

behind the image and also how the film industry maintains a perpetual distance between the star and their audience. Marshall argues that the 'extratextual domains of magazine interviews, critical readings of the films, television appearances, and so on ... that try to present the "real" film star are in themselves actively playing in the tension between the film celebrity's aura and the existence of the star's private life' (Marshall 1997: 117). He also claims that the bond between star and audience goes beyond knowledge or the desire for more (intimate) knowledge as it is, crucially, one of affect and, as such, is chiefly an emotional attachment (ibid.: 83). Nevertheless, although stars and their audiences may be bound by an affective connection, they remain separated by a crucial gap in which both desire and identification circulate. Furthermore, the possession of more intimate knowledge may offer the potential to bridge that gap but invariably it intensifies the sense of distance between a fan and a star.

While publicity materials fill the gap (or purport to bridge the gap) between stars and audiences, they also distinguish between the various overlapping identities of stars: constituting their image and persona, providing a sense of their personality. These identities and the terms commonly used by film scholars to describe them are complex and sometimes confusing, particularly when terms such as 'image', 'persona' and 'personality' are used variously to mean different things. Nevertheless, used with clarity and caution, these can be valuable tools and concepts for any investigation into the construction of star identities across a large range of texts and media, particularly when they are constructed differently for different types of audience or for audiences in different parts of the world, remaining central to the project of star studies.

## 6 UNSTABLE SYMBOLS: ON THE REPRESENTATIVENESS OF FILM STARS

### Introduction

Andy Medhurst suggests that 'the fascination with a star image is probably the most seductive method that narrative cinema has developed in order to catch and bind its audience', adding that after 'that initial pull, though, certain star images begin to set off resonances that have deeper social implications' (Medhurst 1986: 347). Many theorists have explored these, investigating how film stars represent different kinds of identity, including nationality, regional identity, gender, race, age and class.<sup>1</sup> This often involves a consideration of the star's cultural significance and the ways in which they incarnate or embody ideological values, coming to define specific moments in history: for instance, Jean Gabin as 'the emblematic hero of the Popular Front years' in France (Vincendeau 2000: 65, emphasis in original), Gracie Fields as an embodiment of northern English working-class femininity of the 1930s (Landy 2001: 56) or Sidney Poitier as an icon of the American postwar integrationist movement and black middle-class masculinity (Bogle 2004: 199–204). Richard Dyer's work, especially *Heavenly Bodies*, has done much to promote such an approach to stardom, such as his assertion that stars 'enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production (capitalism)', stars representing 'typical ways of behaving, feeling and thinking in

contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed' (Dyer 1987: 17). One of his most influential claims is that stars are 'embodiments of the social categories in which people are placed and through which they have to make sense of their lives, and indeed through which we make our lives – categories of class, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and so on' (ibid.: 18). Many star scholars have developed their research directly out of this notion of stars as embodiments of social types, building upon Dyer's conception of 'structured polysemy' to articulate the ways in which stars simultaneously embody different and often contradictory ideologies, reinforcing both dominant and alternative values, along with gender and sexual ambiguities, as well as ambivalent attitudes towards class, race and ethnicity.

In this chapter, some of the studies that have adopted this approach to understanding the cultural significance of stars will be considered in order to demonstrate the diverse ways in which films stars become meaningful and acquire social significance. This will also reveal how stars are not only made sense of in terms of cultural significance but are constructed in this way, so that some aspects of a star's image and films are privileged over others in order to make a star seem more representative of social groups or historical contexts. What emerges here is the sense of the heavy burden of representation that some stars have been made to carry, sometimes by the film industry, sometimes by their audiences and fans, but most often by film critics, historians and academics.

### Zeitgeist icons

[T]he 'stars' of a given historical period or moment capture their era for us in a range of ways ... the preoccupations, values, conflicts and contradictions of a particular culture, its 'climate of feeling', are vividly expressed through its celebrities. (Gaffney and Holmes 2007a: 1)

John Gaffney and Diana Holmes, in the introduction to *Stardom in Postwar France*, describe stardom as 'a symbolic portal into the nature of a culture', referring to stars as 'that culture's ultimate expression' (ibid.). However, they also recognise that stars are atypical, being 'symbolic *negations* of a given culture' (ibid., emphasis in original) in that they offer something new, something more exciting and aspirational, more glamorous than the reality of life in the culture to which they belong. Studies of stardom that investigate a star or stars of a particular era therefore have a tendency to reveal not so much what was happening socially and culturally at the time but, rather, what was coming into being or what was being left behind. 'Stars can restate, often in new and modern forms, old identities and values, as well as calling a society towards newer, and perhaps confused, emergent values and value systems' (ibid.). This is illustrated in Diana Holmes's essay, "'A Girl of Today": Brigitte Bardot', which examines the French star in terms of zeitgeist, situating Bardot's fame within the context of rapid social change in 1950s France and, in particular, the growth of youth culture. She suggests that the actress 'incarnated' the values of a young generation in the mid- to late 1950s but that she did so in complex and contradictory ways (Holmes 2007: 46). Holmes notes 'a tension between, on the one hand, a prescriptive definition of modern femininity as domesticity and maternity in a more stylish guise and, on the other hand, a sense that femininity might also be compatible with citizenship, education, opportunity, mobility – and a self-defined, pleasurable sexuality' (ibid.). Her reading of a number of the star's key films from this period and publicity in magazines such as *Paris-Match* and *Elle* demonstrates that 'Bardot's appeal as a star seems to have depended, at least in part, on her capacity to hold together a tension between contradictory discourses on sexuality and femininity: between, on the one hand, a nascent female desire for sexual freedom ... and on the other hand, a powerful ideology ... that defined women as by nature dependent, monogamous and maternal'



Girl of the 1950s? Brigitte Bardot in *Les Bijoux du Clair de Lune* (1958)

(ibid.: 62). She also notes that, in the mid-1960s, when 'this conflict began to be more clearly articulated, and signs of the second-wave feminist movement began to appear, Bardot's popularity declined', thereby rendering Bardot a woman of yesterday rather than a 'girl of today' (ibid.).

