

Subjectivity for Sale:
The Gender Politics of Ghosted Celebrity Memoir

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[90,959 words]

Abstract

This thesis examines the memoirs of contemporary, young, female celebrities with a particular focus on gender, agency in self-representation, and ghostwritten authorship. Although the thesis explores examples which range across fiction, photo-diary, comic-strip, and art anthology, as well as more ‘traditional’ autobiographical forms, it argues that a strong set of representational conventions is at play, prescribing particular constructions of female subjectivity. These memoirs exist within what this thesis terms a wider *economics of access*, in which young, female celebrities trade the appearance of access to their commoditised subjectivity and/or exposed bodies. This thesis investigates both the demands of the genre, and the potentially resistant strategies which may work to temper them. Yet even the most seemingly non-conforming examples evidence the weight of convention upon them and point to the limits of the representational possibilities for highly visible young women. This thesis contends that such questions of access and self-representational agency must be interrogated in relation to the genre’s visible mediation. These texts, which are widely understood to be ghost-written, invite consideration of how can we understand collaborative construction and its implications for both agency and ‘authorship’. Case-studies have been organised around female celebrities from different media ‘fields’ - reality TV stars, popstars and ‘glamour’ models - and the thesis explores the examples of Jade Goody, Paris Hilton, Katie Price, Pamela Anderson, Jenna Jameson, Lady Gaga and M.I.A - examining the ways in which self-representation is shaped by the media specificities of the particular celebrity’s domain. By theorising celebrity memoir - as gendered, as ghost-written, as an agentic intervention, and as a negotiated terrain which makes its negotiations exceptionally visible on the page – this thesis provides new ways in which to understand the modes of self-representation available to women on a public stage, and the discourses which structure and limit them.

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Introduction

This thesis argues that the ghost-written memoirs of contemporary, young, female celebrities are a site for the study of self-determination. Within them, famous women tell us their story, in their 'own words'. However, it is an open secret that constellations of ghost writers, management and market forces orbit these texts, undermining assertions of authorship or unfettered access to subjectivity. As a result, the ghost-written memoir inhabits a complex grey area between biography, autobiography, fact and fiction. Any attempt to understand these texts must therefore reconcile the authors' dual roles as self-expressing subject and object within a highly commercialised market for female celebrity subjectivity.

This thesis will examine how female celebrities are represented in their memoirs, and how these representations relate to the wider gender (as well as class and racial) politics of contemporary celebrity. These books variously function to reinscribe and/or counter patriarchal narratives, depending on the particular construction of the memoir in hand. I have sought to select memoirs by subjects with mainstream cultural status and have organised chapters around the different 'fields' from which their fame originates: reality TV stars Jade Goody, Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian; pop stars Lady Gaga and M.I.A.; and Katie Price, Pamela Anderson and Jenna Jameson under the heading 'glamour' girls (a British euphemism that valorises topless modelling). While the nature of transmedia celebrity means that these categories cross-fertilise and blur, they nevertheless prove illuminating because of the ways in which hierarchies of cultural value and perceived associations of 'talent' (or lack thereof) shape the subject positions available to a celebrity author.

As well as examining the selves presented in these women's memoirs, I will investigate the surrounding factors that shape, enable, or inhibit the ways in which the self can be represented. For example, the specificities of the individual celebrity's existing star image, the celebrity's domain or field of work, and the form of memoir adopted, all contribute to or curtail the types of life stories that can be told. This is why I have endeavoured to select texts that span a range of autobiographical modes, such as autobiographical fiction and photo-diary, as well as more 'traditional' memoir forms. These examples show the weight of generic convention at play – conventions of both autobiography and celebrity construction, which require me to bring scholarship from the field of celebrity studies into dialogue with that of literary criticism. However, it would be problematic to assume – as the popular press often does – that celebrity memoir is formulaic: the sample included here reveals that celebrity memoir as a genre is far from homogenous in terms of its textual address or mediation of gender politics.

Autobiography and memoir are terms which have, historically, been used to make distinctions between literary grand narratives and populist marketability.¹ However, scholars of life-writing have long been much concerned with the genre's resistance to definition. For example, James Olney describes autobiography as an inherently paradoxical and elusive genre: 'one never knows where or how to take hold of autobiography; there are simply no general rules available to a critic.'² To maintain these distinctions thus seems counterproductively definitive and unhelpfully upholds hierarchies of cultural value. I, therefore, use the terms autobiography and memoir with some interchangeability, although favouring the term memoir, because this is the language used by the industrial and popular discourses in which these texts circulate.

My project intersects with, and contributes to, literary studies of memoir, feminist media studies work on representational politics, and celebrity studies' understandings of 'authenticity' and the gender dynamics of celebrity culture. The study of celebrity is a field with roots in star studies and the study of cinema. Star studies, which emerged from the study of classical Hollywood movie stars, has traditionally tended towards readings of specific, individual 'star images,'³ while celebrity studies as a field has been more concerned with the broader operations of fame and power. This project sits somewhere between the two, organising case-studies around readings of individual stars which are brought into comparison with one another to draw wider conclusions about celebrity culture. Whilst the terms 'star' and 'celebrity' have historically had different uses and statuses within a hierarchy of cultural value, and whilst I predominantly use the term celebrity (star being a term associated with Hollywood actors, a category of celebrity not investigated in this thesis), their interchangeable usage in everyday parlance means that at times it is more natural to refer to my celebrity author-subjects as, for example, 'pop stars', 'reality TV stars' or 'porn stars'.

This thesis argues that celebrity memoirs are worthy of sustained critique. This is not a straightforward exercise in rehabilitation per se. Indeed, at points my analysis of these texts, and the gendered power dynamics they represent, is unfavourable. However, I emphatically seek to rehabilitate their status as a productive and complex critical object.

Combining the 'intimate' revelations that are central to the construction of celebrity coverage with autobiography's promise of the Enlightenment subject who is capable of self-disclosure of personal truth, the celebrity memoir occupies a nexus of 'access' and 'authenticity'.

¹ Julie Rak, 'Are Memoirs Autobiography? A Consideration of Genre and Public Identity,' *Genre*, 37 (3-4), 2004, pp.483-504.

² James Olney, 'Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical, and Bibliographical Introduction,' *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by James Olney (Princeton Guildford: Princeton University Press, [1980] 2014), p.3.

³ Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979).

However, these promises must be interrogated in relation to the fact that these texts are so visibly mediated. They are widely understood as ghost-written, inviting consideration of how we can understand the collaborative construction of these texts and its implications for both agency and 'authorship'. In this context, the process of attributing meaning to the celebrity life story can be understood as a negotiation, not only between the (various) agents involved in the text's construction, but in terms of how the meaning of these texts is shaped by their wider relationship with extratextual material.

This thesis adopts a framework for reading these texts which accounts for both their collaborative authorship and the industrial conditions of their construction without dismissing them as solely the cynical manufacture of corporate merchandise. I will investigate the ways in which the celebrity memoir reacts to its media environment. It is always in interaction with the assemblage of competing narratives with multiple points of origin (gossip media, promotional materials, PR, interviews, fan materials, and anti-fan blogs for example) in which celebrities can augment, but not control, readings of their images. Just as the demands of narrative in life-writing must impose linear order upon the disorder of lived experience, these texts attempt to impose a singular reading upon the multiplicity of narratives that will surround a celebrity. Within the boundaries of these texts a star identity can be carefully controlled and, as such, they create an opportunity for intervention in a public image that must be constantly reclaimed, rebranded or redressed.

The production of a memoir, collaborative or otherwise, is an act that claims certain forms of agency in self-representation. Yet, in responding to external criticism, these memoirs then implicitly contain the regulatory narratives levied at the authors. This model of what I will call the celebrity-as-assemblage applies not only to the complex mediations of collaboratively authored memoir, but to celebrity as a whole: the performance of the celebrity self is always in dialogue with, and thus constituted of, its paratexts in a web of conflicting mediation. As these competing narratives about a star exist in non-hierarchical multiplicity, this gives rise to the coexistence of multiple versions of the celebrity subject.

Thus, I will argue, that celebrity agency in self-representation can be seen to be multiple and negotiated, taking many forms. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that, far from being a legitimate means by which to invalidate the genre, the ghost-written status of celebrity memoir is a source of complexity that rewards critique, and which functions as an exemplary site for the study of the wider dynamics of celebrity construction and circulation.

Five key research questions underpin this thesis

- Firstly, this thesis investigates how female celebrities are represented in their memoirs and how these representations relate to the gender, class and racial politics of contemporary, Anglo-American celebrity.
- Secondly, it seeks to understand how the female celebrity's memoir is shaped by the media specificities of the celebrity's domain – specifically, the 'pop' music, 'reality TV' and 'glamour modelling' industries.
- In texts which are widely understood to be ghost-written, this thesis asks how we can understand this collaborative construction and its implications for both *agency* and 'authorship'.
- Furthermore, this thesis seeks to explore the promise of a genre that claims to offer *access* and *authenticity* when these texts are so visibly mediated.
- Finally, this thesis investigates how the meanings of these texts are shaped by their relationship with a wider extratextual web of celebrity coverage.

Why this research is much-needed

A thorough interrogation of the memoirs of contemporary, young, female celebrities is long overdue and there are many reasons why it is crucial that they are no longer ignored. Firstly, their enormous popularity, commercial success and resultant cultural impact are grounds for investigation in their own right. Celebrity memoir offers rich and relatively unexplored territory, with much to recommend them as objects of study. I contend that the celebrity memoir is the exemplary medium from which to extrapolate an understanding of wider celebrity culture; the complexities and contradictions of their construction reward scholarly attention with valuable insights about female subjectivity and agency.

The negotiation between publicity and privacy is understood to be integral to celebrity.⁴ As a site for the interrogation of this current in popular culture, celebrity memoir offers a moment of real interface as the reader is addressed individually in the celebrity's private, first-person, confessional voice in a performance of constructed intimacy that is experienced as a one-on-one address and sustained for the duration 300 pages. Celebrity

⁴ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Charles L. Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure: Human-interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, [2001] 1990); and Milly Williamson, 'Celebrity, Gossip, Privacy, and Scandal,' *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender*, ed. by Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner, and Lisa McLaughlin (New York: Routledge, 2014).

memoirs are constructed around this feeling of intense privacy and yet, simultaneously, are transparent exercises in public image management. Thus, the genre has much to reveal as a way of explicitly reading the bridge between publicity and privacy that is at the heart of celebrity culture. These very same dynamics make the celebrity memoir a prime site for the study of star-construction and myth-making and for the examination of celebrity agency within this. The explicit coexistence of industrial brand building and the revelation of a 'real' self behind the image make ghost-written memoirs the ideal celebrity texts for consideration of the questions of celebrity authenticity, which have concerned the field.⁵ Whilst celebrity texts of all kinds tend to engage with these competing discourses, it is rare to find examples so entirely defined by both visible manipulation and apparent access to essential subjectivity. Only by approaching celebrity thus, and through the diversity of autobiographical forms examined here, can we understand, the weight of narrative convention, how very gendered these conventions are, and, what I will term, the celebrity's economics of access: where (the appearance of) access and exposure is traded as vital celebrity currency. Through the chosen sample we see the space available for young, female self-representation in public, and the incursions upon it. We see the weight of recurring conventions, despite the diversity of the celebrities and the autobiographical forms they deploy. At the same time we will see that, whilst many of these gendered conventions appear inescapable, there is space for resistance and the possibility for alternative models of femininity.

Ghost-written memoir offers a 'moment' of interaction between celebrity and audience in which the concerns of celebrity culture (privacy, authenticity, myth-making, marketing, agency, subjectivity) uniquely coalesce in an interaction between slow, old and instantaneous, new media. As 'official' celebrity narratives, memoirs react to their media environment, modelling the ways in which celebrities are always in interaction with the multiplicity of coverage, judgments and readings that circulate around them, and affording a model for understanding the celebrity-as-assemblage. For this reason, by offering an understanding of celebrity memoir - as ghost-written, as an agentic intervention, as a microcosmic cultural artefact with much to tell us about celebrity culture at large, and as a negotiated terrain which makes its negotiations exceptionally visible on the page – this thesis aims to provide new ways of approaching the mediated, collaboratively constructed nature of all celebrity.

⁵ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), p.10; Sean Redmond, 'Pieces of Me: Celebrity Confessional Carnality,' *Social Semiotics*, 18 (2), 2008, pp.149-61; and Su Holmes, 'Off-guard, Unkempt, Unready?': Deconstructing Contemporary Celebrity in *heat Magazine*,' *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 19 (1), 2005, pp.21-38.

About the chosen celebrity case studies

I selected primary texts for analysis, by focussing on contemporary young, female, high-profile celebrities who had produced autobiographies of one form or another and who would be organised by, and analysed in relation to, the different celebrity 'fields' from which they hail.

For my first case-study (chapter two), I chose to analyse what might be termed crossover stars who had made the transition to mainstream fame from working in pornography – either soft-core modelling or hard-core films. Within these parameters Katie Price, Jenna Jameson and Pamela Anderson were chosen as stars with high profiles beyond their original male-targeted porn audiences. For example, after a career topless modelling for British tabloid, *The Sun*, and men's magazines such as *FHM*, Price shot to widespread fame following a range of celebrity reality TV shows, children's books, autobiographies, 'chick lit', and as a staple in women's weekly magazines. After a career modelling for *Playboy*, Anderson became known for the TV show *Baywatch*, the sitcom *Home Improvement*, action movie *Barb Wire*, appearances in women's magazines and animal rights activism. Following her career in hard-core porn films, Jenna Jameson began presenting celebrity news segments for entertainment channel, E!, made a series of cameo appearances in films, television shows, music videos and computer games and appeared in celebrity reality TV shows such as 2015's *Celebrity Big Brother*, U.K.

Despite their high profiles, these three celebrities have not received sustained critical attention. Scholars with an interest in Pamela Anderson have almost exclusively looked to her leaked sex-tape with husband Tommy Lee.⁶ Although the theoretical concerns of access and authenticity are common to both the sex tapes and her fictionalised memoirs, this thesis offers the first in-depth analysis of the memoirs. When Anderson's wider star image, beyond the sex-tape, has been examined, it has been in relation to her animal rights campaigning⁷ or as an archetype for a particular body type which is aspired to through cosmetic surgery.⁸

⁶ Ruth Barcan *Nudity: A Cultural Anatomy* (Oxford: Oxford: Berg, 2004); Jacqueline Lambiasi, 'Codes of Online Sexuality: Celebrity, Gender and Marketing on the Web,' *Sexuality and Culture*, 7 (3), September 2003, pp.57-78; Philip Hayward and Alison Rahn, 'Opening Pandora's Box: Pleasure, Consent and Consequence in the Production and Circulation of Celebrity Sex Videos,' *Porn Studies Journal*, 2 (1), 2015, pp.49-61; Minette Hillyer, 'Sex in the Suburban: Porn, Home Movies and the "Live Action" Performance of Love,' *Porn Studies*, ed. by Linda Williams (Durham NC; London: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁷ Daniel W. Drezner, 'Foreign Policy Goes Glam,' *The National Interest*, 92, Nov./Dec. 2007, pp.22-8; Toby Miller, 'Why Coldplay sucks,' *Celebrity Studies*, 4 (3), 2013, pp.372-6; Theresa M Winge, "Green Is the New Black": Celebrity Chic and the "Green" Commodity Fetish, *Fashion Theory*, 12 (4), 2008, pp.511-23.

⁸ Leigh Turner, 'TV: Cosmetic Surgery: The New Face of Reality TV,' *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 328 (7449), May 2004, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/issues/118442/>.

