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Postmodern Messiah: A Critical Ethnography of Elvis Presley as a Site of Performance.

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POSTMODERN MESSIAH: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY
OF ELVIS PRESLEY AS A SITE OF PERFORMANCE

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech Communication

by
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August 1997

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DEDICATION

In memory of my sister, Aprile
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I would like to thank all those who helped, encouraged, and inspired me throughout this process. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Michael Bowman, for making time to work with me and for always believing that I knew more than I thought I did. Next, I would like to thank my committee members: Dr. Mary Frances HopKins for agreeing to stay on my committee even though she retired; Dr. Ruth Laurion Bowman for being a most supportive and positive role model for me; Dr. Kenneth Zagacki, for insisting that his students always try to be "provocative"; and Dr. Gaines Foster of the Department of History, whom I do not know.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I used a critical ethnographic approach to investigate Elvis as a site of performance where cultural identity, authority and representation are contextualized within the cultural practices of fans, people who love Elvis, and funs, people who do not love Elvis, but still elect to use Elvis as the basis for their cultural performances. I argued that fans and funs use performance as the agency of postmodern identity construction. I explored three performance events in which both fans and funs participated. Additionally, I examined the relationship of power and play between and within fan and fun culture.

I positioned fan and fun activities as cultural performances that enact political ideologies supported by members of fan and fun cultures. I focused on fans and funs as performers who enacted material, verbal, and processual texts. I detailed these performances in three case studies.

In the first case study, written as a narrative, I discussed the performance of the Candlelight Vigil. I described the Vigil as a ritual and discussed how fans/funs use the performance to enact power relations within and between each culture. I also considered how performance of the Vigil aids postmodern identity construction for fans and funs.

In the next case study, written as a screenplay, I critiqued the performance of the Graceland Mansion tour. I discussed how fans and
funs are special types of tourists who use the tour context to further their own cultural identities and agendas.

Finally, in the last case study I explored the critical implications of shopping for souvenirs as performance. I wrote the first part of the study as a brochure to highlight the rhetoric of objects featured at Graceland Plaza. The second part of the chapter I wrote as a scrapbook of "snapshots" to implicate my own autobiographical experience of shopping at Graceland Crossings in the same context as popular and academic discourse about souvenirs and shopping. I attempted to draw the connection between myself and fan/fun performances of shopping at both venues to determine if shopping was an empowering or disempowering performance of postmodern identity.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody tearful night!
O great star disappeared..."
Walt Whitman, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d"

"Elvis could no longer sneer and mean it.
It was time to freeze the legend."
David Israel, The Washington Star

"The truth of the matter is, that Elvis’s pants were filled, and the women knew it. And I think, as much as anything else, this is what heralded his success."
Raymond Browne, Bowling Greene State University

"Elvis, whatever else may be said about him, was an experience."
John Wasserman, San Francisco Chronicle

Elvis Aaron Presley, son of Vernon and Gladys, ex-husband of Priscilla, father of Lisa Marie, King of Rock-n-Roll, popular culture icon, American myth, postmodern messiah—no matter what label follows the name, Elvis was and is, as John Wasserman (1977) states above, "an experience" (131). Thinking of Elvis as an experience, rather than as a person, is what piqued my interest in the cultural phenomena surrounding Elvis since his death in 1977. Elvis, the man, has been transformed over the years into something more than a man, more than an entertainer, and more than a legend; Elvis is now a site of performance where anyone who
chooses to use the image, idea, myth, or symbol of all that is/was "Elvis" enacts an empowering performance of his/her "own" text of Elvis. Who are the people "doing things" with Elvis? What are they doing? And why are they doing it? These were a few of the initial questions that influenced my selection of Elvis as the subject of my scholarly inquiry.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This study investigates the on-going cultural production of Elvis texts by fans, people who interact with each other because of their love for Elvis, and what I shall call "funs," people who do not like Elvis but still choose to focus on Elvis as the source of their interaction. Specifically, I investigate Elvis fan and Elvis fun performances during the annual International Elvis Tribute Week. The three cultural performances I analyze are: (1) the annual Candlelight Vigil held each year on the anniversary of Elvis's death; (2) the tour of Graceland, Elvis's home-turned-tourist-site; and (3) shopping in the two shopping areas across the street from Graceland, Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings. I selected these three performances because each has a large number of fans and funs participating and each foregrounds a different textual manifestation of fan/fun performance: processual texts, verbal texts, and material texts.

I contend that Elvis is a site of postmodern production and consumption where issues of authority, subjectivity, representation, and cultural identity are juxtaposed, contextualized, and played-out through the
cultural performances of fans and funs. The hyper-production of Elvis texts by fans, funs, and Elvis Presley Enterprises marks a specific instance of postmodernity operating within a specific context of performance practices. Through performance, fans and funs simultaneously enact their subjectivity and objectify themselves in a system of consumer capitalism that exploits that subjectivity. By viewing identity as "a freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self, in which one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images, and activities, relatively unconcerned about shifts, transformations, and dramatic changes" (Kellner 1995, 246), fans and funs use performance to construct identities for themselves. For Kellner, postmodern identity construction is an act of empowerment within a system that denies stable identities. The performances of Elvis fans and funs are specific examples of the empowering potential of postmodern identity. However, I contend that this empowering potential can also be simultaneously disempowering.

In this study, I demonstrate how Elvis fans and funs use these cultural performances that occur during International Elvis Tribute Week, August 9-17, to construct their identity as fans and funs. I also examine the relationship between and among fan and fun cultures and performances especially as they relate to power. By focusing on power relations, I see fan and fun performances as "a site of struggle where
competing interests intersect, and different viewpoints and voices get articulated" (Conquergood 1989, 84).

Besides power, I also focus on play as it relates to fan and fun cultural performances. Play is important in my study because I view the relationship between fan and fun cultures as a form of play. Additionally, my method of writing about these specific case studies, besides being a form of work, is also a form of academic play in which I, as ethnographer, play with ways of re-presenting my experiences with/of fan and fun cultural performances. I focus on my role as critical ethnographer and how my participation, interpretation and criticism of fan and fun performances also reveal my values, ideologies, and political agendas. Finally, I discuss the implications of such performances in a postmodern world.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

For several years I have been involved with performances of Elvis texts as both participant and audience member and as both fan and fun. My participant/observer experiences facilitate ethnographic descriptions of these performances. I will detail three case studies of different types of performances of Elvis texts. I have chosen three performances that involve both fans and funs simultaneously, as well as represent verbal, material, and processual cultural texts: the Candlelight Service held at Graceland for the past nineteen years on the anniversary of Elvis's death; the tour of Graceland; and shopping for souvenirs sold in Graceland Plaza.
and Graceland Crossings across the street from the mansion. Although I focus on these three performances, there are actually many performances that occur during International Elvis Tribute Week. I have narrowed my study to these three because they involve the greatest number of fans and funs simultaneously.

Fieldwork and Background Information

I have been to Memphis and attended International Elvis Tribute Week (also known as Elvis Week) activities six times. The atmosphere during the week is full of excitement and activity. People from around the world gather in Memphis during the Week of August 9-17 to celebrate, commemorate, and investigate the life and kitsch of Elvis Presley. Although I focus on three particular performances that occur during the week-long celebration, there are actually numerous other performances that take place. Many of the other performances are officially sponsored by or approved by Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE). These "official" performances involve mainly fans as participants, although, as I discovered in my fieldwork, many funs also attend these events.

Generally, the officially sponsored events are planned in advance by EPE and fan club presidents from around the world. Together they construct a list of Elvis Week activities that are usually open to the public and usually free of charge, although there are occasionally fees charged for tours, concerts, and contests with proceeds donated to a charity. Most
fan clubs contribute to charities as part of their organizational mission because they feel they are following in Elvis's footsteps; Elvis often contributed to charities himself.

Even though Elvis Week officially commemorates the death of Elvis, many of the activities are fast-paced, upbeat, festive celebrations of his life. A typical week's activities include: Elvis Movie Nights, during which Elvis movies are screened in the movie theatre located in Graceland Plaza; a "fan social" at Graceland to welcome members of various fan clubs; a bus trip to Tupelo, Elvis's birthplace; an Elvis Week fan appreciation dance sponsored by a fan club; tours of the Elvis Presley Memorial Trauma Center; the "Elvis Memphis Style" concert and dance sponsored by a local fan club; "Elvis tours," during which participants visit places in Memphis where Elvis hung out, the places he liked to shop, eat, and party; the Elvis Memorial Auction and Luncheon to raise money for Le Bonheure Children's Medical Center; Elvis International 5K Run; Elvis Presley Memorial Karate Tournament; tours of the Kang Rhee Karate Institute where Elvis studied; tours of Humes High School, including question and answer sessions with Elvis's friends from his youth in Memphis; Good Rockin' Tonight, a concert by friends and colleagues of Elvis; numerous charity luncheons and auctions sponsored by numerous fan clubs; "Elvis art" show and contest, with professional and amateur categories; licensee merchandise shows,
during which merchants can display their new Elvis souvenirs; a memorial gathering at the University of Memphis; and an Elvis Impersonator contest.

The aforementioned performances are all officially sanctioned by Elvis Presley Enterprises and seem to attract more fans than funs; however, fun participants in Elvis Week have other Elvis-themed performance options that are not officially recognized by EPE. One of the most popular unofficial Elvis events in Memphis during Elvis Week is the "Dead Elvis Ball," a dance held at a local bar on the anniversary eve of Elvis's death. Participants are mostly funs who enjoy a more viciously humorous activity than the Candlelight Vigil. Also during Elvis Week Memphis is home to a series of Elvis impersonators who attract a mostly fun crowd. My favorite impersonators are El-Vez, the Mexican Elvis, and Elvili Parsley, an East Indian, female Elvis impersonator.

Many of these events, both official and unofficial, are annual occurrences. The regularity and repetition of activities creates a performance tradition that makes Elvis Week meaningful for many returning participants. However, the exact list of Elvis Week performances changes from year to year. Event planners help renew and extend interest in Elvis by helping the festival evolve. Although all of these official and unofficial performances during Elvis Week are interesting as examples of how fans and funs use performance to construct their identities, I decided to focus
on the performances that attracted the largest numbers of fans and funs simultaneously and that occurred with the most regularity.

By viewing Elvis as a site of performance, this study capitalizes on the areas of overlap between Cultural studies, Rhetorical studies, and Performance studies. Additionally, I reveal how performance communities (fans, funs) are not stable, unchanging groups to be studied once by a scholar and assessed as "explained." Cultural studies examine how cultures are constituted by various groups, often taking a Marxist view of power relations within and among cultures. Rhetorical studies assess the strategies used by people to construct their culture, identities, and to achieve their cultural agendas. Performance studies view culture and identity as continually being performed, as a dynamic and on-going process that changes when the different features of performance—text, context, performer, and audience—change. Through performance, the rhetorical and cultural goals of groups/texts are thrust together in (1) a power struggle and (2) a game.

This study consists largely of descriptive/interpretive analyses of these three performances. However, a close, critical reading of each performance addresses the problematics of ethnographic representation and reveals the ideology informing the power relations enacted through the performances.
ETHNOGRAPHY

I am situating my study within the growing interdisciplinary discourse surrounding ethnographic representation. Traditional ethnographies take many forms, such as structural, symbolic, organizational, and interpretive (Jacobson 1991) that entail fieldwork, participant/observation activities, in-depth interviews with "key informants," and specific, verifiable evidence to support empirical claims about "thick descriptions" of the "Other." Although these methods of constructing ethnographic texts are still useful (Marcus 1994, 565) and used by all types of ethnographers, they do have some theoretical shortcomings associated with them that have resulted in what Lincoln and Denzin refer to as ethnography's "fifth moment" (1994, 576).

Ethnography's first moment, "the Traditional Period," lasted from the early 1900s until World War II and was characterized by ethnographies written by "objective" social scientists who sought to reliably represent the object of their studies, usually some foreign, "primitive" "Other" in a scientific, "rhetoric-free," written text (Denzin 1997, 16). The second moment, "the Modernist Phase," which began roughly at the end of World War II and flourished until the 1970s, is still present in many ethnographies. It was/is characterized by "rigorous, qualitative studies of important social processes, including deviance, and social control in the classroom and society" (Denzin 1997, 17). Ethnography's third moment, "Blurred
Genres," lasted from 1970-1986. This moment was led by the work of Geertz (1973; 1983) who "suggested that all anthropological writings were interpretations of interpretations" (Denzin 1997, 17). Furthermore, "the observer had no privileged voice in the interpretations that were written. The central task of theory was to make sense out of a local situation" (Denzin 1997, 17).

Until the end of this third moment the ethnographer was still not explicitly or critically implicated in the ethnographic text itself, even when s/he practiced self-reflection in situ and in fieldnotes. However, since the mid-1980s, many areas of study in academe have experienced a series of crises of representation including the conflation of writing theory and writing culture (Clough 1994); the global, postcolonial focus that accompanies multinational economic systems (Appadurai 1993); the challenge of writing ethnographies in a world already represented ethnographically (Tyler 1986); the realization that the writer "can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, noncontested account of the other's experiences" (Denzin 1997); the implications of gender on discourse (Spivak 1990); the acknowledgement of the moral function of ethnographic writing; and the increased pluralism involved in doing qualitative research (Denzin 1997).

According to Lincoln and Denzin (1994), the next moments of ethnography address these concerns to some extent. The fourth moment
was a response to the "crisis of representation" during which scholars asked "Who is the Other? Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of the Other, or an Other? And if not, how do we create a social science that includes the Other?" (Lincoln & Denzin 1994, 577).

During this time, ethnographers produced texts that considered race, gender, class, and the ethnographer's role in the construction of the written representation of a culture as vital issues of inquiry.

At present, according to Lincoln and Denzin (1994), ethnography is in its fifth moment and quickly moving into its sixth. This moment is characterized by how ethnographers respond to the problems associated with the previous moments, such as issues of textual authority and validity, who has the right to speak for whom, an ethnographic text's ability to accurately portray the world (verisimilitude), and the political implications of assuming responsibility for one's ideologically embedded account of culture, within a contemporary, multinational, postmodern world context. In Dorst's (1989) conceptualization, the postmodern world context "abolishes a conceptual distinction traditional ethnography relies upon, . . . the distinction between the site of ethnographic experience/observation and the site of ethnographic writing" (2). Since cultures, through mass marketing, tourism, and advertising, already generate ethnographic texts about themselves, and since individuals
constantly practice self-documentation on such a grand scale, ethnographers must content themselves with writing post-ethnographies.

Post-ethnographies become critical ethnographies when they are self-reflexive, evaluative, and take into account the researcher's role in performing the writing of the ethnography. According to Dorst (1989), the post-ethnographer has two positions to fill:

- a position of collector/transcriber/collageist, and a position of rhetorician/reader— in other words, the dual role of re-citer/re-siter, one who "tells over again" and thereby "relocates" the already inscribed citations by inserting them into a new context, in effect rewriting them (206).

So the post-ethnographer should write in such a way that the "historicity or 'writenness' of the post-ethnographic text" (Dorst 1989, 207) is foregrounded, the fragments that comprise the text visibly and artificially displayed. Additionally, when fulfilling the role of critical reader, s/he should "unpack the rhetorical strategies, to read critically the auto-ethnographic souvenirs and identify the suppressed mechanisms through which they produce their effects" (Dorst 1989, 207).

The forms of writing post-ethnographies are as varied as the cultures they (re)present. One type of post-ethnography is an autoethnography, which involves the ethnographer implicating him/herself into the writing to such an extent that s/he receives as much focus as the larger context of the study (Ellis 1996; Fiske 1990a). Autoethnography is also used by Hayano (1979; 1982) to refer to studies of one's own culture. This type
of post-ethnography is similar to Van Maanen's "confessional tale" (1988), which features the ethnographer's autobiographical account of fieldwork written in first person. The difference would be that in a confessional tale, the author, although implicated in the text as a character, still serves as the authority in the written text.

Another type of post-ethnography is an impressionist tale. Although usually associated with ethnography's fourth moment, this type of ethnographic representation is still significant in that an impressionist tale is "not about what usually happens but about what rarely happens" (Van Maanen 1988, 102) during the fieldwork experience and thus "is a representational means of cracking open the culture and the fieldworker's way of knowing it so that both can be jointly examined... The epistemological aim is then to braid the knower with the known" (Van Maanen 1988, 102). An interesting example of this type of ethnography is "Confessions of an Apprehensive Performer" (Pelias 1997) in which the author evokes the experience of being apprehensive through a series of narrative and poetic episodes.

Another type of post-ethnography that links the fourth moment to the fifth is surrealist ethnography, which takes impressionist tales to the next level of abstraction from a traditional realist. As described by Clifford (1988) the connection between ethnography and surrealism lies in "a constant willingness to be surprised, to make interpretive synthesizes, and
to value—when it comes—the unclassified, unsought other" (Clifford 1988, 147). This type of post-ethnography makes use of collage to:

- bring to the work (here an ethnographic text) elements that continually proclaim their foreignness to the context of presentation. These elements—like a newspaper clipping or a feather—are marked as real, as collected rather than invented by the artist-writer. The procedures of (a) cutting out and (b) assemblage are of course basic to any semiotic message; here they are the message. The cuts and sutures of the research process are left visible; there is no smoothing over or blending of the work’s raw data into a homogeneous representation. To write ethnographies on the model of collage would be to avoid the portrayal of cultures as organic wholes or as unified, realistic worlds subject to continuous explanatory discourse (Clifford 1988, 146).

The written form of a surrealist ethnography is evocative rather than grounded in a realistic representation of lived experience. For example, in "Ifa and Me: A Divination of Ethnography" (Meyer & Bede-Fagbamila 1997), Meyer, the ethnographer and Bede-Fagbamila, the Ifa diviner, co-constructed the written text of the ethnography by performing Ifa rituals that instructed them how to put the pieces together. The resulting ethnography is multivocal, intersubjective, and readable without being a written representation of a culture. This surreal type of writing marks the beginning of the post-ethnographic project that has since experimented with various forms of writing culture as well as ways to get beyond writing culture (Denzin 1997).

As Marcus (1994) notes, we are now in the age of "messy texts." Post-ethnographic texts are marked by "an open-endedness, an incompleteness, and an uncertainty about how to draw a text/analysis to a
close" (Marcus 1994, 567). Furthermore, "Such open-endedness often marks a concern with an ethics of dialogue and partial knowledge that a work is incomplete without critical, and differently positioned, responses to it by its (one hopes) varied readers" (Marcus 1994, 567). However, although messy texts are subjective accounts of experience, they go beyond experiential epistemology when they "attempt to reflexively map multiple discourses that occur in a given social space. . . . they are always multivoiced, and no given interpretation is privileged" (Denzin 1997, xvii). By experimenting with forms of writing that question and expand the generic boundaries of ethnography, the "new writers" of ethnography discover "there are other ways of knowing, other ways of feeling our way into the experiences of self and other" that perform rather than represent the world (Denzin 1997, xviii).

Much of the current post-ethnographic work is performance-based (Ellis & Bochner 1992; Jackson 1993; McCall & Becker 1990; Meyer & Bede-Fagbamila 1997; Stucky 1993; Ulmer 1989; Welker & Goodall 1997). An especially performative example is "Performing Osun without Bodies: Documenting the Osun Festival in Print" (Jones 1997), in which "[r]eaders will engage with the text in whatever ways suit them" (72), including reading, looking, scanning, skimming or skipping pages of the text altogether. Jones creates an interactive ethnography that the reader performs as s/he encounters the text. According to Fabian, "'Performance'
seem[s] to be a more adequate description both of the ways people realize their culture and of the method by which an ethnographer produces knowledge about that culture" (1990, 18).

Since "[m]any ethnographers have taken a critical turn in recent years" in response to a call that ethnographers "attempt to uncover the power relations which influence how various people, including researchers, interpret culture" (Trujillo 1993, 449), I have positioned myself as critical ethnographer, as a performer, in this study. Critical ethnography "is committed to unveiling the political stakes that anchor cultural practices" (Conquergood 1989, 179). My participation in the performances of International Elvis Tribute Week and my subsequent critical ethnographic representation of those performances constitute a performance. Bauman (1992) supports the implication of the researcher in the performance process when he writes:

In addition to formal reflexivity, performance is reflexive in a social-psychological sense. Insofar as the display mode of performance constitutes the performing self (the actor onstage, the storyteller before the fire, the festival dancer in the village plaza) as an object for itself as well as for others, performance is an especially potent and heightened means of taking the role of the other and of looking back at oneself from that perspective . . . (47-48).

So I engage the other and my self in my critical analysis of my role in the performances of International Elvis Tribute Week. In this sense, when I write my critical ethnographic analyses of fan and fun performances, I am performing as much as the "others" I examine in my study.
A critical ethnographer may encounter the same methodological hurdles as a traditional ethnographer, but her/his aim is not to present an "authentic representation" of the "Other"; a critical ethnographer sets out to investigate the political implications of doing ethnographic research in the first place, and to unmask/detail how the culture being examined and the ethnographer together construct a "dialogic" (Conquergood 1985) performance in which the culture's status as object is redefined as subject. The form of a critical ethnography depends on the specifics involved in the ethnography. Many critical ethnographers have "experimented" with various styles of presenting a culture in writing while simultaneously critiquing the act of representing another culture (Goodall 1991; Trujillo 1993; McCall & Becker 1990; Ellis 1994, 1996; Trinh 1991).

SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is threefold: (1) to write Elvis into the field of Performance Studies; (2) to theorize/examine a previously unexplored aspect of fan culture, namely the relationship between fans and funs; (3) to participate in an ongoing scholarly dialogue about representation of culture through ethnographic performance.

My study is situated at the intersection of three different discourses: studies of Elvis, studies of fandom and popular culture, and studies of performance and identity. To contextualize my study within these discourses I will first review the literature relevant to each area, beginning
with scholarly studies of Elvis and moving to more popular textualizations of Elvis. I will then discuss various scholarly perspectives of fandom as a manifestation of popular culture. Finally, I will briefly review the literature concerning the importance and function of performance as the agency of realizing cultural identity, an expanded discussion of which is the subject of Chapter Two.

**Scholarly Studies of Elvis**

Several scholars have speculated about the cultural phenomena surrounding Elvis Presley since his death in 1977. Camp (1982), in one of the first scholarly articles about Elvis after his death, briefly catalogued what had happened to the image of Elvis only five years after his death. Olson and Crase (1990) discussed the importance of fandom as a way of dealing with grief over Elvis's death. Plasketes (1989) noted the number of songs referring to Elvis's death, myth, and life in the 1980s as significant markers of Elvis’s influence on popular culture. Spigel's (1991) brilliant study of Elvis impersonators as mediators between fans and Elvis was one of the few scholarly articles that actually critiqued the practices of fans in relation to issues of power and gender. A less scholarly, but still very rigorous, account of the Elvis phenomenon was written by Marcus (1991). His book, *Dead Elvis*, was more than a collection of Marcus’s past *Rolling Stone* articles about the rock legend; it was an insightful reading of
what has happened to one of America's popular icons from a non-fan perspective.

A few scholars have focused on the religious aspects associated with Elvis. One of the themes that dominates discussions about Elvis, even when he was alive, was the connection between Elvis, Jesus, and religion. In 1987, a year before Elvis-sightings began, Davidson wrote about the implications of viewing Graceland as a religious site akin to Mecca. Also in 1987, Beckham examined Elvis souvenirs and shrines to explicate the religious folklore connected with Elvis. In 1988, Figgen, at Indiana University, began a study of Elvis as a folk-saint.

(1996) adopted a cultural studies approach to investigate how and why Elvis is so readily appropriated in a wide range of cultural contexts.

Since my study is an ethnography, I have been interested in other Elvis-themed ethnographic investigations. The first ethnographic study of Elvis fans was written by Aparin (1988). In her doctoral dissertation, she investigated working class responses to Elvis by interviewing several steelworkers from Pennsylvania and asking them how Elvis affected their lives. Although her study was narrowly focused, it serves as the first example of ethnographic inquiry into fan response to Elvis from a fan perspective.

The other three "ethnographies" were released on popular presses and are not formally identified by the authors as ethnographies. I refer to them as such because they attempt to chronicle responses to Elvis from fan perspectives and because they focus on information attained from key-informants. Moody (1989) released an account of narratives by people who believe they have had life-after-death experiences that involve Elvis and by people who say they have communicated with Elvis telepathically after his death. Moody used his synthesis of the narratives to espouse his own views of life-after-death, rather than reveal how and why his subjects believe what they believe. Choron and Oskam (1991) collected remembrances about Elvis from fans and essentially pieced these tributes together verbatim with no criticism or interpretation of the stories.
Harrison, in *Elvis People: The Cult of the King* (1993), interviewed British Elvis fans who worship Elvis as their deity. His study offered interesting descriptions of the practices and beliefs of these Elvis worshippers, but, like Choron and Oskam, offered no interpretation or criticism.

**Popular Studies of Elvis**

and Gladys (Dundy 1985), which explored the extremely close bond between Elvis and his mother.

Besides biographies of Elvis, many authors write poetry and prose about Elvis as well as stories of "true encounters" with Elvis after his death. Many of these books target the large base of Elvis fans as their audience: Roadside Elvis: The Complete State-By-State Travel Guide for Elvis Presley Fans (Barth 1991); I Am Elvis: A Complete Guide to Elvis Impersonators (Cahill 1991); The Best of Elvis: Recollections of a Great Humanitarian (Freeman & Hazen 1992); Elvis Presley: A Bio-bibliography (Hammontree 1985); Soldier Boy Elvis (Jones & Burke 1992); Forever Elvis (Taylor 1991); and Elvis Sixty-nine: The Return (Tunzi 1991).

Other books target fans as their audience: In Search of Elvis: a Fact-filled Seek and Find Adventure (Brown 1992), an Elvis version of the Where's Waldo series of books; Dad, I'm an Elvis Impersonator (Fagan 1991); Elvis Shrugged (McCray, Garcia, & Loren 1992), a three-part comic book series in which Elvis is a superhero who saves the world and has his way with Madonna; I Was Elvis Presley's Sheep (Owens & Wombacher 1989), a humorous account of people who worship Elvis; Elvis is Everywhere (Scherman 1992), a photo essay that reveals the ubiquitous nature of the image of Elvis throughout America; Elvis in Art (Taylor 1987), which displays several works of art by serious and humorous Elvis artists; Mondo Elvis (Peabody & Ebersole 1994), a collection of often irreverent
prose and poetry about Elvis; The Elvis Reader (Quain 1991); Elvis and Kathy (Westmoreland 1987); and Mystery Train (Wojahn 1990).

Some Elvis-themed books appeal to fans and funs alike: The Girl Who Loved Elvis (Mee 1993); Elvis World (Stern & Stern 1990), which catalogues thousands of Elvis items; Death of Elvis (Thompson 1992); Elvis Presley Reference Guide and Discography (Whisler 1981); Elvis Presley Boulevard (Winegardner 1987); Elvis: His Life from A to Z (Worth & Tamerius 1992); Elvis Calls His Mother After the Ed Sullivan Show (Charters 1992); Elvis in Oz: New Stories and Poems from the Hollins Creative Writing Program (Flinn & Garrett 1992); and my personal favorites Elvis Sightings (Eicher 1993), which details eye-witness accounts of people seeing Elvis after his death and Is Elvis Alive? (Giorgio-Brewer 1987), the controversial book that prompted a rash of Elvis sightings as well as promoted the theory that Elvis faked his death as part of an FBI cover-up operation.

Fandom and Popular Culture

Another area of scholarly research about Elvis involves those individuals who involve themselves with Elvis texts: fans and funs. Fans are people who actively engage in the construction of their own identity through their textualizing practices regarding popular culture. Whittenberger-Keith (1992) defines fans as:

a collectivity of people who interact together on the basis of a specific media artifact. . . . The distinguishing features of fandom
include the intense involvement of the viewers/fans and the interaction of the fans not just with the artifact but with one another (131-132).

Most studies of fan culture present all fans as similar except for the particular object of their fanaticism, and usually in a very negative light (Jenkins 1992, 12-17). However there have been some studies of fans which attempt to account for fan behaviors from cultural or rhetorical perspectives.

Whittenberger-Keith's study of fans of the television series Beauty and the Beast posits that fandom is an essentially rhetorical construct since, "one purpose of rhetoric is to create and sustain community through the use of discourse and other symbolic forms" (1992, 132). She adds that fan communities are sustained through "interpretive interaction" (142). Fans, writes Whittenberger-Keith, assume roles, rehearse and reaffirm "cherished values" (143), and enact "the process of community building" (149).

In Textual Poachers, Jenkins (1992) also addresses fandom's role in constructing "an interpretive community" (2) and in defining its own culture. Much of his study attempts to catalogue the "material signs of fans culture's productivity" (3). Throughout his study he stresses that fandom "exists in the 'borderlands' between mass culture and everyday life" (3) and is a culture that, in spite of its constant state of flux, is to some degree coherent.
Bacon-Smith's (1992) study of female science fiction fans takes a decidedly feminist approach to understanding and interpreting fan culture. She focuses on fandom as an empowering activity for a particular group of women *Star Trek* fans. She identifies the goals of her study as: "(1) to explore how fan fiction acts as a language, and (2) to explore how fan fiction acts as narrative to organize experience" (303).

Of special interest to me and my study was *Power PlaYS, Power Works*, by John Fiske (1993). Fiske used Elvis fandom as one instance of how people localize power in their everyday lives to negotiate reality and work within a hegemonic system to achieve their own goals. Although only a portion of the book focused on Elvis fans, I found his discussion of Elvis fans to be helpful. Since my study addresses issues of power in relation to fan activities, I later refer to his terminology as a way of explaining the power relations between fans and funs. Also, Fiske is the only other scholar who has mentioned people who do things with Elvis but are not fans; he briefly referred to such people as "anti-fans" but never expanded the implications of such a group's existence. Fiske's "anti-fans" are precursors to my "funs."

"Funs" are another group of people who choose to interact with Elvis. Funs are people who, like fans, use Elvis as the basis for their interaction with each other, but, unlike fans, they are irreverent in their attitude towards the King of Rock-n-Roll. Because making fun of fans is
the primary pastime of this group I refer to them as "funs" throughout this study. Funs take pleasure in watching, interacting with, and often ridiculing fans, but have no desire to become fans themselves.

Like fan culture, fun culture produces and is produced by performance. The only ethnographic study to address specific Elvis-related practices by people who are not Elvis fans was by Howard and Heaton (1993). We offered an insider's account of the folk practices of a group of graduate students who use Elvis in their annual Mardi Gras celebration. Although we did not use the term "fun" when discussing our roles in the celebration, we did specify that we were not Elvis fans.

No other studies about Elvis or fans have examined performance. Furthermore, my study differs from other studies of fans, although I agree with many general observations about fan culture. First, these studies are usually text-centered in their approaches to fandom. Each study focuses on fan textual production as the sign of the culture's identity. However, my study focuses on fandom as realized through performance. Second, Whittenberger-Keith foregrounds interaction with other fans as a distinguishing factor of fandom. However, my study differentiates between types of fans, only some of whom require interaction to realize their cultural identity as fans. Third, these studies investigate only the activities of media fans. However, my study also addresses the relationship between fans and a group I identify as "funs."
Performance and Identity

Although the studies mentioned here are interesting and relevant examinations of the Elvis phenomena, none addresses the issues raised when viewing Elvis fans and funs from a performance perspective. Although varied in its subject matter and approach, the performance perspective is one that focuses on human action that is constructed, self-reflexive, and contextually-based. Performance, according to Bauman (1992), is:

a specially marked mode of action, one that sets up or represents a special interpretive frame within which the act of communication is to be understood. In this sense of performance, the act of communication is put on display, objectified, lifted out to a degree from its contextual surroundings, and opened up to scrutiny by an audience. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of communication and gives license to the audience to regard it and the performer with special intensity. Performance makes one communicatively accountable; it assigns to an audience the responsibility of evaluating the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer’s accomplishment (44).

Through performance, individuals take on roles and, in doing so, create for themselves and others culturally-meaningful representations. Performing such representations allows individuals and groups a way, an agency through which, to negotiate their cultural identities. Performance gives people a way to enact significant issues within their lives. HopKins (1995) notes the power of performance to serve as a form of agency when she writes:

Performance negotiates not only the performer’s relation to the role but the nature of the performance site. . . . audiences, both
spectators and researchers, construe various kinds of sites for performance, such as sites of performance as cultural memory, performance as participatory ritual, performance as social commentary. These categories are negotiations between performer and performed, performer and audience, perhaps even between participating performers. The categories are construed, not given. (233)

Performance, then, provides rich insights about how meaning is constituted and contested within a particular culture.

Furthermore, the categories being negotiated through performance often cannot be separated from the performance itself. In Power and Performance (1990), Fabian states:

What has not been given sufficient consideration is that about large areas and important aspects of culture no one, not even the native, has information that can simply be called up and expressed in discursive statements. This sort of knowledge can be represented—made present—only through action, enactment, or performance. . . . (6)

He suggests that performance is more than a tool to express personal and cultural values but an integral part of the human experience. As such, performance itself should be foregrounded in studies of human expression.

Also writing about the need to study performance, Strine, Long, and HopKins (1990) urge researchers to resist current scholarly practices.

They write:

[For] most research in interpretation and performance studies to date performance functions as an enabling 'pre-text' and/or enabled 'post-text' in relation to the construction of the primary research text. As a consequence, research texts in the field have tended to presuppose or anticipate, rather than feature, actual performance events and practices in their discussion (184).
Although such studies mentioned above are valuable forms of research, for my study the research is performance. By writing a critical ethnography I am featuring "actual performance events and practices" while simultaneously performing my role as ethnographer.

Limitations of the Study

To achieve the goals of this study, I have limited its scope. This study is not an example of traditional ethnography, but is instead a critical post-ethnographic description of a particular site of performance. By assuming a critical post-ethnographic stance, I am participating in an ethnographic practice that Dorst (1989) sees as significant given the current crisis of representation in ethnography. According to Dorst (1989):

advanced consumer culture has hardly been accounted for at all in its local specificities. At least one opportunity open to the displaced ethnographer, then, is to locate himself/herself as a reader of the immediate institutional citations through which a specific Site is constituted in a particular historical context (206).

By concentrating my critical post-ethnographic research on the particular performances of Elvis fans and funs, I am limiting the scope of this study. Without such a limitation, "[t]here is just too much stuff—forces, institutions, social relations and roles, and so on" (Dorst 1989, 2) to address concerning "a particularly vivid staging of advanced consumer culture" (Dorst 1989, 3).

I further limit the study by choosing only three performances of Elvis textuality. First, I want to examine performances in which both fans and
funs participate simultaneously. Second, based on several years of participant-observation of these performances, I use the performances that involve the largest number of fans and funs. Third, each performance uses a variety of material and verbal cultural texts, thus providing me with multiple examples of Elvis textuality in action. Fourth, these three performances are the major "drawing cards," according to fans, funs, and the marketing information I have read, that help make Elvis a site of performance.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The next chapter addresses issues of power, play, performance and postmodern identity in more detail. I discuss the particular theories that have informed my critical ethnographic stance as well as expand on how these theories relate to fans and funs. Chapters Three through Five detail three specific case studies of performance of Elvis texts in which both fans and funs participate: the Candlelight Service commemorating the anniversary of Elvis's death, which foregrounds a processual text; the tour of the Graceland mansion, which foregrounds a verbal text; and shopping in the souvenir shops across from the mansion, which foregrounds material texts. Ethnographic descriptions of each event are filtered through the lens of performance to highlight specific instances of clash between fan and fun cultures.
Following Goodall's (1991) suggestion that one way to implicate the writer/ethnographer in the context of the writing is through "experimentation with alternative genres for writing scholarship, including drama, dialogue, fiction, interview, and debate" (26), I write each case study in a different style: Chapter Three describes the performance of the Candlelight Vigil in the form of a narrative; Chapter Four describes the performance of the Graceland Mansion Tour in the form of a screenplay; Chapter Five describes the performance of shopping for souvenirs at Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings in the form of a scrapbook and a brochure. Writing the case studies in these styles simulates my lived experience of the performance in a written form. Additionally, inserting myself into the context of the performance "will provide richer testimony to the complexity and connectedness of how meanings are constructed through communication" (Goodall 1991, 26).

In the final chapter I synthesize interpretations of the three case studies and offer my conclusions gained from this study. I also examine the theoretical implications of viewing cultural performances from a postmodern perspective. Next I assess the methodology I used to write this critical ethnography. Finally, I address issues for future research.
CHAPTER TWO  
SITING ELVIS: POWER, PLAY, POSTMODERN IDENTITY

"Anywhere you are, Elvis, is home." This statement is more than a simplistic sentiment from the 1990 Candlelight Service Program; this statement posits Elvis as a place, a site where people come together to perform Elvis. My use of the term "site" is similar to Dorst's (1989) in that neither of us refers to a specific, geographical region, but to "an image, an idea, an ideological discourse, an assemblage of texts" (3). The reasoning behind such a definition of site is summarized well by King (1992) when he writes:

Postmodernism has brought a stronger awareness that the site of speech is also the locus of a network of speech practices sanctioning what can and cannot be said, who may and may not speak, what topics may be introduced and in what order, what constitutes evidence, and which forms of deference are appropriate. . . . We have ignored covert sites of discourse that are outside the observation of the dominant groups or those noninstitutional sites that are places of struggle between groups in order to determine whose rules will become sovereign (7).

Elvis is a site where individuals struggle to articulate their own meanings and uses of Elvis textuality. As Fiske (1993) writes:

His body and his body of fans were sites where repressed forces within the social body could be experienced as alive and kicking. They were sites where the socially general and abstract could be turned into the particularity, vitality and public visibility of actual people and actual behavior. That is why Elvis mattered so much (107).

In this study I position Elvis as a site of cultural invention, a site of touristic practice, a site of postmodern identity construction, each of which
contributes to viewing Elvis as a site of performance. In the next three chapters I offer case studies that, when read as fragments of a larger text, actively work to create/describe/evoke Elvis as a site of performance. In this chapter, I suggest a context in which to interpret the three case studies in the following chapters. I first discuss my usage of the term "postmodern" and summarize the conditions/events that gave rise to "postmodernity." Next, I link the discussion of postmodernism to performance by tracing the development of theories of identity construction. I then expand my discussion of performance from Chapter One and detail the importance of power and play regarding fan and fun as performance.

