that as the bishop of Rome, he holds primacy. Catholicism is rooted in intellectual tradition, and the press with the way that it works very rarely is intellectual. You can see some popular press pulling back from the superficial and aiming for the intellectual, but most do not.

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he holds primacy.

Charter: Does celebrity call people to a higher moral conduct because they are so closely watched?

FHT: I think it is unfair to hold them to those higher standards; however, if they choose to live a public life, then they do have a responsibility to be authentic in that life. In our current political environment, we have Newt Gingrich who is now a practicing Catholic, a convert in the last five years. And when he makes public statements and uses the term “vows”—I vow to do this, I vow to do that—well, he gets mocked for misusing his vows because he has been married three times. Now that is not necessarily dealing with his faith, but it does deal with his authenticity and what he is proclaiming. Celebrities are the same. If they proclaim something but do not live it, it becomes contradictory. And because

they have chosen the public realm, they need to be consistent in their actions.

Charter: Priests are celebrities on a smaller scale because of their status among local parishioners. With recent media coverage of child molestation charges among them, how have their relationships with parishioners or their celebrity status changed?

FHT: I think it has changed for the better. I think that it has demonstrated that priests and clergy, both Catholic and non-Catholic, are just as human and flawed as everybody else. We have been taken off a pedestal and the current environment has allowed for a superficiality and criticism. The majority—not all, but the majority—of abuse cases and the victims took place, in my case, before I was born or when I was a small child. Very rarely do you hear something from the '80s, '90s, or 2000s. It is also the case that we live with the sins of our parents. People are going to use the data how they choose to support their choice. That is the advantage at a Jesuit school and institution that has the clergy living in the residence halls among the students, because it demonstrates that humanity

Charter: Yet with cases of secular celebrities such as Lindsay Lohan, the public can easily forgive their wrongdoing. Is it the religious aspect of the situation that causes redemption in the Church to go underpublicized?

FHT: I would think so, because it will not sell. There is a market in our society

for some of that if you watch the nightly news. In the last four or five minutes of the nightly news there is always that fluff piece, one that always makes us feel better about ourselves, so we do have some of that opening awareness. There was a wonderful article recently about Bill Gates and how in 1997 he read a short newspaper article about how children in the Third World were dying from lack of access to clean water. He publicly said that the story changed the way he viewed things because clean water is such a simple thing to provide. With his wife, of course, and his own hard work he founded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has billions of dollars and is the largest nongovernmental foundation worldwide,

and has worked to eradicate malaria and provide clean water. So those fluff pieces have a role. And as far as Lindsay Lohan is concerned, I have no ability to judge her, but the redemption in the

press is not redemption in the eyes of God. The press does the one episode piece which presents an issue, and when the problem is solved the next episode comes on. For someone like Ms. Lohan, the presentation is the same; however, addiction cannot be solved in 30 minutes.

Charter: Do you have your own claim to fame?

FHT: I do not think I have a claim to fame. I am an extrovert, so I tend to be out there a little bit more, and I have been accused of having an ego. But my ego is always directed toward the other. It is there, not about me, but about me as a Jesuit for the sake of Christ. I will fight for things,

I think the real goal is to be able to make those judgments without diminishing the humanity of the other; recognizing their gifts and talents and their limitations at the same time.

that much is clear, but I am fighting for things that are missioned to by the church, the Society of Jesus, and here at Gonzaga, Dr. McCulloh and the Board of Trustees. I will dedicate everything I have to fill those needs because that is my mission—that is not ego. It is because this is what I am asked to do. I have been asked to teach and coach when I ministered to high schoolers, and to support the representation of faith in the Athletic Department today, and I have done all of those to the best of my ability, so we do them: we put a crucifix up, we do a blessing, we light a candle, we now cheer in Latin. I figure out what we are asked to do, and we do it. That is not ego, that is being responsible to the mission that I have been charged with by my religious superiors and by the institution.

Charter: Is there a religious or secular celebrity that grinds your gears?

FHT: I think I want to be very careful here because we are taught in our culture not to judge. I think that, quite frankly, this teaching is incorrect. We are constantly judging and interpreting. I think the real goal is to be able to make those judgments without diminishing the humanity of the other; recognizing their gifts and talents and their limitations at the same time. I think the American public has limitations because we are becoming more and more an uneducated society—statistics show that. Our access to information has increased tremendously, while the quality of that information has been diminished, especially since everyone has the pulpit on the internet. I think some of our pop psychologists and pop theologians have tremendous influence because of that marketability. I am not saying that they are bad, but sometimes because of those pulpits they fall out of favor quickly. The Diocese of Orange just bought the Crystal Cathedral—a big and powerful megachurch

when it was built, but it did not last more than a 10 or 15 years. It was not about God, it was about building a cathedral. So the intentionality is wrong.

Charter: Then do you have a favorite celebrity?

FHT: There are some people I like a lot; some of them are religious leaders, some of them are not. It would depend on what we are looking at. As an educator and Jesuit, I am interested in how to beget God's grace to people, so many of my favorites are people I am working with. I am going to use different stories, examples, or celebrities depending on who I am communicating with and who I am trying to demonstrate God's grace to. If you want to look at someone that everyone can hold up regardless of religion, though, we are looking at people like Nelson Mandela or Desmond Tutu. Those individuals have, because of their practice of authentic justice, suffered for it and addressed that suffering with dignity and grace, not allowing that injustice to embitter them.

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The Individual in the Post-Christian, Celebrity Culture

By *Anonymous*

I HAVE A close friend who lives in Canada, who was studying to become a music professor. A year ago his father, who worked in South Korea, disappeared without a trace. The mother hired private investigators to search for the missing father but in vain. My friend had to withdraw from his university to help his mother pay the bills. I don't know how this crisis will turn out, but it raises the interesting questions that particularly press the modern, technological age, steeped in the celebrity culture: how do visible people become suddenly invisible, and how do invisible people become suddenly visible?

I want to look broadly at that question of visibility, invisibility and relate it to what may be called an authentic life of Christian spirituality. Perhaps one may smirk at that

quaint phrase "authentic life of Christian spirituality," for the concept seems strangely alien. Even in a place like Marin County, Latinos waiting on sidewalks for work is not so alien; it's what I have grown up seeing, at least. Rather, an authentic life of Christian spirituality strikes us as alien because as Arthur W. Hunt III noted, "The Christian conscience is fast fading."¹

The Christian worldview is fast receding, disappearing like the distant echo of a dark and overbearing past. What is replacing it? When saints today seem seriously doubtful,² what gives color to an otherwise mundane life? Jim Carrey, on his regularly-updated Twitter page, put it pithily: "If future historians look bck 2 the blogs of our day 4 reference material it'll be a piss poor account of who we r. Or is that who we r ?;^\`"³ Or as Adorno and Horkheimer put it in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*:

Talented performers belong to the industry long before it displays them; otherwise they would not be so eager to fit in. The attitude of the public, which ostensibly and actually favours [sic] the system of the culture industry, is a part of the system and not an excuse for it.⁴

That is, our culture would not exist without the "our." *We* have produced this culture of superficiality,⁵ sexism,⁶ and

1. Arthur W. Hunt III, "The Image," *Christian Research Journal* 25, no. 3 (2003), <http://www.equip.org/articles/the-image> (accessed Nov. 26, 2011).
2. MsAntitheist, "Mother Fucking Teresa was definitely NOT A SAINT!" *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI8A0VsgueY> (accessed Nov. 27, 2011).
3. Jim Carrey, "Twitter entry for October 5, 2011," *Twitter*, <http://twitter.com/#!/JIMCARREY> (accessed Nov. 25, 2011). Regarding the emoticon ?;^\`, Carrey explains, "?;^\` } The question mark represents my hair, my natural curiosity, and my desire to be a curiosity ?B^•" (Twitter entry for October 26, 2011).
4. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), 33.
5. Cf. Lucas Cruikshank, "Fred's YouTube Channel," *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/user/Fred> (accessed Nov. 28, 2011).
6. Cf. Lisa Belkin, "After Class, Skimpy Equality," *The New York Times*, Aug. 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/28/fashion/after-class-skimpy-equality-motherlode.html>; cf. also a response to Belkin's article: Jillian, "Response to After Class: Skimpy Equality. So...what is being taught?" *Words of Wisdom from Worldly Young Women*, <http://ctywp.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/response-to-after-class-skimpy-equality-so-what-is-being-taught/>.

materialist consumerism,⁷ this culture that the intellectuals complain about (and the corresponding politicians who promise to do something about it but in fact are just as caught up in it as anyone else⁸), this culture in which every daily event of our lives becomes necessary and useless by oodles of social networking,⁹ this culture in which we communicate everything and nothing at once, this culture that, for the sake of profit, abandons the so-called humanitarian values and rights that it supposedly champions,¹⁰ this culture that we participate in to startling degrees, on the one hand criticizing its obvious vanity, but on the other hand participating (zealously) in it without a second's thought. This situation *is* our reality, and to that extent it must be understood in order (if one wishes) to transcend it.