In 2005 Su Holmes wrote of Katie Price in contrast to stars with perceived longevity, such as David Beckham.⁹ Ten years later, Price is still very much in the public eye, winning *Celebrity Big Brother* UK in 2015. Given the longevity and ubiquity of her fame – my own archival research revealed that she appeared on 72% of the front covers of *OK Magazine* in 2006 - surprisingly little work has been done on the celebrity image of Katie Price. What work there has been has often viewed her through the prism of her working-class, female celebrity identity.¹⁰ As a result, it is notable that she has often been paired with Jade Goody as examples of a particular kind of supposedly ‘talentless’ celebrity¹¹ who depends on a ‘drip feed’ of controversy.¹² Any analysis of Price must consider the politics of respectability that surround her. And yet by grouping her, not with British working-class celebrities, but with other celebrities who have found mainstream fame following career origins in pornography, I am able to investigate how conventions of celebrity exposure, both physical and psychic, interact in the glamour girl memoir.

Jenna Jameson is credited as being the first porn star to make this transition to mainstream celebrity.¹³ And yet, Jameson, too, is under-investigated. Her commercial successes outside of pornography are often cited in passing as evidence of the pornification of culture, but rarely receive detailed analysis.¹⁴ Karen Boyle is one exception, whose analysis of Jameson’s memoir examines the ways in which the revelation that female porn stars have been damaged may actually benefit rather than harm the porn industry.¹⁵ Whilst I, too, am interested in the packaging and palatability of life stories including abuse, I examine this in relation to mainstream celebrity culture and its wider trends.

In light of my aforementioned endeavour to analyse the diverse range of autobiographical forms produced by celebrities, this selection of memoirs afforded opportunity to analyse traditional autobiographical prose with a first person address, autobiographical novels narrated in the third person, and a medley including interview transcripts and comic strips. As access, intimacy and exposure are key characteristics of both

⁹ Su Holmes, ‘Starring... Dyer?’: Re-visiting Star Studies and Contemporary Celebrity Culture’, *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* (University of Westminster, London, 2005), 2 (2), pp.6-21.

¹⁰ Su Holmes, ‘It’s a Jungle Out There: The Game of Fame in Celebrity Reality TV’, in *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London: Routledge, 2006); Emma N. Banister and Maria G. Piacentini ‘Producing and Consuming Celebrity Identity Myths: Unpacking the Classed Identities of Cheryl Cole and Katie Price,’ *Journal of Marketing Management* 31 (5-6), 2015, pp.502-24; Bev Skeggs and Helen Wood, ‘The Labour of Transformation and Circuits of Value “Around” Reality Television’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 22 (4), 2008, pp.559-72.

¹¹ Heather Mendick and Rosalyn P. George, ‘Language, Power and Reality TV: The Dynamics of Race, Class and Gender in the UK Big Brother Jade-Shilpa Row,’ *Online Educational Research Journal*, 2010, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://research.gold.ac.uk/4109>.

¹² Mary P. Wood, ‘Sixty Years a Celebrity Auteur: Franco Zeffirelli’, *Celebrity Studies*, 3 (2), 2012, pp.138-49.

¹³ Gail Dines, *Pornland* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York; London: Free Press, 2006); Barbara G. Brents and Teela Sanders, ‘Mainstreaming the Sex Industry: Economic Inclusion and Social Ambivalence’, *Journal of Law and Society Special Issue: Special Issue: Regulating Sex/Work: From Crime Control to Neo-liberalism?*, 37 (1), 2010, pp.40–60.

¹⁵ Karen Boyle, ‘Producing Abuse: Selling the Harms of Pornography’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 34 (2011), pp.593–602.

pornography and memoir, I was keen to examine how they interact within the sub-genre of the 'glamour girl' memoir.

Chapter three investigates the memoirs of reality TV stars, Jade Goody and Paris Hilton. Whilst Jade Goody has greatly interested scholars of celebrity, existing analyses have typically focussed on the specificity of her status as a reality TV celebrity, and the intersection between class and gender,¹⁶ her involvement in a race row with Shilpa Shetty¹⁷ and her much-mediatised death.¹⁸ When analysed alongside other female celebrities, Goody is usually paired with fellow white working-class British celebrities such as Kerry Katona,¹⁹ Katie Price or (if a classed or racialised contrast is sought), Shilpa Shetty,²⁰ but I have found productive comparison and contrast by analysing Goody alongside Paris Hilton. Hilton, by contrast to Goody, has interested scholars as a celebrity characterised by inherited wealth.²¹ A great number of reality TV stars have released memoirs as compatible reality products. However, I was initially intrigued by this particular pairing of reality TV stars because both women were subject to the same 'white trash' slur, despite coming from polar opposite class backgrounds. Unlike the studies of Goody as 'celebrity chav,'²² where similarities of reception are analysed alongside women from similar backgrounds, I considered the striking overlap between stars with such *different* socioeconomic origins to demand investigation, suspecting that there was much more to this gendered, sexualised slur than class alone.

Although celebrity memoir is a written medium, visual images play a more important role than in other text-based genres. Moreover, the role and nature of photographs within these

¹⁶ Kim Allen and Heather Mendick, 'Young People's Uses of Celebrity: Class, Gender and 'Improper' Celebrity', *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34 (1), 2013, pp.77-93; Skeggs and Wood, 'The Labour of Transformation and Circuits of Value "Around" Reality Television,' pp.559-72.

¹⁷ Su Holmes, 'Jade's Back and this Time she's Famous': Narratives of Celebrity in the *Celebrity Big Brother* 'Race Row,' *Entertainment and Sports Law Journal. Special Issue on Governing Celebrity*, 7 (1) 2009, retrieved 15 March 2016, from <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/elj/eslj/issues/volume7/number1/holmes>; Usha Zacharias, and Jane Arthurs, ed., 'Starring Race: Transnational Cultural Politics and the Shilpa-Jade Episode,' *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (4), 2007, pp.455-69.

¹⁸ Misha Kavka and Amy West, 'Jade the Obscure: Celebrity Death and the Mediatized Maiden,' *Celebrity Studies*, 1 (2), 2010, pp.216-30; Hannah Frith, Jayne Raisborough, and Orly Klein, 'Making Death 'Good': Instructional Tales for Dying in Newspaper Accounts of Jade Goody's Death,' *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 35 (3), 2013, pp.419-33.

¹⁹ Tyler and Bennett, 'Celebrity Chav,': Fame, Femininity and Social Class, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 13(3) 2010, pp.375-93.

²⁰ Zacharias and Arthurs, 'Starring Race,' pp.455-69.

²¹ Neeru Paharia, Anat Keinan, Jill Avery, and Juliet B. Schor, 'The Underdog Effect: The Marketing of Disadvantage and Determination through Brand Biography', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (5), 2011, pp.775-90; Thomas Fahy, 'One Night in Paris (Hilton): Wealth, Celebrity, and the Politics of Humiliation,' *Pop-Porn. Pornography in American Culture*, ed. by A. Hall and M. Bishop, 1st ed. [online] (Westport: Praeger Publishers 2007), retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://www.georgesclaudeguilbert.com/fahy.pdf>, pp.75-98.

²² Tyler and Bennett, 'Celebrity Chav,' pp.375-93; Keith Hayward and Majid Yar, 'The 'Chav' Phenomenon: Consumption, Media and the Construction of a New Underclass' *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2 (1), April 2006, pp.9-28; Jayne Raisborough, Hannah Frith, and Orly Klein, 'Media and Class-making: What Lessons are Learnt when a Celebrity Chav Dies?' *Sociology*, 47, (2) April 2013, pp.251-66.

books offer cues as to how they are intended to be read. The memoirs of Paris Hilton and the Kardashians present their written content over and alongside glossy full colour pictures throughout, borrowing from the conventions of editorialised magazine content. ‘New! Exclusive! Inside Kim’s wedding with never-seen pix,’²³ exclaims the cover of *Kardashian Konfidential*, positioning itself as a seamless continuation of the modes of consumption offered by other forms of gossip media. Price and Goody’s memoirs comprise segments containing snapshots of the star subject set on glossy, colour pages, distinct from the matte, black and white pages of written narrative: a delineation presenting word and image as complementary yet discrete information. Despite the fictionalisation of Anderson’s memoir and its claim that she is not the true subject of the text, the inside covers offer a centrefold-style image of her naked. This reinforces a link between Anderson, the exposed, soft-core pornographic context from which her fame originates, the author-subject position, and the appetites for access to her that the memoir promises to sate. In these ways, the images in celebrity memoirs signal to readers how the text should be consumed. Celebrity memoirs are texts which exist in an otherwise predominantly visual field and this is reflected in the visual emphasis of their pages (and covers). However, whether explicitly fictional, purportedly factual, chronological, instructional or reported speech, it is the written text of memoir that is conventionally presented as the primary content of value with new insight to offer about the star.

By contrast, the memoirs analysed in chapter four are picture books, offering visual images as the primary content and demanding a deeper contemplation of the image. Chapter four thus analyses the specificities of the visual image in the economics of access at the heart of both autobiographical expression and celebrity construction, where (the appearance of) access and exposure is traded as vital celebrity currency. In their construction of a feeling of proximity, and the promise that fans can purchase a means to better know their celebrity subjects, the photographic tour diary of American pop star Lady Gaga and the published collection artworks related to the pop career of British-Sri Lankan diasporic star M.I.A. both work to serve the same function as the written celebrity memoirs that typify the genre in that they construct the star persona and its meaning whilst providing the appearance of access to and intimacy with an authentic self. Whilst the means available to a book of images differ to those of a book of linear, written they overlap in their conceptual and commercial ends.

Chapter four investigates pop stars as a category of celebrity within the context of the memoir. This selection deliberately adds valuable contrast in relation to the previous case-

²³ Kim Kardashian, Kourtney Kardashian, Khloe Kardashian, *Kardashian Konfidential*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2011) front cover.

studies because hierarchies of cultural value permit female pop stars with sub-cultural affiliations a wider range of representational opportunities and less contested access to the status associated with the role of creative agent or author. This 'field' therefore afforded the opportunity to consider celebrities who have mainstream impact, but who also operate with seemingly greater licence. Nonetheless, a thesis about wider celebrity culture still requires pop stars of a certain stature, garnering interest beyond their given musical subcultures. I sought to end the thesis with examples that might counter and contrast with the representational and narrative conventions set up in the previous two sets of case studies and thus looked to examine them in relation to a, seemingly, more alternative or countercultural kind of celebrity – a limit case, perhaps.

Both stars have piqued the interest of scholars of celebrity. M.I.A. has been analysed in relation to postcolonial politics,²⁴ while Gaga has been lauded as a resistant new form of femininity²⁵ and even as a new form of feminism.²⁶ Both have been hailed for their progressive potential. Both offered interesting case studies for an investigation of celebrity memoir because their star images appear to be built upon a kind of performed postmodern masquerade – which is seemingly anathema to the conventions of autobiography with its realist roots and its concerns with revealing an authentic, essential self. I was therefore keen to analyse whether their apparent alternative, countercultural status as artists allows them to break the conventions of celebrity memoir and present new models for female celebrity self-representation, or whether, despite their seeming licence, they conformed to some of the more regressive gender politics of contemporary celebrity culture. Not only does this line of enquiry offer a re-examination of these particular celebrities, it also crucially reveals those conventions that most forcibly foreclose the parameters of self-representation for the young, female celebrity. In seeing those conventions and restraints that endure despite differences in textual format and celebrity field, and despite the fact that Gaga and M.I.A. have been widely considered to represent a different kind of celebrity – more progressive, less mainstream and with sub-cultural associations – this thesis seeks to demonstrate the persistence of the conventions that structure the performance of female celebrity subjectivity.

In terms of the markers of their identity, the only initial selection criteria I set out with was that they be young, female, and high-profile in the twenty-first century. However,

²⁴ Brian Creech, 'Refugee Status: Tracing the Global Flows of M.I.A.', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 7, 2014, pp.267–82, p.271; Anamik Saha, 'Locating MIA: 'Race', Commodification and the Politics of Production,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 15, 2012, pp.736-52, p.742.

²⁵ R. J. Gray, ed. *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, 2012).

²⁶ J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

looking at the overall sample, other patterns emerge which may say something about the conventions of female celebrity. There is a significant variation in class backgrounds as discussed in chapter three. Notably, the three ‘glamour girl’ author-subjects relate their working-class origins, while both pop stars were educated at prestigious universities. There is less variation in terms of race—the sample is entirely white and, except for M.I.A. and Kim Kardashian, features no black, female celebrities. M.I.A.’s star image is primarily defined by her Tamil-refugee identity as shall be discussed. Kim Kardashian’s Armenian ethnicity is brought in as a point of contrast when discussing Paris Hilton’s ‘white celebrity.’²⁷ Further, there is virtually no variation in terms of professed sexual orientation. Whilst Lady Gaga has come out as bisexual and campaigns for LGBT rights, explicit heterosexuality runs throughout the texts and images analysed here. Such patterns were not a product of deliberate selection - indeed I sought a broad sample within my set parameters. But the existence of such patterns says much about the potency of the conventions that govern who the light of fame is shone upon, and accords with what scholars of celebrity have noted about female celebrity: that is presumed to be white and overtly, avaiably heterosexual.²⁸

Methodology

This thesis is fundamentally interdisciplinary, drawing upon a wide range of theoretical frameworks throughout, including celebrity studies, feminist theory, autobiography theory, critical theory, literary criticism, and cultural studies. This thesis approaches these memoirs as written texts, analysing the textual address through narrator’s voice, chosen language and point of view, and conducting comparative analyses between memoirs in search of thematic or formal overlap. Whilst these approaches are all customary in literary criticism, this thesis is, at the same time, heavily indebted to the cultural studies practice of viewing quotidian aesthetic forms as cultural artefacts with much to tell us about wider ideologies and their manifestations in society, power dynamics and representational politics. I use the term discourse in recognition of the inescapably political contexts in which we communicate, owing to the system of relations between parties engaged in communication.²⁹ Further, as a project which studies the way dynamics of social power or its lack are ‘enacted, reproduced,

²⁷ Sean Redmond, ‘The Whiteness of Stars: Looking at Kate Winslet’s Unruly White Body,’ *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London: SAGE, 2006).

²⁸ See Redmond, ‘The Whiteness of Stars’ and *In the Limelight and under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, ed. by Su Holmes and Diane Negra (New York: New York: Continuum, 2011).

²⁹ Patricia Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* (New York; London: Routledge 1991), p.vii.

and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context', this thesis draws upon the practices of discourse analysis.³⁰

As such I undertake a contextualised analysis, viewing the representations within these texts in relation to constellations of overlapping extratextual detail that surround them: both within the book as material object (dustjacket blurbs, forewords, images, acknowledgements pages) and outside of it (author interviews, promotional materials, other works from the same ghost writer). In accounting for the presence of the ghost writer, I introduce a concern with the politics of production and, whilst I do not in any way undertake an industrial analysis, my analysis is alert to how the memoirs represent the industrial conditions of their production. Although this is not a reception study and, as such, does not provide a full and systematic analysis of the reception these memoirs have received, I do draw on celebrity reception as a set of discourses which afford consideration of gender in relation to the codifications of celebrity and supplement our understanding of the climate into which the memoirs are released. This includes journalists' responses to individual memoirs and their treatment of the genre as a publishing phenomenon, journalists' responses to the stars, and user-generated fans and anti-fans websites. Situating my analysis of the narratives within these memoirs in relation to the wider narratives that circulate around a celebrity without her control enables the opportunity to consider these texts as official *interventions* into the assemblage of unofficial public discourse about a star, and sheds light upon the kinds of conversations into which these memoirs might be hoping to interject.