**POSTMODERNITY AND IDENTITY**

The meaning of the term "postmodern" has been debated by scholars for the past decade or so (Connor 1989; Kellner 1995). To situate my study within a growing discourse about "postmodernism" I will first discuss my use of the term. Although no single definition of the term seems adequate to me, I find Kellner's (1995) discussion of the misuse of the term fascinating. Kellner posits that much of what tries to pass as postmodern theory is "an often confused attempt to distinguish oneself from the commitments of modern theory, or to appear hip and cool" (1995, 46). Although I personally have no problem with someone using the term to appear hip and cool, in this study I use the term to denote that
"we are living between a now aging modern era and a new postmodern era that remains to be adequately conceptualized, charted, and mapped" (Kellner 1995, 49). If, as Denzin (1997) suggests, we are living in a time in which the crises of representation and legitimacy are leading us to a renewed interest in the past, then postmodernity could be described as:

The sense of 'betweeness,' or transition [that] requires that one grasp the continuities with the past as well as the novelties of the present and future. Living in a borderland between the old and the new creates tension, insecurity, and even panic, thus producing a troubling and uncertain cultural and social environment (Kellner 1995, 49).

Such an uncertain environment corresponds with many of the widely touted characteristics of postmodernism: a sense of blankness, a collage of styles, pastiche, an affinity for reproductions, a nostalgic longing for a past that is no longer believed to be "real" (Baudrillard 1968; Connor 1989; Gitlin 1989; Jameson 1985).

According to Jameson (1985), these characteristics developed as a result of a shift in global economic structures and the growth of multinational capitalism. Since World War II, the number of people who practiced "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen 1953) accelerated as the global economic system entered into its third or late period (Jameson 1984) marked by:

the production, exchange, marketing, and consumption of cultural forms—considered in their widest sense and therefore including advertising, television, and the mass media generally—as a central focus and expression of economic activity. Here, images, styles, and
representations are not the promotional accessories to economic products, they are the products themselves" (Connor 1989, 46).

Furthermore, these global economic changes lead to increased commodification, not only economic but cultural as well.

These economic shifts, coupled with a loss of the sense of self as well as the loss of a sense of history serve to fragment the self into "linguistic island[s]" (Jameson 1985, 114). As Carlson (1996), citing Geertz's essay, "Blurred Genres" (1983) summarizes:

concerns with continuous traditions, singular and stable cultures, coherent structures, and stable identities have been largely replaced by a concept of "identity" and "culture" as constructed, relational, and in constant flux, with the porous or contested borders replacing centers as the focus of interest--because it is at these borders that meaning is continually being created and negotiated. This clearly relates to the reality of the post-colonial world, with its new patterns of global communication, multinational corporations, and the continual movement and displacement of peoples. (Carlson 1996, 188)

Identity is no longer stable because we live in "a perpetual present" (Jameson 1985, 125) that denies the formation of a substantial self, individually, socially, and culturally. In this sense, identity in the postmodern era is made of a series of multiple selves, none of which are the "real" self.

This constructed self is not the "real" self of modernism, but is instead what Baudrillard (1983) calls a simulacrum of reality; the postmodern self is an assemblage, or bricolage, of illusory images of what a self is supposed to be. We can no longer know who we are because
who we are is mediated through cultural consumption, the news, MTV, fashion magazines, recycled images from television and advertising, nostalgic longings for a time when we could know who we were, which was also an illusion. Since the self is not real, but an amalgam of images, texts, and styles, we are free to actively construct selves from these pieces of cultural capital. The self is a commodity made of fragments. The agency by which one constructs one's self, individually, socially, and culturally, is performance (Carlson 1996; Conquergood 1991).

Several theorists have postulated how identity is realized through performance. Generally, performances of identity can be divided into three levels or "magnitudes" (Schechner 1988): performativity, which includes performances of seemingly involuntary behaviors such as facial expressions, eating, and neurological processes; theatricality, which includes performances that enter into the social realm, such as day-to-day interactions with other people, "everyday life" performances, and traditional theatrical productions; and narrativity, which includes performances on the level of cultural practice, such as rituals and ceremonies in which participants enact their roles as members of a group.

My study is concerned with the last two magnitudes of performance; my case studies continually move between these two levels of performance. Fan and fun performances during Elvis Week involve not only the social but also the cultural levels of performance. Fans and funs
are engaged in building social and cultural identities for themselves through these performances.

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman discusses a sociological view of performance. Taking "all the world's a stage" as his metaphor for social interactions, Goffman, like Burke (1945; 1950), explicates how we enact various socially constructed roles in our daily lives. At this level of performance, the roles that individuals play situate them in relation to as well as differentiate them from other people. For example, in my daily life, my socially constructed roles include teacher, friend, son, student, fiance, and cat feeder, among others. My identity is constructed out of the fragments of these various roles. Goffman includes as "performance" "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (1959, 22). This definition of performance makes interaction between a performer and an audience integral to marking behaviors as performance, although the performer need not be aware that s/he is performing.

Another level of performance is the cultural level. From a cultural perspective, identity is constructed through the performance of rituals (MacCannell 1992; Schechner 1985; Turner 1969, 1982), spectacles (Geertz 1973; MacAlloon 1984; Manning 1983), foodways (Douglas 1984), dance (Kaepppler 1992), as well as through cultural artifacts such as
clothing (Enninger 1992), art (Appadurai 1986; Clifford 1988; Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1981), and furnishings (Bronner 1986). Performances at the cultural level do not necessarily enact an individual's identity as much as a group's identity by reifying through performance a culture's values and beliefs. Theorists have identified two different categories of performance at the cultural level: social dramas and cultural performances. Both have a dramatic structure that positions participants as performers who enact their culture's beliefs and values.

Cultural theorist and anthropologist Victor Turner is noted for his work with describing the structure of social dramas and cultural performances. Turner owes much of his theorizing about how culture operates dramatically to two other theorists, Arnold van Gennep and Milton Singer. From van Gennep (1960) Turner borrowed and expanded the notion of the ritual process (Turner 1969) which has three steps: separation from one's everyday world; a liminal or transitional stage between two roles; and reintegration back into the everyday world. Turner expanded van Gennep's three step process into a four part theory of cultural activities as social dramas: first a breach occurs in the current cultural system; next a crisis develops as a result of the breach; then a redress of the crisis is attempted; and finally either the crisis is resolved and participants reintegrate or a permanent schism results. Significantly, Turner focused "not so much [on] the 'set-apartness' of performance, but
its 'in-betweenness,' its function as a transition between two stages of more settled or more conventional cultural activity" (Carlson 1996:20).

Turner also owes a debt to Milton Singer whose concept of "cultural performance" (1959) has received wide acceptance due in large part to Turner's adaptation of the term. Whereas social dramas are instances of cultural redefinition that occur during moments of crisis, cultural performances are instances of cultural reaffirmation that occur in moments of crisis or stability within a community. Turner lists five characteristics that mark an event as a cultural performance: (1) spatial and temporal framing; (2) structured ordering of events; (3) providing occasions for communitas; (4) heightening displays; (5) advanced publicizing and preparation (Turner 1986, 42).

Fuoss, in his discussion of how communities enact cultural performances, writes:

Performances produce communities by articulating their external boundaries and marking their internal divisions. Performances articulate the limits of community by constructing, maintaining, reinforcing, or renegotiating the boundary between community and other, insider and outsider, "us" and "them." . . . performances articulate community by putting into circulation particular interpretations of community . . . by enacting communal relationships in the very process of gathering persons for a performance event and engaging those persons either as actors in or audience members for a performance. In short, performance may either represent or enact the internal and external articulation of community, or it may do both simultaneously (1995, 93-94).

Through performance, members of a community "realize their culture" (Fabian 1990, 18) in "a dialectical relationship [that] exists between
performance and community whereby communities not only produce but are produced by performances" (Fuoss 1995, 80). Furthermore, when Conquergood refers to "the preeminently rhetorical nature of cultural performance--ritual, ceremony, celebration, festival, parade, pageant, feast. . . . as a special form of public address, rhetorical agency" (1991, 188), he addresses the rhetorical function of cultural performances, such as those practiced by fans and funs, as performance. Cultural performances also enact political ideologies supported by members of a culture. As Bauman notes:

Recent performance studies in anthropology, as in the work of Roger Abrahams, Clifford Geertz, Richard Schechner, and Victor Turner, demonstrate that cultural performances may be primary modes of discourse in their own right, casting in sensuous images and performative action rather than in ordered sets of explicit, verbally articulated values or beliefs, people's understandings of ultimate realities and the implications of those realities for action (1992, 47).

In this sense, cultural performances are sites of ideological struggle between members of a culture and between members of co-cultures.

Cultural performances serve many functions for their participants, most significantly as the agency for constructing cultural identity in the postmodern era. Cultural identity construction in the postmodern era involves the active selection and assembly of textual fragments into a new text, the text of the self. Here I use text in an expanded sense; a text is no longer merely a collection of words on a page. According to King (1992):
postmodern critics refuse to countenance the text in the old way; that is, they do not honor it as a discrete object of study. They do not value it as a distillation of a writer's or speaker's richly matured thought. Instead, they view it as a rapidly blurring snapshot or an inchoate series of images rapidly being rewritten, annotated, scribbled over, and revised. In fact, the postmodern view of the text exists in oppositional counterpoint to the modernist. Whereas the text has been viewed as an artistic exemplar, postmodernists define it as a fragment or trace of a larger dialogue. Instead of seeing the text as a product of an individual orator or writer, postmodernists see it as a product of social collaboration. Whereas the text was innocently assumed to speak with a single voice, postmodern critics call attention to the multivoiced or polysemous nature of the text.

The text of the self is assembled as "a social invention rather than the composition of any single individual" (King 1992, 7). This process is not divorced from power relations within and between cultures; how one assembles the fragments and which fragments one selects to assemble is an act of negotiation.

I use the term culture to denote "the texts and practices of everyday life" and "as a terrain of conflict and contestation. It is seen as a key site for the production and reproduction of the social relations of everyday life" (Storey 1996, 2). Within culture there is "a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups. It is this which makes culture ideological" (Storey 1996, 4). Identity is constructed from the cultural fragments circulating in popular culture. Individuals produce a self through the act of cultural consumption (Jameson 1991).
When individuals, as members of cultural groups, construct identities for themselves, they are engaged in political activities that "can be empowering to subordinate and resistant to dominant understandings of the world. But this is not to say that popular culture is always empowering and resistant" (Storey 1996, 5). Sometimes consumption is passive. Sometimes consumption, even when active, supports the ideology of the dominant or what Fiske (1993) refers to as the "power bloc," those people/institutions who control the modes of production within a society. But consumption is often associated with the leisure class attempt to create identities and status for themselves in a process called "conspicuous consumption" (Veblen 1953) in which identity and status is established not by one's social or economic position within society but by how and how much one consumes cultural products.

Cultural theorists such as de Certeau (1984), Jenkins (1992), and Fiske (1989a; 1989b; 1993) posit that when people consume cultural capital they reappropriate the texts for their own use, thus making them producers of other cultural texts. At this level of reading, groups form what Fish calls "interpretive communities," groups of people "who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (1980, 171). These reading/writing strategies are formed as a result of social interactions with other people.
Although Fish uses interpretive communities to refer to the reading of literary texts, interpretive communities also form to read popular culture texts. Participation in fandom often leads to the formation of an interpretive community. The texts produced by interpretive communities promote the worldview and values held by members of the community and quite often subvert ideologies held by those who are not members of the interpretive community. Membership in an interpretive community provides opportunities for performance of that group affiliation in the form of social and cultural performances such as those displayed by fans and funs during International Elvis Tribute Week.

I contend that the performances of fans and funs are "processes of self-inscription, indigenous self-documentation, and endlessly self-reflexive simulation" (Dorst 1989, 2). Through these performances, fans and funs reinscribe power relations within and between their cultures as both a form of play and of power negotiations. Performance is the agency through which cultural identity is constructed.

**PLAY AND POWER**

In his article, "Poetics, Play, Process, and Power: The Performative Turn in Anthropology," Conquergood offers four key words that address "[t]he shift from thinking about performance as an Act of culture to thinking about performance as an Agency of culture" (1989, 82). My study focuses on two of these key words--play and power.
Play

As Conquergood (1989) states, "[a]ppreciation of play has helped ethnographers of performance understand the unmasking and unmaking tendencies that keep cultures open and in a continuous state of productive tension" (83). I believe this "state of productive tension" is exhibited in the cultural performances in which both fans and funs participate.

Schechner, in The Future of Ritual examines play, or more precisely "playing," as "the underlying, always there continuum of experience" (1993, 42) "because the process of making performances does not so much imitate playing as epitomize it" (Schechner 1993, 41). Schechner further encourages others to:

- investigate playing, the ongoing, underlying process of off-balancing, loosening, bending, twisting, reconfiguring, and transforming—the permeating, eruptive/disruptive energy and mood below, behind, and to the sides of focused attention. . . . The questions we need to ask are: how, when, and why is playing invited and sustained? How, when, and why is playing denied or repressed? is playing categorically antistructural—that is does it always take the opposite position or role to whatever is happening at the time it erupts or is invited? is playing autonomous—that is, will it 'just happen' if nothing else blocks, cancels, or represses it? (1993, 43)

In my study, I examine how fans and funs use play as a way of constructing their identities. Additionally, I note how fans and funs conflate the distinctions between work and play.

Power

In my study, I investigate power relations within and between fan and fun cultures as exhibited through their cultural performances. I use the
term power to refer to attempts by members of each culture to establish
and secure their cultural boundaries and identities for their own edification
as well as in opposition to other cultural boundaries and identities in
society. The questions regarding power are:

How does performance reproduce, legitimate, uphold, or
challenge, critique, and subvert ideology? . . . How are performances
situated between forces of accommodation and resistance? And
how do they simultaneously reproduce and struggle against
hegemony? (Conquergood 1989, 84)

These questions are compounded when asked of two seemingly
interdependent co-cultures such as fans and funs, especially when both co-
cultures participate in the same performances. Nevertheless, asking these
questions of fan and fun performances reveals the ideologies of each
culture and the power relations between and within each culture.

**FAN AND FUN ROLES**

Within a macro-cultural framework, the individual self is
commodified and fragmented into various roles within culture. When we
enact cultural performances, we reify those cultural roles with which we
identify; when we enact social roles within those cultural performances,
we can reify or subvert the larger cultural system by how we perform
those roles on the micro-cultural level. There is a tension between the self
in culture and the self in everyday life that is amplified when notions of
power are implicated. These social and cultural roles are constructed
through the performances themselves. The roles are constituted
dialogically, as a negotiation between members of fan and fun cultures and as a reinscription of roles defined within popular culture. The performers and audience both contribute to the construction and reception of these roles.

The roles played by participants in these cultural performances are as varied as the array of people participating. The participants include all those people involved in the "creation" and execution of a performance: authors, directors, viewers, people "behind-the-scenes." However, "the pre-eminent part of a performance is usually taken to be that played by 'the performer(s)'" (Finnegan 1992, 96). Performers are those individuals who enact, present, represent, embody and/or form a text or texts for an audience within a specific context of behavioral interactions. Throughout history, performers have garnered much of the attention of theatre scholars. Nevertheless, the importance and functions of performers have "been taken for granted in ways which now need to be looked at more critically" (Finnegan 1992, 96).

Finnegan proffers several questions researchers of performance might investigate concerning performers:

One concerns the performers' actions within the performance. They may be acting singly; in pairs; in a small or a large group; interacting or exchanging with other single or collective performers as leader, follower, or equal; overlapping or interchanging with more audience-like roles. . . . There are also questions about how performers carry out their role(s): relying mainly on words and gestures, or also exploiting music and dance; purporting to deliver works by others; creative or otherwise in the sense of composing during or before
performance. . . . Performers are also of certain ages, gender, social position, training, reputation and competence. . . . The relationship of the performers to the general artistic division of labour, their economic position, or their place in the social hierarchy too may be significant for the performance and its local meaning in the large sense of the term. At the very least they form the background to any full understanding of the performance and its expected conventions (1992, 95).

Furthermore, Fabian directs researchers to look at how "the people who perform relate to each other and to their society at large in terms of power" (1990, 17). For this reason, I believe a discussion of the performer as integral to the entire performance process, rather than as a featured aspect of the performance, is necessary. Nevertheless, in order to discuss how performers are integrally tied to the process itself, I will first discuss the various performers involved in performances during International Elvis Tribute Week at Graceland. I then describe several roles enacted by fans and funs during these performances.

Tour guides, sales people, security guards, bus drivers, and restaurant staff are the most highly visible performers who "officially" perform roles at Graceland—that is, they are paid by Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE) to enact these roles. Other performers are the sales people and restaurant staff who work in the "unofficial" gift shops near Graceland. These performers play pivotal roles in the cultural performances enacted at Graceland every day. However, the performers I watched the most during my visits to Graceland were the fans and funs. All these performers, the official and unofficial workers, the fans, and the
funs, are integral to the performances during International Elvis Tribute Week, and each has a different reason for participating in these performances. The workers perform because of their economic needs; they need jobs to earn money to live. But fans and funs perform for different reasons; they perform their roles as consumers of things and of ideologies. But more than that, they perform their roles as fans and funs as part of cultural identification. By identifying fans and funs as cultures, I focus on the activities and ideologies that bring group members together and that mark someone as an in-group member or an out-group member. I do not, however, present fans as a monolithic culture. The variety of roles played within fan and fun cultures are constructed dialogically as a series of negotiations between fans, funs and in relation to other roles played in society. On a larger scale, all fans and funs play the role of tourist when they go to Graceland, but at the micro-cultural level, roles played by fans and by funs can be differentiated by noting the variety of subject positions fans and funs enact through their cultural performances.

FANS

I encountered examples of all types of fans at Graceland during International Elvis Tribute Week. Although one fan may vastly differ from other fans, each experiences fan culture based on the performances s/he chooses to enact. Fan knowledge of Elvis is:

produced and validated experientially in the ways in which his fans saw, heard, and felt him. Such popular ways of knowing are lived,
situated and believed, and operate quite differently, both socially and epistemologically, from abstracted, generalized, objective knowledge (Fiske 1993, 108).

Thus, for fans, performance is the agency by which they realize their cultural identity. I believe that fan culture is as varied as the number of fans who participate in fandom. To illustrate the differences among fans, I have devised a typology of fan roles. This typology of fans is based on my observations; they are not "native" terms used by fans to describe themselves, with the exception of "hard core fans." Even within the larger culture of fandom, there are boundaries that designate/mark someone as a type of fan, each fan in the culture plays a different role within the fan community. The three main types of fan roles are hardcore, softcore, and internalized.

Hardcore Fans

Within the larger fan culture, the fans who display the most devotion to and close association with the object of their fanaticism are generally designated as hardcore fans. If fandom has a hierarchy at all, hardcore fans are at the top. Hardcore fandom is further divided into particular categories of behavior; hardcore fans could be reactive, proactive, or fixated.
Reactive Hardcore Fans

Reactive hardcore fans are those fans whose fandom manifests itself in reaction to some force outside the fan group—for example, fans of television series such as Star Trek, Cagney and Lacey, and Beauty and the Beast have all "saved" the object of their devotion from cancellation by launching letter writing campaigns aimed at network executives. Many Elvis fans are reactive hardcore fans. When stories about how Elvis faked his death began to appear in tabloids in 1988, some hardcore fans lashed out at the tabloid publishers, demanding that they stop printing lies about the king. But even before he died, Elvis fans reacted in supportive ways to defend Elvis as a good person, not a "young punk" or a "sex fiend."

Proactive Hardcore Fans

Proactive hardcore fans are those fans who do not wait for an inciting incident to take action in support of their object of devotion. Proactive hardcore fans manifest their fandom by starting or joining fan clubs, by writing or contributing to fan magazines often referred to as "'zines" (Bacon-Smith 1992), by doing charitable work, and by interacting positively not only with other fans but also with funs.

Most of the Elvis fans I met would fit this category. A large number of participants in International Elvis Tribute Week are actively involved in fan clubs. The fan clubs sponsor charity events such as the Elvis 5K Run for Cerebral Palsy and contribute to charitable organizations such as the
Elvis Presley Memorial Trauma center at Baptist Hospital in Memphis.

Perhaps the most visible sign of proactive hardcore Elvis fan activity is the official United States Postal Service's Elvis stamp. Fans joined together to petition the U. S. Postal Service to offer an Elvis stamp. Because of fan persistence and their ability to generate publicity and interest nationwide, the fans were successful. The Elvis stamp sold more than 124 million copies—more than any stamp in history (Associated Press International 1995). Fans are now actively working on a national "Elvis Day" holiday.

Fixated Hardcore Fans

The third type of hardcore fan is the Fixated Hardcore fan. These are fans who are completely consumed by their fandom. For these fans, their obsession has altered their perception of reality to such an extent that they often ignore real life obligations to pursue their love of some media object or person. Unfortunately, these are the fans that most non-fans think of when they think of fans. Some more extreme examples include "trekkers" who believe the characters and events of Star Trek are real, the crazed Madonna fan who stalked and threatened her, the female jury member who wore her "Starfleet" uniform to court everyday because she "always wears it on official occasions," or fans who have themselves surgically altered to resemble their favorite movie star. Hardcore fixated Elvis fans exist, although there are not as many as one might imagine. Some of them believe he is still alive because of an elaborate explanation of an FBI
coverup (Giorgio-Brewer 1987). Others dress like Elvis in their daily lives. Some communicate with him through psychic messages. Still others have abandoned their families to devote themselves to full-time Elvis worship.

**Softcore Fans**

Softcore fans are not as publicly effusive as hardcore fans, yet they do see themselves as fans. One type of softcore fan is the devoted viewer of a television series, someone who rearranges his/her schedule to participate in a ritual viewing of a show, either alone or with friends. Another type of softcore fan is the closeted fan who hides his/her devotion from others so no one will mistakenly think s/he is fixated. Examples of this type of fan include male soap opera viewers who secretly watch traditionally "female" shows, female pornography fans who secretly watch/read traditionally "male" texts, and even my own (until now) hidden experience as a James Dean fan. Unlike the hardcore fans, softcore fans do not need interaction with other fans to achieve maximum pleasure, but they may not have an aversion to interacting with others. A soft core Elvis fan might own several Elvis albums or videotapes, might go to Graceland on a lark, or might identify his/herself as a fan, but distinguish his/herself from a hardcore fixated fan. This type of fan might admit to being a fan, but will make certain that s/he delineates him/herself from hardcore fans.
**Internalized Fans**

This role is hypothetical. Other than myself, I have not observed anyone who fits this category of fandom. Internalized fans are those fans who never interact with other fans. In fact, when questioned, these fans might not even admit to being fans. These fans have a psychological desire or admiration for the object of their fanaticism, but they make no public commitment. Some are inhibited by interacting with hardcore fans. Others are inhibited by a fear of funs. Still others only fully realize their fandom if they can keep it to themselves—for example, a horror fiction fan whose delight comes from getting scared while reading alone. If such Elvis fans exist, they do not, by definition, make themselves known. An example of an Internalized Elvis fan would be someone who secretly likes Elvis movies, but who would never rent one at a video store, because then the sales clerk would know s/he liked Elvis. If an Elvis movie happened to come on television, s/he would watch it if alone. Also, if asked, this type of fan pretends to be a fun or a non-fan.

These various roles played by fans in the performances of International Elvis Tribute Week assist fans in identifying and stratifying members of their own culture. Conversely, the large number of fan roles allow funs to more easily infiltrate and interact with fan culture in these performances for their own purposes.
In Fiske's *Power Plays, Power Works*, he mentions "anti-fans" (1993, 184) and refers to them as those who:

- distinguish themselves from fans. Though both may come from subordinated social classes, the anti-fans may tacitly and temporally use power-bloc knowledge (and thus align themselves with interests which in other domains of their lives would conflict with their own) to establish horizontal identities of difference rather than of communitas (Fiske 1993, 184).

My term for anti-fans is funs. Based on my observations and discussions with several funs, I believe their goal is to attain pleasure from watching and interacting with fans without becoming fans themselves. As Fiske suggests, funs enjoy noting the differences between themselves and fans, as if they believed "I'm better than these people." But I also believe funs do what they do out of a sense of curiosity or as an aspect of fun playfulness. At any rate, I have, through participant-observation, identified several stages a fun might go through when encountering fan culture:

1. Initial recognition of "otherness"
2. Curious interest in the other
3. Covert observation from a distance
   a. Observe behaviors
   b. Learn some passing information
4. Covert observation in close proximity
   a. Move among group
   b. Use/test information gained from observation
5. More overt attempt to interact with group
6. Overt questioning of fans
7. Attempts to disguise self as fan
8. Begin to detach from other culture
9. Judgement of other culture
10. Converse with other funs about your judgement

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11. Exhibit overt fun behaviors in presence of funs
12. When supported, exhibit fun behavior among fans

This particular twelve step program is not set in stone; some funs exhibit fun behavior all along and never attempt to disguise the self or interact with fans except when treating them as objects of play, not as a separate culture with its own values, beliefs, and norms.

But who are funs? Curious people on vacation, scholars, media, culture vultures, townies, Graceland workers, gen xers and 13ers, writers, poets, singers, impersonators, tourists—anyone who makes an attempt to encounter fan culture but not an attempt to become a fan. Fun junkies or textual scavengers or textual scavengers or textual commodity brokers or textual carpetbaggers or whatever simile implies use and gratification but no commitment.

Just as identifying several types of fan roles is important to understanding the power structure within fan culture, I also identify several types of fun roles to describe the power structure within fun culture. Again, I have generated this typology of funs based on my observations; these are not "native" terms used by funs themselves. I found these terms useful as a researcher to help me describe observed behaviors of funs and to help me explicate the power relations within fun culture.
Observer Funs

This type of fun likes to watch fans interact with each other because of some sense of curiosity. S/he gains pleasure from remaining detached from fans. At Graceland, I noticed many people-watchers in the crowd surrounding Graceland Plaza. One person interviewed said, "I'm not a fan. We were just traveling through Memphis and thought we'd stop off here, see what it was. It's interesting—to see." If this type of fun ridicules fans, s/he waits until s/he is a safe distance from the fans.

Participant Observer Funs

These funs like to get involved. They go on the tours, buy souvenirs, take part in the Vigil, and gain their pleasure from doing things surrounded by fans. Some make an attempt at contact with fans, others try to pass as fans. If they ridicule fans, they do it quietly or wait until later.

Fan-Abusive Funs

This is the type of fun who enjoys openly ridiculing fans. S/he might point at odd looking fans and laugh. Often they walk around with strange looks on their faces, as if they were on Mars. Some wear offensive t-shirts that say "Dead Elvis." I saw one young man wearing a t-shirt with a drawing of Elvis's head on Napoleon's body. Still others are very vocally abusive to fans, and might have no problem calling a hardcore fan a "freak," "weirdo," "crazy," or some other derogatory term.
Ambivalent Funs

This type of fun is not as committed to fun activities as the participant observer or fan-abusive fun; s/he is a fence-sitter, neither wholeheartedly for or against fans. Perhaps this type of fun is actually an internalized fan who is afraid to "out" him/herself and so pretends to be a fun outwardly.

Transformed-Fan Funs

Some fans actually used to be fans, but because of a negative experience with the object of their devotion or because of a financial debt or because of a change of taste, s/he no longer considers him/herself a fan. This type of fun might have an ulterior motive when interacting with fans--to convert as many as possible away from fandom.

Scholar-funs

Some fans developed an interest in Elvis for academic reasons. As described in my review of literature, I am not the only person in academe who finds the phenomenon surrounding Elvis interesting from multiple academic perspectives. But scholar-funs exhibit more than a passing interest; they actually enjoy finding out more about such popular culture icons as Elvis, as well as about the people who use popular culture texts in their everyday lives.

For various reasons, many people chose to interact with fans although they are not themselves fans. But for some reason, previous
research of fan culture has ignored the diversity of people who enjoy "doing things" with images and texts related to popular entertainment figures, but who are not fans. Logically, if there are people who designate themselves as fans, there must people who do not designate themselves as fans—how and when fans interact with these funs tells us as much about fan culture as concentrating on the fans does. Fans do not exist in a vacuum; they encounter people of varying degrees of belief and skepticism at different points along their journey into fandom. I find value in investigating these interactions.

**SUMMARY**

By viewing performance as the agency of culture, the means by which we negotiate and enact various roles within culture and various identities in postmodernity, this study describes the activities of two specific interpretive communities, groups of people who work together to establish identities and enact cultural performances, which in turn reify their status as community members. However, as the following case studies demonstrate, even though these performances enact postmodern identity, fans and funs still exist within a system that denies stable identities. By focusing on specific instances of postmodern identity construction, this study reveals that the empowering potential of performance must be documented at the micro level of cultural activity, not theorized only at the macro-cultural level. The following case studies
detail how fans and funs use various social and cultural performances to enact their postmodern identities. From the performance of a ritual such as the Candlelight Vigil to touring the Graceland mansion to shopping for Elvis souvenirs, fans and funs actively construct their identities.
CHAPTER THREE

VIGIL VIRGINS: THE ETHNOGRAPHER REMEMBERS

Life is full of firsts: first kiss; first car; first apartment; first marriage. This chapter is also full of firsts: the ethnographer’s first case study of his first visit to Graceland to participate in his first performance of the Candlelight Service, also known as the Vigil, which commemorates the anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley. The ethnographer examines how the Vigil serves to reify power relations between and within fan and fun cultures. Now, as he sits contemplating the events he has participated in and witnessed over the past six years, he thinks he has gained a new perspective on the Vigil that he did not possess during that very first experience. Armed with a library of books and articles, as well as with his field experiences, he feels ready to explicate and imagine those once strange performances and people. Scholarly notions about "work," "play," "ritual," "efficacy," "entertainment," "identity," and "power" swirl through his mind as he tries to focus on writing about fan and fun performances of the Vigil.

He has written this chapter in a narrative format that he has titled, "The Ethnographer Remembers." He uses the third-person limited-omniscient narrator as a distancing device throughout the narrative. By not writing about the Vigil in first-person, he believes he is able to create an ironic narrator who knows more than he did the first time he experienced the performance of the Vigil. He uses the narrator’s voice to
critique his own interpretation and understanding of the performance. Additionally, by writing this chapter in this style, he combines work, the scholarly inquiry of fan and fun performances, with play, the creative writing process. The narrative temporally shifts between the ethnographer in the "present" and the ethnographer's first time experience with the Vigil in the past. These temporal shifts help the ethnographer sort through his thoughts about how work and play in a ritual context affect postmodern identity construction.

He begins his journey into the past in a fictional present.

THE ETHNOGRAPHER REMEMBERS

10:17 P.M., August 15, Now

Standing among the crowd of swaying people, lifting his candle high, and singing along full-voiced to "Can't Help Falling in Love," the ethnographer feels an uneasy sense of pride; uneasy because he also feels like laughing at the people surrounding him. Why is he proud and of what? Is it because he has, for the sixth time, successfully infiltrated the foreign territory disguised as a local? Is it because no one suspects he is a spy? Or is it something else--is he actually becoming one of them?

The ethnographer lowers his candle and contemplates the path that has led him to this moment of personal inversion. Where did it all begin? If he had known then what he knows now, would he have done things

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differently? After all the rituals, all the interviews, all the reading, all the writing, where is his moment of epiphany? Somewhere along the path.

**Remembrance of Things Past**

In August of 1991 the ethnographer traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, during the week of August 8-17, International Elvis Tribute Week, to visit the home of the deceased King of Rock-n-Roll. As interested as he was in the life and death of Elvis, he had never had time or money enough to travel to Memphis and visit Elvis's home, the Graceland Mansion. Luckily, that year he could afford it, had two weeks between semesters, and had friends willing to make the pilgrimage with him. During their week of festivities, they planned to tour the mansion, observe the fans, drink on Beale Street, shop for Elvis souvenirs, and visit the Catherine the Great Exhibit. The climactic event of the week, however, would be participating in the Thirteenth Annual Candlelight Service at Graceland on August 15th, the anniversary eve of Elvis's death.

**Inside the Ethnographer's Journal**

The ethnographer remembers once writing in his journal: "The Candlelight Vigil demonstrates a particular instance of how performance is the 'Agency of culture' through which fans and funs enact various power relations within and between their cultural boundaries (Conquergood 1989, 82). Within the cultural boundaries of each group, performance of the Vigil enacts 'a dialectical
relationship [that] exists between performance and community whereby communities not only produce but are produced by performances' (Fuoss 1995, 80). Fans and funs use performance of the Vigil to enact their cultural identities as fans and funs, but without such performances, fan culture and fun culture might not exist. Between the cultural boundaries of each group, performance of the Vigil is 'situated between forces of accommodation and resistance' that enact political ideologies supported by each culture (Conquergood 1989, 84)."

Thinking of this passage in his journal takes the ethnographer back to a happier, simpler time, before he worried about power and postmodern identity, a time when fans were the main attraction of Graceland and knowledge of fun culture was a notion that he was just beginning to explore.

Somewhere In Time

The ethnographer first heard of the Candlelight Service in 1988 while watching the local news. Television station WBRZ in Baton Rouge sent a correspondent to Memphis to cover the event. Before that news broadcast, however, he was already interested in Elvis; he'd held an "Elvis is Alive" party and incorporated Elvis into the graduate student Mardi Gras celebration (Howard and Heaton 1993). After the news broadcast, he
began to wonder what the celebration at Graceland was really like and began to make plans to attend.

10:18 P.M., August 15. Now

As he stands in line awaiting the long trek to the grave, the ethnographer tries to formulate a theory about fan and fun participation in the Vigil year after year. He realizes that although the performance of the Vigil exists within multiple contexts (postmodernity, tourism and festival), from the perspectives of the performers/audience members (fans and funs), the specific context that is foregrounded in this particular performance is the context of ritual. The ethnographer notes that this event has developed a structure over the nineteen years since its inception that is followed each year and that exhibits ritualistic qualities. Although, traditionally, ethnographers associate rituals with "primitive" peoples or pre-industrial societies, Victor Turner argues that even in post-industrial societies performances of rituals and "the collective dimensions, communitas and structure, are to be found at all stages and levels of culture and society" (1969, 113). In modern societies, rituals are often expressed in the form of leisure-time activities that separate people from their working world (Turner 1982, 40). The ethnographer had this ritual process in his mind even before he first came to Graceland; he knew what he would be looking for all along; but why wasn't it clear to him yet?
What's the Plan, Dan?

In the summer of 1991, the ethnographer asked some friends if they would like to accompany him to Memphis and take part in the service. He asked Kathy to go because she was already interested in Elvis as well; he would classify her as a participant/observer fun, someone who likes to get in there and have fun along with the fans. Kerry, who was Kathy's boyfriend and the ethnographer's roommate at the time, also agreed to go; Kerry was more of a fan-abusive fun, the type who liked to openly ridicule fans. The final member of their little foursome was Tracy, who was neither fan nor fun but was interested in going on adventures. None of them had attended the event before, so they didn't really know what to expect.

Inside the Ethnographer's Journal: He Can Read It Like A Textbook

The ethnographer can see clearly how his study will take shape; he can read it like a textbook: "An application of Arnold van Gennep's ritual process and Turner's concept of a liminoid experience explicates how the Candlelight Service is best understood from a fan and fun perspective as occurring in a ritual context. Arnold van Gennep (1960) divides the performance of rituals into three steps: segregation, liminality, and reintegration.

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Segregation involves participants separating themselves from their everyday world. This separation occurs when participants are taken out into the wilderness, away from all other forms of society, or when participants find a place where they do not have to think about the structured world from which the ritual helps them escape. The former usually occurs with tribal rituals, but the latter is the type of segregation experienced by many of the participants in the Candlelight Service. Elvis fans and many funs leave their homes to be a part of the festivities in Memphis. But perhaps more importantly from a tourist perspective, during segregation tourists leave one place to congregate in a particular tourist sight.

Segregation in the context of a tourist ritual involves a process of sight sacralization (MacCannell 1989, 42). This process involves five stages: naming, framing/elevation, enshrinement, mechanical reproduction, and social reproduction (MacCannell 1989, 44-45). The first stage is naming, in which the sight is examined and deemed "authentic." Elvis Presley's Graceland entered this stage almost as soon as Elvis moved into the home, but since his death in 1977 the home has been "officially" recognized by being included in the National Register of Historic Homes, thereby "authenticating" it as a tourist sight. The second stage is framing/elevation, in which the sight is put on display, protected and enhanced. Graceland entered
this stage when the Graceland Plaza was built across the street and
the home was opened for tours. The third stage is enshrinement, in
which the place where the sight is displayed enters the naming stage.
Many tourists congregate at Graceland Plaza and spend much more
time walking around the various souvenir shops and museums there
than they do in the actual mansion. The fourth stage is mechanical
reproduction, in which photographs, models, and replicas of the sight
are created, displayed and valued. One need only glance through a
shop window at Graceland Plaza to see the hundreds of reproduced
images of the home and Elvis on such things as Christmas tree
ornaments, thimbles, cups, t-shirts and postcards to realize that
Graceland and Elvis have long been in this stage. The fifth and final
stage is social reproduction, in which people and places name
themselves after the sight. For several years, Memphis has been
synonymous with Elvis and Graceland. The road in front of the
mansion was renamed "Elvis Presley Boulevard." Many hardcore fans
have legally changed their names to Elvis or have joined fan clubs that
include the name of Elvis and/or Graceland. Additionally, the names
"Elvis Presley" and "Graceland" are registered trademarks.

Once a sight has gone through the process of sacralization,
such as Elvis and Graceland have, it serves as the central gathering
place wherein tourists in the segregation stage of their ritual will
congregate before moving into the next stage of the ritual process. As MacCannell notes, "the ritual attitude of the tourist originates in the act of travel itself and culminates when he [or she] arrives in the presence of the sight" (1989, 43).

The ethnographer is pleased with himself. He knows his analysis of fan and fun ritual performances will be insightful, mentally invigorating, maybe even a best-selling book. An average of five new Elvis books a year have been released since Elvis’s death in 1977. Who can blame him for feeling proud? Yet, he is still uneasy. Remember, he asks himself, how naive you were during that first trip to Graceland?

Bon Voyage

Kathy, Kerry, Tracy, Dan: the four of them arrived in Memphis a few days before the Candlelight Service was to take place. They spent two days just hanging out around the Graceland Plaza, trying to find information about the event. In the Plaza was an information desk, as well as several tables full of flyers and announcements about Elvis Week activities. On one of the tables was a flyer about the Candlelight Service that detailed the procedures, rules, and tips for participants. This flyer codified the ground rules for the performance of the Candlelight Service.

The ethnographer knew that the Candlelight Service was an event "officially sponsored" by Elvis Presley Enterprises, so he was not surprised to discover the rules listed on the flyer addressing suitable codes of
behavior for anyone who planned to attend, including fans and funs.

Under the section, "Special Guidelines," the flyer requested that fans:

be considerate of others and do not hold up the movement or smooth flow of the procession by stopping at the grave sites, stepping out of line to remain in the garden, bunching up into groups, etc. The idea is to have a continuous single file flow. Remember that however long you might have waited, there are many more behind you who have waited longer. Please keep moving. (See the Elvis Week Brochure for special times all week for longer visits to the garden)(Candlelight Vigil Flyer 1991).

