

Deconstructing the Groupie

by [Robert Lewis](#) (September 2021)

Communication of Hate, Keith Vaughan, 1943

At this point is born the fatal envy which so many men feel of the lives of others. Seen from a distance, these existences seem to possess a coherence and a unity which they cannot have in reality, but which seem evident to the spectator. He sees only the salient points of these lives without taking into account the details of corrosion.
—Camus

We mock and deride them, dismiss them as tramps and tarts, in order to disassociate ourselves from the ethos that compels them to give themselves away to total strangers. Groupies are mostly young women that follow, fawn over and offer themselves to musicians performing in mostly rock and pop groups. And while the phenomenon dates back to the 1950s, groupie behaviour has been explicit since the dawn of man when men were waxing savage over wild game in the African savannahs or fighting for cave space in the cliffs of les-Eyzies (France). Back then, females, to optimize survival for themselves and future offspring, would gravitate to the most powerful, territory-toting males. Males, too, would attempt to forge asexual bonds with their betters to better ensure their chances at survival. Over time, these survival patterns – expressed as primordial impulses that compel someone towards

someone better – found their way into our DNA, and since then accounts for our abiding fascination with persons exercising power.

Until recently in our history, the prototype of the groupie was envied for giving herself (her eggs) away to the alpha male. Today, her modern counterpart invites universal scorn for the exact same comportment, a development that underscores the importance we attach to the rites of courtship which the groupie insouciantly flouts and for which she is stigmatized: the smallest price to pay for a chance at the big prize. Which is to say in the grand evolutionary skein of things, the bio-force urging the groupie to tender herself to the rich and famous takes precedence over any rite of courtship. Or, with all due respect to able bodied latrinists and their kind without whom society would be in the deep, the groupie wants what is (genotypically) best for her eggs.

That too many of us have convinced ourselves we are superior in kind may be a self-serving delusion that begs further investigation, especially among males who secretly long for the unconditional adoration and ovarian rights conferred by the guileless groupie. Can the case now be made that the groupie phenomenon conceals a universal truth that designates Becoming (a groupie) prior to and a condition of self-hood? And those of us too proud and prude to assume our groupie inheritance imperil not only our peace of mind, but condemn the fugitive quest for the self to a series of defeats. Perhaps women in all cultures outlive men because they have the courage to acknowledge the groupie within? – “a little part of us in every one,” – pace Neil Young, professional rock star.

Enlightened males (pardon the oxymoron), who are in touch with their groupie patrimony, can be observed performing the acrobatics of self-vassalation while struggling to maintain acceptable self-esteem indices. Like flies to fresh fertilizer, they gravitate to the hierarchies established by

powerful males, but unlike females, social custom obliges them to disguise their inner groupie. So instead of admitting – outside of their fantasy life – to their desire/dream of meeting with and getting connected to a Brad Pitt or Tiger Woods, they approach the object of their adulation through, for example, the rite of the autograph request (always for someone else, of course) or engineer the desired association through non-fawning conventional means: practical doctor-dentist-financial advisor, career-consultant relationships.

Rob: I was thinking, Mick (Jagger), that maybe we should place that small speaker more to the left, so your voice and Keith's guitar are better separated.

Mick: (Offering thought to Rob's suggestion). That's probably a good idea, Rob. You're talking about 5 feet, 10 feet?

Rob: Not sure. Maybe we should do a quick sound check?

Mick: Absolutely. Fans deserve the best. (Conferring in low voices, Rob and Mick approach the concert stage).

That the ultimate power is creative and not political or territorial – which is what Nietzsche means by the Will to Power, shorthand for the will to re-invent oneself – explains why the rock star is by far the first choice of the groupie. Compared to music – and the pleasurable drugs with which it is often mixed – the content of political discourse, despite its manifest theatricality, oscillates between the soporific and retentive, not to speak of the age differential between groupie and politician, on top of which it is now politically-exponentially incorrect for politicians to cultivate groupies. Beyond that, music is that perfect friend outside oneself that invites the listener to indulge his/her (unedited) feelings

without ever having to articulate them. For every emotion there is a musical counterpoint, a private place where the listener can go and confess his/her anger, frustration, hatred, self-hatred, alienation, and desire to be understood. Like no other art form, music provides for the inner life of mostly teenagers trying to find themselves and their way in a mostly indifferent world. If power is the measure of someone's ability to command the attention and love-adoration of large numbers of people, music's mega-stars reign supreme. From Mali to the Mekong Delta, they enjoy iconic status in every corner of the world, a groupie-quantifiable fact that prompted the late John Lennon to declare the Beatles were more popular than Jesus Christ, which, if nothing else, demystifies the unspoken conceit that being able to create something out of nothing is tantamount to playing God with a small 'g.' So that when we find ourselves inexplicably drawn to the gods who created the B Minor Mass and Abbey Road it is because we are drawn to and want to participate in the very mystery of creation itself.

By preserving and transmitting the artist's exceptional gifts, we are signing on to the notion that what isn't transmuted into art won't survive, or, taking liberties with the poet Stephane Mallarmé, the aim of the universe is the creation of melody.

Which leaves you and I in the unmediated presence of the groupie in the truth of her being, confident and fully rehabilitated, a steady calm in the discontent of our pride and prejudice.

For when all is said and sung, the groupie, without apology, is simply and frankly expressing her/his devotion to the principle of creation. That young women will continue to give themselves away to lead guitarists in tight pants, total strangers known only through their music, confirms the exceptional status of the artist, who by making exceptional demands on himself, commands the means (the groupie) to genetically preserve and transmit his gift.

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We, the legions of the mediocre, aching to transcend the mulish persistence of our mediocrity, by associating ourselves with the most influential creators of our time, are expressing, with the blessings of nature, our deepest groupie instincts. There should be no shame in this; the only shame is to deny the longing.

So let us demystify the instinct that moves us to follow and fawn over the great artists of our time, knowing that nothing less will set us on the path to self-hood.

Before my confessor, I'll say it once so you don't have to say it for me: I want to be Mick Jagger's roadie. That is the truth I hide behind, the truth that provides me.

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