Furthermore, each case-study demands its own scholarly framing: chapter two, on the memoirs of 'glamour girls', requires an engagement with the field of porn studies; chapter three, on the memoirs of reality stars deemed 'white trash', draws on scholarship around class and 'whiteness'; chapter four, on the visual memoir of pop stars Lady Gaga and M.I.A. requires a consideration of existing work on photography and post-colonialism. In this regard, my thesis could be considered to ascribe to Sara Childers *et al's* approach of needing 'promiscuous feminist methodologies' that are 'always in-the-making' because 'the messy practice of inquiry transgresses any imposed boundaries or assumptions about what counts as research and feminism.'³¹ As Childers *et al* argue, 'the theories we put to work "get dirty" as they are contaminated and re-appropriated by other ways of thinking and doing through (con)texts of messy practices.'³² In her search for ways in which research methods

³⁰ Teun A. Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis,' *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. by D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, and H. E. Hamilton (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), pp.352–71, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Critical%20discourse%20analysis.pdf>.

³¹ Sara M. Childers, Jeong-eun Rhee, and Stephanie L. Daza, 'Promiscuous (Use of) Feminist Methodologies: The Dirty Theory and Messy Practice of Educational Research Beyond Gender,' *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26 (5), 2013, pp.507-23.

³² Childers, Rhee, and Daza, 'Promiscuous (Use of) Feminist Methodologies,' pp.507-23.

can ‘better challenge the relations of dominance’³³ Patricia Lather argues that ‘grasping the complexities of people and the cultures they create’ requires ‘an effort to break out of the limitations of increasingly inadequate category systems.’³⁴ It is for these reasons that, sharing the goals of Childers *et al* and Lather, this project demands that I draw from such wide ranging critical practices without too strict regard for disciplinary purity or containment. Together, textual, contextual, discursive, and formal analysis, informed by these wide ranging scholarly fields and critical practices, can illuminate the connections between celebrity, ghost, audience, market and celebrity extratexts in the unique case study in identity construction, commodification, mediated access and ‘authenticity’ that celebrity memoir represents.

Outline of case-studies

Sex, Trauma and Access in the Porn Star Memoirs of Katie Price, Pamela Anderson and Jenna Jameson

This chapter examines the tensions that arise when life-writing – an act of *subjectification* – is undertaken by an individual with a professional investment in their own *objectification*. Processes of objectification and commodification are instructive in the understanding of all life-writing and celebrity merchandise. The illustration is especially stark in the examples chosen, being sexually inflected through the celebrity author-subjects’ career origins in soft-core pornographic modelling or hard-core pornographic films. This subsection of celebrity memoir demands interrogation because, despite the predominantly female target audience of celebrity autobiography, women made famous by male-targeted pornography have ‘authored’ some of the most commercially successful and widely read contemporary texts in the genre. Investigating how Katie Price, Pamela Anderson and Jenna Jameson are represented in their memoirs reveals these texts to be acts of persona construction that must simultaneously tally with, extend, and retrospectively justify their pornographic careers for new target audiences. This reveals how the female celebrity memoir is shaped by the media specificities of the author’s celebrity domain, and how the meaning of these texts is shaped by their relationship with a wider extratextual web of celebrity coverage. Of course, they do not construct their memoirs alone. Rather, the ghost writer works with the paratextual pornographic constructions of these women to produce a life that will sell.

These texts offer a case study in the ghosting relationship as charged with complex, gendered power dynamics. In the cases of Anderson and Jameson, the ghosts with whom

³³ Lather, *Getting Smart*, p.xv.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.xvi.

they collaborate are – significantly – male. Existing as they do in a space of historical, representational lack³⁵ (as offering women’s subjectivity, as women’s sexual autobiography, and as giving voice to women in the sex industry specifically), it is significant that these texts, sold as ‘true’ female experiences, are often co-authored by men. The porn star memoir thus emerges as an extremely complicated intervention into the erasure of the subjectivity of the eroticised woman.

Examination of the power dynamics of ghosting is especially necessary when these texts narrate (and make palatable) stories of trauma, abuse and sexual violence. Analysis of the texts included here reveals that a thematic and formal preoccupation with constructedness interacts with (and potentially undermines) testimonies of trauma survival that make claim to truth status. Key issues in this section include the commodification of female experience, constructedness, writing the body, postfeminist sexual empowerment and ghosting trauma.

‘White Trash’: Class, Race and Authority in the Reality TV Star Memoirs of Jade Goody and Paris Hilton

Ghost-written memoirs offer the opportunity to intervene in a public image that otherwise often extends beyond the celebrity’s grasp. However, other factors, including the ghost writer’s construction and editing, the function of media industries, genre and narrative conventions and the star’s symbolic function, all circumscribe the ways in which that agency can be manifested so undermine the subject’s authority. Using the memoir of Jade Goody, this chapter opens with a consideration of the various capitals the celebrity and their ghost writer bring to the exchange of collaborative authorship. This chapter then contrasts Goody with Paris Hilton, arguing that their class origins shape the ways in which they are able/required to represent themselves in their memoirs. Where Goody adopts a model of abjection, seeking exoneration from the audience in return for a thorough confession, Hilton adopts a strategy of camp play and heightened artifice, refusing to give much away and deliberately undermining the little she does reveal.

This chapter ends with an analysis of the similarities between both women’s reception as ‘white trash’. That this is a class-based insult would suggest that it is their class identities that render them vulnerable to criticism, but their socioeconomic backgrounds, are diametrically opposed. I will argue that the nature of reality TV celebrity, with its subjects’

³⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (London : Penguin Books, 1997); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York; London: Routledge, 1990).

lives on continual display, provides a basis for the gendered classing of its female stars as 'trash', a status deriving from the failure to demonstrate acceptably feminine restraint rather than relating to socioeconomic status. This analysis reveals that, whilst celebrity culture and its supporting gossip media have been viewed as a 'low' field with tabloid sensibilities, its value system is punitively middle-class, policing the appropriateness of its players and shaming those who fall short. Key issues in this section include class, race and 'white-trash' celebrity, shame and display, confession and evasion, respectability, camp play and the 'undeserving' rich.

Art, Authorship and Authenticity in the Visual Pop Star memoirs of M.I.A and Lady Gaga

At first look the visual memoirs of M.I.A. and Lady Gaga appear to be quite different texts which break the conventions outlined in the previous chapters. M.I.A.'s anthology of graphic art and Gaga's photographic diary of life on the road, appear to be setting themselves up as a post-modern masquerade: a playful bricolage with performed identities which directs attention to the surface in a genre that is usually concerned with finding 'hidden depths'. Rather than written confessional narratives like those of Katie Price and Jade Goody which draw upon nineteenth century realist modes and an Enlightenment model of a coherent self, M.I.A. and Gaga's texts appear to be constructing a self-conscious performance of 'doing' pop stardom.

In a culture determined to know its young, female celebrities, where celebrity exists in an economics of exposure that coaxes stars to share everything, this focus on the surface image could be read as a resistant move against interpretation, negotiating against these demands. Whilst these examples do demonstrate meaningful differences that show that the genre is not homogenous, they ultimately still trade in the same currencies as the texts in previous chapters. Rather than being exceptions, these texts demonstrate the extreme persistence of certain conventions of female celebrity (self-)representation. Although they do not offer the written confessions that are the norm, a form of confession can be extracted nonetheless.

This chapter demonstrates the rare moments when the status of the celebrity author-subject in relation to their ghost can be discerned in the text and how these power relations also shape the meaning of the resultant co-authored work. Key issues in this section include the celebrity photograph, hierarchies of cultural value, claims to artistry and creative agency, 'doing' pop stardom, directing attention to the surface as a resistant strategy against

interpretation, the wider agents of mediation as 'ghosts', the ghost as employee, and the containment of disruptive femininity.

Chapter 1. Critical and Contextual Review

Cultural contexts: celebrity memoir as broadsheet hate object

The wide readership and commercial power of the ghost-written celebrity memoir are indicative of its cultural significance,³⁶ yet it remains a critically overlooked, much-derided genre, dismissed by one *Observer* reviewer as ‘a literary phenomenon of the non-literate’.³⁷ This somewhat typical sweeping insult takes in the texts, their readers, and their ghosted celebrity author-subjects. In the case of the latter, this highlights the fact that this denigration comes from a perceived gap between a celebrity subject’s literary ability and their ghosted output. Yet the conflicted logics of “ghosting”—its ambiguous and mediated claims to authorship and subjectivity—have yet to be thoroughly explored in relation to celebrity memoir.

Every Christmas, as the new batch of celebrity memoirs is released in anticipation of the lucrative Christmas gift market, the broadsheet media gleefully predict the death of the celebrity memoir.³⁸ And yet such books continue to be released in great numbers, counting commercial successes amongst them.³⁹ ‘Are we seeing the death of the celebrity memoir?’ asked a *Daily Mail* headline, hopefully.⁴⁰ These stories pose as quantitative news, hiding behind a smattering of (‘notoriously unreliable’) Nielsen Bookscan sales data.⁴¹ In reality, they present qualitative judgements laden with discourses of cultural value, with journalists keen to distance themselves from the genre and perform their ‘superior’ taste: ‘As for me,’ states Iain Hollingshead in the closing sentence of a 2011 *Telegraph* article titled ‘Is it curtains for the celebrity memoir?’ ‘I’m going to do my best to hasten its demise by auctioning my collection on eBay – and buying some good novels instead. Especially ones

³⁶ Ben Yagoda, for example, calculates that ‘total sales in categories of Personal Memoirs, Childhood Memoirs, and Parenthood Memoirs increased more than 400 per cent between 2004 and 2008.’ Ben Yagoda, *Memoir: A History* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), p.7.

³⁷ Carole Cadwalladr, ‘All Because the Ladies Love Jordan,’ *The Observer*, 12 February 2006, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theobserver/2006/feb/12/features.review47>.

³⁸ November and December are reportedly responsible for one third of the annual turnover of bookshop chains. Paul Bignell, ‘Decline and Fall of the C-list Female Celebrity Memoirs,’ *The Independent*, 23 December 2007, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/news/decline-and-fallof-the-clist-female-celebrity-memoirs-766946.html>.

³⁹ For example, an article in *The Independent*, titled, ‘Celebs Lose their Sheen for Publishers as Gift-buyers Spurn Celebrity Biographies,’ focusses upon the decline of the genre despite listing commercial successes from the celebrity author-subjects Zoe ‘Zoella’ Sugg (178,000 copies), Lynda Bellingham (265,000 copies), and Sir Alex Ferguson (850,000 copies). Gideon Spanier, ‘Celebs Lose their Sheen for Publishers as Gift-buyers Spurn Celebrity Biographies,’ *The Independent*, 19 December 2014, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/celebs-lose-their-sheen-for-publishers-as-giftbuyers-spurn-celebrity-biographies-9937012.html>.

⁴⁰ Jack Crone, ‘Are We Seeing the Death of the Celebrity Memoir?’ *Mail Online*, 20 December 2014, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2881571/End-chapter-celebrity-memoirs-Autobiographies-rich-famous-no-longer-sell-says-publishing-house.html#ixzz3icP5MsBk>.

⁴¹ Jerry Maatta, ‘Apocalypse Now and Again: Mapping the Bestselling Classics of the End of the World,’ *Hype: Bestsellers and Literary Culture*, ed. by Jon Helgason, Sara Kärholm and Ann Steiner (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2014), p.160.

not ghost-written for Katie Price'.⁴² Ghostwriting is presented here as further contaminating unapologetically low culture. A *New Statesman* review of Jade Goody's *Catch a Falling Star* opens with a comparable disdainful reference to the invalidating presence of the ghost writer: 'The last thing you expect to read, on opening the second autobiography by the former *Big Brother* contestant Jade Goody, is an extract from *Prospect* magazine. Like the rest of this book, it's not written by her.'⁴³ These articles show journalists proudly and performatively distancing themselves from this material, keen to 'distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make'.⁴⁴ It is significant that, despite discussing a crop of memoirs by both male and female celebrity authors, and demonstrating contempt for the genre as a whole, both journalists choose to focus upon sexualised, female reality-stars in summing up their disparagement. Hollingshead mentions seventeen texts authored by male celebrities (including footballer Paul Gascoine, reality TV businessman Alan Sugar, and pop boy band One Direction), and two female celebrities (Price and actress Joanna Lumley). And yet, it is Price he points to as typifying the abasement of the genre. A 2007 *Independent* headline makes the gender specificity of the disparagement explicit, heralding the 'Decline and fall of the C-list female celebrity memoir,' claiming that a failure of 'likeability' is a problem specifically facing female celebrities.⁴⁵ This thesis will demonstrate how both these texts and their female author-subjects are 'bad objects'; they are rejected due to the anxieties they stimulate, viewed as inauthentic due to visible mediation and thus denied authority.

Furthermore, the centrality of gender to the derision of the genre is clear, and extends to its female readership. Reporting from a Katie Price book-signing, for example, Carole Cadwalladr, characterises the readers as an illiterate, irrational, emotional and out of control swarm: 'the crowd surges forward - women with buggies, women with bumps and women with small, slightly confused children. [...] Jordan can't write. And her readers don't like reading'.⁴⁶ John Carey argues that this conception of the 'masses' as sub-human hordes in thrall to popular culture reveals an elitist desire to 'preserve the intellectual's seclusion from the "mass"' and has been a recurring characterisation since late nineteenth-century educational reforms provoked a 'hostile reaction to the unprecedentedly large reading public'.⁴⁷ Milly Williamson has demonstrated that gender is central to the elitist derision of celebrity culture⁴⁸ and that class and gender work together in overlapping denigrations

⁴² Ian Hollingshead, 'Is it Curtains for the Celebrity Memoir?' *The Telegraph*, 9 December 2011, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/topics/christmas/8943536/Is-it-curtains-for-the-celebrity-memoir.html>.

⁴³ Lynsey Hanley, 'Reality Cheque,' *New Statesman*, 16 October 2008, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2008/10/jade-goody-star-brother-life>.

⁴⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), p.6.

⁴⁵ Paul Bignell, 'Decline and fall of the C-list female celebrity memoirs,'

⁴⁶ Carole Cadwalladr, 'All Because the Ladies Love Jordan.'

⁴⁷ John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia* (London: Faber, 1992), p.vii.

⁴⁸ Milly Williamson, 'Celebrity, Gossip, Privacy, and Scandal'.

where ‘open class prejudice [...] is concealed behind sexism.’⁴⁹ These journalistic characterisations of the genre, its star author-subjects, and its audience, suggest that the dismissal of celebrity memoir is part of a wider contempt for culture targeting women - especially those of working class backgrounds.

Critical contexts: celebrity memoir as scholarly ‘bad object’

It is significant that even celebrity studies, a field which deliberately and politically seeks to disrupt such cultural hierarchies, has neglected celebrity memoirs, treating them as just *one* of many supplementary texts that comprise intertextual celebrity identity work. In a scholarly field concerned with the vexed status of the ‘real’ amongst obvious mediation, celebrity memoirs have been held to epitomise the problems of inauthenticity and manufacture.⁵⁰ Rather than viewing memoirs as a site for the interrogation of these central issues of celebrity, analysis of the memoir has tended to end with the identification (and dismissal) of these texts as constructions - an omission which, deliberately or otherwise, reproduces gendered discourses of cultural value.

A small community of scholars such as Leigh Gilmore⁵¹ and Julie Rak⁵² have convincingly examined the contemporary popularity of the memoir genre. But this has tended to centre upon ‘ordinary’ authors without any pre-existing fame.⁵³ The community of scholars who have applied critical attention to memoirs by and about famous women is smaller still. Here, Pamela Fox’s work on the memoirs of women in country music began the important work of questioning the contradictory role of the ghost in manufacturing and undermining authenticity.⁵⁴ More recently, Katja Lee stands out for her arguments for the possibility of celebrity agency and her endeavours to trace evidence of its presence in the co-authored text. However, with the exception of these attempts to recuperate the genre, celebrity memoir itself has rarely been the focus of analysis.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Milly Williamson, ‘Female Celebrities and the Media: The Gendered Denigration of the ‘Ordinary’ Celebrity,’ *Celebrity Studies*, 1 (1) 2010, p.118.

⁵⁰ Emma Bell, ‘From Bad Girl to Mad Girl: British Female Celebrity, Reality Products, and the Pathologization of Pop-feminism.’ *Genders*, 48, 2008, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/9394/>; Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1979).