Francis Schaeffer, the Christian philosopher, predicted, "When the memory of the Christian consensus which gave us freedom within the biblical form is increasingly forgotten, a manipulating authoritarianism will tend to fill the vacuum."¹¹ Politically, one may say that

this authoritarianism has taken the form of the modern, secular state. Acknowledging truth to that claim, I wish, however, to go deeper, to the psycho-spiritual level. It's easy to write *about* a feeling of mass existential aimlessness when one has had little-to-no direct experience with the hopelessness that suffocates the suicidal's psyche. When one faces that very real question, "What *is* my purpose, if I have any at all?"—that question that brings us face-to-face with death—then one suddenly sees the mass illusion that constitutes our modern world, especially the celebrity phenomenon.¹² It is, as Carl Raschke observed, "a collective form of transference."¹³ It is a symptom that expresses itself through a fantasy mechanism, where "[f]antasy designates our 'impossible' relationship to the person or thing that we most desire."¹⁴ Hunt stated it this way: "We pour our own meaning into them [media/electronic images] and receive that meaning back," and "The *image* exalts itself not only against words but ultimately against the transcendent *Word (Logos)*" (emphasis original).¹⁵ Jacques Lacan put this dichotomy between seeing and hearing in this way:

7. Cf. the endless Black Friday horror stories that the media publishes; e.g. "Black Friday Shoppers Pepper-Sprayed in Calif.," *CBS News*, Nov. 25, 2011, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57331160/black-friday-shoppers-pepper-sprayed-in-calif/ (accessed 28 Nov. 2011).

8. The most notorious example in our time is perhaps Silvio Berlusconi. Cf. John Hooper, "Silvio Berlusconi: A Story of Unfulfilled Promises," *The Guardian*, Nov. 13, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/13/silvio-berlusconi-story-unfulfilled-promises>; cf. also "Profile: Silvio Berlusconi, Ex-Italian Prime Minister," BBC News Europe, Nov. 12, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11981754>.

9. I.e. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, blogs, vlogs, etc.

10. E.g. Dove, which a few years ago promoted developing awareness of the negative and oppressive effects of the beauty culture on growing women, and Lynx/Axe, which is notorious for its commercials that promote gender-typing and sexism, are both owned by Unilever. The Dove campaign was, of course, launched in response to criticism towards the Axe commercials, but to me it seems that the entire affair is profit driven regardless of what Unilever says. Even the non-profit Foundation for a Better Life is suspect since it received funding from Philip Anschutz (cf. the *Forbes* profile of Anschutz: <http://www.forbes.com/profile/philip-anschutz/>), whose other financial investments are not so philanthropic.

11. Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), 23.

12. Regarding the fact that up until the advent of modernity every Westerner regularly thought about the reality of death—"memento mori"—and whether the individual's soul was ready to face God, I think a very applicable painting to today's situation would be Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*. Spend some time looking at the painting yourself without reading an analysis of it. See if you can find the two peculiar oddities that stand out among the wealth of the ambassadors depicted.

13. Tom Ryan and Carl Raschke, "On Cultural Neuroses, Primal Screams, and the Psychology of Celebrity: An Interview with Carl Raschke," *The Other Journal*, Jan. 25, 2011, <http://theotherjournal.com/2011/01/25/1071/>.

14. Andrew Houston, "Views and Reviews: Celebrity as Fantasy Screen," *Canadian Theatre Review* 141 (Jan. 2010), http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/canadian_theatre_review/v141/141.141.houston.html (accessed Nov. 28, 2011).

15. Hunt, "The Image."

The root of the scopical drive is to be found entirely in the subject, in the fact that the subject sees himself [...] in his sexual member [...]. Whereas making oneself seen is indicated by an arrow that really comes back towards the subject, making oneself heard goes toward the other.¹⁶

It is the authoritarianism of the narcissistic fantasy, the domination of *ego* in a world of atomic meaninglessness, the desperate projection of a “unique” mind where only matter is to be found, to be grasped fleetingly, like the latest intrigue or hit song, a jumble of stuff (meaning?) reducible to... With the displacement of God, the fundamental fantasy of society becomes focused on the celebrity, promising what cannot be fulfilled, brokenness deified, a repetition through symptoms of that existential aimlessness, passed down in a way described so disconcertingly by Philip Larkin in his 1971 poem “This Be The Verse.”

This is the radical question: how can a human being with real, unique dignity disappear or appear so easily and inconsequentially in a world that raises the self to divine heights, that pursues the celebrity status with such desperate vigor? How can one so simply flicker out like a small star disappearing forever in the vast cosmos? I’m not so much asking *how* this phenomenon is actually possible but rather drawing attention to the shocking fact that

it *is* happening. Consider the photograph collection of Belgian photographer Mishka Henner called *No Man’s Land*. Putting together a series of photographs through Google Map’s “Street View,” Henner stumbled upon, all across Europe, images of various lonely women by the roadsides... These women are prostitutes, victims of the European sex trade, utterly exposed all day and stripped of their womanhood and any decent dress, their stories unknown, untold, captured by the automatic recording process of the ubiquitous Google street cars.¹⁷ Their faces, as with all faces in the Street View, have been eerily blurred out, further emphasizing their total isolation and anonymity. This phenomenon is possible with and because of our celebrity culture, which imprints its totalitarian stamp on everything¹⁸ and leaves everything else—i.e. whatever is *actually* valuable but deemed otherwise by the culture machine—“to be discarded after a short while like empty food cans.”¹⁹ The culture that emphasizes the pursuit of fame on a global scale inevitably will and *has in fact* created and unconsciously (if not consciously) encouraged an entire underworld of hellish slavery, a *sub-culture* symptomatic of modernity’s gluttonous hedonism and so-called *progress*. This *sub-culture* hides behind a *very* thin veil, and anyone who has eyes to see will indeed see the horrors produced, as a “by-product” (or in other words, as a “*waste product*”), by this celebrity culture of ours.

Now, obviously the basic cynical response is: “Dude, that’s the world. That’s life. It just happens.” I’m perfectly aware

16. Jacques Lacan, “The Partial Drive and its Circuit” and “From Love to the Libido” in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), 194–195.

17. Mishka Henner, *No Man’s Land*, Apr. 22, 2011, Mishka Henner / Works website, <http://mishka.lockandhenner.com/blog/?p=644> (accessed Nov. 28, 2011). Cf. also Marco Bohr, “Google Street View and the Politics of Exploitation,” *Visual Culture Blog*, <http://visualcultureblog.com/2011/10/google-street-view-and-the-politics-of-exploitation/>; and Jesus Diaz, “Murder Captured by Google Street View Car,” *Gizmodo*, <http://gizmodo.com/5656497/murder-captured-by-google-street-view-car> (accessed Nov. 30, 2011).

18. Consider all the young women, especially those who are anorexic or bulimic, who struggle tragically against each other and society because of the demands of the beauty industry.

19. Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” 32.

of this type of answer, but obviously that sort of answer is itself a symptom of the terse puerility of the culture machine and lazily encourages the vitality and “virility” of this impotent social state of affairs.²⁰ It’s the same sort of answer that regards a “facile” musical like *Jesus Christ Superstar* as “plain-and-simple entertainment,” but the insightful critic, whether approaching the celebrity culture from a political, economic, or psychological angle, never takes the output of the establishment at face value. The self-referential—“joking”—hypocrisy of *The Simpsons* and the satire of *South Park* are, similarly, mere cogs that keep the culture machine running while maintaining the passing smug satisfaction of the cynical masses who never go past the superficial.

Even though one *must* live *in* the world, there are several ways to be not *of* it. Perhaps the most repugnant solution to the modern person, even among those who desire to transcend materialist culture, is the authentic life of Christian spirituality mentioned above. Karl Löwith, summarizing Jacob Burckhardt’s view on modern Christianity, wrote:

Primitive and genuine Christianity stands in complete contrast to the standards of the world. [...] “The humble surrender of self and the parable of the right and the left cheek are no longer popular.” People want to maintain their social sphere and respectability; they have to work and to make money; hence they cannot but

allow the world to interfere in many ways with their traditional religion. “In short, for all their religiosity, people are not disposed to renounce the advantages and benefits of modern culture.”²¹

Nietzsche famously had this to say:

You [Christians], however, if your belief makes you blessed then appear to be blessed! Your faces have always been more injurious to your belief than our [atheists] objections have! If these glad tidings of your Bible were written on your faces, you would not need to insist so obstinately on the authority of that book. (s.98)²²

And Marx wrote this:

Does not every moment of your practical life give the lie to your religious theory? Do you think it is unjust to appeal to the courts if somebody cheats you? But the apostle says it is wrong. Do you offer your right cheek if somebody slaps your left cheek, or would you rather start a lawsuit? But the gospels forbid it. Do you not [...] grumble about the slightest increase of taxes and become excited at the smallest violation

20. Fantastic examples of this attitude are related to and encouraged by, for example, the *Jackass* reality show with accompanying movies or *Borat: Cultural Learnings [etc.]*; cf. Adorno and Horkheimer’s insightful comment here: “The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors’ incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed” (Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” 32).

21. Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1949), 29-30.

22. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, <http://www.theperspectivesofnietzsche.com/nietzsche/nchrist.html> (accessed Nov. 28, 2011).

of personal liberty? But it is said unto you that the sufferings of this *saeculum* do not matter in comparison with the future glory.²³

Indeed, to any moderately perceptive person, the fact that many so-called “pious” Christians seem to have no grasp of true love is as obvious as the sun that shines. The lukewarm, inauthentic Christian, the “modern Christian” who has lost all conception of the *eschaton* and the existence of objective good and evil, will either experience true conversion or disappear, according to the terrible prophesy of the Jesuit Karl Rahner: “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all.”²⁴ The Christian conscience, or consciousness, is fast fading, but I propose that it is the development of this consciousness in a person’s psyche that would allow them to transcend the celebrity culture.

The Christian response to the allurements of celebrity culture is quite simple:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live for ever [sic].²⁵

St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “But we urge you, beloved, [...] to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, [...] so that you may behave properly towards outsiders and be dependent on no one,”²⁶ The authentic Christian life is a quiet one, a humble one. In the eyes of the world, the Christian life is *boring*; that’s why the Romans made a sport out of killing Christians—it turned Christianity into something exciting.

The constant testimony of the mystics was something like this: *I experienced a love in my heart so profound that I thought it would burst.* This experience was deemed more valuable than anything else even their very lives. The mystics and martyrs bore witness to this same spiritual reality: it towers above the physical.²⁷ It is the tough work of mysticism that Christians, and all others, shy away from. They sense its power, its reality, and they are afraid. They balk, gawk, snicker, and cry out, “I can’t do *that!* That’s *stupid.* I’ll *die* if I give up [frivolous entertainments, such as certain TV shows, movies, sports, games, gambling, radio, or secular music, sweets and junk foods, soda, sexual promiscuity, coffee, Facebook and other useless forms of social networking, tobacco, habitual alcohol use, drug use, immodest dress, body piercings, useless reading, such as certain magazines, books, and newspapers not necessary for professional purposes, etc.]. Besides, that all sounds like Dark Age *Puritanism!*”—as if the accusation of Puritanism somehow reduced real spirituality to something confront-able and hence dismissible.²⁸ And that’s the point:

23. Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 46-47.

24. Cf. Karl Rahner, “The Spirituality of the Church of the Future,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. XX, trans. Edward Quinn (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1981), 143-53.

25. 1 John 2:15-17. Translation is the New Revised Standard Version.

26. 1 Thessalonians 4:10b-12.

27. St. John of the Cross wrote: “*Gustato spiritu, desipit omnis caro*” (Ascent of Mount Carmel, 2.17.5), which translates roughly to, “Once I taste of the spirit, all carnal things become meaningless” (trans. Raymond L. Richmond, “Entertainment,” *ChastitySF*, http://www.chastitysf.com/q_entertain.htm (accessed Nov. 28, 2011)).

28. I suggest that the accusation of Puritanism often comes from those who are themselves too comfortable. Cf. G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, ch. 6: “The Paradoxes of Christianity” (available online here: <http://www.leaderu.com/cyber/books/orthodoxy/ch6.html>): “Suppose we heard an unknown man spoken of by many men. Suppose we were puzzled to hear that some men said he was too tall and some too short; some objected to his fatness, some lamented his leanness; some thought him too dark, and some too fair. One explanation (as has been

genuine Christianity is uncomfortable; it dis-comforts. It dis-lodges our common perceptions and assumptions.²⁹ Forget about magick! *Real* Christianity is dynamite! Nietzsche mentioned the human tendency to spiritual inertia when he remarked:

At bottom, every human being knows very well that he is in this world just once, as something unique, and that no accident, however strange, will throw together a second time into a unity such a curious and diffuse plurality: he knows it, but hides it like a bad conscience. Why? From fear of his neighbour [sic] who insists on convention and veils himself with it. [...] The human being who does not wish to belong to the mass must merely cease being comfortable with himself.³⁰

C.S. Lewis also pointed out the awesome quality of authentic Christianity in a stirring passage on the nature of God from his book *Miracles*:

It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. ‘Look out!’ we cry, ‘it’s *alive*’. And therefore this is the very point at which so many draw back—and I would have done so myself if I could—and proceed no further with Christianity. An ‘impersonal God’—well and good. [...]

A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God Himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord, perhaps approaching at an infinite speed, the hunter, king, husband—that is quite another matter. There comes a moment when the children who have been playing at burglars hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? [...] Supposing we really found [God]? We never meant it to come to *that*! Worse still, supposing He had found us?³¹

The authentic Christian, who has found herself in God, seeks to disappear while helping everyone around her to find themselves amidst this mass of aimlessness. She no longer needs nor craves to be seen by you or anyone, for she is seen and loved infinitely by God. The authentic Christian’s presence is felt everywhere, yet she is oddly nowhere, just like Christ. The joy radiating from her smile lingers in an empty room somehow, and it affects those present even though she is gone. Her view of the world is refreshing and piercing yet never cynical because it is full of love for those caught up in that world. However, to achieve this sort of spiritual radiance, a transformation so radical must occur that to describe it here would be impossible. All I can say is a short prayer given to me by someone who I believe is an authentic Christian: “Without the grace of your love, Lord, I would have been swept away in the wickedness of this world.” *Amen.* ■

Note 28 cont... already admitted) would be that he might be an odd shape. But there is another explanation. He might be the right shape. Outrageously tall men might feel him to be short. Very short men might feel him to be tall. [...] Perhaps (in short) this extraordinary thing is really the ordinary thing; at least the normal thing, the centre [sic]. Perhaps, after all, it is Christianity that is sane and all its critics that are mad—in various ways.”

29. Cf. Peter Kreeft, *Jesus-Shock* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2008).

30. Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Challenge of Every Great Philosophy,” in *Schopenhauer as Teacher from Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/nietzsche/1874/challenge.htm> (accessed Nov. 28, 2011).

31. C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1996), 150.

Celebrity

Chastonie Chipman

THE WORD IN itself is highly overrated. When we hear the word “celebrity” we think of money, fame, beauty and invincibility. Ideally, someone should be famous for an invention or because of talent, yet we all know that today’s celebrity can be someone who is famous for being famous. The media even differentiates between A-, B-, C- and D-list celebrities based on their popularity, income, and what it is they actually do.

Once we meet a celebrity, we can take off our rose colored glasses with the realization that they are—brace yourself—just like everyone else. They have great characteristics and bad ones, regrets, fond memories, dreams, nightmares, fears, loves, hates, and insecurities. The difference is that these people are considered celebrities. Ask anyone who falls into this category and they will probably tell you that the attention and recognition they got in the beginning of their careers was exciting, and maybe even fascinating. After a while, though, they wish people would not know who they are. Celebrities are often elevated to a godlike status. Though they might seem to be more than we can ever dream of being the reality is that are not superhuman. They are people searching for happiness and fulfillment, and avoiding pain and disappointment.

The danger is that at some point these celebrities often think of themselves as superhuman too. The paradox is that the fans and the general public criticize the same person they were infatuated with just days before for believing the very things that the media has said about them for years! In other words: it is okay for fans to see celebrities as divine, but the celebrity who also believes in this status is arrogant and delusional. I agree that people who think of themselves in this way need a reality check, but in the end celebrities are just a product of their surroundings. We have created this mindset through our “celebrity worship,” and the fault lays with us. ■

A Struggle to the Death

Eric Cunningham

Department of History

NOTHING MORE GLARINGLY demonstrates the absurdity of the human condition than the phenomenon of modern worldly celebrity. In figuring out how I should approach this essay over the last several months, I have found that even thinking about the topic tends to stir up a certain inner revulsion that makes it hard to discuss it in any intelligent way, let alone in any fully honest way. The problem is that while I feel morally compelled to write critically, even condemningly about celebrity, I also have to acknowledge that in doing so I am actively seeking—if only in the confined world of *Charter* readership—to have my thoughts on the subject read, appreciated, and perhaps even celebrated.

We who belong to this celebrity-obsessed culture know how corrupting the thing is, yet many of us still seem to crave it. As is the case with any vice, our knowledge of its destructive properties is confirmed by a never-ending stream of evidence from the political and popular cultures. We speak passionately against it, we admonish our loved ones to avoid it—and still—we entertain fantasies about how nice it would be if we could have some—but not too much, of course, for that would be unseemly and risky. “Surely *I*, unlike those stupid people in the public eye who wind up ruining their lives and the lives of everyone around them, could handle a moderate dose of fame and even do some

good with it! *I* am not like *them*?”

Our three-hundred-year-long dalliance with Cartesian dualism has left us all but programmed to divide the world into simple categories of *I* and *them*, and has lulled us into accepting the insanity that the *I* is the only “real” part of the binary. It’s a different kind of insanity entirely that leads us to ridicule *them* for their shallow taste while simultaneously and relentlessly seeking *their* adulation. The follies of celebrity-seeking and worshipping are only compounded when they takes place in a society that claims to pride itself on its egalitarianism. I suppose it is possible that our fetishizing of celebrity is a natural reaction to having swallowed the lie of egalitarianism. If we had enough sense to realize that we simply are not all equal (which is perfectly all right) we would not be so desperate to prove that we’re more special than the common run of humanity.

So rather than use this space to indulge in a transparently self-celebrating, and ultimately parasitical enterprise of seeking recognition for myself by taking the topic of celebrity to task, I would rather look at a small slice of the large question of why we are a celebrity-obsessed culture, speculate on where it leads us (spoiler alert: nowhere good), and then finish by talking about some people who have actively spurned celebrity for the sake of something more meaningful than the favorable opinion of the world.