The flyer further encouraged "veterans of this vigil" to "help the newcomers with orientation." The ethnographer assumed that meant they should show the vigil virgins how to hold and light the candles, how to shield the flame from the wind, how to keep wax from dripping onto your hand, how to file up the drive respectfully, and any other bits of information that come from experience.

The ethnographer noticed that the flyer also included rules which seemed to be specifically designed for funs. The sponsors of the event realized, perhaps from past experience, that not everyone present at the service would be an Elvis fan. One section of the flyer tried to deter any trouble that might occur by asking participants to:

Please avoid loud talking and laughter or any other behavior that might be offensive to, or unappreciated by, those who take this tribute seriously. Also, while on the street or in the line outside the fence, as on the mansion grounds, please avoid boisterous behavior and noise. THIS IS NOT A PARTY. Elvis Week is full of many loud, festive, fun, party-type events, but the Candlelight Vigil is intended to be a solemn, respectable tribute. On behalf of the many sincere and loyal fans to whom this night means so much, we ask for your
help in keeping the tone of the evening as it should be. Thank you! (Candlelight Vigil Flyer 1991)

In another section of the flyer, people who were there to have fun were again reminded that "disruptive behavior and noise are prohibited." They were further warned that "those who insist upon violating these rules or behaving inappropriately will be escorted off the property."

These warnings struck the ethnographer as funny. He assumed that anyone who would cause trouble at a public event wouldn’t read the flyer anyway. So, he asked himself, who is the audience for this flyer? The flyer was really meant for fans, not funs. Many parts of the flyer tried to comfort and to reassure the fans that this would be a serious, respectful, and reverent occasion. Additionally, he read the warnings to possible disruptors as signs of reassurance that the event planners had the fans first and foremost in mind. The flyer even addressed the presence of the news media:

The Candlelight Vigil always attracts extensive media coverage. Television crews, photographers, and journalists will be allowed access to the vigil on a restricted basis. Most of their activity usually takes place during the first hour or so. All media representatives are strictly instructed that they may not interview anyone in the actual procession line on the driveway or in the garden. They are asked to take care of their business in a quiet, respectful, expedient fashion. The media will be allowed to videotape and photograph in a specific area at the edge of the garden, but not within the garden itself. They will be allowed to invite people to step away from the line on the driveway for interviews. They may also interview people on the street or in the plaza. If you find any media representatives disregarding any of these guidelines or behaving improperly, please notify the nearest Graceland employee who will either correct the problem or summon
a manager to do so. Please be mindful that the media have their job to do and their coverage of this and other Elvis Week activities is important to the perpetuation of the Elvis legend. Also, for each of you who gets to be here for Elvis Week, there are thousands more who wish they could be. Watching at home on television or seeing photo stories in papers and magazines is their way of sharing the week with you. (Candlelight Vigil Flyer 1991)

Fans were assured that they would not be victimized by the media. But the flyer also justified the presence of the media in such a way that photographers and reporters were almost used as priests, angels, or shamans sending the message of Elvis to those poor souls who couldn’t be there personally. This passage also contained a blatant reference to the power of the media to generate interest in Elvis, to continue the "perpetuation of the Elvis legend," as if the fans' love of Elvis alone would not be enough to accomplish this task.

Even though the foursome had this very instructive flyer to use as a guide, they still sought information from others who would participate in the performance. Perhaps the desire to communicate with someone in person was the ethnographer's attempt to overcome a little more of the apprehension he felt about participating in an event that he perceived as a "fans only" performance. At that point he wasn't aware of the large numbers of funs who also participated in the performance, and he didn't want his first Graceland experience to be a disaster by being "escorted off the property."
While wandering around the Graceland Plaza, they had several opportunities to find out more about the Candlelight Service. He asked the woman working the information desk if there were any specific rules they needed to be aware of. She was a pretty, young, bleached-blonde. Fresh out of high school, he thought. She looked like a local with her excessive make-up and teased hair. He knew she would have the inside scoop. She kindly referred him to the Candlelight Service flyer he'd already read.

How odd. "I've never done this before," he said to her, "do you have any advice for me?" She quickly said, "All the information is in the handout," and went back to work behind the counter. He thanked her and moved away from the desk.

Kerry, who was signing up to participate in the Elvis 5K Charity Run to be held the morning after the vigil, laughed when the ethnographer told him about his exchange with the information woman. Kerry then offered to ask her the same set of questions to see what her response would be, but the ethnographer didn't think that would be worthwhile—funny, maybe, but not worthwhile. He suggested, instead, that the best way to get information about the service would be to ask someone who had participated before; they needed input from a fan.

The ethnographer was usually very shy around people he didn't know very well. Also, he liked to sit back and observe things for awhile before jumping into them. These two personality traits do not lend
themselves to speedy ethnographic methods of getting information such as interviewing strangers on the street. Fortunately, Kathy and Tracy were not burdened by such personality traits, so they had no fear of approaching complete strangers and asking for the information they needed. Between the two of them, they gathered enough information from previous participants to supplement the flyer information. Kerry and the ethnographer stood back and watched as Kathy and Tracy approached people who looked like "typical" fans—middle-aged white women in Elvis t-shirts who carried bags of Elvis souvenirs. Most of these women corroborated the information they already knew. However, there were a couple of "veterans" of the Candlelight Service who provided them with helpful hints not listed on the flyer.

One piece of information they received involved where to park their car. A large woman named Sarah, who was sitting on a bench outside the Graceland Plaza ice cream parlor, suggested that they not park their car in the Graceland parking lot because it would probably be full all day on the day of the Service.

Another woman—small, thirty-something, Joyce—told Kathy that she liked to just sit across from the mansion during the service so she could enjoy the lighting of the candles. She looked across the street at the mansion as she said in an almost reverent, hushed tone, "I see all those people who love him as much as me, and they light their candles off each
other's, and pretty soon it's just glowing and then they start singing 'Can't Help Falling In Love.' It's just beautiful to see and be a part of it." The ethnographer looked at Joyce. She's one of them, all right, he thought. What had he gotten himself into?

**A Time to Reflect**

He wonders if the third person limited omniscient narrator is working as a distancing device. Can he gain a different perspective on his ethnography by estranging his own thinking process, or is this just a clever way to avoid taking responsibility for the utter lack of interest in his reportage of events? He knows that third person ethnographies are no longer in vogue. First person personal narrative is the more acceptable style in which to write an account of one's ethnographic experience; to write otherwise is madness, scholarly suicide, the voice of uncertainty, a resignation of authority over his own story. He worries too much.

**The Best-Laid Plans**

Once the ethnographer and his cohorts learned the rules and expectations of the performance, they were a little less apprehensive about participating. After all, none of them were fans--there was a bit of fear on all their parts that they might be "detected" as "fakes" and asked to leave. Also, he was a little worried about Kerry's ability to keep his rather boisterous sense of humor to himself. Fortunately, Kerry was hung over
from the previous night's festivities on Beale Street, so he wasn't very vocal the few times he did openly make fun of the people around them.

The four of them wanted to make sure they got good spots in line for the service, so they decided to eat dinner early and stand in line. According to the flyer, the Memphis police would close Elvis Presley Boulevard from Bluebird Street to Craft Road around 8:00 p.m. on the night of the service. To avoid a possible traffic jam, they arrived at Graceland around 6:00 p.m. Actually, they decided to eat at a Chinese restaurant two blocks away from Graceland, park their car there, as their informant advised them to do, and walk to the procession queue after dinner.

After dinner, Kathy realized that they did not have any candles. How could they "fool" everyone into thinking they were supposed to be there if they didn't even have the proper supplies? At a convenience store located across the street from the restaurant they purchased a box of four, white, six-inch, non-drip candles for the low, low price of five dollars! If they had paid more attention to the Candlelight Vigil flyer, they would have remembered the section that stated, "Graceland will provide free candles to those newcomers who arrive at the vigil without knowing they should have brought their own." Oh, well—live and learn.
Inside the Ethnographer's Journal: If Life Gives You Limens

As he remembers back to that glorious first-time experience, the ethnographer realizes that in his recollection, he and his friends were about to enter the stage of the ritual process in which he now finds himself once again: "Liminality, the second step in the ritual process, is more complex than the segregation step. In this phase, participants experience a world between two worlds; they exist in a limbo in which they function as a self-contained group whose purpose is to meet the needs neglected in their 'real' world. Turner makes a distinction between a liminal experience and a liminoid experience.

Turner lists the differences between these two concepts as follows: liminal phenomena occur mainly in tribal societies, 'tend to be collective, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms,' (1982, 53) and are a central part of 'the total social process' (1982, 53) of a society that has a common meaning for all participants; liminoid phenomena occur in industrial societies, are sometimes collective, but are usually individualized, develop in the margins of the society, not the center, and 'compete with one another for general recognition' (1982, 53-54). The main difference is that the obligation to participate in liminal phenomena does not exist for the liminoid; participants in liminoid phenomena have an option not to
participate. As Turner succinctly states, 'one works at the liminal, one plays with the liminoid' (1982, 55). This distinction does not, however, create a hierarchy between the two; both are significant and integral to the ritual process. Indeed, it is possible for both conditions to be present to some extent within the same ritual. Such was the case with the Candlelight Service." Work and play all at once. Did it seem so even then? The ethnographer tries to recall.

**Gentlemen. Start Your Engines**

Around 7:15 p.m., they made their way from the store to the sidewalk in front of Graceland where there was already a sizeable crowd lined up, woven around the serpentine of ropes that outlined the rows leading to the front gate of Graceland. Along the front of Graceland is a stone fence, about one block long and five feet high, but they were about three roped rows over from the stone wall. The service was not scheduled to begin until 10 p.m., so they had about two hours or more to wait—two very long, hot, sticky hours. As the flyer stated, "It is August in Memphis. That means heat and humidity." Even though Graceland Plaza, located on the west side of the street, blocked off much of the soon-to-be-setting sun, they were surrounded by so many people that the heat seemed to be magnified. And so the waiting began. Little did they know that the entire performance would last almost six hours.
At first the ethnographer was excited. He was excited about actually doing something this campy and kitschy. He was excited to be surrounded by so many interesting-looking people. He was excited to be with three of his best friends, who he knew must really love him to agree to do this with him. He was excited by the feeling that something important was about to happen, and he was going to be part of it. He was excited—at first. Then, after about twenty minutes, twenty hot, sticky minutes, his mind wandered off the subject of his mission. He began to think about unrelated events: the ducks at the Peabody Hotel; the leak in his toilet back home; how he could get a job narrating museum tours on tape; Tracy's new short haircut. He was called back to the present when Kerry said, "I wish we had some beer." So did he.

10:20 P.M., August 15, Now

As he stands in line now, he looks around him at the people he now thinks of as a family of sorts. Yes, they are strangers, but he knows them. Based on his observations over the past few years he has deduced that for Hardcore fans there is a perceived obligation to attend the event, especially the fixated hardcore fans who "worship" Elvis. This perceived obligation to participate is necessary to show other fans and themselves that they know how to perform their role within their community of fans. For other participants, such as Softcore fans and most funs, the option of attending the event allows them the freedom to remain an individual, while still
retaining the ability to become a part of the collective experience. He again remembers that first collective experience.

**Flashback**

He began looking around at the people in line. All around them were people wearing Elvis t-shirts, Elvis buttons, Elvis jewelry, Elvis leggings, Elvis jackets, Elvis jumpsuits, Elvis hats, and Elvis air-brushed items made of denim, velour, and wool. Standing near them in line was a pair of sixty-year-old identical twins who wore matching vests covered with hundreds of Elvis pins, each pin situated in exactly the same place on each vest.

Also in line were at least twenty Elvis impersonators and their wives. The odd thing about the impersonators was that none of them seemed to be soliciting attention from the crowd. Earlier in the week, the impersonators he saw actively tried to draw attention to themselves, but that night, he supposed out of respect for Elvis, none of them were "on."

They waited with people of all ages, races, nationalities; Tracy spoke to a teen-aged woman from Japan who was wearing stockings with black and white pictures of Elvis's face on them. The ethnographer heard some people in the row beside him speaking German, and still further over, some people speaking with Irish accents. They waited with college students there on vacation and college professors there to observe the phenomenon. And, as many people as were standing in line, there were
hundreds more seated across the street at the Graceland Plaza watching those people in line, or possibly waiting to join the line themselves.

During the few hours that he and his friends stood in line waiting for the ceremony to begin he had a chance to speak with several people—or more accurately, Kathy and Tracy spoke to people and he listened. Some of them had brought gifts to leave at Elvis's graveside. He remembered from the WBRZ news story about the Vigil that people often left gifts, so since they came from Louisiana, they brought some Mardi Gras beads to leave at Elvis's grave. Kathy noticed that some people had cards and letters addressed to Elvis, so she suggested that they should all write little notes to Elvis, asking him to bless people and to help them with some of their problems. Perhaps this was her way of alleviating the boredom of waiting. Or perhaps this was her way of trying to feel included. Or perhaps this was her way of making fun of the fans without their knowledge. A sixtyish-year-old woman who was standing nearby overheard the plan and remarked that she thought it was a lovely gesture.

So they sat on the sidewalk in front of Graceland writing prayer lists, little notes to Elvis asking him to watch over people they loved or grant them each a wish. The ethnographer’s note read: "Dear Elvis, Please bless my friends Kathy, Kerry, and Tracy—they have been really good this year. Take care of J.J., Onion, and Honeybutter in our absence. Why did you have to go so soon? Why couldn’t you stay around long enough to make
it from the toilet to the bed? The Mardi Gras beads are from us. Love, Dan"

Although the ethnographer and his friends were writing these notes as a joke, some people apparently took their actions very seriously. He noticed several people watching them as they composed their lists. He couldn't tell which ones were fans and which ones were funs. He wondered if there were people watching him who thought he was a crazed, Elvis-worshiping, fixated hardcore fan, and if there were fans watching him who thought he was behaving inappropriately.

Kathy said, "Okay, let's read them out loud." Kerry and the ethnographer looked at each other. He knew that if Kerry's note was anything like his, he did not want any fans close by to overhear what he had written.

"I don't think that's such a good idea. Here," he said, handing Kathy his note, "read it to yourself." She took it, read it, and laughed. Then she handed it back to him and said, "That's sweet."

Tracy, who was still writing, leaned over to him and said, "This woman beside me is crying." He looked up at the woman. She was definitely crying.

Around 9:00 p.m. he noticed some movement near the gates of Graceland. From where they were seated, he couldn't see the gate very clearly, so he didn't know immediately what was happening. But a few
minutes later he realized what must have happened: he noticed people in the rows closer to the rock wall were passing around what appeared to be folded sheets of paper. He leaned over the rope that separated him from the next closer row and asked what was going on. (He was very proud of himself for directly asking someone a question.) He was told the Candlelight Service Programs had arrived and were being distributed. Somehow, and he was not quite sure how, he acquired one of the programs.

On the cover of the program was a drawing of a svelte Elvis in a Vegas jumpsuit. At the top of the program was the title, "13th Annual Candlelight Service"; at the bottom, "August 15, 1991," and "10:00 P.M." Inside the program was a message from the Elvis Country Fan Club, which organizes the Candlelight Service each year, and a sequence of events for the Service. The program resembled the programs we used to get in church, but without the Biblical references. The motto of the Elvis Country Fan Club printed inside the program was: "Anywhere you are, Elvis, is home and you will be in our hearts forever more."

The sequence of events included the following: a welcome message; the "presentation of the 1991 plate for the Candlelight Service Plaque," which he assumed was some sort of wooden plaque with twelve other plates affixed, each commemorating the previous services; the singing of "If I Can Dream," the Elvis Country Club Song; the lighting of
the candle; 1991's theme song, "Home is Where the Heart Is"; an
unnamed speaker; "a time to reflect"; a prayer; an Inspirational song; and
"Can't Help Falling In Love" with the directions "everyone sing."

With the program held firmly in his sweaty hand, he felt a
resurgence of the excitement and energy that had drained out of him as he
waited in the heat. He knew that soon the service would begin. All they
had to do was wait--again.

10:22 P.M., August 15. Now

With sloth-like swiftness the line inches forward, each millimeter
closer to the goal--the musical-scaled iron gates of Graceland. The August
night is sticky-hot, like every August night in the south. But this time the
closeness of the crowd does not stifle him as it has in the past. Back then,
he could barely breathe. Anxiety overtook him and he wanted to run
screaming, flailing his arms, gasping to taste air again. But now he is
relaxed. At ease. At home.

First-Time Jitters

Around 10:00 p.m. he started getting frustrated. He was anxious
for the service to begin. The clock read 10:00! Why wasn't anything
happening? Why were they still waiting? What was the hold-up? Didn't
anyone know they'd been there for hours? Why were they making them
wait longer? He tried not to appear angry, but he was so hot! There were
so many people crowding all around him, he almost couldn't breathe. He
had always had a fear of crowds, and there he was purposefully subjecting himself to the torture of anonymous hordes of people moving, talking, smoking, pushing ever closer, inching forward, shifting from foot to foot, fanning themselves with their programs. And beyond the all-consuming crowd—freedom? No, a larger, amorphous, undulating crowd moving faster and faster towards him and away from him until he wanted to scream. But he didn’t. He controlled his fear. He focused over the heads of the crowd. He looked at the mansion on the hill.

The mansion looked larger than it had when he toured it. The sun had set and the colorful grounds lights were turned on. The mansion grounds did look peaceful, serene. He could understand how someone could come here to pray. He was feeling better. His anxiety had passed.

His tranquility was broken by the sound of a helicopter passing overhead. He looked up at its search lights as they beamed onto the crowd. He could see a cameraperson leaning out of the helicopter. The brochure was right—the media were attracted to the vigil. As the helicopter flew off toward the east, he heard another sound—this time it was the sound of a microphone being tested. The service was about to begin.

Inside the Ethnographer’s Journal: What’s Happenin’

He can feel it again—the feeling that something strange is happening to him. He has grown to expect it each time he attends the Vigil, but this
time, it is stronger than ever before, although he likes to think of himself as being more detached. He remembers writing: "Turner distinguishes between different kinds of communitas—ideological and spontaneous. Ideological communitas is:

an attempt to describe the external and visible effects of inward experience, and to spell out the optimal social conditions under which such experiences might be expected to flourish and multiply (1969, 136).

Spontaneous communitas is 'what hippies call "a happening"'(1969, 136). Spontaneous communitas is similar to the feelings many Christians experience when they attend religious retreats, or to the bond that exists among members of a team who all work together for the good of the whole. Turner even refers to it as 'magic.'

He further states:

Spontaneous communitas can never be adequately expressed in a structural form, but it may arise unpredictably at any time between human beings who are institutionally reckoned or defined as members of any or all kinds of social groupings, or of none. (1969, 137)

I witnessed this type of communitas at the Candlelight Service." And now it is happening again, the feeling of "magic." He does not resist it as he once did. Now he actually tries to enjoy the feeling of being surrounded by people with so much in common. Even the fans, he notes, enjoy the spectacle of the crowd, the tension between the silence and the sound, the constant movement that goes nowhere. How happy he is that he
forced himself to get through the ceremony that first time, else where would he be now?

At Long Last Love

At about 10:15, the ceremony began. The President of the Elvis Country Fan Club welcomed everyone to the service saying, "This gathering represents a constant love for Elvis that continues to burn brightly in all of our hearts. Our love for Elvis brought us here tonight."

She then presented the 1991 plate to be added to the Candlelight Service Plaque. Next was the traditional playing of the Elvis Country Club Song, "If I Can Dream," sung by a pre-recorded Elvis himself. He wanted to laugh, but the people around him were so serious he felt like he would be violating their sanctity if he treated this event as a joke.

The President of the fan club read a sort of ode to Elvis that she had written and began the lighting of the candles. "For Elvis fans the world over that could not be here tonight, we light this candle. The flame glows with their love for Elvis," said the President as she first lit her candle from a torch that was lit by the eternal flame over Elvis's grave. Another song was played over the sound system—"Home Is Where The Heart Is," that year's theme song, also sung by a pre-recorded Elvis.

Inside the Ethnographer's Journal: Hear Me. See Me. Touch Me. Feel Me

He loves the way he feels when he is at Graceland. But he is quick to note that those feelings do not make him a fan. He is still a scholar-fun.
He enjoys playing the game, pretending, being different from himself, even if only for a while. He remembers writing: "The feelings of communitas are brought about by play. Johan Huizinga, in his article concerning the importance of play, writes:

the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the game. . . . What the "others" do "outside" is no concern of ours at the moment. Inside the circle of the game the laws and customs of ordinary life no longer count. We are different and do things differently. (1976, 54-55)

He sees play as the aspect of a performance that keeps rituals organized, yet flexible, and thus necessary. Play permits the survival of a culture because it defines the culture's beliefs and values by means of an activity that has to continue. Hardcore Elvis fans use the Candlelight Service as a form of play to release their emotional energy in a creative, adaptive, constructive way." In the ethnographer's mind, work and play are conflated in the performance of the Vigil--who can really say who is working and who is playing? He is doing both simultaneously.

**Raise Your Hand If You're Sure**

The President of the fan club then introduced the man responsible for the creation of International Elvis Week, but the ethnographer didn't catch his name. He greeted them, and they played yet another Elvis tune, "There's Always Me." A prayer followed the song. The prayer seemed to be almost redundant at that point--the whole experience up to then had
been very prayerful and religious. After that song was another song, the spiritual "Who Am I" sung by Elvis. During this second spiritual song, taking their cue from the fan club president, everyone raised their candles in a moment of tribute and respect.

10:25 P.M., August 15, Now

He tries to focus on the present. All around him are people, just as in years past, who "dress" for the occasion. He now knows that he is not the only fun there. Perhaps, he thinks for a moment, there are no real fans here. What if everyone is a fun? He realizes how silly that sounds, for he has spoken with real fans on several occasions—they are real.

He recognizes some people he had seen earlier in the week; then they wore "regular" street clothes, not the Elvis-laden costumes they now wear. He now recognizes them for what they are, participant/observer funs. They are trying to blend in with the crowd, playing roles they would never dream of playing anywhere else, hoping for that feeling that so many participants look for.

For Participant/observer funs, who often try to pass as fans during the performance, play is a type of communitas. As if they are spies infiltrating a strange land, Participant/observer funs outwardly try to exhibit the behaviors they witness fans exhibiting. Just like a "method" actor who "becomes" a character and later has to "cool down" to become him/herself, these funs actively try to engage the "Other" through the
performance of the Vigil. If s/he successfully portrays the "Other," a feeling akin to communitas between funs who are in on the "ruse" arises. He looks forward to watching them later in the night and giving them the knowing glance that only another fun could give them.

Sing Out, Louise

The final part of the ceremony before the walk up the driveway of Graceland to the graveside was a sing-a-long version of "Can't Help Falling In Love." This was the ethnographer's favorite Elvis song, so luckily he knew all the words. He was very moved to hear all these people singing along with a tape of Elvis, some already in tears, some singing with almost religious fervor. Then they were instructed by the fan club president to "file silently and reverently up the drive to Meditation Garden."

Slowly the line snaked around the rope maze that guided them to the gates of Graceland. At first he was relieved to be moving after having been crowded and still for so long. At last he could see the gates! But that happy sight gave way to a less happy realization—he would soon be snaking his way back the way he came to stand only one foot closer to the mansion. They repeated this process a third time before they were within arm's length of the stone wall.

When they were within about two hundred feet of the gates, they were walking along the part of the sidewalk next to the stone wall that surrounds Graceland. The wall was filled with graffiti. Years ago, the
Graceland Foundation decided to allow people to write on the wall. Every so often, however, the wall is cleaned to make room for new messages. As he got closer to the gates he read the wall:

Love forever, Amy—Houston, Tx.
Elvis has left the planet!
The King Is Dead, Long Live the King!
I need you Elvis—please come back—Lorna
You ain't nuthin but a dead houn dog
Thank you for the wonder of you
Of all the men in all the world, only you have my heart
H M + E P
Elvis Christ!
Fuck Elvis—up hi fat whi e ass
I cried when I first heard you sing Elvis
Now I cry to hear you sing again—I love you—Theresa Carter

And there were many more scrawls on the wall, some barely legible, some obscene, but most heart felt expressions of admiration, love and loss.

Finally, they entered the gates and began their slow walk up the driveway. His non-drip candle started dripping on his hand. Elvis was not worth getting burned over, but he was too scared to scream in pain, or to blow out his candle. He didn't know why, but the context of the event, everyone around him taking things so seriously, made him feel bad about expressing concern for himself. So he silently endured.

10:47 P.M., August 15, Now

Finally, he enters the gates and begins his slow walk up the driveway. His non-drip candle does not drip on his hand—he has learned from his mistakes. Now he "passes" for a fan. He notes that for Participant/observer fans there is no greater joy/amusement than to be
mistaken for an actual fan—in that instance, his/her cultural role as fun is fulfilled. In fact, he himself could not easily discern who was or was not a "real" fan during his first experience with the Vigil. Only after close observation was he able to distinguish the subtle differences between fans and funs during the Vigil—the glances and fingers of funs pointed at hardcore fans, the slight hesitation to see what actions others exhibited during the Vigil, the whispering to a companion before attempting a burst of emotion, often followed by silent laughter. Now he knows how to blend in—the chameleon.

He looks up at the house as he did that first time.

The Gift of the Magi

Tracy whispered to him, "I'll bet he's up there," indicating the second floor of the mansion, "and he's getting off all over himself watching all these people do this." The thought had also crossed his mind, but he was not going to say it in front of all those devout believers in Elvis. He didn't think anyone could hear what she said, but he certainly didn't want to risk being escorted from the property after waiting so long to get this far.

Once they reached the graveside the line slowed because so many people were stopping to leave their gifts on Elvis's grave. When they got to the grave, they placed their prayer notes and Mardi Gras beads on the grave. One lady asked him what he was putting down. When he told her
she said, "That is so beautiful. Thank you," as if she were a member of Elvis's family. And, on that night, maybe she was.

He noticed flower arrangements everywhere, more than they'd had displayed the day before when he toured the mansion. He asked one of the volunteers what happens to them after the service. She said they were donated to hospitals, nursing homes, and cemeteries. After looking at these flowers for awhile, he blew out his candle and quickly, but silently, walked down the driveway he had waited so long to climb. The entire event had taken approximately six hours to complete. They were all exhausted.

Inside the Ethnographer's Journal: And Now, the End is Near

The ethnographer remembers what the end of that long first night was like. Now he sees it as the completion of a process, a necessary step in the ritual process: "The third step in the performance of a ritual is the reintegration phase. This stage involves participants, newly revitalized by communitas, rejoining their "real," structured world. For many of the participants in the Candlelight Service, this return to the world occurred when they left Graceland, maybe even Memphis altogether, and began living their lives with only the memories of Elvis to last them until the next year's Vigil. Softcore fans, who do not live for Elvis, were less likely to be profoundly affected by the feeling of
communitas; therefore, their reintegration back into their everyday lives was less of a change from the world of the ritual."

The ethnographer initially suspected that funs would not experience communitas the same way as fans and so would not need to "re"integrate- - on one level funs never really leave their everyday world behind because they are not "true believers." Even though they are not interested in or affected by Elvis in the same way as fans, some of the participant/observer funs he has spoken with were affected by the ritual itself in a significant way. Because of the ritual context, the event is very spiritual. Participant/observer funs who are susceptible to feeling communitas in other religious ceremonies might "get into" the Vigil ritual to such an extent that they do experience some form of communitas, most likely the spontaneous communitas. Therefore, he reasoned, these funs would have to more fully experience the reintegration stage than funs who did not experience communitas. He had reintegrated, but without the feeling of revitalization.

You Can't Go Home Again

As soon as they got outside the gates, he noticed that there were still thousands of people in line and many still sitting across the street in front of the Plaza. He also saw hundreds of people walking on the roped-off section of the street. Although the sight reminded him of New Orleans around Mardi Gras time, no one was rowdy or disorderly, at least not that
he could see. He realized that even though his part of the performance had ended, it was still going on for many of those still waiting.

They made their way through the crowd and headed back to their car. They soon realized that perhaps their informant was incorrect in advising them not to park in the Graceland parking lot. They were trapped on the south side of Graceland and their hotel was located northeast of Graceland. They thought they could cut through a subdivision rather easily, but they were wrong. They also didn’t have a map of Memphis with them. So they rode around for awhile until they saw the sign of a road they recognized. So much for reintegration.

They eventually made it back to their hotel forty minutes later. The only part of their trip that remained was for Kerry to run in the Elvis 5K Charity Run the next morning. He only signed-up for the race because it was co-sponsored by "Miller Lite" and all runners got free beer after the race. He came in 606th out of 1227.

10:52 P.M., August 15. Now

Since that first-time experience with the Candlelight Vigil, the ethnographer has had other opportunities to attend the event with different groups of friends. He has tried to station himself at different locations each time he returns so he can get a different point of view on the entire performance.
One year, he decided to play the role of voyeur and just watch all the people participate. For awhile, he sat on a bench outside the Plaza and watched people slowly but steadily form a multi-curved line on the sidewalk in front of the mansion. Although he enjoyed the sight of the candles glowing and moving as people walked up the driveway, this experience was not as much fun for him. As a fun, he had experienced the Vigil before firsthand, and watching it did not have the same thrill for him as participating. He much prefers being both performer and audience, rather than just audience.

Another year, he decided to take on a particularly uncharacteristic role for himself. He decided to mix with the crowd that formed on the street between the Plaza and the mansion. There were so many people walking around in the street that he was reminded of a very tame Mardi Gras. Normally, he tries to avoid crowds at all cost, but he wanted to experience the Vigil from another perspective. At around eleven o'clock, his friend, Jim, who had accompanied him that year, and he went into the crowd. Even though most of the people were well-behaved, he was a little apprehensive about the close proximity to so many strangers. But as he walked around, he noticed that many people were walking around as if in a daze. Since this was not a party atmosphere and alcoholic beverages were not allowed, he began to feel more at ease.
10:53 P.M., August 15. Now

No matter what role he takes during the Vigil, the ethnographer always compares it to the first experience he had. He also asks himself why fans would return to this event. He returns because he is doing research—but why do other fans return once they've done it the first time? Some fans he spoke with said that they just enjoyed the gathering of people; others said they went to the Vigil before going to other Elvis-themed events, such as the Dead Elvis Ball or the El-Vez concert, so they could tell people about what they'd seen at the Vigil—presumably they meant make fun of fans they'd seen at the Vigil. Whatever their reasons, fans and fans both keep returning to this performance year after year, each group an integral part of the overall performance experience.

As he approaches the grave, flowers everywhere, people weeping openly and loudly, he stares into the flame above Elvis's tombstone. The light flickers, dances,beckons. He moves closer to the rail around the grave. The flame winks. The air is thick and wet. Has he locked his knees? He feels as if he is going to pass out. The people around him blur and sway. He envisions himself inside a Dali painting. He stares at the flame. He sees what he wants to see.
As he stares into the flame, he sees a vision of his study. He tries to explain it to himself. If only he could write it all down so he could remember it: This ritual serves different functions for each participant. Performance theorist Richard Schechner views the functions of rituals on a continuum between efficacy and entertainment, with context and function of a specific performance seen merely as variables in a much larger grid for classifying performances (1988, 120). He also notes that no performance is a pure form of efficacy or entertainment, as the context and function of each performance is influenced by the viewing perspectives of the audience members. At one end of the continuum is efficacy, which deals with a performance’s ability to effect transformations in the participants. He classifies rituals as efficacious performances because they seek results, link participants to an absent Other, take place in symbolic time, encourage audience participation, are believed by the audience to be real, discourage criticism, and emphasize collective creativity, rather than individual creativity (1988, 120).

In the case of the Candlelight Service, the performance is a ritual, but not everyone who participates in the performance believes in the "magic" of Elvis. This event is an excellent example of a mix of efficacy and entertainment. The ease with which the participants
interact with each other, some participating for spiritual reasons, others for secular reasons, demonstrates the wide varieties of uses people have for the Vigil.

For fans and funs the performance of the ritual enacts power relations within and between each group in the form of play. On Schechner’s efficacy/entertainment continuum, play is more closely aligned with entertainment, but I contend that in this performance, fan play simultaneously aligns with efficacy and entertainment, and fun play with entertainment only. Additionally, the distinction between work and play must be viewed on a continuum as well, not one compared to efficacy/entertainment, but one intertwined with them. For example:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{FANS} & \rightarrow & \text{FUNS} \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{WORK} & \rightarrow & \text{(WORK)} \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{PLAY} & \rightarrow & \text{PLAY} \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{ENTERTAINMENT} & \rightarrow & \text{EFFICACY} \\
\downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{EFFICACY} & \rightarrow & \text{ENTERTAINMENT} \\
\end{array}
\]

In this chart, activities designated as Fan Work lead to efficacy and to entertainment. When a fan club president organizes part of the Vigil, s/he is "working," although the subject of his/her work could be regarded by non-fans (people who are not fans), and even by some Softcore or Internalized fans, as trivial, thus consigning it to the realm
of play. His/her work is both entertaining for the fan and leads to efficacy through the enactment of the ritual itself. Activities designated as Fan Play lead to both efficacy and entertainment. When a Softcore fan attends the ritual as part of her/his family vacation, the performance is entertaining; but when s/he attends the Vigil and inadvertently gets caught up in the moment and experiences spontaneous communitas, the activity designated as play leads to efficacy.

In the chart, activities designated as Fun Play lead to entertainment, rarely to efficacy. However, he believes funs can possibly experience the Vigil as efficacious; for example, if an Ambivalent Fun were to somehow enjoy the spiritual nature of the event or become mesmerized while watching the slow chain of candlelight move up and down the driveway of Graceland, s/he might regard the ritual as having more than an entertaining effect, even if momentarily. Fun Work may also lead to entertainment, as when a member of the media who is an Observer fun is assigned to cover the Vigil and enjoys the festival setting, but it seldom leads to efficacy.

These relationships among efficacy/entertainment and play/work are significant when analyzed regarding power relations within and between fan and fun cultures. To address these power relations, he poses the questions offered by Conquergood (1989, 84).
From a fan perspective, how does the performance of the Vigil challenge, critique or subvert fan ideology? Performance of the Vigil subtly displays a hierarchical power structure within fan culture. In fan culture, the Hardcore fans are the ones who call the shots. Hardcore fans run the fan club that sponsors the Vigil and thus determine the rules of the event. Although softcore fans participate in the ritual, they are given no formal power within the fan community, even if hardcore fans appreciate their affection for Elvis.

Among Hardcore fans who are not in charge of the event, there is a subtle contest of sorts being played on the bodies of the fans themselves. Through their dress and accessories fans communicate their status within the fan community. Usually at the top of this artifactual hierarchy is the Elvis impersonator who, because of his physical resemblance to the King, is granted a priestly status among fans. However, during the Vigil he noticed that there were several men whom he recognized as impersonators, either because of their hair or because he had seen them earlier in the week, who did not wear their usual costumes. He believes the context of the event made them "tone down" their appearance. As one fan told me, "They know it's not their night—it's Elvis's night."

Next on the visual hierarchy would be fans who wear unique "tributes to Elvis": a handmade outfit with Elvis memorabilia sewn on;
an airbrushed leather jacket depicting scenes from Elvis's life; the twins with the multitude of identical Elvis buttons; the fan club badges; the Elvis tattoos. But he also noticed that several people had other artifacts to communicate their status. The people with very elaborate candleholders or lanterns marked themselves as longtime participants of the Vigil. The people who brought their own lounge chairs to endure the wait in line also marked their commitment to the Vigil. The people like my friends and me who did not have drip guards for our candles obviously marked ourselves as Vigil virgins.

From a fun perspective, how does the performance of the Vigil challenge, critique or subvert fun ideology? The power relations within fun culture are more difficult to discern than the power relations within fan culture. During the Vigil, so many funs try to disguise themselves as fans there are not many artifactual signals that demonstrate a fun hierarchy, other than the Fan-Abusive funs who wear their insulting t-shirts in front of the fans even on the night of the Vigil. The only way power is displayed by funs during the Vigil is by participation level. The funs who successfully blend in with the fans achieve the highest status from a Participant/observer fun perspective. Funhs who successfully remained detached throughout the entire event also achieve a certain amount of status among Ambivalent funs.
He thought now that he had a handle on power relations within each culture, but what about power relations between each culture? From a fan perspective, how does the performance of the Vigil challenge, critique or subvert non-fan ideology? In this particular performance, fans simultaneously work and play; such an activity challenges an ideology that positions work and play as opposed activities, not as co-present activities. Yet, because of the very prominent structure of the Vigil and its similarities to other religious ceremonies, the performance simultaneously reinforces an ideology that views play as less important than work. On the surface this seems to be a contradiction, yet as Manning states:

> the ambiguity of celebration affects both its textual portrayal of society and its active role in the social process. As a communicative agent, celebration embraces two modes: play and ritual. Play inverts the social order and leans toward license, whereas ritual confirms the social order and is regulated. The two modes are complimentary as well as contrastive. . . . (1983, 7)

For Manning, a ritual performance confirms societal ideologies, while play tends to challenge societal ideologies. He acknowledges that both may be present in the same activity. However, as Schechner notes, "Turner locates ritual 'betwixt and between,' in cultural creases and margins, making it more like play than anything else" (1993, 256). So, for Turner, there would be no ideologic contradiction enacted in a fan's performance of the Vigil.
Next, how is the performance of the Vigil situated between forces of accommodation and resistance? From a fan perspective, this question addresses the issue of cultural territory and expansion. Fans have persuaded the Memphis police to close a section of Elvis Presley Boulevard during the Vigil; therefore the police had to accommodate the desires of fan culture. But this is not an act of "localizing power," the temporary creation of sites of pleasure (Fiske 1993); instead it is an act of cultural expansion. Fans have convinced "the power bloc" to give them what they want in a very overt way. Fans have expanded their cultural boundaries into other people's work spaces.

Fans also do some accommodating themselves. They allow fans and the media to participate in the Vigil, a ritual that for some is a very solemn occasion, even though there is the danger of a disruption. Fans issue rules of behavior for fans and the media in the form of the Candlelight Vigil flyer. However, this same flyer acknowledges how fan accommodation leads to cultural expansion; fans use the media to "keep the legend alive," thus further expanding their cultural territory. In this sense, the performance of the Vigil is able to "simultaneously reproduce and struggle against hegemony" (Conquergood 1989, 84) by using a tool of the hegemony, the media, to further their own cause.
These questions of power need also to be addressed of fun performance of the Vigil. Fun participation in the Vigil challenges the fan ideology of belief in Elvis. Also, fan power is subverted by fun play. When Participant/observer funs infiltrate the Vigil and successfully pass as fans, they are achieving an act of subversion—fun play is juxtaposed against fan work, even if only in the mind of the fun. But funs also uphold fan power when they agree to abide by fan rules of behavior. The few Fan-abusive funs who do show up for the Vigil are quickly silenced, often by other funs who do not want to cause trouble.

