

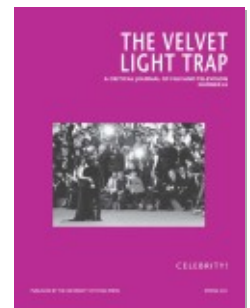


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Death on Display: Reifying Stardom through Hollywood's Dark Tourism

Linda Levitt

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Death on Display: Reifying Stardom through Hollywood's Dark Tourism

On his 2001 book *Hollywood Remains to Be Seen: A Guide to the Movie Stars' Final Homes* travel writer Mark Masek reports that 350 visitors pay their respects at Marilyn Monroe's grave each day (187). This is noteworthy not only because Monroe died in 1962—before many visitors were born—but also because the tiny cemetery in which she is interred, Pierce Brothers Westwood Village Memorial Park, is tucked behind high-rise office buildings next to a multiplex theater off busy Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. One must set out to locate Westwood; visiting the cemetery is a deliberate act, and for many it is a pilgrimage. Monroe is one of a handful of iconic stars who, long after their deaths, continue to gain new fans and remain powerful cultural commodities. Her image adorns posters, T-shirts, magnets, coffee mugs, shot glasses, and scores of items sold in gift shops lining Hollywood Boulevard. Pierce Brothers Westwood welcomes those who wish to pay their respects to the celebrities buried there, and the cemetery is one of the stops on tour guide Brian Sapir's Haunted Hollywood tour. Sapir brings his clients to the cemetery because it is reputedly haunted, yet it is also a star-studded landscape where visitors can reminisce about film and television stars they admire, standing just a mere six feet from their mortal remains.

Sapir is among a handful of tour guides participating in the commodification of death sites and burial sites of the famous in Los Angeles for the sake of entertainment, education, and profit. In their seminal 2000 text *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* John Lennon and Malcolm Foley exclude cemetery tourism from the growing trend of turning sites of death and disaster into tourist destinations. Lennon and Foley define dark tourism as a postmodern phenomenon in which sites of catastrophe become commodities of spectacle, in part as a mirror of our mediated experience of disaster. Categorizing the

touristic visit to the cemetery as a pilgrimage, they remark on a perceived difference between cemeteries and sites of dark tourism, arguing that “gravity and reverence are not always characteristic of death sites/grave sites” (77). More recent work by tourism scholar Philip Stone describes a spectrum of dark tourism sites that does not limit the field to those associated with traumatic loss and devastation. Stone positions “dark resting places”—cemeteries used to promote historic tourism—and “dark shrines”—temporary sites constructed at or near the location of a tragic death—toward the “darker” end of his spectrum. Dark tourism in Hollywood mingles these two categories by including both cemeteries and death sites among its destinations.

Hollywood's dark tourism depends on a traditional view of stardom. The collapse of the star system, coupled with the more recent proliferation of celebrity tabloid journalism in print, on television, and online, altered the cultural production of celebrity. Where stars were once admired foremost for their talent or beauty, today celebrity is situated in a different set of attributes because of unprecedented access to still images and video of celebrities. In the early days of Hollywood the studios controlled the public image of their stars. Now the entertainment news industry is devoted to constructing the image of stars and celebrities, often intending to present an image of the famous as “ordinary” people who walk their dogs, get coffee at Starbucks, and watch their children play in the park, just like you and I do.

Among others working in media studies, Joshua Gamson asks, “Is it possible to bypass work, action, achievement, and talent and head straight for notoriety? Is celebrity a commodity that can be manufactured through publicity, not by building an audience but by building the perception that one already exists?” (3–4). Gamson raises his questions with regard to Angelyne, the Hollywood celebrity