In *The End of History and the Last Man*, political scientist Francis Fukuyama attempted to make sense of the fall of Soviet Communism by framing it within a long-term Hegelian word-historical process.¹ He attributed the fall of the Soviet Union in large part to the desire of former Eastern bloc countries to claim prestige as free and autonomous nations—he adapted Hegel’s idea that the “struggle for recognition” constituted the fundamental drive in the human psyche,

1. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Penguin, 1992)

2. *Ibid.*, 145.

3. *Ibid.*, 147.

and by extension, the human historical process.² For nations as well as individuals, the argument holds, the desire to be recognized, to be counted—in short, to matter—is of greater evolutionary importance than the need to reproduce, to acquire resources, or even to wield power. Accordingly, the struggle for recognition, according to Hegel (and Fukuyama) will ultimately influence not only our self-actualization, but our social conduct and historical development as well. “Man is fundamentally an other-directed and social animal,” Fukuyama writes, “but his sociability leads him not into a peaceful civil society, but into a violent struggle to the death for pure prestige.”

If this is correct, what does it tell us about celebrity? It only makes sense that celebrity would be a natural by-product of the struggle for recognition. Celebrity is, after all, prestige—the evidence of recognition successfully attained. But even as we celebrate people for their talents or attainments, we run the risk of tainting our good feelings for them with envy over what they have, or resentment over the fact that we don’t have it yet. It gets even murkier in a society like ours, where so many people who have no discernible talents desire to be recognized, to be counted—in short, to *matter*—is of greater evolutionary importance than the need to reproduce, to acquire resources, or even to wield power. Accordingly, the struggle for recognition, according to Hegel (and Fukuyama) will ultimately influence not only our self-actualization, but our social conduct and historical development as well. “Man is fundamentally an other-directed and social animal,” Fukuyama writes, “but his sociability leads him not into a peaceful civil society, but into a violent struggle to the death for pure prestige.”³

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[The] “bloody battle” [for prestige] can have one of three results. It can lead to the death of both combatants, in which case life itself, human and natural, ends. It can lead to the death of one of the contestants, in which case the survivor remains unsatisfied because there is no longer another consciousness to recognize him. Or, finally, the battle can terminate in the relationship of lordship and bondage, in which one of the contestants decides to submit to a life of slavery rather than face the risk of violent death.⁴

4. Ibid.

That's it? Death, death, or slavery? How can it be that the pursuit of our most basic, innate drive should bring us to an end of brutality or subjugation? Are we really sure that it *is* a basic, innate human drive? Maybe Hegel was wrong about this one—maybe he just overplayed what seemed like a decent early nineteenth-century philosophical hand. In other words, maybe it's provisionally true—applying, for example, to the fallen human world, but not to the Kingdom of God, or to people *honestly* striving to enter the Kingdom.

Like most modern philosophers, Hegel had a tendency to categorize as “universal” certain concepts and habits of mind that may, after all, turn out only to be peculiarities

of modern European consciousness. We have to be wary of confusing what may have been Hegel's own desire for academic recognition, or post-Napoleonic Germany's desire for a restoration of its dignity, with fundamental drives in the human psyche. At any rate, even if humans are *not* programmed to fight to the death for prestige, I think Fukuyama is at least correct in identifying the struggle for recognition as a fundamental drive in the modern materialistic world. I am also open to the possibility that celebrity, such as we know it, is a suitable present-day stand-in for the slavery that the primordial losers of Hegel's imagination ultimately accepted.

How does celebrity operate as a form of slavery? Maybe the slaves in this dynamic are those poor souls who fawn over celebrities, defining their *raison d'être* as waiting for the next tweet or bit of televised gossip. On the other hand, maybe the slaves are the celebrities themselves, having sold their right to privacy for the dubious prize of being well thought of by people who

actually follow other people's tweets—all the while knowing that the next spin of Fortuna's Wheel may send them reeling into scandal, prison, or worst of all, obscurity.

Upon reflection, it would seem that celebrity works to enslave both the fan and the beautiful person—or maybe this is the double death to which Fukuyama alludes. If Hegel and his twentieth century disciples Kojève and Fukuyama are correct in saying that the driving force of history is humanity's struggle for recognition, then we're all doomed, because if we enlarge

our subjective *I* and *them* dialectic to the size of a world-historical evolutionary process, we soon find that we inhabit a world composed of a few elite *people who matter*, and

masses of other *people who don't*. The problem with this is not that we make fools of ourselves pretending that people like Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan are *important*. The problem is that through our voyeurism, envy, and adoration of celebrities, we legitimate their dead-end aspirations, while simultaneously affirming the existence of an inferior category of non-essential people.

Is it even possible to thrive, grow, and excel without using our urge to improve as a means of attaining celebrity in the eyes of the world? I think the answer to this question is yes, but it may take more self-awareness, self-discipline, and humility than most of us have been conditioned to exercise. This is not to say that our world is completely devoid of such people, but they are not in the majority, and they are not, by and large, in charge of anything.

For a little over ten years, I have been making periodic retreats at the Benedictine Monastery in Mt. Angel, Oregon. With each passing year, I have seen a steady stream of younger novices joining the abbey

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to commit themselves to the obscurity of the monastic life. I have also have noted the departure of many of the older monks, who left this world after decades of faithful life in the abbey, praying every day, year in and year out, meditating, working, and cultivating a devotion to God as their primary reason for being. It's always sobering for me (a guy who drops noisily in on the abbey, decompresses for a few days, and then buzzes back, a tad quieter, to the "real" world to do his very important things) to realize, time and again, that the Mt. Angel monks, who take vows of chastity, poverty, and stability to their monastery, are not at the abbey for a "retreat," or a rest, or a short spiritual regeneration. They are not role-players in some spiritual theme park that I get to visit once a year. They are there for keeps. When I'm home enjoying the company of my family and the satisfactions of my real-world work, they will continue to wake up in the wee hours of the morning in the same cell, pray the same psalms in the same church, eat in the same refectory, perform the same work around the abbey, and offer the same hospitality and spiritual direction to a never-ending stream of visitors—until they die. In short, the monks will do, with great seriousness, charity, and good humor, the same thing that Benedictines have been doing since the sixth century, A.D., which is to say—a good many years before Hegel came to the conclusion that human life was a struggle to the death for recognition.

My favorite spot on the abbey grounds is the small cemetery, where gravestones dating to the late nineteenth century mark the final resting place of men who left no other visible marks on the world—men who willingly placed themselves in the category of those-who-do-not-matter, and lived a life of obedience and willful obscurity, placing God above all things. I don't know which is more difficult to process—that fact that these monks actually belong to the same species as the Kim Kardashians

of the world, or that the great majority of us who are neither monk nor Kardashians seem to find the latter type so much more interesting. ■

Tony Bennett, Whitney Houston, and Addiction

Dane Westermeyer

AS A KID, I was exposed to two types of music: Mom's car, and Dad's car. When Dad drove to baseball games and basketball tournaments, my brothers and I listened to the likes of Eric Clapton, Bryan Adams, and Bruce Springsteen. When Mom drove us to school every morning, we listened to Mariah Carey, Celine Dion, and Whitney Houston. Now I have the freedom to make my own decisions about the music that makes its way onto my iPod. Dad's favorites, like Springsteen's "Born to Run" and Adams' "Summer of '69" made the cut, while Mom's morning playlist classics have mostly been left behind. With that being said, those female vocalists that I grew up listening to were legendary. Whether you were at the Star Bar on a Thursday night, in the shower

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You do not have to love Whitney Houston's music to recognize that her death was tragedy. When she died, the world lost one of the most iconic voices of this generation. While the circumstances surrounding her death are still shrouded in uncertainty,¹ Houston's lifelong battle with cocaine dependency has been well-documented in popular media. Regardless of what her actual cause of death turns out to be, her passing has reopened a long-standing conversation about drug abuse and addiction in America.

In reaction to Houston's death,

legendary
jazz vocalist
Tony Bennett
recently argued
that legalizing
hard drugs is
the solution to
America's problem
with dependency.
In an interview
with *Rolling Stone
Magazine*, Bennett
said that legalizing
hard drugs would,
"get rid of all the
gangsters that

make people hide. One thing I've learned about young people, when you say 'Don't do this,' that's the one thing they're going to try and do. Once it's legal and everybody can do it, there is no longer the desire to do something that nobody else can do."²

1. [Editor's Note: Though findings will not be conclusive at the time of publication, Fox News reports a possible combination of prescription drugs, including Xanax, and alcohol that caused Houston's death. "Rx drugs reportedly killed Houston, but officials still probing possible drowning." *Fox News*. 13 Feb. 2012. < <http://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2012/02/12/whitney-houston-dead-prescription-drugs-drowned-autopsy/>>.]

2. Appleford, Steve. "Tony Bennett Defends Drug Legalization Comments After Whitney Houston's Death." *Rolling Stone*. Wenner Media, 13 Feb. 2012. Web. 17 Feb. 2012.

According to the article, Bennett never knew Houston, but he did suffer from an addiction to cocaine of his own in the seventies and was close to the late Amy Winehouse, who died last year after a lifelong addiction to drugs and alcohol.