⁵¹ Leigh Gilmore, ‘American Neoconfessional: Memoir, Self Help and Redemption on Oprah’s Couch,’ *Biography*, 33 (4) 2010, pp.657-79.

⁵² Julie Rak, *Boom!: Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013).

⁵³ For example James Frey’s (2003) account of addiction and recovery, *A Million Little Pieces*, which, gained bestseller status through support from Oprah Winfrey’s TV Book Club, but was then exposed to be fabricated by website, *The Smoking Gun*, resulting in a lawsuit enabling readers to demand a full refund. Both Gilmore and Rak discuss Frey’s book in particular and the text has become a go-to example for demonstrating the problem of truth claims in contemporary memoir.

⁵⁴ Pamela Fox, ‘Recycled “Trash”: Gender and Authenticity in Country Music Autobiography,’ *American quarterly*, 50 (2), 1998, pp.234–66.

⁵⁵ Katja Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories: Alternate Practices For Reading Coauthored Celebrity Memoirs,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 47 (6) 2014, pp.1256-70.

This intertextual approach was set by Richard Dyer who, in his analysis of classical Hollywood stardom, observes how the meanings of on and off screen identities reciprocally constitute one another.⁵⁶ His is a model of diffuse biographical details functioning paratextually to the core text of the feature film. Fan magazines, newspapers, studio publicity, and legal trials are treated similarly as elements lending meaning to, or resolving contradictions in, star images. Together, these collectively offer a ‘finite multitude’ of potential meanings, or a ‘structured polysemy’.⁵⁷ As previously discussed, when memoirs are acknowledged, at least in relation to classical Hollywood, they are treated with scepticism in relation to the highly controlled studio system and their status as tools for deliberate, fabricated acts of branding.⁵⁸

Celebrity memoir has been equally neglected by literary scholarship. **The genre’s visible commercial function contributes to academic uneasiness regarding its validity as an object of study. Where other literary forms are understood as genres, memoir is understood as an industry. As Julie Rak suggests, ‘the books of the memoir boom are produced by mainstream presses for large audiences, and perhaps that is why critics of autobiography tend to overlook them or not teach them in their classes.’⁵⁹ Indeed whether fairly or not, memoir, more than other genres, has been understood as a commodity manufactured for a market. Rak charts this back to eighteenth-century France and the ‘scandalous memoirs’ produced by former courtesans to pay for their court cases: ‘They were written in order to sell and they were bought because they were scandalous’.⁶⁰ This intertwining of memoir and capitalism is integral to Yagoda’s conception of the genre: ‘Memoir has become the central form of the culture: not only the way stories are told, but the way arguments are put forth, products and properties marketed, ideas floated, acts justified, reputations constructed or salvaged.’⁶¹ Thus, the contemporary moment is ‘unprecedented’ in both the ‘sheer volume’ of memoir and the pervasiveness of its rhetoric under capitalism.⁶² Thus, the close relationship between memoir and commercial markets that is used to undermine the genre in terms of cultural value simultaneously defines of the genre and offers evidence of its enormous reach and cultural power.**

As Mark A. Sanders observes, the perceived low status specifically of ghost-written memoir has led to scholarly neglect, and it being ‘largely dismissed in favour of the perceived

⁵⁶ Richard Dyer, ‘Lana: Four Films of Lana Turner’, *Movie* 25, Winter 1977–78, pp.30–54. Reprinted in M. Landy, ed. *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama* (Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

⁵⁷ Dyer, *Stars*, p.3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.421.

⁵⁹ Rak, *Boom!*, p.3.

⁶⁰ Rak, *Boom!*, p.5.

⁶¹ Yagoda, *Memoir*, p.28.

⁶² *Ibid.*

authenticity found in self-generated texts.⁶³ G. Thomas Couser is one such scholar who, notably, in his book entitled *Memoir: An Introduction*, dismisses celebrity memoir out of hand, observing: ‘seeking to immortalize oneself is not necessarily a noble motive; hence the redundancy of celebrity memoir.’⁶⁴ Thus, the ghost-written celebrity memoir becomes doubly discredited. That a book is authored by a sole subject is no guarantee that their words are credible, and yet, if the authorship is collaborative, it is read as a guarantee that their words are not credible. The association of the genre with subjects from ‘low’ culture has contributed to its devaluation. Echoing the synecdochal sexism of the broadsheet press, John Sutherland notes:

The general rule about ghosting is that the lower the literature, or aspiration, or our esteem for the author, the less we’re upset ... When Katie Price admits that hands other than her own create her bestselling works, we smile indulgently. No one expects a model to write her own books any more than they expect her to sew her own clothes.⁶⁵

So low are society’s expectations of such celebrity women, that their inability to author their life stories is a presumption, not a disappointment. Falling between scholarly disciplines, ghost-written celebrity memoir is the genre that no one wants to claim.

Historical contexts: selling gendered access to the commodified celebrity private life

This thesis posits that the celebrity memoir exists as an exemplary text within a wider economics of access at the level of celebrity culture. I contend that the promise of access (which is heavily mediated and highly gendered) is integral to the genre’s appeal. My analysis focusses on the turn of the twenty-first century as a moment when a variety of social, historical and technological factors combined around an economics of access to the private lives of public figures. That is not to say that these appetites are unique to this period. Indeed, many aspects of celebrity culture that are often assumed to be recent developments were prevalent a century or more ago.

For example, Leo Braudy offers a ‘history of fame’ that begins with the triumphalism and self-promotion of the upper classes of the Roman era.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, for Charles Ponce de

⁶³ Mark Sanders, 'Theorizing the Collaborative Self: The Dynamics of Contour and Content in the Dictated Autobiography.' *New Literary History*, 25, 1994, p.455.

⁶⁴ G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.14.

⁶⁵ John Sutherland, 'Among the Ghosts', *Spectator*, 11 June 2011, retrieved on 29 February 2016, from <http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/7009933/among-the-ghosts/>.

⁶⁶ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.17.

Leon an interest in the private lives of public figures, originating in the nineteenth century, defines the ‘emergence of celebrity’.⁶⁷ Joshua Gamson, instead, argues that the history of celebrity is the history of a coexisting metanarrative about industrial manufacture and distrust, which Gamson traces back to eighteenth-century America, citing the concerns of George Washington’s biographer that ‘a public character is often an artificial one’.⁶⁸ There is no one definitive history of celebrity. As such, histories have been positioned and interpreted in different ways. Of these various histories, four themes are especially useful to an understanding of the contemporary memoirs of young, female celebrities: the belief that proximity to the star is something that can be purchased, the shift to interest in their private lives, the celebrity author and readers’ interest in their lives beyond their texts, and the (punitively) gendered nature of the attention that the star’s private life receives. Thus, a range of intersecting themes within these histories are pertinent to this project which I shall sketch below.

The central promise of contemporary celebrity memoir is that it claims to be a means of accessing authenticated knowledge about the private life of the celebrity author-subject. In his study of the emergence of the star system, film historian Richard de Cordova, like Ponce de Leon, sees a fascination with the private lives of actors as what defines celebrity construction. He identifies the 1910s as a moment of ‘significant transformation,’ when the types of knowledge about actors that were available to audiences expanded from the professional existence of the actor to the private life of the star.⁶⁹ To this shift in emphasis, where magazines begin to offer access to actors’ existence beyond their film work, de Cordova attributes the emergence of the figure of the ‘star’ we understand today. The promise of insights into who a celebrity is as a person, the idea of a ‘true’ self ‘behind’ their public cultural output, remains integral to the function and appeal of contemporary celebrity memoir.

Tracing these practices back further still, and considering celebrity authorship in particular, Richard Salmon takes the example of the Victorian author to argue that the late nineteenth century was an era of ‘newfound proximity’ for audiences and celebrities, as advertising, journalism and photography commoditise the ‘life’ of the author to be marketed alongside his works.⁷⁰ Salmon laments this fact and sees it as a ‘displacement’ of the locus of attention from the literary work as privileged object. A key difference between Salmon’s model of celebrity and the examples chosen for this thesis is that the ‘life’ of a figure like

⁶⁷ Charles L. Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure: Human-interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁶⁸ Parson Weems cited in Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1994), p.19.

⁶⁹ Richard de Cordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, [2001] 1990), p.98.

⁷⁰ Richard Salmon, ‘Signs of Intimacy: The Literary Celebrity in the “Age of Interviewing,”’ *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 25.1 (1997), pp.159-77.

Katie Price or Kim Kardashian is her work.⁷¹ There may be other texts which they produce (indeed, the nature of contemporary, multiplatform celebrity is such that there will be many), but far from operating as paratextual support or merely marketing, the work of producing the celebrity life story is absolutely central to (or enabling of) these other texts. Another dissimilarity between my analysis and that of Salmon is that he views the cultural trend of offering up the celebrity 'life' as displacing attention from the literary work to the life as commodity, a view which fits within the critical trend of deeming each new development in popular culture as evidence of cultural decline.⁷²

Lastly, as I have stated, this thesis contends that cultural appetites for access to a celebrity's private life particularly target female celebrities: the types of stories demanded and the manner of the confession required are both heavily gendered and punitive. As Milly Williamson demonstrates with regard to eighteenth-century theatre and publishing, widespread interest in gossip and scandal surrounding the private lives of celebrities is a phenomenon dating back over two hundred years.⁷³ As well as situating the roots of the economics of access in a far older set of cultural practices than Turner, de Cordova or Salmon, Williamson's analysis is especially pertinent as it demonstrates that the gendered dynamics of these appetites for access are also historically entrenched, as 'merciless' concern with women's sexual morality and the promise of access to knowledge of women's sexual histories remain foundational to the memoirs of contemporary female celebrities and their surrounding industries.

The 21st century celebrity context

Whilst there is a long tradition of the celebrity memoir form⁷⁴ - and ghosting is not a new phenomenon⁷⁵ - the turn of the twenty-first century was a moment when news about the 'private' lives of celebrities resisted the patterns of decline in television and print media, evolving in new online forms, and becoming a constant feed updated across multiple platforms as if 'in real time'. It is in this context of 'the everywhere of fame' that I analyse celebrity memoirs,⁷⁶ and, from this point onward, that I define the contemporary period of

⁷¹ Stéphanie Genz, 'My Job is Me', *Feminist Media Studies*, 15 (4), 2015, pp.545-61.

⁷² Salmon is not alone in this. It is a position espoused most emphatically by Daniel Boorstin before him, who characterised celebrity as a 'pseudo-event' (p. 57, 1962). Indeed, Graeme Turner observes a trend of elitist criticism in which "each new shift in fashion is offered as the end of civilization as we know it, with the real motivation being an elitist distaste for the demotic or populist dimension of mass cultural practices" (*Understanding Celebrity*, p.5).

⁷³ Williamson, 'Celebrity, Gossip, Privacy, and Scandal.'

⁷⁴ Ben Yagoda, *Memoir*; Julie Rak, *Boom!*.

⁷⁵ Ernest R. May, Ghost Writing and History, *The American Scholar*, 22 (4) 1953, pp. 459-65.

⁷⁶ Sean Redmond, 'Intimate Fame Everywhere', *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p.27.

the genre, analysing texts published between 2004 and 2012. I shall illustrate the contemporary appetites and commercial imperatives for a fantasy of access, celebrity news and reality products by demonstrating how these have resisted patterns of decline seen in other media.

In the late 1990s, women's magazines were declining in circulation, with the exception of weekly celebrity titles, which enjoyed increasing sales figures.⁷⁷ The rapid expansion of home internet use⁷⁸ saw the launch of online celebrity gossip sites such as Popbitch in the UK (1999) and Perez Hilton in the US (2004) and, with them, came a 'shift to a more malicious or "Bitchy" discussion of female celebrities, as well as the heightened profile of the female "train-wreck" celebrity'.⁷⁹ Whilst the punitive circulation of celebrity scandal has always historically targeted public women,⁸⁰ and pejorative celebrity gossip has been integral to the success of historic publications such as the *Confidential Magazine* of the 1950s,⁸¹ an increasingly vicious tone of celebrity discourse flourished with celebrity gossip blogging, exacerbating the trend towards caustic and highly gendered vitriol.⁸²

Where celebrity gossip magazines had previously demanded a cover charge for a weekly despatch, these sites could offer daily updates for free. As Kirsty Fairclough argues, gossip blogs operate at 'such a frenetic pace that traditional celebrity gossip delivery mechanisms are struggling to compete.'⁸³ Digital media facilitated new fissures in an already (at times deliberately) porous division between public and private. As Richard Berger has observed: this was a 'new media that was largely untouched by the restrictive content regulation of the PCC and government legislation.'⁸⁴ This discourse from a 'perceived back region,'⁸⁵ both responded to and encouraged appetites for access, with content from such sites being discussed and recycled across mainstream media platforms.

Meanwhile, the television industry was seeking new formats to attract mass audiences and contend with increasingly fierce market competition. The arrival of digital television in the UK saw 497 new channels introduced in 20 years.⁸⁶ The average number of

⁷⁷ Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.137.

⁷⁸ James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.238.

⁷⁹ Kirsty Fairclough, "Fame is a Losing Game: Celebrity Gossip Blogging, Bitch Culture and Postfeminism," *Genders* 48, 2008, retrieved on 23.6.2012 from http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_fairclough.html.

⁸⁰ Williamson, 'Celebrity, Gossip, Privacy, and Scandal.'

⁸¹ Nick Muntean and Anne Helen Petersen, 'Celebrity Twitter: Strategies of Intrusion and Disclosure in the Age of Technoculture,' *M/C Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 5 (2009)

⁸² Fairclough, 'Fame is a Losing Game.'

⁸³ Fairclough, 'Fame is a Losing Game.'

⁸⁴ Richard Berger, *Framing the Subversive: Journalism, Celebrity and the Web*. Paper presented at *The End of Journalism? Technology, education and ethics*, University of Bedfordshire, 18 October 2008, retrieved on 6 June 2013, from <http://theendofjournalism.wikidot.com/richardberger>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ This is a 12,525% increase. Hannah Yelin and Jonathan Wise, 'Dave: Now Everyone has a Mate Called Dave', in Neil Dawson, ed., *Advertising Works 17: Case studies from the IPA effectiveness awards 2008* (Henley-on-Thames: WARC 2009), p.114.

channels watched per person increased⁸⁷ while average weekly hours viewed remained static.⁸⁸ As a result, average UK viewing per channel declined.⁸⁹ In 2000 *Big Brother* was launched in both the UK and US with contestants giving up their privacy for 3 months to live under 24 hour surveillance, allowing viewers to watch every aspect of their everyday lives, including those considered private, overly intimate, or indecent, and as such normally out of bounds, for example going to the toilet, having sex or sleeping. This new format provided Channel 4 with an effective return on investment, national news coverage, high viewing figures, corresponding advertising rates and lucrative sponsorship deals. This fantasy of absolute access (which is in reality highly mediated) proved to be a formula for commercial success at a time when TV channels were struggling for audiences.⁹⁰

Whilst I am not suggesting the success of the celebrity memoir can be attributed to these shifts, as it clearly has a longer history, this moment, marked by commercial and competitive intensity; online media evolutions; and a cultural preoccupation with accessing the lives of others, saw celebrity memoir sales figures boom.⁹¹ Celebrity gossip was defying the trend towards decline in television and print media, evolving online, and increasingly ubiquitous across all platforms. Added to this, the free-marketisation of the UK publishing industry in 1997 saw the end of the 1899 net book agreement, which had allowed publishers to set and maintain the retail prices of books. 'When that happened,' Jonny Geller, managing director of Curtis Brown's books division, told *The Guardian*, 'the supermarkets came in with huge discounts, and you got a mass market.'⁹² This is borne out by the sales figures. Ben Yagoda calculates that 'total sales in categories of Personal Memoirs, Childhood Memoirs, and Parenthood Memoirs increased more than 400 per cent between 2004 and 2008.'⁹³ By 'making a private history public',⁹⁴ celebrity memoir offers credibility to the idea of a 'real' identity that supposedly exists 'behind' a public persona at a time when this very dynamic is unique in its ability to attract mass audiences, adapt to new forms and to shape national media consumption.

