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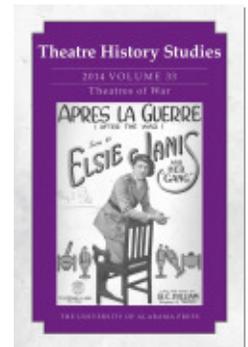
Marilyn Monroe: Soldier in Greasepaint

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Marilyn Monroe

Soldier in Greasepaint

—KRISTI GOOD

A favorite story from my childhood was told by my great-uncle Jack Forsha, who served in the Korean War in the same unit with his identical twin brother, Jim. At family gatherings, Jack would pass around the photos he had taken of Marilyn Monroe during her post-war Korean USO show in February 1954, as well as the book he had purchased when he realized it showed a picture of Marilyn onstage with him and Jim just a few rows away in the audience. As a graduate student learning about performance theory and cognitive science, I began to wonder about his personal experience with this cultural icon.

Jack remembers sitting and chatting with Jim and several other servicemen when Monroe arrived at K-47 base in Chunchon, Korea, with her military escort. Jack and Jim had been stationed at K-47 with approximately one thousand other airmen since May 1953, just two months before the cease-fire agreement. Talk of a cease-fire had been going on for two years, but it was not until July 27, 1953, that the United Nations Command, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Chinese People's Volunteers signed the official Armistice Agreement. The war is widely considered to have concluded with the signing of the Armistice Agreement, and actions such as the establishment of the Demilitarized Zone and the exchange of prisoners of war and deceased soldiers occurred following the cease-fire without an official peace treaty. In order to keep the men occupied after the cease-fire had been arranged, K-47 base organized the men into sports teams that would compete with other bases in tournaments. Jack admitted, with a chuckle, that he spent most of his time in Korea playing baseball and basketball. When they heard the news of the upcoming USO show, Jack

said, “We were buffaloed-over that Marilyn was coming. I didn’t know what to expect. I had never met a celebrity.”¹

Sitting with Jack and Jim were Gerald Kasper and his identical twin brother, Robert; the Forshas and the Kaspers were two of four pairs of twins at the base. Jack recalls that when Monroe arrived, the escort was not allowing her to sign autographs because she was scheduled to attend an officers’ dinner. Monroe stopped to talk to the twins, however, because Gerald had recently broken his leg after falling out of a truck. Monroe chatted with the men for a moment or two, learning their names and signing Gerald’s cast. Jack remembers at dinner that night that Monroe “table-hopped” to spend time with the men, rather than sitting at the head table reserved for officers.

At the official USO Camp Show performance, Jack and Jim were approximately five rows away from the stage—an impressive feat, given the number of military personnel in attendance. Monroe came to the edge of the stage after performing her songs to shake hands and sign autographs. After a few moments, she began to walk offstage, but turned back when she noticed that Jack had just taken a picture of her from the fifth row. She said, “Did you get that, Jack?” and he replied, “No!” (see fig. 1). She returned to the edge of the stage and motioned for him to approach. He moved to the first row and she posed for him before leaving the stage (see fig. 2).²



Figure 1. Marilyn Monroe asks, “Did you get that, Jack?” USO Show, Korea, 1954. Photo by Jack Forsha.

MARILYN MONROE



Figure 2. Marilyn Monroe poses at the USO Show, Korea, 1954. Photo by Jack Forsha.

Many of us have stories about encounters with a celebrity, and in a time when social media and fan conventions like Comic-Con can bring us into close proximity and interaction with our favorite stars, it is unusual to find someone who has not shared a moment with a famous icon. The experiences of the U.S. soldiers in Korea, however, seem to indicate moments that are much more intimate and meaningful than what we come into contact with today. The project initiated by the United Services Organization that made these experiences possible is a very important factor in investigating the nature of these celebrity interactions. Was the USO simply trying to give the soldiers a bit of fun, a brush with a celebrity, or was there a more complex agenda behind the USO Camp Shows that culminated in unique encounters, such as those experienced by the Forshas?

Monroe's status as a Hollywood star in 1954 is undeniable, but the nature of her celebrity in general is a mysterious concept. Many biographers have attempted to capture the qualities of Monroe's life that made her so famous. Joseph Roach deftly tackles the elusive nature of celebrity in his 2007 book *It*, which serves here as a tool to explore the effect of Monroe's celebrity on the public, rather than on her life story. The project of the USO and the experiences of the U.S. soldiers in Korea are important parts of this research. To understand those experiences, the final section of my essay deals with cognitive science theories

of audience engagement. I employ cognitive science to examine the relationship between audience and performer in light of the unusual circumstances of Monroe's live performance for the U.S. troops, specifically her oscillation between celebrity and ordinary volunteer; she was not only performing live for the first time in her life, but she was also interacting with the servicemen away from the stage. By investigating Monroe's role as a USO performer in 1954 Korea through the use of Roach's theory of celebrity and cognitive theories on audience engagement, I examine the relationship between spectator and performance within a wartime context in a new light. Moreover, I argue that the USO created "scripted" performances in order to encourage feelings of nationalism within the troops in Korea during the winter of 1954.