Funs expand their cultural ideologies by infiltrating fan space and fan performances. Yet fun culture relies on fan culture for its existence—fun culture is a parasitic culture because it needs a host culture to survive; therefore it can subvert the host culture, but only to a certain extent. If it destroys or injures the host culture, the parasite will eliminate itself. Fun play subverts fan work/play to the extent that it can without causing harm to fans. However, some funs, the fan-abusive funs, serve more as viruses— they infiltrate the system to destroy it and then move on to another system to infiltrate.

The flame glows, but he can discern people around him. Someone is speaking. To him?
"Are you okay?" asks a small, middle-aged white female wearing a blue suede cowboy hat and rhinestone-studded blue suede t-shirt.

"Huh?" he says as he drifts back to the now. "Oh, yeah, I'm fine."

"It's rough sometimes. I know how you feel."

How could she know how he feels? She is making her remark based on a limited knowledge of him as her subject of inquiry. She had merely observed him from a superficial distance, and yet she knows how he feels.

He blows out his candle and begins to wander down the driveway to the exit.

Inside the Ethnographer's Journal: Antipathy

He really knows these people. He has them assessed. He has seen through their eyes. He has walked in their shoes. He has...  

-- exploited them for his own gain?

-- used their ritual performance and signifying cultural practices to support his own theories of human interaction?

-- cleverly constructed a self-effacing narrative that eliminates himself from the mix of voices, thus alleviating his ivory towered white male guilt and making it okay for him to speak for the other?

-- written what he knows and truly believes to be events as they transpired?

-- concluded that this game has gone on long enough?
12:03 A.M., August 16, Now

As he exits through the iron gates of Graceland, he notices a woman in the crowd who he thinks looks just like Elvis's mother, Gladys. He is not alone in his assessment. He hears a woman beside him say to her friends, "Oh my God—it's Gladys!" Her friends quickly agree that she does bear a remarkable resemblance to Gladys. One other woman actually walks up to the woman and comments on the resemblance. He then notices a shortish man with a notepad quickly turn and look at the look-alike. He follows her through the crowd. For some reason the ethnographer follows him. When the man finally catches up with the woman, the ethnographer overhears him ask her a series of questions about her love for Elvis, her resemblance to Gladys, etc. He turns out to be a reporter looking for some interesting angle for a story.

After the reporter leaves "Gladys," the ethnographer follows him to see who else he will talk to. Then, for some reason, he goes to the reporter and actually asks him a question. "Are you with the press?"

"Yeah," he tells him.

He asks, "What do you think of all this?"

The reporter says, "This stuff is crazy. These people...," and he stops as if seeking confirmation from the ethnographer about the sanity of the participants. He gives no response. The reporter has no way of knowing whether the ethnographer is a fan or not—he thinks it rude and
presumptuous of him to make such a comment to him. He then asks the reporter, "What's your story going to be about?"

He says, "I don't know. None of this stuff is very interesting to me."

The ethnographer asks, "So, why are you writing about it?"

He says, "I was assigned to cover the Vigil—I'm the new guy at work. I guess everyone else has done their time down here. But, I think I got enough now. If I can just get out of here."

"Good luck with your story," the ethnographer says as he watches the reporter disappear into the crowd.
CHAPTER FOUR
ELVIS'S EYES ARE SMILING OR
TOUR: A LURE OR LIE?

INT. OFFICE

DAN

A white male ethnographer, early thirties. He is researching fan and fun performances during International Elvis Tribute Week.

Dan sits at his desk typing. We hear his voice over.

DAN

In this chapter I critique the performance of the Graceland Mansion Tour. Unlike the performance of the Candlelight Vigil in which fans and funs are featured as performers, in this performance fans and funs are featured more as audience and the tour guides are the performers; however, the audience of this performance, although not officially allowed to interact, does respond to the performance of the tour narrative and thus creates their own version of the tour narrative as they enact the role of tourist.

On the surface level, the performance of the tour is a group performance of a narrative text, the story of Elvis Presley’s Graceland. But at a deeper level, the performance of the tour is comprised of several smaller performances—enactments of power relations within, and among fans, funs, tour guides, and Elvis Presley Enterprises.

I write this chapter in the form of a screenplay. I wanted my description of the tour and of fan and fun performances to have a documentary feeling. As a documentarian, I do not present an objective representation of the tour; instead, I use the documentary format to create a particular rhetorical reading of the performance. I selected this genre because it allows me to weave together scholarly and lay voices about the tour in a typically postmodern format, televisual montage. The camera lens serves as the narrator of this experience, but I am the one controlling which parts of the tour the viewer will see, which order they will appear, and which other voices will be added to the official tour narrative to critique and comment on the performance of the tour. "EXT." refers to an exterior setting; "INT." refers to an interior setting. Stage directions are justified along the left margin. Character names are capitalized and centered above the dialogue.
I also use the screenplay format as a way of enacting my performance of scholar-fun play. By using this genre, I recontextualize scholarly discourse, the work of a scholar-fun, within a popular discourse genre. My use of humor throughout the screenplay serves as a distancing device, almost a Brechtian alienation effect, to subvert my own voice as "the authority"; by stepping back from my own scholarly analysis of the tour, I am better able to critique my role in the construction of this post-ethnographic representation of fan and fun cultural performances of the tour. By humorously positioning the scholarly work of others within the screenplay context, I am better able to diffuse the often oppressive voice of academe.

EXT. GRACELAND PLAZA - MORNING
(TITLE SEQUENCE)

TOURISTS stand on the sidewalk in front of the white brick building waiting to board a white shuttle bus that will take them to Graceland Mansion.

"Love Me Tender" can be heard over the loudspeaker in the background.

Over the music we hear a female VOICE OVER with a thick Southern accent.

VOICE OVER

Two o'clock tour number three, now boarding two o'clock tour number three at the shuttle area. Two o'clock tour number three.

The white shuttle bus idles as the TOURISTS begin crossing in front of the bus to board it on the right. The engine of the shuttle drowns out the music.

Dan is among the tourists. He has toured the mansion many times before. He wears an Elvis t-shirt and blue jean shorts.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS

Dan boards the bus and hands SHUTTLE DRIVER #1 his ticket and takes a seat.
SHARON

A white female friend of Dan, early thirties. She has accompanied him to Graceland before and actually enjoys watching all the people.

Sharon climbs the steps of the bus and hands the Shuttle Driver her ticket and sits beside Dan.

SHUTTLE DRIVER

A middle-aged white female. She has worked at Graceland for six years and enjoys escorting tourists to the mansion. She wears a Graceland uniform.

Shuttle Driver checks her walkie-talkie to get clearance to leave the Plaza and take this busload of tourists across the street to the mansion. She receives the clearance and exits the Plaza. As she crosses the street and goes through the gates of Graceland, she addresses the shuttle passengers over a PA system.

SHUTTLE DRIVER

Good afternoon and welcome to Graceland. We hope you enjoy your tour with us today. When we get to the top of the driveway we ask that you stay seated until the tour guides come to take you up to the mansion. After your tour, you can catch a return shuttle back to Graceland Plaza by waiting at the covered area near Meditation Garden. For your safety we ask that you not walk down the driveway to return to the Plaza.

EXT. SHUTTLE BUS CROSSING THE STREET

The shuttle goes through the opened gates of Graceland and up the driveway. It stops just short of the front porch. A GROUP OF PEOPLE stands on the porch waiting to enter, so the new arrivals stay on the shuttle until the other group enters the mansion.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS

While waiting, we hear Dan’s voice over.

DAN

On June 7, 1982, Graceland was opened to the public for the first time. The decision to open the home to tour groups was purely a financial one. Rather than sell the estate, which was valued at
$500,000 yet cost around $512,000 a year to operate, Priscilla, Elvis's ex-wife and Lisa Marie's custodian, decided to open the house to the public at a charge of $5.00 a person (Worth and Tamerius 1992, 79). Fans were more than willing to pay to see the King's palace. The tour included a whirlwind trip through

INT. GRACELAND MANSION LIVING ROOM

DAN

the living room,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION DINING ROOM

DAN
dining room,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION TELEVISION ROOM

DAN
downstairs television room,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION GAME ROOM

DAN
game room,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION JUNGLE ROOM

DAN
jungle room/den,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION OFFICE

DAN
Vernon's office,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION TROPHY ROOM

DAN
the Trophy room,

INT. GRACELAND MANSION RACQUETBALL COURT
racquetball court,

EXT. GRACELAND MANSION MEDITATION GARDEN

DAN

and gravesite.

EXT. GRACELAND MANSION SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS

DAN

The remaining rooms were still closed to the public because members of Elvis's family still resided in the mansion and used the other rooms. Also, by not opening the upstairs, the scene of Elvis's death, the corporation kept some of its secrets—built a sense of mystery and intrigue, also by not revealing all their cards at once, they left room to expand their operations in the future.

EXT. GRACELAND PLAZA

DAN

Also, with traffic considerations on Elvis Presley Boulevard becoming increasingly more problematic, Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE) built a small ticket pavilion and souvenir shop across the street from the mansion to facilitate the growing numbers of tourists to the home. Each year since the Pavilion, Graceland Plaza, was first built, new stores and attractions have been added—all in the name of keeping the tourists happy.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS

DAN

I'm never really sure what to make of all this. This film is my attempt to understand it.

(END TITLE SEQUENCE)

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM

The room is long and narrow with hardwood floors and white walls. Dan sits on his sofa drinking a Diet Dr. Pepper and watches The Simpsons on television. We hear his voice over.
DAN
I guess I need to start at the beginning, or at least at a beginning. The trouble is, there are too many beginning places: I could start with a discussion of guided tours as particular types of cultural performances. Or I could start with a brief overview of scholarly thought on tourists at tourist sites. Or I could start with a description of the Graceland Mansion Tour itself. (long pause) Or I could just wait until The Simpsons is over to make a decision. (long pause)

INT. MICHAEL’S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

MICHAEL BOWMAN

A devastatingly handsome, rugged, male professor of forty. He is worshipped by his students, but doesn’t let it go to his head. He is Dan’s mentor.

CAPTION: MICHAEL BOWMAN - MENTOR
Michael sits at his desk smoking a Camel cigarette and drinking coffee from a mug. He speaks directly to the camera.

MICHAEL
Well, I think you should give the viewer some sort of theoretical framework for interpreting your analysis of the tour. Although I’d like to hear about what you did when touring the house I don’t necessarily think your first-person account of touring the house is going to be enough to give your study a critical distance. "The task of analyzing particular discourses and sites of tourism involves, on the one hand, participation in the event as tourist/audience-reader/consumer, sharing in the perceptions, sensations, emotions, and ideas generated in a given performance (which, of course, can be negative, as well as positive). On the other hand, it involves the attempt to fashion a position from which we can distance ourselves from those sensations so that we might speak as other-than-tourist--standing back or outside the performance so as not to be absorbed by our own absorption in it" (Bowman in press). Or you could just watch The Simpsons.

INT. DAN’S LIVING ROOM

Dan sits on the sofa and watches The Simpsons.
EXT. BENCH OUTSIDE GRACELAND PLAZA - MORNING

Dan sits on the bench looking at Graceland across the street. We hear his voice over.

DAN

Many studies of tourism and tourist practices I read discuss tourism and touring as paradoxical behaviors: tourists simultaneously enrich and exploit cultures through tourism (Urry 1995; Bowman in press); tourists simultaneously support a capitalist consumer culture through touring and subvert the system in the form of cultural capital gains (Fiske 1992); tourists simultaneously operate within and against a system of domination (Fiske 1993; Katriel 1991); tourists support public transcripts and create hidden transcripts (Scott 1990); tourist practices are empowering and disempowering (MacCannell 1989; 1992); tourists seek authenticity, but only recognize authenticity when it is marked as such, which in turn renders the authentic inauthentic (MacCannel 1989; Culler 1988). I agree with all these studies.

EXT. ROCK WALL IN FRONT OF GRACELAND

Dan writes a message on the wall and throws rocks over the fence onto the Graceland property.

We hear his voice over.

DAN

To a certain degree, touring the Graceland Mansion is a paradoxical performance just as other museum tours are; but in another sense, viewing the tour as paradoxical requires that one first accept that the effects of tourism are indeed paradoxical—what if, to the participants in the tourist endeavor, tourism and its effects make perfect sense? One person's paradox is another person's common sense.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LISA MARIE AIRPLANE

Dan kicks the tires of the plane. We hear his voice over.

DAN

Nevertheless, I can certainly see how, when I take myself out of "tourist mode," tours are structured rhetorically to serve a certain group's needs and thus not serve other group's needs. But is that a
paradox, or just part of a postmodern sensibility that realizes that inequities exist and sometimes all factions benefit and lose because of those inequities? Or is that just the capitalist in me?

EXT. SIDEWALK OF GRACELAND PLAZA

Dan walks down the sidewalk eating an ice cream cone. He is followed by an ELVIS IMPERSONATOR but does not notice him.

We hear Dan's voice over.

DAN

I believe that these issues of power and domination and cultural capital and authenticity, etc., change when the tourists involved in touristic practices are fans and funs. They are special classes of tourists; they have more at stake in tourist performances than "ordinary" tourists do. They play different roles within tourist performances than do other tourists: they take on the persona of fan or fun when they encounter particular tourist sites; Elvis is such a site for his fans and funs. While touring Graceland, fans and funs use the performance as the agency through which they express their cultural identification as fans and funs.

All performers, in essence, live in paradoxical relation to themselves and to non-performers.

EXT. JACKSON SQUARE IN THE FRENCH QUARTER, NEW ORLEANS

JUANITA

A postmodern hair/art theorist and hair technologist. Juanita is clearly Dan in a white bouffant wig and pink polyester pants suit.

Juanita sits in a folding chair. Propped against a small folding table is a sign that reads "Juanita's Art of Hair Fashi'n: Postmodern Hair/Art Theory, Beauty Advice, Free."

We hear Dan's voice over.

DAN

When a performer takes on a role, either in an aesthetic performance context or in culture or in everyday life, s/he is always simultaneously self and other. Performers, born of paradox, resolve contradictions in beliefs and behaviors either by attributing perceived differences to misunderstanding or by rationalizing that the
difference is an integral part of the persona adopted by the performer. Or they do not recognize differences in their behaviors and beliefs at all, so, to them, there is no contradiction or paradox.

Juanita looks at the camera and nods in approval.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF GRACELAND CROSSINGS SHOPPING CENTER

Dan sits on the sidewalk watching people walk by.

We hear his voice over.

DAN
That said, let me go back to the "paradoxical" performances of fans and funs during the tour of Graceland. The Graceland Mansion Tour narrative was written by people who work for Elvis Presley Enterprises. When performed as written, the tour narrative is a performance of what James Scott calls a "public transcript" (1990).

EXT. STREET MARKET IN INDIA - AFTERNOON

JAMES SCOTT

A small, bearded, scholar of fifty.

CAPTION: JAMES SCOTT - DOMINATION SPECIALIST

James wanders through the market followed by LITTLE CHILDREN who constantly beg him for chewing gum while he speaks.

JAMES
"I shall use the term 'public transcript' as a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate. . . . Public refers here to action that is openly avowed to the other party in the power relationship, and transcript is used almost in its juridical sense (proces verbal) of a complete record of what was said. This complete record, however, would also include nonspeech acts such as gestures and expressions. . . . The public transcript, where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation" (1990, 2 and footnote).
James walks faster and faster to escape the children. We hear Dan's voice over. Eventually the children overrun James, who screams.

DAN
The "official" tour narrative as written and endorsed by Elvis Presley Enterprises adopts a monologic view of Elvis that reiterates the "standard party line" about Elvis's life. To the extent that it accomplishes this goal, it is a public transcript performed by tour guides.

INT. TROPHY ROOM

The trophy room is a long narrow room filled with photos and artifacts from Elvis's life. Along the left wall is a roped off display of photos, newspaper articles, records, books, and clothes. On the wall to the right are a few display cases that contain some movie memorabilia and things from Elvis's stint in the Army. At the far end of the room is a glass case with a mannequin in it. On the mannequin is Elvis's U. S. Army uniform.

LISA

A young, white female tour guide. She is full of energy and speaks very clearly when she describes the Trophy Room to A GROUP OF TOURISTS. Dan and Sharon are among the tourists.

LISA
Come all the way inside please. (pause) Step all the way inside, please. If you'll stay in a group together, at the end of your tour you can come back to look around. This is the Trophy Room. It was added on to the mansion in 1965. Elvis used it as a storage area for just about everything you see in here today. Everything's been arranged in a chronological order, so we're going to take you on a trip through Elvis's life-story. January 8, 1935, Elvis was born in this two-room house in Tupelo, Mississippi, at about 4:35 in the morning. His twin brother, Jesse Garon, had been born earlier at 4 a.m., but was stillborn. Elvis grew up as an only child. The Presley family moved to Memphis in 1948. Elvis graduated from a local high school in the class of '53. A year after graduating, Elvis had formed his first band with Scotty Moore and Bill Black. They had five singles together under the Sun label, the first of which was most popular--"That's All Right," better known as "That's All Right, Mama." By 1955 they were performing throughout the South quite frequently and a lot of times on Saturday nights he would find him on the "Louisiana Hayride," a radio show.
out of Shreveport. One evening backstage, Elvis was introduced to Colonel Tom Parker, the man who signed him under RCA. Elvis's first big release for RCA was "Heartbreak Hotel" in 1956. That same year, Elvis's first album appeared and was self-entitled. Both of these went gold immediately. That same year "Don't Be Cruel" backed by "Hound Dog" was released and it sold more than five million copies in less than a month, making it the fastest selling recording in the rock era for more than thirty-five years.

Elvis was very busy in 1956; he made several television appearances and his first movie, Love Me Tender, a black-and-white Civil War drama. Out of his thirty-one movies it was the only one that he appears in as a co-star. In 1957 Elvis was in Loving You and Jailhouse Rock, and then, in 1958, King Creole, his personal favorite.

While making King Creole Elvis received his draft papers from the Army. He was given sixty days to finish the movie. He spent six months in Ft. Hood, Texas, a year and a half in West Germany where he met Priscilla. His uniform is in the corner. He was six foot tall.

On March 6, 1960, at the end of his two year term, Elvis was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant E-5 and a medal of good conduct.

He returned to Graceland on March 8th. This will be a guided tour so please stay with your tour guide your first time through. At the end of your entire tour you'll be able to separate from your group and stay in this building to look around for as long as you like. But first, your next stop is straight ahead and into the hall of gold. Please come back later to look around.

As Dan, Sharon and the tourists look around the room, we hear Dan's voice over.

DAN

Lisa's performance of the "official" tour narrative was a good one. She was energetic, only minimally sing-songy in her vocal delivery, and she smiled at us. Her performance of this public transcript supports the version of Elvis's life story promoted by EPE. However, people who take the tour and listen to the narrative also construct their own transcript while listening to the tour guides. For example, here's the script I was constructing while listening to Lisa.

INT. TROPHY ROOM - SAME SCENE AS BEFORE

This time, while Lisa speaks, Dan's thought are heard in voice over.
LISA
Come all the way inside please. (pause) Step all the way inside, please. If you'll stay in a group together, at the end of your tour you can come back to look around. This is the Trophy Room. It was added on to the mansion in 1965. Elvis used it as a storage area for just about everything you see in here today. Everything's been arranged in a chronological order, so we're going to take you on a trip through Elvis's life-story.

DAN
This is nice. So even if you don't know anything about Elvis, you can learn about it here. At least, you can learn the things they want you to know here.

LISA
January 8, 1935, Elvis was born in this two-room house in Tupelo, Mississippi, at about 4:35 in the morning. His twin brother, Jesse Garon, had been born earlier at 4 a.m., but was stillborn. Elvis grew up as an only child. The Presley family moved to Memphis in 1948. Elvis graduated from a local high school in the class of '53. A year after graduating, Elvis had formed his first band with Scotty Moore and Bill Black. They had five singles together under the Sun label, the first of which was most popular—"That's All Right," better known as "That's All Right, Mama." By 1955 they were performing throughout the South quite frequently and a lot of times on Saturday nights he would find him on the "Louisiana Hayride," a radio show out of Shreveport. One evening backstage, Elvis was introduced to Colonel Tom Parker, the man who signed him under RCA.

DAN
Colonel Parker always reminds me of P.T. Barnum—the way he promoted Elvis.

LISA
Elvis's first big release for RCA was "Heartbreak Hotel" in 1956. That same year, Elvis's first album appeared and was self-entitled. Both of these went gold immediately. That same year "Don't Be Cruel" backed by "Hound Dog" was released and it sold more than five million copies in less than a month, making it the fastest selling recording in the rock era for more than thirty-five years.
DAN
That's impressive. It's difficult to imagine what being young back then must have been like; they must have been starved for entertainment.

LISA
Elvis was very busy in 1956; he made several television appearances and his first movie, Love Me Tender, a black-and-white Civil War drama. Out of his thirty-one movies it was the only one that he appears in as a co-star. In 1957 Elvis was in Loving You and Jailhouse Rock, and then, in 1958, King Creole, his personal favorite.

DAN
That was the one with Carolyn Jones, the future Morticia Addams.

LISA
While making King Creole Elvis received his draft papers from the Army. He was given sixty days to finish the movie.

DAN
How '50s! If the draft existed today, I don't think performers would be given extra time before reporting in.

LISA
He spent six months in Ft. Hood, Texas, a year and a half in West Germany where he met Priscilla. His uniform is in the corner. He was six foot tall.

DAN
That was a bit non sequitur.

LISA
On March 6, 1960, at the end of his two year term, Elvis was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant E-5 and a medal of good conduct.

DAN
What a rebel!

LISA
He returned to Graceland on March 8th. This will be a guided tour so please stay with your tour guide your first time through. At the end of your entire tour you'll be able to separate from your group.
and stay in this building to look around for as long as you like. But first, your next stop is straight ahead and into the hall of gold. Please come back later to look around.

INT. GRACELAND SHONEY’S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon sit in a booth eating potato and cheese soup.

DAN
Good soup. Have you ever had their brownie pie?

SHARON
No.

DAN
Oh, God, it’s great. The brownie is sort of like a thick chocolate chip cookie and it’s hot and gooey. I don’t really like the ice cream part.

SHARON
Huh. (long pause) So do you think the narrator of the written text of the tour narrative is supportive or biased towards EPE?

DAN
Well, the narrator obviously has a great deal at stake in telling the story and keeping the legend of Elvis alive. I don’t think fans would let EPE get away with a narrative that deviates too greatly from their accepted views of Elvis. Sure, EPE controls the actual narrative text, but they can’t really control what tour guides do with it during the tour. Of course, fans would probably love it if a tour guide would go off on a tangent and totally fuck with people’s minds during the tour. I don’t think the tour guides would risk it though; they must need the money or they probably wouldn’t work here.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM IN DELHI, INDIA

James Scott is in a hospital bed in traction.

JAMES
Remember, those who occupy subordinate positions also have something at stake in promoting the public transcript.

INT. GRACELAND SHONEY’S RESTAURANT - NIGHT
Dan and Sharon look at the camera then look at each other.

DAN
Tour guides are just as much at the mercy of EPE as fans and funs are. If we think about tour guides as performers enacting the public transcript, some of them actually perform the narrative as if they really love Elvis.

INT. TROPHY ROOM - HALL OF GOLD

Dan, Sharon and a Group of Tourists go through a large doorway into a long, narrow room, its walls lined with gold records and awards.

CHERYL
A twenty-something, white, female tour guide with a very high-pitched voice.

Cheryl addresses the group. We hear Dan’s thoughts in voice over.

CHERYL
Come right on in. I’d like to welcome y’all into the Hall of Gold. To your right, that is a television set that was given to Elvis by RCA in 1960.

DAN
What is it with the tv’s? It’s not like he had too many channel options for viewing. I guess television sets were some kind of status symbol back then.

CHERYL
It commemorates the sixty million mark in record sales. In the case behind you you’ll find Elvis’s fourteen Grammy nominations, his lifetime achievement award, and the Grammys he actually won. Even though he was known as the King of Rock-n-Roll he never won a Grammy for any of his Rock-n-Roll—these three are for Gospel.

DAN
The way she said “gospel” made it sound like she preferred his religious recordings to his rock songs. She actually seems like she might really be a fan. She seems to take pride in telling us this stuff. Of course she could just be trying to enjoy her job.
CHERYL
Now come down the hallway a little bit. You may have noticed all the gold records in the hallway.

DAN
Oh, yeah. Do you think that's why they call it the hall of gold?

CHERYL
Each of these to your right represents a million copies of that single sold. Each of these to your left represents a half million copies of the album sold.

DAN
Well, this is the most impressive thing I've seen about Elvis. They should feature these more prominently in the tour. I mean, these are the reasons he was the king, not his tacky house.

CHERYL
Now if you'll come down a little bit further here you'll see the platinum albums. Each one of these represents a million copies of the album sold. Now here on your right are some of Elvis's foreign awards. He was perhaps most proud of these. With the exception of Canada, he never toured outside the United States. Yet his records sold by the millions in other countries. If you'll step all the way to the end of the hallway. Here to the left you'll find more foreign awards, to the right some of Elvis's magazine awards. You might want to take special note of that diamond shaped plaque. It was given to Elvis thirty-two weeks after the TV from RCA--it commemorates the seventy-five million mark.

DAN
So for fifty million records you get a nice tv, but for seventy-five million all you get is a plaque? He just made millions of dollars for RCA and all they sprung for was a lousy plaque?

CHERYL
In 1984 the estate was informed by RCA that Elvis did what no other artist had ever done--he had surpassed the one billion mark in record sales.

DAN
What'd they give him then, a fifty-cents-off coupon for Endust?
CHERYL
Now to give you an idea of how many records this would be, if you were to line them up side-by-side along the equator-

DAN
They would melt?

CHERYL
-they would circle the Earth more than two and a half times. Elvis was also a very generous man. Every year around Christmastime, he'd present the city of Memphis with fifty thousand dollars to distribute evenly amongst fifty needy charities.

DAN
Fifty thousand split fifty ways? That's only $1,000 to each charity. I'll bet that helped a lot! Very generous, El.

CHERYL
The plaque here represents the fifty neediest charities of the year 1964. Elvis did this for some seventeen years and never took the money off his tax deduction. He said to do so would take away from the true spirit of giving. If you'll go through this doorway here into the big room you'll pick up with Elvis's life in the '60s. I hope you enjoy the rest of your stay.

INT. GRACELAND SHONEY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon share a brownie pie.

DAN
I told you this was great.

SHARON
It's like a food orgasm.

DAN
Cheryl really got into her part of the narrative. Either she was very adept at performing the public transcript convincingly or she really did love Elvis.

SHARON
She could have just been trying to make her job more interesting by faking enthusiasm.
True. But unfortunately for EPE, the performers who embody the narrator for the tourists do not always enact genuine affection for Elvis or the story they tell about him. Some of them do seem to be performing what Scott would call a "hidden transcript" (1990 4).

INT. HALLWAY OF A HOSPITAL IN DELHI, INDIA

James Scott is in a wheelchair. He rolls himself slowly down the hall.

JAMES

"I... use the term hidden transcript to characterize discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (1990, 4-5).

INT. GRACELAND SHONEY'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon look at the camera and then at each other.

DAN

I argue that the hidden transcript can be performed in public in the form of a poor or unconvincing performance, such as when tour guides speak too quickly to be understood or leave out information or exhibit disinterest.

SHARON

Tour guides perform as interpreters of the text, just as someone might interpret a poem or a short story. EPE can't always control how they perform it. It's just like with our students in oral interp class; some of them get into it and others just memorize a section and recite it. But don't know that you could say that our students, by performing "badly" are performing hidden transcripts to fight the oppression of a tyrannical professor.

DAN

Well, maybe not my students. Seriously, I think hidden transcripts can be performed in public. Take Wanda's part of the tour narrative for example.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION - DINING ROOM
WANDA

A young African-American female tour guide. She appears in the dining room and directs Dan, Sharon, and a Group of Tourists over to the room's entrance. A small rectangular part of the entrance is roped off.

Wanda speaks without smiling.

WANDA
Please step all the way to the rope. (pause) You are now inside Graceland's formal dining room.

DAN
Actually we're just in the doorway. Somehow I thought it would be bigger than it is. I like the color scheme.

In the center of the room is a large, oblong, mirror-topped dining room table. The room seems too small for such a large table. Six dark brown oak chairs are placed on the sides of the table. The walls of the room are covered with mirrors that have thin, gold threads running through them to create a marbled effect.

DAN
Very '70s!

Over the center of the table is a huge crystal chandelier. Against the wall to the left of the table is a large console television set circa 1974. To the right of the table is a potted plant in a gold bucket. On the wall behind the plant is a portrait of Priscilla and Lisa Marie.

WANDA
As you can see, the dining table in front of you is set for six; it was not uncommon for Elvis to host ten to twelve guests. Dinner was usually served here at the mansion around nine or ten p.m.

DAN
That's probably why he got so fat. That and what he ate.

WANDA
Elvis sat at the head of the table. If you'll look to your right you'll notice the portrait of Priscilla and Lisa Marie at the age of two. Lisa Marie is now twenty-six years old. She lives in Southern California. She has recently inherited the Elvis Presley Estate and has joined the management team along with her mother, Priscilla.
DAN
I wonder if Lisa Marie ever comes here. I wonder if any of the tour guides are going to mention her marriage to Michael Jackson. I wonder if Priscilla asked her to sign over her proxy in the business. I always thought it was weird that Priscilla had so much control over the business since she wasn't even married to Elvis when he died.

WANDA
Get a good look around in the dining room. Those of you in front may want to exit so those in the back can get a better view. The next stop is across the hall in the living room.

DAN
That was it? That took about one minute. She looked and sounded really bored. I wonder if all the tour guides who work in the summer are high school kids? I think its strange that a young, African-American female would work here. In the Elvis literature there is an often spoken of animosity between African-Americans and Elvis. The theory is that Elvis appropriated the music of the Black bluesmen of Memphis, but never did anything to pay them back. I also wonder why this tour guide hasn't mentioned some of the things I've heard on previous tours, such as the story of the chandelier, what they often ate, why there was a television in the dining room. Oh, well! Go with the herd.

INT. GRACELAND SHONEY'S RESTAURANT

Dan and Sharon have finished eating.

DAN
See. I think Wanda's performance of the public transcript was a performance of a hidden transcript. In the tour guide performances, an attitude towards tourists emerged through the vocal and physical delivery of the tour narrative. Also, tour guides, as narrators, revealed their attitudes about their jobs by selecting which pieces of the official narrative they would share and which pieces they would omit or alter. Some tour guides, like Wanda-

SHARON
And Aimee. And Tamra.

DAN
-And Aimee and Tamra, yes- they all openly displayed their lack of interest in tourists and their disregard for their roles as narrator.
SHARON
Wanda never even smiled at the tourists.

DAN
But remember when you saw her after the tour and took her photograph? Wanda was perky and smiling quite a bit.

EXT. GRACELAND MANSION DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Sharon notices several TOUR GUIDES standing together on the sidewalk between the mansion entrance and the shuttle area. She recognizes some of them as her tour guides. Wanda is among them.

They are all smiling and laughing. They are exhibiting signs of personality that they did not show tourists on the tour.

Sharon approaches them for a photo-op.

SHARON
Hi. Excuse me. Could I take a picture of y'all.

WHITE MALE TOUR GUIDE
Sure. Y'all want to get your picture taken?

WANDA
Oh, lord.

SHARON
Everybody, move in a little. Smile.

They huddle together and smile, including Wanda. Sharon takes the picture.

EXT. GRACELAND SHONEY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon walk to their car.

DAN
It's hard to believe she was the same person who gave us the tour. But I have to say, in her defense, she wasn't the worst one we had. Aimee was even worse than Wanda because she deviated from the prepared narrative by telling her audience misinformation about Elvis, leaving out important pieces of exposition, and not speaking clearly.
INT. GRACELAND MANSION, LIVING ROOM

Dan, Sharon, and a Group of Tourists exit the dining room and cross the hall, a trek of at least three steps, to enter a rectangular, roped-off section of the living room.

AIMEE

A teen-aged, white female tour guide. She waits for them in the living room but does not usher them into the room as Wanda did. She merely begins speaking rather quickly.

AIMEE

You are now coming into the living room-combination-music room. All the furniture was custom made shortly after Elvis moved in. Over to your right is (unclear) and coffee table.

Over the entrance to the room is an archway with a bright blue curtain. Everything is white: The carpet is white, the two plush chairs on the right side of the room are white. The very long sofa is white. The walls are white. The ceiling is white. The shades on the lamps are white. The only other color in the room is the blue curtain at the top of the archway at the opposite end of the room. Beyond that archway is a white grand piano. On either side of that archway are two stained glass windows with peacock designs featured.

We hear Dan's voice over.

DAN

This is the point in the tour narrative where the tour guide is supposed to tell us about the dimensions of the long, white sofa. It's about seventeen feet long; that's because Elvis had it custom made. She also didn't say anything about this being the furniture Priscilla requested be put back in the living room when the house opened for tours. Apparently before Elvis died in 1977, his girlfriend, Linda Thompson, had put some very garish red furniture in the living room, and Priscilla changed it back to how it was when she lived in the mansion.

AIMEE

If you look straight ahead you see the stained glass Elvis installed in 1934.

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DAN
1934? Before he was even born?!

AIMEE
He chose the peacocks not only for their beauty, but for their symbolic meaning. (She coughs.)

DAN
What symbolic meaning? She sure is taking a lot for granted if she thinks many of us know the symbolic meaning of a peacock. I wonder if she just forgot what she was supposed to say or if she just doesn’t care.

AIMEE
To your left is a portrait of Elvis at the age of twenty-two. This gives you an idea of how he looked when he first moved to Graceland. Below it is a photo of his parents, (unclear).

DAN
Vernon and Gladys Presley! Their names are Vernon and Gladys. Sure everyone here knows that, but she could still say it loud enough for us to hear.

AIMEE
Make sure that you get a good look around.

DAN
I’ve heard that before. It’s not like they even give you time to hear what they’re saying much less see what they’re talking about. I feel sorry for the people who have never been here before—they’re really not getting their money’s worth.

AIMEE
Whenever you’re ready your tour will continue around the corner and down the hallway. I hope you enjoy it. (She coughs.)

INT. DAN’S CAR
Dan drives down Elvis Presley Boulevard.
Sharon sits in the passenger seat.
DAN
And remember our tour guide in the Jungle Room? She was barely audible and also left out important pieces of exposition in the tour narrative.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION - JUNGLE ROOM

Dan, Sharon, and the Group of Tourists are separated from the den by a wood-panelled half wall. This room is large and "eclectic." On one end of the wood-panelled room is a giant wood carving that resembles a seated African goddess with some sort of bowl in her lap. The floor is covered with the green shag carpet. So is the ceiling. To the left of the goddess is a carved-wood table with a carved-wood lamp and orange velour shade on top. Along the far wall is a large, carved-wood hutch with several pieces of early '70s bric-a-brac. On the floor in front of the goddess is some sort of white animal skin rug. There is a large, round fur-covered ottoman in the center of the room next to a very uncomfortable looking sofa. On the wall opposite the goddess is a rock wall complete with a fully operational fountain.

JUNGLE ROOM TOUR GUIDE

A young, white female. She has a frightened look on her face. She begins to speak, but she is barely audible.

JUNGLE ROOM TOUR GUIDE
We'd like to welcome all of you at this time to the Jungle Room. It was given that name by the media in 1982 (unclear). All of this furniture was hand-picked by Elvis at (unclear) Furniture Store here in Memphis. It's all hand-carved (unclear) pine with the exception of the coffee table which is (unclear). It only took Elvis thirty minutes to pick out all the furniture (unclear).

DAN
Hard to believe--it all matches so well.

JUNGLE ROOM TOUR GUIDE
The carpet that's on the ceiling was a popular trend in the late '70s.

DAN
In bordellos, maybe.
JUNGLE ROOM TOUR GUIDE
(unclear) Elvis enjoyed this room because he said it reminded him of his favorite vacation in (unclear). (Very long unclear section).

Dan, Sharon, and the Group of Tourists stand still for a few seconds. When the Tour Guide shows no signs of speaking again (she just stares blankly at the floor) they all begin to exit through a screen door that leads to the carport.

DAN
In previous tours we were told more about the room. I think Elvis supposedly recorded an album in this room because the shag carpet made it acoustically sound proof. Of course, she could have said all that, but I couldn't understand her well enough to figure it out. I'll bet the foreign visitors have a very difficult time understanding this tour unless they've read about it first somewhere.

INT. DAN'S CAR

Dan is now driving the other direction on Elvis Presley Boulevard.

DAN
I think the worst tour guide performance was delivered by Tamra—she made no pretense of interest in the tourists, the narrative, or her job as narrator. She simply refused to give us any information and merely directed us to the racquetball court to watch the video.

INT. GRACELAND RACQUETBALL BUILDING

Dan, Sharon and the Group of Tourists stand in a small waiting area that overlooks the racquetball court. There are some leather chairs and a small sofa located in an alcove.

TAMRA

A young, African-American female tour guide. She stands just inside the door of the building. She speaks without any vocal inflection or enthusiasm.

TAMRA
You're now inside Elvis's racquetball building that was built in 1975. It cost around $300,000. Down the steps there's a video (unclear) all about it.
Dan, Sharon, and the Group of Tourists walk down the steps into the court.

Tamra sighs, sits on a stool, and looks at her fingernails.

EXT. DOGTRACK PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon get out of the car, walk across the lot and enter the Dogtrack building.

INT. DOGTRACK TICKET BOOTH

Dan and Sharon purchase tickets to a race and stand next to the ticket booth.

We hear Sharon's voice over.

SHARON
Wait. Wait. Stop. I would never go to a dogtrack.

DAN
Okay. How about the Peabody Hotel?

SHARON
Okay. We could see the ducks. I would do that.

INT. PEABODY HOTEL LOBBY

Dan and Sharon sit and wait for the ducks to walk from the fountain to the elevator.

DAN
EPE writes the public transcript, which, to a certain extent, is supported by fans. However, the text as written is not necessarily the text as performed or as received. As a narrative, the audience and speaker(s) co-equally perform the text (Goodwin 1986) within a tourist context designed to feature an "authentic slice of life," a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the world Elvis inhabited. The slice is never "authentic"—it is always mediated by the narrator of the text; it is further mediated by the performer when s/he speaks the text and then further mediated in the mind of the audience/tourist when s/he accepts, rejects, or negotiates the meaning of the text.
INT. LANGELLIER AND PETERSON'S KITCHEN

KRISTIN LANGELLIER

A petite, dark haired woman of forty. She has done extensive research about the performance of personal narratives.

ERIC PETERSON

A short, thin man with glasses of forty. He has worked with Langellier in much of her scholarly endeavors.