This was the moment at which the memoirs in this study were released. They now exist and must compete within a culture that constructs celebrity according to a logic of

⁸⁷ From 4 to 30, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ On average, people spent more time watching TV than in paid employment, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ From 6 hours 18 minutes to 50 minutes – an 87% drop, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Channel 4 reported a record financial year after BB's first series and saw audiences figures grow steadily over subsequent years: 'Record Year for Channel Four,' *Daily Mail*, 1 May 2001, retrieved on 5 June 2013, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/news/article-1555910/Record-year-for-Channel-4.html>.

Nadia Cohen, 'Beep, beep, beep ... it's Big Brother!', *The Daily Mail*, May 2002, retrieved on 5 June 2013, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-117087/Beep-beep-beep---Big-Brother.html#ixzz2UiGGZpS9>.

⁹¹ Rak, *Boom!*

⁹² John Harris, 'Why Celebrity Memoirs Rule Publishing,' *The Guardian*, 13 December 2010, retrieved on 5 June 2013, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/dec/13/celebrity-memoirs-bestsellers-autobiography-christmas#ixzz2UhtsjwCT>.

⁹³ Yagoda, *Memoir*, p.7.

⁹⁴ Rachael McLennan, *American Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013) p.7.

exposure, where access is perceived to equal authenticity and unauthorised access offers the greatest authenticity of all. There is a rush to analyse new media forms such as social media and their cultural functions as technologies of self-making,⁹⁵ and yet this ‘old’ (yet still thriving) media form remains comparatively unexamined. This is, therefore, in effect, a study of an old media genre in a moment of change. As Holmes argues, celebrity texts must compete with one another as each claims ‘to offer a higher form of truth’.⁹⁶ Reality TV claims to offer unprecedented direct access while reactive gossip media contradictorily offer accompanying ‘behind the scenes’ stories in real time. Added to this cycle, a constant stream of celebrity social media ‘has been equated with the assertion of the authentic celebrity voice [whilst] the seemingly unrehearsed quality of the communiqués lends the form an immediacy and casualness’.⁹⁷ With a high cover price, and a much-delayed (slow media) release date, memoir must work harder to deliver a return for appetites for the story ‘behind’ all previous stories whilst reconciling, tallying with or reacting to this wealth of interconnected, pre-existing extratextual narratives.

Theorizing authenticity and artifice: in celebrity and in autobiography

Celebrity culture shares a central characteristic with the autobiography genre in that they both appeal to their audiences by promising to reveal the ‘real’ person. As a result of this underlying ‘rhetoric of sincerity or authenticity,’⁹⁸ critical understandings of both celebrity and autobiography have focussed upon problematising such claims and highlighting the inherently constructed nature of authenticity. Writing from the perspective of star studies, Richard Dyer notes that ‘star biographies are devoted to the notion of showing us the star as he or she really is’ and claim to offer access “‘behind the scenes”, “beneath the surface”, “beyond the image”’.⁹⁹ As Dyer argues, underpinning all of these excavations behind, beneath, and beyond, is the ‘insistent question of “really”’: what is the star *really* like?¹⁰⁰ Celebrity discourses of authenticity (like autobiographies more widely) hinge upon, and give credence to, Enlightenment models of the value of the unique individual and the coherent,

⁹⁵ For example K. Tiidenberg, ‘Bringing Sexy Back: Reclaiming the Body Aesthetic via Self-shooting,’ *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 8 (1) 2014.

⁹⁶ Su Holmes, ‘All You’ve Got to Worry About is the Task, Having a Cup of Tea, and Doing a Bit of Sunbathing’: Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*,’ in *Understanding Reality Television*, ed. by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (London : Routledge 2004), p.121.

⁹⁷ Muntean and Petersen, ‘Celebrity Twitter.’

⁹⁸ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), p.10

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.2.

essential self, encouraging belief in the possibility of ‘gaining access to some essential knowledge’.¹⁰¹ Media texts claim to offer access to this ‘real’, essential self through varying means. For example, stars are presented in the confessional mode to construct a relationship of affective intimacy¹⁰² or are ‘caught’ (or constructed) as ‘off-guard, unkempt, unready’¹⁰³ to suggest the logic of the exposé. In this regard, the private, or the hidden, is prized as the locus of ‘truth’. However, representations of the star’s private, confessed, or unkempt selves are as much images that require construction as their ‘on-screen’ personas. Dyer argues that the idea that any one aspect of a star identity is more real than another is a logical impossibility: ‘How we appear is no less real than how we have manufactured that appearance, or the ‘we’ that is doing the manufacturing.’¹⁰⁴ Thus, the authenticity so prized in the celebrity world functions according to Lionel Trilling’s understanding of authenticity: a paradox precisely because it requires effort to appear true to oneself. Authentic identity is in fact a social construct that contradicts the very notion it supposedly represents.¹⁰⁵ Authenticity is thus a value judgement, externally imposed: its proof residing in the audience who receives the celebrity self or text and deems it authentic or otherwise.

Yet, in spite of this (often explicitly evident) interference, antagonism and unattainability, authenticity remains ‘a quality necessary to the star phenomenon to make it work.’¹⁰⁶ It persists, then, as a vexed yet valuable currency, retaining its exchange value, however openly it is undermined. Richard Dyer has observed that authenticity is a form of currency for celebrities: ‘It is the star’s really seeming to be what he/she is supposed to be that secures his/her status.’¹⁰⁷ This is exacerbated in ‘reality products’¹⁰⁸ such as memoirs, resulting in an ‘ever more fervent negotiation of the “real” self.’¹⁰⁹

The concern with the real self behind the visibly mediated image results in reflexive media texts that ‘have become unabashed and unapologetic about artificial authenticity, instructing readers in how to be more sophisticated in recognizing and using it themselves.’¹¹⁰ This results, notes Holmes, in an ‘ever more tenuous line that [celebrity gossip media] walk in balancing both the construction and ‘deconstruction’ of contemporary

¹⁰¹ Graeme Turner, Frances Bonner, and P. David Marshall, *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000), p.12.

¹⁰² Redmond, ‘Pieces of Me’.

¹⁰³ Su Holmes, ‘Off-guard, Unkempt, Unready’?: Deconstructing Contemporary Celebrity in heat Magazine, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 19 (1) 2005, pp.21-38.

¹⁰⁴ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, p.2.

¹⁰⁵ Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 5-6.

¹⁰⁶ Dyer, Richard, “A Star Is Born and the Construction of Authenticity”, *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. by Christine Gledhill (London: Routledge, 1991), p.133.

¹⁰⁷ Dyer, ‘A Star is Born,’ pp.132-40; p.133.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, ‘Bad Girl to Mad Girl’.

¹⁰⁹ Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, ‘Introduction’, in *Understanding Reality Television*, ed. Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (London: Routledge, 2004). p.22.

¹¹⁰ Joshua Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.48.

celebrity.¹¹¹ The hunt to excavate ‘behind’ the public person is not a new phenomenon. As Gamson, writing in 1994, demonstrates, celebrity has long been accompanied by scepticism owing to historic ‘anxieties about the trustworthiness of public selves.’¹¹² This self-reflexivity around the question of authenticity versus artifice continues in the contemporary, networked media landscape – exacerbated as technology enables its evolution into new forms. As Holmes and Redmond argue, ‘this “game” of star and celebrity hide-and-seek seems to be an increasingly important one given the amount of “extra” artifice and simulation in the modern world’ as new media open up ‘the number of spaces where the star or celebrity can be found out, re-written, and seen *in the flesh* as they really are.’¹¹³ Thus, the contemporary negotiation of authenticity is increasingly explicit in its discussions of artifice and authenticity – both within self-conscious media texts and within an audience that is increasingly well versed in the processes of manufacturing fame. Further, as this thesis shall demonstrate, what is specific to the contemporary era of *networked* media is the ease with which these discourses are enabled to overlap, compete, interact and coalesce in assemblages of contradictory narratives that surround a star.

Authenticity, its visual, verbal and textual codes; its high celebrity exchange value; and its paradoxical impossibility, are fundamental to the celebrity memoir. Despite their evident status as carefully, slowly honed, edited and ghost-written texts, these memoirs claim to offer the self in its fullest, stressing veracity at every opportunity and using various methods to construct the appearance of authenticity’s presence. The methods used to construct the appearance of authenticity differ from text to text, residing variously in some of the following textual features: explicit promises of access to ‘the real me’ (Hilton, Price, Jameson, Goody), the idiosyncratic textual address suggestive of verbal oration (Price, Jameson, Goody, Kardashian, M.I.A.), a history of suffering (Anderson, Jameson, Price, Goody, M.I.A., Kardashian), emotional extremity (Gaga, Jameson, Goody, Anderson), narrating the ‘stripped bare’ naked body, locating authenticity in ever greater exposure (Gaga, Price, Anderson, Jameson), and the narration of lives that are out of control (Gaga, Price, Anderson, Jameson, Goody). Even when these texts purport to engage in postmodern, self-reflexive play with performed identities, in what I term ‘doing’ celebrity (Hilton, Gaga, M.I.A.), they default to the currency of authenticity in one way or another.

Just as the study of celebrity has been greatly concerned with the competing ideas of authenticity and artifice, these themes are central to the study of autobiography. From the field of literary criticism, Jakki Spicer has observed that ‘since its inception as a formalised

¹¹¹ Su Holmes, ‘Off-guard, Unkempt, Unready’?: Deconstructing Contemporary Celebrity in *heat Magazine*.’ *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 19 (1), 2005: 21-38.

¹¹² Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.38.

¹¹³ Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, ‘Introduction: Understanding Celebrity Culture’, in *Framing Celebrity : New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London: London : Routledge, 2006)., p.4.

field of study, autobiography studies has been preoccupied with whether an autobiographical text can communicate to its readers the reality of its author's experiences.¹¹⁴ As well as the difficulties of converting lived experience into written narrative, these texts are compromised by the limits of the subject's self-knowledge, memory, or ability to conceive of themselves outside of culturally designated subjectivities. As Mary Evans writes, 'contemporary auto/biography cannot in any sense "reveal" because the author has internalised the norms and conventions of the twentieth century.'¹¹⁵ I posit that the explicit incursions into the authenticity of the celebrity memoir are an open secret that can be taken into account by the reader, who is able to simultaneously search for insight into a 'real' person and for discrepancies, without necessarily undermining the functioning of the text.

As I have suggested, this situates the ghost-written memoir in a complex grey area between biography, autobiography, fact and fiction. As such it is useful to consider these texts, not only in relation to the critical tools used in the study of autobiography and celebrity, but also, the critical tools used to understand the subjectivity represented in the narrator of fiction. In Wayne Booth's terms, a narrator is '*reliable* when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say the implied author's norms), *unreliable* when he does not' [emphasis in original].¹¹⁶ The gap that Booth conceives between the narrator, the implied author, and the 'real' author of fiction is exacerbated by the presence of the ghost writer. However, due to the direct 'telling' of autobiography, the implied author and narrator often collapse into one, which means that narratorial reliability requires that the world within the memoir tally with extratextual reality. Dan Shen argues that the memoir reader is 'consciously or half-consciously comparing the textual world with the extratextual reality.'¹¹⁷ Thus, when Paris Hilton's memoir states 'I have pretty much grown up in public and I've done some pretty immature things along the way,'¹¹⁸ the public circulation of her leaked sex tape or news coverage of her jail time for driving under the influence operate as extratextual discourses directing readers inferences as to what she may be alluding.¹¹⁹ These intertexts help to hide the ghost writer and ease readers into the collusive suspension of disbelief that the woman they know from the web of celebrity gossip is directly relating her life story to them. Whilst the memoir is an intervention into the multiple versions of the celebrity subject, they cannot deviate from those versions entirely as readers seek to tally the subject they encounter within the text with the readings they have already arrived at from multiple other sources.

¹¹⁴ Jakki Spicer, 'The Author is Dead, Long Live the Author: Autobiography and the Fantasy of the Individual,' *Criticism*, 47 (3) 2005, pp.387-403, p.388.

¹¹⁵ Mary Evans, *Missing Persons. The Impossibility of Auto/biography*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p.138.

¹¹⁶ Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp.158-59.

¹¹⁷ Dan Shen, 'Unreliability in Autobiography vs. Fiction', *Poetics Today* 28 (1) 2007, p.48.

¹¹⁸ Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress: A Tongue-in-Chic Peek Behind the Pose* (New York: Fireside Books, 2004), p.176.

¹¹⁹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Ghost-written memoirs occupy a different ontological status from either autobiography or novels because of the ways in which they interact with an extratextual reality, and the fact that this interaction is fundamental to their functioning. Despite the ghost writer's known position occupying much of the actual author's space, readers look to the "I" of the narrator for insight into the life of another actual author. Viewing these subjects through the lens of the (unreliable) narrators of fiction enables the separation of the celebrity subjects that readers seek to know within these memoirs from the people they appear to be outside of the boundaries of these texts. Asking what constitutes reliability in this context raises questions of authorship and authority that can inform our understanding, not only of celebrity memoirs in particular, but of texts whose criticism cannot be contained solely within the text.

If the readers enjoy and continue to purchase these texts, the subject has an opportunity to rebrand, and the ghost writer gets paid, one might wonder why it matters how much input Pamela Anderson, Katie Price, Jenna Jameson, Paris Hilton, Kim Kardashian, Jade Goody, Lady Gaga, or M.I.A. had in the generation of their published life-stories. This ambiguity of the subject's authorial role is what remains unaddressed in the existing reading strategies offered by celebrity studies, autobiography theory, or literary criticism. This thesis seeks to show that there are ramifications if some of the highest circulating texts about and 'by' women today are not actually written by women, or, if they are written by women, not by the women whose stories are told. Whether or not these women relinquish their agency in self-representation wilfully to serve their individual interests as stars, the ghost writer creates a space where women's lives and, in some cases, bodies can be reinscribed with the imposition of external meaning. Whilst I do not ascribe to the view that celebrities are necessarily without any authorial agency whatsoever – indeed, we can never confidently ascertain the presence or absence of agency where celebrity culture is concerned, only seek textual details which invite inference or look at *representations* of agency - we will nonetheless see examples where the space of the ghost reinforces the fallacy that real women are secondary to generic convention, readerly satisfaction, commercial profit or 'every young boy's fantasy'¹²⁰ (as Anderson describes herself).

Whilst, celebrity has been much theorised in relation to authenticity, this thesis demonstrates that the counterpoint to celebrity authenticity is the embrace of camp and the celebration of artificiality that comes with it. Certainly the examples here can be seen to be fervently negotiating and seeking ways to assert their status as authentic celebrity texts, but

¹²⁰ Pamela Anderson, *Star Struck*, (London : Simon & Schuster, 2005), p.34.

this does not preclude the mobilisation of camp: from Katie Price's proud pronouncements of performative self-creation through cosmetic surgery, to Paris Hilton's defensively evasive playfulness and irony, to Lady Gaga's use of reference, quotation and pastiche in her stage shows.

