

# **CELEBRITY WORSHIP**

"A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF CELEBRITY WORSHIP AS A CONTEMPORARY RELIGION"

ENRIC MARTÍ CAÑIZARES' DEGREE FINAL PROJECT

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"We need fantasy to survive because reality is too difficult"

- LADY GAGA

FASHION DESIGN AT "ESCOLA SUPERIOR DE DISSENY - ESDI" (RAMÓN LLULL UNIVERSITY)

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## INDEX

### CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ANALYSIS

.Celebrity culture

.The new religion

.Para-social and identification

.Referent's analysis - Francesco Vezzoli

CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

.Books

.Articles in specialized magazines

.Thesis and university works

.Articles in printed and online press

.Electronic documents and websites

## INTRODUCTION

As the definition of religion has been widely debated over the years, various aspect of celebrity worship seem to be meaningful to people in ways that suggest a kind of religious parallel. Since Friedrich Nietzsche's death-of-God decree, it's been identified a general condition in which cultural life has been losing adherence to objective or transcendent standards, permitting the growing popularity of forms of mysticism that rise from indefinite religious emotion. Thus, the weakening of Christian faith and its belief in God becomes redundant and cognitively superfluous, where without God we're literally on our own. So, the contemporary environment is characterized by a shift in religious sensibility towards an expressive individualism, which work under a tangibility statement. The focus on the individual leads to a move through the expansive self, located in feelings and sensitivities, where the self becomes the focus of attention and energy. This has wrought a change in religion so that the question "How can I be saved?" has been replaced by the question "How can I feel good about myself?". Sounds interesting, then, that instead of being replaced, the religious nowadays is floating and has actually been relocated. With the weakening of traditional faith, worship has bled into every specialized sector of modern culture that speak to the breadth and depth of contemporary religious environments, making no surprise that religious imagery and themes are surfacing more and more in the anti-establishment worlds of art and entertainment. The media encourage the sense that people are in need of fulfilling in a religious landscape where's being revealed the changing manner of expressing religiosity. This sets up multiple forms of cultural activity that do not simply appear to be like religion, but are in fact dynamic expressions of genuine religious sensibilities and sentiments underlining many of our everyday lives. We now find meaning where we may not otherwise have looked: in the meaningless. Altogether, generated a response to the desire of people to worship themselves as embodiments

of an embracing life-process, in the mids of the new society of the banal.

So, the biggest of this hypothesis to be borne out is that, actually, “there is a correlation between religion cult and celebrity worship that is reflected in the construction of individual identities in the twenty-first century culture”. We take celebrities up ritually as heroes, leaders, scapegoats or magical figures. Celebrities represent subject positions that audiences can adopt or adapt in their formation of social identities, and this constitutes a change in the way cultural meanings are generated as the celebrity becomes a key site of attention and personal aspiration. Irrefutably, their worship generates a discourse that takes us into the interplay between identity, individuality, value and norms. At its heart, the celebrity fact generates para-social interactions that operate as means of compensating for changes in the social construction. These are instances where worshippers respond to what we think of as real emotional attachments with figures only knew through their representations in the media, so the investment with phantasmal projections of need-fulfillment becomes real. Therefore, unable to confront naked existence in the absence of a structured traditional God, individuals are left to confront the limitations, adversities, and injustices of worldly existence by themselves and without hope of reconciliation.

People are more likely to seek escape or refuge through fantasy if they lack control in core aspects of their lives or who are materially disempowered. Celebrity adoration could be accompanied by poor psychological well-being resulting from failed attempts to cope with daily life, which kind of builds a utopian refuge that may contribute in portraying a better, brighter, fairer world. So, celebrities grant healthiness to the worshippers and express hyper-versions of possible transformation that anyone in 21st century culture could achieve.

And I just pose for a minute; half-way fantasies, lived as realities, aren't just salvation for those who need confident until the point of delusion?

# CELEBRITY CULTURE



Queen (Freddie Mercury) at Wembley (Jul 12, 1986)

## ANALYSIS

### CELEBRITY CULTURE

*Fame is mesmerizing.*<sup>1</sup> That's what is all about for Howard Altman, whose contribution in the understanding of fame concept and its change over the decades help in the development of celebrity definitions.

For someone like Pharaohs Akhenaten and his wife Nefertiti, probably the first known celebrities 3.500 years ago, fame wasn't as much deeper or at least conscious-of-it, as for Alexander the Great or Caesar, whose ideas of fame were such an important motivating force that added a new dimension to the conception of immortality. The original etymological Latin meaning of it is "to be thronged by the crowd", that's why's not surprising to think of Golden Greece Era athletes as one of the earliest celebrated persons in history, since such athletes were accorded the same high status enjoyed by today's superstars. *They were not only widely talked about but also given nowadays red-carpet treatment. When they returned home, for instance, part of the city wall was demolished so they did not have to use the gates like ordinary mortals.*<sup>2</sup> Clearly, contemporary celebrity culture reads from this earlier versions of fame, where the desire for renown has been a fundamental component in the consideration of western societies over many centuries. Taking this in consideration, Renaissance conception of notoriety was all about a step forward Alexander the Great notion of immortality; the fame just provided the legacy and history recognition, and being celebrated by the crowd wasn't as important as being reviewed by the following generations. By the time William Shakespeare was part of the mid-16th century English scene, times were changing. *England had dramatic shifts in science, religion and culture occurring. Popular theaters became a major source of entertainment for the masses.*

<sup>1</sup>HOWARD ALTMAN. *Celebrity culture*, 2005: 7-9-10-12-13-14.

<sup>2</sup>HOWARD ALTMAN. *Celebrity culture*, 2005: 7-9-10-12-13-14.

*The clergy and scholars may have disapproved of such “corrupt” entertainment, but it turned Shakespeare into London’s most celebrated playwright, and the more people read, the more they wanted to know about the entertainment globe. But it’s not till the 18th century with the increasing importance of the public sphere, that society starts recognizing the public as an entity separate from the government and the church, and a new class of people frequently known for their exceptional skills emerged as the recipients of widespread attention.*<sup>3</sup> So, this is how the history of fame provides us with an angle of inspection society’s shifting definition of achievement and what it means to be an individual.