Tony Bennett's concern is well-taken, and the conversation that he sparked is an important one. Thousands of Americans suffer from drug addiction, and something needs to be done to remedy the problem. However, that something is not legalizing hard drugs. I do agree that legalizing them would minimize their appeal, but we have to consider what other effects legalization would have. If drugs were legalized, their perceived danger would diminish. Younger audiences would begin to assume that because they are no longer illegal, they must not be as bad as we originally thought. It is difficult enough to educate our youth about the danger of illegal drugs. Consider the confusing nature of the argument that we would have to make to our children if we legalized them. We would basically be forced to say that we made drugs legal because they killed too many people when they were illegal, which seems completely counterintuitive. Yes, drugs appeal to kids because they are illegal. However, if they were made available to the public, then kids would start to assume they are not as bad as everyone says, which would be much more problematic than their current appeal.

Furthermore, the allure of drugs like cocaine is not what kills people—addiction kills people. Hard drugs are illegal for two reasons: they are lethal, and they are addictive. Making drugs legal means increasing the ability to access them, and it only takes one usage to become addicted. Once that addiction sets in, even people who realize they want to get out and stop using struggle to quit. Because they are illegal, however, we have the ability to at least try to regulate their use in order to protect people from the dangers that come with their use. Once drugs are

decriminalized, we forfeit a lot of control that we desperately need to maintain. I understand that people will have access to drugs whether they are legal or not, but making them legal just opens the door to so many more problems than Mr. Bennett realizes.

The obvious real-world problem behind Mr. Bennett's call for legalization is that it simply will not happen. Our government will not legalize hard drugs, at least not any time soon. Instead of arguing for legalization, we should focus on improving addiction treatment. Available treatments are too expensive for the people that need them most, and on top of that, they are often ineffective. Relapse is extremely common amongst drug users, and that is a huge problem. If people like Whitney Houston have the courage to admit they have a problem and want to straighten out their lives, we should have effective treatment available for them. We should be pouring money into research on addiction and treatment programs so that we can find a more effective way to stop substance dependence before it kills.

While the death of Whitney Houston is absolutely tragic, it is even more unfortunate that it takes the passing of a prominent celebrity to get people like Tony Bennett talking about this issue. Thousands of people die from addiction every year, and their deaths are every bit as tragic as Whitney Houston's. This is an issue that should have garnered our attention long before she passed away, but regardless, we need to capitalize on the attention that her fame has shed on this problem. Tony Bennett is headed in the right direction with his public comments about addiction, but ultimately his call for legalization of hard drugs is extreme and would end up doing more harm than good in the long run. If we can improve addiction treatment, then we can slowly start to chip away at the root of the problem that causes so many people to lose their lives every year. ■

Which One's Which? Doesn't Really Matter

FOR THOSE UNFAMILIAR WITH GONZAGA'S CELEBRITY ALUMNI, LUKE BARATS AND JOE BERETA MET ON CAMPUS IN 2003 AS STUDENTS IN THE THEATER AND BROADCASTING DEPARTMENTS. THEIR STAND-UP COMEDY AND VIRAL VIDEOS HAVE EARNED THEM NATIONAL ATTENTION, INCLUDING A DEVELOPMENT DEAL WITH NBC UNIVERSAL AND MILLIONS OF ONLINE VIEWERS.

Charter: We've seen you writing plots, earning millions of YouTube views, and impersonating missionaries. What are you up to right now?

Luke Barats (L): Joe and I moved down to Los Angeles in 2008 and ever since it's been more of the same: we're writing pilots, earning millions of YouTube views, and impersonating missionaries. Over the course of the past few years we've been building up our YouTube channel first and foremost, but we periodically get invited

to step out into the realms of television, movies and live performance. We're actually in the process of mounting our first college tour show for early March—maybe we'll see you guys up in Spokane sometime!

Joe Bereta (J): It's always a matter of what lands on our plates and right now we're currently working on our live show. We'll be debuting it at the University of Wyoming in March. We're also both very active in our respective theaters. Luke performs over at the Upright Citizens Brigade and I'm over at ComedySportz Los Angeles.

Charter: Was there ever a defining moment when you realized you were celebrities? Was there any indication of that at Gonzaga? Has more exposure changed your daily lives, with people recognizing you on the street?

L: I've said it once and I'll say it again: we are definitely not celebrities. People have coined various terms in an attempt to quantify what exactly it is that we are, though—"webcebs," "cewebrities," "internetainers"... none of them really roll off the tongue, but I agree with what they're all trying to accomplish. Web celebrities are pretty numerous these days, and they're certainly a step or five below "real" celebrities in pretty much every way. Do I get recognized on the street every so often? Yeah, but half the time it's a dude running up to me and saying, "Hey—you're Bereta, right?"

J: I don't think there was ever a defining "celebrity" moment because we're the farthest thing from celebrities. Yes, every month or so, someone might recognize us out in public but I think that's just the nature of the internet. The guy who gets hit in the crotch with a football and the girl who cries every time she hears the word

“bago” also get recognized because their videos are out in the digital realm, so we take any moments of “Hey you’re that guy” with a massive grain of salt.

Charter: What are the rewards and drawbacks to your jobs?

L: There are many, many rewarding things about our jobs... the freedom to set our own hours and choose our own projects is huge, and of course there’s the joy we get from

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making people laugh. If I had to name a drawback, it would be that being your own boss is hard. You kind of have to motivate yourself to self-motivate.

J: There’s nothing more rewarding than getting to start at the inception of your ideas and seeing

them all the way through to reception. And for the most part, it’s almost always on our own terms. That’s an amazing and fulfilling feeling. We have a platform to make people laugh. What’s better than that?

Charter: YouTube undoubtedly catapulted Barats and Bereta into a new level of exposure. Do you think the site has redefined fame for the 21st century?

L: YouTube has absolutely redefined fame for the 21st century. Before YouTube, famous people did not interact with their fanbase on a personal level—it wasn’t really possible unless the celebrity wanted to get stalked or something. But social media in general (YouTube included) has made it

incredibly easy for that interaction to exist both regularly and safely. Today Ashton Kutcher can now take 3 seconds out of his day to tweet something to millions of fans. And because that sort of interaction is so easy for both parties, it’s become rather expected of celebrities. If I may use a metaphor from Catholicism—and I believe for *Charter* if I may—YouTube has essentially done for fame what Vatican II did for mass.

J: I like to think that YouTube blew the doors off of Hollywood. Before YouTube, the general consensus was that you had to jump on a bus headed to LA with nothing but your dream and a sparkle in your eye. These days, talented people from around the world can showcase their abilities with nothing more than a Flip camera and computer. And it also allows people to create a product that is entirely their own because they don’t have to wait for a producer or talent agent to tell them that they’re “good enough.” If someone has an idea, they can make it, put it out there for people to see, and receive immediate feedback.

Charter: How close are you to your fans?

L: In YouTube terms, Joe and I are among the oldest content creators out there. I suppose we still have some of the 20th-Century Rules of Fan Interaction ingrained into us, but we’re getting better about it. We’re on Twitter, Facebook, MySpace (R.I.P.), etc... anyone who wishes to talk to us can do so on Gchat whenever they’d like.

J: We’ve definitely become more accustomed to the back and forth nature of fan interaction as the years have passed. When we started, there was a fairly thick fourth wall and we were very comfortable with that fact. As more and more social networking sites came about, the wall basically crumbled, and now we

love that we can engage in conversations with our fans at almost any time.

Charter: Any words of wisdom for Gonzaga’s aspiring actors and comedians?

L: I’d encourage students to not view the entertainment industry as something you need an invitation to join. Rather, they should look at it as something readily available to them—a fruit that can be plucked if they merely take it upon themselves to build the ladder. In a day and age when you can showcase your work to the world with the click of a button, there’s no excuse left. If they can repeatedly put out quality work, it’s only a matter of time before the web will take notice.

J: Exactly. These days, you are your own biggest obstacle. You just have to convince yourself to “do it.” Every idea has the potential to find an audience so students should be fearless and just “do it.” Don’t wait for someone else to tell you you’re good enough. Everyone offers up something special and everyone can find an audience. Be creative and consistent and hopefully you’ll find yourself a vehicle that is not only successful, but one that is something you’re passionate about as well. ■

“Fame is empowering. My mistake was that I thought I would instinctively know how to handle it. But there’s no manual, no training course.”

-Charlie Sheen

Catholic Celebrities

Margaret McGuire

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH has celebrities. No joke, they really do. We have a celebrity for almost every day of the year, as well as one day, November 1st, when we celebrate every celebrity we have. I'm talking about the saints, of course. They are Holy Mother Church's celebrities. The many devotees of these celebrities know exactly which one to talk to when the keys go missing (St. Anthony of Padua), which one discuss an impossible situation with (St. Jude), and which one who can sympathize with poor vision (St. Catherine of Siena). There is a patron saint for almost everything.