There is a clear relationship between the performed subjectivity at the centre of both memoir and celebrity culture and Sontag's definition of camp as 'being as playing a role'.¹²¹ For Sontag camp is a postmodern sensibility characterised by irony, artifice, exaggeration and unnaturalness (themes that we shall see recur throughout the memoirs analysed here).¹²² However, scholars such as Dyer¹²³ and Jack Babuscio¹²⁴ have been keen to assert the specifically queer, survivalist politics of camp, with this performative role-playing a consequence of existing as a gay man within a hostile, heteropatriarchal society that necessitates 'passing' as 'straight' and thereby inculcates a sensitivity to wider, everyday theatricality. Histories of camp commonly begin with Christopher Isherwood's 1954 novel, *The World in the Evening*, a story of an isolated gay man's search for connection and self-expression. In this context, camp is defined as communicating seriousness through humour, something we shall see in the way 'glamour girl' memoirs attempt to handle histories of abuse: 'You can't camp about something you don't take seriously.'¹²⁵ The question of the politics, or lack thereof, in the camp stance have been central to discussion surrounding it. Angela McRobbie argues that 'glamour, glitter and gloss should not so easily be relegated to the sphere of the insistently apolitical,'¹²⁶ and, certainly, the glossy performance of feminised aesthetics enacted by women's celebrity memoir interacts with the charges of inauthenticity and artifice that see celebrity memoir commonly relegated to the sphere of inconsequential froth, rather than, as this thesis contends, sites of intervention with their own politics.

This understanding of femininity as performance is indebted to Judith Butler's theorisation of 'gender trouble', the process by which gender reveals itself to be a socially constructed performance without any essential basis. Drag, for example 'is not an imitation or a copy of some prior true gender [...] drag enacts the very structure of impersonation by which *any gender* is assumed.'¹²⁷ Within this conception, Katie Price's performance of deliberately constructed and artificial femininity could be seen to be a moment of feminine impersonation, or 'gender trouble'. Here, the repetition of heterosexual cultural forms can be the very site of their denaturalisation, bringing 'into relief the utterly constructed status of

¹²¹ Susan Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), p.280.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹²⁴ Jack Babuscio, 'Camp and Gay Sensibility', *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*. Ed. David Bergman. (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1993).

¹²⁵ Christopher Isherwood, *The World in the Evening*, (London, Methuen, 1954), p.125.

¹²⁶ Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994), p. 175.

¹²⁷ Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, edited by Ann Garry, Marilyn Pearsall, (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p.378.

the so-called heterosexual original'.¹²⁸ However, that is not to say that Price's self-reflexivity around her performance of femininity necessarily 'disrupt[s] the categories of the body, sex, gender, and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification'.¹²⁹ Indeed, the performances in the sample here in turns both strengthen and destabilise existing mores.

Rather, in the competing assertions of willed performance and earnest authenticity we see the precarious and contested space afforded to public women. For Efrat Tseelon, the interrelations of artifice, authenticity and ornament are a specifically feminist issue. She identifies the impossibly competing demands placed upon women and the role of appearance within them. In Tseelon's terms, a 'the duplicity paradox' sees women constructed as artifice, socially required to 'improve' their appearance and simultaneously criticised for superficiality, inauthenticity and a 'lack of essence'.¹³⁰ This she traces to ancient mythological and theological conceptions of femininity such as Pandora and Lilith who 'concealed a treacherous self behind a façade of beauty' and whose myths still today underpin ideas of women as synonymous with artifice.¹³¹ This leaves woman occupying an 'impossible space'¹³² where she is always already failing these competing demands: 'is it the case that she hides her real essence, or is she only a series of masks with no essence?'¹³³ As a result, the contradictory performances of earnest authenticity and willed artifice in these memoirs can be seen as the contortions of required of accounts which seek to present a successful feminine subjectivity in such a paradoxically impossible space. We see these texts attempting to simultaneously adhere to mutually exclusive, contradictory and impossible female norms rather than being able to wholly accept, subvert or reconcile them.

Literary critical approaches to the ghosted celebrity author

Ghost-written celebrity memoir occupies a subsection of the autobiography genre. The field has been defined by self-generated autobiography and as a result, when ghost-written memoir is engaged with, its singularities are often ignored so that texts can be read as if they had been authored by a single individual. This is something that the texts themselves encourage through tone, consistency with extratextual narratives that circulate around the star and, frequently, the invisibility of the ghost. Narrated in the first person, without

¹²⁸ Ibid. p.380.

¹²⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.xii.

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.xxxi.

¹³¹ Efrat Tseëlon, *The Masque of Femininity: the presentation of woman in everyday life*, (London: Sage, 1995), pp.34-5.

¹³² Ibid. p.34.

¹³³ Ibid. p.39.

quotation marks, the straight authorial address implies frank confession and direct access to subjectivity; these texts frequently actively veil the collaborative production process and seek to collapse the distinctions between narrator, implied and actual author.

The status of singular author connotes power. Michel Foucault has argued that the ‘coming into being of the notion of ‘author’ constitutes the privileged moment of individualisation in the history of ideas.’¹³⁴ However, collaborative authorship is not denied legitimacy in all of its forms. From political speechwriters such as Peggy Noonan to literary editors such as Maxwell Perkins, forms of authorship exist that show that collaboration can result in culturally celebrated sources of power or authority. Authorship-as-collaboration scholarship ranges from that which argues for the inherently collaborative foundation of all writing due to its socially constructed nature to those who ask whether the death of the author has been a means to deny certain groups *authority*.¹³⁵

Lee has identified the critical and popular tendency in the reading of celebrity memoir to ‘mute the celebrity and allow the non-celebrity signature to take the credit for the production of the celebrity autobiography,’¹³⁶ a practice based purely on ‘suspicions about the intellectual labors (or lack thereof) of the rich and famous.’¹³⁷ This thesis proposes that, just as agency takes multiple forms, participation in the collaborative writing process may be the result of various practices – for example conception, oration and authorisation may not fall within traditional definitions of *writing*, but cannot be denied as participatory acts which shape the life story.

It is for this reason that, unless there is some textual evidence to the contrary, I attribute the words in these texts to their celebrity author-subjects, despite the fact that as critical readers we can only ever *infer* who is speaking behind the collectively-produced, first person “I”. Whilst the presence of the ghost writer problematises the promise of the single authorial signature,¹³⁸ this thesis nonetheless ascribes quotes to the celebrities involved more concretely than is strictly possible to discern in the text (for example, ‘Paris Hilton relates’ or ‘Paris Hilton’s memoir relates’). This does not mean I take the text’s claims to offer the voice of the celebrity author at face value: far from it. The reader of collaboratively authored memoir can never truly know who is speaking or the nature of the contributions made by

¹³⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author?’, *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Poststructuralist Criticism*, ed. by Josue V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1979), pp.141-60, p.141.

¹³⁵ Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford, ‘Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship’, *PMLA*, 116 (2) 2001, pp. 354-69, p.354.

¹³⁶ Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories’, p.1257.

¹³⁷ Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories’, p.1256.

¹³⁸ Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*. Trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

each party.¹³⁹ But to deliberately seek an alternative terminology that interrupts this claim of authorship (for example ‘Hilton and/or her ghost relates’), and to ignore the fact that the texts themselves attribute these words to the celebrity author-subject, denies the celebrity selves agency too firmly (a perspective which dovetails with popular and gendered assumptions about the celebrity’s intellectual capacities).¹⁴⁰ I invoke their ghost writers when this is pertinent to what is being said or how - to draw attention to a moment of uncharacteristic self-reflexivity, for example - not as a means to discredit the female, celebrity author-subject.

This thesis interrogates the many layers of mediation ghost-written celebrity memoir presents. It attempts to navigate the difficulties that arise from the explicit promise of access to a ‘true’ self, in an environment in which the degree of authorship a star has had can only be inferred. This raises questions of the relationship between ghost-writing, the agency of its subjects and the resultant granting or denial of the status of object of authenticity and authority.

The emphasis in twentieth-century literary theory, from New Criticism to postmodernism, has been upon the text as *text*, independent of an extratextual author.¹⁴¹ I argue that ghost-written memoirs are so much a product of the market in which they are produced, and so much in dialogue with their paratexts, that this needs to be addressed for application to a context in which the texts exist in an assemblage of webs of conflicting mediation.

Before the ‘life’ even reaches the creative and editing processes of the ghost writer, its first layer of mediation is that of the memory of the subject. The inevitably partial ‘imaginative acts of remembering’ through which all autobiography is mediated are identified by Smith and Watson as ‘a subjective form of evidence, not externally verifiable’ but ‘asserted on the subject’s authority.’¹⁴² If, however, the subject is denied authority to begin with, the layering of inauthenticity as represented by the ghost writer, compounds the existing invalidation.

In *The Company We Keep: The Ethics of Fiction*, Wayne Booth raises questions that, although developed with reference to fiction, are especially applicable to collaborative life-writing: ‘what are the author's responsibilities to those whose lives are used as “material”?’ ‘what are the author's responsibilities to others whose labor is exploited to make the work of

¹³⁹ G. Thomas Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives: The Ethics of Collaborative Life Writing,' *Style*, 32 (2), 1998, p.334-51.

¹⁴⁰ Lee, 'Not Just Ghost Stories.'

¹⁴¹ Leroy Searle, 'New Criticism,' *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory*, 2nd edition, ed. by Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). Roland Barthes. 'The Death of the Author.' *Image / Music / Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) pp.142-7.

¹⁴² Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis; London: Minneapolis ; London : University of Minnesota Press, 2001). p.6.

art possible?', and 'what are responsibilities of the author to truth?'¹⁴³ Thomas G. Couser responds to these questions by charting the ethics and power dynamics presented by collaborative life-writing along a continuum 'from ethnographic autobiography, in which the writer outranks the subject, to celebrity autobiography, in which the subject outranks the writer.'¹⁴⁴ Couser's analysis highlights the fact that, whilst they must coalesce for the production of the book, the interests of writer and subject are not necessarily aligned. Whilst this has validity, the presentation of a clear direction to the hierarchy is a reductive, exaggerated distinction. A celebrity may 'outrank' their writer economically; however this does not straightforwardly translate into agency in the production of their life story. This reading fails to account for non-economic forms of capital and the diversity of markers of status, and acts by which one places oneself within a hierarchy

Pierre Bourdieu argues non-economic (or indirectly economic) assets constitute an individual's status and opportunities for social mobility through 'cultural capital' such as taste, education, intellect, voice or appearance, and in 'symbolic capital,' such as prestige, reputation and honour.¹⁴⁵ Couser's analysis functions in terms of economic, and arguably symbolic, capital. However, consider as an example the difference in cultural capitals between Jade Goody and her ghost writer, Lucie Cave (which shall be discussed in detail in chapter three). Now the editor of UK celebrity gossip magazine, *heat*, Cave is a university-educated journalist and broadcaster. Goody, by contrast, is a working-class woman repeatedly excluded from her state secondary school who became famous, and publicly mocked, for her malapropisms, confusion and lack of education. One therefore cannot assume that Cave is merely an exploited scribe doing Goody's bidding, when it is possible, if not likely, that she had a greater awareness than her subject of the reception that aspects of Goody's life story would receive. As if in acknowledgement of this fact, a foreword by Cave to Goody's fifth and final memoir, *Jade: Fighting to the End*, describes Goody as 'candid' and 'extremely vulnerable.'¹⁴⁶ Goody's agency in the process of her self-representation is therefore problematic. The field of celebrity studies has been much concerned with these questions of agency, and these debates shall be outlined in greater detail in the next section of this literature review.

On occasions when autobiography studies does engage with collaborative construction, it appears to sit at either end of a spectrum. Either it is still very much indebted to its origins in ethnography where, in Lejeune's words, the subject is 'studied from above,'¹⁴⁷ a model which

¹⁴³ Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) pp.130-32.

¹⁴⁴ Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives,' pp.334-51.

¹⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

¹⁴⁶ Jade Goody, *Jade Fighting to the End*, (London: John Blake, 2009), p.vii.

¹⁴⁷ Philippe Lejeune, 'The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write,' *On Autobiography*, ed. by Paul John Eakin (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p.199.

does not accord with celebrity memoir due to the star's economic (and in some cases symbolic) status, or, like G. Thomas Couser above, the field conceives of 'celebrity autobiography, in which the subject outranks the writer,'¹⁴⁸ situating the celebrity at the apex of social hierarchy. Neither of these two models offers a satisfactory account of collaborative construction because each fails to take into account the different capitals that each party may bring to the collaboration; the other processes of mediation that occur through the texts' industrial production; or the ways in which agency in self-representation is, in these texts, multiple and negotiated. Rather than evading or simplifying the challenges ghost-writing presents to interpretation, they will be the very subject of my enquiry.

My aim is to offer a framework for reading these texts that accounts for their autobiographical nature without valorising the author (and thus the coherent self). Given that ghosted authorship involves at least two people, an appropriate conceptual framework needs to account for the industrial conditions of their construction without dismissing them as the solely cynical manufacture of corporate merchandise. An effective framework must also treat these texts as narratives with unreliable subjectivities that collapse distinctions between narrator, implied and actual author, and yet have author subjects who undeniably exist beyond the text. Whilst the academy treats these aspects as discrete, these texts offer a reading experience that is able to reconcile these paradoxical, coexistent contradictions.

Celebrity studies approaches to celebrity agency

I shall now sketch the debates around agency within the field of celebrity studies and suggest a framework in which the negotiated agency of the celebrity author subjects analysed here can be understood. As stated, the celebrity memoir has been dogged by associations with manufacture and inauthenticity. Tied up with concerns about manufacture are questions of agency. In 1979, Richard Dyer questioned the dominant 'manipulation thesis' in which stars were seen to exist only through the hegemonic, industrial machinery that produces them.¹⁴⁹ Despite Dyer's arguments, such assumptions remain persistent in both popular and scholarly discourse.¹⁵⁰ However, despite being one of the earliest to disavow a 'manipulation thesis,' Dyer engages with memoir primarily as evidence of manipulation, as previously discussed.

P. David Marshall's understanding of celebrity as a 'negotiated "terrain" of significance,'¹⁵¹ is therefore useful in its multiplicity. Marshall's conception of celebrity as a

¹⁴⁸ Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives,' pp.334-51.

¹⁴⁹ Dyer, *Stars*, p.13.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of the persistence of assumptions of celebrity manipulation see Lorraine York 'Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency.' *The Journal of Popular Culture* 46 (6) 2013: pp.1330-47.

¹⁵¹ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.47.

struggle between various interests, agents and narratives captures the constant flux of the phenomenology of celebrity. In line with Marshall, I argue that the celebrity is one of many agents in the production of the life story to demonstrate the way in which the celebrity 'life' must interact with a pre-existing field of narratives which circulate around the celebrity, with or without her authorisation, in an assemblage resembling Marshall's negotiated terrain. However, despite creating an important space for a negotiation between multiple agents in our understanding of celebrity, Marshall nonetheless defaults to the paradigm of manufactured, manipulated celebrity:

To a great degree, the celebrity is a production of the dominant culture. It is produced by a commodity system of cultural production and is produced with the intentions of leading and/or representing. Nevertheless, the celebrity's meaning is constructed by the audience.¹⁵²

Despite his concession to the attempts of cultural studies as a discipline to account for the active phenomenological participation of audiences, his 'collective' conception of celebrity has the identified forces operating upon or around the celebrity, rather than theorising the active participation of the celebrity herself.

Joe Moran approaches the question of agency through the example of literary 'star authors', arguing that 'authors actively negotiate their own celebrity, rather than having it simply imposed upon them.'¹⁵³ Building upon Bourdieu's 'field' theory, with its account of the negotiation between structure and agency,¹⁵⁴ Moran proposes a model of 'situated agency' whereby the celebrity author is a self-reflexive agent of their own fame, within and alongside whatever structural or industrial constraints may also be operating upon them.¹⁵⁵ This, in combination with Marshall's idea of the negotiated celebrity 'terrain,' begins to approach a framework for celebrity agency. For Moran, the fact that many of the bestselling authors in America are also literary prize winners, endorsed with all the cultural capital associated with 'high brow' culture, counters, or balances, accusations of the vulgarity or taint of commercial success. Although he states the desire to counter hostility to popular culture and escape the predominant logic that literary celebrity is an outcome of the 'vulgarization of literary life by commercial mass media', he is also keen to separate his celebrity authors from 'the pervasiveness of "entertainment celebrity."¹⁵⁶ Therefore, whilst his theory of situated agency offers immense potential for reimagining the celebrity-as-agent, Moran does not seek to

¹⁵² Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, p.47.