Later, the 19th century entailed a hundred and eighty grade change in the notion of celebrity, where only the heroes were recognized by their achievements and celebs for their personality, disassociating with the original idea of Greeks and Romans. The significance of the new idea of stars lied in the way that his or her charisma operated as a symbolic reference point for society. With the progress of visual information, persons of the entertainment world began to make their mark. More recent there’s an increased concentration of interest in defining celebrity over the late 1990s and 2000s, all around the media representation idea. The discourses in play within the mass representation of celebrities are highly contradictory and ambivalent. *At times celebrities are part of the background noise and flow, part of the wallpaper, and at times they loom up as something more. Sometimes we evaluate them as physical beings and moral agents. Often we find them desirable, or enviable, or in some other ways they evoke the sentiments, the liking, irritation or boredom, that flesh and blood individuals evoke. Yet an aura of some sort surrounds them. We take them up ritually as heroes, leaders, scapegoats, magical figures to be admired, envied, loved or hated: to matter.*<sup>4</sup> The territories of desire explored by the representation of celebrities are complex. There’s always one point largely lost in most discussions of celebrity culture. While it is reasonable to think that the discursive regime in which celebrities take part

<sup>3</sup>GRAEME TURNER. Understanding celebrity, 2013: 3-10.

<sup>4</sup>GRAEME TURNER. Understanding celebrity, 2013: 89.

is represented as more or less the same across the range of different medias, we must recognize that the consumers’ pleasures and identifications can differ significantly. Our fascination with particular celebrities is a ready-witted projection of ourselves as individuals, and the following of one’s fantasies in celebrities can inject significance into our own everyday lives. For instance, talks about the illusion of intimacy that might connect the death of Princess Diana, John Lennon or Michael Jackson (for example) with the empathic fanatic eye, suggests that the relationship constructed between them resides only in the minds of the beholders. That’s why, in this whole thesis will be rejected talks about the profit of media representation towards the selling of an idea or product, in the deceitful strategy to persuade the viewer through the public character.

However, let’s consider first some interesting theories about the construction and function of celebrities. On the one hand, Daniel Boorstin is responsible for one of the most widely quoted aphorisms about celebrity: *the celebrity is a person who is well-known for their well-knowingness. Fabricated on purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness, the celebrity develops a capacity for fame, not by achieving great things but by differentiating their own personality from those of their competitors in the public arena. It is not surprising that entertainers dominate the ranks of celebrity because they are skilled in the marginal differentiation of their personalities.*<sup>5</sup> Boorstin’s discourse takes part within a critique that accused all those contemporary under-America-influenced cultures of a fundamental inauthenticity, as it was increasingly dominated by what he calls the pseudo-event: the own media’s presentation throughout media coverages rather than any other disinterested assessment of importance. The celebrity, in turn, is its human equivalent: the human pseudo-event, fabricated for the media and evaluated in terms of effectiveness of their visibility and media representation. Otherwise, there’s a second opinion about celebrities’ social function aside Daniel Boorstin bewildering critique. There are thoughts that interprets celebrity as a symptom of cultural change.

<sup>5</sup>GRAEME TURNER. Understanding celebrity, 2013: 3-10.

*We might read the modern celebrity as representative of a significant shift in contemporary popular culture. This constitutes a change in the way cultural meanings are generated as the celebrity becomes a key site of attention and personal aspiration, as well as one of the key places where cultural meanings are negotiated and organized. In the more sociological accounts, there is an affective deficit in modern life. Some of our closest social relations seem to be in decline: the nuclear family, the extended family and the withdrawal of the family unit from the wider suburban community, are among the symptoms we might name. The diminution of direct social relations is addressed by what has been called para-social interactions, such as those we enjoy with the celebrities we watch and admire. In effect, we are using celebrity as a means of constructing a new dimension of community. [...] Descriptions of the semiotics of stars found that their social meanings were not only deposited there by repeated representations and performances, but that they were also the product of complex relations between the kind of individuality the star signified and that valued by the society. As a result, the meanings embedded in the image of Marilyn Monroe is not only a story of the professional cultivation of her persona as a star, but also of the discursive and ideological context within which that persona could develop.<sup>6</sup>*

Once this said, which could sound a little contradictory in terms of, again, media representation, helps us sketch the social and ideological position which the celebrity could take part in the context and beliefs of individuals. Stardom is not a purely mercantile phenomenon imposed from above by profit-hungry media, as much as it is a socially based phenomenon generated from below at the level of real people who make affective investments in particular media figures. Most opponents agree that the whole celebrity phenomenon is forth and ephemeral, the antithesis of all things of value. *In the main, this approach to celebrity is a thinly veiled version of an elitist view of culture.<sup>7</sup>* But actually, celebrity culture could be seen as representing the overall collapse of contemporary society, proving that we're living in an empty and vacuous atmosphere.

<sup>6</sup>GRAEME TURNER. Understanding celebrity, 2013: 3-10.

<sup>7</sup>PETE WARD. Gods Behaving Badly, 2011: 2.

Undeniably, the celebrity aspect is not simply a condition of popular culture. Actually, celebrities are part of pop's DNA. So, as we're flicking through magazines or newspapers, watching TV or even surfing the internet globosphere, we're being invited into debates that doesn't really necessarily rely to celebrity, but to our possible selves. A gossip will probably pass us by, but we might still have a view to share about society through the image of Brad Pitt, Adele, John Galliano or Meryl Streep. That's why celebrities matter not because of who they are or what the industry wants of them to represent, but because of what they indeed represent. *Celebrities represent subject positions that audiences can adopt or adapt in their formation of social identities. Each celebrity represents a complex form of audience-subjectivity that, when placed within a system of celebrities, provides the ground in which distinctions, differences, and oppositions are played out. The celebrity, then, is an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a culture.<sup>8</sup>* They are part of our own signifying system, functioning as symbols in the communication process. Celebrities present possibilities for the self, offering ways of being human. They represent the aspirational and the ideal as well as the fallen and the virtueless. It allows us to worship the best, the worst and the most banal of ourselves within "the society of the banal" which we are submerged in right now. *As such, celebrities represent different ways to be a woman, to be black, to be old, to be faithful, to be gay, to be a parent or to be a loser. Our interest, or indeed our lack of interest in them, is rooted in the extent to which we relate to what they represent.<sup>9</sup>* Even those who try to limit the impact of celebrities in their life find that its magnetism is hard to overcome. Some try to beat the impact by willing its insignificance, but truth is that celebrity culture has become the "lingua franca" for identity in our society.

Hence, it seems that cultural identity and celebrity share a common story. At this point, we're all fascinated by stars because they enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social organization, whether into

<sup>8</sup>GRAEME TURNER. Understanding celebrity, 2013: 23-25.