who is known for the billboards displaying her enticing, sexually charged image across Los Angeles. Her fame is derived from these billboards; prior to this self-promotion, Angelyne had no public image. As Daniel Boorstin defined celebrity, Angelyne is purely “a person who is known for [her] well-knownness” (57). Boorstin’s critique of celebrity evacuates the category of any talent, skill, or creative work. Arguing against Boorstin’s definition, Neal Gabler declares that “[u]nless you use the term to define itself—that is, a celebrity is by definition someone who is famous for not having accomplished anything of value—most of the people we call celebrities have accomplished something, and many of them have accomplished a great deal. . . . They are undeniably celebrities, but they are also, at the very least, remarkable entertainers” (3). Building on Gabler’s argument, I would make a distinction between stardom and celebrity in which stardom is rooted in the fame associated with one’s cultural production and celebrity is rooted in publicity. It is possible to be both a star and a celebrity. Tom Cruise, for example, is a star respected for his roles in films, including *Risky Business*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *Top Gun*, yet he is also a tabloid celebrity, as well known for his marriages to Nicole Kidman and Katie Holmes and his enthusiasm for Scientology as he is for his acting. In a media environment saturated with a constant stream of celebrity images and narratives, Hollywood’s dark tourism reifies and revalues stardom and a time, as the cliché goes, “when stars were stars.” When the public had limited access to a small number of famous individuals who were revered, audiences anticipated the opportunity to see those stars on television. In “Walking the Red Carpet: When Stars Were Stars” media critic Tom Watson, for example, describes watching the Academy Awards in the 1960s, “an age where there was a real remove between celebrity and the general public; there was true distance between our living room floor and the black and white images on the television. The walk of fame was an island in a far-away land and we glimpsed it through a gauzy lens from the vantage-point of our common lives” (par. 2). The relationship to stardom about which Watson reminisces stands in contrast to the current media landscape, which is flooded with information about those who might be considered famous.

With this constant flow of information and images, celebrities become part of the public’s everyday lives. Even lacking a parasocial relationship, television viewers and supermarket shoppers can easily feel a comfortable familiarity with celebrities who appear frequently in the media. As

such, the death of a celebrity is newsworthy, often eliciting a sense of loss among audience members. While entertainment news programs broadcast career retrospectives, fans leave flowers and remembrances at death sites. The heaping collections of flowers left near the Alma Tunnel in Paris and at Kensington Gardens were included in news coverage of Diana Spencer’s death, as were, more recently, the remembrances left at the door of Heath Ledger’s apartment building after his death in 2008. Fans establish memorial Web sites, allowing not only the site designer but also visitors to the site to participate in public commemoration. When a celebrity dies, news reports are not merely about the celebrity but also about what that person represents culturally and how audiences made meaning of his or her career. If, as Joseph Roach argues, dying can be thought of as a liminal space between life and death, then in celebrity culture there is another liminality between death and burial, an in-between time during which the public may take stock of an individual’s cultural contributions to consider his or her place in cultural memory. When death occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, the public experiences a heightened sense of loss, as in the deaths of Diana Spencer, John Lennon, and James Dean, among others.

In her work on how journalists eulogize celebrities, media scholar Carolyn Kitch shows how the media participate in the process of commemoration and identity work that goes on among audience members in the aftermath of a celebrity’s death. The nation—invoked by journalists using “we” in their reporting—reassesses itself by examining how and why we value certain celebrities as reflections of our aspirations, our sensibilities, and our selves. “If celebrity is a cultural space in which Americans negotiate their values and identities, then a celebrity’s death is a moment for public discussion of these qualities,” Kitch writes. “It is also an occasion for the celebrity’s media image once more to be recast, so that his or her ‘final’ cultural meaning is magnified” (176). This “final cultural meaning” readily carries over to the rhetoric of Hollywood tourism, where some celebrities and stars are remembered for their cultural achievements, others are best remembered for their tragic deaths, and still others leave their cultural mark for scandals during their lives.

Hollywood’s Dark Tourism

Tourists travel for the pleasures of leisure and experience, and tourist attractions are organized to provide visitors

with a sense of an “authentic” experience. Sociologist Dean MacCannell argues that through the act of sightseeing, tourists themselves impart a sense of authenticity to a particular attraction; if visitors flock to see a place, it must be of cultural value. MacCannell notes that “the rhetoric of tourism is full of manifestations of the importance of the authenticity of the relationship between tourists and what they see: this is a *typical* native house; this is the *very* place the leader fell; this is the *actual* pen used to sign the law; this is the *original* manuscript” (14, emphasis original).

Hollywood tourists—specific among visitors to Los Angeles who have an interest in the entertainment industry—seek an authentic experience of celebrity. For many, the pinnacle of a visit to Los Angeles would be the celebrity sighting, creating an additional level of attraction for places like Canter’s Deli or Pink’s hot dog stand, which are known to be frequented by the famous. Studio tours offer a behind-the-scenes pleasure of authenticity for film and television fans, along with the potential for spotting a celebrity on the grounds. A more historical experience is available to tourists visiting Hollywood Boulevard, where an enormous infusion of money and interest during the last decade led to renovation and repair of theaters and attractions. Central to the Hollywood Boulevard visit is a stop at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre, where tourists can get as close as possible to the physical presence of the famous by literally standing in their footsteps. The quintessential Hollywood celebrity tourist attraction, however, may be the Starline Tours movie star homes tour. Since 1935, Starline’s tour buses have carried tourists past the mansions of film and television stars in Bel Air and Beverly Hills and throughout Los Angeles. Tourists may be motivated to take a Starline tour for the opportunity to imagine the everyday personal lives of celebrities or for the hope of seeing a celebrity at home, however unlikely such an occurrence may be. Starline clients can take home the stories and photographs of what they have witnessed as typical Hollywood tourists.