Don't believe that the saints are celebrities? Ask my Sunday school students what they think! They have been amazed by the stories I've told them. They think it's amazing that Catherine of Siena walked from Italy to France and told the Pope to return to Rome. They think it's cool that St. Francis got the animals to listen to him when the townspeople wouldn't. You can see them thinking about God's hand in our lives after hearing about St. Margaret Mary, who was asked by Jesus to increase devotion to His Sacred Heart, or hearing about St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, who spent 46 years as a doorkeeper for his Jesuit brothers and never told anyone about the graces, ecstasies, and visions he received. The saints have run the same race we are now

These holy men and women, these celebrities of the Church, have two advantages over our modern, worldly celebrities.

running, and they have "run the good race" in the fullest sense of that phrase. That is why they are the Catholic celebrities—they have done what God wanted them to do, and did it well.

Catholics do not *worship* the saints; we *venerate* them. This common misconception needs clarification. To worship means to praise and honor. To venerate means to respect greatly. While there is a seeming similarity between the two, there is an important difference. To praise and honor someone is to make them the focus of our attention and even of our lives; to venerate someone is to show respect for what they have accomplished. Holy Mother Church has, of course, special names for the worship given to God and the veneration given to the saints; St. Augustine goes into this in his work *City of God*. Suffice to say that worship is given to God and is called *latría*. The veneration given to the saints is called *dulia*.

Additionally, there is *hyperdulia*, the veneration given the Mary, the Mother of God. She maintains a special place among the

saints as the Queen of Saints, the first of saints. She was the first to set us an example for following Jesus. Her 'yes' to God puts her a step above all other saints. Like the saints, she points unceasingly to Jesus, but at times her pointing can be a little, well, pointed. Her multiple apparitions around the globe call to us and tell us to turn to her Son. The other saints, while powerful role models, have largely let their own lives speak for themselves or appeared only a few times.

These holy men and women, these celebrities of the Church, have two advantages over our modern, worldly celebrities. First, the saints are scandal-free. We can always trust them to point us in the right direction. We can safely emulate them

without fear of being disappointed when they suddenly stumble. Second, they know about us and will pray for us. When we ask St. Anthony to help us find the car keys, he says a prayer that flies straight to God's ear. When we ask St. Maria Goretti to help us maintain purity, she takes our petition to God. When we ask St. Blase to intercede for our sore throat, he turns to God. Whatever we ask of Mary is laid at her Son's feet with the same confidence she showed at the wedding in Cana. These saints and all the others pray for us daily that we might follow in their footsteps and share in their happiness.

Now those are celebrities I can get excited about.

Pax Christe ■

“What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life?”

-Matthew 16:26

“Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility.”

-Sigmund Freud

“Sacrificing anonymity may be the next generation's price for keeping precious liberty, as prior generations paid in blood.”

-Hal Norby

... Comes Great Responsibility

Thomas Bryan

CELEBRITIES MAY DRIVE the news cycle but everyone else drives everything else. Non-celebrities are, tautologically, unknown, but their great numbers translate into the ability to change almost anything that can be changed, as will be shown. With such great power comes great responsibility.

Clarity of definition will be necessary to proceed with any aspiration to coherence, so let me establish the objects of this discussion here. Celebrities are people who are known, i.e. who can command the attention of a significant amount of people with relative ease, as compared to a baseline, common ability to command the attention of only a small audience, e.g. you and I. There will be two primary types in this discussion. Celebrities who combine the

authority to compel with the ability to command attention will be known as statesmen (statespeople being too cumbersome and always harassed by a squiggly red line). Celebrities who have not been vested with the capacity to institute compulsory measures will be known as stars. Three categories of non-

celebrities are also important. These types do not usually command much attention, but are important to understanding the nature of celebrity. The first are those who have the authority to compel by their position as individual, call them shakers. The second are those who have power, or the ability to affect change, by being a member of a significant group of people, call them movers. The third set of non-celebrities are those who have no power, as individuals or members of a group, but in our interconnected, technology-empowered world I submit that this group is null. As examples, the President of the United States of America is a statesman, Lady Gaga is a star, Douglas Shulman is a shaker, you and I are movers.

Admittedly, the status of celebrity is a continuum, not a categorical measure, but these categories will serve for this investigation, which is to ask what is the purpose of each group? Statesmen seem to have the most obvious purpose; they ought to use their power to foster an ever-more-just society. As with statesmen, so the

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shakers' purpose is straightforward. It derives from the power that is imbued in the positions these people occupy. With great power comes great responsibility. These are not the groups of interest for this piece,

though this principle will be. Stars are ones who have a more interesting answer to the question, what is their purpose? The answers easiest to reach for are "to make money," "to entertain," "to self-destruct (for our entertainment)," "to draw attention to ourselves," etc. Stars, it should be noted,

also have some power: they can command attention. There is a telos even in this power. The only difference between the authority of our statesmen and the power of stars is that the former is a combination of coercive authority and attractive celebrity, while the latter is only attractive. This celebrity power also is accompanied by a responsibility to move towards a just society, if ethics has taught me anything. With great stardom comes great responsibility.

That leaves movers. What is their telos? The movers as a whole actually command more power than any other category. Even a small change in the habits of a group of great magnitude ends up being a large change. This is the most effective way for you and I to implement change. Individually you and I can only affect a limited change, but we can move in powerful ways. As examples: increases in the demand for organic foods made it economical for big box stores like Wal-Mart to carry them. The protests of Stop the Traffik (an abolitionist organization based in the United Kingdom) motivated the Cadbury chocolate company to provide Fair Trade chocolate in their flagship chocolate products. Witness also the infrastructure erected in response to the aggregate demand for roads, gasoline, power, mail, telephones, books, clothes, medicine, the internet. We wield massive power. As a member of society even little power comes with great responsibility, because each of our little powers adds up to a great ability to implement change for better or worse. With this power comes the same purpose as stars and statesmen, to mold a more just society. That means no more excuses. Excuses in the aggregate are injustice. Disrespect in the aggregate is evil. Inaction in the aggregate is scornful apathy. Over-consumption in the aggregate is pillaging.

So how to use this power? To start, recall when I defined celebrities as those who can command attention with relative ease. That

definition makes celebrity sound like a more passive process than it is. We are the movers, we decide on whom to bestow our time, interest, attention, money and participation. Let's allocate our resource by first asking, what is just? Which celebrities use their power to foster a more just, equitable, and peaceful world? Those are the only people who deserve stardom. ■

2. C.f. Food, Inc. <http://www.foodincmovie.com/>

3. <http://www.bnet.com/blog/food/cadbury-chocolate-brand-goes-fair-trade/519> also, I'm on Stop the Traffik's mailing list.

The Feminine Mistake: How Sex is Selling Women Short

Dr. Kellie Carter Jackson
Department of History

I'LL ADMIT IT, I struggle to not be a fan of Beyoncé. It's hard. Album after album she manages to come out with one hit after another that sets dance trends and sends everyone from grown men to little girls into shrieks of delight. Her new album, *Beyoncé 4*, debuted June 28. Her newest single, "Run the World (Girls)," has made my struggle to not be a fan just a little bit easier. While the lyrics leave little to be desired, I witnessed the performance for the first time during Oprah's finale. When I saw women marching down the stage in skimpy outfits with matching cropped graduation caps and gowns, it was nothing short of a WTH moment. For a song about women's empowerment, it made every feminist bone in my body cringe. I've long tried to reconcile what I call "New Age pseudo-feminism," which somehow requires women to be money making-mommy-moguls, and above all things, sex kittens. Let's be real, Beyoncé exudes sex. I get it. Yet, I can't help but be troubled when I see that the only perceived power women possess is their sexual nature. I'm fully aware that what I am writing is not new, dating back to the old adage of "sex sells." My issue with Beyoncé is not only problematic, but symptomatic. What Beyoncé represents is part of a macrocosm of female hyper-sexualization. This popular

form of New Age pseudo-feminism creates a false sense of gender equality and furthermore, spreads the notion that women can be anything they want as long as they are sexy doing it. This ideology touts that it's acceptable to be a stay-at-home mom, as long as you are a M.I.L.F. Be funny and sexy like Tina Fey. Be conservative and sexy like Sarah Palin. Or just be sexy and sexy like Kim Kardashian.

Beyoncé's lyrics state that power is getting paid, but power is not demanding that someone pay you; power is cutting the check! Gender is nothing more than a study of power relations. I'm all for women's empowerment, but not if sex is the only tool or even the most used tool.

Of course, one could argue that Beyoncé is a feminist. She's a businesswoman singing, "All the women, independent...!" But, is it possible to like a product and not the packaging? Perhaps what I'm looking for is authenticity. If you took away all of Beyoncé's glitz and glam and her wind-blown hair...well, she would be about as boring and forgettable as her performance in "Dreamgirls." The idea that she has to be sexy to make a point about power proves men run the world. Whose idea is it that women have to be sexy? Who benefits? I will tell you: men and the women who meet their demand.

As women, the joke is often and unknowingly on us. When Justin Timberlake parodied Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" video on SNL, I thought it was hilarious. But over time, I questioned why this is so funny. After sitting on a panel discussing race and gender with my colleague Ann Ciasullo, Assistant Professor of English from Gonzaga University, she explained, "When a woman dresses up as a man no one laughs. When a man dresses up as a woman its comedy" (ie. *Big Momma's House*, *Tyler Perry's Madea*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, etc). Ciasullo continued, "This is because the notion of being a woman in general is somehow ridiculous." Women

are consistently portrayed as emotional, superficial, catty, and thereby comic (i.e. “The Real Housewives of Pick a City”). Sex has the same effect of trapping women into a box labeled jokes or objects to be used. So yes, I struggle with the direct and indirect messages society sends my girlfriends, my impressionable nieces and myself. Shoot, I was Beyoncé for Halloween last year (I told you, I struggle not to be a fan!).