<sup>9</sup>PETE WARD. Gods Behaving Badly, 2011: 3.



public or private spheres. We love them because they represent how we think that experience is or how it would be lovely to feel that it is, experiences that have been socially, culturally and historically constructed. *How identity is formed in relation to representation in popular culture is complicated and multilayered. It is a negotiation between subjectivity (or our sense of self) and the representation in pop culture. [...] Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us. They are the result of a successful articulation or chaining of the subject in the flow of discourse.*<sup>10</sup>

We have all amply accepted that culture is not just located in novels or paintings, rather it is to be seen in practices such as songwriting, performing, recording, advertising and making videos, but it also includes going to concerts and even putting posters on your room's walls. This kind of practices make up twenty-first century popular culture, and they enable the generation and the circulation of meaning. For instance people give meaning to images, objects and events, and over time things in themselves rarely ever have a single, fixed and unchanging meaning. This is why with an artist such as Lady Gaga we see shifting patterns of meaning and differing possible interpretations. People want her to represent disparate things, quite like Madonna or David Bowie, who have built their careers in the ability to morph from one image to another. Thus, all the meaning generations plus the self-identity concept, drifts into mythic elements correlated to celebrity culture. The mythic potential of celebrities such as Marilyn or James Dean shape icons, but this making is shrouded in the kind of mystery that comes from. Their worship is slightly reverent, imprinting their presence on our consciousness; they are a constant reference point, a hook where we can hang our own things. That's why on a very basic biological basis, scientists say humans are hardwired to be fascinated with celebrity, and that our brains receive pleasurable chemical stimuli when we see familiar faces, enabling the detection of religious or theological elements in them.

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<sup>10</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 39.

It's not surprising, then, that as a consequence celebrity culture exhibits a casual and a continual dispute that is rooted in the carnal and the material. It is suggested that *the cultural function of the celebrity today contains significant parallels with the functions normally ascribed to religion*.<sup>11</sup> Representation makes gods out of mortals and idols out of stars, proving that celebrities are intercessory figures who span the divine between two worlds.

Is Elvis a God?

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<sup>11</sup>GRAEME TURNER. *Understanding celebrity*, 2013: 3-10.

# THE NEW RELIGION



*Madonna at the "Express Yourself" video (May 17, 1989)*

## ANALYSIS

### THE NEW RELIGION

Over the years, human's ultimate dimensional estate, religion, has been widely debated and variously defined. Most definitions of religion (be them essentialist, functionalist or phenomenological) tend to exclude celebrity worship as a formal religion for one or other reason. The issue's that various aspects of celebrity worship seem to be meaningful to people in ways that suggest a kind of religious parallel. But how is this potentially possible when most definitions of religion rely in the following idea? The belief in some kind of supernatural being and the power of religion to somehow shape and sustain a community or a church. Let's consider for a moment anthropologist Clifford Geerts' definition for religion: *a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.*<sup>12</sup> He says that ultimately a religion is the organizing principle of one's life under which everything else becomes subordinate. Religion is an integrated system of belief, lifestyle and ritual activities which individuals give meaning to (or find meaning in) their lives by orienting themselves to what they take to be holy, sacred, or of the highest value. Individuals, that's the keyword in the understanding of contemporary's religious situation. Since nowadays religion can no longer be understood as a separate sphere of social life, contemporary environment is characterized by a shift in religious sensibility towards expressive individualism. The focus on the individual leads to the collapse of differentiation. So, the spirituality of the eternal has meant a journey from religious exclusivism to inclusivism. Choice leaves the subject as an autonomous arbitrator between religious and non-religious sources as them are diffused in culture, so we no longer feel constrained by the boundaries of tradition. Traditions may survive, but they

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<sup>12</sup>PETE WARD. Gods Behaving Badly, 2011: 63.

undergo significant changes; a process called the subjective turn. *The turn is a move away from life lived in terms of external or objective roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences. So the subjective turn is a move toward subjective-life, away from the life-as. Subjective-life is framed around what is described as life lived in deep connection with the unique experiences of my self-in-relation. The shift of the individual in religion as a move through the expansive self, located in feelings, sensitivities, expressiveness, or simply in individuality, positions where the self-become the focus of attention and energy. This has wrought a change in religion so that the question "How can I be saved?" has been replaced by the question "How can I feel good about myself?".*<sup>13</sup>

Besides, many other recent theories of religion have tended to read the new religious context in the way that religion might be described from the perspective of religious subject. Religion should be seen as the practice of making the invisible visible, of concretizing the order of the universe, the nature of human life and its destiny, to the various dimensions and possibilities of human interiority itself, in order to render them in the circumstances of everyday life.

We do not need to go so far to embrace Friedrich Nietzsche's death-of-God decree. It's known by all that the monotheism of Jerusalem provided a distinctive structure for satisfying religious impulses by centralizing religious worship around an absolute personal God who transcended the creation, but who made connection with human beings through revelation and, in the case of Christianity, through the single incarnation of Jesus. God's decisive interventions into the world offered human beings a relationship with him: humans were given a way to achieve salvation, but in place they were called to obey absolute commandments to overcome the sins but, without the human's revision, they were coasted to discipleship. In modern age Nietzsche meant that society

no longer had this use for God. *As a cultural fact, the absence or presence of Christian faith made no difference to humanity and thus belief in God was redundant and cognitively superfluous. Nietzsche recognized the stark implications of this position; "without God we're literally on our own".*<sup>14</sup>

The aspect of the weakening of faith most relevant to the rise of celebrity worship was firstly identified by the sociologist Georg Simmel in the early twentieth century. Writing at the end of World War I, he identified a general condition in which cultural life was losing adherence to objective or transcendent standards. Consequently this permitted the growing popularity of forms of mysticism that dispensed with the structures of received faith in favor of an indefinite expansiveness of religious emotion. Denial of the transcendent monotheist God as the focus of worship leaves spirituality floating freely, often to be attached itself transiently to finite objects immanent in the world. *Many people in his time were rejecting the other-worldly objects of religious faith, yet they still had religious needs. In place of faith in a transcendent God they had substituted religiosity as an all-embracing spontaneous process of life.*<sup>15</sup> The virtue of Simmel's discussion of the weakening of religious faith is that it makes clear that religious impulses survived a specific rejection of God's transcendent objectivity. *The choice was not between traditional faith and nihilism, but between transcendent and immanent forms of worship. The rise of mysticism was essentially a response to the desire of people to worship themselves as embodiments of an embracing life-process.*<sup>15</sup>

From the viewpoint of Christian and Jewish monotheism, there could be no greater sin than for people to take religion into their own hands; indeed, self-worship was the negation of worship, a terribly destructive paradox that could only leave human beings in their fallen state, perpetually unredeemed. Such a return to (a new) polytheism

<sup>13</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 71.

<sup>14</sup>CAROL LANGFORD. 'God is Dead' - The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche: 1.