Parodying the well-known Starline name, former mortician Greg Smith started Grave Line Tours in 1987. Those with an interest in the macabre could visit sites of tragedy and scandal, traveling in Smith’s hearse. On the original Grave Line tour visitors passed the locations where Janis Joplin, Bela Lugosi, and Peter Lorre died, among others. Some of these sites are included on the Dearly Departed tour, operated by Scott Michaels, a former guide for the now-defunct Grave Line Tours. Michaels drives his clients

around the city in a van he calls the “tomb buggy,” sharing stories of both the scandalous and the mundane. Michaels engages the historical narratives of Hollywood characters and their scandals. On his Web site findadeath.com he writes about and provides supplemental documents, including death certificates and photographs related to the deaths of more than three hundred entertainment industry figures. The profiles and the tour are often colored by Michaels’s opinions and his personal experiences.

Visitors can see some of the same sites on the Haunted Hollywood tour, formerly operated under the Starline Tours umbrella. Ghost tours—whether in haunted theaters, hotels, houses, or cemeteries—are increasingly popular across the United States and particularly in locations like Key West, Savannah, and New Orleans that market themselves as heritage tourism sites. Heritage tourism organizes and commodifies the past in powerful ways: the sites that are selected for inclusion in a tour become part of the narrative that is history. A selected interpretation of the past is reified through heritage tourism and ghost tours as the discourse of tour guides, carried out into circulation by tourists, is socially constructed as history. Those sites are photographed and talked about by tourists in recounting their vacations, while other locations, not included on the tour, are more likely to be forgotten. Brian Sapir’s Haunted Hollywood tour exemplifies the selective and interpretive nature of history as it is shaped by tourism practices. Sapir takes a lighthearted approach to his tour, infusing jokes into his spiel and relating some of the scandalous stories told by Kenneth Anger in *Hollywood Babylon: The Legendary Underground Classic of Hollywood’s Darkest and Best Kept Secrets*. Sapir takes his clients on a drive past sites throughout the greater Los Angeles area that are reported to be haunted, including the Comedy Store, where the ghost of Sam Kinison is said to linger, and the Landmark Hotel, where Janis Joplin overdosed. Whether or not Sapir believes in the supernatural, his exuberant delivery sometimes pokes fun at the possibility of ghosts, accommodating both the believers and the skeptics who might be on board.

Haunted Hollywood tour guide Aaron Rosenberg says that out of respect for both Pierce Brothers Westwood and Hollywood Forever Cemetery he won’t drive the tour vehicle, a 1961 Cadillac limousine, onto the cemetery grounds when there are signs affixed to the car indicating its affiliation with a tour company. As he takes his clients around Los Angeles, Rosenberg says, “a lot of the people in the houses that I go up to—Rudolph Valentino, Jayne

Mansfield, Marion Davies—they're all here [at Hollywood Forever]. Needless to say, I talk about the cemetery every day, five times a day, on the tour." Of the celebrity cemeteries in Los Angeles, Hollywood Forever and Westwood are the most welcoming to tourists, and Hollywood Forever offers a walking tour of the grounds led by film enthusiast Karie Bible. Among the most visited grave sites in Los Angeles are those of iconic stars Rudolph Valentino and Marilyn Monroe, interred at Hollywood Forever and Westwood, respectively.