Bardot makes for a convincing case regarding the ability of stars to embody the cultural contradictions of a specific era, just as Marilyn Monroe does in Richard Dyer's case study in *Heavenly Bodies* (Dyer 1987: 19–66). Elsewhere, however, attempts to construct stars as icons of a moment in a culture's history have been forced to acknowledge the instabilities and limitations of this approach. For instance, Ulrike Sieglöhr's examination of the way in which the German actress Hildegard Knef became constructed as an icon of West German postwar reconstruction in the mid- to late 1940s is particularly revealing of how such accounts privilege certain aspects of a star's career and image while ignoring others (Sieglöhr 2000b). Knef's unglamorous portrayals of young women in such films as *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*The Murderers Are Among Us*, Wolfgang Staudé, 1946), *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (*Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Harald Braun, 1947) and *Film ohne Titel* (*Film without a Title*, Rudolf Jugert, 1947–8) have resulted in her construction as the quintessential 'rubble girl': that is, a representative of the millions of women who undertook the task of clearing away the debris in cities across postwar Germany, symbolising the German nation's attempts to rebuild itself after the Third Reich had been obliterated.

Ulrike Sieglöhr observes how Knef's rise to stardom has been linked in critical appraisals and biographies to the birth of the new (post-Nazi) Germany that emerged after May 1945. However, she also notes that Knef's reputation as the 'new face of Germany' ignores a number of important factors: namely, the fact that the actress had been trained at the Nazi-controlled studios of Ufa during the war, making a number of films there, such as *Träumerei*



(*Dreaming*, Harald Braun, 1944). It also ignores the fact that Knef quickly became an international star by adopting a more subversive and glamorous image, most notably in Willi Forst's *Die Sünderin* (*The Sinner*, 1951). Sieglöhr notes that in 1948, after winning the Best Actress prize at the International Film Festival in Locarno, Knef signed a contract with Hollywood producer David O. Selznick and moved to the USA and that, although she returned to Germany in 1950 to star in *Die Sünderin*, the transnational course of her career was already set. After appearing in 20th Century-Fox's *Decision before Dawn* (Anatole Litvak, 1951), she made films in Hollywood, France and Britain, as well as Germany – most notably, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (Henry King, 1952), *Svengali* (Noel Langley, 1954) and *Fedora* (Billy Wilder, 1978), often playing beautiful and glamorous characters that were a far cry from her rubble girls of 1946–7. Consequently, Knef's incarnation of postwar Germany's reconstruction was not only brief but also largely in contrast to the work she produced and the image she acquired during her career as a film star, this being a formative but unrepresentative phase.

### Sex symbols and muscle men

In order to claim a place in the pantheon of international stardom in the 1950s, Hildegard Knef had to compete for roles in Hollywood films and European co-productions alongside a growing roster of pneumatic sex symbols: most notably, Marilyn Monroe, Kim Novak, Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot, Diana Dors and Anita Ekberg, many of whom were 'blonde bombshells'.<sup>2</sup> These were not only symbols of sex (i.e., gender and sexuality), but also of class, nationality, ethnicity and race. The sex symbol was 'defined in terms of her excessive sexuality, which is seen as a manifestation of, and commentary on, shifting social relations of class, gender and sexuality' (Cook 2001: 169). A transgressive figure, the sex symbol challenged 'traditional

social boundaries, and is often demonised or criminalised as an instrument of consumerism, even if she is celebrated for her independence' (ibid.). Combining 'sexual transgression, mercenary motives and hedonistic lifestyle', Pam Cook notes that 'the postwar, post-Kinsey sex symbol was an international phenomenon that could be found in many ... female stars of the period, from continental Europe as well as Britain and the USA' (ibid.: 169–70). She further notes that the 'blonde bombshell ... played a significant role in the process of redefining cultural attitudes in the shifts towards modernity that took place during the 1950s' (ibid.: 171).

Since Dyer produced his case study of Marilyn Monroe in *Heavenly Bodies*, the sex symbol has become a major area of star scholarship, with a number of studies devoted to the likes of France's Brigitte Bardot, Britain's Diana Dors and Italy's Sophia Loren (Dyer 1987: 42–5). Christine Geraghty, in her study of Dors, writes that at 'the crux of this construction of a sex symbol are the contradictory ideas of vulnerability and knowingness which allow the female star to be perceived as sexually active and challenging but not held responsible for how she behaves' (Geraghty 1986: 341). She goes on to explain how the knowingness of the sex symbol derives largely from the sense of her 'deliberate dressing up, an emphasis on expense and sensuality – diamonds, sequins, furs', as well as her portrayal of knowing and calculating characters in films (ibid.). Meanwhile, vulnerability is usually suggested through 'a certain childishness which is partly indicated by an emphasis on being natural and direct' but also through publicity suggesting that the stars are greatly influenced or even controlled by their husbands (ibid.: 342). Geraghty argues, however, that no two sex symbols 'will fit this knowingness/vulnerability axis in the same way' (ibid.).

Pam Cook has observed that Diana Dors acquired a star persona in the 1950s that encapsulated the 'conflicting cultural and social values surrounding class, gender and sexuality' (Cook 2001: 167). By the mid-1950s, Dors was one of Britain's best-known

female film stars, distinguished from the majority of her compatriots by being unashamedly sexual, epitomising working-class aspirations of social mobility in a new age of affluence and consumerism. Identified as a working-class woman, she was straight-talking and outspoken, especially against middle-class English hypocrisy and petit-bourgeois morality. For Cook, 'she was emblematic of conflicting forces of social change in a way no other British star was able to achieve', bringing this unique and challenging aspect to her roles in such films as *The Weak and the Wicked* (J. Lee Thompson, 1954), *A Kid for Two Farthings* (Carol Reed, 1955), *Value for Money* (Ken Annakin, 1955), *An Alligator Named Daisy* (J. Lee Thompson, 1955) and *Yield to the Night* (1956) (ibid.: 175). By 1956, Dors had developed an iconic status through the 'self-conscious performance of sexuality' that included a '[s]tylized body language, gesture and stance combined with exaggerated physical attributes such as a tightly corseted, statuesque figure' (ibid.: 168). Although she was not the only British sex symbol (others included Sabrina and Belinda Lee), she was 'the only one who has been given a place in the blonde bombshell international pantheon, along with Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot' (ibid.).