<sup>15</sup>DEENA AND MICHAEL WEINSTEIN. *Celebrity Worship as Weak Religion*, 2003: 296.

helped the rejection of God, meaning a return to the prior condition: worshipping self-consciously human contrivances, celebrating a religion of culture where human beings worship their own creations, not even The Creation.

So, with the weakening of faith, worship has bled into every specialized sector of modern culture. Technology, money, success, consumer goods, sex, beauty, science, death, sports, music and power are only a few of the objects that people have come to adore. These and other areas of fascination and fixation, often intermingled with fear and faith, speak to the breadth and depth of contemporary religious environments. Each has its cults and devotees, each its promises, and an individual can choose to engage in more than one of these cults simultaneously and can exchange one for another over time. A spirit of pragmatism prevails in the new polytheism; there's no absolute truth and if one form of worship fails to work, another can be taken up. What sounds actually interesting's that instead of being replaced, the religious is floating and has actually been relocated in present-day contexts. And here is where the link's been raised: the decline in religious institutions has left a vacuum that is partly filled by media with a whole range of visual and aural stimuli. It's not surprising, then, that religious imagery and themes are surfacing more and more in the anti-establishment worlds of art and entertainment. Human life has never before been so caught up and at the same time aware of mediated images and symbols. The media encourage the sense that people are in need of fulfilling in a religious landscape where's being revealed the changing manner of expressing religiously. So, this sets up multiple forms of cultural activity that do not simply appear to be like religion, but are in fact dynamic expressions of genuine religious sensibilities and sentiments underlining many of our everyday. We now find meaning where we may not otherwise have looked: in the "meaningless".

Therefore, there is a distinct possibility that current theological and religious analogies indicate that the sacred may be shifting into human's biggest pop culture repre-

sentative: celebrities. *We can begin to understand celebrity as an object of worship by repeating Daniel Boorstin's definitional quote in which celebrities are those who are known for well-knowingness. This are people who have been elevated above the ordinary anonymous life of a mass society by having attracted the interest and attention of large numbers of people from diverse walks of life and sectors of society: their names end-up as household words. Being well known in a specialized and fragmented society with divergent codes of conduct, multiple ethnicities, and a dizzying array of lifestyles and taste groups endows the celebrity with mystique. Recognition cannot be taken for granted in a mass culture, making them appear to be extraordinary, bigger than regular life.*<sup>16</sup> So, the celebs are public personalities who can summon up primary psychological processes like identification, love and adoration. Celebrity worship seems to save the new polytheism from a total absorption in things, connecting it with the western tradition of a personal God and with the characteristic dispositions towards that God. It is then the most significant symptom of this changing nature of religion into human beings; described as analogical since it doesn't refer to supernatural powers but possesses most of the other features of religion in the full sense of the term.

Under the abstract unification of being well known, celebrities come in all flavors. Indeed, there are celebrities for all of the major interests, fears, and desires of human life, just as polytheistic religions have gods that personify the various and contradictory possibilities of human nature. Our confusion over the choice of celebrity gods extends to what we expect of the sacred. Rock bands or movies have been mined for their theology, and the lived experiences of fans have been explored to see how they construct religious meaning from popular culture. This sense shows that the boundaries between pop culture and religion are blurring. Despite of, religion is not just constituted by belief in gods or spirits. Instead, religion is based on the distinction between the

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<sup>16</sup>DEENA AND MICHAEL WEINSTEIN. *Celebrity Worship as Weak Religion*, 2003: 297-298.

sacred and the profane: *all known traditional religious beliefs present one common characteristic, they presuppose a classification of things, real and ideal, of which men think into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by the words profane and sacred.*<sup>17</sup> This distinction between the religious and the secular, are collapsing into one another. The mix of the sacred and the profane then serves as a resource for their negotiation of identity in and through popular culture. Most important, though, the conception of the sacred participates in common forms of expression and shared social experiences tied to myths and symbols, rituals and ceremonies, power and order, which allows celebrity worship invest in mythologies that promise “immortality”, as much as Renaissance did. What is considered sacred becomes a vital source of empowerment and ultimate investments, and is connected to human inspirations and desires, meaningful actions and attitudes, and social identities and community affiliations. So individuals will give their lives to preserve and protect it. What is unique in these moments at some point is the existence of a paradoxical dualism: the world as lived and the world as imagined fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turned out to be the same world. “I live between reality and fantasy. We need fantasy to survive because reality is too difficult”, said once Lady Gaga. That’s why we do not view real people when we relate to celebrities, instead, although some of them may achieve more than Andy Warhol’s fifteen minutes of fame, we continually elevate them, cast them down, and replace them in frenzies of hype. In traditional theology we are subjected to a God who sees all that we do and who will ultimately call us all to account; through the media, however, our relationship with the divine has been reversed. We are now the ones who have the all-seeing powers. Revelation is not the choice of God, it is the demand of the people. We are the judges, we are the ones who weigh the actions of our gods. Making from the religion of the sacred self, the self as a divine arbiter.

<sup>17</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 62.

*The failure of the gods does rely to those who succumb to their own imperfect nature. These failures, however, often seem to make celebrity figures more accessible to the public, since we identify with gods who mess up. Contemporary gods are both sublime and carnal. Just like Diana, whose iconography situated her as a divine archetype. It is a mixture of the sacred and the profane. The star is divinized in spite of her evident humanity, in spite of her submission to the outrages of time or in spite of the aesthetic consciousness of the spectator.*<sup>18</sup> She demonstrates the way the celebrity worship stimulated atavistic religious emotions. Her death produced a new catholic “madonna”, a modern Mary with a taste for popularity. This is a power that academic paradigms (influenced by feminism, Marxism and Foucault) can’t understand and whose enduring mystique can only be explained by Roman Catholicism. By this turns, *theological terms such as icon, divinity, sin, redemption and salvation, have been unhooked from their previous location in a largely Christian theological tradition and haven been rearticulated with celebrities as symbols of the self.*<sup>19</sup> In celebrity culture image is power while idolatry is very suggestive: these are representations of the human or the possibilities of what it is to be human. So, we are asked to worship versions of our sacred selves reflected through the lens of media generated images. What this reveals is the conflicted nature not only of or sense of self but also of our perception of divine. Celebrities are deities only to the extent that they are carrying the projected identifications of the worshippers.

*The second of the Ten Commandments seems rather unequivocal: “you shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them”.*<sup>20</sup> Therefore, this can be concluded by saying that if there are such religious overtones to celebrity culture, they obviously operate in ways

<sup>18</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 103-104.

<sup>19</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 3.