The academic pursuit of making sense of the life of Marilyn Monroe is a daunting one. There are countless biographies and tell-all books that claim to have singular ownership of the true story of Monroe's life, psyche, and career. Any given anecdote about her life could exist in three distinctly disparate forms in as many books. In the end, this study is not *about* Monroe. It is, rather, about the *effect* of Monroe and how cognitive science can help us to speak with more scientific validity about that effect. The application of cognitive science to performance studies is a comparatively recent practice. The traditional practice of employing theory in an academic analysis may result in holes and questions, but cognitive science can often help fill in the gaps. The word "theory" connotes a generally accepted hypothesis that can continue to be tested by predicting future outcomes. The information we have about the human mind grows by leaps and bounds every day due to the rigorous and methodical exploration carried out by scientists around the globe. The information that cognitive studies yields has been systematically observed, tested, and measured so that it moves farther and farther from theory and closer to fact. By implementing both theory and scientific fact in this essay, I hope to close some of the gaps that my questions leave about the reception of Marilyn Monroe during her tour in Korea, specifically regarding how the USO succeeded in creating a "scripted" performance to promote a nationalistic agenda and what the experience of interacting with a celebrity under these conditions meant to the servicemen.

In 1954, Marilyn Monroe was exploding onto the Hollywood scene. She was quickly becoming a popular cultural icon and made headlines, once again, by marrying baseball star Joe DiMaggio. Yet she was unknown as a stage performer. Even though she would study with the Strasbergs at the Actors Studio in New York, she used her actor training in the movies and not in the theatre. The USO tour was an impromptu arrangement made while on her honeymoon in Japan. According to biographer Donald Spoto, the couple's arrival in Tokyo produced

excitement in the news and prompted General John E. Hall to contact Monroe the next day with a request to perform for the troops, provided that proper government clearances and USO documents could be furnished.³ Fred Lawrence Guiles writes that when DiMaggio objected, Monroe responded, "But it's the least anyone can do."⁴ Within two weeks, the necessary documents were in hand, and Monroe was on her way to Korea for her first live performance.

How was Monroe received at this live USO show? What were the experiences of soldiers like Jack and Jim Forsha who came into contact with her? What did it really mean for a serviceman to watch a glamorous movie star like Marilyn Monroe perform live onstage and then have the opportunity simply to chat with or be served dinner by this same celebrity? The USO made these personal experiences possible, and after seventy years of providing Camp Shows and other amenities for our servicemen and women around the globe, that success raises some questions. What techniques were the USO using to create a celebrity encounter that was more than just a brush with fame? And to what end?

Roach's book *It* takes a theoretical look at the nature of celebrity and helps to explain encounters such as the one the Forsha brothers had with Monroe in Korea. As he writes, "'It' is the power of apparently effortless embodiment of contradictory qualities simultaneously: strength *and* vulnerability, innocence *and* experience, and singularity *and* typicality among them."⁵ These are the qualities that most biographies of Monroe attempt to uncover, with varying results. More important than pinning down the particular qualities of "It" that Marilyn possessed is the examination of the effects of those qualities on her audience.

Roach outlines three particular aspects of the effect of "It." These are conditions that exist outside of the personal qualities that a person with "It" exhibits. Public intimacy is the first of these conditions, and it refers to the illusion of availability. This occurs when celebrities are constructed as products of the media; their appearance on magazine covers, the movie screen, the Internet, and newspapers produces a false sense of intimacy with spectators.⁶ Images of Monroe are ever-present today, but in the years leading up to 1954 she was just reaching her peak as a Hollywood celebrity. She began playing small roles in 1948, and by the end of 1953 she had over twenty films to her credit. While many of her early onscreen roles consisted of walk-on parts with one or two lines, the later films leading up to 1953 would prove to be milestones in her career: *Monkey Business*, *Niagara*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *How to Marry a Millionaire*.⁷ The public saw Monroe regularly in the magazines, especially as her screen time increased in her movies. She appeared on the covers and interior pages of *Look*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, and *Time*, as well as numerous others publications.