They sit at their kitchen table drinking herbal tea.

CAPTION: KRISTIN LANGELLIER AND ERIC PETERSON - NARRATIVE EXPERTS

They speak at the same time.

KRISTIN AND ERIC
The audience . . . (both laugh) You go ahead. No, you go ahead. (they laugh)

ERIC
You go.

KRISTIN
(laughing) Okay. The audience plays a significant role in the performance of a narrative in that "refusal to listen, challenges to the speaker, . . .

ERIC
. . . supportive responses . . .

KRISTIN
. . . supportive responses," right, or "deferential listening" (1993, 62) affect narrative authority as well as narrative content.

EXT. ROOF OF THE PEABODY HOTEL - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon stand near the edge of the roof overlooking Memphis.
DAN
So the fans and funs are fust as responsible for the effect of the tour narrative as tour guides. Maybe tour guides sense that no one cares what they have to say so they don't try very hard to do a good job of delivering the lines of the narrative. These tour guide performances demonstrate that not only can a text have an ideal reader, but it can have an ideal performer—or the opposite of each, the non-ideal reader, such as funs, and the non-ideal performer, such as a tour guide who reluctantly performs the narrative. From a fan-abusive fun perspective, such tour guide performances do nothing to alter a fun's opinion that there is no reason to take Elvis seriously. Such performances keep funs saying, "That's it? That's all there is to Elvis? To Graceland? To the legend?"

EXT. BEALE STREET - EVENING

VANCE
A young, white male fan-abusive fun. He is walking around Beale Street after an El-Vez, the Mexican Elvis, concert.

CAPTION: VANCE - FAN-ABUSIVE FUN

Fans are whacked. They are nuts. We went on that tour of Graceland, just for laughs, and that place was u-g-ly! And those people eat that shit up—oh, can I say that?—but the tour guides are like zombies. They don't even want to talk about that crap themselves. I would quit. I would flat out quit if I had to be one of those tour guides. Some of them are old ladies who probably get off on Elvis, but the ones that are my age? No way. I'd quit before I'd surround myself with that tacky stuff. It's funny to look at, but I would not want to be surrounded by it all day. I will never understand what the appeal is.

EXT. ROOF OF PEABODY HOTEL - NIGHT

Dan and Sharon are sitting on a bench looking up at the stars.

DAN
However, for hardcore fans, such tour guide performances can reinforce fan superiority over the "official" workers because they know more than the tour guides and do not need the tour narrative
to understand Elvis or the mansion. Hardcore fans go through the tour not to hear the narrative, but to actually spend time in the house.

INT. WILSON WORLD HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM

SAMANTHA HENDRIX

A chubby, blonde-haired woman of forty-five. She is a fan club president and a self-proclaimed hard core fan.

Samantha sits in a chair and addresses the camera directly.

CAPTION: SAMANTHA HENDRIX - HARD CORE FAN

SAMANTHA

I guess I know the house as well as anyone. I've been through it over two hundred times. There's a lot they don't tell you during those tours. But a lot of 'em are just high school kids. They don't know as much as we do about him. So you sort of expect there to be differences, discrepancies, between what they say and what's true. They don't know any better. And I don't think they do it on purpose or anything. They just don't know they're wrong. Or they do know, and they think no one will notice. But believe me, people notice! I used to get so mad when I'd tour the house and one of those kids would mess up their speech, because they were supposed to be telling people about Elvis, and they weren't. I would have done their job for free if it meant telling people the truth about the house and Elvis. It doesn't bother me so much anymore. I guess I got used to it. And at this point, I think most people who visit the house know something about Elvis anyway. I really just keep going to be in his house. So I've learned not to pay so much attention to them anyway. Occasionally one or two of them will do a good job, and I'll tell 'em so. I'm like their mother (laughs). "Good job, honey!"

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan sits on the sofa watching *The Simpsons*.

We hear his voice over.
DAN
So far, I've tried to make sense of this tour by looking at how tour guide performances of the tour narrative support and subvert the public transcript constructed by EPE. But I still have questions about the tour I need answered, questions about power, play and postmodern identity construction. How is performance of a hidden transcript tied to those issues?

Dan falls asleep on the sofa.

FADE TO BLACK

DREAM SEQUENCE BEGINS

CAPTION: DEUS EX MACHINA

EXT. GRACELAND MANSION FRONT PORCH

Dan, Sharon, and the Group of Tourists stand huddled together on the tiny porch.

KAREN

A small, dark-haired, young, white woman. She is the first tour guide. She wears the standard uniform—navy blue skirt, light blue cotton shirt, white collar, small navy blue tie. She also wears a small "Graceland" name tag which reads "Karen."

KAREN
Step on up please. Hello, welcome to Elvis's home, Graceland. Graceland was built in 1935 by Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Moore. Graceland was named after Mrs. Moore's great-aunt Grace. In 1957 Elvis bought the house for the price of one-hundred-thousand dollars. Graceland is built on some 13.8 acres of land. The first stop on your tour will be the formal dining room.

Dan speaks directly to the camera.

DAN
I've been on this tour before, so I know what she's going to say. At least I thought I knew what she was going to say. She left out the part about Elvis's Aunt Delta who still lives in the house. I wonder if she died.
KAREN
But first I must remind you that we do have a "no smoking" policy. We encourage you to take as many pictures as you like. We do ask that you turn your flash off as it fades and deteriorates the fabrics. If y'all have any video or audio equipment, we ask that you drop it off with the security guards at the door. It'll be returned to you when the tour is complete. Now if you'll step inside, enjoy the rest of your day.

Sharon and Dan look at each other nervously.

Dan speaks directly to the camera.

DAN
I suspected that recording devices wouldn't be allowed during the tour. But I need to record the tour narrative for my research. This is sort of an ethical dilemma—should I record the narrative even though it is expressly against the rules? Since the rules were made by Elvis Presley Enterprises and not by the fans, I could violate the rules. I look at it as an act of resistance against the hegemony, not as a way of taking advantage of fans or fans. Besides, the recording will be used for research purposes. It isn't like I am going to transcribe it and sell it to anyone—as if anyone would want it. Also, the information included in the tour narrative is already well-known to most Elvis fans. I don't think there will be any harm done by violating this one rule. Unless we get caught! We have to make sure that we stand near the tour guides so our hidden recorders will pick up their voices, but we mustn't look suspicious. But then, these tour guides see so many weird people every day they probably wouldn't notice if we held the recorders up to their mouths.

Karen opens the metallic-barred outer door as a SECURITY GUARD opens the inner wooden door.

Everyone enters the small foyer.

Wanda stands in the dining room.

WANDA
This is the dining room. Look around. You may be asking yourself, "From a fan perspective, how does the performance of the tour enact power relations within fan culture?" The hierarchy within fan culture that was discussed in relation to the Vigil in the previous chapter is also evident in this performance, but is manifested
differently. The way fans demonstrate the hierarchy within fan culture during this performance has to do with "hang time," the amount of time spent in each room of the house itself before moving on to the next room.

Instead of the usual Graceland furniture in each room, fans are placed on pedestals with plaques attached.

Wanda points out different fans as she speaks.

WANDA
Hard core fans at the top of the hierarchy stay in each room longer than other fans and funs, not because they necessarily want to see the objects in each room, but because they want to spend time in the house. Hard core fans also make their presence known in other nonverbal ways. Fan club members often tour the house together, dress in similar clothing, and wear fan club badges, so the distinction between types of hard core fans is very subtle.

Aimee enters from the living room and begins to point out the fans who are displayed there.

AIMEE
Fixated hard core fans move through the house as if it were a dream—they walk slowly, gaze at each room with eyes glazed over, sigh frequently, and on occasion, cry openly. By performing these behaviors, they mark themselves as a particular type of fan, one who is totally enraptured with Elvis. Unfortunately, they also typify the negative stereotype of Elvis fandom that prompts ridicule of all fans.

EXT. GRACELAND CROSSINGS - DAYTIME

MARK
A young, white male of twenty-five. He is an observer fun who just likes to watch the fans interact with each other.

Dan has stopped Mark and asked him some questions.

DAN
Have you seen anyone you thought was obsessed with Elvis?
MARK
Look around! (laughs) Yeah, I was in the mansion, on a tour, and there was this, like, an Elvis impersonator in my group—well, he wasn’t really an impersonator. He looked like Elvis, with the hair and the glasses, but he was dressed in just regular clothes. Maybe he was on a break from impersonating. But I’d say he seemed really obsessed with Elvis.

DAN
Why? What’d he do?

MARK
He, he was. . . really into the tour, you know. Like he would walk through the rooms with everyone else, but he would mumble to himself and laugh to himself. I was a little afraid to get too close to him, but he just really took it all very seriously. I thought he was going to cry a few times. I was glad there weren’t more of him in the group with us. But he was more interesting than the tour itself! (laughs)

DAN
Were you surprised to see someone like him?

MARK
No, actually I thought I’d see a lot more people like him than I have. I was sort of hoping to see more crazy people. Maybe all the crazy ones get in a group together to go through the place.

INT. DAN’S LIVING ROOM.

Dan is on the sofa. He wakes up and turns off the television. He thinks the dream sequence is over.

He walks into the kitchen, opens the refrigerator door, looks inside, then closes the door. As he turns around, Tamra appears in his kitchen. The dream sequence is not over.

TAMRA
Proactive hard core fans often try to lead the tour themselves. They move through the house as if it were theirs.

As Tamra speaks we see images of what she is describing.
They mark themselves as Elvis authorities by nodding in agreement when the tour narrative meets their approval, and by shaking their heads and whispering corrections to whomever is standing nearby when the tour narrative is "not quite right."

I often noticed them giving their own tour narrative quietly at the same time as the tour guide performance. Some would point to certain features in a room and lean towards nearby tourists and begin a rather physically animated story. On several occasions during past tours I found myself listening to the fan tour narrative rather than to the tour guides partly because I had already heard the tour guide narrative before and partly because the fan tour narrative did include more "Elvis trivia."

Tamra and the fan images disappear.

DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS

EXT. ELVIS PRESLEY AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

Dan sits beside a large pink Cadillac outside the museum.

We hear his voice over.

From a fan perspective, the performance of the Tour not only reinforces fan ideology but it also challenges fan ideology. One important tenet of fan ideology is the notion of sharing Elvis with the world.

EXT. CANDLELIGHT VIGIL CEREMONY

A small, white female of fifty. She stands on a platform near the entrance to Graceland and reads from a prepared script.

Those of us gathered here tonight share our love for Elvis with each other and the world. As you go through tonight’s ceremony, send your thoughts and prayers to the countless fans who could not be here with us tonight. They can only experience this wonderful night
through you and your actions beyond tonight, through your stories and letters about the wonder of Elvis. Keep the legend alive. As Elvis has touched you, so let you touch others.

EXT. ELVIS PRESLEY AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

Dan climbs into the pink cadillac.

We hear his voice over.

DAN

However, that ideology is challenged by the tour performance when tour guides give misinformation and try to rush tourists through the house as quickly as possible.

INT. GRACELAND PLAZA - ART EXHIBIT AREA

Dan wanders through the exhibit looking at odd paintings of Elvis.

DAN

Fans themselves enact behaviors that challenge fan ideology. Most fan writing and art clearly support the fan ideology that makes Elvis the focus of attention; however, during the tour, hard core fan behavior often draws the focus away from the information about Elvis. Whether fans consciously try to draw attention to themselves or not, the result is the same—a direct challenge to fan ideology that places Elvis at the center of all activities. From a soft core fan perspective, behaviors that draw attention to fans rather than to Elvis are embarrassing. While they identify themselves as fans, they often make sure there is a clear distinction between themselves and "those crazy fans."

EXT. GRACELAND PLAZA - IN FRONT OF THE POST OFFICE

BRENDA

A middle-aged, white female. She is a soft core fan who likes Elvis, but not the hype.

CAPTION: BRENDA - SOFT CORE FAN

BRENDA

People showing off, like some of those impersonators or people crying by the grave—that's uncalled for. I respect Elvis and his
music. He was a human, just like the rest of us. There’s no need to get so hysterical about it. Yes, I’m a fan, but I’m not one of those crazy fans who gets all worked up over it. I think you do more of a service for Elvis and his legend when you quietly respect him and enjoy his music. From what I’ve heard of him as a person, he didn’t really like people making a big show of him. He made a big enough show of himself!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GRACELAND PLAZA ICE CREAM PARLOR

LORA

A middle-aged, white female. She is also a soft core fan.

CAPTION: LORA - SOFT CORE FAN

LORA

I’m a fan, but I’m not obsessed or anything. I don’t belong to any fan clubs. I guess I’ve just seen some strange people here who wear fan club badges—people who carry it a little too far. I certainly like his music, but I don’t think I’d enjoy being in a fan club. It’s fun to see the really gung-ho fans, but I wouldn’t want to be one or have people think I am one.

EXT. CONVENIENT MART - BESIDE GRACELAND PLAZA

Dan puts gasoline in his car. We hear his voice over.

DAN

Hard core fans aren’t the only ones who take the tour who might call attention to themselves. Fans who go on the mansion tour never know who might be standing beside or behind them, so they are often more careful about what they say to their companions while touring—except for the occasional fan-abusive fun who enjoys making fun of fans rather overtly.

Dan looks across the street at the Graceland mansion.

EXT. STONE WALL IN FRONT OF GRACELAND

BRANDY

A teen-aged local woman. Brandy is a fan-abusive fun.
TRACI

A teen-aged local woman. She is also a fan-abusive fun.

Brandy and Traci write on the wall.

BRANDY
I had Elvis’s love child.

TRACI
I am Elvis’s love child.

BRANDY
I killed Elvis’s love child.

TRACI
That’s mean.

BRANDY
Elvis, are you up there? Come open the gate and let me in! Elvis! Elvis!

Traci notices A GROUP OF WOMEN near the gate.

TRACI
Brandy. Shut up.

BRANDY
Why? I don’t care what those old cows think. Elvis! Get your sorry ass down here right now!

DAN
But most funs are more covert—they take part in a form of play that performance theorist Richard Schechner refers to as "dark play."

INT. SHOW BAR LOUNGE

RICHARD SCHECHNER

An elderly white male performance scholar. He sits at a table far away from the stage. A STRIPPER is performing a pole dance.

Schechner speaks loudly because the music is very loud.
"Dark play occurs when contradictory realities coexist, each seemingly capable of canceling the other out, as in a double cross... a wisecrack, a flash of frenzy, risk, or delirium" (Schechner 1993, 6).

Dan enters the foreground near Schechner’s table and directly addresses the camera. He speaks like a news correspondent on 20/20.

DAN
Funs experience dark play by simply enacting their roles as funs. Fan-abusive funs enjoy the risk of punishment or disapproval by fans or EPE officials, therefore, they are more likely than other types of funs to make wisecracks in front of fans or to openly ridicule fans and EPE staff. Participant-Observer funs, because they try to disguise themselves as fans, enact a dangerous, and thrilling, form of dark play that-

Schechner
"subverts order, dissolves frames, breaks its own rules... as in spying, con games, undercover actions, and double agentry" (Schechner 1993, 6).

DAN
Their goal is to infiltrate fan territory without being exposed as "fakes." They spend time observing fan behaviors and trying to simulate them. Participant-Observer funs are walking "contradictory realities" in that they are both fan and fun simultaneously—the hermaphrodites of fandom.

The Stripper has danced her way over to Schechner’s table. He deposits five dollars in her g-string.

Schechner
Although this inversion and obfuscation of identity by funs could be read as a form of carnival, "dark play's inversions are not declared or resolved; its end is not integration but disruption, deceit, excess, and gratification" (Schechner 1993,6). Funs gain gratification from their deceit; their reasons for enacting this identity may not be known to anyone, including themselves.

EXT. SHOW BAR PARKING LOT - MORNING
DAN
For some funs, the act of touring the house is itself an instance of dark play. Fun
s enter the sacred realm of the icon, just as Indiana Jones entered the Temple of Doom.

Schechner runs out the door of the Show Bar and tries to catch Dan.

SCHECHNER
Even funs who do not do anything to be overtly subversive or disruptive may still participate in dark play activities since "dark play need not be overtly angry or violent. And what might be dark play to one person can be innocuous to another" (Schechner 1993, 6).

As Dan speaks, small images of specific tour guides appear on the screen.

DAN
Tour guides who are funs exhibit instances of dark play activity when they give misinformation,

Aimee's face appears.

DAN
have a dead-pan delivery,

Jungle Room Tour Guide's face appears.

DAN
display a negative attitude,

Wanda's face appears.

DAN
or display no attitude at all.

Tamra's face appears.

DAN
Their dark play seeps through in many instances to help make work more bearable.

SCHECHNER
"[I]t's wrong to think of playing as the interruption of ordinary life. Consider instead playing as the underlying, always there continuum of experience. . . . Ordinary life is netted out of playing but playing

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continuously squeezes through even the smallest holes in the
worknet—because there is no such thing as absolute opacity, there
are no totally blank walls. No matter how hard people try, play finds
its way through." (1993, 42)

DAN
If this observation is true, then even fan performances of the tour
are instances of dark play.

SCHECHNER
Fans participate in dark play when "the play frame [is] so disturbed
or disrupted that the players themselves are not sure if they are
playing or not" (Schechner, 1993 39). When a fan enacts his/her
fandom in the form of cultural performances such as the tour, s/he
"plays out alternative selves" (Schechner 1993, 39) not only for
him/herself but also for others. Each of these alternative selves may
be instances of dark play when performed or become instances of
dark play retroactively "by reperforming them as narratives."
(Schechner 1993, 39)

INT. STEAM ROOM OF THE NEW YORK CITY YMCA
Dan and Schechner sit on a bench and talk.

DAN
So, when fans tell others of their activities as fans, they cast their
behaviors as serious forms of work, which in itself is a form of dark
play because it conceals the frame "this is play."

SCHECHNER
Yes, as I state on page thirty-eight of my 1993 book, when "they
subvert the metacommunicational aspect of the play frame . . ."
they are involved in dark play. But there are several characteristics,
if you will, that may mark something as dark play: (1) dark play is
is physically risky.

DAN
Right, because you never know when you might encounter a fan-
basher or just generally piss someone off with your fun activities.

SCHECHNER
Whatever; (2) dark play involves intentional confusion or
concealment of the frame "this is play."

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DAN
Which we already talked about.

SCHENKNER
Whatever; (3) dark play may continue actions from early childhood.

DAN
You mean like role playing, making mud pies, frantic and frenetic
movement, getting dizzy, stuff like that?

SCHENKNER
Sort of, but I mean more psychological/emotional actions from
childhood, like seeking the comfort of your mother's womb.

DAN
Let's just skip that one.

SCHENKNER
Okay. (4) dark play only occasionally demands make believe.

DAN
Right. And fans aren't pretending when they demonstrate their love
of Elvis or when they go through the mansion tour to be near his
stuff. But they could be pretending. Or participant/observer fans
who try to blend in and make people believe they are fans employ
make believe as a form of dark play.

SCHENKNER
Exactly. And (5) participants in dark play activities play out
alternative selves. The play frame may be so disturbed or disrupted
that the players themselves are not sure if they are playing or not--
their actions become play retroactively: the events are what they
are, but by telling these events, by reperforming them as narratives,
they are cast as play.

DAN
So a hard core fan, someone who is really into being a fan,
especially while at Graceland for Elvis Week, may not even be aware
that s/he is experiencing dark play because s/he is so "into"
character, this alternative self they've created in the festival
context. They see it as work while doing it, but recast it as play
when they tell about their experiences and say things like "We had a
great time at Graceland."
SCHECHNER

Yes.

DAN

For funs, too, I guess--while at Graceland, they are enacting the role of fun that they may not perform in any other context; fans are fans even away from Graceland, but funs may be funs only at Graceland. Even so, they may not be aware that they are actively assuming a new identity while there. They think they are just being themselves when they’re really becoming members of a postmodern tourist culture. When they tell other people about the tour, they then reposition it as an act of play and their part in the performance as dark play.

SCHECHNER

Whatever.

DAN

I’m just trying to tie this all together here. Bear with me. So could we say then that through performances of dark play, it is possible to have a publicly performed hidden transcript?

SCHECHNER

Yes.

EXT. GRACELAND MANSION - FRONT PORCH

Dan and a Group of Tourists get off the shuttle and walk to the porch.

DAN

Some changes have occurred in the tour since I last participated. I recently learned that this year the tour is not conducted by teen- aged-zombie-tour-guides. Instead-

Docents distribute tape players to each tourist.

DAN

-the tour is on tape. Visitors to the mansion are given a set of headphones and a small cassette player with a pre-recorded tour narrative tape inside.

Dan and the tourists enter the mansion.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION LIVING ROOM
DAN
The advantage of this system is that visitors are not subjected to the delivery of less-than-enthusiastic tour guides.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION TELEVISION ROOM

DAN
Also, the visitor is allowed to stay in each room a bit longer—all one needs to do to pause the tour is to pause the tape.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION GAME ROOM

DAN
I also understand that parts of the tape are narrated by Priscilla, which makes the experience even more interesting from a fan perspective—you get to hear her actual words about her home and her life with Elvis.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION KITCHEN

DAN
The drawback to this method is that it is very impersonal—very mechanical. Wanda may have been monotonous, but she probably needed the job.

INT. WANDA’S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Wanda sits in a chair while reading the classified ads in the newspaper.

WANDA
I may have been monotonous, but I needed the job.

We hear Dan’s voice over.

DAN
Eliminating the live tour guide is one way for EPE to control the content of the tour narrative, as well as a way to make money by not having to pay tour guides.

EXT. BACKYARD PATIO OF GRACELAND

The lawn furniture on the patio is empty. As we hear Dan’s voice in voice over an image of ELVIS’S AUNT DELTA is superimposed over the furniture.
Another change that has occurred is the death of Elvis's Aunt Delta and the subsequent opening of the kitchen area as part of the tour. By opening the kitchen area as a new part of the tour, EPE is assured of record tour attendance. Although many fans grieve for Delta as if she were their own Aunt, I am sure they are more thrilled to be able to learn something new from the tour experience.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION - VARIOUS ROOMS IN A MONTAGE

As we hear Dan's voice over, tourists wearing headphones are seen in different rooms throughout the house.

Whether seen as positive or negative, these changes do markedly alter the performance of the tour by altering the constitutive elements of performance. No longer do we have tour guides as performers: now we have electronically produced performers. We no longer have the same tour narrative text. We no longer have the possibility of an interactive relationship between performer and audience. The context of the event has changed as well: it is no longer the same cultural performance; it is a more streamlined, hi-tech (if cassettes can be said to be hi-tech), impersonal, corporate context.

A montage of images of tour guides moving in slow motion is seen while we hear Dan's voice over.

I found a certain charm in having high school kids working during summer vacation half-heartedly talk about a person who died long before they were born that cannot be recreated via cassette tape. Although I disliked those tour guides when I went through the tour, now that I know they've been replaced, I see them in a new light. Their performances were not aesthetically pleasing (from a realist perspective) but from a fun perspective, their performances were forms of subverting the power of the corporation. It was as if they were saying, each time they opened their mouths to slur out a barely rehearsed speech,

INT. WANDA'S LIVING ROOM

Wanda sits in her chair and directly addresses the camera.
WANDA

Fuck you EPE.

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM AT GRACELAND PLAZA
Tamra directly addresses the camera.

TAMRA

Fuck you EPE!

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT

MIKE
A young, white former tour guide. He directly addresses the camera.

MIKE

Fuck you EPE!

We hear Dan's voice over.

DAN

"I’ll take your money for this crappy job, but I won’t pretend to enjoy it." They were also enacting their resentment towards fans who come to Memphis for something they see as stupid.

INT. GRACELAND MANSION - TV ROOM

We see Mike as a tour guide greeting people in the TV Room. We hear his voice over.

MIKE

I did a good job for them. I really enjoyed working there. Maybe they’ll go back to the old way of doing the tour. If they do, though, I won’t work for them again. They didn’t pay much anyway.

INT. DAN'S OFFICE

Dan is at the computer typing. We hear his voice over.

DAN

For Mike, the performance of the tour is no longer a paradox. He and all the other former tour guides have fallen victim to the evil empire—not McDonald’s or Disney—but Elvis Presley Enterprises. For fans and funs, however, performance of the tour remains a seemingly paradoxical performance. When fans and funs construct their identities through performances like the Graceland Mansion
tour, they are demonstrating how within the tourist context, fans and fans are particular types of tourists with different power relations and different uses of power than regular tourists; therefore, the performances they enact and the identities they construct through the performances simultaneously and paradoxically reflect and propagate a postmodern sensibility of identity construction. They are empowered in that they have the ability to construct multiple and playful identities within and in opposition to a system of hegemony that attempts to control their experiences with texts and with each other. Additionally, the performance of the Graceland Mansion tour is an example of how, through dark play, subordinates within a hegemonic system can publicly perform their hidden transcripts.

Dan types the command to print the document. He checks his watch, stands and walks out of the room.

INT. DAN'S LIVING ROOM

Dan sits on the sofa, turns on the television and watches The Simpsons.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END
CHAPTER FIVE
TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS IN A FLASH: SOUVENIRS, "SNAPSHOTS," AND SHOPPING

In this chapter I examine the fan and fun performances that take place in the shopping areas across the street from Graceland during International Elvis Tribute Week that foreground material texts. Additionally, I detail how these performances, as instances of play, serve as the agency to enact power relations between and within fan and fun cultures. I will examine the role of shopping in the construction of identities for fans and funs as well as examine how consumers read objects/texts. Furthermore, I will examine how shopping reifies power relations between and within fan and fun cultures.

I begin by explaining the style in which the case study is written: a style that combines the nonlinear aspects of what Ulmer (1989) refers to as a "mystery" and the highly personal aspects of what Fiske (1990a) calls "autoethnography." Although parts of the chapter are nonlinear, the overall structure of the chapter is not; it is divided into three sections: the first section is the explanation of the writing style; the next two sections describe the performances that occur in the two main shopping areas, the "officially sanctioned" Graceland Plaza and the "unofficial" Graceland Crossings plaza.
EXPLANATION OF WRITING STYLE

The form of this chapter is significantly different from the previous case study chapters. I represented the Vigil performance in the form of a narrative and the Tour performance as a screenplay so that the written form of my ethnographic representation would critically challenge my own voice as the "authority" who "knows" fan and fun cultures, but each chapter basically followed a linear progression; however, my experience with the performance of souvenirs was primarily visual and nonlinear. The visual equivalent of my experience might be montage or kaleidoscope. Unfortunately, the only written forms that closely resemble/rhythmically-simulate my visual experience with souvenirs would be a scrapbook, a brochure, or some beat poetry. Since I am not particularly poetic, I will focus on the other two types, especially as they relate to mystory and autoethnography.

MYSTORY AND AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

In Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Television, Ulmer (1989) discusses mystory as "an alternative way to represent research, involving a kind of thinking that is more 'euretic' (concerned with invention and making) than hermeneutic" (xi). For Ulmer, the mystery is a nonlinear combination of fragments from "three levels of discourse: personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history or popular culture), [and] expert (disciplines of knowledge)" (1989, 209). "One
rationale for writing this manipulative way, selecting and combining a montage text out of the archive of personal, popular, and specialized material," writes Ulmer, "is that in the age of Artificial Intelligence, we are learning the lesson of the integration of artificial and living memory" (1989, 210-211). Another rationale, which Ulmer does not mention, is that writing an ethnography in this manner foregrounds the constructedness with which the ethnographer assembles the ethnographic representation of a performance. The writer's power relation to the object of study is implicated in the writing, rather than disguised as objective observation.

My style of writing also incorporates "autoethnography" (Fiske 1990a). Fiske uses the three levels of discourse mentioned by Ulmer, personal, professional, and popular, in his discussion of writing an autoethnography. When Fiske "attempted through theoretically structured introspection to study [his] own responses" (1990a, 85) to a media text, he focused on "the interdiscourse between social discourses in the text and those through which [he] made sense of [him] 'self', [his] social relations, and [his] social experience" (85). He further notes that:

[These discourses worked not only to circulate meanings but also to constitute 'me' as both a social agent in the reproduction and regeneration of those meanings, and also as the social agency through which they circulated. . . my first investigation, then, was of myself, not as an individual, but as a site and as an instance of reading, as an agent of culture in process. . . because the process by which I produced it was a structured instance of culture in practice (Fiske 1990a, 85-86).}
These observations led Fiske to propose autoethnography as a way of representing/writing about a personal experience in an academic discourse. My representation of the shopping performances in Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings is an autoethnography in that, like Fiske:

I have to be able to move in and out of my domestic environment, I have to be able to bring different distancing discourses to bear upon my experience, to make that experience both private and public, to account for it as both a specific cultural practice and as a systemic instance. Environments can be observed and interpreted up to a point from the outside, but they can only be experienced from the inside, and an autoethnography may be able to offer both perspectives (1990a, 89).

Since, to a certain extent, the souvenirs themselves serve as autoethnographic texts (Dorst 1989), my job as critical/postethnographer is to assemble these preexistent autoethnographic texts, my own experiences of the shopping performance, and scholarly discourse about shopping, souvenirs, and tourist practices into a collage and then read them critically to expose the rhetorical strategies operating within the performance. My collages take the form of two textual genres that make use of collage principles: brochure and scrapbook.

**Brochure**

The first of the two written genres that I combine with mystery and autoethnography to create my written representation of the performances of shopping is brochure. The word "brochure" comes from the French word "brocher," meaning, "to stitch, or weave together" (Williams 1979, 115). A brochure weaves information and fragments of other texts.
together in the form of a coherent, easily readable document, but it often
denies the linear connections of narrative by leaving the fragments visible.
Brochures follow a nonlinear logic of discourse rather than a linear logic of
narrative. Moreover, brochures are written with an "institutional voice,"
that works stylistically and rhetorically to simultaneously draw the reader
into the text and remain detached; the brochure seems almost
"authorless."

In one sense, the experience shopping at Graceland Plaza was like
reading a brochure. Since the performance of shopping at Graceland Plaza
featured the "official" merchandise and images of Elvis displayed in a well-
ordered, highly structured, but not necessarily linear way, I read it as an
"official" brochure. Also, the actual souvenirs displayed supported a view
of Elvis promoted by Elvis Presley Enterprises (EPE).

Besides representing my reading of Graceland Plaza, I use the
brochure as a metaphor for my style of writing. I weave together
fragments from actual brochures, fan letters, performances of shopping,
catalogue descriptions of souvenirs, my field notes, interviews with fans
and funs, and other autoethnographic texts to create my own brochure for
Graceland Plaza. I attempt, as much as possible, to simulate the written
discourse of an official brochure; however, because of institutional
restrictions regarding fonts and page layout for my chapters, I cannot
include photographs, a variety of font sizes and types, columns, or use
glossy paper as I would if this were an actual brochure. I indicate in the
text where I would ideally place a photograph; I use a combination of
italics, boldface, line spacing, and all capital letters to suggest how my
ideal text might look.

**Scrapbook**

The second of the two written genres that I combine with mystery
and autoethnography to create my written representation of the
performances of shopping is scrapbook. I read the experience shopping at
Graceland Crossings, not as a brochure not as a scrapbook, a "book in
which to paste clippings or pictures" (Williams 1979, 814). Although the
collage form of the scrapbook resembles the collage form of a brochure,
the scrapbook, unlike the brochure, is an autobiographical text that
attempts metonymically to superimpose its collected fragments on a linear
life story. As Katriel and Farrell (1991) note, scrapbooks are powerful
(re)sources of public memory. Because they are subjective constructions,
scrapbooks necessarily foreground the ideological stance of their
assembler. I read shopping at Graceland Crossings as a scrapbook
because it contained a greater variety of images of Elvis, "unofficial"
merchandise, and seemed more personal and fun than Graceland Plaza.
My scrapbook of my shopping experience tells a story "that is
fundamentally rhetorical and performative in character" (Katriel and Farrell
1991, 2).
I call the fragments of texts I assemble in my scrapbook "snapshots" in a manner similar to Dorst (1989) and the Project on Disney (1995). As snapshots, these fragments represent my (re)collection of the experience of shopping. I assemble them to foreground the "historicity or 'writtenness' of the post-ethnographic text" (Dorst 1989, 207) in such a way that the fragments that comprise my text are visibly, artificially, and sometimes arbitrarily displayed. In so doing, I fulfill the dual roles of a post-ethnographer:

- a position of collector/transcriber/collageist, and a position of rhetorician/reader—in other words, the dual role of re-citer/re-siter, one who "tells over again" and thereby "relocates" the already inscribed citations by inserting them into a new context, in effect rewriting them (Dorst 1989, 206).

Additionally, when fulfilling the role of critical reader, I "unpack the rhetorical strategies, . . . read critically the auto-ethnographic souvenirs and identify the suppressed mechanisms through which they produce their effects" (Dorst 1989, 207).

I implicate myself in the performances when I feature my role/voice as critical ethnographer and thus attempt to "create noise, the parasitic static that may, even while it enables the system to function, open up space inside the system to disrupt it" (HopKins 1995, 235). I create "static" by using the form of ethnographic representation favored by Elvis Presley Enterprises, the brochure, as my mode of critique of the corporate
material culture system. My writing style takes up HopKins's challenge to "consciously perform the resistance" (1995, 235) by:

intentionally exaggerating the performance of resistance [to] create a surplus of noise, of static. This static may be subversive, may create a rupture in the center of the system by exposing the oppositions on which the system depends for its existence (235).

I expose "the oppositions on which the system depends" when I critique not only the relationships within and between fan and fun cultures but also when I construct my scrapbook of fragmented personal, public, and professional snapshots. I begin with a written representation of the performances that took place in Graceland Plaza.

GRACELAND PLAZA: THE "OFFICIAL" ULTIMATE ELVIS EXPERIENCE

If you are looking for that once-in-a-lifetime Elvis experience you can re-live again and again, look no further than Graceland Plaza. Come to Graceland Plaza and see for yourself:

Elvis is woven into the fabric of our culture, representing all the joyful heights of the American Dream, and some of the difficult trials that go with having the dream come true. Memories of him are warmly and poignantly entwined with memories we treasure from our own lives (Elvis Presley’s Graceland 1992).

Graceland Plaza is your home for everything Elvis and more:

* Convenient Location
* Pleasant Environment
* Hourly Shuttles to the Graceland Mansion
*Officially Licensed Elvis Memorabilia and Souvenirs

Material Texts

*Interesting People

Verbal Texts

*And Much, Much More...  

Processual/performative texts

If you’re the hardest hard core fan or the most abusive fan-abusive fun, there’s something for YOU at Graceland Plaza.

CONVENIENT LOCATION

Directly across the street from the Graceland Mansion is the Graceland Plaza, also known as the visitor’s center, a one-block long collection of white stone buildings that house such features as:

the ticket booth for MUSEUM&MANSION TOURS&an information desk&a United States Post Office&two restaurants&an ice cream parlor&the Automobile museum &the Elvis Up-Close Museum&the "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" movie theater&the Airplane and Bus tour sites&the Art exhibition area&public restrooms&a first aid station &benches and tables for resting or people watching&fan club information booths&numerous gift shops

From almost any point in the Plaza YOU CAN EASILY VIEW THE MANSION across the street.
At Graceland Plaza, proximity is everything. But don’t take our word for it; just ask S. J. Bronner (1986), noted material culture theorist:

Reliance on proximity can be explained by recalling that people associate objects, like persons, with other prominent objects around them. This helps people define a center by establishing borders, usually on either side, which guide movement to the center. Doing so is a basic way of constructing malleable categories as part of a system of navigation—social and physical—and thus of judging experience (12).

In essence, all roads lead to Graceland. And Graceland Plaza is the center of it all. Located on Elvis Presley Boulevard and near Interstate 55, Graceland Plaza is automobile accessible. Buses are welcome.

where YOUR memories live again
I'm from Memphis; I go by here all the time. I don’t think it's tacky at all. Gives us jobs. I know a lot of people who work here. They like it all right, I guess. I don’t think I'd make a special trip just to come here, but since it's so close and some of the stuff is interesting, I stop by. I've heard of people coming from Germany and Japan and England. That's sort of excessive, I think, but if they can afford it, why not?
Jackie, observer fun
Memphis, TN
(Personal Interview, August 13, 1993)

PLEASANT ENVIRONMENT

The pleasant environment of Graceland Plaza is provided chiefly by Elvis himself. Stereo-speakers located in the ceilings and walkway covers continually play Elvis songs, although not every speaker plays the same song simultaneously: if you stand between the ticket center and the post
office, you can easily hear two different songs playing at once. And you'll be assured to always hear the "Young and Beautiful" Elvis, never the disastrous concert performance of "Unchained Melody."

Elvis music also is played continually inside all the shops and restaurants, especially in the Heartbreak Hotel Restaurant, complete with '50s pastiche decor and tabletop jukeboxes filled with Elvis songs. In some shops, walls of televisions continually play videos of Elvis's movies and concert films.

Despite the crowds of people during International Elvis Week, THE GROUNDS REMAIN CLEAN AND FREE OF LITTER, much like an extremely nice state welcome center.

**HOURLY SHUTTLES TO THE GRACELAND MANSION**

A steady stream of shuttle buses departs from the semicircular driveway in front of the plaza, crosses the street, and takes you directly up to the mansion. In perfect synchronicity, returning shuttle buses arrive back at the plaza. Once you disembark, you can continue shopping, touring, and eating in Graceland Plaza.

(insert photo of shuttle)

_A voice is heard over the speaker near the ticket booth, "Two o'clock tour number six, two o'clock tour number six now boarding the shuttle." Suddenly, many people move to a roped-off part of the sidewalk to form a line. The waiting for some is over; another shuttle bus fills, departs, and takes another load of tourists to the mansion. ALL ABOARD!_
where YOUR memories live again

I don’t think anyone was hurt too badly. The shuttle was crossing the intersection, and that blue car was coming down the street. I guess the driver didn’t see the light, or didn’t care, or maybe he thought he could beat the shuttle. He wasn’t going very fast and neither was the shuttle. But it just didn’t stop. So we diverted traffic. I’ve been telling them for years that we need big warning signs up the road cause some people act like Graceland’s not even here. But it is. They need to learn how to stop.

Bill, Graceland Security
(Personal Interview, August 14, 1992)

OFFICIALLY LICENSED ELVIS MEMORABILIA AND SOUVENIRS

Material texts consist of the various "things" produced by fans, funs and Elvis Presley Enterprises:

- souvenirs of all types
- clothing
- artwork
- literature
- stamps
- museums
- merchandise
- the material artifacts left behind by Elvis himself—his songs, videos, films, clothes, trophies, furniture, will, home, cars, and other paraphernalia

There are so many material texts of Elvis that you could spend years just shopping, collecting, and cataloging.