Icons of Hollywood and Dark Tourism

Richard Dyer posited in *Stars* that "stars as images are constructed in all kinds of media texts other than films, but nonetheless, films remain . . . privileged instances of the star's image" (99). As cinema-going audiences decline and the ubiquity of the celebrity image is spread across broadcast and cable networks, the Internet, and entertainment tabloids and magazines, film can no longer be seen as the principal site for audiences to develop a constructed idea of a particular celebrity. The steady stream of images and narratives enables countless possibilities for celebrity, regardless of how fleeting that fame might be. As Leo Braudy notes, "as each new medium of fame appears, the human image it conveys is intensified and the number of individuals celebrated expands" (4). Yet new outlets for celebrity also facilitate a broader opening to revisit stars whose presence has persisted for decades; stars like Marilyn Monroe become part of the fabric of Hollywood history and culture beyond the entertainment industry. Dyer reconsiders his position regarding Monroe in *Heavenly Bodies*, acknowledging that many who are familiar with her photographic image and with the story of her life and death may not have even seen any of her films. "Monroe may now have become before everything else an emblematic figure, her symbolic meaning far outrunning what actually happens in her films," Dyer argues (3). Her iconic status supersedes both stardom and celebrity. While Dyer's impulse is to look at Monroe "in the flux of ideas about morality and sexuality that characterized the fifties in America" (*Stars* 36), her image is also repurposed to serve various ends. Monroe's narrative—abandoned by her parents, her difficult marriages, her shocking death—is used to represent the tragedy of stardom. As an icon, Monroe is a star whom many, most recently Paris Hilton, aspire to emulate. Beyond the 1950s, Monroe has come

to represent a sexuality rooted in freedom and liberation rather than promiscuity and the male gaze. In these ways she becomes a simulacrum, as her personality recedes behind representation.

Sapir uses Marilyn Monroe to frame his Haunted Hollywood tour. Pulling away from Grauman's Chinese Theatre, where the tour begins, he points out the Roosevelt Hotel, promising that the tour will culminate there with a search for Monroe's ghost. This tantalizing forecast assumes that those on the tour are familiar with Monroe and will anticipate the opportunity to encounter her ghost. The mirror that once hung in the suite Monroe stayed in at the Roosevelt is now set outside the hotel's gift shop, and there are reports of visitors catching a glimpse of a blonde woman resembling Monroe reflected in the mirror. This would be the celebrity sighting par excellence for a haunted tour. Sapir reports that the spirits of both Monroe and Montgomery Clift have been seen at the Roosevelt Hotel. These hauntings are featured on paranormal programming on the Travel Channel in addition to various Web sites focused on the lighter side of dark tourism. Unlike many hotels that leverage their haunted history to attract guests and visitors, the Roosevelt denies that the ghosts of former guests linger in its rooms and hallways (Pramis par. 5). The high-end hotel instead draws on its rich history as the "playground of luminaries" and the site of the first Academy Awards ceremony ("Roosevelt Hotel"). Yet the television crews and Haunted Hollywood tours are not unwelcome.

In August 2007 msnbc.com columnist Gael Fashingbauer Cooper published an article about her visit to Westwood Memorial Park. Based on the notoriety of fans paying tribute to Jim Morrison at Père Lachaise, Cooper was "braced for a zoo-like atmosphere" around Marilyn Monroe's grave. Instead, she remarks, Monroe's crypt was "as elegant and lovely as Marilyn on her best day" (par. 4). The many comments from readers were overwhelmingly positive, with the exception of one reader, "Robin from Los Angeles," who wrote that "Westwood Memorial Park is NOT A TOURIST ATTRACTION!" (emphasis original). She added that "there is nothing more disgusting than a bunch of grave diggers like you and your sick flock haunting and disrespecting me and other families while visiting there [*sic*] loved ones" (par. 21). Many readers added comments to this post, often offering their own experiences to discourage a negative perspective on cemetery tourism. "Mark from Los Angeles," whose grandparents

are buried at Westwood, says, “I personally don’t have a problem at all with folks coming to visit Marilyn and the other celebs. It is a very nice cemetery and the staff are very courteous, and I have always found people to be quite respectful in my visits there” (par. 46). A former Los Angeles resident writes, “I have been there w/my Mom & others & my Mom cried at several of the sites, recalling memories of this star or that and, for some, mourning the way in which they had passed and how young. Everyone else I saw there was very respectful & not treating it as a ‘tourist attraction’” (par. 29).