¹⁵³ Joe Moran, *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America* (London: Pluto, 2000), p.10.

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁵⁵ Moran, *Star Authors*, p.67.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.1.

rehabilitate so-called 'low' culture, entertainment celebrity forms, such as the porn star or reality TV star memoirs investigated in this thesis.

Lorraine York builds upon Moran's situated agency for a wider application to questions of agency across a broader range of celebrity forms and modes of cultural production. For York, celebrity agency is a complex and open-ended set of exchanges with stakes in various industrial relations:

He or she may have any number of agendas that may or may not be satisfied as the exchange proceeds. Thinking about celebrity agency in this way—as piecemeal rather than monolithic—allows for greater complexity in discussions of any individual celebrity's agency: it need not be determined to be either present or absent, just as the celebrity need not be determined to be either powerful or powerless. Instead, one may investigate the differential levels of agency that a celebrity may have or lose at any stage. (1341)

Understanding who determines the meaning of celebrity, then, is not simply a case of celebrity versus manipulative industry fabrications,¹⁵⁷ nor is it a case of hegemonic producers versus the consuming audience,¹⁵⁸ nor need it be restricted by genre or hierarchies of cultural value.

However multiple the industrial relations and stakeholders, the celebrity memoir clearly operates as a conscious act of brand management, and whilst authorship may be similarly multiple, participation in authorship can take many forms and cannot be assumed to exclude these celebrity author-subjects. One scholar who has argued *for* the discernible presence of celebrity agency is Rebecca Williams, who interrogates the figure of the empowered female celebrity through the dual lenses of 'third wave' feminism and auteur theory. In her study of American actress, Drew Barrymore, Williams argues that the star can be seen to 'author' her own image.¹⁵⁹ Williams cites Barrymore's active choice in the on-screen roles she takes-on as an opportunity to participate in a 'performed agency' which invites exploration of 'the ways in which she subverts or reinforces hegemonic ideas about gender.'¹⁶⁰ Williams concludes that Barrymore's 'status as producer/auteur and the inextricability of her on-screen and "real life" personas' ensure 'a feminist reading is now possible.'¹⁶¹ The women discussed in this thesis similarly construct their star images in relation to ideas of the 'empowered' woman and, in almost all cases, endeavour to intertwine their on and off screen personas. These celebrity author-subjects can be seen to be, quite

¹⁵⁷ Dyer, *Stars*.

¹⁵⁸ Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*.

¹⁵⁹ Rebecca Williams, 'From beyond Control to in Control: Investigating Drew Barrymore's Feminist Agency/Authorship.' In *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, 111-26. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2007) p.111

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.114

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.121

literally, ‘authoring’ their own images in ways that both subvert and reinforce dominant gender norms. Whilst the memoirs examined here do not always demonstrate progressive gender politics, there are definite moments of textual resistance: speaking back to an industry that hounds and exposes these women, and finding strategies to either resist the demands of the genre to expose themselves further, or to set the terms of their exposure. These resistant gestures within the texts, however, are frequently co-opted by larger, regressive narrative and thematic trends and, instead, become moments that reveal the pressures which coax the telling of the life story in particular directions. In their consideration of autobiographical convention, Smith and Watson argue for the way in which one is ‘coax[ed], coach[ed] or coerce[d]’ into giving an account of oneself because pre-existing ‘discursive patterns both guide and compel us to tell stories about ourselves in particular ways’.¹⁶² As Judith Butler argues, ‘conditions do not “act” in the way that individual agents do, but no agent acts without them’.¹⁶³ Thus, whilst the existence of industrial conditions which collectively produce the mediated life stories examined here does not in itself negate the author subjects’ agency in self-representation, it must be understood as an agency that operates ‘alongside and even within structural forces and constraints’¹⁶⁴ which are also working to shape the celebrity life story.

These structural forces and constraints are necessarily gendered, and the conflict and contortions that arise from these texts’ attempts to negotiate such constraints reveal the contradictory pressures upon the space available to any woman who wishes the account she gives of herself to be received favourably. Again, Tseelon’s understanding of femininity as a paradox is useful here: a woman is ‘an impossible creature who is given space and no space at all, who is offered a position while being denied that position.’¹⁶⁵ The social, psychological and visual roles that are available to women create this paradoxical ‘impossible position’:

If she embraces them she is supporting the ideology which defines her in the first place. If she rejects them outright she denies herself a certain amount of options, now marked, that would have otherwise been available to her.¹⁶⁶

Thus, agency in the celebrity memoir is complex, negotiated, and situated. As the texts simultaneously intervene in and capitulate to competing and contradictory demands they demonstrate how their female authors both have agency and yet are still constrained in circumstances not of their choosing.

¹⁶² Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.51, p.32.

¹⁶³ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), p.11.

¹⁶⁴ Lorraine York ‘Star Turn: The Challenges of Theorizing Celebrity Agency,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture* 46 (6) 2013, pp.1330–47, p.1339.

¹⁶⁵ Tseelon, *Masque of Femininity*, p.2.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. pp.2-3.

Postfeminism and the memoirs of contemporary, young, female celebrities

The memoirs in this sample exist within, and contribute to, a postfeminist cultural context. Whilst the definition of postfeminism has been much disputed as a collection of cultural practices that have the potential to be 'both sexist and transformative',¹⁶⁷ Ros Gill posits a way to understand the phenomenon as a 'postfeminist sensibility,' underpinned by a number of interrelated themes.¹⁶⁸ Amongst these themes we see the (previously mentioned) thematic overlap between the memoir genre and gendered celebrity. For example, the 'emphasis upon self-surveillance', which Gill argues, is constitutive of postfeminist media culture,¹⁶⁹ is equally foundational to the confessional conventions of the memoir genre. While, according to Gill, postfeminism demands constant monitoring of the self, autobiography is necessarily a form of self-surveillance as the author's identity and life experiences are scrutinised, accounted for, analysed and given meaning through discursive regimes.

Another theme identified by Gill is the 'focus on individualism, choice and empowerment.'¹⁷⁰ These memoirs directly invoke questions of personal power, and frequently offer their celebrity author-subjects as examples of 'empowered' femininity, issuing such advice as 'it's your choice who you are'¹⁷¹ and 'know how to work it.'¹⁷² Despite discussion of social issues that affect women – for example the experiences of sexual assault and partner violence discussed in the memoirs of Anderson, Jameson, and Price – none of the memoirs invoke feminism as a collective movement with a shared goal of improving the situation of women as a social group. Instead, such structural inequalities are 'reprivatised,' and presented as challenges to be overcome in an individual path to empowerment.¹⁷³ Thus, individual solutions are offered in place of coherent responses to structural, social problems. This accords with the understanding of postfeminism as part of a 'backlash'¹⁷⁴ against the gains of second wave feminism in which feminism is 'taken into account' only 'in order to emphasise that it is no longer needed.'¹⁷⁵

¹⁶⁷ Jessica Ringrose, *Postfeminist Education: Girls and the Sexual Politics of Schooling*, (London; New York, NY : Routledge 2013), p.121.

¹⁶⁸ Rosalind Gill, 'Postfeminist Media Culture Elements of a Sensibility,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10 (2) 2007, pp.147-166, p.147.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Pamela Anderson, *Star Struck* (London: Pocket, 2006), p.212.

¹⁷² Katie Price, *Being Jordan* (London: John Blake, 2005), p. 7.

¹⁷³ Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism : Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p.106.

¹⁷⁴ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Anchor Books 1992)

¹⁷⁵ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 'Introduction', *Interrogating Postfeminism*, ed. by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (Durham : Duke University Press 2007), p.28.

The depoliticisation of women's concerns under postfeminism is accompanied by a declawing of the threat of the capable, independent, adult woman through a process of 'girling', in which we see 'the competent professional adult woman who is made safe by being represented as fundamentally still a girl.'¹⁷⁶ This characterisation of the girlish woman works in tandem with an emphasis upon consumerist 'beauty work'¹⁷⁷ in which 'consumption as a strategy... for the production of the self'¹⁷⁸ intertwines with the imperative for self-improvement¹⁷⁹ encouraging costly and labour intensive practices to produce the desirably feminine body which are justified as unproblematic 'pleasures.'¹⁸⁰ Whilst the nature, framing and degree of emphasis varies from text to text, these acts of 'girling' and 'beauty work' are seen, without exception, in every one of the memoirs in this sample. Whilst this is attributable to the prevalence of postfeminist celebrity culture, it is also likely that girlish, non-threatening personas are created because one of the goals of celebrity memoir is to create a likeable, non-threatening persona to which readers can relate.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, as previously discussed, showing the work that goes into constructing the celebrity image is a common strategy for making claims to authenticity. It is significant, however, that although these traits appear across the celebrity memoirs analysed here, postfeminist dictats are most fervently adhered to, and insisted upon, in the memoirs of 'glamour girls' Price, Anderson and Jameson: those who originate from (and in some cases sustain) careers with the greatest professional investment in male desire and pleasure.

Unsurprisingly this is also true of another key motif of postfeminism as identified by Gill: the presentation of sexual pleasure as the source of women's power. As Joel Gwynne argues of postfeminist sexual memoir, readers are 'expected to perceive [the sexual practices related] as empowering simply because the authors/narrators claim to enjoy' them.¹⁸² Enthusiastic self-sexualisation, understood as 'raunch culture'¹⁸³ by Ariel Levy and 'compulsory sexual agency'¹⁸⁴ by Ros Gill, celebrates models of feminine sexuality markedly similar to those promulgated in sexist, male-targeted media, however, this time under the guise of female sexual empowerment. This combination of apparent sexual freedoms and

¹⁷⁶ Tasker and Negra, 'Introduction', p.43

¹⁷⁷ Adrienne Evans and Susan Riley, 'Immaculate Consumption: Negotiating the Sex Symbol in Postfeminist Celebrity Culture,' *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22 (3) 2013, pp.268–81, p.276.

¹⁷⁸ Tasker and Negra, 'Introduction', p.2.

¹⁷⁹ Angela McRobbie, 'Postfeminism and Popular Culture,' in Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (ed.) *Interrogating Postfeminism*, (Durham : Duke University Press 2007) p.35

¹⁸⁰ Avelie Stuart and Ngaire Donaghue, 'Choosing to Conform: The Discursive Complexities of Choice in Relation to Feminine Beauty Practices,' *Feminism & Psychology* 22(1), pp.98–121.

¹⁸¹ Abigail Gosselin, 'Memoirs as Mirrors: Counterstories in Contemporary Memoir,' *Narrative*, 19 (1) 2011, pp.133–48.

¹⁸² Joel Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs and Postfeminism: The Politics of Pleasure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.118.

¹⁸³ Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs : Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York; London: Free Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁴ Rosalind Gill, 'Culture and Subjectivity in Neoliberal and Postfeminist Times,' *Subjectivity*, 25, 2008 pp.432–45, p.440.

intensified incitements to perfect the feminine body are understood by Angela McRobbie as a 'new sexual contract' in which hyper-sexualised emphasis upon feminine sexuality is required as a sort of compensation for the adoption of masculine traits in the entry of women into civic society: '[the young woman] takes up her place in the labour market without going too far. She must retain a visible fragility and the displaying of a kind of conventional feminine vulnerability will ensure she remains desirable to men'.¹⁸⁵ Whilst this constitutes a central narrative theme across the 'glamour girl' memoirs, it is also integral to the photomemoir of Lady Gaga, a research subject originally chosen for this thesis in part for her seemingly resistant, oppositional persona.¹⁸⁶

These imperatives (interpellating the female subject as conventionally feminine, girlish, hyper-sexual, consuming, and always perfecting the body) are heralded as empowering under the rhetoric of choice.¹⁸⁷ However, it is an exaltation of choice and women's freedoms in which regressive gender roles are celebrated and 'chosen' above all others. The mutually reinforcing relationship between postfeminism and neoliberalism can be seen in its endorsement of individualism, consumption and choice, as well as the depoliticisation of collective social movements and perpetuation of conservative social roles. This is equally true of purportedly counter-cultural young, female celebrities such as Lady Gaga. As Caitlin Yunuen Lewis observes in her theorisation of 'cool postfeminism,' a stance characterised by ironic distance and, even, nihilism does not exempt a star from embodying postfeminist values—girlishness, self-sexualisation and unthreatening femininity.¹⁸⁸ By drawing upon these critiques, I seek to show the ways in which, just as memoirs coax a performance of subjectivity, postfeminist media culture coaxes certain subjectivities from the contemporary, young, female subject.

Memoir within gendered celebrity culture

It is impossible to consider the relationship between celebrity memoir and postfeminism without considering how female celebrity culture dramatises, and contributes to, the discursive context of postfeminism more widely. These memoirs are both a perpetuation of, and an intervention into, harshly gendered celebrity cultures that coax particular subjectivities from women. It is for this reason that this thesis focusses exclusively on the

¹⁸⁵ Angela McRobbie, 'Top Girls? Young Women and the Post-Feminist Sexual Contract,' *Identity in Question*, ed. by Anthony Elliott and Paul du Gay (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009), p.79.

¹⁸⁶ David Annandale, 'Rebelais Meets Vogue: The Construction of Carnival, Beauty and Grotesque,' *The performance identities of Lady Gaga*, ed. by R. J. Gray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing 2012).

¹⁸⁷ Rosalind Gill, 'Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and 'Choice' for Feminism,' *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2007 *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 14 (1) 2007, pp.69-80.

¹⁸⁸ Caitlin Yunuen Lewis, 'Cool Postfeminism: The Stardom of Sofia Coppola,' *In the Limelight and under the Microscope : Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, ed. by Su Holmes and Diane Negra (New York: Continuum, 2011).

memoirs of young *female* celebrities. In the coming case studies we shall see many examples of the gendered nature of fame. It is hard to imagine, for example, the male equivalent of Anderson's claim, made in a promotional interview for her fictionalised memoir, *Star*, 'my breasts have a career. I'm just tagging along.'¹⁸⁹ Holmes and Negra observe 'stark differences in the contemporary treatment of male and female celebrities,'¹⁹⁰ noting that the body is '*the* key terrain upon which discourses surrounding female celebrity are mapped'¹⁹¹ [original emphasis]. In chapter two we shall see how detailed accounts of the female celebrity body - its appearance and the 'beauty work' performed to 'perfect' it - are offered as integral elements of the female celebrity life story (again in ways which are not the case for male stars). Julie Wilson terms this governance of women's bodies within postfeminist celebrity culture 'star testing', in which the female celebrity body is offered up to their female audience through an 'evaluative hermeneutic', inviting women to judge both stars and themselves.¹⁹²

As well as encouraging a judgmental stance towards bodily perfectability, celebrity culture operates as a Foucauldian 'theatre of punishment'¹⁹³ policing 'acceptably' feminine behaviour. Holmes and Negra note the dominance in celebrity culture of 'stories that work to consolidate a strong cultural consensus about "out of bounds" behaviours for women and proffer the pleasures of identifying and judging it.'¹⁹⁴ For example, one such method of proscribing certain celebrity behaviours as unacceptably unfeminine is the pathologisation of rebellious 'bad girl' behaviour as an aberrant and temporary symptom of mental illness through therapised confessional discourses such as those we shall see in the memoir of Jade Goody.¹⁹⁵ For Misha Kavka the reception of such celebrity discourses is an 'affective condition that brings into play gender norms [to] determine what is "appropriate".'¹⁹⁶ 'Quite blatantly,' she argues 'female celebrities are judged more harshly' than male celebrities.¹⁹⁷

A further affective, and heavily gendered, condition of celebrity culture is the centrality of discourses of intimacy and sexuality. These texts operate as 'women's culture', a commodified genre of intimacy which constructs, as Lauren Berlant theorises, 'intimate publics' that enact a fantasy of universal female experience predicated on intimacy and revelation.¹⁹⁸ Williamson theorises the contradiction at the heart of female fame as one in

¹⁸⁹ Mike Sager, 'What I've Learned: Pamela Anderson,' *Esquire Magazine*, December 31 2004, retrieved on 19 September 2015, from

http://web.archive.org/web/20121217055346/http://www.esquire.com/features/ESQ0105-WIL_Anderson.