(insert photo of "Graceland Gifts" catalog, black velvet Elvis photo album, and the window of a gift shop)

And the uses of these texts are as varied as the people who encounter them. Use the texts to:

* TOUCH ELVIS

(insert photo of people shopping)

"In a culture like America's where social taboos exist against open displays of affection, objects often become symbolic substitutes for tactile
experiences" (Bronner 1986, 3). So people who cannot, nor ever could, touch Elvis when he was alive, can now touch him through his "stuff."

where YOUR memories live again
As an ardent Elvis fan, my family and friends buy any and everything to do with Elvis for me. I have most of the books written about Elvis. . . . Elvis has been a big part of my life for over 30 years. Way back then, my older brother gave me my first Elvis album. I've been a collector ever since! My brother and I shared a trip to Graceland in March...my 5th, his first. It was magical, sharing my love for Elvis and Graceland and Memphis with the person who opened the door to Elvis for me in the first place. We had such a fun trip, we are going back real soon. If you're an Elvis fan and you haven't seen Graceland, it's a must. You can feel the love all around you and it's almost as if you expect Elvis himself to greet you. Graceland is such a warm, homey place. People who are not Elvis fans will never understand why we collect items, replay music and movies and visit Graceland again and again. But if you are a fan, we don't need words to understand the feelings we have.

Mona Lasoyne
Alexandria, LA
(1994, 9)

*BUY INTO THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

The souvenirs at Graceland Plaza tell an official story of Elvis, a sanitized, mass mediated, folk enculturated, "authentic" story of a boy who would be king. Individually, the souvenirs at Graceland Plaza are pieces of the puzzle. They answer the question, "WHO WAS ELVIS?" The answers to that question almost become propaganda for recruiting new fans into the cult of the king. Fans know the real story of what happened to Elvis, a mortal man who was flawed, in spite of his great talent and love of his fellow man.

(insert photo of souvenirs)
Those of us not on the shuttle were left to mill about more. I almost believed for a second that the souvenir shops located in the Plaza were there to help tourists pass the time between mansion tours— but just for a second. I know, as an educated consumer, that all these shops are merely tools of a capitalistic patriarchy designed to rob the people foolish enough to spend money in them of their hard earned dollars to support some corporate, big-whig’s salary. I also know that my mother would love the cute, pink-satin Christmas ornament with the young, singing Elvis silhouetted in black against the pink background. And it’s only fifteen dollars. So I buy this one item; that doesn’t make me a victim of the system, does it? So what if I buy the ten, plastic, Graceland cups for two dollars? I promised several people I would bring them back something from the trip. Am I now as stupid as the other people buying this crap? I am on this trip for scholarly reasons! So don’t tell me I’m acting like a tourist, ok? I’m just trying not to be conspicuous as a researcher.

—anonymous scholar-fun

*SATISFY YOUR NEED TO CONSUME

The souvenirs at Graceland Plaza are ARRANGED IN AN AESTHETICALLY PLEASING WAY. Look at the shelves of souvenirs together; get a complete visual image of Elvis, a complete story of a great man. The narrative is totally positive, even when it refers to negative aspects of Elvis’s life. The arrangement of souvenirs almost seems "natural," as if there were no other way to display these images. Yet someone did arrange them on the shelves. Someone did decide to place the eight-inch by ten-inch black and white photos of Elvis and his Mama beside the photos of Elvis and Priscilla’s wedding, which were placed next to photos of Elvis, Priscilla and Lisa Marie. Someone did decide to put the "Hollywood Years" merchandise together in a complete display of visual images from his most popular movies, next to a display of videos of his
movies, next to movie posters, next to post cards with movie images, etc. It's just as our old friend Bronner (1986, 12) says, "Objects are tangible references people use to outline the routes and experiences they know and knew, the worlds they try to cope with, and those they imagine."

Although these arrangements seem natural, they are not. They are calculated marketing moves, strategic ways to move merchandise. Yes, this arrangement might help fans find items more easily, but this arrangement also promotes an idea of Elvis, a narrative about Elvis that seems ordered and natural, and thus, real.

*FEEL THE RHETORICAL EFFECTS*

The story told in the post cards available at Graceland Plaza offers images of the young, sexy Elvis at his prime. In these souvenirs, Elvis is always young and beautiful. There are no images for sale at Graceland Plaza of the bloated, drugged-up, last days Elvis. Visually, the collage of images almost negates the truth of the story of Elvis's demise. Elvis Presley Enterprises officially licenses these images of Elvis to keep a particular narrative of Elvis alive.

*where YOUR memories live again*

When I asked a cashier at Graceland Plaza why the merchandise at Graceland Crossings was different from the merchandise at the Plaza, she said that Graceland and Elvis Presley Enterprises had nothing to do with the unofficial shops up the road. She made it very clear to me that the corporation frowned upon people buying unofficial merchandise
because it decreased the value of Elvis. She also began to tell me at some length about the high quality of the officially licensed merchandise, about the authenticity of the merchandise, about the preservation of the Elvis legend through merchandising. When she finished talking, I felt as if I had taken a Tony Robbins seminar. I was motivated to make a purchase that would change my life forever. I then decided that if I were going to spend my money on souvenirs, I would enjoy looking at a humorous book comparing Elvis and Jesus through caricature drawings than at an officially licensed thimble embossed with the image of the Graceland mansion. I definitely chose to be a fun at that moment.

--Dan, scholar-fun

*CONSTRUCT AN IDENTITY*

As different individuals construct their images within the similarity of fashion, so different shops construct their identity, frequently by the use of lighting and color, within the overall stylistic unity of the shopping center. Window shopping involves a seemingly casual, but actually purposeful, wandering from shop to shop, which means wandering from potential identity to potential identity until a shop identity is found that matches the individual identity, or, rather, that offers the means to construct that identity (Fiske 1989b, 38).

While shopping at Graceland Plaza you can see first hand how consumers in a postmodern consumer society enact/create their identities through the performance of shopping. As Fiske notes:

(Insert photo of fan club members)

[IT]n Elvis fandom . . . there are ways of experiencing capitalism differently: [they produce] a different world of experience whose knowledge is conditional rather than indicative. These worlds, which I have called "worlds of the as if," are neither freely produced nor independent, but are related antagonistically to the world produced and controlled by the power-bloc. We have to be able to elbow the workings of the power-bloc aside to be able to produce a world as if their discipline were weaker and our spaces larger. The Elvis fans constructed an imaginary world as if the disciplinary system had lost its power to produce their identities and social relations through individuation (1993, 138).
where YOUR memories live again

There is no doubt Elvis enjoyed the social and financial benefits of his fame. He laughed and played. He shared his wealth with overwhelming unselfishness. He was blessed with loving parents and a beautiful wife and daughter. His joys were many. But his sacrifices were great. He must have felt an enormous responsibility to always deliver that God-given talent we couldn’t get enough of. The legacy he left for those of us who choose to understand his life is one to be cherished. Getting to know Elvis is an opportunity for each of us to discover our own inhibitions, fears, insecurities, dreams, and successes. ELVIS is a reality. . . . I am 37 years old, the wife of a coal miner. I have a wonderful life. I have freedom. If ever I had the opportunity to meet Priscilla or Lisa, I would just invite them over for coffee and talk about the weather. I wish them peace of mind and happiness with their families and in their lives for they too have given so much.
—Loni Curtis, fan
Price, Utah
(1993, 25-26)

*YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL

A plethora of "officially" licensed material texts are available in UNLIMITED QUANTITIES in any of the dozen gift shops located in Graceland Plaza. Some of the most popular items are:

(insert photo of TCB Rhinestone Necklace)

TCB Rhinestone Necklace
"Taking Care of Business" was Elvis' motto and he was rarely seen without his own TCB necklace. His close friends were given similar pendants. This gold-tone replica has a 24" chain, spring clasp. Pendant approximately 2"; the TCB inlaid with 11 sparkling rhinestones.
075-5100.................$ 19.99 (Graceland Gifts 1992, 10)

His Friends Called Him "Crazy"
Elvis' friends lovingly called him "crazy." Gold-tone replica of Elvis' own ID bracelet, "Elvis" engraved on one side; underneath "crazy." Slide closure. 7 1/2" long.
075-1325.................$3.49 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)
Elvis and the Lisa Marie Mug

Elvis named his jet after his daughter, Lisa Marie. Screen print artwork depicts the Lisa Marie in flight and Elvis waving as he leaves the jet. Inscription reads "Elvis Presley/Taking Care of Business." Approx. 3 1/2" high. Ceramic. 040-3750.............$5.99 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)

Graceland Paperweight

Now you can own a piece of Elvis Presley's mansion grounds. A vial of soil has been collected from the Graceland property and encapsulated in lucite before an image of Elvis' famous home and gates. Graceland paperweight, blue background, reverse with descriptive paragraph and certification shipped in protective acetate cover. 085-1450.............$19.95 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 16)

Elvis Attitude


Elvis: 1954-1977 Photo Book

During Elvis' lifetime, thousands of photographers, both professional and amateur, captured different Presley poses on film. Memphis photographer Jim Reid has a better collection than most and has shared part of it here. More than 40 pages. Paperback. 010-1100.................$10.00 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)
These are gifts that do more than sit on a shelf and look nice: they help form a bond between consumer and producer of goods. Not only that, each of the items listed above puts you one step closer to an authentically reproduced experience with Elvis.

But wait, there's more!

You can also purchase a silk blue ribbon with gold letters, and in the circular center of the ribbon is "Elvis Tribute Week 16th Anniversary." On the strips of silk attached to the bottom is "EP in '93. TCB. I was there."

The price tag reads "$5.95."

I remember as do all of Elvis' fans all over the world exactly where I was on August 16, 1977. I think everyone, Elvis fan or not, that was old enough remembers that day. I don't think it is important how I reacted; everyone reacts differently to losing someone they love. What is important is that we all love Elvis just as much today as we did then. . . . I am lucky enough to be going to Memphis. There surrounded by other fans who understand your love for Elvis and being around Elvis' friends and family, you can feel Elvis love all around you. There is no place in the world I would rather be on August 16th than in Memphis sharing happy memories of Elvis with our Elvis family from all over the world. Somehow I know that during the Candlelight Service Elvis is watching down on us and he is receiving our love back that he gave us so unselfishly.

—Karen Oberender, fan
(1991, 43)

*BE A CRITICAL CONSUMER

There is more to shopping at Graceland Plaza than meets the eye.

Shopping for souvenirs involves the COMPLEX CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF CONSUMPTION. Within a capitalist consumer culture:

the very idea of consumption itself has to be set back into the social process, not merely looked upon as a result or objective of work. Consumption has to be recognized as an integral part of the same
social system that accounts for the drive to work, itself a part of the social need to relate to other people, and to have mediating materials for relating to them (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 4).

Shopping, then, constitutes the means by which consumers "relate to other people." Souvenirs provide the "mediating materials" used by consumers to relate to each other.

As good ol' Bronner (1986) says:

Analysis of material culture simply as behavior would be misleadingly mechanical. Culture would merely be the packaging. . . . But when unifying and conflicting social effects, taking in the often-unforeseen political and ethical meanings of productive and consumptive activity, become involved, then behavior becomes cultural. Then it is praxis (21).

So when fans and funs shop, they are enacting their political meanings of consumptive activity. Some literally buy their way into culture. Others consume images for free and thus enact a different political relationship to consumption (NO PURCHASE NECESSARY) in which they perform as a member of fan or fun culture by shopping, but they retain the power over EPE by choosing not to spend money.

Some fans and funs shop because they enjoy the activity. Others shop because they use the objects as a means for understanding why they are members of a particular culture. For example, the story told in the "TCB" pendant offers fans a glimpse of Elvis's practical side:

*he took care of business
*he was generous and frequently gave gifts of jewelry to his friends

*he had a sense of style

When fans purchase the TCB pendant, they are performing a relationship to Elvis mediated through the object. This activity could be compared to the relationship between a Christian, a cross, and Jesus: the Christian uses the cross as a symbolic way of connecting to Jesus. The cross also serves as a symbol of cultural affiliation, a way to let other Christians know you are one of them: it's the same with ELVIS FANS.

where YOUR memories live again

I'm 28 now and truly believe that I've heard, read and seen everything that has ever been recorded, printed and filmed on Elvis. . . . In The Illustrated Elvis, written by W.A. Harbinson, some wonderful descriptions of Elvis are written. When speaking of the way Elvis affected his Teen Audience, he says, "[he is] a Lazarus arisen from the ashes of their boredom: a cool, dangerous and very sexy animal who transports them briefly to heaven." He also says of Elvis' singing style, "he takes pure country songs and then rapes them with the blues; he takes the Blues and refines them into Pop songs. This in itself is quite an achievement."

Elvis was very intelligent. He had a unique grasp of the psychology of an audience. . . . He was tall, dark and magically handsome. He had beautiful, smoldering, velvety blue eyes, the most sensual smile. . . . He was perfectly proportioned. No one looks as good as Elvis in Karate Suit. . . . A leader of trendsetters in music, fashion, hair styles, and personalities. He was the most contradictory person that I've ever seen in my life, but I really feel that I understand him and his way of thinking.

--Cara Striff, fan
(1993, 27)

The "TCB" INSIGNIA blazes across items such as:

- cups & thimbles & beer coasters & t-shirts & bone china &
- beach towels & satin jackets & Christmas ornaments &
- collector plates & playing cards & so much more

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--all constant reminders of Elvis's practicality, generosity, and fun-loving manner.

(insert photo of TCB insignia)

Some sort of "gathering" around the self and the group—the assemblage of a material "world," the marking-off of a subjective domain that is not "other"—is probably universal. All such collections embody hierarchies of value, exclusions, rule-governed territories of the self. But the notion that this gathering involves the accumulation of possessions, the idea that identity is a kind of wealth (of objects, knowledge, memories, experience), is surely not universal. . . . In the West, however, collecting has long been a strategy for the deployment of a possessive self, culture, and authenticity.

Children's collections are revealing in this light: a boy's accumulation of miniature cars, a girl's dolls, a summer vacation "nature museum" (with labeled stones and shells, a hummingbird in a bottle), a treasured bowl filled with the bright shavings of crayons. In these small rituals we observe the channelings of obsession, an exercise in how to make the world one's own, to gather things around oneself tastefully, appropriately. The inclusion in all collections reflect wider cultural rules—of rational taxonomy, of gender, of aesthetics. An excessive, sometimes even rapacious need to have is transformed into rule-governed, meaningful desire. Thus the self that must possess but cannot have it all learns to select, order, classify in hierarchies— to make "good collections" (Clifford 1988, 218).

For hard core fans, to make a purchase at Graceland Plaza is to make a commitment to the official story of Elvis, thus insuring that his or her collection will be "good."

where YOUR memories live again

Collecting silk scarves is a way of experiencing a relationship with Elvis. It produces no truths which can be abstracted from their performance, generalized and then represented to others. Its truths are the fan's: The meaning of the collection cannot be abstracted away from her practice in
176

Locales are made out of practices and things; things, in particular, can overcome the temporary nature of locales, they can bring a sense of permanence which offers localizing cultures a way of controlling time. Localizing knowledge-power works through things and practices, imperializing knowledge-power works through texts and representations, and the body is the key site of struggle between them.

John Fiske, scholar-fun
(1993, 118)

INTERESTING PEOPLE...

Although the material texts found at Graceland Plaza are seen by many as the main attraction, you haven't seen ANYTHING until you've seen the PEOPLE at Graceland Plaza:

*FANS
*FUNS
*WORKERS
*TOURISTS
*LOCALS
*ETHNOGRAPHERS

(insert photo of people)

PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE-- some in motion, some at rest.

Benches are lined with middle-aged women wearing summer attire, tired parents trying to keep up with small, ice cream-eating children, and bored-looking teenagers on family vacation. People mill about as if waiting for something. Some carry bags full of Elvis goodies; some fan themselves.
with tour brochures; some wander around constantly looking at everyone
else (as if the mansion were not enough of an attraction).

...WITH THINGS TO SAY

Verbal texts consist of the various oral and written narratives about
Elvis produced by fans, funs, and EPE:

stories&biographies&"true" encounter narratives&
sighting stories&poems&novels&myths&diaries&
journal articles&newspaper articles&magazine articles&
cookbooks&documentaries&jokes&cartoons&tourguide
narratives&local folklore&gossip&fan letters

where YOUR memories live again

Hi! My name is Adam. I'm 19 years old and have been "Elvis Crazy" for
about a year and a half. It's hard to believe I'm a Presley fan. Sometime
I'll be sitting in my room admiring the pictures of Elvis above my stereo
and think, "Wow, I'm an Elvis Presley Fan! I must be crazy, what will my
friends whose heroes are Metallica think?" Well it turns out they thought I
was a nut case but they respected my taste or more or less accepted it.
I was searching for a new kind of music when one day I was listening to
the oldies station and "Don't Be Cruel" came on. It was the first time I
didn't change the station when Elvis came on. I started singing with it and
had those legs going. Oh, yeah! That was what I was looking for. Then I
started reading every book and listening to every song I could get my
hands on. Elvis' song is like a Lays Potato chip, you can't have just one!!
Also, I've met a bunch of great people. I'm in the T.C.B. in West Georgia
Fan Club and the Special Moments for Priscilla Fan Club. I just can't help
believin' I've been touched by my KING!

--Adam "King"ton, fan
Knoxville, TN
(1993, 41)
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

You can spend a couple of hours or all day at Graceland—there’s so much to see and do! Our visitor center offers two restaurants—one with burgers and fries served in a nostalgic diner atmosphere and one with Southern home style cooking and a salad bar. There are also several gift shops offering T-shirts, recordings, videos, and Elvis collectibles of all kinds, making for great adventures in shopping. Then, of course, there are the Graceland tours and attractions, for which tickets may be purchased individually or in a package. Admission for children under four is free for all attractions. (Elvis Presley’s Graceland 1992)

(insert photo of people shopping)

Processual/performative texts consist of EVENTS IN WHICH FANS AND FUNS PARTICIPATE, some corporate sponsored, others not:

tours of the mansion&car museum&up-close museum&bus&plane&high school&birth home&Sun Records&Beale Street&fan club parties&conventions&International Elvis Week&the Annual Candlelight Service&impersonators tribute concerts&weddings&tv series&commemorative specials&cd’s&Elvis is Dead parties&Dead Elvis Ball&El-Vez Concert&Krewe D’Elvis&pilgrimages to the gravesite&the church of Elvis&shopping&people watching

Whatever performance YOU choose to participate in at Graceland Plaza, you will be always be A CONSUMER.

[I]n our society the conditions of production are ones over which people have no control, no choice about if or where to work, or about the conditions under which to work; consumption, however, offers some means of coping with the frustrations of capitalist conditions of production. It thus serves both the economic interests
of the producers and the cultural interests of the consumers while not completely separating the two. . . . Consumption, then, offers a sense of control over communal meaning of oneself and social relations, it offers a means of controlling to some extent the context of everyday life (Fiske 1989b, 25).

So go head, TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE. Engage in a performance at Graceland Plaza.

Sharon and I were sitting on a bench outside the visitor center watching people walk by. From our vantage point we could see the sidewalk that runs the entire length of the Plaza. I noticed a small group of people who had "tourists" written all over them— the cameras dangling, the guidebooks open, the heads turning, the eyes gawking, the fingers pointing— emerge from the ticket area. I guessed them to be a family on vacation: father, mother, small boy and teen-aged boy. They looked like every other family we'd seen pass by that day, withered from the heat but full of pre-tour excitement.

But not everyone in the family was excited. The oldest child, a boy of around fourteen, APPEARED COMPLETELY BORED. He was hunch-shouldered, tallish, dressed in baggy pants, baggy "Massimo" t-shirt, sandals. His shoulder-length, mouse-brown hair looked uncombed, unwashed and uncomfortable. He slouched, hands in pockets, a few feet away from the rest of the family, as if to indicate he was not part of them or as if he could easily escape. But his mother kept talking to him. Didn't she know? Couldn't she see how uncomfortable he was, how out of place he felt? Or was she used to this behavior and able to ignore it? Sharon turned to me and said, almost at the same time I was thinking it, "Surly teen," our term for teen-aged people who are forced to be with their families. He was the epitome of the surly teen. He would have none of Graceland or Elvis, but he had to endure.

An Elvis impersonator in a bright red jumpsuit walked near the family. The younger child pointed at him, which caught his attention. The impersonator Elvised over to the family and began to perform for them. The surly teen was not amused. His face turned as red as the jumpsuit. How could they do this to him?

--Dan, an ethnographer

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LOTS TO SEE AND DO!

Elvis Art Exhibit & Contest
Elvis-themed art pieces displayed inside the Graceland visitor center pavilion, August 8-16, 8:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Exhibit open to the public at no charge. Contest is open to amateur artists in general, youth, and physically challenged categories. There will also be a category for professionals. No entry fee for artists. Art pieces must depict Elvis or his home. Judging will take place prior to Elvis Week so that award ribbons may be displayed with the winning pieces. Artists who wish to enter their work in the contest must contact Nancy Simon at the usual Graceland phone numbers and address for rules, procedures, and other information. All art pieces must be received at Graceland by August 3 in order to be guaranteed inclusion in the contest (Elvis Week '92 1992, 6-7).

(insert photo of art show)

(insert photo of sincerely elvis)

Sincerely Elvis--Brand New For '92!
(All ages 4 and older $2.75)
The trophy building displays at the mansion cover mainly the career of Elvis Presley. Sincerely Elvis, located in the middle of the visitor center plaza, is a small museum offering a self-paced tour featuring personal items reflecting the private side of the legend--candid photos, home movie clips, off stage clothing, home furnishings and accessories from mansion rooms not seen on the tour, books, personal mementos, horse riding gear, sports equipment, and much more. Part of this exhibit, by popular demand, is a display of stage wear for our many visitors who see the extensive costume displays in the trophy room, yet still want to see more of Elvis' famous outfits (Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992).

The "Sincerely Elvis" Museum became the "Elvis Upclose Museum,"

WHERE TOURISTS SEE ELVIS'S STUFF from upstairs (the forbidden no(wo)man's land of the mansion), including:

photos of Elvis's personal football team&the round, fur-covered bed with a lid&Elvis's collection of Tom Jones records&Elvis's personal

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wardrobe & a few of the flashy show costumes not included in the mansion tour & the furniture that was in the house at the time of his death (gaudy, red sofas and chairs purchased by then-girlfriend Linda Thompson, removed from the home by Priscilla when Graceland opened to the public so the white and blue furniture Priscilla liked could be moved back in) & books Elvis was reading at the time of his death & karate photos & memorabilia from his parents & a family Bible & Lisa Marie's crib & more sheriff's badges and police i.d.'s & much more.

AS YOU EXIT THE MUSEUM, YOU ENTER A GIFT SHOP.

*LOOK, BUT DON'T TOUCH

It's TRUE:

Museum objects draw attention, too, because they have a connection to a notable event, place, or person. . . . The touch-oriented world, reproduced in some natural history 'discovery rooms' and 'living history' or 'folk' museums, is oriented toward a more direct experience of everyday life's flow. . . . The touch-oriented world tends to call for human action and social participation, and stresses immediate human interplay with the environment (Bronner 1986, 11).

Not so with the museums at Graceland Plaza; since people can't really touch Elvis’s stuff in the museums, they can vicariously touch them by buying souvenirs or reproductions of them in one of the NUMEROUS GIFT SHOPS; so shopping at Graceland Plaza provides that much needed “immediate human interplay with the environment.”
where YOUR memories live again

I'm a 19 year old singer/songwriter and without a doubt one of Elvis' biggest fans. With no exceptions, Elvis inspired not only my music but my life itself. Someone to look up to, someone to admire, and someone to thank. Although dead for 15 years, Elvis somehow still seems to "be there" for each and everyone of us.

--Larry Cole, fan
Farmington Hills, MI
(1993, 19)

THE FUN NEVER ENDS

Walk a Mile in My Shoes
(Free to all Graceland Visitors)
Presented at the theater in the middle of the visitor center plaza, this specially produced 22-minute film, in a fast-paced, fun, and sometimes touching way, takes you through highlights of the exciting and fascinating career of Elvis Presley. If you're a fan, you'll relive lots of familiar and favorite moments. If you've never really studied his life and career, you'll likely get to know some facets of Elvis that you never knew existed (Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992).

(insert photo of people leaving film)

AS YOU EXIT THE FILM, YOU ENTER A GIFT SHOP.

At Graceland Plaza the opportunities to enact your cultural identity by shopping, buying, and collecting officially licensed objects seem endless.

Get what you want. WE'LL MAKE MORE. LIVE THE DREAM.

Gathered artifacts--whether they find their way into curio cabinets, living rooms, museums of ethnography, folklore, or fine art--function within a developing capitalist "system of objects" (Baudrillard 1968). By virtue of this system, a world of value is created and a meaningful deployment and circulation of artifacts maintained. For Baudrillard, collected objects create a structured environment that substitutes its own temporality for the 'real time' of historical and productive processes: '... the environment of private objects and
their possession—of which collections are an extreme manifestation—is a dimension of our life that is both essential and imaginary..." (Baudrillard 1968, 135). (Clifford 1988, 239-240)

(insert photo of museum)

Even fans share in the dream of creating culture through associations with objects. If you're a fan, you won't want to miss all Graceland Plaza has to offer YOU:

* Fans to ridicule
* Souvenirs to laugh at
* Access to over-priced popular culture kitsch
* Inside jokes with friends
* Postmodern Identity Construction

Graceland Plaza is the ultimate in FUN fun. Be part of a popular culture phenomenon without the messy strings of commitment that come with fandom. Enjoy Elvis on your own terms. Exercise your rights as a consumer. Or if you're a participant-observer fan looking to enact your culture through play, try to blend in with the crowd (BE AN ELVIS FAN FOR A DAY) at the end of the day, try on a different persona; it's all part of the fun of being a FUN at Graceland Plaza.

(insert photo of fans)

God, no. I'm not a fan! Shit. Do I look brain damaged?... I just come here to look at the freaks. It's kind of cool. Not them; coming here. It's a college thing, you know?... I've listened to some of his songs, mostly by accident. Of course, you can't get away from 'em here! Shit. You'd think they'd get tired of hearing the same old songs, much less that corny hick

where YOUR memories live again

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stuff. . . . Shit. All this crap! It's definitely not worth what you have to pay for it, but some of it's cool. I got this cool, well, I don't know what they call 'em— a beer cooler? Cold keeper? It goes around the can— cozie, yeah, a cozie! Thanks, man. It's just a piece of crap, but it's fun to buy it while you're here, I guess. . . . This is my third time at Graceland. People are gonna start thinking I'm an Elvis-freak, or something! It's just amazing. I mean, I don't try to blend in or anything. I don't dress up like Elvis; I'll wear a t-shirt, but I wouldn't really want people thinking I love Elvis or anything. . . um, I haven't been mean to any of them, per se. I'll laugh at them if they look like total freaks, like the old guys with the Elvis hair or the fat old ladies with the blue eye shadow, but I wouldn't be intentionally mean to 'em. . . Oh, yeah, except that time when my friend pretended to have an "Elvis attack" in a gift shop. He fell to the ground yelling, "No, Elvis, why did you have to die?" and all these old chicks were looking at him and shaking their heads and I was kind of mean to them. I told them to get over it, like we were being sacrilegious or something.

Shit.

Kevin, fan-abusive fun
Nashville, TN
(Personal Interview, August 14, 1993)

TEMPORAL BLURRING

Walk around the Graceland Plaza; you'll notice an Elvis impersonator and his family. Nothing so unusual about seeing an Elvis impersonator. In fact you CAN'T WALK THREE FEET WITHOUT SEEING AN ELVIS IMPERSONATOR during International Elvis Tribute Week. Perhaps one particular impersonator will draw your attention because of his "odd" appearance. He'll have "Vegas years" hair (circa 1972), definitely a "Last Days" body (1977), and an "Early years" pink lame jacket and black and white saddle oxfords (1955). He will be MIXING THE ESTABLISHED TEMPORAL DEMARCATIONS OF ELVIS. This temporal blurring is the major rhetorical effect of shopping at Graceland Plaza.
The more YOU walk around the more you'll notice other instances of this mixing of temporal representations:

* "Priscilla years" furniture in the living room (1968)
* photos of Elvis and Nixon (1972) beside photos of Elvis in the Army (late 50's)
* biographies by various authors, each claiming to tell the real story of Elvis
* snippets of conversations of people telling each other about Elvis as if he were still alive
* the "early years" song, "Young and Beautiful," played in one part of the pavilion and within earshot the "latter days" song, "In the Ghetto," can be heard from somewhere else.

(The Elvis Presley Automobile Museum)

The Elvis Presley Automobile Museum
(Adults $4.50, Children 4-12 $2.75)
Like no car museum you've ever seen! It's all indoors, but you walk down a landscaped, curbed, tree-lined "highway", past colorful exhibits of vehicles owned and enjoyed by Elvis--his famous 1955 pink Cadillac, 1956 purple Cadillac convertible, 1956 Continental Mark II, 1971 and 1973 Stutz Blackhaws, Harley Davidson motorcycles, three-wheeled supercycles, and more. Along with these 20 or more vehicles are personal items like his leather cycle jackets, gasoline credit cards, driver's license, and more. The centerpiece of the museum is a recreation of an old-time drive-in movie, where you sit in authentic 1957 Chevy seats and watch a specially produced 9-minute film, with the sound coming from real drive-in speaker boxes. The tour is self-guided and self-paced. The auto museum is located at the south end of the visitor center plaza.
(Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992)
AS YOU LEAVE THE MUSEUM, YOU ENTER A GIFT SHOP.

**Candlelight Vigil**
The most beautiful and moving of all events of Elvis Week. Evening of August 15 at Graceland. The gates of Graceland Mansion will open at 10:00 PM for anyone who wishes to walk up the driveway to Elvis' grave site and back, carrying a candle in quiet, respectful tribute. The gates will remain open until all who wish to participate have done so. A brief opening ceremony produced by the Elvis Country Fan Club will be presented at the gates at the start of the vigil. No admission charge. Please check at the Graceland visitor center for important guidelines and information regarding the vigil (Elvis Week '92, 1992).

If you don't like the official performances offered at Graceland Plaza, try one of your own:

One of the commonest practices of the consumer is window shopping, a consumption of images, an imaginative if not imaginary use of the language of commodities that may or may not turn into the purchase of actual commodities. . . . Looking is as much a means of social control as speaking. . . . Looking makes meanings; it is therefore a means of entering social relations, of inserting oneself into the social order in general, and of controlling one's immediate social relations in particular (Fiske 1989, 34-35).
the night at a friend's house. I walked by their tv and saw a picture of Elvis in the top right corner. Then the newsman said that Elvis was dead. I had to go home because I couldn’t stop crying. For the next two weeks all I did was cry whenever I thought of Elvis. It was like having my Daddy die.

I remember watching the funeral. . . . After that, I gathered all of my Elvis things and put them in a box to save with all the memories of him. . . . Since then, I’ve started collecting anything to do with Elvis. I even went to Memphis last summer to visit Graceland. It was wonderful and very peaceful. And, yes, I cried as I put a rose on Elvis’ grave and I signed his front wall.

Deanna Shapire
Huntington Beach, CA
(Fall 1993, 40)

EXPERIENCE GRACELAND PLAZA FOR YOURSELF

Visit Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee. Stroll through Graceland Mansion, the lavish Elvis Presley Automobile Museum, Elvis’ Lisa Marie Jet and more. Step back in time. Walk through the amazing life and career of the greatest entertainment superstar the world has ever known, through several decades of American culture, and down the private avenues of your own unique memories (Elvis Presley’s Graceland 1992).

(insert photo of Graceland Plaza)

*FAN AND FUN POWER RELATIONS

*WORK AND PLAY

*SHOPPING AS PERFORMANCE

*POSTMODERN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

*INSTITUTIONALLY SANCTIONED DISCOURSE

*SOUVENIRS

*ALL IN ONE CONVENIENT, PLEASANT LOCATION

(insert photo of Elvis)
Elvis Presley is more than his brilliant talent, great looks, unique style, sex appeal, and overwhelming charisma. More than his warmth, humor, generosity, human compassion, and mortal imperfections. More than his gold records, hit movies, history-making television appearances, and triumphant concert tours. More than his sideburns, swiveling hips, flashy clothes, and mischievous grin (Elvis Presley’s Graceland 1992).

*where YOUR memories live again*

Graceland Plaza is such a vital part of the performances of fans and funs. It's more than just a location, more than a place. It's the borderland where these two cultures overlap. It's the battlefield for people who are empowered through the act of shopping. It's where the power bloc meets the people. Here we have the classic battle between the controller and the controlled. EPE tries to control the behaviors of fans and funs several ways: through the layout of Graceland Plaza, having every museum or attraction exit into a gift shop; through proffering "official" Elvis merchandise as opposed to the unofficial goods made by fans or "unauthorized dealers"; by presenting only merchandise that promotes a positive image of Elvis; by raising the prices of merchandise during International Elvis Tribute Week; by packaging Elvis's life into a series of quantifiable "tours" designed to give fans an "authentic" Elvis experience; and by selling pre-packaged and pre-lived memories of Elvis to people who are fully capable of making their own memories. But fans and funs actively work and play to control their identities as fans and funs. They can sample the pieces of Elvis they want. They can choose to buy or make or imagine texts of Elvis that help them construct their identities as fans and funs, no matter what EPE says or does. The performance of shopping at Graceland Plaza is a specific instance of how fan and fun cultural identities manifest themselves in a postmodern consumer society. In many ways, Graceland Plaza is just like any other tourist trap shopping area: there are tons of kitschy souvenirs to buy or look at; it's labelled and copywrited; etc. But it's also unlike any other tourist trap I've ever seen. Yes, it's a place of economic capital, but the cultural capital that is exchanged there is more important. In this one place, two cultures meet annually, identities are integrally linked to the act of shopping, postmodern consumer consumption includes not just stuff, but images, performances, personas, and games.

Dan, ethnographer
Columbus, OH
SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

The Graceland Crossings sign

According to Bronner (1986), "Signs point to the materialistic landscape, itself a terrain of signs. The rise of signs shows the transition from a localistic, touch-oriented society to a visual mass society" (4). So the rapid mobility of people as the country grew and expanded brought about the need for more efficient ways of understanding, reading others and places quickly, and signs did that.

NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

Graceland Crossings itself

Walk past the Lisa Marie and Hound Dog 2. Walk past the Graceland Plaza parking lot. On the other side of a fence, you'll see it: Graceland Crossings--a small, L-shaped strip mall with six or seven souvenir shops, a small, paved parking lot, a larger, paved, adjacent parking lot and hundreds of people. If you kept walking you'd end up at Shoney's, Wilson World Hotel, or another parking lot, so it's best to stop here, catch your breath and shop. Or perhaps you'll sit in one of the seats set up under a large tent-top in the parking lot during International Elvis Tribute Week.

At the far end of the tent are a small stage, some audio equipment, and a microphone on a stand. People begin to fill the seats. They munch
on sandwiches and drink sodas in the cooler-yet-still-hot shade of the tent. The tent is there to serve as a cover for an Elvis Impersonator contest to be held later in the week. Until then, impersonators occasionally perform there throughout the week. Also on the schedule is an Elvis memorabilia auction, a fan club party, and a wedding. All this just in the parking lot!

In the shops themselves, the feeling is different from in the shops at Graceland Plaza— "The Wooden Indian," "Memories of Elvis," "Souvenirs of Elvis"— even the names of these shops suggest that something is different about them. I realize that many of the bags of souvenirs I saw people carrying while I shopped at Graceland Plaza were bags from these shops, not the Graceland Plaza shops. Also, at Graceland Crossings I get a sense of freedom that I don't get at Graceland Plaza; spatially, the shopping center is arranged so that each shop opens onto the communal parking lot; visually, the window displays seem less calculated than they do at Graceland Plaza. The items featured in shop windows vary in sincerity and attitude toward Elvis; institutionally, Graceland Crossings appears to be run by independent merchants rather than by a large corporation like Graceland Plaza.

Another difference between the two shopping centers is the feeling of spontaneous activity at Graceland Crossings. At Graceland Plaza, events are scheduled around shuttle departure times, museum hours of operation, and corporate sponsored activities. At Graceland Crossings,
however, events are less rigidly scheduled, sporadic occurrences. Some
days there will be a full day’s worth of events; other days, nothing but
shopping will occur. And parking is always free at Graceland Crossings.

NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT
My Shopping Philosophy

I am very familiar with the activity of shopping. My friend Kelly and
I often go shopping as a form of relaxation, a means of escaping our real
lives and entering into the realm of the hyper-real. My friend Sharon,
however, detests shopping, especially if the goal is just to look, not to buy
something. She does not understand that there is a certain amount of
visual pleasure that comes with shopping, with immersing oneself in a
completely manufactured, artificial, and fantastic environment. For me,
and for Kelly, the experience of shopping is a way of participating in and
enacting roles within a consumer culture. In a sense, each time we shop
we become ethnographers of consumer culture, whether we buy anything
or not. Each time we shop we become touristic subjects literally gazing at
objects for our own pleasures. Each time we shop we enact power
relations specific to members of an advanced consumer culture. In another
sense, because we live in an advanced consumer culture, we do all these
things even when we aren’t shopping or, rather, we perform shopping-like
behaviors in multiple contexts.
Kelly and I developed a shopping ritual. We would go to the local mall, park beside Maison Blanche, walk around the inside of the mall completely once before entering any stores. Then we would always go to the same stores: the computer store, B. Dalton's Bookstore, Bookland, Babbage's, and Sears. In Sears I would select clothes for Kelly to model for me. Our game was simple: find the most hideous clothes I could find and see if I could actually get Kelly to try the outfit on, which she always did. After that we would eat lunch at Mama Brava's and then go to the Chocolate Chip Cookie Company for dessert, but we would only buy cookies if a certain salesperson were working. We identified her as "the Troll" because of her sparkling personality. If she was not working, then we would not buy cookies. Then we would leave. In the years that we performed our shopping ritual, Kelly only bought something once (other than lunch and cookies). The reason for shopping was not to purchase something, but to experience shopping itself. We achieved a type of communitas through shopping. While we were there, in the mall, the outside world did not exist. When the ritual was over, we returned fresh and alive to our regular lives.

I tell this story not because it relates directly to my shopping practices at Graceland Crossings but as an allegory for shopping as performance.
SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Bronner's Quotation

Bronner (1986) states, "Objects serve to convey more of the intimate and everyday . . ." (14). Most of the items for sale at Graceland Crossings have practical everyday uses: fly-swatters; ashtrays; refrigerator magnets; cigarette lighters; playing cards; board games; clocks; calendars; underwear; condoms.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Relationship between objects and identity

men and women make order in their selves (i.e.,'retrieve their identity') by first creating and then interacting with the material world. The nature of that transaction will determine to a great extent, the kind of person that emerges. Thus the things that surround us are inseparable from who we are (Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1980, 16).