She was featured on the cover of *Life* for the first time in April 1952. She would occupy this coveted space six more times between then and her death in 1962.⁸

Closely tied with the idea of public intimacy is Roach's second condition of synthetic experience. Synthetic experience, he writes, must "answer the human need, regulated by both curiosity and fear, to experience life vicariously as well as directly."⁹ This condition, then, relies on the consumption of those products that enhance public intimacy. Fans purchase movie tickets, read magazines and interviews, and bedeck their computer desktops with images in order to feel closer to and understand more about a celebrity. Synthetic experience feeds into and intensifies the illusion of availability that public intimacy provides. For the general public in the 1950s, two events in particular drove these conditions of synthetic experience to a new level for Monroe's celebrity status: the nude calendar photos of 1949 and the first issue of *Playboy* magazine in December 1953.

In May 1949, Monroe sat for a collection of nude photographs in the studio of Tom Kelley that were to be used in a calendar. There are various stories regarding Monroe's hesitation to sit for the photographs and her eventual capitulation: her car had been repossessed, she was late with the rent, she wasn't eating enough.¹⁰ Regardless of the specific reason, the assumption is that she submitted out of poverty. Monroe was still relatively unknown as an actress at the time, so the intention was not for a celebrity nude photo. In fact, she had not yet developed her signature style. The photo, entitled "Golden Dreams," of the naked woman sprawled across red velvet, shows golden-auburn, shoulder-length hair—not the bleached-blond short hairdo associated with the iconic Marilyn Monroe. Marilyn's notability in the movie industry was only beginning to take off when the calendar appeared three years later in 1952, and people recognized her in the nude photos immediately.

One year later, in December 1953, Hugh Hefner released the first issue of *Playboy* magazine with the photos Kelley had taken of Monroe in 1949. Kelley had paid Monroe fifty dollars for the nude photography session, but the photos did not belong to him or to her. Hefner purchased the negatives of the photographs from the company who produced the calendar and printed them without Monroe's permission.¹¹ The nude calendar was now an item of secondary importance, being only tacitly understood as a synthetic experience of Monroe, since it did not bear her name and was not specifically marketed as a Marilyn Monroe "product." The same photo in *Playboy*, however, was explicitly tied to Monroe, and its intensity in terms of public intimacy skyrocketed when Hefner made it readily available for consumption on every newsstand across the country.

Roach concludes his trio of conditions with the It-Effect, or the "deifying reception" of these synthetic experiences.¹² The particular It-Effect under

examination here is Monroe's live performance for the USO in Korea. As previously noted, while Monroe was a singer and dancer, one did not buy tickets to see her at a theatre; she was a product of the silver screen and the magazine cover (*and* centerfold), always appearing in a mediatized form. This synthetic construction heightens the impact of her live appearance on the USO stage and her personal interactions with servicemen away from the stage because the illusion of availability was intensified through the rarity of her physical presence. Roach identifies the It-Effect with a certain quality called effervescence, writing that "the very thought of the proximity of It has triggered the exhilaration of the ensemble," and likening it to the "crush at a rock concert or other celebrity gala."¹³ The feeling of effervescence—the exhilaration and excitement of the crowd—would have begun when it was clear that Monroe would be visiting the bases in Korea and increased when she arrived in person. The crowds began to gather before her arrival and became even more unruly at the sight of her.

Monroe's live appearance incited riots at many of the ten locations she visited on her four-day tour, a testament to Roach's idea of the It-Effect. Various film clips and footage from the tour show hundreds upon thousands of men in uniform packed against one another wherever Monroe appears: descending from helicopters, riding in jeeps, walking through camps, and—undoubtedly—while on stage. A brief clip from British Pathé's website shows a military police officer admonishing and gesturing to a crowd of men who seem to have pushed too close to the stage, with thousands of other men swarming behind them.¹⁴ Other footage shows Marilyn and her escort in the middle of a crowd of soldiers with cameras. As Marilyn attempts to make her way to a nearby helicopter, the mass cannot disperse, because the men are packed in around her so tightly that she is barely able to squeeze through.¹⁵

Hanson Baldwin was the Pulitzer Prize-winning military editor for the *New York Times*. He openly complained in the *Times* about the uproar caused by Monroe's visit to the troops in Korea, criticizing Army Secretary Robert Stevens and Chief of Staff General James Ridgway for it. Baldwin wrote in 1954: "Correct the weakness in service morale epitomized by the visit of Miss Monroe to Korea. On two occasions during the visit of the motion picture actress, troops rioted wildly and behaved like bobby-soxers in Time Square, not like soldiers proud of their uniform."¹⁶ These incidents appear to originate solely from the effervescence felt in conjunction with the presence of a celebrity—the It-Effect—rather than any of Monroe's particular actions. Actress Terry Moore caused a stir when she performed in Korea with Bob Hope in 1953, wearing only an ermine-fur bathing suit.¹⁷ Unlike Monroe—whose mere appearance in baggy army fatigues was the catalyst for unruly behavior—Moore created a scene because of her racy

attire. This was not appropriate according to USO standards, as the USO standard of decorum sought to prevent disruptions at any cost.