Diana Dors' international reputation, particularly after making three films in Hollywood in the mid- to late 1950s, made her seem less British as a star than many of her contemporaries, such as Kay Kendall, Virginia McKenna, Sylvia Sims or Yvonne Mitchell. From the start of her film career, Dors had presented an image that was modelled on Hollywood glamour and, in many ways, was opposed to the conventional standards of British femininity, which was dominated largely by notions of restraint (even repression) and authenticity. Melanie Bell, in *Femininity in the Frame* (2010), has observed that Dors' star image as a sex symbol and blonde bombshell in the late 1950s was uncharacteristic of British female stars and enabled her to be cast in unconventional roles more typically associated with European (mainly French and Italian)

actresses (Bell 2010: 147). Bell suggests that Dors reached her peak as an international icon following her return from Hollywood after her RKO contract expired,<sup>3</sup> appearing in Luigi Zampa's Italian comedy *La ragazza del palio* (1958, released in USA in 1960 as *The Love Specialist*), Gordon Parry's *Tread Softly Stranger* (1958) and Alan Rakoff's *Passport to Shame* (1959). Of the latter, Bell notes the significance of Dors' casting as a prostitute, claiming that she was the only British film actress in the 1950s who could convincingly take on this highly sexualised role (ibid.: 146). This is suggested by the casting of Dors alongside a number of international stars, the Czech-born actor Herbert Lom, American star Eddie Constantine and Parisian actress Odile Versois. While Versois was cast as the good girl (Malou, a French waitress), Dors was cast as bad girl Vicky, a glamorous but tough prostitute in tight, figure-hugging costumes that accentuate her curves. Despite being the bad girl, however, as Bell points out, Dors' character is treated sympathetically and with some respect, the film being unusual in its frank depiction of contemporary prostitution. Furthermore, in her role as the prostitute (or 'pneumatic tart', as Bell describes her) Dors embodied a modern conception of female sexuality, operating both as 'an ambiguous figure' and as a 'site where concerns, anxieties and new understandings of female sexuality were being worked through in a manner that was palatable to audiences', the kind of figure that would play a more prominent role in British New Wave films of the 1960s: most notably, *The L-Shaped Room* (Bryan Forbes, 1962) (ibid.). During the 1960s, however, Dors was eclipsed by a new generation of British actresses that, in various ways, departed from the image of the international sex symbol or 'blonde bombshell': most notably, Rita Tushingham, Lynn Redgrave, Rachel Roberts, Claire Bloom, Shirley Ann Field and Julie Christie.

Italy's most successful sex symbol, Sophia Loren, came to prominence at roughly the same time as Diana Dors. Having begun her film career in 1950, she attracted international attention as the

Ethiopian slave girl in Clemente Fracassi's film version of Verdi's opera *Aida* (1953).<sup>4</sup> Her subsequent appearance as the pizza girl (la pizzaiola) in Vittorio de Sica's episodic *L'Ora di Napoli* (*The Gold of Naples*, 1954) transformed her into a major star in Italy and made her the 'embodiment of a highly subversive idea of unabashed female sensuality', one that mixed defiance and flirtatiousness (Gundle 2004: 81). Her international profile was raised significantly by her roles as the dark-skinned, raven haired Greek peasant girl in Jean Negulesco's *Boy on a Dolphin* (1957) with Alan Ladd, and as a Spanish woman in Stanley Kramer's *The Pride and the Passion* (1957). Other Hollywood productions, including John Wayne's *Legend of the Lost* (Henry Hathaway, 1957) and Cary Grant's *Houseboat* (Melville Shavelson, 1958), advanced Loren's international success at the same time that Diana Dors' RKO films failed. Moreover, as Dors was being eclipsed by a new generation of film actresses in Britain, Loren's popularity and success in Italy endured: most notably with her starring roles in Vittorio de Sica's *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*, 1960), *Ieri, oggi, domani* (*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, 1963) and *Matrimonio all'italiana* (*Marriage, Italian Style*, 1964), as well as in Italian-Hollywood co-productions, such as Anthony Mann's *El Cid* (1961). Not only did Loren dominate notions of Italian national identity during this period, she also established an enduring model for female film stars in Italy. 'Even today,' writes Maddalena Spazzini, 'Sophia Loren still dominates the Italian star system', remaining 'the country's most successful star' (Spazzini 2009: 161). She further notes that Loren has become the 'prototype' to which successive generations of Italian actresses have been compared, many of whom have found themselves dubbed the 'new Sophia Loren' (ibid.). Noting that Loren was responsible in the 1950s for spreading abroad stereotypical images of the country based on family values, food and beauty, Spazzini also records that these 'are now more important in keeping alive the sense of national identity in the country more than other cultural elements' (ibid.: 165).



Bronze bombshell: Dorothy Dandridge, the star of *Carmen Jones* (1954)



Stephen Gundle, in his essay 'Sophia Loren, Italian Icon', has revealed a rather different picture, noting that at the beginning of her film career Loren was not considered Italian enough, being cast therefore as gypsies, non-white 'ethnic' types and 'exotics', including Africans (Gundle 2004: 80–1). He also notes that her status as Italy's national icon has fluctuated over time, so that while in the 1950s she became a 'cultural icon and even a national symbol', there was a 'dramatic erosion of Loren's personal popularity' in the late 1970s and early 80s (ibid.: 86 and 92). However, having fallen out of favour, Gundle reports that Loren returned to popularity in Italy in the late 1980s as a 'woman of strength and courage', being voted a national idol in 1989 (ibid.: 93). This indicates the way in which certain histories, images, films and performances are often eradicated in the construction of a star as a national symbol (i.e., in Spazzini's account). It also indicates the way in which the sex symbol is not only a national, class, gender and sexual icon but also one of ethnicity and race, most often embodying notions of whiteness in the case of 'blonde bombshells' such as Marilyn Monroe, Brigitte Bardot, Diana Dors and Anita Ekberg (Dyer 1987: 42–5).

Sophia Loren stood out in the pantheon of international sex symbols in the 1950 and 60s as a darker version of the type. Hollywood, meanwhile, produced a darker version around the same time. Dorothy Dandridge, the star of *Carmen Jones* (Otto Preminger, 1954), was Hollywood's first 'black bombshell' (or, given the light tones of her skin, 'bronze bombshell'), whose beauty, shapely figure and sex appeal could match those of many of the 'blonde bombshells' of the 1950s. Donald Bogle has observed that she achieved recognition in Hollywood in 1951 as Melmendi, Queen of the Ashuba, in Lex Barker's *Tarzan and the Jungle Queen* (Byron Haskin, 1951), stating that 'it was apparent that never before had the black woman been so erotically and obviously used as a sex object' (Bogle 2004: 196). Thereafter she was cast opposite Harry Belafonte in three films: MGM's all-black musical *Bright Road* (Gerald Mayer,

1953); *Carmen Jones*, Oscar Hammerstein II's African-American version of Bizet's opera *Carmen*; and *Island in the Sun* (Robert Rossen, 1957). Of these three, it was *Carmen Jones* that boosted Dandridge's star status, earning her an Oscar nomination for Best Actress of 1954 for her starring role in the 'most lavish, most publicized, and most successful all-black musical' of the 1950s (ibid.). By 1955, Dandridge was a major celebrity, her image appearing on the cover of magazines such as *Paris-Match* and *Ebony*, her private life being repeatedly 'reported on, probed, studied, dissected, discussed, scrutinized, and surveyed' with all kinds of incredible rumours circulating about her (ibid.: 197).