Fans who shop for and collect Elvis souvenirs surround themselves with artifacts that position them rhetorically as particular types of consumers within a larger consumer culture. One fan I spoke with said she looks for quality items that are well-made, rather than official or licensed items that may increase in value. Her attitude is shared by many other fans who do not see EPE as THE source of Elvis memorabilia. Another fan said that before she goes to Graceland, she thinks of what items she will look for. If she does not find them, she will not substitute something that is available for them; she knows that eventually she will find what she is looking for. This type of consumer behavior demonstrates a prevalent
sentiment among Elvis fans. They are the ones with the power of the
dollar behind them; they decide what is worth buying and collecting, not
EPE. Fans use shopping for and collecting souvenirs as a performance of
power within a consumer culture.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Jenkins on fandom's empowering potential

I am not claiming that there is anything particularly empowering
about the texts fans embrace. I am, however, claiming that there is
something empowering about what fans do with those texts in the
process of assimilating them to the particulars of their lives. Fandom
celebrates not exceptional texts but rather exceptional readings
(though its interpretive practices make it impossible to maintain a
clear or precise distinction between the two) (1992, 284).

Jenkins's statement is also applicable to funs. Fun readings of souvenirs,
especially souvenirs produced specifically for the fun audience, empower
funs while they are in situ. At Graceland Crossings funs can freely laugh
at the image of Elvis without fear of fan rebuffs. In one sense, the texts
themselves at Graceland Crossings allow multiple and often unflattering
readings of Elvis; they are, after all, not officially licensed by EPE. In
another sense, funs empower themselves to read even "authentic" Elvis
souvenirs as jokes.

NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

Elvis vs. Jesus

Almost immediately after Elvis's death, fans and scholars began to
make the connection between Elvis and Jesus. Their myths are very
similar, even if their lives were not. Both were born of humble parents; both were raised to be good; both were praised for their deeds in life; both were considered heretical; both were called "king" while still alive; both were worshipped by some when alive; both died painfully; both were reported to be alive after their deaths were announced; and both have followers who still believe in them. The faith of their believers makes each of these men Messiahs, not the power of Elvis or Christ to make others believers. Of course, true believers will say that it is the man himself who makes believing possible. In any event, the choice of believing or not is there, and it is recognized as an arbitrary choice in a postmodern society.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Objects and Cultural Politics

Given the ideational basis of culture, cultural products commonly express ideology as well as utility. Such products are political because they draw power from a person, community, or larger order. Products become ethical when as cultural expressions they raise conflicting social meanings (Bronner 1986, 19).

What conflicting social meanings are raised by Elvis souvenirs sold at Graceland Crossings? Items made specifically for sale to fans, not fans, presuppose alternative views of Elvis. If such items did not sell well, the shops at Graceland Crossings would not continue to offer them. At Graceland Crossings, a place where the voice of the fun is recognized as an economic reality, there is the potential for conflicting social meanings between fan and fun interpretations of products.
NONLINEAR NARRATIVE SNAPSHOT

How I shop

Shopping is not a linear experience for me. I move from one item to another in a haphazard, free-flowing, meandering fashion. However, the visual images I encounter while shopping tell a story of sorts. My shopping experience is nonlinear, but narrative. The question that comes to my mind is: how can my experience be narrative without a narrator?

But the form of souvenir performances aren’t narrated exactly. There is no narrator present. Yes, visual objects can convey or be read through narrative, but should I force narrative on artifacts. How do I let the objects speak for themselves? or are they speaking through me? Is "speaking" always narrated because it’s mediated? Individual souvenirs may have a narrative element or be constructed to display visually a narrative performance, but when they’re displayed together in a souvenir shop, as fragments of the Elvis narrative, are they necessarily narrative?

What is my relationship to these objects? What power relations do I enact by forcing them into a narrative frame? How can I re-tell them?

Can a performance be non-narrated? What about cultural performances?

There may be an actual author, but no narrator. I supply the narrator’s voice. I choose which fragments to read and when and how. My narrator is covert or invisible or unstressed. Schwa.
INTERVIEW SNAPSHOT

The cashier

In "The Wooden Indian," as I paid for my "Elvis Shrugged" comic books, I asked the cashier why there was different merchandise in the Graceland Crossings shops than in the Graceland Plaza shops. He told me that the shops in Graceland Crossings are not allowed to sell the officially licensed merchandise distributed by EPE; only shops at Graceland can sell official merchandise. However, Graceland Crossings merchandise must be approved and licensed by EPE to be sold at Graceland Crossings. So even though Graceland Crossings is not owned or operated by EPE, the corporation, which legally "controls" the image of Elvis, tries to exert economic and textual authority over those free market vendors of souvenirs. Since many items sold at Graceland Crossings depict Elvis in a humorous or unflattering light, and since all items sold at Graceland Crossings must be approved by EPE, then EPE is instrumental in producing these less than positive images of Elvis. In this sense, even the unofficial items are official.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Elvis Afterlife

Dead superstars, like dead artists, have a greater effect on their fans than their living counterparts because their images are frozen in time forever and their myths gloss over the circumstances of their deaths and
make admirable their actions in life. Mason Wiley explains that the worship of dead celebrities arose because of a growing feeling of insecurity in our world:

Instead of a culture shaped by sexual daring and economic aspiration, today we get the Boulevard of Broken Dreams poster where Marilyn, Elvis and Jimmy are superimposed onto Edward Hopper's "The Diner." They've become patron saints guarding our culture's lost souls. These dead celebrities are a metaphor, of sorts, for what could have been, but was never meant to be. We used to be the wild ones; now we play it safe (1990, 69).

It is only after death that superstars become mythic heroes. Perhaps the best example of this phenomena is Elvis Presley, the King of Rock and Roll.

SELF-REFLECTING SNAPSHOT

James Dean

I enjoy shopping at Graceland Crossings more than shopping at Graceland Plaza mostly because some of the stores in Graceland Crossings also sell memorabilia of other stars. Of special interest to me is the large amount of James Dean merchandise available. I have been a James Dean fan for several years. I always buy a new James Dean calendar every year. I also love buying James Dean (JD) biographies. Although JD and Elvis were contemporaries, JD was so much more interesting than Elvis. Because he died young, no one will ever really know what he could have become. Even though he died almost ten years before I was born, I feel close to JD. I know JD, even though we could never have met. And it doesn't matter if how I know him isn't "real" in the sense of meeting
someone who is alive, becoming that person's friend, sharing experiences, thoughts, values, etc. I think what I like about being a JD fan is that I am not necessarily bound to the truth of his earthly existence. Since I never knew him, I am free to assume that he is what I want him to be, even when faced with contradictory information.

I've never really thought about what it means to me to be a JD fan before. In my mind, my type of fandom was different from Elvis fandom because mine was "real," not "for show." I know there are people who make a pilgrimage to Fairmont, IN, JD's home town, similar to the pilgrimage people make to Graceland, but JD's pilgrimage isn't so blatantly obsessive. It's more quietly obsessive.

Now there's a JD postage stamp. Do I buy into the corporate hype and use these stamps? I buy into the corporate hype when I buy books or calendars, don't I? So why is the stamp different? Perhaps I really like the idea of the stamp, but not the showy commercialization of the stamp. I want the stamp to be available, but I don't want parties to celebrate the stamp. Maybe that's why I like JD and not Elvis. JD fandom is less participatory. I am free to enjoy him on my own; but Elvis fans seem to want to congregate together and "share in his love." I don't want to share my love. It's mine.

I don't mind sharing an interest in Elvis with other fans, however. The difference for me is the intimacy factor. My James Dean Fandom is a
personal thing; my Elvis fandom is communal. My pleasure in purchasing
James Dean memorabilia is a private, guilty pleasure; my pleasure in purchasing Elvis memorabilia is public and only humorous if I can share the joke with someone else. I believe humor is the cornerstone of fandom and humor is best when shared. Communal laughter bonds the souls of funs together while shopping as communal tears bind fans during the Candlelight Vigil.

SOUVENIR SNAPSHOT

Window Shopping

The window of the "Souvenirs of Elvis" shop contains: twelve gold and rhinestone pin designs, a fluorescent treble clef, a pack of three Elvis tattoos, three versions of the "Elvis swinging hips Clock," nineteen different Elvis earring designs, an Elvis mantle clock, an Elvis Stamp blanket, a white porcelain plate with a picture of Elvis wearing leather, a smaller porcelain plate edged in gold leaf with a picture of Graceland embossed in gold in the center, an Elvis alarm clock, a mannequin bust covered with around one hundred different Elvis buttons, Elvis World, a photo album with pictures of Elvis, Priscilla, and Lisa Marie, Music Maestro, Placing Elvis, Early Elvis, Soldier Boy Elvis, Elvis, the Rebel, Elvis, a neon sign that reads "Aloha from Hawaii," "TCB" Christmas tree ornaments, an entire row of teddy bears dressed in Elvis-like jumpsuits, "TCB" rubber stamp sets, two Elvis baseball caps, one Elvis t-shirt, a
twelve-inch high cardboard cutout of Elvis in gold lame, a porcelain Elvis stein, Elvis keychains, "TCB" key chains, a miniature Elvis doll standing in front of a miniature pink cadillac, a spread deck of Elvis playing cards, and a small metal box with pictures of young Elvis covering it.

**SOUVENIR SNAPSHOT**

**Free Stuff**

Upon every purchase in "Souvenirs of Elvis" the customer receives a free bookmark. It is a three by seven inch, green bookmark that advertises the shop on one side and has a copy of Elvis's last driver's license on the other side. This is something you won't get at Graceland Plaza.

**SOUVENIR SNAPSHOT**

**Another shop window**

A Window in "The Wooden Indian" contains a display of eleven different silk ties, each with a different likeness of Elvis. The sign reads, "Silk Ties. Have fun! 'Look great' Reg. $24.95 Sale $7.95."

As a scholar-fun, my pleasure comes from interpreting and deconstructing the popular culture artifacts found at Graceland Crossings. I will now rhetorically "unpack" the silk tie display as an act of scholar-fun play:

1) each tie displays a different likeness of Elvis suggesting that there are many different versions of Elvis available and consumers are free to select the one(s) that best suit(s) their needs;
2) the ties are made of silk, usually considered a very expensive, luxurious, elitist fabric, but have been covered with images of Elvis, a popular culture figure who is far from elitist;

3) the silk tie acts as a metaphor for Elvis's life and Elvis fandom. Elvis was woven into the fabric of American society. He had money, the tool of the elite, but he was still one of the regular people. His ability to rise in society and yet retain his folk charm and roots make him a role model for his fans;

4) the price of the silk tie is reduced, which symbolically represents both the cheapening of Elvis's image by mass producing poor quality souvenirs and the elitist attitude toward Elvis that continues to cast him as just a popular culture fad;

5) from a fun perspective, the price reduction symbolizes the depths to which souvenir merchants will sink to market items directly to fans;

6) the statement, "Have Fun!", is used to market the item to both fans and fans. Fans will not be upset by the images of Elvis because they are flattering likenesses of him, and fans enjoy wearing images of Elvis on their clothing. Fans might buy the item because it is relatively inexpensive, makes a cheap gag gift, and could elicit humorous responses from people if worn in public;

7) on the sign, the statement, "'Look Great'," is in quotation marks to imply the double-voicedness of the item. It appeals to both fan and fun
sensibilities. If a fan purchased the tie, s/he would believe that s/he did look great while wearing it; if a fun purchased the tie, s/he would view the visual appeal of the item's good looks as sarcastic;

8) the price reduction mocks Elvis fans by implying they could not afford to purchase the item at regular price;

9) the price reduction mocks the souvenir industry by demonstrating a lack of economic interest in a "quality" item, as well as by highlighting the ineffectiveness of the industry's product marketing surveys; if they had done their research they would have realized that most male Elvis fans don't wear ties;

10) the display seen as a whole marks a difference between shopping at Graceland Crossings and shopping at Graceland Plaza. At Crossings, merchants compete against each other for customers and so must resort to typical marketing strategies to sell items, like signs in window displays advertising a special deal. At Plaza, all merchants are owned by EPE and so do not compete with each other; therefore, there is no need for signs, special deals, or special marketing strategies for individual items.

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

Resistance is physical and intellectual, and in between, culture comes in. Objects or sights that resist expectations of consistency stimulate the mind and heighten the senses. . . . The mind seeks clarity, perhaps an explanation of irregularity, which culture helps define (Bronner 1986, 13).
**SELF-REFLECTING SNAPSHOT**

Since I first began working on this project, I have been given numerous Elvis-themed gifts. Some people, the ones who knew I was not an Elvis fan, gave them as jokes. Other people, the ones who thought I had a genuine interest in Elvis, gave them with sincerity. I accepted them all graciously and still have them all. I display many of them in my office.

Since I first began working on this project, I have purchased numerous Elvis-themed items. Some I purchased because they would contribute to my understanding of fan and fun culture. Some I purchased because I actually liked the items.

The following is a list of items I received as gifts:

Elvis Aloha from Hawaii tapestry; Elvis floating pen; Elvis Gospel album; Is Elvis Alive?; "Elvis: The Great Performances"; "Elvis: The Early Years"; "Elvis Movie Previews"; black velvet photo album; Elvis mugs; Elvis stamp kitchen towels and pot holders; Elvis stamp blanket; Dead Elvis; Elvis papier mache' dyorama; four Elvis t-shirts; one hundred and fifty Elvis stamps; Young Elvis tapestry; a strange Elvis impersonator video; I Am Elvis; two Elvis calendars; Elvis playing cards; Graceland ashtray; Elvis cologne; commemorative blue ribbon; three Elvis buttons; Elvis: His Life from A to Z; Elvis for President; Where's Elvis?: floating Elvis wand; twenty-seven newspaper articles; thirty-two photographs; eighteen Elvis...
birthday cards; four Elvis post cards; and half a black velvet painting.

Please don’t give me anymore stuff.

The following is a list of Elvis-themed items I purchased myself:

Elvis swinging hips clock; three Elvis calendars; six issues of Elvis International Forum; twenty-two books about Elvis; five t-shirts; an Elvis notepad; "Elvis Lives" post-it notes; Elvis + Marilyn = 2 X Immortal; seven humorous greeting cards; several issues of The Weekly World News with Elvis stories; the Elvis Shrugged comic book trilogy; and Elvis tattoos.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

... Aristotle’s term praxis. He used it to refer to activities that mark one’s political and ethical life. For cultural study, praxis is activity resulting in the production, and I would add consumption, of an object, but one where the doing, the processes involved and the conditions present, rather than solely the end, is paramount (Bronner 1986, 20-21).

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Brian Sutton-Smith (1985, 154) writes, "the mind works better as a narrator than as a categorizer. . . the imagination as narrative is contributing to the linguistic mode of intelligence just as the imagination as logic is contributing to the logical mode of intelligence."

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Rhetorical strategy

On a very basic level, temporality is the major mode of reference among Elvis fans. Invariably fans refer to Elvis according to various time periods of his life: young Elvis, the early years, the army years, the
Hollywood years, the Vegas years, the latter years, the last days, the afterlife, the '68 comeback special, the '73 concert, Aloha from Hawaii, August 16, 1977. And fans know the dates by heart. It's almost a rite of passage into fandom to be able to chronologize the life of Elvis correctly.

**SOUVENIR SNAPSHOT**

Rhetorical strategy in action

The merchandise on sale promotes visual images of Elvis at different time periods: ashtrays with Elvis in his Gold lame suit in 1956; postcards of Elvis and Priscilla at their wedding in 1968; young Elvis on the stamp; Elvis's glamour shots from Hollywood; movie stills from every film he was in; Elvis in karate gear in the '70s; Elvis in Army gear in the '50s; Elvis with side burns and a duckbill; Elvis with sideburns and long hair; Elvis getting his crewcut; etc.

The merchandise also promotes ideas about Elvis from different temporal orientations: Elvis afterlife, Dead Elvis, The Boy Who Would Be King, the connection between E and Jesus, E's attraction to the number 2001, the death date coincidence (he died the day after his mother's death date anniversary), Elvis lives! Long Live the King! American Trilogy (parlaying a connection between the Southern gothic myth of Elvis and the lived, Southern experience of many of his fans into mega-bucks).
SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT
Who’s the Rhetor?

For blurred temporality to be used as a rhetorical strategy, there must be a rhetor using the strategy. But who is the rhetor? In some cases the rhetor could be EPE because it produces many of the artifacts at Graceland that aid in temporal blurring. But I'm not sure if the corporation is consciously blurring temporality or not so can I say it is an unwitting rhetor using an arbitrary method of persuasion to get fans to buy stuff? Where is the rhetorical manipulation in that? Or is it supposed to seem like there is no persuasive strategy being used?

PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT
The Wedding

As interesting as shopping at Graceland Plaza was, I never felt as if I was getting my "money's worth." As a fun, I was there to consume spectacle, but most of the spectacle of shopping involved images of Elvis on things. Fortunately, I was able to witness a performance of fandom that reinforced my notion of people doing things with Elvis other than looking at him or consuming him. In the Graceland Crossings parking lot a stage was set up for a wedding that was to take place later in the day. I noted the time the wedding was to take place and made plans to return.

The bride and groom were Elvis fans. Her dream was to be married at Graceland, but such events are not allowed by EPE on the mansion.
grounds. So the closest she could get was the parking lot of Graceland Crossings.

At first I thought it was a joke or an event staged by the Graceland Crossings shop-owners to get publicity. Although I'm sure the shop-owners were pleased at the amount of publicity the event generated, it was an actual wedding. A hundred people or more were sitting in folding chairs facing the stage. The bride, rather than walking down the aisle, began the ceremony on stage with the groom. She was dressed in a Hawaiian muumuu dress, a lai of flowers around her neck. He wore a Hawaiian print shirt and casual slacks. She sang "The Hawaiian Wedding Song" to him--just as Elvis had in one of his Hawaiian-themed movies. Her voice cracked and wavered. At first I thought she had a bad singing voice, but then I thought it was nervousness: there were lots of people watching her at a very personal moment in her life. Then she started looking around at the people and crying. Was she upset by the crowd of people?

Many of the people not seated in the audience were taking photos. I noticed that many of the people I would categorize as fans were standing on the sidewalks of the shopping area laughing, whispering to each other, pointing their fingers, shaking their heads, looks of incredulity on their faces. Even though I classified myself as a fun, I had enough respect for the wedding couple not to ridicule them openly. But then I said to myself,
"Well, what did they expect? They're getting married in a parking lot near Graceland."

Then I asked myself, "Why wouldn't EPE allow a wedding on the grounds of Graceland? How could two people openly expressing their love for each other (aside from copulation) possibly be interpreted as a misuse of the image of Elvis? Of course, it is private property, so they can say what can happen there and what cannot."

While I was thinking, I had missed the groom's vows. When I snapped back to the present I could barely hear the bride utter her vows, even though she had a microphone. Except for the location, the dress of the couple, the stage, the cars whizzing by, the heat, the curious onlookers, and the Elvis-Hawaiian-theme, it was pretty much like any other wedding. The bride was nervous, but determined to get through the ceremony. The groom looked as if he would pass out at any moment. And some people in the audience were actually crying.

I then thought to myself, "Maybe she didn't even notice the people's reactions to her song. Maybe she was just a bride. Maybe I was reading more into the event and the crowd because I was looking for friction between fans and funs."

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

A reappropriation of the Elvis myth empowers the fans, most of whom are marginal subjects: middle-aged women, lower-middle class
couples, and men who identify with Elvis as a hero (Spigel 1991). Fans are also empowered by this reappropriation of the myth in that their attitude towards Elvis may be cynical and sarcastic, but their pleasure at being able to exhibit freely this opposition to "the King" is very empowering. For example, fans who choose to believe Elvis is still alive use those parts of the Elvis myth which validate their perception of reality. They choose to believe he is alive because in their minds Elvis was not a drug addict, he was a victim. In this sense, Elvis becomes a martyr, sacrificing himself for some greater good.

Fans who choose to believe Elvis is alive use the Elvis myth to reinforce their perceptions of Elvis as a man who was trapped by his own fame and needed a way to escape. The Elvis myth is also reappropriated by EPE, which makes a hefty profit from a variety of Elvis paraphernalia, to maintain public interest in their number one source of income. Elvis is no longer Elvis, but a text that becomes whatever we make him. He is not here to control which parts of himself are made public and are thus used by his fans for their own purposes. According to Spigel, "the post mortem Elvis incorporates what the larger society presents only as binary oppositions and alternative choices-- he is both tough and gentle, both spiritual and sexual. . . . He allows people, in other words, to negotiate historical conflict" (1991, 182).
SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Who's the Rhetor?

Or are the fans the rhetors, manipulating temporality in these cultural texts to keep their worldview at the forefront and the "actual facts" about Elvis's demise under wraps, or erased altogether?

PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

Stalking a fan

There's one. A fan. I can tell by the fan club badge and because she is dressed like everyone else in her fan club. She is middle-aged, around forty-five-years-old, with dark poofy hair, an Elvis t-shirt, white shorts, a type of sandal called "jellies," a large white, cloth purse that resembles a beach bag, and two bags of "stuff" from Graceland Plaza gift shops. I follow her into the "Wooden Indian," but keep a discreet distance. I do not want to be arrested for stalking (even though, I guess, that's what I'm doing).

She heads straight for the jewelry display case near the cash register. With a determined stare she examines each piece of jewelry carefully from the other side of the glass case. A sales clerk approaches her. "Can I help you, m'am?" asks the clerk, a young but jaded-looking version of Mary Anne Mobley.
"Yeah, let me see the new set of pins," answers the fan in a voice slightly higher than Elizabeth Ashley's, but with just as much exaggerated southern spunk.

"These ones here?"

"Uh-huh. And all them right there."

The clerk removes two trays of rhinestone-encrusted gold costume jewelry. I work my way over to the display counter next to the fan. I see about twenty pieces of jewelry. The fan bends over the countertop to get a closer look at each piece.

"You can take 'em off the pad if you want," says the clerk who is obviously tired of holding the pads.

The fan runs her right index finger over the surface of each piece and says, without looking up at the clerk, "Will these stay on?"

"M'am?"

"I bought two pins here last time and most of the stones came out."

"I'm sorry, m'am. I don't know how they're made. I guess they're just glued in."

"Uh-huh. It's just glue. I think it got too hot and the glue musta melted or something. But I couldn't find the stone anywhere. Do you have any extra stones?"

"I don't think so. Let me ask somebody." As the clerk leaves the counter to get an answer to the fan's question, the fan keeps intently
scrutinizing the pins in front of her. Then she says, "You'd think they'd make 'em better 'an that for the prices they ask."

I am not sure who she is talking to. The clerk is gone; no one else is with her. Is she talking to me? She picks up a "TCB" pin, turns to me and says, "See how the stones are too big for the setting. That's how you can tell it's not good quality. The stones need to fit right to stay in."

I nod, but cannot speak.

"They had that auction last night of some of his stuff, and one of his jewelers was there. You go?"

I shake my head no.

"Now he knew what to look for, and he tells us about fitting the stone to the setting, what a intricate process it is and all. They had some gorgeous rings there. I don't know who could afford 'em, though."

The clerk returns with another clerk who says to the fan, "M'am? I'm sorry about your pin. We get these from a manufacturer, so we don't have any loose stones. I'd be happy to give you the address of the manufacturer if you want to write and let them know what happened."

"No, that's all right. See, the stones got to be the right size for the setting, and yours are too big. Which looks nice, but it won't stay. I just thought you'd like to know."

"I'm sorry, m'am."
"It's ok. I'm just going to look around some more." And with that, the fan moves away from the counter and begins wandering around the shop. She first heads for the shelves of t-shirts. She thumbs through a few different t-shirts and moves on to a display of beer steins. She picks up each stein and intently looks each over from top to bottom.

On the shelf below the steins are several wooden boxes with pictures of Elvis lacquered on the lids. She lifts each one, opens each lid, runs her finger over the surface picture, closes the lid and gently puts each one back on the shelf. From my vantage point at a rack of postcards I can see her moving her lips as if she is talking to herself. Perhaps she is debating which item to buy. Perhaps she really thinks someone else is with her.

The fan then approaches a rack of rubber stamps. Again, she carefully picks up and inspects each one. She raises her head slightly, looks over at the first sales clerk, looks back at the rack, picks up a rubber stamp, moves back to the steins, picks up one, moves back to the t-shirts, picks one up, and ends up at the jewelry counter where she asks the clerk for the "TCB" pin she showed me. She then hands all the items to the sales clerk who asks, "Have you got everything?"

"Uh-huh."

"Will this be cash or charge?"
"Charge," she says with a smile, the first I've seen on her face since I decided to stalk her. She presents the clerk with a gold American Express card. Her total purchase price is $104.37. She signs the charge slip, collects her bag of goodies, and moves to the store's exit. I decide to continue following her, so I nonchalantly move toward the exit.

As I look though the window of the shop, I see her talking to another woman dressed in a matching outfit. As I exit the store, I overhear them telling each other about their purchases. The new arrival then says, "Let's go over to the Plaza. Carolyn is over there, I think." They begin walking toward the sidewalk that leads to Graceland Plaza. I decide to stalk someone else, since I don't want to go back to the Plaza yet.

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT

Who's the Rhetor?

Or are the rhetors the funs who have nothing to lose by constantly reminding people of the "truth" about Elvis, so they manipulate temporality overtly to demonstrate their "superiority" over these "gullible fans"?

Who is manipulating whom?

PERFORMANCE SNAPSHOT

Elvis Impersonators

Impersonators provide the only real link we get to "Last Days Elvis" (known to funs as "old, fat Elvis"). Many of the impersonators are
themselves overweight, middle-aged men, so they couldn't very well portray a young, sexy, 1950s Elvis. Their performances are billed as tributes. Actually what they are doing with these concerts is blurring temporality again. We get to see "Elvis" as he might be if he'd lived: still overweight and growing older, but full of energy and love for his fans. The few instances when we do see images of the "real" Elvis in his latter days serve to remind us that he was not a perfect role model for us. Funs constantly remind us that: he did do drugs; he did die of an overdose; he was overweight; he was bad in concert toward the end; he was slipping in popularity; he was going broke; he was less than attractive; he did have bad taste; he was strange; he was a superstar.

Impersonators show us an image of "old, fat Elvis" that is more tenable to fans: he's vital; he's sexy; he's rich; he's a supersuperstar. Temporality is blurred to change the historical "fact" of "old, fat Elvis" into an ahistorical "act" of "after-the-fact-Elvis." The narrative of "old, fat Elvis" changes as a result of this blurring of temporality; there is question about the validity of Elvis's demise and dour condition. Why remember the bad stuff when there is so much good stuff being thrown in your face to negate the bad stuff? Even the bad stuff that gets through is now blurred to seem like just another account of what might have happened, but also might not have happened. The past is recovered in terms of the present needs of fans and the corporation. Instead of recovering the past, or
presenting the present, impersonators give a glimpse of the future that never was, but could be because of their performances and the audience's imagination.

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

Rhetorical Strategy Revisited

As a rhetorical strategy, the blurring of temporality attempts to persuade the audience/reader that: (1) the past of Elvis should not be cluttered with stories of his demise, but filled with instances of his triumphs; (2) the present of Elvis is that he is a larger than life, legendary, godlike figure to people who envision him as their role model; and (3) the future of Elvis is embodied in the impersonator because we see Elvis as he might have been, and in fact we can picture him as he will be in the future because of the varying ages of impersonators.

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

Impersonator Meets Strategy

The transformation of impersonators into "future Elvis" exemplifies what Dorst (1989) refers to as "postmodern veneer," a characteristically postmodern rhetorical figure:

In its simple sense, of course, veneer refers to covering a cheap substance making up the bulk of some object with a thin layer of finer material. In its metaphorical extension, veneer means a superficial and artificial outward display that hides an underlying reality. Speciousness, inauthenticity, and deception are often implied. . . . But the postmodern veneer as a characteristic structure of contemporary discourse is different from veneer in this simple sense. It refers to those sorts of surfaces, literal and metaphorical,
that do not just hide some underlying substance, but that completely
dissolve or de-materialize that substance. This is not to say, of
course, that the substance is physically demolished. Rather it
becomes framed as an image in an endless chain of automatic
reproduction, so that it ceases to make sense to distinguish between
substance and simulacrum, original and copy, depth and surface
(110).

This idea of postmodern veneer also applies to the proliferation of images
and texts of Elvis. But more is involved than the dissolving of substance;
this veneer also aids in temporal blurring by creating a "hypertemporality."
I define hypertemporality as the blurring of several time periods, images,
artifacts, or concepts from different time periods at an accelerated rate.
This accelerated temporal blurring allows/forces secular time and sacred
time to merge together into a sacresecular temporal movement that
simulates both a sense of history and a sense of place in popular culture
communities. Thus hypertemporality, as a by-product of blurred
temporality, characterizes a definitive feature of postmodernity. Dorst
(1989) posits:

. . . is the pervasiveness of an 'historical hyperspace' in which depth
in time is displaced by fragmentary surfaces. The essential
qualification, though, is that depth in time is not simply obliterated
by these postmodern surfaces. Rather a whole panoply of simulacra
signifying historical depth and authenticity become the very texts
inscribed upon such surfaces. It is not that depth and volume are
simply suppressed, . . . nor is it exactly that surfaces are deployed
to fool the eye with the impression of depth. It is more accurate to
say that . . . postmodernity trades heavily in the reproducible
simulation of depth, in depth as consumable imagery, in historical
authenticity as a commodified surface effect (108).
So we are left with simulations of simulations of fragments of Elvis texts, temporally oriented in the present referring to a past that refers to a past that refers to a future which is really the present.

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

*Myth*

A myth is a sign which carries cultural meanings and "relates to reality and brings reality into line with appropriate cultural values" (Fiske and Hartley 1978, 42). Myths are made meaningful by members of a culture because of their "intersubjectivity. . . . the area of subjective responses which are shared, to a degree, by all members of a culture" (Fiske and Hartley 1978, 46). Through myths, people determine what is reality and their place within a particular culture.

**SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOT**

*Postmodern Society*

In a postmodern society, as Connor states, the sign is increasingly separated (signifier from signified) with the signifier no longer having a specific referent; thus, postmodernism "ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts. . . in some new and heightened bricolage. . . " (Connor 1989, 27). Modern myths are recognized as being reappropriated from other existing myths. Since in a postmodern society, there are no canonical or central texts or practices, myths are freed from their need to be "shared by all members of a culture." In a fragmented
society, one myth can be reappropriated by a variety of subcultures and
given signification according to the cultural values of each subculture, and
thus, not support the view of reality held by those with hegemonic power.
This characteristic of the postmodern condition empowers those on the
fringe of society with the ability to create their own mythology which co­
exists with the mythology of the "dominant culture."

SCHOLARLY SNAPSHOTS

Dead Celebrities

According to Mason Wiley (1990):

Dead celebrity worship is the ultimate manipulation of a person. Mortals are hard to live with, thanks to all their human defects, but immortals are flawless. They carry a guarantee—that you'll never be disappointed, abandoned or betrayed, that you'll never want your money back. You get exactly what you pay for: a relationship with no strings attached. The beauty of any relationship between fan and icon. . . is that you can love them with all your soul, and never have to put up with any of their crap (66).

Through death, Elvis was chosen as the new Messiah who is more adored now than when he was alive. But more importantly, his fans, and funs, now have more power to make of him what they will, to use his myth to their advantage, to create their own cultural reality with Elvis as the cornerstone, whether seriously or in jest. This empowerment is possible because of the postmodern condition of our culture, and it is realized/enacted in performances such as shopping at Graceland Crossings.
FINAL SNAPSHOT

My scrapbook is incomplete. I look to it for some "emancipatory possibilities," but I keep finding emancipatory impossibilities, such as a dissatisfaction with not being able to achieve closure. Stopping is easy; closure is difficult. Changing identities as fashions and interests change is easy; holding on to an identity that I really want to keep is difficult. Feeling free to play with a vast array of performance choices is easy; feeling certain I’ve made the "right" choice is difficult. Celebrating my textual power over EPE is easy; escaping the cloud of multinational capitalism is difficult. "Grasping things" is easy; cherishing things is difficult. Establishing a substantial cultural identity through fandom is easy; establishing a substantial cultural identity through fundom is difficult. Blurring temporality is easy; seeing through the blur is difficult. Collecting and assembling snapshots is easy; reading and interpreting snapshots is difficult.

Stopping is easy.
CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

In this study I used a critical ethnographic approach to investigate Elvis as a site of performance where such issues as cultural identity, authority and representation are contextualized within the particular cultural practices of fans, people who love Elvis, and funs, people who do not love Elvis, but still elect to use Elvis as the basis for their cultural performances. I argued that fans and funs use performance as the agency of postmodern identity construction. More specifically, I explored three performance events in which both fans and funs participated: the annual Candlelight Service, the tour of the Graceland mansion, and shopping for souvenirs at Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings. Additionally, I examined the relationship of power and play between and within fan and fun culture.

My method of writing about these specific case studies conflated notions of academic work and academic play. By casting myself as a critical ethnographer and implicating myself in my post-ethnographic descriptions and critiques of fan and fun performances, I enacted a performance of critical ethnography.

I situated my study within an expanding field of scholarly inquiry about Elvis. For the past several years, many scholars have deemed Elvis and those who do things with his image, objects, and legend worthy of academic pursuit. Studies have ranged from psychological investigations
of Elvis and his fans, social treatises about the impact of Elvis on popular culture, and explorations of Elvis's religious manifestations to rhetorical critiques of Elvis's films, home, souvenirs, legend, and songs. Most relevant to my particular investigation have been several ethnographic studies of Elvis and his fans, as well as research about fans in general.

Research about fans generally examines the social and psychological reasons for which people participate in fandom. Whenever Elvis fans have been mentioned, it was almost always to support a negative view of fandom and fans. I approached fandom from a performance perspective, which allowed me to view fandom as an on-going process of cultural invention rather than as a static, monolithic cultural artifact. Specifically, I positioned fan and fun activities as cultural performances that enact political ideologies supported by members of fan and fun cultures. I focused on fans and funs as performers who enacted and created three types of Elvis texts: material texts, verbal texts, and processual texts.

For several years I have been involved in fan and fun performances during Elvis International Tribute Week. Through participant/observation techniques, informant interviews, and research of secondary texts, I crafted ethnographic descriptions of three performances that involved fans and funs simultaneously. Additionally, I selected these three performances because each foregrounded a different fan/fun text of Elvis: the Candlelight Vigil foregrounded a processual text; the Tour of Graceland foregrounded a
verbal text; and shopping for souvenirs at Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings foregrounded material texts of Elvis. My study consisted of descriptive and interpretive analyses of these three performances, as well as offered critiques of fan/fun use of these performances as the agency of postmodern identity construction.

My study enacted a performance of critical ethnography in order to investigate not only the power relations within and between fan and fun cultures but also to investigate the political implications of doing ethnographic research. The type of critical ethnography I performed was a post-ethnography, which positions the ethnographer as a collageist and rhetorician who assembles and critically reads his/her collection of ethnographic fragments. Because I elected to perform a post-ethnography, I wrote each of my case study chapters in a different literary style to simultaneously distance myself as the authority in the ethnography and to implicate/critique my own actions in the performances and their subsequent written representations.

In the first case study I discussed the performance of the Candlelight Vigil, which I wrote as a third-person narrative. I described the Vigil as a ritual and discussed how fans and funs use the performance to enact power relations within and between each culture. I also considered how performance of the Vigil aids postmodern identity construction for fans and funs.
In the next case study I critiqued the performance of the Graceland Mansion tour, which I wrote as a screenplay. I used the case study to discuss how fans and funs are special types of tourists who use the tour context to further their own cultural identities and agendas.

Finally, in the last case study I explored the critical implications of shopping for souvenirs as performance. I wrote the first part of the study as a brochure to highlight the rhetoric of objects featured at Graceland Plaza. The second part of the chapter I wrote as a scrapbook of "snapshots" to implicate my own autobiographical experience of shopping at Graceland Crossings in the same context as popular and academic discourse about souvenirs and shopping. I attempted to draw the connection between myself and fan/fun performances of shopping at both venues to determine if shopping was an empowering or disempowering performance of postmodern identity.

**FINDINGS**

The performances of fans and funs often conflate the distinction between behaviors labelled "work" and behaviors labelled "play." For fans, attending International Elvis Tribute Week is simultaneously work and play. It is work for those fans in charge of various activities, fans who make their living selling and collecting Elvis memorabilia, impersonators who are often paid to attend the event, and fans who see loving Elvis as a full-time job, much like being a priest; they love it, but it takes effort
usually associated with work. But their activities are also seen as play, such as when fans dress up in matching outfits or costumes, when they schedule their family vacations to coincide with International Elvis Tribute Week and see it as a break from work, or when fans interact with each other, even fans they don't know, in the form of parties, shopping, touring the house.

For funs, play is obviously more prominent than work while at International Elvis Tribute Week. Most funs are there to have a good time, a goal usually associated with play, but, as we saw in the tour, they also exhibit dark play behaviors that conceal their identities as funs. Also, funs use dark play as a way of performing public hidden transcripts, such as when they attend the Vigil disguised as fans or when they shop for kitschy souvenirs as a form of participating in the capitalist game of consumption.

Within fan culture all three performances help maintain hierarchy. In the Vigil, fan hierarchy is established and maintained by the level of involvement in staging the event, by the amount of emotion displayed during the Vigil, and by the clothing worn by different types of fans. In the tour, fans again display hierarchy by "hang time," with the most hard core fans staying as much time as possible in Elvis's house; also, the number of times a fan has been to the mansion and the gravesite establishes a hierarchical relationship among fans. In the performance of shopping, fan hierarchy is revealed by the amount of stuff accumulated, also by the
quality of the items attained either through direct purchase or auction. While shopping, high level fans know where to go to get the best price for higher quality items; they also display their level of devotedness by sharing shopping/souvenir stories with others—telling about where and when they purchased significant items, telling people what to look out for when shopping, and using Elvis merchandise to elicit fan knowledge of Elvis trivia or true encounter stories.

Funs reify their power relations in quite different ways than fans. Within fun culture the hierarchy is not as obvious as within fan culture, but it does exist. Funs who successfully pass as fans during the Vigil, funs who publicly display their hidden transcripts in the form of dark play, and funs who are openly fan-abusive all share equally as heightened examples of fundom. Funs who are extreme in either sense, either extremely covert or extremely overt are the ones who feel they are on the highest level of fundom. Funs also reify power relations between their culture and fan culture in the form of cultural expansion. When funs infiltrate fan territory, either disguised or in full view, they are essentially expanding their boundaries; they are saying to fans, "I was here and you couldn’t stop me."