<sup>20</sup>GARY LADERMAN. *Sacred Matters*, 2009: 63.



that are quite different from the way that formal religions operate. Media and religion may occupy the same space, serve many of the same purposes and invigorate the same practices in late modernity; but how they work is considerably different. Celebrities are more than their images, more than their personal selves: they are what everyone makes of them. In this sense, celebrity becomes a reflection of what we might be, or what we might want to be or indeed what we would hope in a million years never to be. This is what is purely sacred about celebrity culture. It is not the individual celebrity himself/herself, but the particular narrative of their lives which is what people project onto them as significant. So, as celebrity culture is understood as a religion, then its essence is the worship of our individual self or the possible want-to-be self within a para-social relationship.

# PARA-SOCIAL AND IDENTIFICATION



*Lady Gaga at the 52nd Grammy Awards (Jan 31, 2010)*

## ANALYSIS

### PARA-SOCIAL AND IDENTIFICATION

Let's put back in plane again for a second this existential assertion: *There's been a change in religion today so that the question "How can I be saved?" has been replaced by the query "How can I feel good about myself?"*.<sup>21</sup> This just moves us to the starter of west culture religious interactions, so that we can catch up nowadays' fans-celebrities liaison.

The famous words of Genesis is one of the crucial features in Christian religion, which constitutes our cultural tradition. In this tradition's always been remarked the similarity between the man and God as an expression of human dignity. It thus establishes a relationship of closeness between the divine and the human. Such aspects acquire a meaning and central importance for men, which makes them symbolic and crucial elements of reality structuring. *Religious representations are provided as a set of mirrors in which we seek the unity of the plural and fragmented image of ourselves. So, thanks to the similarity between God and man, intimacy appears. In this intimacy, alone with himself, man has another key to forge his identity with the presence of the image of God. In conclusion, we can say that religious interactions are inseparable from the design of human identity. Religion, anthropologically, appears as a human product, but as a product that is a decisive factor in shaping our lives. [...] It's like a mirror into which is headed the experience of our fragmentation and drive us back an image on which to base our ways of life.*<sup>22</sup>

The link and interaction between present days believers and believed aren't quite far from Christian religion modus operandi. A social dimension of celebrity worship is described by anthropologist Eric Gans, who traces the phenomenon to social resentment. *People worship celebrities so they can avoid acknowledging and admiring*

<sup>21</sup> PETE WARD. Gods Behaving Badly, 2011: 71.

<sup>22</sup> JOSÉ JIMÉNEZ. La vida como azar, 1994: 57-58-59-63.

*the actual human beings in their midst who display superior virtues or have acquired more of what society has to offer. By placing an idol, the worshippers level the latters' real distinctions and ease their inferiority feelings.*<sup>23</sup> Sociologist Chris Rojek fills out the motives for celebrity worship by describing its spiritual dimension as a cult of distraction. Weakening of traditional faith, leaves individuals to confront the limitations, adversities, and injustices of worldly existence by themselves and without hope of reconciliation. Unable to confront naked existence in the absence of God, they wire themselves into the land of celebrities. To speak of celebrity culture as a kind of theology therefore does not tell us anything about a universal God, but it does reveal something about how we see ourselves. And even though there's no reference to a transcendent other, doesn't it mean salvation if the believing is distracting you from controversial feelings? The basic idea is that celebrities' devotees create para-social relationships with the star, investing the celeb with phantasmal projections of need-fulfillment. Para-social interactions are intimacies that are at a distance, intense, like any other current friendship, but with someone who most fans have never met. *The symbolic cognitive and emotional processes that form the basis of normal human interactions are also implicated in the development of para-social relationships with celebrities. Through frequent media exposure, audiences come to feel they know a celebrity from their appearance, gestures, conversations, philosophy and conduct, despite having had no direct communication with them.*<sup>24</sup> From psychology it is evident that the idea of worship indicates a level of identification that in some cases could seem pathological, but even though this interaction may look a fable tie, the truth's that the actual relationship couldn't be more real.

Following the already talked weakening of traditional faith, the immanent spirituality turns celebrities into a vital support function of the individual's life as a motive. But, *what is the state of their souls?*<sup>25</sup> Researchers have found that celebrity worship is methadone for the soul.

Worshippers tend to be introverted and intuitive (rather than rationally calculating) and they find it more difficult than the average person to relate to other people. In the most full-blown cases, the fanatic is scarred by an inability to trust coping with an all-embracing world that seems to provide no breakthrough to transcendence. At its root, it is an expression of a need emotional valuing by someone who distrusts his/her capacity to love or to be loved. They need religious representations that appear to be other than themselves and superior to them, but that in fact is merely a projection of themselves under their control, in the hope of achieving stability and peace. *Exists in humans a universal tendency to conceive all beings like ourselves, and to transfer to all subjects or objects the qualities we know about and are intimately aware of. This is how we should probably understand all human conduct in the presence of spirituality around a celebrity.*<sup>26</sup> In this ways, individuals develop with celebrities relationships that form a part of their daily lives. This kind of intimacy can be seen as both enriching and rewarding. Whether this tends to be seen as being potentially abnormal, this kind of ambivalent or conflicted link between the fan and the celebrity can be described as the tension between identification and disidentification of contemporary social structure. Through identification, celebrities, just like religious figures, serve as a focus for their aspirations, transformations and full identity construction. In this way, fans relate to celebrities by including them in the construction of their imaginary worlds. These behaviors show how individual celebrity worshippers may be responding with intelligence, wit, and measure skepticism, in front of a tough view of life.

Celebrities are more akin to Christian representations than to other kind of spiritual authorities. Since the Byzantine era, sacred images of the virgin, Jesus or saints existed for the need of the divine as something accessible, familiar and recognizable in sequence. In medieval popular devotion, virgins and saints were seen as kindly neighbors, friends and helpers. Relationships with them revealed not only devotion but a close identification on the worshipper's side. Prayerful and devoted links demonstra-

<sup>23</sup> DEENA AND MICHAEL WEINSTEIN. Celebrity Worship as Weak Religion, 2003: 301.

<sup>24</sup> KARL A. ROBERTS. Relationship attachment and the behaviour of fans towards celebrities, 2007: 56.

<sup>25</sup> DEENA AND MICHAEL WEINSTEIN. Celebrity Worship as Weak Religion, 2003: 300.