The USO had been disbanded after World War II with the notion that, since the war was over, the purpose of the organization had been fulfilled. With the rise of the conflict in Korea, the USO re-formed to continue their original mission: “to bolster and maintain the morale of America’s servicemen and women.”¹⁸ Regardless of the changing decades, the emotional needs of men in combat had not changed. The Camp Shows in World War II had been a major method of boosting morale, and the expectations for the USO Camp Shows were high. The National Association of Broadcasters extended its code of ethics to the shows, and the former national chairman of the Code Committee of the National Association of Broadcasters, Earl J. Glade, commented on this code in 1943. “An audience of four thousand or more males wants hearty, punchy, he-man entertainment, but that doesn’t mean that it must be dirty or nasty... Most boys coming into camps now are teen-aged. They are nervous, impressionable, lonely, and (sometimes even hospitalized) for nothing more serious than nostalgia. They are easily shocked and react badly to any sordidness in their entertainment.”¹⁹ In a letter home by an unidentified female USO performer, the sentiments are echoed on a more personal level: “Don’t ever underestimate [the GI] by thinking all he wants is a leg show and dirty cracks. He talks and listens to ‘men talk’ day in and day out. Every woman back home wears a halo now and those who represent her had better keep theirs on too.”²⁰ And in a pamphlet published by USO Camp Shows during World War II, seasoned performers offered advice to new “trouper” on their first circuit. “The most important baggage is your stage wardrobe. A GI doesn’t want to see you in slacks, and he’s not interested in your uniform. He wants to see you look like the girls back home on an important Saturday night date. Remember that, and take your best clothes with you.”²¹ These two statements suggest that the USO was advocating a particular image of women. The first paints a picture of a wholesome, nonsexualized woman, a saintly ideal, perhaps a mother or sister figure. The second points specifically to the idea of the sweetheart, a woman who is more alluring in her date dress than a mother or sister, but still not painted in a sexually inappropriate way.

The standards of the Camp Shows and the USO’s expectations of decorum were not any different in the Korean War. In a collection of her essays—in an entry called “Korean Serenade”—Marilyn Monroe recounts moments of her whirlwind tour of Korea. She remembers singing “Do It Again” for wounded soldiers in a hospital. The officer in charge of her tour said she had to sing a “classy” song instead. “But ‘Do It Again’ is a classy song,” she said. “It’s a George Gershwin song.” He agreed to the performance, but only after she suggested changing the

words to “Kiss Me Again.” At her first stage performance for the troops, Monroe had second thoughts about another of her songs, “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend.” She wrote, “It seemed like the wrong thing to say to soldiers in Korea, earning only soldiers’ pay. Then I remembered the dance I did after the song. It was a cute dance. I knew they would like it.”²² While Monroe traveled from base to base in military-issued clothing, she wore her best “Saturday Night Date” outfit on stage. It appears as though she consoled herself with the idea that any message that could be misconstrued on stage as a political statement would be forgiven if she presented a more alluring and carefree image.²³

For all the care the USO took in providing quality, clean entertainment, they won the admiration of countless servicemen and women. What was it about these performances that had such an impact on the troops? The cognitive science used in Bruce McConachie’s book *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* is an effective tool for determining what could have been happening in the brains of the U.S. servicemen when they came into contact with USO performances in general and Marilyn Monroe in particular. By examining the scientific workings behind these human reactions, we can better understand how the USO was able to reinvigorate the weary soldiers and urge them to continue their duty with a renewed sense of nationalism. McConachie specifically points to human memory as one aspect of human cognition, among others, that enables audience engagement.²⁴

In his book *The Haunted Stage*, Marvin Carlson writes, “We are able to ‘read’ new works...only because we recognize within them elements that have been recycled from other structures of experience that we have experienced earlier.”²⁵ Carlson’s explanation is a theoretical version of the cognitive science behind memory. While there are differing theories of memory in the world of neuroscience, some are more viable than others. The metaphor of memory as a dropbox or computer storage has been popular for many years, but McConachie rightly assesses that this metaphor can lead to many problems concerning ideas of precoding and recall. He prefers Gerald Edelman’s idea of “constructive recategorization.”²⁶ In constructive recategorization, a person matches a current contextual signal with a prior signal that has already been encoded in the brain. “A person is able to remember such things because those previous actions prompted the brain to make alterations so that a similar signal at a later time would engage a similar response. As the brain continues to remake itself in response to experience, it reallocates different neuronal groups and synapses among the several billions of neurons available.”²⁷