Fans reify their power in relation to funs and to EPE. Fans are the ones with the financial clout to force EPE to take a product off the market, or to produce certain items over others. Also, fans have the power to
influence EPE's decisions about museum displays, Elvis's image, tour packages. Fans have decided to make Elvis the focus of their lives, at least for certain time periods. Fans also exert control over Elvis's image itself. In spite of EPE's ban on black velvet Elvis paintings, they are still mass produced and sold at Graceland Crossings because fans (and funs) enjoy them. Also, fan folk art and stories are not controlled by EPE, but by the fans themselves, so fans really have the power of cultural as well as economic capital. Fans also display their power in popular culture in general. They have promoted Elvis's legend for many years and have kept interest in him alive. The Elvis stamp, Graceland's position on the historic homes registry, and closing Elvis Presley Boulevard for the Vigil are all examples of fan power and fan cultural expansion in society.

The performances of fans and funs simultaneously propagate and illustrate postmodernity through heightened awareness of the multiple uses of Elvis's image and life story displayed in souvenirs, personal narratives, art. "Elvis is Everywhere" is now a cliche because of increased fragmentation of what Elvis is/was. The Vigil self-consciously promotes the legend, is covered by the media, and has become a major tourist event in Memphis, thus integrally linking fan cultural production to institutional economic production. Fans and funs are simultaneously producers and consumers of images and goods, all mass produced, non-"authentic," and some parodic.
Within the context of tourism, which casts tourists as postmodern explorers looking for "real," but pre-packaged, and thus risk-free adventure, touring the mansion, taking part in the Vigil, and shopping at Graceland Plaza and Graceland Crossings epitomize the sensibility that "more is more."

Within popular culture, the worship of Elvis by fans and funs has not only economic and cultural implications but also religious implications. Indeed, the "worship" of pop icon Elvis exists in a postmodern society because of certain characteristics which both represent and propagate the postmodern condition. In "The Postmodern Predicament," Gitlin (1989) lists several characteristics of postmodernism: pastiche; blankness; a sense of exhaustion; a mixture of levels, forms, styles; a relish for copies and repetition; a knowingness that dissolves commitment into irony; acute self-consciousness about the formal, constructed nature of the work; pleasure in the play of surfaces; a rejection of history. (67)

The postmodern condition is represented by participation in fandom in America because of the implicit arbitrariness of whom one admires. The postmodern condition is propagated by fandom in that there seems to be no end, no goal, no result—merely endless repetitions and reorderings of stars of the past, such as Madonna's version of Marilyn Monroe (Fiske, 1989a).

Within academe, the study of popular culture figures such as Elvis was once, and to a certain extent still is, thought of as trivial and of no
importance to scholarly pursuits. However, as my examination of the Vigil and shopping have shown, fans and funs are real people making real uses of the variety of images and texts generated about and because of Elvis. Their incorporation of Elvis into their everyday lives is certainly worthy of academic inquiry; if this is a throw-away society, or trash culture characterized by trivial leisure time activity, why and how are people making something substantial with the Vigil, tour, and shopping?

Fans and funs use these performances of Elvis textuality to create personas for themselves. They take on roles when they shop or tour or participate in the Vigil. The roles they assume, as parts of specific cultural activities, dictate how they should behave and respond in each given situation. The role and context determine how they will dress, what they will do, whom they will encounter, what actions they will perform.

On one hand, fandom continues to exist, even though many people realize its artificial constructedness, because people are not only willing to accept it and have fun with it but also use fandom as a means of organizing and understanding their behaviors and interactions. On the other hand, fandom continues to exist because it serves its users well as a means of constructing a seemingly stable identity in a seemingly unstable world. This latter view is supported by the work of Kellner (1995). Although he does not refer specifically to popular culture fans, Kellner
offers a view of postmodern identity politics that is "emancipatory" and positive, rather than debilitating and negative.

Kellner (1995) states that postmodern identity:

... is constituted theatrically through role playing and image construction. While the locus of modern identity revolved around one's occupation, one's function in the public sphere (or family), postmodern identity revolves around leisure, centered on looks, images, and consumption. ... postmodern identity is a function of leisure and is grounded in play, in gamesmanship, in producing an image. (242)

The activities that Kellner says ground postmodern identity are exactly the activities that fans and funs enact through their performances of Elvis textuality. Fan and fun cultural identities are realized through these performances, but because of the cultural conditions within which their cultures become manifest, some postmodernists would argue that these identities are merely simulations or illusions of identity. From one postmodern perspective, the instability of identity in a postmodern society is a negative outgrowth of living in a mass mediated consumer culture. However, as Kellner (1995) notes, "some positive potentials of this postmodern portrayal of identity" are "that one can always change one's life, that identity can always be reconstructed, that one is free to change and produce oneself as one chooses" (243). By viewing identity as "a freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self, in which one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images, and activities, relatively unconcerned about shifts, transformations, and dramatic
changes" (Kellner 1995, 246), fans and funs use the performance of the Candlelight Vigil to construct identities for themselves. So, for Kellner, postmodern identity construction is an act of empowerment within a system that denies stable identities. The performances of Elvis fans and funs are specific examples of the empowering potential of postmodern identity.

**OBSERVATIONS**

Before I began this study I read the works of others interested in Elvis, fandom, performance, and postmodernity. While not everything I read was relevant to my study directly, I have discovered that my investigation has confirmed the findings of several others as well as extended existing research in several areas.

First, my study confirms other's views of fandom. My study supports Whittenberger-Keith's (1992) assertion that fandom is an essentially rhetorical activity. Fans use their actions rhetorically to constitute their community and to promote specific views and uses of Elvis. My study also supports Jenkins's (1992) attempt to note the importance of material culture and fan reappropriations of institutionally produced texts to the construction of fandom. Similarly, my study corroborates Bacon-Smith's (1992) claim that fans use narrative to organize their experiences.

Some of my observations, however, differed from or extended earlier research. First, although I agree with Whittenberger-Keith's rhetorical view of fandom, I believe fandom is best understood from a performance perspective since the activities fans use to construct their communities rhetorically are performances. Next, I extend Fiske's notion of localizing power (1993). He uses the term to refer to subordinated people's ability to "control their immediate social conditions" (11) and "to produce and hold onto a space that can, as far as possible, be controlled by the
subordinate who live within it" (12). Although he refers to space as an actual place, I extend his notion to include textual space. Fans and funs employ localizing power when they produce and hold onto Elvis in a textual space.

Another example of how my study has extended existing research is found in the discussion of hidden and public texts in Chapter Three. I extend Scott's notion of hidden texts by asserting that fans, funs, and tour guides perform public hidden transcripts in full view of an audience that may include their superiors. The public performance of hidden transcripts serves as an act of subversion of the hegemony. I also extend Scott by linking his research to Schechner's concept of dark play as the means by which a hidden transcript can be performed publicly.

However, as much as I owe to Kellner's ideas about postmodern identity construction, I disagree with some of his comments. As much as Kellner touts the virtues of the "emancipatory possibilities in the perpetual possibility of being able to change one's self and identity, to move from one identity to another, to revel in the play of multiple and plural identities" (247), his vision of how these possibilities are enacted in people's lives is limited. At one point he contradicts the notion of "emancipatory possibilities" when he states:

constituting a substantial identity is work which requires will, action, commitment, intelligence, and creativity, and many of the postmodern identities constructed out of media and consumer culture lack these features, being little more than a game someone
plays, a pose, a style and look that one can dispose of tomorrow for a new look and image: disposable and easily replaceable identities for the postmodern carnival. (1995, 260)

By referring to postmodern identity as "little more than a game," and without qualifying the criteria that mark identities as "substantial" or "insubstantial," Kellner fails to see that work and play are often simultaneous activities. He does not take into account that for some people, specifically fans and funs, play is work and is a substantive means of empowering oneself. On one level, postmodern identity may seem trivial because it is so closely aligned with popular culture phenomena and thus only concerned with image and style. But on another level, when postmodern identity is examined in the lives of real people, like fans and funs, a context for viewing identity is created and sustained through a performance. Performance, far from being insubstantial and trivial, is the agency through which all cultures enact their ideologies, values, and identities. As performance, fan/fun postmodern identity construction is substantial in the sense that through these performances, cultural ideologies and political agendas are realized and enacted.

Kellner further denigrates postmodern identity when he indicates that the flexibility of postmodern identity, the very feature that generates empowerment, makes it "disposable" and thus not substantial. Yet during the Candlelight Vigil, an event with an eighteen year long tradition, fans and funs are constructing identities that are substantial, in the sense that
they are durable and repeatable performances, and in the case of hardcore fans, enduring features of their characters. Fans rely on the emancipatory possibilities of their identities as fans to give them power. I have spoken with several Elvis fans, many of whom are middle-class, who recognize the desire to be other than they are in their "everyday lives." They do not see themselves as part of an empowered group already, so they turn to fandom to gain power. But the substantiality of postmodern identity is not limited to Elvis fans; fans of many other popular icons (Madonna, Michael Jackson, Princess Diana), television shows (Star Trek, Beauty and the Beast, All My Children), sports teams (Green Bay Packers, Ohio State Buckeyes, Chicago Bulls), novelists (Stephen King, Anne Rice, Danielle Steele), movies (Rocky Horror Picture Show, Star Wars, Batman), and fashion designers (Isaac Mizrahi, Ralph Lauren, Versace) also devote significant portions of their lives to "doing things" with the object(s) of their fandom. What they do and how they do it contributes to the construction of a postmodern identity that is not only not trivial, insubstantial or disposable but is a very real economic as well as political power in the world. Even President Clinton has admitted to being an Elvis fan.

Fans also construct their identities through these playful performances. From a fun perspective, play and insubstantiality are what they are all about. Yet there is something very substantial and
"emancipatory" in being able to create an identity out of the fragments of popular culture. Although funs play with the fragments, they work to maintain stability. Their leisure and touristic practices have value to members of the culture beyond terminal, trivial values; this is true of funs of other popular culture phenomena (the "bad B-movies" of Mystery Science Theatre 3000, Roswell, Talk Soup). I would alter Kellner's phrasing to say that a substantial identity is work and play "that requires will, action, commitment, intelligence, and creativity" to construct. Because funs work and play to create and sustain their identities as funs, their identities are as substantial as anyone else's who lives in a postmodern world.

One final observation concerns what I see as my contribution to theory, small though it may be. As far as my research has shown, no one, other than a passing reference in Fiske (1993), has explored the existence of and possibilities for funs. Part of the reason for this lack of attention may be that fandom is still such a new area of research. Another reason may be that funs have been mistakenly identified as fans. Nevertheless, my study asserts their existence as a separate cultural group, distinct from, but also integrally tied to fans. I would also add that there is a distinction between funs who actively "do things" with popular culture and non-funs, people who experience popular culture as part of their daily lives, such as anyone who watches television, goes to movies, reads novels, buys a
newspaper, or dresses in the latest fashion; funs work and play at making the popular culture experience a significant part of who they are, whereas non-funs often take their experiences with popular culture for granted and trivialize popular culture altogether.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Although fandom and fundom are symptomatic of a culture characterized by a bricolage of images from ceaseless intertextuality, the reordering of pre-existing texts, and a fragmented, decentralized, arbitrary society, the "emancipatory possibilities" of postmodern identity construction offer hope that empowerment is possible at a micro level. Fan and fun performances of the Candlelight Vigil, the Graceland Mansion tour, and souvenir shopping not only help keep the memory of Elvis alive but also provide fans and funs the opportunity to construct and enact their identities as fans and funs.

I can draw some general implications about performance based on this study. First, performers use performance to construct paradoxical roles for themselves. While some may see these contradictions as negative, or signs of insubstantiality, I believe that the emancipatory possibilities of paradoxical performances make room for positive and substantial identities in a postmodern culture. Second, whether recognized by the performer or not, performance is inherently paradoxical. Simply engaging in an act of performance marks the performer as simultaneously
"self" and "other." Third, emancipatory possibilities of performance may exist outside fandom, perhaps in all tourist activities. As Harrison (1991) notes:

Theme parks, medieval fayres and feasts, pop festivals, and "living" museums provide the opportunities to temporarily adopt identities which have new meanings for their participants. As part of postmodernism this dismemberment of group norms allows people to lead eclectic lives "unshackled by the legacy of tradition or collective expectation" and to respond freely to the market place. (159)

The empowering potentials of the performance of these tourist activities remain to be investigated.

As far as implications of my writing method go, I can think of two major issues that were raised while writing this project, both having to do with working within constraints, both academic and institutional. I enjoyed writing my post-ethnographies; I viewed them as a simultaneous performance of scholar-fun work and scholar-fun play. Although they were difficult to construct, I am pleased with the final product. As a scholar-fun, I was looking for a way to write nonlinear arguments about nonlinear experiences into the linear form of a dissertation. I tried to represent and experience the difference between linear ways of making academic arguments and nonlinear ways of experiencing the world. Many feminist critics have expressed a frustration with a privileged, masculinist view of analytical discourse that moves from claim to warrants to grounds to conclusion at the exclusion of other ways of thinking about and
experiencing the world. In my written representations of the performances
during International Elvis Tribute Week, I often attempted to use a
curvilinear and fragmented style of writing to express curvilinear and
fragmented ideas and experiences.

Another constraint within which I had to create my performances of
writing critical ethnography involves the institutional rules for writing
research to which I was bound. I saw my performance of writing as a
game; how could I write my often fragmented collages in a format that
would meet the approval of the graduate school's editor? If I were free to
construct these post-ethnographies without font restrictions, pagination
constraints, and layout limitations, this study would look very different
from what it does now and, I think, would yield different insights or
readings of the performances. One thing performance has taught me is
that form often dictates content. But one of Ulmer's purposes in using
mystery as a genre of academic writing was to allow the researcher the
freedom to be inventive, euretic. I feel that, although my own
inventiveness was constrained to a certain extent, I still managed to evoke
a sense of each performance, as well as advance an argument.

Beyond the constraints of writing this particular study I can offer a
more general assessment of post-ethnographic writing. Although there are
advantages to using a post-ethnographic method for writing case studies,
there are a few disadvantages, as well. One advantage that makes writing
a post-ethnography worthwhile is that, given the recent crises of representation and legitimation (Denzin 1997), a post-ethnography results in a more "dialogic" (Conquergood 1985) performance than a traditional ethnography. The ethnographer is not solely responsible for the effect of the finished product. S/he writes/assembles his/her written evocation of a culture in a particular instance of enactment, an instance that, from a postmodern perspective, cannot be "realistically" and "truthfully" "represented" in a fixed text, but must be co-constructed and performed when engaged by the reader/audience. Unfortunately, this also creates the first disadvantage; the reader is required to do more work, to be more active in the construction of the performance than s/he would when reading a traditional ethnography.

A second advantage of post-ethnography is the blurring between fact and fiction in the written text. The writer, as collageist/collector of preexisting ethnographic texts generated by the culture itself, seeks to achieve a written evocation of something that is political, ideological, and subjective by nature, the:

- glimpses and slices of the culture in action. Any given practice that is studied is significant because it is an instance of a cultural practice that happened in a particular time and place. This practice cannot be generalized to other practices; its importance lies in the fact that it instantiates a cultural practice, a cultural performance (story telling), and a set of shifting, conflictual cultural meanings. (Denzin 1997, 8)
A post-ethnography does not, however, allow the writer to make positivist truth claims about the culture, and may seem less "scientific," "scholarly," or "truthful" than a traditional ethnography. Although others might not agree, I do not view this as a disadvantage.

Based on my experience constructing this post-ethnography I would recommend that other writers try to construct their own. First, since I had the opportunity to experiment with several different genres in this study (narrative prose, screenplay, brochure, scrapbook, literature review, academic monograph), as an ethnographer I had to deal with the structural, formal, generic, and aesthetic conventions associated with each genre. I experienced firsthand the limitations of each genre; there were certain things I could not do and remain "true" to the genre. For example, in the screenplay, I had established a visual authority in which the visual images used in each scene often contested or subverted the authority of the verbal images (ie. James Scott being attacked by children or Schechner discussing dark play in a show bar). Quite often, my voice was heard in voice over creating a disembodied and absent authorial presence. If I had written the tour case study as some other genre, I might not have been able to achieve these effects. If I had followed the chronology of the tour rather than the chronology imposed by the fragmented scenes of the screenplay, my study might have evoked a different, but no less political or subjective account of the tour performance.
Second, I recommend it because it was fun. As Denzin (1997) notes, "We should not take ourselves too seriously. We should have fun doing what we are doing" (25). Too often scholarly writing assumes a form that is not only uninteresting to read but often ideologically oppressive. Writers who experiment with new and different ways of (re)presenting scholarly discourse might not only find increased readership but also find ways to "get the word out" to a broader audience than they traditionally reach. If the goal of research is to improve the world in some way by increasing knowledge or to effect a change in the real lives of nonacademics, then writing traditional, jargon-filled, theoretically dense analyses will not help scholars accomplish this goal. I am not saying that fragmented, fun-but-not-necessarily-easy-to-read, popular-genre-inspired writing will accomplish the goal either, but any attempt to make the "results" or process of scholarship more accessible to a general reader is a step in the right direction.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Based on my experience in creating this study I can suggest several avenues for further study, not only for myself but for others as well. I believe a more in-depth study of fun culture would provide more insights than I had the time or inclination to discover in this study. Also, more studies of specific instances of fan and fun activities could replicate or
challenge my findings in this study. I would be especially interested in other views of how power is manifested through fandom and fundom.

Additionally, research needs to be done concerning postmodern identity construction. Rather than try to create all-encompassing theories of human behaviors that try to decide once and for all whether postmodern identity is empowering or not, researchers need to investigate postmodern identity construction at specific sites. I have here but one example of how people use popular and consumer culture to construct their flexible and often paradoxical identities. What could be gained from examining how people use other types of popular culture activities to accomplish similar goals, such as comic book collecting, video renting, karaoke singing, swinging, monster truck rallying, or surfing the internet? Each of these activities needs to be explored ethnographically to determine to what extent participants are empowered or not in their performances of these behaviors.

Yet another area of research could involve rethinking tourism. I concur with Bowman (in press) who believes that if researchers looked at tourists as performers, rather than audiences at tourist sites, tourism itself would have a less negative connotation. Again, by considering the specific, micro situations of tourism as performance, emancipatory possibilities (or impossibilities) may be discovered.
I would like to add my voice to a call for performance scholarship that entails "a critique and performance of the half of the power ratio that is currently ignored--dominance" (Taft-Kaufman 1995, 229). I would suggest a research project involving an attempt to experience tourism from the "other" side of the tourist/attraction equation. According to Jill Taft-Kaufman, "'The Other' is not a fixed reality, but a dynamic, multifaceted relationship that takes experience to uncover and may be glimpsed only partially within roles that are often multiple and contradictory" (1995, 230). She further argues that current use of the term:

ignores significant differences within groups of people, implying timeless homogeneity among people who are continually changing. Patronizingly, it frames people from the perspective of dominant culture. Perhaps most dangerously, use of the term depoliticizes strategic discourse by assuming that material circumstances, history, and detail are not determinants of peoples' lives. (231)

So a research project that situates the ethnographer outside the "perspective of the dominant culture," would be a critical performance in which the ethnographer would achieve both subject and object status simultaneously by becoming the object of tourist gaze.

A FINAL NOTE

I was trying to think of a way to end this study that would be simultaneously classy and kitschy, so I conclude now with one of my favorite poems about Elvis, "Tribute Week in Memphis--August 16th," by Kristi Row (1994) of Shreveport, Louisiana:
I walk through the gates and up the long drive, although you are not here physically your spirit is alive.

Graceland stands tall, the place you called home, the only life inside is the spirits that roam.

As I look at the house, I can see it cry, wondering what happened to the life gone by.

Every fan here has a rose in hand, they are walking so slow, to your beloved Graceland.

They all seem to know exactly why they came, if you ask anyone they will all say the same.

You are the one they feel they know, your songs get them through when they are feeling low.

The tear on my cheek reflects how I feel, the love that I have is oh so real.

I couldn't have known you better, if I'd slept by your side, that's why I cry my tears like an ocean's tide.

Underneath the hot Memphis night, your fans line up with candles alight.

There are people here from far and near, with one thing in common, a big wet tear.

As I stand in line, I feel no breeze, only the silence of your big oak trees.

Their arms are outstretched with nothing to hold, they relive their memories of stories being told.

Crickets chirping is the only life around, they are trying to break the mournful silence with their happy sound.

the night is dark, as dark as can be, but God placed one small star, so that you could see.

It is the only window that I see around, this is your night Elvis, so watch with astound.

The flames from our candles can't reach where you are, but the love from our hearts might reach that star. (20)
REFERENCE LIST


Figgen, K. 1988. Personal interview. Memphis, TN.


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VITA

Daniel Weaver Heaton was born in Anderson, South Carolina, on July 6, 1964. He received his Associate of Arts in Theatre at Anderson College in 1984 where he graduated summa cum laude. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Theatre and English from Carson-Newman College in 1987 and graduated magna cum laude. In the Fall of 1987, he entered the graduate program at Louisiana State University in Speech Communication with a concentration in Performance Studies. After completing his Master of Arts degree at Louisiana State University in 1990, he decided to continue his education in the doctoral program there. Also, his decision to remain at Louisiana State University was prompted by the closeness he felt for the professors and students who had formed a second family for him.

Currently, Dan lives in Columbus, Ohio. He and his fiancee, Dr. Sharon Croft, both work in the Department of Speech and Communication Arts at Capital University. They plan to marry in May of 1998 so their cats, Baby, Hepburn, and Redfurred will no longer be bastards.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Daniel Weaver Heaton

Major Field: Speech Communication

Title of Dissertation: Postmodern Messiah: A Critical Ethnography of Elvis Presley as a Site of Performance

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

June 19, 1997
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Reliance on proximity can be explained by recalling that people associate objects, like persons, with other prominent objects around them. This helps people define a center by establishing borders, usually on either side, which guide movement to the center. Doing so is a basic way of constructing malleable categories as part of a system of navigation—social and physical—and thus of judging experience (12).

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A plethora of "officially" licensed material texts are available in UNLIMITED QUANTITIES in any of the dozen gift shops located in GRACELAND PLAZA. Some of the most popular items are:

**TCB Rhinestone Necklace**

"Taking Care of Business" was Elvis' motto and he was rarely seen without his own TCB necklace. His close friends were given similar pendants. This gold-tone replica has a 24" chain, spring clasp. Pendant approximately 2"; the TCB inlaid with 11 sparkling rhinestones.

075-5100.............$19.99 (Graceland Gifts 1992, 10)

**His Friends Called Him "Crazy"**

Elvis' friends lovingly called him "crazy." Gold-tone replica of Elvis' own ID bracelet, "Elvis" engraved on one side; underneath "crazy," Slide closure. 7 1/2" long.

075-1325.............$3.49 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)

**Elvis and the Lisa Marie Mug**

Elvis named his jet after his daughter, Lisa Marie. Screen print artwork depicts the Lisa Marie in flight and Elvis waving as he leaves the jet. Inscription reads "Elvis Presley/Taking Care of Business." Approx. 3 1/2" high. Ceramic.

040-3750.............$5.99 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)

**Graceland Paperweight**

Now you can own a piece of Elvis Presley's mansion grounds. A vial of soil has been collected from the Graceland property and encapsulated in lucite before an image of Elvis' famous home and gates. Graceland paperweight, blue background, reverse with descriptive paragraph and certification shipped in protective acetate cover.

085-1450.............$19.95 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 16)

where YOUR memories live again

There is no doubt Elvis enjoyed the social and financial benefits of his fame. He laughed and played. He shared his wealth with overwhelming unselfishness. He was blessed with loving parents and a beautiful wife and daughter. His joys were many. But his sacrifices were great. He must have felt an enormous responsibility to always deliver that God-given talent we couldn't get enough of. The legacy he left for those of us who choose to understand his life is one to be cherished. Getting to know Elvis is an opportunity for each of us to discover our own inhibitions, fears, insecurities, dreams, and successes. ELVIS is a reality. . . . I am 37 years old, the wife of a coal miner. I have a wonderful life. I have freedom. If ever I had the opportunity to meet Priscilla or Lisa, I would just invite them over for coffee and talk about the weather. I would wish them peace of mind and happiness with their families and in their lives for they too have given so much.

—Loni Curtis, fan
Price, Utah
(1993, 25-26)
*But Wait, There's More!*

**Elvis Attitude**

Four color screen print artwork of Elvis with wistful eyes; his signature underneath. Neon electric "vibes" emanate from and surround the man who MADE music. 50% cotton, 50% polyester. Machine wash, tumble dry. Ribbed crew neck, hemmed short sleeves, straight bottom. Made in U.S.A. Colors: sky blue, mint green, white (subject to availability). Sizes: S, M, L, XL.

151-9650..............$12.00 (Graceland Gifts 1992, 11)

**Elvis: 1954-1977 Photo Book**

During Elvis' lifetime, thousands of photographers, both professional and amateur, captured different Presley poses on film. Memphis photographer Jim Reid has a better collection than most and has shared part of it here. More than 40 pages. Paperback.

010-1100..............$10.00 (Graceland Gifts 1991, 14)

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*where YOUR memories live again*

I remember as do all of Elvis' fans all over the world exactly where I was on August 16, 1977. I think everyone, Elvis fan or not, that was old enough remembers that day. I don't think it is important how I reacted; everyone reacts differently to losing someone they love. What is important is that we all love Elvis just as much today as we did then. . . . I am lucky enough to be going to Memphis. There surrounded by other fans who understand your love for Elvis and being around Elvis' friends and family, you can feel Elvis love all around you. There is no place in the world I would rather be on August 16th than in Memphis sharing happy memories of Elvis with our Elvis family from all over the world. Somehow I know that during the Candleight Service Elvis is watching down on us and he is receiving our love back that he gave us so unselfishly.

—Karen Oberender, fan

(1991, 43)
There is more to shopping at Graceland Plaza than meets the eye. Shopping for souvenirs involves the COMPLEX CULTURAL ACTIVITY OF CONSUMPTION. Within a capitalist consumer culture:

the very idea of consumption itself has to be set back into the social process, not merely looked upon as a result or objective of work. Consumption has to be recognized as an integral part of the same social system that accounts for the drive to work, itself a part of the social need to relate to other people, and to have mediating materials for relating to them (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 4).

Shopping, then, constitutes the means by which consumers "relate to other people." Souvenirs provide the "mediating materials" used by consumers to relate to each other.

As good of Bronner (1986) says:

Analysis of material culture simply as behavior would be misleadingly mechanical. Culture would merely be the packaging... But when unifying and conflicting social effects, taking in the often-unforeseen political and ethical meanings of productive and consumptive activity, become involved, then behavior becomes cultural. Then it is praxis (21).

So when fans and funs shop, they are enacting their political meanings of consumptive activity. Some literally buy their way into culture. Others consume images for free and thus enact a different political relationship to consumption (NO PURCHASE NECESSARY) in which they perform as a member of fan or fun culture by shopping, but they retain the power over EPE by choosing not to spend money.

where YOUR memories live again
I'm 29 now and truly believe that I've heard, read and seen everything that has ever been recorded, printed and filmed on Elvis... In The Illustrated-Elvis, written by W.A. Harman, some wonderful descriptions of Elvis are entailed. When speaking of the way Elvis affected his Teen Audience, he says, "the is a Led Zeppelin band-slash-thrash of their boredom; a cool, dangerous and very sexy animal who transposes them briefly to heaven." His description of Elvis' singing style, "he takes pure country songs and then rape's them with the blues; he takes the Blues and refines them into Pop songs. This in itself is quite an achievement."

Elvis was very intelligent. He had a unique grasp of the psychology of an audience. He was tall, dark and magically handsome. He had beautiful, smoldering, velvet eyes, the most sensual smile... He was perfectly proportioned. No one looks as good as Elvis in Karate Suit... A leader of trendsetters in music, fashion, hair styles, and personalities.

He was the most contradictory person that I've ever seen in my life, but I really feel that I understand him and his way of thinking.

-Cara Shiff, fan
(1993, 27)
and fans shop because they enjoy the
fers shop because they use the
means for understanding why they
are a particular culture. For example,
and in the "TCB" pendant offers fans a
Elvis's practical side:

- took care of business
- was generous and frequently
- had a sense of style

The "TCB" INSIGNIA blazes across items such as:
cups&thimbles&beer coasters&-shirts&bone
china& beach towels&satin jackets&Christmas
ornaments&collector plates&playing cards&so
much more

—even constant reminders of Elvis's practicality,
generosity, and fun-loving manner.

Some sort of “gathering” around the self
and the group—the assemblage of a
material “world,” the marking-off of a
subjective domain that is not “other”—is
probably universal. All such collections
embody hierarchies of value, exclusions,
rule-governed territories of the self. But
the notion that this gathering involves
the accumulation of possessions, the
idea that identity is a kind of wealth (of
objects, knowledge, memories,
experience), is surely not universal.

In the West, however, collecting has
long been a strategy
for
the deployment
of a possessive self, culture, and
authenticity.

Children's collections are
revealing in this light a boy's
accumulation of miniature cars, a girl's
dolls, a summer vacation “natural
museum” (with labeled stones and
shells, a hummingbird in a bottle), a
treasured bowl filled with the bright
shavings of crayons. In these small
rituals we observe the channelling of
obsession, an exercise in how to make
the world one's own; to gather things
around oneself tastefully, appropriately.
The inclusion in all collections reflect
wider cultural rules—of rational
taxonomy, of gender, of aesthetics. An
excessive, sometimes even rapacious
need to
have
is transformed into rule-
governed, meaningful desire. Thus the
self that must possess but cannot have it
all learns to select, order, classify in
hierarchies—to make “good collections”
(Clifford 1988, 218).

For hard core fans, to make a purchase at
GRACELAND PLAZA is to make a commitment
to the official story of Elvis, thus insuring that his or
her collection will be “good.”

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INTERESTING PEOPLE...

Although the material texts found at GRACELAND PLAZA are seen by many as the main attraction, you haven't seen ANYTHING until you've seen the PEOPLE at GRACELAND PLAZA:

*FANS
*FUNS
*WORKERS
*TOURISTS
*LOCALS
*ETHNOGRAPHERS

PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE—
some in motion, some at rest. Benches are lined with middle-aged women wearing summer attire, tired parents trying to keep up with small, ice cream-eating children, and bored-looking teenagers on family vacation. People mill about as if waiting for something. Some carry bags full of Elvis goodies; some fan themselves with tour brochures; some wander around constantly looking at everyone else (as if the mansion were not enough of an attraction).

...WITH THINGS TO SAY

Verbal texts consist of the various oral and written narratives about Elvis produced by fans, funs, and EPE:

* stories & biographies & "true" encounter narratives &
* sightseeing
* stories & poems & novel
* & myth & diaries &
* journal articles & newspaper
* articles & magazine articles &
* cookbooks & documentaries & jokes & cart
* oons & tour guide
* narratives & local folklore & gossip & fan letters

where YOUR memories live again

Hi! My name is Adam. I'm 18 years old and have been "Elvis Crazy" for about a year and a half. It's hard to believe I'm a Presley fan. Sometimes I'll be sitting in my room admiring the pictures of Elvis above my stereo and think, "Wow...I'm an Elvis Presley Fan! I must be crazy. What will my friends whose heroes are Metallica think?" Well it turns out they thought I was a nut case but they respected my taste or more or less accepted it. I was searching for a new kind of music when one day I was listening to the oldies station and "Don't Be Cruel" came on. It was the first time I didn't change the station when Elvis came on. I started singing with it and had those legs going. Oh, yeah! That was what I was looking for. Then I started reading every book and listening to every song I could get my hands on. Elvis' song is like a Lays Potato chip, you can't have just one! Also, I've met a bunch of great people. I'm in the T.C.B. in West Georgia Fan Club and the Special Moments for Priscilla Fan Club. I just can't help believin' I've been touched by my KING!—Adam "King" Ton, fan
Knoxville, TN
(1993, 41)
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE

You can spend a couple of hours or all day at Graceland—there's so much to see and do! Our visitor center offers two restaurants—one with burgers and fries served in a nostalgic diner atmosphere and one with Southern home style cooking and a salad bar. There are also several gift shops offering T-shirts, recordings, videos, and Elvis collectibles of all kinds, making for great adventures in shopping. Then, of course, there are the Graceland tours and attractions, for which tickets may be purchased individually or in a package. Admission for children under four is free for all attractions.

(Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992)

Whatever performance YOU choose to participate in at GRACELAND PLAZA, you will be always be A CONSUMER.
 TEMPORAL BLURING

Walk around the GRACELAND PLAZA; you'll notice an Elvis impersonator and his family. Nothing so unusual about seeing an Elvis impersonator. In fact you CAN'T WALK THREE FEET WITHOUT SEEING AN ELVIS IMPERSONATOR during International Elvis Tribute Week. Perhaps one particular impersonator will draw your attention because of his "odd" appearance. He'll have "Vegas years" hair (circa 1972), definitely a "Last Days" body (1977), and an "Early years" pink tasseled jacket and black and white saddle shoes (1955). He will be MIXING THE ESTABLISHED TEMPORAL DEMARCATIONS OF ELVIS. This temporal blurring is the major rhetorical effect of shopping at GRACELAND PLAZA.

The more YOU walk around the more YOU notice other instances of this mixing of temporal representations:

"Vegas years" furniture in the living room (1968)
"photos of Elvis and Nixon (1972) beside photos of Elvis in the Army (late 60's)
"biographies by various authors, each claiming to tell the real story of Elvis
"snippets of conversations of people telling each other about Elvis as if he were still alive
the "early years" song, "Young and Beautiful," played in one part the pavilion and within earshot the "latter days" song, "In the Ghetto," can be heard from somewhere else.

Elvis Presley Automobile Museum
(Adults $4.50, Children 4-12 $2.75)
Like no car museum you've ever seen! It's all indoors, but you walk down a landscaped, curbed, tree-lined "highway", past colorful exhibits of vehicles owned and enjoyed by Elvis—his famous 1955 pink Cadillac, 1955 purple Cadillac convertible, 1956 Continental Mark II, 1971 and 1973 Stutz Blackhawk, Harley Davidson motorcycles, three-wheeled supercycles, and more. Along with these 20 or more vehicles are personal items like his leather cycle jackets, gasoline credit cards, driver's license, and more. The centerpiece of the museum is a recreation of an old-time drive-in movie, where you sit in authentic 1957 Chevy seats and watch a specially produced 8-minute film, with the sound coming from real drive-in speaker boxes. The tour is self-guided and self-paced. The auto museum is located at the south end of the visitor center plaza. (Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992)

Candlelight Vigil
The most beautiful and moving of all events of Elvis Week: Evening of August 15 at Graceland. The gates of Graceland Mansion will open at 10:00 PM for anyone who wishes to walk up the driveway to Elvis' grave site and back, carrying a candle inquist; respectfully.

The gates will remain open until all who wish to participate have done so. A brief opening ceremony produced by the Elvis Country Fan Club will be presented at the gates at the start of the vigil. No admission charge. Please check at the Graceland visitor center for important guidelines and information regarding the vigil (Elvis Week '92, 1992).

if you don't like the official performances offered at GRACELAND PLAZA, try one of your own:

One of the commonest practices of the consumer is window shopping, a consumption of images, an imaginative if not imaginary use of the language of commodities that may or may not turn into the purchase of actual commodities.

Looking is as much a means of social control as speaking. . . Looking makes meanings; it is therefore a means of altering social relations, of inserting oneself into the social order in general, and of controlling one's immediate social relations in particular (Fiske 1989:34-35).

where YOUR memories live again

My dad used to look like Elvis. I guess that's why I've always loved Elvis. Every little girl thinks her dad is a king, but Elvis was the real one.

My earliest memory of Elvis is when I was four, pretending my piano bench was a horse and listening to Elvis sing "Lonesome Cowboy." After that I remember watching the Alpha From Hawaii special. My whole family gathered around to watch. I was seven at the time. . . . My next memory is of August 16, 1977. Most people remember when they were when JFK was shot. I remember losing Elvis.

I was eleven years old and spending the night at a friend's house. I walked by their tv and saw a picture of Elvis in the top right corner.

Then the newsmen said that Elvis was dead. I had to go home because I couldn't stop crying. For the next two weeks all I did was cry whenever I thought of Elvis. It was like losing my Daddy die.

I remember watching the funeral. . . . After that, I gathered all of my Elvis things and put them in a box to save with all the memories of him. . . . Since then, I've started collecting anything to do with Elvis. I even went to Memphis last summer to visit Graceland. It was wonderful and very peaceful. And, yes, I cried as I put a rose on Elvis' grave and I enjoyed his last walk.

Deanne Shepere
Huntington Beach, CA
(Feb. 1993: 40)

AS YOU LEAVE THE MUSEUM, YOU ENTER A GIFT SHOP

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Visit Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee. Stroll through Graceland Mansion, the lavish Elvis Presley Automobile Museum, Elvis' Lisa Marie Jet and more. Step back in time. Walk through the amazing life and career of the greatest entertainment superstar the world has ever known, through several decades of American culture, and down the private avenues of your own unique memories (Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992).

Elvis Presley is more than his brilliant talent, great looks, unique style, sex appeal, and overwhelming charisma. More than his warmth, humor, generosity, human compassion, and mortal imperfections. More than his gold records, hit movies, history-making television appearances, and triumphant concert tours. More than his sideburns, swiveling hips, flashy clothes, and mischievous grin (Elvis Presley's Graceland 1992).

where YOUR memories live again. Graceland Plaza is such a vital part of the performances of fans and funs. It's more than just a location, more than a place. It's the borderland where these two cultures overlap. It's the battlefield for people who are empowered through the act of shopping. It's where the power bloc meets the people. Here we have the classic battle between the controller and the controlled. EPE tries to control the behaviors of fans and funs several ways: through the layout of Graceland Plaza; having every museum or attraction exit into a gift shop; through profiting "official" Elvis merchandise as opposed to the unofficial goods made by fans or "unauthorized dealers"; by presenting only merchandise that promotes a positive image of Elvis; by raising the prices of merchandise during International Elvis Tribute Week; by packaging Elvis's life into a series of quantifiable "tours" designed to give fans an "authentic" Elvis experience; and by selling pre-packaged and pre-lived memories of Elvis to people who are fully capable of making their own memories. But fans and funs actively work and play to control their identities as fans and funs. They can sample the pieces of Elvis they want. They can choose to buy or make or imagine texts of Elvis that help them construct their identities as fans and funs, no matter what EPE says or does. The performance of shopping at Graceland Plaza is a specific instance of how fan and fun cultural identities manifest themselves in a postmodern consumer society. In many ways, Graceland Plaza is just like any other tourist trap shopping area: there are tons of kitschy souvenirs to buy or look at; it's labelled and copyrighted; etc. But it's also unlike any other tourist trap I've ever seen. Yes, it's a piece of economic capital, but the cultural capital that is exchanged there is more important.

In this one place, two cultures meet annually, identities are integrally linked to the act of shopping, postmodern consumer consumption includes not just stuff, but images, performances, personas, and games. Dan, ethnographer Columbus, OH

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