For many dark tourists, the visit to the cemetery or death site is approached with reverence and grief. Although relationships with stars are typically parasocial and lack the same gravity as interpersonal relationships with friends and family members, visitors still experience a sense of loss. As the respondent to Cooper’s column notes, fans grieve the end of a star’s life and often the tragic circumstances surrounding the star’s death. A few steps from Marilyn Monroe’s grave, visitors to Westwood can pay their respects to Dominique Dunne, the *Poltergeist* star who was strangled by her former boyfriend shortly before her twenty-third birthday, as well as Dunne’s costar Heather O’Rourke, who died at the age of twelve. Nearby is *Playboy* playmate Dorothy Stratten, who was killed by her jealous husband. All three of these young women are remembered as much for their deaths as for their lives. Whether or not they are stars is subject to debate, particularly when stardom is determined in the assessment of Kitch’s “final cultural meaning.” Natalie Wood, who is also interred at Westwood, is remembered for her tragic death—an accidental drowning at the age of forty-three—yet unlike Dunne, O’Rourke, and Stratten, Wood’s career was long and significant enough to have achieved stardom. Yet Wood also demonstrates that stardom is not fixed in time: her roles in *West Side Story* and *Splendor in the Grass* made her a star, but her lack of noteworthy film and television appearances during the 1970s diminished her stardom. Playing the role of Judy in 1955’s *Rebel Without a Cause* secured Wood a lasting fame, if not for her performance, then for the cultural impact of the film itself. For contemporary audiences, *Rebel Without a Cause* is considered an iconic film not only for its landmark portrayal of troubled teenagers but also because of the early, tragic deaths of Wood, James Dean, and Sal Mineo.

Rebel Without a Cause provides a reference point for life in the mid-1950s as the era was depicted in the film. To recall a film or song from one’s childhood or any other

particular time in our lives is to recall ourselves—who we were, what we knew and believed, our worldview in that moment. Standing at the grave of Carroll O’Connor, for example, a visitor may recall her own life in the 1970s, watching *All in the Family* and the generational confrontations played out in the series. Other luminaries buried at Westwood and at Hollywood Forever have careers that outlived them; as stars of classic films, they are routinely resurrected on cable networks like American Movie Classics and Turner Classic Movies. These networks serve as important repositories of cultural memory, and the films that are aired provide certain stars with more opportunities to be remembered than are afforded others. Turner Classic Movies frequently airs a marathon of Rudolph Valentino films to mark the anniversary of his birth, providing his fans with a means of mediated celebration.

Valentino is Hollywood Forever’s great iconic star, and hundreds of fans travel from across the nation for his annual memorial service at the cemetery. As examples of iconic stardom, Valentino and Monroe show the differences between the eras in which each rose to stardom. Although there were celebrity magazines in Valentino’s lifetime, photographs were not nearly as prevalent in print media in the early years of the twentieth century. There were simply not as many photographs of Valentino in circulation as there were—and are—of Monroe. The July 1922 cover of *Photoplay* magazine features an artist’s portrait of Valentino costumed as Ramon Laredo in *Moran of the Lady Letty* rather than a photograph of the star. *Photoplay* began using photographs for its cover portraits in 1937, more than a decade after Valentino’s death. In addition, the phenomenal growth of television during the 1950s enabled audiences to build relationships with stars like Marilyn Monroe that were not possible when access beyond film roles was limited to still images. As film quality and technology advanced over the decades, the silent films that made Valentino a star began to appear antiquated and somewhat quaint, rendering him more of a historical figure in film history and denying him the relevance Monroe still has.

Yet film critic Mike Szymanski notes that “when Rudolph Valentino died, he was the most famous person on the planet. He’d be like Michael Jordan or someone like that. And the fact that his death was so public, more than anything. It was a big deal to have these public personas and these public ceremonies. People want to be remembered, I think, in grandiose ways.” Valentino was cinema’s first sex

symbol and one of the first celebrities to gain significant media attention following his unexpected death. He died in 1926 at the age of thirty-one due to complications from surgery for appendicitis and gastric ulcers. The *New York Times* reported, "When the end came, the street in front of the Polyclinic Hospital was blocked by thousands of the actor's admirers and the curious, awaiting the latest bulletins from his bedside" ("Valentino Passes" par. 2). More than 100,000 people lined up at Campbell's Funeral Home in New York City to view Valentino in repose. Thousands more lined the streets of Los Angeles to watch the funeral procession as Valentino's body was transported from the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills to Hollywood Memorial Park, which is now Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

The events surrounding Valentino's death and its aftermath are significant cultural markers of the phenomenon of stardom. Dying suddenly at the height of his fame allows Valentino to be immortalized in youth, as were Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and Jim Morrison in later generations. I would argue, however, that one must already have achieved a certain level of fame in order for an untimely death to heighten one's stardom. Former child actor Brad Renfro died of a heroin overdose the week before Heath Ledger's death. The public response to Renfro's death was comparatively insignificant, lacking the outpouring of tributes by both media and fans seen in response to Ledger's death. Few fans were in attendance at the memorial service honoring Renfro on the first anniversary of his death. The *Knoxville News Sentinel* reports that the gathering was comprised mostly of family and friends and includes a quote from one fan who drove more than two hundred miles to "show support to his family" (Bledsoe par. 9).