In addition to her talents as an actress and singer, Dandridge's stardom rested upon her 'combination of acceptably light-skinned good looks and an acceptable crossover repertoire', her incarnation of the 'Bronze Venus' stereotype (Alexander 1991: 48). Nevertheless, despite her talent, her beauty and her fascinating (even scandalous) private life, Hollywood was unable to sustain Dandridge's stardom after *Carmen Jones*, supplying her with few decent parts. The only time she was able to match this performance was when cast as Bess alongside Sidney Poitier and Sammy Davis Jr in Preminger's film version of Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* (1959), for which she was nominated for a Foreign Press Golden Globe Award for best actress in a musical (Bogle 2004: 197). However, this commercially successful film was harshly criticised by much of the black community in the USA and, according to Karen Alexander, around this time the actress began to feel burdened by her image as Hollywood's strongest 'Black Woman', causing her to retreat into a marriage that ultimately left her 'morally destroyed and financially bankrupt' (Alexander 1991: 49).

Dorothy Dandridge's film career was relatively short-lived, being confined to the 1950s. While few of the great sex symbols of this era prospered in the 1960s, many of the 'blonde bombshells' (e.g., Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield) and the 'brunette

bombshells' (e.g., Jane Russell) have been reserved a place in film history as icons of the 1950s. However, in the pantheon of Hollywood sex symbols, Dandridge had largely been forgotten: that is, until recently. The HBO biopic *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* (Martha Coolidge, 1999), starring Halle Berry in the title role, did much to reclaim Dandridge's public reputation. Meanwhile, her profile within film studies was significantly augmented in 2009 with the publication of Mia Mask's *Divas on Screen: Black Women in American Film*, which devoted a chapter to her. Mask chose Dandridge as one of five female stars to represent the history of black women in American cinema from the 1950s to the 2000s, the others being Pam Grier, Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey and Halle Berry. Representing black female stardom in the 1950s, Dandridge is presented here as not only a culturally important representative of 1950s black bourgeois beauty but also as 'an icon admired by African Americans', as 'emblematic of the social and political climate' in the USA at this time, as 'represent[ing] the dominant culture's ideal concept of black femininity' and as an 'important icon for understanding black spectators and their class aspirations and identifications (Mask 2009: 14, 21, 30 and 56). The heavy burden that Alexander ascribes to Dandridge during the 1950s as Hollywood's strongest 'Black Woman' has subsequently been matched by the heavy burden of representation that her star image is now called upon to sustain in Mask's book. Nevertheless, it would seem that part of her reclamation as a significant Hollywood star of the 1950s lies with her ability to represent in numerous ways the peculiar social concerns of black and white America at this historical moment. It is in part the ambiguities and instabilities of Dandridge's star image that make her a prime candidate for representing America's racial ideologies of the 1950s, making her a fascinating, troubling and contentious symbol of gender, sexuality, race and nationality, and, therefore, making her an unstable symbol.

It is the lot of the sex symbol to be loved and loathed, worshipped as a sex goddess and ridiculed as a travesty of womanhood. While the rewards can be considerable for the actress who assumes this mantle (i.e., in terms of lucrative employment, fame and popularity), the costs are equally great (i.e., in terms of typecasting, a short shelf-life and a loss of credibility). The excessive nature of the sex symbol makes her not only the ultimate in heterosexual male desire but also a parody of conventional patriarchal ideals of femininity, incorporating some aspect of mockery and critique into her image and performances, accounting in part for the sex symbol's longstanding appeal for gay audiences. The sex symbol also seems redolent of America in the 1950s, an era in which prurience and repression were locked in a struggle for supremacy. Since the 1950s, only a handful of sex symbols have survived as major stars within mainstream commercial cinema (most notably, Raquel Welch), becoming increasingly associated with cult cinema, sexploitation films and pornography, making the sex symbol a devalued commodity. While the 1950s has come to signify a time of relative innocence or naivety in regard to gender politics, being associated with a period before feminism transformed the lives of women in the West, the 1960s has come to be characterised as a period of consciousness in which established ideologies were contested and eventually overturned. Since the 1960s, therefore, the sex symbol has symbolised retrogressive gender politics, which can only be salvaged via camp or parody. It is the ambiguities of the sex symbol that ultimately prove to be her saving grace, her idealised and parodic sexual identity lending her image a subversive edge. The sex symbol, moreover, occupies an ambivalent position between, on the one hand, more normative representations of femininity (personified by the likes of Lillian Gish, Claudette Colbert, Greer Garson, Betty Grable, Grace Kelly, Ava Gardner, Goldie Hawn and Julia Roberts) and, on the other hand, more challenging versions (most notably, Marlene Dietrich,



Mae West, Katharine Hepburn, Jane Fonda, Jodie Foster, Whoopi Goldberg and Hilary Swank).

The male muscle-bound stars of Hollywood action movies of the 1980–90s occupy a similar position between normative representations of masculinity (e.g., Clint Eastwood, Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Mel Gibson, Denzel Washington, Daniel Craig and Matt Damon) and more unconventional masculine types (e.g., John Travolta, John Hurt, Richard Gere, Hugh Grant, Johnny Depp, Brad Pitt, Rupert Everett and Jude Law). The 1980s and 90s film star body-builder (most notably, Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger) has taken the place of the 1950s sex symbol, his pumped-up and oversized physique replacing the blonde bombshell's pneumatic body, his spectacular pecks substituting for her ample bosom, his hyper-masculinity matching her ultra-femininity. In so doing, the body-built action star has elicited a similar degree of ambivalence among audiences and critics, being both admired and ridiculed (Tasker 1993: 76). The connection between these two types of star is such that Yvonne Tasker was able to successfully adapt and apply much of Richard Dyer's work on the 1950s sex symbol to her study of action heroes of the 1980s and early 90s: for instance, using his notion of cultural embodiment in her analysis of the images and performances of Stallone, Schwarzenegger, Jean-Claude van Damme and others (Tasker 1993: 76).