<sup>26</sup> DAVID FREEDBERG. El poder de las imágenes, 2011: 277.



ted a sort of affectionate dependence in the hope that he or she would be adopted and protected in turn. But not just Christian liturgy can be related to celebrity culture; like ancient Greek and Roman gods, celebrities appear to manifest both the noble and the venial. The gods fell out with one another, they got jealous, and they exacted revenge. These gods represented not simply the possible good or the ideal, they also appeared to manifest the fallen. So our interest, or indeed our lack of interest in celebrities, is rooted in the extent to which we relate to what they represent. We may identify with them or we may desidentify with them. The contradictory nature of celebrity culture finds a unity only to the extent that the various possibilities of the human that are represented by celebrities allow for a changing point of reference in the construction of the individual. Therefore, much in the same way that Byzantine icons allowed for a universal language within Christendom, today celebrity images allow for a common language across cultural boundaries. Celebrities have offered us a distinctive view of the world. This is a version of reality where the possibilities appear to have no limits. We are shown a future where anything and everything is possible, where we can deconstruct current reality and re-construct it under our own sights. Celebrities are the living proof of this. The narratives and images that make up celebrity culture have mythic elements. For instance, there's a connection made between contemporary religion and ideas of myth and rituals. Myths and legends of various religious traditions resurface by themselves in fragments and in strange combinations in what looks like wholly secular spaces in a process that both keeps the stories alive and radically reframes their meaning. But, what is a myth today in the celebrity culture context?

Myths represent a theology that can be molded and shaped by the user. Celebrity gods are only significant because of the way that they are taken to mean something by audiences. Even though the existence of a strong para-social relationship between the celebrity and the worshipper, the acts to reach the direct connection to it is between the sacred "materialisms". Actually, *even though we can reach our celebrity god within*

*the mind, we get to him/her through an amazing material object which constitutes the prototype image of what it represents. The worshippers do not worship the objects itself, but what is represented within them.*<sup>27</sup> The material objects of adoration, be it an image, a CD, or sports team, is more than simply a possession: it becomes part of the fan sense of himself or herself and also how he or she is viewed by others. To suggest that celebrity watchers are embracing the superficial and therefore the socially ephemeral and insignificant is to fail to understand how this culture operates. *Fans are meeting their social needs not so much through imaginary relationships to celebrities as through their relationships with other fans and objects of cult. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself. So a sacred stone continues to be a stone, but for those whom the stone reveals itself as sacred its immediate reality is transmuted into sacred reality. Religious feeling are shaped around the attempt to remain as far as long as it's possible in the sacred world.*<sup>28</sup>

What sounds interesting here, though, is to focus a little bit more onto the idea of giving meaning to the secular object, to take it sacredly seriously under the mythological eye. With this said, then, I'm going to give an out of theme example so we can totally understand how powerful the idea of sacralization is. *A remarkable ceremony practiced in West Africa presents a question of fusion and spiritual inherence. Until it was abolished by the colonial authorities, people from Nupa Nigeria worshipped Ndâkô Ghoya. Made of white cloth, shaped like a cylinder and wide enough to accommodate a man inside, this kind of huge mask was suspended from a bamboo branch about four meters high. Looking at it caused a frightening and terrifying effect in the villagers. The man inside the mask moved at variable speeds, sometimes jumping and running or tilting side to side. It brought to life the spirit of Ndâkô Ghoya (the grandfather or ancestor Ghoya); a god. Once inside the mask, the dancer is inseparable from the thing it represents. The mask, of course, is nothing more than a piece of cloth that the people themselves cut and make, but once its life is fostered by a man, it no longer remains*

<sup>27</sup> DAVID FREEDBERG. El poder de las imágenes, 2011: 448.

<sup>28</sup> PETE WARD. Gods Behaving Badly, 2011: 29 and 67.

*as a simple material object and becomes the symbolized thing. What happens in this West Africa case is the same as in Byzantium; the image, once prepared, assembled, decorated and properly attired becomes the locus of spirit, what is thought it represents.*<sup>29</sup> So, this is an amazing way to explain how the celebrity himself/herself, as the image of the represented through the worshippers' mind and spirituality, can be as powerful for the individuals of nowadays west society as much as the mask was for the Nigerians ones.

In the past, the sacred images were the ones which constituted the axis of common people religiosity. *People do not decorate, wash or crown images or sacred objects only by force of habit, but because all these events are symptoms of a relationship between image and viewer clearly based on the allocation of powers that transcend the purely material aspect of the object. The intimacy of close relationships between celebrity or sacred image/object and worshipers were treated in the foreground with unparalleled sensitivity regarding behavioral symptoms of perception. A wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural profane world. You can only understand God's creation by the resemblance with the creative activities of any person, in this case celebrity culture, to create simply a self-image that reflects a set of individual and representative synthesis. Thus, the criterion of the divinity order concept wide to establish unambiguously the equality of celebrity culture and the expressive divine ontology of all the real images.*<sup>30</sup> In this parameters, then, the images foundation is the metaphor of all those human nature divine aspects.

So, to sum all this ideas in one writing, it can be asserted that in a contemporary society characterized by affluence, individualism, achievement and capitalist values, there exist some components about the worshipper which help the celebrity worship phenomena become what it truly is, a sort of religion for the believers.

So, the para-social relationships that constitute such phenomena is based on four established concepts. First's consumption socialization: *celebrities always act like role models of desires values and modes of conduct. Everything in life, from bottom to top, influences worshipper's likelihood which is engaged in the celebrity worship conception.*<sup>31</sup> Then we carry religiosity, where worshippers imbue celebrities with god-like powers, regard the celebrity as everything, and seek to serve and/or suffer for them. Thus, makes fan treat celebrity objects/images as sacred, and here's where the mythologies appear. All this entertainment worlds, such as the cinema, sports or music sphere, are often liked because of their positive mood altering capacity. They can lift one's spirits and lighten emotional flatness. If this, or other social areas can make us feel better, then this should also reflect positively on our evaluation of the celebrity which is linked. Third is the celebrity needs. *A celebrity needs for adoration to fuel the worship. The celebrity-fan relationship takes on symbiotic character where both participants develop a strong need for each other. Each of become prisoners of their expectation for each other.*<sup>31</sup> And last, but certainly not least, the self-concept and identification. *Fans tend to be attracted to celebrities endowed with characteristics that they desire for themselves. Other self-concept explanations focus on an individual's tendency to fantasize. People are more likely to seek escape or refuge through fantasy if they lack control in core aspects of their lives or who are materially disempowered. Celebrity adoration is accompanied by poor psychological well-being resulting from failed attempts to cope with daily life, which kind of builds a utopian refuge that may contribute in portraying a better, brighter, fairer world. For all that, some researchers add to this section the fact of fans having a kind of easy-psychopathology, where the ones who have higher cognitive functioning people are better able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, hence are less likely to be absorbed in the fantasy of a celebrity;*<sup>31</sup> but, where's the problem in living naturally between two worlds? Other researchers argue that much of the negative stereotyping of celebrity worshippers is

<sup>29</sup> DAVID FREEDBERG. El poder de las imágenes, 2011: 48-49-50-51.