Conversely, hundreds of fans gather at Hollywood Forever to pay tribute to Valentino more than eighty years after his death. The Valentino memorial service is the longest-running annual event in Los Angeles, other than the Easter Sunrise Service at the Hollywood Bowl, which began in 1921. With this rich past the memorial becomes more than a remembrance of a particular film star. It is transformed into a cultural event, specifically a Hollywood event, celebrating not just Valentino's life and career but also its own history. Part of the memorial service's history is the appearance of the Lady in Black, who laid flowers at Valentino's grave on the anniversary of his death and hid her identity by wearing a black veil over her face. Over

the decades various women came forward claiming to be the Lady in Black, and the controversy surrounding her identity drew media and public interest. Today, the role of the Lady in Black is an honorary one played by Karie Bible, the guide for Hollywood Forever's walking tour. A stop at Valentino's crypt in the Cathedral Mausoleum is part of Bible's tour, where she tells visitors about his career, his marriage, his allure, and his death. Many tourists visiting Hollywood Forever hear Valentino's story for the first time on Bible's tour.

Yet for those who are devoted Valentino fans, Hollywood Forever transformed the actor's legacy into a commodity: although all of the crypts in the Cathedral Mausoleum are occupied, Valentino fans now have the opportunity to be interred near their idol. At the 1999 memorial service, the cemetery announced the impending construction of the Valentino Shrine, a wall of cremation niches added at the end of the corridor in which the silent film star is interred. The cemetery is capitalizing on Valentino fandom while also offering its customers something desirable and, notably, eternal. Hollywood Forever can easily leverage the Valentino name, where the names and images of scores of other stars are protected long after their deaths. CMG Worldwide represents and controls the interests of dozens of stars, including Marilyn Monroe; Tyrone Power, who is interred at Hollywood Forever; and Jayne Mansfield, whose fans dedicated a cenotaph at Hollywood Forever as a place to remember her. The images of these stars are valuable intellectual property. Media, tourism, and organizations like CMG Worldwide participate in the commodification of dead stars and celebrities, demonstrating that stardom is largely produced discursively, whether a star is dead or alive.

Stars and Their Narratives

Reassessing the meaning of celebrity in his 2001 article "Toward a New Definition of Celebrity," Neal Gabler argues that narrative is the attribute that turns a famous person into a celebrity, that audiences find celebrity culture appealing because "we are interested in their stories" (4). He goes on to assert that because the narrative of a dead celebrity has a terminus, it can no longer engage audiences in the same manner:

[O]ne could make a powerful case that celebrity also requires a corporeal protagonist who can continue to provide a dynamic plot and who has not just left behind a narrative to be amended

and reworked by others like some ancient text. Dead celebrities are just that: Their stories are entombed. Since celebrity is a kind of performance art, if audiences don't feel there is a live personality starring in the narrative, if they don't feel that the narrative can take new and surprising turns, if they don't feel that they could actually meet the protagonist, there is some essential frisson missing. Celebrity seems to depend to some degree on the idea of tangibility. (8)

If the stories of dead celebrities are "entombed," Hollywood's dark tourism unearths them, dusts them off, and presents them as meaningful, appealing narratives. The Haunted Hollywood and Dearly Departed tours both traverse Sunset Boulevard, pointing out the Viper Room as the site of River Phoenix's death, and Chateau Marmont, where John Belushi overdosed in a bungalow in 1982. The call-out is brief and somewhat offhand: in addition to busy traffic deterring a full stop, tour directors assume the likelihood of their clients' familiarity with both actors and the circumstances of their deaths. Phoenix and Belushi maintain star status in part because their tragic overdoses are revisited in broadcast and print media focused on either celebrity scandal or commemoration. Both were featured in episodes of A&E Biography's *Final 24*, the series that recounts the last day of a particular star's life. As the early seasons of *Saturday Night Live* are released on DVD and *101 Most Unforgettable SNL Moments* airs on E! Belushi's death is often a subtext to his comedic success. Yet for some celebrities featured on the Dearly Departed tour, the scandalous nature of their deaths becomes more significant than their creative work. Sharon Tate, for example, is better known for being brutally murdered by the Manson Family than for her roles in *Valley of the Dolls* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