Tasker sets her analysis of male body-built stars against the background of a crisis in western masculinity resulting from the social advancement of feminism, on the one hand, and gay liberation, on the other. Consequently, Stallone, Schwarzenegger, Jean-Claude van Damme and their comrades emerge as embodiments of an overly elaborated form of male heterosexuality that is a response to the notion of the 'New Man' (i.e., sensitive to issues of equality, respectful of the demands of feminism and, to some extent, feminised) and homosexuality (or gay/queer identities), even though homoeroticism features heavily as part of their image and the

narratives of their movies (Tasker 1993: 128). Nothing if not contradictory, these symbols of hyper-masculinity are frequently feminised by being subjected to an eroticised gaze in films and publicity, so that the muscle-bound action hero consistently provokes ambivalent and complex reactions, producing a multiplicity of readings and pleasures among different kinds of audience.<sup>5</sup> Also (and, again, reminiscent of the 1950s sex symbol), these muscular stars of action movies come in a variety of forms that represent national, racial and ethnic characteristics: white American (Stallone), black American (Wesley Snipes) and white European (Schwarzenegger). Many of the Hollywood action movies of the 1980s and 90s were built around blonde, blue-eyed Nordic actors, presenting an extreme form of Aryan whiteness: most notably (the Swede) Dolph Lundgren. However, just as many Hollywood action movies feature black American stars (e.g., Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, Denzel Washington and Will Smith), as Yvonne Tasker observes in her chapter 'Black Buddies and White Heroes' (Tasker 1993: 35–53). Furthermore, the action movie has increased demand for Asian stars in Hollywood, providing star vehicles for Jackie Chan and Yun-Fat Chow from Hong-Kong, and Joan Chen and Jet Li from China (see Stringer 2003).

### **Culture personified**

Since 1918, Hollywood has been the most dominant film industry in the world, having a major impact on the film cultures of many countries. Consequently, Hollywood stars have traditionally been some of the biggest on the planet. However, the American film industry also has a long tradition of hiring leading film artists (directors, writers, cinematographers and actors) from around the world, making Los Angeles the global centre of film production. Drawing upon a diverse range of international talent and making

films for numerous national audiences, Hollywood has tended to overlook national, cultural, regional and ethnic differences in favour of more generalised identities, chiefly (and crudely), American and non-American. While Hollywood has tended to distinguish between Latins and Northern Europeans, Arabs and Asians (also between Indians and 'Orientals') under 'non-American', finer distinctions have tended to be ignored. Consequently, when an Italian dancer called Rodolfo Alfonzo Raffaello Pierre Filibert Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguolla became internationally famous as Rudolph Valentino in the early 1920s, he was cast as a Latin-American gaucho in *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, 1921), a Spanish matador in *Blood and Sand* (Fred Niblo, 1922), an Indian prince in *The Young Rajah* (Phil Rosen, 1922), Arabs in *The Sheik* (George Melford, 1921) and *The Son of the Sheik* (George Fitzmaurice, 1926), a Frenchman in *Monsieur Beaucaire* (Sidney Olcott, 1924) and a Russian in *The Eagle* (Clarence Brown, 1925). Hollywood ignored his Italian nationality and rebranded him (very successfully) as a 'Latin Lover' (see Lawrence 2010b).

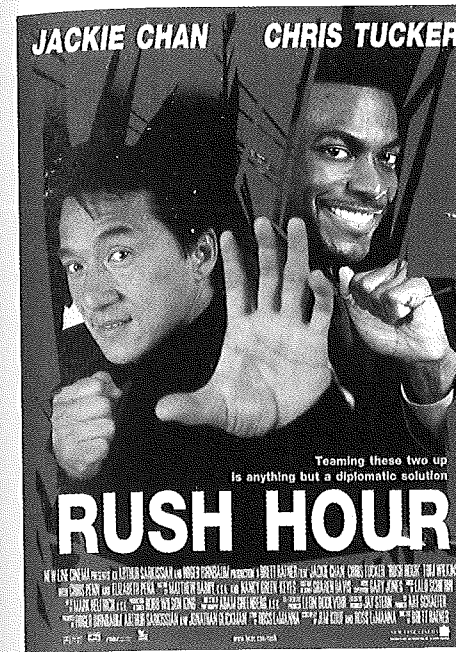
According to Christian Viviani, Swedish actress Greta Garbo only played Swedes in four of her Hollywood films of the 1920s and 30s (Viviani 2006: 95). Mostly, she played Russians (i.e., in five films) and French women (four films), although she was also Dutch in *Mata Hari* (George Fitzmaurice, 1931) and Polish in *Conquest* (Clarence Brown, 1937). Occasionally her nationality was unspecified, as in the case of *Flesh and the Devil* (Clarence Brown, 1926). In Hollywood during the studio era, nationality hardly mattered unless it was racially or ethnically marked. Consequently, while Margarita Carmen Cansino (better known as Rita Hayworth) rarely played Spanish or Mexican characters, American actress Rita Novella (also known as Rita Rio and Dona Drake) specialised in Latin American and Mexican characters throughout the 1930s and 40s. Even in the 1990s and 2000s, Latin American characters have frequently been played by Europeans in Hollywood films. For instance, Spanish actor Antonio

Banderas played a Cuban trumpeter in *The Mambo Kings* (Arne Glimcher, 1992) and a Mexican guitarist and dancer in *Desperado* (Robert Rodriguez, 1995). As Vicente Sánchez-Biosca has explained, there are simply more opportunities for Spanish actors to play South Americans and Mexicans in Hollywood than Spaniards, especially since the rapid expansion of the Hispanic community in the USA in the 1990s (Sánchez-Biosca 2006: 138).

Ginette Vincendeau has claimed that when French stars appear outside of France they invariably assume the 'burden' of national identity, finding themselves defined in terms of their Frenchness (Vincendeau 2000: 31). During the 1930s and 40s this burden was placed upon Maurice Chevalier and Charles Boyer, while during the late 1940s and 50s, it was assumed by Louis Jourdan (originally Louis Gendre). Jourdan began his Hollywood career in 1947, appearing in such films as *The Paradine Case* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1947), *Letter From an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, 1948), *Madame Bovary* (Vincente Minnelli, 1949), *Anne of the Indies* (Jacques Tourneur, 1951), *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Jean Negulesco, 1954) and *Gigi* (Minnelli, 1958). However, while for many moviegoers Jourdan was regarded as the archetypal Frenchman (a suave, highly sexualised and sophisticated *bon vivant*), Hilary Radner argues that he was frequently used in Hollywood to represent an unspecified 'Un-American' identity, even noting that his ethnicity shifted between a range of 'foreign' identities, including an 'Oriental' villain in the James Bond film *Octopussy* (John Glen, 1983) (Radner 2006: 126). She concludes that Jourdan's persona in Hollywood lacked 'a clearly defined national self' and that what it represented was 'otherness', particularly in terms of sexuality (ibid.: 130). Jourdan's highly sexualised persona (or, for Radner, his 'hypersexuality') distinguished him from most American male stars of the studio era and, Radner argues, rendered him more feminine than masculine, lending him an ambiguous sexuality that had previously characterised Rudolph Valentino's persona in the 1920s.