<sup>30</sup> DAVID FREEDBERG. El poder de las imágenes, 2011: 199 and 117.

<sup>31</sup> MARYLOUISE CALDWELL AND PAUL HENRY. Celebrity Worship, Micro-Communities and Consumer Well-Being: 3-4-5.

a product of the middle class where their derision of fans is a defense mechanism to normalize themselves, the non-fans. *So, irrefutably celebrity culture generates a discourse that takes us into the interplay between identity, individuality, value and norms within cultures. Celebrities are meaningful because it is through their representations that individuals in the wider society find cues for how to shape their own sense of self.*<sup>32</sup>

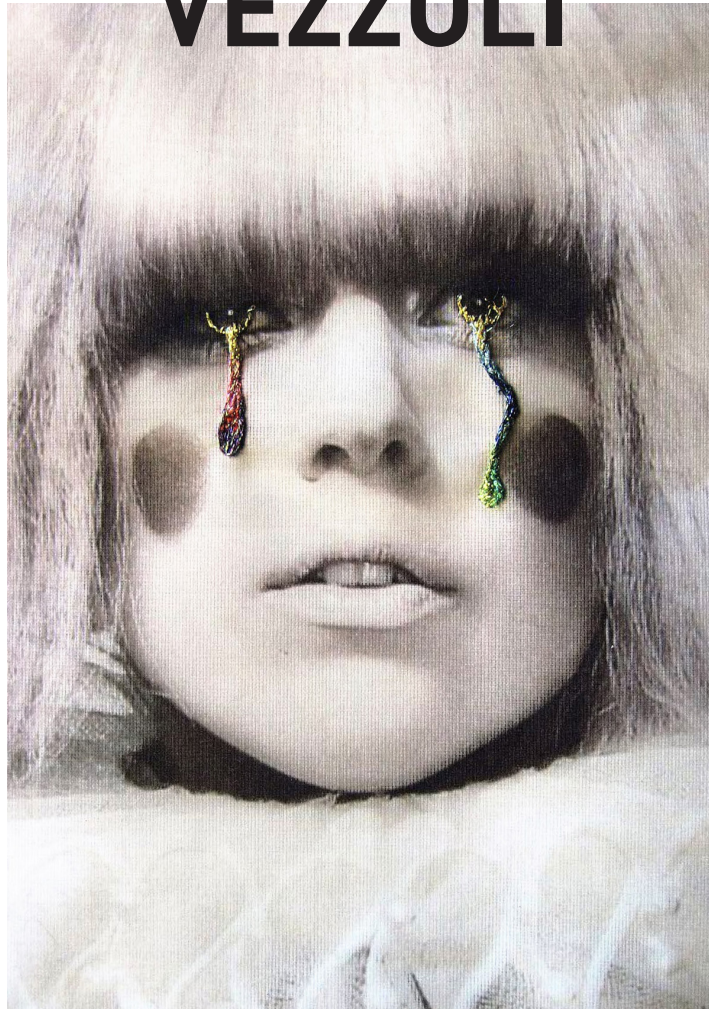
This may be how to do our own hair. And this actually goes with sense of Lady Gaga's Hair song lyrics, which talk about the own identification: changing as needed as *"I just wanna be myself and I want you to know, I am as free as my hair"*.<sup>33</sup> Celebrities perform individuality in their various guises, grant healthiness to the worshippers, and express hyper-versions of possible transformation that anyone in 21st century culture could achieve.

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<sup>32</sup>PETE WARD. *Gods Behaving Badly*, 2011: 51-52.

<sup>33</sup>LADY GAGA. *Hair* (Born This Way), 2011.

# FRANCESCO VEZZOLI



*Francesco Vezzoli's "Lady Gaga as Pierrot with Rainbow Tears" (2009)*

*laser print on canvas with metallic embroidery, 15 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches (40 x 29 cm)*

## REFERENT'S ANALYSIS

### FRANCESCO VEZZOLI

Under keywords such as “contemporary conceptualism”, “mixed-media”, “provocative consumerism”, or “glamour fashionable figurative art”, Francesco Vezzoli’s work explores the huge power which contemporary popular culture owns today. Overcoming ‘60s Povera Art and ‘80s Transvanguardia (both Italian avant-garde artistic movements), contemporary Italian artists have found ways to reference the past with nostalgia while also looking forward in an attempt to explore subtle new landscapes. By closely emulating formats of various media, such as advertising, film, sculpture or painting, Vezzoli addresses ongoing preoccupations with the fundamental ambiguity of truth, the seductive power of language, and the instability of the human self. Once studying in Central Saint Martins, Vezzoli’s most recognized and applauded by the crowd discipline is the needlepoint/embroidery, a distinctly outdated artistic medium at the time, which he used as a reaction against the London art scene of the mid-1990s that contextualized his education. His embroidery projects focus on pop culture and his love for filmography and the mass communication media. In his needlepoint works he includes altering portraits of well-known celebrities; be it movie stars, singers and entertainers, or even fashion sphere’s characters. Vezzoli is considered an investigator of nowadays pop culture myths, reminiscent of his influencer Andy Warhol. And if we take etymology’s word meaning, where the myth’s a type of speech, we get quite a clear comprehension of what the contemporary myths are. Speeches of this kind are messages, but they aren’t therefore confined to oral speeches. It can consists in models of writing or representations; photography, cinema, reporting, sports, shows, publicity; just to name a few. *Every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things. A tree is a tree. Yes, of course. But a tree as expressed by Minou Drouet is no longer quite a tree, it is a tree which is de-*

*corated, adapted to a certain type of consumption, laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short with a type of social usage which is added to pure matter.*<sup>34</sup>

The innovation came in 1999 where Francesco began to create his signature canvases with laser-printed images of iconic actresses, models, and singers, onto which the artist embroidered metallic threads to form tears or blood, in the pursuit of incorporating the Renaissance and Christianity into his contemporary celebrity works. With this, his major focus' ever been creating both real and imaginary productions and blurring at each embroidery work he does the earthly and divine sceneries, crossing boundaries into the understanding of both the sacred and the profane worlds. Through his embroidery, film, and performance over the years, Vezzoli engaged with the cult of fame through figures like Marisa Berenson, the model Veruschka, or Bianca Jagger, incorporating references from the artistic intelligentsia and popular culture to outright the bizarre. Needlepoint has remained as his signature technique from the outset of his career, becoming a more profound and contemplative activity which he referred to as a world of feelings, crises, obsessions and depressions historically unified with the craft, the artisanal and the handmade techniques.