If we see a chair or a dog or a familiar person in front of us, we do not search our brains in order to match the image that we see to an image that we have

“stored.” Instead, through constructive recategorization, the chair or dog or familiar person we encounter sets off a neuronal firing pattern that triggers the last encounter with a similar object. So, if we see a chair made out of metal and our previous experience has always been with chairs made out of wood, we can still recognize it as a chair because of the similarity between the two neuronal firing patterns. The original signal for the wooden chair will be reencoded when we encounter the chair made out of metal. The next time we come upon a chair made out of unusual material such as hockey sticks or cardboard or beer cans, the same process will occur again.

This process of recategorization can also be illustrated in the accompanying photograph from Julia M. H. Carson’s book *Home Away from Home: The Story of the USO*. The photograph shows a dock in front of a towering boat fully laden with servicemen (see fig. 3).²⁸ The grainy photo is a testament to what the USO was trying to accomplish. The female singer stands on a small “stage” represented by a wooden skid, a crudely constructed platform only six inches off the ground. In fact, it does not even seem constructed at all. Several smaller sections of skid appear haphazardly stacked in the foreground of the photograph, which give the impression that the performers chose the skid with the largest surface area. If the singer were simply standing on the ground with a microphone, there would be fewer associations for the spectatorial brains to make.

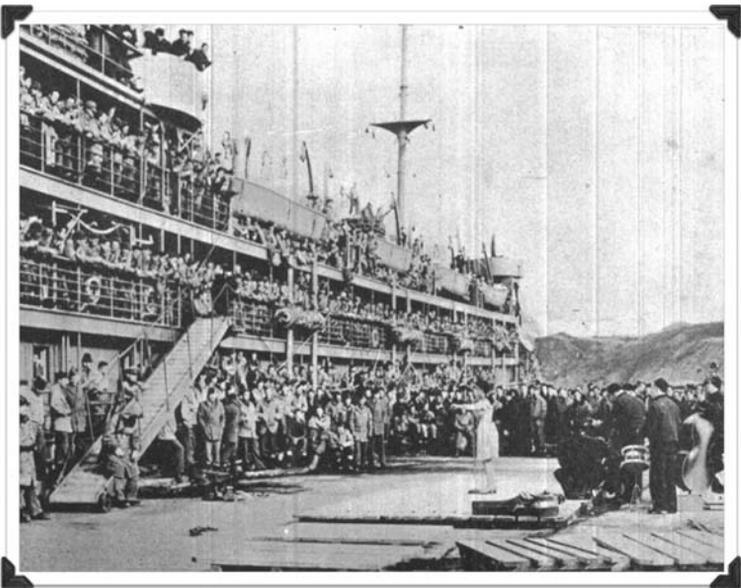


Figure 3. USO Camp Show. From Julia M. H. Carson’s *Home Away from Home: The Story of the USO*.

The skid itself is the important factor in arousing the neuronal firing patterns in the audience: a skid is a raised surface, a raised surface is a platform, a platform is like a stage, this skid is like the stages back home in Anywhere, U.S.A. Cognitive scientists point out that we are not conscious of this process; it happens quickly and involuntarily. The contextual signal of the crude “stage” prompts the brains of the servicemen present to engage with the previously encoded signal of any stage they may have encountered in their civilian life—since it is unlikely they would have attended local theaters or performances while deployed—whether at the fairgrounds, a musical concert, theatrical production, or public-speaking event. This is not the only kind of temporary stage that the USO created, and, in fact, the word “stage” took on an entirely new meaning, as car hoods and truck beds were also frequently used for performers in remote military outposts.²⁹ The effort of creating a makeshift stage, no matter how simple, was the USO’s way of creating a structure that immediately and intuitively aroused a memory of stages and performances back home.

This illustration segues into McConachie’s assertion that “all theatres come to spectators freighted with a history and culture that will partly control how spectators look at performers.”³⁰ The memory of home sparked by a crude makeshift theatre and the standards of the USO controlled how the men in Korea looked at Marilyn Monroe. The USO did its best to re-create the idea of home to boost the spirits of the soldiers: All-American music, All-American movies, All-American performers, All-American humor. Lieutenant James F. Orley of the Second U.S. Infantry Division in Korea wrote a letter to the editor of *Life* magazine in response to Hanson Baldwin’s aforementioned critique of the servicemen’s behavior: “Since the sudden switch from fighting to training and never-ending inspections in the cold Manchurian winds, our morale has ebbed. Miss Monroe’s visit was the World Series, the Fourth of July and the Mardi Gras rolled in one. Not many of the famous have come over to see us. It took The Blonde, who looked so fresh, healthy and American, to raise our spirits and make us feel like men again. God bless her.”³¹ Orley perfectly describes the ideal image of a USO woman: an All-American 4th of July with a dash of Mardi Gras.