Younger dark tourists are less likely to know much about actor Sal Mineo; if at all, they may recognize him for his role as Plato in *Rebel Without a Cause*. Scott Michaels stops his Dearly Departed tour van outside the apartment building where Mineo was stabbed to death in 1976 shortly before beginning a theatrical run of *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead*. The time devoted to Mineo affirms his stardom for Michaels's clients. In telling the story of Mineo's career Michaels may revive interest in Mineo not only for his tragic death but also for his work in films such as *Exodus* and *Giant*. As Dyer asserts in his analysis of Judy Garland as an iconic figure in gay culture, the visit to a star's death site or grave site can reinvigorate interest in that star's creative work, "sending people back to [their] old films with a different

kind of interest" (*Heavenly Bodies* 3). Through a particular category of celebrity Garland and others can become stars for a new audience, propelling their diminished stardom forward.

A tour guide's personal interests often shape the content of their tours. Karie Bible demonstrates her appreciation for classic film as well as her feminist point of view in her tour rhetoric at Hollywood Forever. At the Douras family mausoleum in which Marion Davies is interred, Bible lays out the argument that William Randolph Hearst, with whom Davies had a decades-long affair, hindered rather than helped her career. Thanks to Hearst's publicity, Davies became a star, yet under his influence she was typically cast in hyperfeminine, romantic roles that Bible believes served to diminish Davies' natural comedic talent. Standing beside the crypt of Barbara La Marr, Bible discusses the tendency in the early years of the Hollywood studios to discard reels at the end of a film's theatrical run: once a film had garnered profit for the studio and the theaters, the film reels were deemed to have served their purpose. The idea of film preservation did not take hold until the mid-1930s to combat both the intentional destruction and the accidental decay of classic films from the silent era, and thus much of La Marr's work is forever lost.

There are, however, instances in which preservation and restoration have enabled classic films to be brought to contemporary audiences. The Rudolph Valentino film *The Young Rajah* (1922), for example, was considered lost until some fragments of 16-millimeter film were recovered. Film preservation specialists Flicker Alley pieced together a version of the film from still photographs, theatrical trailers, and the film fragments, but so much content is missing that the new version must be considered a reconstruction rather than a restoration of the original film. Nonetheless, this version of *The Young Rajah* aired on Turner Classic Movies and is part of a Valentino box set, providing multiple opportunities to profit from the Latin Lover's stardom while also extending his cultural capital. As a fan of Valentino and a silent film aficionado, Bible incorporates her personal perspective into the tour rhetoric. She shares the history of the cemetery while also promoting enthusiasm for the creative work of the actors, directors, and public figures interred at Hollywood Forever. Her assertion that these actors were stars, worthy of revisiting in classical film, affirms their cultural value.

Behind many glamorous careers are stories of tragedy and scandal. In some instances those stories are lost over

time, and dark tourism resurrects them. Brian Sapir and Karie Bible both tell the story of Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle and Virginia Rappe, whose spirit is said to haunt Hollywood Forever’s Garden of Legends, where she is interred. Rappe died following a party hosted by Arbuckle, who was subsequently tried, and acquitted, for her rape and murder. Director William Desmond Taylor, who was murdered while the second of Arbuckle’s three trials for Rappe’s murder was under way, is interred in the Cathedral Mausoleum. Taylor’s 1922 murder remains unsolved and is a favorite subject among conspiracy theorists and fans of the decadent tales of Hollywood infamy. Arbuckle’s trial and Taylor’s murder, along with the death of actor Wallace Reid resulting from morphine addiction, led to the institution of the Hays Code, intended to subdue the decadent image and influence of Hollywood by censoring film content. Arbuckle becomes a star again when dark tourism revisits that moment in history in which his career was tarnished due to an injustice.

Although Hollywood Forever is located on prime property, adjacent to the Paramount Studios backlot, years of neglect of the cemetery’s buildings and grounds led Hollywood’s elite to choose other cemeteries for their final resting places. Hollywood Forever must make the grave sites of its stars—many of them somewhat obscure to contemporary audiences—attractive to the visitor as worth seeing, functioning as a publicist for the dead. Comparing the celebrity to the cultural hero, Boorstin elaborates on the fleeting fame that must be reinforced by the image machine, arguing that the celebrity “is the creature of gossip, of public opinion, of magazines, newspapers, and the ephemeral images of movie and television screen” where heroes are “made by folklore, sacred texts, and history books” (63). As such, the hero gains immortality, whereas the celebrity fades away. Boorstin does not account for the possibility of iconic stardom. Marilyn Monroe and Rudolph Valentino, among others, continue to draw new fans long after death. The culture industry continues to promote and profit from these stars through DVDs, CDs, books, and other paraphernalia, leveraging the cultural capital of Hollywood’s dearly departed.