While in 1983 it may have been acceptable for Jourdan to play an Asian character in a 007 movie, by the late 1990s such casting would have been deemed offensive and intrinsically 'Orientalist'. During the mid- to late 1990s, Hollywood producers abandoned the longstanding practice of casting non-Asian actors in leading Asian roles. At the same time, increasing numbers of Hong Kong and Chinese stars began to achieve major commercial success in the USA: most notably, Jackie Chan. Although Jackie Chan was one of the biggest stars of 1980s Hong Kong cinema,<sup>6</sup> his films received only limited release in the West and his first English-language films, such as *The Big Brawl* (Robert Clouse, 1980) and *The Protector* (James Glickenhaus, 1985), did poor business beyond Asia. However, that changed decisively in 1996 when *Rumble in the Bronx* received widespread distribution across the USA, earning \$9.8 million during its opening weekend and making over \$30 million during the course of its initial theatrical run (Gallagher 2004: 120). This significantly raised Chan's international profile, extending his fame beyond martial arts fans and making him one of the world's most popular action stars. His subsequent Hong Kong films, such as *Jackie Chan's First Strike* (Stanley Tong, 1997), were dubbed into English and the promotional campaigns for these played down potential cultural differences in order to enhance their appeal for mainstream American audiences.

Mark Gallagher has observed that Chan's first Hollywood film, *Rush Hour* (Brett Ratner, 1998), proved to be his biggest hit in the West, partly as a result of it being shot in English but also because it adheres closely to western stereotypes of Chinese people (Gallagher 2004: 127). In his essay, 'Rumble in the USA: Jackie Chan in Translation' (2004), he explores the various ways in which Chan's established star persona was adapted in order to attract American audiences by drawing attention to his characters' cultural difference rather than simply denying it, transforming him into a more comic, less masculine and more childlike figure (i.e.,



Cultural negotiations on display: Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker in *Rush Hour* (1998)

earnest, sincere and vulnerable), more likely to appeal to western viewers by pandering to their sense of racial superiority while simultaneously assuaging fears of Asia's emergence as an economic, as well as military, power (ibid.: 121–33). He also claims that part of *Rush Hour's* huge success in the USA resulted from its appeal to black Americans, noting the vital role played by black actor Chris Tucker as Chan's sidekick, enabling an 'African-American protagonist and his Hong Kong Chinese counterpart [to] overcome their ethnic and cultural differences [in order to] defeat the Chinese-American gang led by the evil, white Hong Kong crime lord (Tom Wilkinson)' (ibid.: 128). While the film unites blacks and Asians in the face of a white enemy, much of its humour stems from culturally specific tastes (i.e., in food and



music) being exchanged between the film's black and Asian protagonists, promoting a deeper mutual respect.

Since the late 1990s numerous Chinese stars have become highly successful in Hollywood, being absorbed into the American film industry. In contrast, Bollywood stars have seldom crossed over to Hollywood despite acquiring some of the largest and most diverse international audiences of any stars since the early 1990s. During the latter half of the twentieth century, Bollywood became increasingly transnational, catering to steadily growing numbers of moviegoers outside India that made up the massive (and massively dispersed) Indian diaspora: most notably, in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Many Bollywood stars have built their careers and their star status on their popularity with members of this diaspora. Nevertheless, few have been lured to Hollywood, the major exception being Aishwarya Rai who, in 2009, joined the supporting cast of Steve Martin's star vehicle *The Pink Panther 2* (Harald Zwart), alongside British actors Emily Mortimer, Alfred Molina, John Cleese and Jeremy Irons, Japanese actor Yuki Matsuzaki and French action hero Jean Reno.

While few Bollywood stars have worked in Hollywood, the Mumbai-based film industry has been positioning itself as the international centre of global entertainment in the twenty-first century, with a number of Indian production companies attempting to match the international success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) (Bose 2006: 12). Consequently, some Bollywood films have sought to capitalise on an international market beyond the Indian diaspora by producing spectacular action thrillers, such as Sanjay Gadhvi's *Dhoom:2* (2006), and sci-fi fantasies, such as Sujoy Ghosh's *Aladin* (2009), S. Shankar's *Endhiran* (2010) and Anubhav Sinha's Shah Rukh Khan vehicle *Ra.One* (2011). In part, this is to exploit Mumbai's status as the international centre of special effects but this is also part of a more strategic attempt to rebrand 'Bollywood' as a high-tech purveyor of dominant cinematic

genres, placing the Hindi film industry more directly in competition with Hollywood. However, as Derek Bose argues in *Brand Bollywood*, Indian cinema may gain a more global reach by developing more international co-productions (i.e., with Europe, China and Hollywood). The ultimate aspiration, he suggests, should be a Bollywood-Hollywood co-production starring Shah Rukh Khan with either Brad Pitt or Nicole Kidman that could match the global success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Bose 2006: 57).

It was *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that propelled Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi to international stardom in 2000. After further success in Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and *House of the Flying Daggers* in 2004, she became one of the most internationally famous Chinese stars and, according to Olga Kourelou, was widely regarded as an 'embodiment of the transformation of Chineseness in the age of global modernity' (Kourelou 2010: 123). Kourelou, in her essay "'Put the Blame on ... Mei": Zhang Ziyi and the Politics of Global Stardom' (2010), adapts Richard Dyer's notion of the star text and his understanding of stars as embodiments of ideological contradiction in order to read Zhang Ziyi's star image in terms of its crystallisation of ideological conflicts, conflicts resulting from the transnationalism of Chinese films and stars in the global market and also in terms of China's recent transition to a post-Mao regime with closer links to the West. In 2005, Zhang Ziyi was both acclaimed as the 'face of China' in the twenty-first century (i.e., when she appeared as one of three prominent Chinese cultural icons on the cover of the American magazine *Newsweek*) and accused of being an 'Orientalist movie icon' (i.e., when her eyes were retouched and tinted blue to look more western for the billboard posters promoting her first Hollywood film, Rob Marshall's *Memoirs of a Geisha* [2005]) (ibid.: 123). Once she became the West's face of China and Japan, Zhang Ziyi's star image became not only contradictory but also contentious. In China, she was criticised for betraying and misrepresenting her country, with *Memoirs of a Geisha* being banned



Chinese star Zhang Ziyi, as the Japanese geisha Nitta Sayuri, in *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005)

'for fear of inciting anti-Japanese sentiments', while the star was blamed for 'selling out', for 'disregarding cultural specificity and ethnic diversity, and thus betraying her national loyalties' (ibid.: 122).