Most importantly, as seen from the advice given by World War II USO “trouper,” the USO promoted the image of the Girl Back Home. Jack Forsha responded emphatically to a question about the 1953 *Playboy* that featured Monroe’s 1949 nude calendar photos, immediately recalling the red velvet background. He said one of his friends at the base had the magazine, but when the airman asked Monroe to autograph it, her escort refused to allow it.³² One might argue, via Roach, that the airman was attempting to increase the illusion of

availability and his own synthetic experience by adding Monroe's autograph to the nude photo. The photo would not only be connected with her name—unlike the calendar itself—but also be officially approved by Monroe “signing off” on it. The attempt, of course, was foiled by the standard of decorum enforced by the USO. The organization marketed Monroe not as a sexpot movie star, but as a distinguished representative of the All-American Girl Back Home.

Along with memory, McConachie includes conceptual blending as another cognitive process involved in spectating.³³ For spectators in the theatre to conceptually blend the identities of an actor with a character, they merge any pre-existing ideas they may already have about the actor onstage with any ideas they are experiencing through the representation of a character, which results in a conceptual blend of the figure the spectators are witnessing onstage. The blending of these two separate identities into one can be described as an almost imperceptible and continual oscillation between actor and character that produces a melded, yet continually fluctuating, actor/character identity. The final conceptual blend is contingent upon how much of the actor and how much of the character any given audience member fuses together.³⁴ This is, like the reconstructive categorization of memory, an immediate and unconscious function of the brain. The process of conceptual blending when watching actors in a play is identical to the process of conceptual blending while watching Monroe's performance in Korea, but the concepts being blended are not “actor” and “character.” The conceptual blend for many spectators at the USO show in Korea was the complex metaphor so graciously supplied by Lieutenant Orly: Marilyn Monroe merged with the concept of the All-American Girl Back Home.

It is important to specify that there is no guarantee that any two people will conceptually blend in the same way. Every audience member has his or her own experiences from which he or she draws. Therefore, there is no empirical evidence that can prove that all the members of the audience during Monroe's USO tour were experiencing the same blend or constructing the same metaphor as Lieutenant Orly. However, we can suppose that the circumstances surrounding Monroe's USO tour did indeed lead to similar experiences for many of the men in the audience.

There are various accounts of the impact the USO Camp Shows had on the morale of servicemen in Korea. In particular, historian Paul Edwards notes that for many of the servicemen, a USO Camp Show offered the GIs what was probably their first view of an American woman since they had come to Korea and, in addition, “The show was a touch of home, a moment of joy away from the routine.”³⁵ Korea War veteran Scott L. Defebaugh confirms this view, saying, “For two hours, the men could forget they were soldiers at war.”³⁶ Even a

decade or more after the inception of the USO, their goals had not changed, because the human experience of wartime circumstances were similar, even if the historical contexts were different: USO shows during the Korean War strove—as they did in World War II—to provide the comfort of home in a foreign place. To prevent the shock that many members of the armed forces faced in those trying circumstances, the USO provided a familiar and comforting respite from the physical and emotional exhaustion of wartime service. These men were homesick, and the USO did a tremendous job of providing as many comforts of home as they could, while also strategically reinforcing a strong sense of nationalism that would enable a soldier to return to battle despite the hardship. By the end of the war, the USO had 294 centers in operation in the United States and abroad, staffed with over 113,000 volunteers.³⁷

The USO standard regarding the modesty and wholesomeness of Camp Show performances was one way of achieving that comfort. It is fairly safe to assume that the majority of the audience at a USO Camp Show felt a deep connection with America. When Terry Moore appeared onstage in her ermine-fur bathing suit, the overwhelming reaction from journalists in America was that she should be sent home, because they felt the bathing suit was indecent and below the standards of the USO. Edwards writes, “GIs argued that she should stay, saying that if she had to go home they would go with her. She stayed.”³⁸ USO Camp Show performers meant a great deal to the wartime audiences and were even graced with the affectionate nickname “soldiers in greasepaint.” The servicemen clearly felt a personal connection to Moore and many of the USO Camp Show performers. Marilyn Monroe was no exception.