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<sup>34</sup>ROLAND BARTHES. Mythologies, 1991: 107-109.



## CONCLUSIONS

At this point, I think we all agree that stardom is not a purely mercantile phenomenon imposed from above by the production media, rather, celebrity culture like other “entertaining pursuits” of the twenty-first century, cannot be carelessly dismissed as only an expression of secular culture, but a movement of real people who make affective investments in particular media figures. We take celebrities up ritually as heroes, leaders, scapegoats or magical figures, and this constitutes a change in the way cultural meanings are generated as the celebrity becomes a key site of attention and personal aspiration, as well as one of the key places where cultural meanings are negotiated and organized. Celebrities represent subject positions that audiences can adopt or adapt in their formation of social identities. Each celebrity represents a complex form of audience-subjectivity that, when placed within a system of celebrities, provides us the ground in which distinctions, differences, and oppositions are played out. The celebrity, then, is an embodiment of a discursive battleground on the norms of individuality and personality within a random culture. That’s why celebrities matter not because of who they are or what the industry wants of them, but because of what they indeed represent. In this way, I feel I should rescue the thesis’ first hypothesis in order to observe if I was right with the assertion: there is a correlation between religion cult and celebrity worship that is reflected in the construction of individual identities in the twenty-first century culture. So, I believe there’s no doubt that the whole celebrity culture should be understood as containing sacred potential to become something much more religiously valuable in the hearts and minds of modern men and women, creating meaningful moral systems and new forms of religious individual communities. Since the contemporary weakening of faith, as a consequence of the death of conventional religion perception, the articulation of religious analogies in celebrity culture generates new and unexpected theological meaning, which work under a tangibility

statement. At its heart, celebrity culture facilitates the negotiation of the self through processes of representation, identification, and disidentification. For instance, people give meaning to images, objects and events, and over time things in themselves rarely ever have a single, fixed and unchanging meaning; so how identity is formed in relation to representation in popular culture is complicated and multilayered. It is a negotiation between subjectivity (or our sense of self) and the own representation in pop culture. Thus, all the meaning generations plus the self-identity concept, drifts into mythic elements correlated to celebrity culture. The sacred, mixed in with a good dose of the profane, is taken up in this contested sphere. What is being debated is the kind of life we should live and how we should live it, since the traditional religious question “How can I be saved?” feels reductive and no-longer relevant, as the changing nature of religion reached a new goal question; “How can I feel good about myself?”. It is the intersection of style, ethics and discipleship which drives us to be asked to choose our gods and entices us to sit in judgment upon them. Our confusion over the choice of celebrity gods extends to what we expect of the sacred, so choice leaves us as an autonomous arbitrator between religious and non-religious sources as they are diffused in culture, so we no longer feel constrained by the boundaries of tradition.

The celebrity fact generates para-social interactions that operate as a means of compensating for changes in the social construction. These are instances where worshippers respond to what we think of as real emotional attachments with figures only knew through their representations in the media, so the investment with phantasmal projections of need-fulfillment becomes real.

In order to make from this work a self-help exploration I decided to show my universe to the universe, and to spread an hyper-conscious reality of my soul state so that a strength solid castle can be built around and from the insides of me and take myself to the dearest human dimension: self-confidence. At some point people, just as me, worship celebrities so that we can avoid acknowledging the actual human beings in our

midst, in an attempt to ease our inferiority feelings. It does represent a battleground where our lack of trust, the crave to love and to be loved, and the aim for transcendence try to push the limits and fight for, at least, a clear-cut personal future. Celebrities are our own deities in the extent that they carry the projected identifications of what we would like to be. In nowadays culture, I can't imagine other way of belief that a tangible form of spirituality. We're such a corrupted society that the sole escape relies in the existence of this paradoxical dualism: the world as lived and the world as imagined fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turning out to be the same world. "I live between reality and fantasy. We need fantasy to survive because reality is too difficult", said once my bizarre life mentor Lady Gaga. So, this kind of dualism is what has been firstly remarked in my project: two different poles (pop culture and religion, structured and soft; meaning both the balance of reality and fantasy's fluidity) intersected by its electric while eclectic magnetism into a one unique conception. This is what actually the para-social relationship is all about, right? The flow of two subjects who encounter in a real-ideal dyad. So, fabrics such as tulles or chiffons will be used in juxtaposition to strong wools, space-covering velvets and even upholstery suedes. Also, a way of materialize this middle-overall dimensions idea's been by showing all those fashion processes elements which are fully necessarily in the construction of a garment but that usually are ripped off at last minute from the final product; so that with my action them not just get evident, but shift into the principles. How better to express the state of my mind through fashion? For instance, talks about the illusion of intimacy that might connect the Princess Diana or Michael Jackson's death (for example) with the empathic fanatic eye, suggests that the relationship constructed with the believed resides only in the minds of the beholders, so I trust in the idea of showing it off.

Now we know that celebrities perform individuality in their various guises, grant healthiness to the worshippers, and express hyper-versions of possible transforma-

tion that anyone in 21st century culture could achieve. So, irrefutably their worship generates a discourse that takes us into the interplay between identity, individuality, value and norms within cultures. Celebrities are meaningful because it is through their representations that individuals find cues for how to shape the own sense of self. It doesn't shame me to admit that I'm stuck in a personal place where I know, or at least I have endeavored to through years, my identity and my position in world's existence. Each day that passes I discover new insecurities that I've never experienced before, and as much frightening it is, the more I learn that it's necessarily to believe in yourself to the point of delusion; so right now I am as insecure as confident. As I said, I do need to show my insecurities and fears to the world, and I materialized it by taking out all those "ugly" while necessary apparel constructions (different from its process, already appointed); hidden seams, sheathings and waddings, and even revealing the insider pieces required like interlinings or "plastrons".

Sounds interesting that instead of being replaced, the religious nowadays is floating and has actually been relocated. Sounds actually interesting too the idea of changing clothing's' nature structure within fragmentation, prolongation, implosion and blurring techniques as much as worshippers' reality can be divided and re-configured as their own pleasure. How identity is formed in relation to representation in popular culture is complicated and multilayered, and layering is what the project's been about. The pictographic language discourse Francesco Vezzoli created displays a work between layers, where none of them opaque at all, and the reality (indeed the image or the artwork) is constructed by what's understood in the reading of the total multi-layering superposition. So, with this said, I played around overlaying tulle layers and creating an image of it (faces), which with the help of embroidery threads and embellishment pieces I transforms an ideal imaginary into a real one.

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