Although branded an 'Orientalist movie icon' in mainland China, Zhang has been recognised as an important (and marketable) symbol of China who conforms closely to western perceptions of Chinese womanhood (ibid.: 124). Despite her commercial and critical success, however, Zhang Ziyi remains problematic as an embodiment of twenty-first-century China. While her performance skills, beauty and charismatic personality have made her indisputably one of the twenty-first century's greatest film stars, as an icon, embodiment or incarnation of China or of Chinese femininity (or even of a transnational and modern or westernised Chinese femininity) her image is complex, contradictory, controversial and contestable. Claims that in the West she is the embodiment of a modern China are undermined by the fact that she is generally known for her historical roles that draw on various motifs of the *femme fatale* (or warrior women) in seventeenth-century fiction and the *sing-song* girls (i.e., tea-serving entertainers/prostitutes) popular in Chinese musicals of the 1950s, making her seem more traditional than modern. Clearly her fascination comes from a range of oblique references to China and the West, both ancient and modern, that she is able to conjure up through her films and publicity, which makes the task of pinning down precisely what her images represent not only challenging but questionable as an exercise. Furthermore, imposing a burden of representation upon her (i.e., as either the incarnation of a modern and westernised China or as a western Orientalist movie icon) will invariably prove hard to sustain as the actress continues to develop her career as a film star in a transnational context, competing for roles alongside other Chinese actresses (e.g., Maggie Cheung, Michelle Yeoh and Gong Li) and other transnational stars (e.g., Penelope Cruz, Keira Knightly or

Aishwarya Rai). As the transnational stars of earlier periods have shown (most notably, Sophia Loren), a film star seldom remains an icon or symbol of anything for very long, for in order to maintain her star status over time she or he must adapt to changing times, indeed being part of the cultural processes of negotiating social change.

Stars are made. Once manufactured and distributed widely, they continue to evolve, their images rarely remaining stable or consistent. For example, although British film star Dirk Bogarde started out in the early 1950s by incarnating an aggressive and sexually charged British working-class masculinity in such films as *The Blue Lamp* (Basil Dearden, 1950), by the time he starred in Luchino Visconti's *Death in Venice* in 1971 his sexuality had matured into something more gentle and ambiguous (i.e., implicitly homosexual) and he had acquired a more bourgeois and European persona. This transformation, moreover, had taken place gradually and incrementally throughout the 1950s and 60s (Medhurst 1986: 348–53).<sup>7</sup> Bogarde's changing persona demonstrates the extent to which film stars occupy different relations with social groups and historical contexts as they age, as the film industry develops and as societies change. It also suggests that the process of identifying a star's cultural significance necessarily involves mapping the shifts that take place over the course of their career rather than fixing upon one moment that may seem more significant than any other, a moment that is singled out as emblematic of a star's relationship to a specific time and place.

## Tenuous connections

Studies that seek to establish the various (even contradictory) ways in which a film star embodies or incarnates a particular set of social values or a specific and identifiable period within a culture's history are invariably open to charges of reductionism and over-simplification, as

well as 'reflectionism' (see McDonald 1998: 179). Reflectionism was something that Richard Dyer was concerned to avoid in his own work on stars. In the preface to his book *Heavenly Bodies*, for instance, he stated that his objective with this study was 'to find a way of understanding the social significance of stars which fully respects the way they function as media texts, yet does not fall into a view of a given star as simply reflecting some aspect of social reality that the analyst cared to name' (Dyer 1987: ix). Increasingly, Dyer turned his attention to the role of audiences (and various different types of audience) and the ways in which they interpret and make use of star discourses.

Attempts to identify and understand the socio-cultural contexts in which a star operates, emerges and prospers have often proven instructive.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach can, for instance, provide insights (or, at least, clues) into why certain performers were chosen and groomed for stardom, why they became popular and with what kinds of audience, as well as how their work was evaluated in their own time and thereafter. How stars are used to represent particular social groups or historical moments is vital to understanding not just the cultural meanings but also the cultural practices of stardom: for example, how and why certain star texts come to have specific meanings assigned to them, being accepted or even appropriated by particular social groups. Such questions can provide a useful starting point for investigations into film audiences and film cultures, particularly when it is recognised that the cultural significance of a star results from an active process of selection and manipulation in which certain potential meanings are favoured over others at one time or another. Charting the changing cultural meanings that are assigned to a star can be illuminating, especially when it is recognised that the ideological contradictions that are negotiated by stars throughout their careers are seldom, if ever, resolved or indeed resolvable. If it is true that star images 'set off resonances that have deeper social implications', then the social meanings that are



entangled among the variety of star texts (both films and extra-filmic matter) are likely to reverberate differently over time (Medhurst 1986: 347). Subtle variations are likely to occur as these social resonances rebound off the various constituent forces that distinguish one cultural moment from another, offering scholars an opportunity to map and remap the coordinates of such transformations. However, the words 'resonance' and 'implication' suggest meanings that are fluid and amorphous, drawing attention to the fact that star meanings are largely intangible and virtually ungraspable. Acknowledging this makes the prospect of identifying or fixing a star's cultural significance at best provisional, at worst impossible and, inevitably, challenging.