Perhaps Beyoncé is just an easy target in a frustrating world. What I’m asking, at least for celebrities, who command some of the greatest stages, is for a little authenticity and a little less sex. When James Brown crooned, “This is a man’s world...but it ain’t nothing without a woman or a girl,” I could roll with that! His lyrics resonated with me because they *mean* something. In short, “Run the World” means nothing to me because even if you put a good beat and hot dance moves to a song, the reality remains: Girls do not run this world. “Who run the world?” Men! “Who run this mutha?” Men! ■

“Believe it or not, fame is not as glamorous as it seems.”

-Kim Kardashian

“I don’t think there’s ever been anyone like me that’s lasted. And I’m going to keep on lasting.”

-Paris Hilton

“Hollywood is a place where they’ll pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss and fifty cents for your soul.”

-Marilyn Monroe

Consumption of a Female Celebrity

Analise Thornley

EVERY DAY AMERICANS are shown thousands of advertisements telling them what they need, how to make their lives better, or how to become better people. The consuming nature of Western culture is very much connected to the buying and selling of female beauty. The women depicted in advertisements and on television are unrealistic portrayals of what is desired and beautiful, and both males and females are constantly bombarded with and have come to expect a virtually “perfect” image. When checking out at the grocery store I consume much more than food: every woman featured on the glossy magazine covers tells me what beautiful is and what I should aspire to be. Whether it is because of the latest gossip or diet, female celebrities are either criticized or rewarded for how they meet the socially constructed box that they must fit into.

American culture has only recently moved from sharing information through the written word to displaying it through images and screens. Printed news stories and novels were the primary source of information about what was going on in the world and reflected societal values, yet the information we now consume has become more visual, which cuts out the imagination and the possibility of multiple interpretations. For example, the evening news airs alongside *E!*, a channel that often criticizes or rewards female celebrities for their ability to meet our expectations.

Young girls idolize Barbies and Disney Princesses, consuming the sugary sweet images of what the media suggests women should be, and it’s not a healthy thing to be feeding children. Instead of letting them imagine what a beautiful woman should be, the media feeds them a singing, slim, well-dressed princess. Every cartoon a young girl watches depicts women as physically beautiful and filled with a sugarcoated personality. As these girls grow up, their animated idols take human form. For example, Cinderella is known for her blonde hair, blue dress, and willingness to marry the first man who “rescues” her. What makes her any different than Paris Hilton? The Barbie dolls and Disney princesses mature into reality television stars and sexy advertisements.

The plastic dolls and singing princesses are just like the real females we choose to be our icons. They are interchangeable, unreal, and their lack of substance makes it easy to consume them. The Hollywood “it” girl and, just like the Disney heroine, can be mass-produced, photoshopped and covered in makeup. The “people” we idolize don’t represent the American population as a whole or a real standard of beauty. We eat up the drama, the gossip, the false perfection on a daily basis as we consume idealized images of females in the media. Unless something changes we will be left with the same aching feeling that children get after eating as much Halloween candy as they can get their hands on. Just as we teach our children to eat a balanced diet, we must also teach them that beauty can be found in the wonderful variety of humanity. ■

On Celebrity: A Pop Cultural Perspective

DR. ANN CIASULLO,
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OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER
STUDIES, TALKS POP
CULTURE, POP HISTORY,
AND KIM KARDASHIAN
WITH *CHARTER*.

Charter: What got you interested in studying pop culture?

Dr. Ann Ciasullo (AC): Growing up I was really immersed in pop culture. My sister and I watched a lot of TV, and we were really into popular music. I was just the right age—12—when MTV first started, so it was a defining feature of my life. Then I majored in English and went to graduate school, and it was there that I started to recognize that English majors could study more than literature—that a “text” was defined more broadly than words on the page. With my own introduction to literary theory, I recognized that one could read anything as a text in multiple ways and think about the message it is sending. That brought me full circle to thinking about the texts that had informed my life and other people’s lives on a daily basis. While I still distinguish between *The Great Gatsby* as great text as opposed to *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, they both

deserve attention because of what they are saying about the values of the time in which they were created. Most people don’t think of pop culture as representing a set of values or ideals, but of course it does because all texts are ideological. Whether they purport to present a set of values or not, they do.

Charter: How are celebrities and pop culture linked?

AC: In many ways pop culture is independent of celebrities, but I also think that celebrities become the face of popular culture. In that sense, they become representative of an historical moment and of a set of values. A good example of this would be someone like Marilyn Monroe. Most students have never seen her movies or heard her speak, but they know who she is. She is fixed in a particular narrative because of her tragic death, but she is also fixed to a very specific historical and cultural moment of the postwar boom, of overt sexuality and femininity paired with innocence. As a celebrity she became an icon in and of herself, and she is also representative of the pop culture of the time period in which she lived.

Charter: Who would you say is today’s Marilyn Monroe? Do we have one yet?

AC: This leads me to Kim Kardashian, who is a celebrity that grinds my gears. I think the difference between Marilyn Monroe and Kim Kardashian is that Marilyn Monroe did something. She actually had a career: she was an actress, though there were arguments over how good she really was; she was a *Playboy* centerfold; and she became a sex symbol because of her beauty and allure. She’s a celebrity in myriad ways and she had a reason for becoming a celebrity. There is not a single part of me that understands

why anyone would find Kim Kardashian interesting because she's stupid and shallow. She does nothing. There's a distinction between the way that celebrity status developed, say, fifty years ago, compared to now, which is very different in the internet age. Now you can be famous for doing nothing. Celebrity is now a matter of visibility, more than anything else.

Charter: With the advent of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, we also have the chance to be more connected with the celebs we idolize. How do you think this connectivity has changed our conception of celebrities?

AC: I think there is a sort of strange paradox. On Twitter, for example, certain celebrities like Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher have followers who are interested what they have to say, even if what they have to say is not very smart or interesting. Social networking sites make celebrities seem more real to us, but in reality they are *not* more real. They are still presenting a certain facade or a certain kind of persona that they want to be perceived as. At the same time, "real" people are increasingly becoming celebrities. The playing field is more level now: you can put a stupid video on YouTube and people may know who you are if you get enough hits. You can become a celebrity just for being visible in ways that might be embarrassing, humiliating, or just average. That averageness was not a quality of celebrities eighty years ago.

Charter: How do you think pop culture has changed the meaning of celebrity over time?

AC: Most people think, rightly, that we live in a very celebrity-obsessed culture. We are fascinated by particular icons like Kim Kardashian and Charlie Sheen, or people like George Clooney or Angelina

Jolie who are seen as doing good, noble work in the world. However, our celebrity-obsessed culture is nothing new. If you go back to the 1920s, there were celebrities who were just as popular and fawned-over

as celebrities are now. When Rudolph Valentino, a famous silent movie star, died in 1926, women around the country were in mourning. Thousands of women wailed and fainted outside his funeral. The Brad Pitt-Angelina Jolie "power couple" of the 1920s was Douglas Fairbanks and

Visibility means that you are conveying a message, whether you want to or not, so you need to think consciously about what message you want to convey.

Mary Pickford. Two well-known Hollywood actors, they got married and bought a huge estate together, creating a fairy tale image of romance, and everyone loved them. They were considered Hollywood royalty.

It's important to recognize that celebrities as we now know them came with the rise of film. One could argue, I suppose, that there were celebrities before film—people like Oscar Wilde come to mind—but in terms of the link between celebrity and pop culture, movies helped to create that link. In some sense, the celebrity culture now or the average person's obsession with celebrity is not any different from how it was in the 1920s. The difference is that we have more celebrities and more venues in which people can become celebrities.

Charter: Do you think a celeb-obsessed culture is a dangerous one in that we reward stupidity and lower our standards as consumers because we are okay with the

shallow icon that is now Kim Kardashian? Might we have a stronger society if we weren't privileging these people who don't do anything?

AC: Take a look at a show like *Jackass*, where the title says it all. The premise is this: as long as you make an ass of yourself, someone will watch you and recognize you. That part of a celebrity-obsessed culture is problematic. The other part I think is problematic is the way in which celebrities become the standard to which people aspire, particularly in terms of our looks and our bodies. If we look at someone like Marilyn Monroe, we might think *Oh, she's so curvaceous; beauty standards weren't as rigid in the 1950s as they are now*. But if you talked to the average woman in the 50s, she might say that Monroe's sexiness was unattainable. There is always a gap between what the average person can achieve and what the celebrity presents, which we know

The other part I think is problematic is the way in which celebrities become the standard to which people aspire, particularly in terms of our looks and our bodies.

now is truly a presentation. They have to be made up in a particular way, but that doesn't psychologically stop us from thinking that we want that for ourselves. That is the danger of celebrities.

The way in which I think celebrity culture is not dangerous is to think of it trans-historically. When I sometimes

get depressed over why we like this person or that person, I try to remember that people in 1930 liked celebrities who were good and bad too. Our obsession has certainly escalated over the years, but part

of me thinks that it's in human nature to project outward and to see someone outside of yourself as someone you want to be in some way.