Conclusion

Dark tourists are drawn to Hollywood in part by the power of place. With extensive media coverage of celebrity scandals, the opportunity to visit sites like Chateau Marmont

and the Viper Room creates a sense of proximity: the event becomes “real” rather than mediated by virtue of being there. Because of the need to get closer, to see, touch, and hear what is known only through mediated experiences, tourists are often drawn to visit the sites of events experienced virtually. This sense of presence powerfully connects visitors to the stars who are included in tours of death sites and cemeteries. When a particular star later appears in the media, whether through entertainment news coverage or in a film or television series on cable, the significance of that entertainer’s stardom is easily brought to mind. The recollection of the star’s narrative is accompanied by the memories of vacation, which is typically organized and documented—through photographs, souvenirs, and travel diaries—to be memorable. Thus, the interweaving of dark tourism into vacation experiences makes the work dark tourism do to reify stardom different from the reification that occurs through commemorative events or media events that reiterate the cultural significance of certain stars. Dark tourism uniquely blends lived experience with mediated memories to reify stardom.

Through Hollywood’s dark tourism visitors can connect themselves to the past, blending personal memory and cultural memory. This is particularly prevalent when tourists carry their mediated memories to the sites of tragic events. While cultural tourism of this nature is usually thought of with regard to locations like the site of the former World Trade Center or Dealey Plaza in Dallas, the historical and personal significance of Hollywood should not be overlooked. After all, celebrities and stars have a presence in one’s everyday life. If one is interested in the life of a star whose movements can be followed across the media landscape, then that star’s death may result in a sincere experience of grief. The visit to a grave site or death site allows tourists to stitch themselves into cultural history through commemoration.

Stardom and celebrity are temporal phenomena, and publicists, studios, and often celebrities themselves work diligently to maintain public interest in their lives and careers. The entertainment media participate in the production of celebrity and the reification of stardom. Film and television critics, cable networks, including E! and the Biography Channel, and celebrity magazines are among the sites that make stardom possible by creating and perpetuating celebrity discourse. Dyer notes that “stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act

out matters to enough people. Though there is a sense in which stars must touch on things that are deep and constant features of human existence, such features never exist outside a culturally and historically specific context" (*Heavenly Bodies* 19).

The specificity of the context of stardom is often limiting. What matters in one decade may not matter in the next, and a star who epitomizes the times in which he or she performed a certain role may not remain relevant. Stardom persists for only a handful of iconic performers, as fame typically diminishes without the workings of the culture machine. Yet Hollywood's dark tourism can bring new attention to those who have faded from view. Because stardom is socially constructed, Hollywood tours can build on a taken-for-granted notion of fame in which visitors are likely to accept the status of stars that is conveyed in tourist rhetoric. These pronouncements of stardom are particularly influential in the case of stars who are no longer part of public discourse but whose fame can readily be communicated through stories and images. At Janet Gaynor's grave site, for example, Karie Bible tells her clients that Gaynor was "the very first Academy Award winner for best actress in 1927—for not one, but three different movies." She asserts that Gaynor was "a very talented actress, and she actually managed to make the transition from the silent era to talkies and even in color films." Although many of the cemetery tourists may not have heard of Gaynor, and few of her films are still available for viewing, Bible's affirmation of the actor's success reifies Gaynor's stardom.

The enterprise of celebrity is inseparable from the endless commodification of stars and their deaths. Hollywood tour guides are motivated not only by their love of celebrity, history, scandal, and the paranormal but also by the profitability of their endeavor. Dark tourism is a narrow slice of the enormous tourism industry in Hollywood, the nexus of star production. The fascination with some stars never ceases, despite death, while others have their postmortem careers enhanced through retrospectives or cultural transformations. As visitors leave the Roosevelt Hotel at the conclusion of the Haunted Hollywood tour, it's only a few dozen steps to the souvenir shops that line Hollywood Boulevard. There tourists can collect the mementos that inspire the recollections and narratives of stardom, carrying the stories of stars into circulation through dark tourism.

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