It would be naive to assume that film stars closely resemble the social groups that they are commonly associated with or held to represent. In the 1970s, Barbra Streisand was not actually like most Jewish women living in Brooklyn, New York, just as Gracie Fields was never really like the vast majority of working-class Lancashire women in the 1930s. As stars, they had qualities that set them apart, distinguishing them and making them stand out as unique. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the world, Streisand became the representative of the post-1960s emancipated Jewish females of Brooklyn just as Fields had been the representative in Britain of liberated working-class women from Rochdale before World War II. A significant part of their stardom was invested in their abilities to personify these groups and their culture (i.e., their values, ideas, ideals, fantasies and aspirations, etc.), giving them a voice and an image. At the same time, however, Streisand and Fields were more than types. Their success depended on being popular with certain social groups and on their acquisition of a professional status as a certain type of entertainer (i.e., comediennes with musical talent and an ability to play tragicomedy, provoking laughter and tears) but their attainment of stardom also rested upon their individuality, extraordinariness and originality. The acquisition of a unique and

exclusive set of skills and characteristics was fundamental to the stardom Barbra Streisand and Gracie Fields, as it has been for the vast majority of film stars. Consequently, they and their counterparts in film industries around the world (and across many decades) have combined typicality with originality. Understanding a star's typicality involves a consideration of their representativeness (i.e., their cultural and historical significance) but it remains essential that this consideration does not overshadow the star's uniqueness, what made them different, even unrepresentative. Moreover, if stars really can offer historians insights into a culture or society at a particular moment of its history, then such insights can never be complete, direct or consistent, particularly during periods of social transformation. What stars offer, if anything, are little more than fleeting and tantalising glimpses of a world in flux, unsteady and unstable, easily misapprehended.

Stars exist primarily in the realm of representation and, as such, are divorced from reality. Their relation to reality is necessarily tenuous, given that most inhabit an exalted position in a higher social sphere. On screen they may play characters that are closer to real life, these characters having been designed by writers to represent and articulate aspects of human experience. However, social disconnection is often the price of fame, the celebrity eliciting unusual responses from most of the ordinary people they encounter in daily life. Film stars, the ultimate celebrities, can easily become detached from the real people and the culture that they are generally believed to represent, so that to read them as representative is to ignore the gap that separates stars from ordinary people. Once raised to the lofty heights of stardom (the upper stratosphere in the case of super- or mega-stars), the culture from which the star emerged becomes insignificant. To ignore the pedestal on which stars are raised is to ignore the gap that separates them from their fans, the gap that generates desire for the star, the desire to be like their favourite star as well as the desire to know more about them. These

gaps are not only fundamental to a star's achievement and to the retention of star status but also to how they function in society and how people relate to them.

## Conclusion

Film stars have often been considered in terms of what they have to reveal about being human and even a particular kind of human being: male or female, black or white, American and non-American, etc. The processes of making stars representative and the forging of links between certain stars and specific social groups and eras warrant investigation. How film-makers, studio executives, publicists, audiences, critics and scholars establish these connections and attempt to sustain them, even in the face of contradiction, ambivalence and hybridity, even when star images strain under the heavy burden of representation, can prove insightful. How and why stars acquire symbolic value remains an important area of star studies.

The symbolic value of stars is most clearly represented by the 1950s 'sex bombs', the 80s body-built action stars and transnational stars, particularly Asian stars working in the West. The pneumatic bombshells of the 1950s forcefully incarnated cultural fantasies of femininity, female heterosexuality but also race and ethnicity, class and national identity. These over-inflated, transgressive and contradictory figures proliferated in an era of sexual prurience and repression in which women were increasingly gaining freedom and independence. Consequently, the sex symbol was not only transgressive but also transient, modern by the standards of the 1950s but retrogressive thereafter. Always contradictory and ambivalent, she epitomised the symbolic potential inherent in stardom, over-valued by audiences in one era and devalued in other.<sup>9</sup> Her significance, moreover, is to be not only evaluated but also

contested as part of the negotiations and exchanges that arise from the different values and inequalities of numerous social groups within the cultural arena. Sex symbols also reveal how time-sensitive and fluid stars can be in terms of reputation, although they (like the body-built stars that later superseded them) also demonstrate how varied reactions to them can be at any one time, provoking adoration and repudiation in more or less equal measure.

The sex symbol and the muscle-bound action hero are also representative of the extraordinariness of film stars. In the case of both the sex symbol and the body-built star, their larger-than-life quality is writ large upon every contour of their over-sized body, bodies that conform more closely to fantasy physiques than conventional human anatomy. The fantastic nature of all stars is exposed by these extreme and exaggerated versions of cinematic bodies, the idealised bodies that commonly populate mainstream commercial cinemas (i.e., toned rather than pumped up) of Hollywood, Europe, Bollywood and China. Meanwhile, transnational stars demonstrate the conflicting demands placed upon stars more generally in their construction as recognisable social (i.e., national or ethnic) types, oscillating between stereotypical notions of national or ethnic identities, on the one hand, and more universal subjectivities that ignore the specificities of nationality, regionality, class or ethnicity, on the other. As transnational stars move from one geographical territory to another, their cultural identities either become exaggerated or obscured, being utilised in some instances rather than others. Many transnational stars have therefore been accused of misrepresenting their national or ethnic characteristics abroad through exaggeration or denial. Transnational stars, perhaps more than any other, reveal the instability and mutability of star identities, which are sensitive to changes in context, industrial and cultural. The kinds of changes that often happen incrementally, almost imperceptibly, with stars who consistently work in the same environment can undergo dramatic shifts when they are transplanted

to new pastures. Given the extent to which the ultimate level of stardom (super- or mega-stardom) requires an international profile, stars are exposed to high levels of instability that inevitably render them internationally recognised symbols of hybridity and inauthenticity as much as personifications of national, regional, racial, class, gender and sexual identity.

## CONCLUSION

Through close-ups, films provide intimate views of stars, while interviews in magazines offer intimate insights into their personalities and private lives, for which many people will pay a modest sum. Yet despite these repeated incursions into their personal space, stars remain distant and out of reach. Stars, therefore, both invite and evade scrutiny. A considerable part of this book has been about analysing stars and about what analysis of stars can reveal about film, the film industry, about film culture and even, to some extent, about the wider culture in which films, star images and discourses circulate. This raises a multitude of questions. The attempt to find answers to the questions of what stars do, how they do it and how they are used has resulted in a rich and diverse body of academic literature, much of which has been incorporated into the preceding chapters. These chapters have attempted to organise this branch of film studies into discrete areas, compartmentalising it as part of the process of mapping out the field. The overarching objective has been to select key works that represent most clearly the separate strands of star studies in an effort to better understand its themes, conceptual frameworks and methodologies. This mapping exercise has revealed that considerable progress has been made in terms of understanding the nature and operation of film stardom, the practices of star gazing and the meanings attached to certain stars. Nevertheless, it has also suggested that considerable scope remains for this field to further