Charter: From a women's and gender studies perspective, how has the celeb image affected the popular conception of what it means to be a woman? Man? Gay? Straight? Beautiful?

AC: Well, I think there is one answer for all of those groups of people, and then there are different answers for each of them. For all of them: The way celebrity images have affected us is that there is always an ideal outside of ourselves that we're aspiring toward, usually in bodily form or looks for both women and men. We also emulate celebrity attitudes or personas. For instance, Bruce Willis was very popular when I was growing up. He had it all. He was macho, sexy, smooth. He got the ladies, but he was a man's man. I don't know who that would be for your generation—Will Smith, maybe—but even guys like him will eventually be replaced by another batch of tough guys. We look for role models in our lives, and famous people are easily accessible to us—or at least, their image is. The problem in looking for celebrity role models in terms of gender or sexuality is that most of the time they are role models we can't ever be. No man I have ever known is going to be Bruce Willis because there aren't buildings blowing up everywhere for them to jump out of. That unattainable aspect is problematic.

It's problematic for men, but it's moreso for women, because I would argue that female images have become more homogenous throughout the years. The top female celebrities of the late 50s to the early 60s were Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn, who were very different in terms of their bodies and their personalities. I don't know if we have those opposing

types any more. Now we basically have one type for women, and that one who is extraordinarily thin, flawless in all ways, and under 40. Men have a wider range of people to idolize, like Sean Connery who is still considered sexy, although he is over 80, or George Clooney who is in his early 50s and still getting the younger

If pop culture conveys a set of values, then celebrities are the representatives of those values.

ladies. Regarding gay and lesbian representation among stars, I will say that there is something very important about seeing celebrities who are out gay men and women. They help people who self identify in a similar way

to see that it is okay to live an out life. The problem with celebrities representing “gayness” is that this identity is typically narrowly defined in celebrity culture. Kurt, the gay character on *Glee* who is played by a gay actor, is an example of this. He has become a role model for a lot of people, which is fantastic, but he still fits the typical gay role—effeminate, victimized, etc. Of course, his identity resonates with many gay men, but not all of them. We don’t see a range of gayness or lesbianism, just as we don’t see a range of female identities.

Charter: If we take a look at celebrities like Angelina Jolie or Princess Diana, who were known for their humanitarian work, or stars-turned-politicians like Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger, there seems to be a trend of public service associated with fame. Do you think that celebrities have a moral obligation to give back to the society that idolizes them?

AC: The part of me who is very individualistic wants to answer this with a

no, and say that they are people and they get to make the choice of what they will do with their lives regardless of what the public wants or needs. The other part of me that recognizes how we live in community wants to answer this with a yes, and say that they have an obligation to give back. If pop culture conveys a set of values, then celebrities are the representatives of those values. That means that they are role models, whether they want to be or not. I don’t know what it is like to be a celebrity, nor do I ever want to be, but any celebrity who is not naive would understand that visibility and scrutiny come with the territory. Visibility means that you are conveying a message, whether you want to or not, so you need to think consciously about what message you want to convey. Of course, perhaps I’m being naive because there is a whole machine behind every celebrity who is out there, and I have no idea of the extent to which the celebrity him or herself actually has control over his or her own image.

Charter: Why do you think the public readily excuses bad celebrity behavior? Although we may never forget what happened, and reputations may be damaged forever, why are we so willing to forgive those like Charlie Sheen, Tiger Woods, Lindsay Lohan or Paris Hilton?

AC: I don’t know. Tiger Woods, Charlie Sheen, Paris Hilton—they are all arguably morally questionable people. There are ways in which Tiger Woods has felt the backlash, but he certainly still has his defenders out there. Charlie Sheen is a mystery. I don’t understand him at all, and there’s a part of me that feels really sad for him because he is an addict and he can’t see it. Maybe we are drawn to him because he’s such a train wreck. We love to see celebrities fall because then we can feel superior to them. In part, that’s why we like reality t.v. shows,

too. We like to see people rewarded and punished, to think *I would be the girl to get the rose from the Bachelor and not that girl*. There are some celebrities, like Paris Hilton, for whom I truly have no explanation, and no theoretical or psychological background is going to help me understand them. But the thing that Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian have in common is, of course, that they both became famous for doing sex tapes, thereby suggesting that one thing women can gain national attention for participating in soft porn.

Charter: So if you are already a celebrity for being immoral, are you allowed to be immoral forever?

AC: I think so. There might be one or two things that would be unacceptable within the realm of celebrity. Murder maybe? Or sexual abuse of a child? The Penn State scandal with Joe Paterno has really thrown this into question. In most of the public discourse about the scandal—particularly coming from the college students themselves—the welfare of children became secondary to Paterno's celebrity status. I don't get that at all. But it does show the power of celebrity. If there are people we imbue with a certain kind of power, or goodness, or wholesomeness, we tend not to want to let go of it, even in the face of things that tell us otherwise. The thing about Charlie Sheen is that he has been a screwup since day one, so that's been helpful for him. He was unstable to begin with and then just kept falling. Now, think about if Taylor Swift pulled a Charlie Sheen. That would be a different story because she seems so sweet. But then again, maybe that's just her celebrity persona. There's no way we'll ever know, is there? ■

It's a Barbie World

Leah Beckett

WHEN I WAS little I wanted to be a Barbie doll. My mother will remind you of the story if you ask her. I wanted every little boy and girl to be able to hold my coffee-with-creamer colored skin with the seams going down my arms, legs and back. I wanted them to make me walk, to manipulate my knees in the way they bend them so they were stuck for a couple seconds and then bend them back. I wanted the little girls to make me marry Ken and I wanted the little boys to chop my hair when they got mad at their sisters. The sisters could Velcro more on. Everybody wins with Barbie. Including me. I would always be held as what little girls think of as beautiful and what little boys think of as a future wife, if I were Barbie. I would set the bar. I would be known.

I had two life-size Barbie dolls growing up. One wore a pink dress and the other had a blue dress with a spinning stand so I could dance with her. My brother took the blue dress off of my spinning doll and colored up and down her naked body with black crayon. Her torso had a gleaming painting of silver undergarments, not dissimilar from Mormon underwear. Now it was tainted with boy crayon artistry. It would have looked better had an elephant drawn on it.

When I was probably around nine I was at my aunt's two-room cabin in Maine. My

aunt Lee, my namesake, started tap dancing at the age of 60. She makes cards in her spare time. She loves Thai food. She hates Barbies. At the tender age of 9 when I was still involved with Barbie in my daily life, she made me lunch. What kind of lunch? Barbie soup. I had always heard of this soup: Barbie loved this soup. But when she set the bowl on the plastic tablecloth, I saw what Barbie soup meant. Not only was Barbie dead, but she was dismembered. Floating in the scalding chicken broth were the heads of four platinum blonde Barbies, floating like miniature buoys of female perfection, their hair tangled, their earrings still intact. Like any rational almost-girly girl, I ran outside screaming to a safe place, the boulder covered in moss next to the house.

Flash forward to my not so young youth and I was taking on the different personas

I would always be held as what little girls think of as beautiful and what little boys think of as a future wife, if I were Barbie.

of Barbie instead of just playing with her. My grandmother had one dogwood tree behind her house. It had a branch that I used as the uneven

bars. Taking on the role of Gymnast Barbie, one day I was swinging and swinging and on my third time around, the branch snapped and I landed on my head. Instead of going to the hospital, I ate ice cream. In eighth and ninth grades I went to circus camp in upstate New York, taking on the role of Circus Barbie. There I continued working on my proficiency at the bars and the trapeze, centered in the spotlight. As High School Barbie, I decided to deceive my teacher, Mr. Dursin. I said I was going to the bathroom when really I climbed into a tunnel under the school and went "spelunking" through the dirt pathway with my best friend James. Eventually we popped up through the other trap door in my English class. My teacher screamed! He screamed like I screamed when I saw

the Barbie soup! After class he said the non-teacher part of him was in awe and the teacher part of him thought he could get fired, but mostly he thought it was *awesome*. As a senior, as Actress Barbie, I played Mary Warren in *The Crucible*. On a walk with my dog, Cody, after opening night a neighbor talking on her corded telephone and wearing a white bathrobe walked out and asked me if I was Mary Warren. Yes, I said. She said she loved me! She loved the play!

There is a certain amount of freedom in being able to not have a pink house, long blonde hair and perfectly flat abs beneath painted Mormon underwear every day of my life. When the neighbor complimented me, she was complimenting *my* work, not Barbie's. The beauty of life is that it oscillates; Barbie smiles every day and her eyes gleam with every event happening around her. Disturbingly, Barbie would not be able to scream if she saw any of her duplications floating around in the steaming broth. And man, I want to scream. I want to scream and I want to laugh and I want to see life like Mr. Dursin: I should both be scared of getting fired sometimes and in awe of what happens around me. Barbie can only smile in each of her fixed characters, and the beauty of life, the normalcy of life, is that I can take on each of Barbie's roles in one body, and it's mine. ■

“Living in LA, everyone likes to mold you and change you. I don't care about fame, I don't care about being a celebrity. I know that's part of the job, but I don't feed into anyone's idea of who I should be.”

-Jessica Alba

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