The nature of these special connections that many servicemen felt with celebrities is multiple and varied. Amy Cook’s work on conceptual blending leads this discussion to the impact of the blend that the USO aided in creating for the Camp Show audiences. Because any given blend can be different from person to person, the implication is that the possibilities of types of blend are countless. In addition, Cook suggests that “the network of spaces prompted in a given situation is more powerful as a process in flux, a series of variables, than simply a final blend.”³⁹ McConachie explains that the actor/character blend is continually oscillating, and Cook supports this by pointing out that the process itself is the most powerful aspect of the blend. We know that at least one serviceman in Korea was blending the concept of “Monroe” with the concept of “Celebrity,” as evidenced by Forsha’s friend who attempted to get an autograph for his copy of *Playboy*, but the USO was working overtime to introduce variables into the blending process that would ensure the servicemen were not solely imagining Monroe as the *Playboy* centerfold.

The rigorous USO standards encouraged a blend that would include not only “Monroe as Celebrity,” but also “Monroe as All-American Girl Back Home” by implementing numerous tactics, the rejection of the *Playboy* magazine and the questioning of song lyrics being only two of them. One film clip shows Monroe’s bedside visit to GIs in hospital, when she leans down to hug a man in his bed for a photo op. The young man smiles with his arm around her and chastely kisses her on the cheek.⁴⁰ A photo from the book in which Jack Forsha found his own photograph shows Monroe wearing a 2nd Infantry Division “Honorary Member” patch safety-pinned to her sleeve as she dishes out hot food in a mess hall. In the photo below that one, a serviceman holds a piece of cake in his hand as Monroe unabashedly takes a large bite.⁴¹ As Forsha remembers, Monroe table-hopped and chatted with the servicemen instead of being sequestered at the officers’ table. These simple services, enacted by Monroe, suggested not celebrity but that carefully balanced mix of mother, sister, and sweetheart, reminding the men of the actions of their loved-ones back home. In fact, another film clip shows Monroe waving from a doorway where a large heart-shaped sign, complete with Cupid’s arrow, shows the name “Marilyn” in script with the subtitle “Sweetheart of the Bayonet Division.” Below that is a small rectangular sign with the name of Monroe’s companion, “Mrs. O’Doul,” printed in plain block letters.⁴²

Some GIs no doubt filled their mental space labeled “Monroe as Celebrity” with blonde hair, the *Playboy* centerfold, Hollywood, “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend,” and many other associations. Yet the space labeled “All-American Girl Back Home” would contain fond memories of sweethearts, sisters, mothers, home-cooked meals, and any number of personal memories of life as a civilian. As the cease-fire suggested an end to service in Korea, the men were looking forward to returning home. As Cook argues, the emergent structure of the blend is rife with other networks of ideas,⁴³ evocative associations that suggested that Monroe was more than just a movie star on a makeshift stage. She was America. She was home.

Roach states that the It-Effect intensifies the need for increased intimacy with the unattainable object.⁴⁴ The effervescence felt when seeing a celebrity in person fuels the need for more interaction. Conversing at length outside the stage door with a favorite celebrity or finding yourself at a banquet table next to a political role model are occurrences that could have a myriad of effects. You have your photograph taken with a famous actor or you continually tell the story of “When I Met So-and-So.” In the quest for more experiences of the It-Effect—and consequently, more meaningful encounters, such as personal interactions and celebrity-approved mementos—people strive to increase the proximity to

and understanding of the celebrity. This need to become “closer”—physically, psychologically, emotionally—is, in effect, a desire to unlock and understand the nature of It as it is embodied by a particular individual. The greater the intimacy of these real-life encounters, however, the greater the need for continued and more deeply intimate encounters. If one is not able to come closer to understanding It, then he or she must continue to seek more synthetic experiences and more chances to experience the It-Effect in the presence of the celebrity.

The same goes for the servicemen’s varied experiences with Marilyn Monroe, from watching her USO performance from fifty rows back or having her autograph a leg cast. Due to the efforts of the USO to create a nostalgic sense for the All-American Girl Back Home, I believe they succeeded in maintaining the unattainable nature of intimacy with Monroe by discouraging the “Monroe as Celebrity” blend. While many servicemen may have experienced the “Monroe as Celebrity” blend, the USO went to great lengths to ensure that reminders of “Monroe as All-American Girl Back Home” entered into the blending process more frequently and forcefully. The USO created these intimate encounters with a remarkable icon, all the time promoting a conceptual blend that made the servicemen think of the girls back home. This It-Effect—which combined the excitement of a celebrity and the tenderness of a loved one back home—provided a very high level of intimacy for servicemen, albeit one that focused more on their loved ones than the celebrity in front of them. The intimacy with Monroe was overshadowed by the recollection of home, and even though the encounter with Monroe possessed a special level of intimacy, it did not lead to any privileged information about her that would promote actual intimacy. Though Jack Forsha’s stories and photographs are not the only surviving memories of Monroe’s USO tour, these mementos have not brought any of their keepers to a deeper understanding of who Marilyn Monroe was. They can only serve as detailed and poignant reminders of an encounter with the It-Effect that will continue to fascinate the world as we attempt more and more furiously to capture and contemplate It.

Notes

1. Jack Forsha, in discussion with the author, November 25, 2010, Lancaster, PA.
2. Ibid.
3. Donald Spoto, *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1993), 263–64.

4. Fred Lawrence Guiles, *Norma Jean: The Life of Marilyn Monroe* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 149.
5. Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 8 (emphasis in original).
6. *Ibid.*, 3.
7. Fred Lawrence Guiles, *Legend: The Life and Death of Marilyn Monroe* (New York: Stein and Day, 1984), 449–66.
8. “Marilyn Monroe: The *LIFE* Covers, 1952–1962,” <http://life.time.com/icons/marilyn-monroe-life-magazine-covers-photos/#1>, Accessed August 4, 2014.
9. Roach, *It*, 28.
10. Spoto, *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, 151–52.
11. Churchwell, *Many Lives*, 37.
12. Roach, *It*, 44.
13. *Ibid.*, 18.
14. “Marilyn Monroe in Korea 1954,” <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/marilyn-monroe-in-korea/query/monroe>, accessed August 3, 2014. Footage of MP and troops appears at 00:26 and 00:35.
15. “Marilyn Monroe—Footage with the Troops in Korea 1954,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7zxdB_AneM, accessed August 3, 2014. Footage of crowd begins at 4:36.
16. Guiles, *Legend*, 240.
17. Paul M. Edwards, *The Korean War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 123.
18. Maxene Andrews, *Over Here, Over There: The Andrews Sisters and the USO Stars in World War II* (New York: Zebra Books, 1993), 30.
19. *Ibid.*, 129–30.
20. *Ibid.*, 129.
21. *Ibid.*, 229–30.
22. Marilyn Monroe, *My Story* (New York: Stein and Day, 1974), 142–43.
23. My research has not uncovered any published scholarship regarding gender representation in the USO Camp Shows, although an unpublished thesis by Samantha Joy Pearlman at Wesleyan University in 2011 treats the subject quite competently (Pearlman, “‘Something for the Boys’: An Analysis of the Women of the USO Camp Shows, Inc. and their Performed Gender,” available at http://wescholar.wesleyan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1656&context=etd_hon_theses, accessed August 3, 2014). Gender representations of the women who served as USO hostesses are quite fully examined by Margaret Winchell in her book *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
24. Bruce McConachie, *Engaging Audiences: A Cognitive Approach to Spectating in the Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 63.
25. Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 4.
26. McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 33. “Constructive recategorization” from Gerald M. Edelman and Giulio Tononi, *A Universe of Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
27. *Ibid.*
28. Julia Carson, *Home Away from Home: The Story of the USO* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946). Found in unnumbered photo insert, bottom photo on page 15 of the insert.

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29. "Air Force Now," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UGWldXzKjM>, accessed August 3, 2014. Quote appears at 8:00.
30. McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 134.
31. James F. Orlay, "Letters to the Editor" *Life*, March 22, 1954, 20.
32. Forsha, discussion with the author.
33. McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*, 63.
34. *Ibid.*, 41–44.
35. Edwards, *The Korean War*, 151.
36. Scott L. Defebaugh, "Something to Enjoy," in Linda Granfield, *I Remember Korea: Veterans Tell Their Stories of the Korean War, 1950–1953* (New York: Clarion Books, 2003), 53.
37. Edwards, *The Korean War*, 123.
38. *Ibid.*, 123–24.
39. Amy Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay: Reinvigorating the Study of Dramatic Texts and Performance through Cognitive Science* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 91.
40. "Marilyn Monroe—The Korea film RARE!" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtZV9_hfpBI, accessed August 3, 2014. Footage appears at 2:42.
41. Marie Clayton, *Marilyn Monroe: The Unseen Archives* (Bath: Parragon Publishing, 2005), 123.
42. "Marilyn Monroe—The Korea film RARE!" Footage appears at 6:34. Mrs. Jean O'Doul and her husband, baseball player Frank "Lefty" O'Doul, had accompanied Monroe and DiMaggio to Japan.
43. Cook, *Shakespearean Neuroplay*, 12–13.
44. Roach, *It*, 44.