¹⁹⁰ Holmes and Negra, 'Introduction', *In the Limelight and under the Microscope*, p.1

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

¹⁹² J. A. Wilson, 'Star Testing: The Emerging Politics of Celebrity Gossip,' *The Velvet Light Trap*, 65, 2010, p.30.

¹⁹³ Tyler and Bennett, 'Celebrity Chav', p.380.

¹⁹⁴ Holmes and Negra, 'Introduction', *In the Limelight and under the Microscope*, p.2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Misha Kavka, 'Hating Madonna and Loving Tom Ford: Gender, Affect and the 'Extra-curricular' Celebrity,' *Celebrity Studies*, 5 (1-2), 2014, pp.59-74, p.60.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.71

¹⁹⁸ L. Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008)

which women are increasingly visible in the public sphere whilst being defined by their sexuality and thereby firmly associated with the private realm.¹⁹⁹ Williamson charts the direct links between the contemporary celebrity condition and the late eighteenth century fame of women in the theatre, noting the gendered ‘illusions of public intimacy that began with insinuations of prostitution’ and continue to this day.²⁰⁰ This is clearly discernible in the construction of intimacy offered by the memoirs of Jameson, Price and Anderson in chapter two. This is perhaps not surprising as they are all stars who have crossed over to achieve mainstream cultural impact from their work in either the soft or hard-core porn industries. However, this same dynamic of punitive sexual insinuation surrounds the memoirs of Goody and Hilton discussed in chapter three, interacting as they do with extratexts such as Hilton’s leaked sex tape and Goody’s sexual acts filmed in the *Big Brother* house.

Repeatedly through these case studies, we see the construction of intimacy through the sexualised exposure of (and harm to) the female celebrity body. Scenes of the female celebrity body subjected to harm or, in Helen Hester’s term, ‘the body in a state of intensity,’²⁰¹ range from images of Gaga’s bloodstained body collapsed backstage to Jameson’s testimony of surviving a violent gang rape. These are suggestive of both ‘a gendered dynamic of popular interest and pleasure in the misfortunes of female celebrities’²⁰² and a postfeminist celebrity culture which lets men ‘off the hook’ with regard to male violence against women²⁰³ and indeed sells harm for its own entertainment appeal.²⁰⁴

The derision directed at celebrity culture more widely is, as Holmes and Negra argue, ‘implicitly couched in gendered terms, given the dismissal of what is apparently “trivial”, “gossipy” and (in terms of the contours of its concerns) “private” sphere.’²⁰⁵ On those rare occasions when male celebrities are called upon to present themselves in comparable ways, the derision of the feminine remains intact as ‘the process of fame can have a certain “feminising” effect when setting up men as the object of the gaze.’²⁰⁶

Christine Geraghty argues for the intrinsically gendered nature of the term celebrity, given that women are ‘particularly likely to be seen as celebrities whose working life is of less interest than their personal life.’²⁰⁷ In many ways the memoirs in this sample support

¹⁹⁹ Williamson, ‘Celebrity, Gossip, Privacy, and Scandal.’

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Helen Hester, *Beyond Explicit: Pornography and the Displacement of Sex* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), p.65.

²⁰² Holmes and Negra, ‘Introduction’, *In the Limelight and under the Microscope*, p.1.

²⁰³ Natasha Patterson and Camilla A. Sears, ‘Letting Men off the Hook? Domestic Violence and Postfeminist Celebrity Culture,’ *Genders* 53, 2011.

²⁰⁴ Karen Boyle, ‘Producing Abuse: Selling the Harms of Pornography’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 34 (2011).

²⁰⁵ Holmes and Negra, ‘Introduction’, *In the Limelight and under the Microscope*, p.14.

²⁰⁶ Tim Edwards, ‘Medusa’s Stare: Celebrity, Subjectivity and Gender,’ *Celebrity Studies*, 4 (2) 2013, pp.155-68, p.158.

²⁰⁷ Christine Geraghty, ‘Re-examining Stardom: Questions of Texts, Bodies and Performance,’ *Stardom and celebrity: A reader*, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd.. 2007) p.99.

Geraghty's observations: they offer up details of the celebrity's private life and work towards the specularisation of their celebrity author-subjects. It is significant, however, that every memoir in this study, without exception, positions their author as demanding to be taken seriously as workers: emphasising the professional skills and physical labour that go into becoming a successful model,²⁰⁸ the creative vision that goes into a sell-out arena tour,²⁰⁹ the talent that goes into winning singing competitions,²¹⁰ or the business acumen and judgement that goes into navigating contracts in the porn industry,²¹¹ selling your own branded merchandise²¹² or setting up a music label.²¹³ These memoirs, therefore, do not only, or straightforwardly uphold the common characterisation of female celebrity. Rather they both compound and contest models of celebrity femininity - offering the opportunity to respond to the vicissitudes of gendered celebrity culture whilst negotiating one's performance within it.

²⁰⁸ See Pamela Anderson, *Star Struck* (London: Pocket, 2006) and Katie Price, *Being Jordan*, (London : John Blake, 2005)

²⁰⁹ Lady Gaga and Terry Richardson, *Gaga x Richardson* (London: Hodder & Stoughton 2011)

²¹⁰ Goody, *Fighting to the End*.

²¹¹ Jenna Jameson, *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star: A Cautionary Tale*, (New York: It Books, 2010)

²¹² See Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress: A Tongue-in-Chic Peek Behind the Pose* (New York: Fireside Books, 2004) and Kourtney Kardashian, Kim Kardashian, and Khloe Kardashian, *Kardashian Confidential*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2011).

²¹³ Mathangi "Maya" Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2012)

Chapter 2. Sex, Trauma and Access in the Porn Star Memoirs of Katie Price, Pamela Anderson and Jenna Jameson

Introduction

This chapter examines the tensions that arise when life-writing – an act of *subjectification* – is undertaken by an individual with a professional investment in their own *objectification* (an investment shared by wider society). This chapter explores how Katie Price, Pamela Anderson and Jenna Jameson are represented in their memoirs – women who crossed over to mainstream celebrity, having become famous through either hard-core porn films or soft-core modelling. Examining how the celebrity memoir is shaped by the specificities of the celebrity’s domain reveals these texts to be acts of persona construction that must simultaneously tally with, extend, and retrospectively justify, their pornographic careers. What the celebrity author-subjects were originally famous for shapes what their memoirs reveal: pornographic tropes and idioms prescribe the preferred language through which they depict their subjectivity. Three themes arise as crucial to understanding how these texts function: the commoditised self, contradictory representations of sexual agency, and a deliberate emphasis upon constructedness as a pervasive formal and thematic concern.

Despite the predominantly female target audience of celebrity autobiography, these women – made famous by male-targeted ‘adult’ media – have ‘authored’ some of the most commercially successful and widely read contemporary texts within the genre. Jameson’s memoir, *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star* (2004), spent six weeks on *The New York Times* bestseller list.²¹⁴ A senior publishing executive, who turned down Price’s *Being Jordan* (2004) because he ‘believed that the public was only interested in getting stories about the size of pop stars’ penises from the tabloids,’ states that ‘the book’s success caught the publishing world off guard’ and created its own ‘new sub-genre’²¹⁵ when it reached number one in the Nielsen Bookscan chart,²¹⁶ selling over a million copies in its various forms by 2007.²¹⁷ This success is arguably attributable to Price’s celebrity appeal across a number of

²¹⁴ Edward Wyatt, ‘Political but Not Partisan: A Publisher Has It Both Ways,’ *The New York Times*, 13 October 2004, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/13/books/13bbox.html?_r=0.

²¹⁵ Trevor Dolby, ‘Publishing Confessions,’ *Prospect Magazine*, 14 January 2007, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/arts-and-books/publishingconfessions>.

²¹⁶ Philip Stone, ‘Jade Title Reaches Number One,’ *The Oxford Editors*, 7 April 2009, retrieved on 6 September 2015, from <http://www.theoxfordeditors.co.uk/?p=216>.

²¹⁷ Patrick Barkham, ‘I’m Famous, Buy Me,’ *The Guardian*, 15 January 2007, retrieved on 6 September 2015 from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jan/15/biography.patrickbarkham>.

audiences, as evidenced in a book-signing tour for *Being Jordan* ‘that drew crowds aged from 11 to 70 and, contrary to expectations, almost exclusively female.’²¹⁸

The role of the ghost writer in the construction of such conflicted representations of the ‘empowered’ (and eroticised) female subject requires interrogation. These texts offer a case study in the ghosting relationship as charged with complex, gendered power dynamics, with implications for how we understand the genre’s dual promises of ‘access’ and ‘authenticity’. In the case of Anderson and Jameson, the ghosts with whom they collaborate are male. It is significant that these texts, sold as ‘true’ female experiences, are often co-authored by men because they exist in a space of historical, representational lack – both as women’s sexual autobiography and, more specifically, as the voices of women in the sex industry. Examination of the power dynamics of ghosting is especially necessary when these texts narrate (and make palatable) stories of trauma, abuse and sexual violence. It is not my intention to enter into debates around potential causative relationships between a history of abuse and sex work.²¹⁹ Rather, this chapter is concerned with investigating the power dynamics of a performance of eroticised subjectivity when, despite a majority female audience for these texts,²²⁰ the specular (and at points abusive) sexuality presented within them appears to transmit the male pornographic gaze from the visual to the verbal. What surfaces is a tension between narratives of erotic titillation and accounts of abuse, which implicates readers in a prurient relationship with abuse as entertainment. This analysis asks two questions. First, it analyses how these texts construct a readerly subject position in which permission is granted to read and enjoy another’s suffering without that being exploitative. Second, it explores how a thematic and formal emphasis on constructedness interacts with testimonies of trauma survival that make claim to truth status.

Porn debates and textual fantasies

Questions of the ‘real’ and of purported ‘presence’ have been central to scholarly debates about pornography and harm. The promise of the ‘real’, extratextual self and the possibility of access are themes that are similarly intrinsic to the memoir genre, as shall be demonstrated later in this chapter. Anti-pornography debates are framed in terms of harm and the potential for force, coercion or damage to the real bodies of the women involved.²²¹ Erotic content within the written word, meanwhile, has been seen as a harmless space of

²¹⁸ Danuta Kean, ‘Celebrity Memoirs: Bookshop Bingo!’, in *The Independent*, 24 September 2015, retrieved on 6 September 2015, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/celeb-memoirs-bookshop-bingo-417361.html>.

²¹⁹ For this kind of reading see Boyle, ‘Producing Abuse’, pp.593–602.

²²⁰ Cadwalladr, ‘All Because the Ladies Love Jordan’; Sager, ‘What I’ve Learned: Pamela Anderson’.

²²¹ See, for example, Catharine A. MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, *In Harm’s Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1997).

woman-friendly sexual exploration – as Susanna Paasonen has argued, ‘a realm of fantasy, play, and experimentation.’²²² The memoirs discussed here, however, bear elements of both critical positions, but do not fit neatly into either category.

They feature many narratives of sexual violence and bodily harm. For example, Price narrates her experience of sexual assault in the park as a child; Anderson relates having been raped when she was twelve; and Jameson relates a harrowing story of being violently gang-raped and left for dead when in high school. These testimonies sit alongside eroticised tales of idealised past love affairs, and both types of narratives are, together, packaged as an entertaining exploration of the lives of real women. As such, they construct a reading position in which permission is given to consume stories of purported real world abuse without considering oneself implicated in the commercialisation of harm. Whilst the audiences for both pornography and celebrity memoir are diverse, and may contain some overlap, all three women have made a transition from appearing in magazines or films targeting a male audience, for whom they revealed their body, to a range of media texts targeting a female audience, for whom they claim to reveal their innermost thoughts.

In the case of Pamela Anderson, for example, she crossed over to mainstream fame in the American hit TV series *Baywatch* after a career topless modelling for men’s magazines such as *Playboy*. In a promotional interview with men’s magazine, *Esquire*, at the time of the release of her second memoir, *Star Struck* (2005), she explains:

You'd think that my fans would be the guys who are too drunk to turn the channel after football. But surprisingly, from all the demographic research that people have done on me, we've found out that I have a huge female following. It's a girl-girl type thing.²²³

Casting the relationship with her audience as one of mutual sexual desire could suggest a model of female spectatorship beyond either masochistic identification with the object of the gaze, or transvestitism in identification with the objectifying male gaze.²²⁴ However, her use of the terminology of pornography targeting heterosexual men does not exclude the male gaze – far from it. The suggestion of a ‘girl-girl’ dynamic in the relationship between female sex symbol and female readership, instead, co-opts her new female-targeted ventures as another means to titillate the male readers of *Esquire*. The shift in audiences is part of a transition which expands the female celebrity’s fame, lifecycle and breadth of commercial

²²² Susanna Paasonen, ‘Good Amateurs: Erotica Writing and Notions of Quality’, *Porn.Com: Making Sense of Online Pornography*, ed. by Feona Attwood (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p.139.

²²³ Sager, ‘Pamela Anderson.’

²²⁴ Laura Mulvey, ‘Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ Inspired by King Vidor’s *Duel in the Sun*,’ *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) p. 33.

opportunities as they bare themselves, one way or another, from physical exposure to psychic confession.

Scholarly discussion of pornography has tended towards either defensive endorsement or trenchant protest.²²⁵ Porn has stimulated scholarly debate over whether it is a legitimate cultural form and site of resistance, which must be protected from repressive censorship,²²⁶ or whether causative links exist between-the symbolic violence of representations of and by the sex industry and the empirical realities of structural inequality.²²⁷ What both sides agree upon is that pornography has proliferated across mainstream culture to exist in many forms that too easily go unexamined. From different sides of the debate, Gail Dines suggests that ‘porn has seeped into our everyday world and is fast becoming such a normal part of our lives that it barely warrants a mention’,²²⁸ whilst Linda Williams observes ‘a veritable explosion of sexually explicit materials that cry out for better understanding’.²²⁹ This process of mainstreaming is evidenced by the existence and commercial success of the memoirs examined in this chapter: crossover texts which bring bestselling representations of the sex industry to wide audiences beyond those of pornography, as well as offering content which is sexually explicit in and of itself.

The growing field of porn studies has defined itself in contrast to previous anti-porn feminist arguments. The tone for this line of scholarship was set by Linda Williams’ 1989 work, *Hard Core*, which claimed:

[Feminist debates have] impeded discussion of almost everything but the question of whether pornography deserves to exist at all. Since it does, however, we should be asking what it does for viewers; and since it is a genre with basic similarities to other genres, we need to come to terms with it.²³⁰

However, as Susanna Paasonen observes, ‘proporn, anti-anti-porn, and prosex authors who approach the genre from a more positive angle have chosen independent, queer, artistic projects that challenge gender norms, porn clichés, and the commodity logic of the porn industry.’²³¹ A theorisation of pornography based upon its most alternative examples proves less useful when critiquing texts such as those authored by Anderson, Jameson and Price,

²²⁵ Hester, *Beyond Explicit*.

²²⁶ Feminists Against Censorship, *Pornography and Feminism: The Case Against Censorship*, ed. by Gillian Rodgeron and Elizabeth Wilson (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991).

²²⁷ Maddy Coy, Josephine Wakeling, and Maria Garner, ‘Selling Sex Sells: Representations of Prostitution and the Sex Industry in Sexualised Popular Culture as Symbolic Violence,’ *Women's Studies International Forum*, 34, 2011, pp.441–8.

²²⁸ Gail Dines, *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), p. 1.

²²⁹ Linda Williams, ‘Introduction’, *Porn Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 1.

²³⁰ Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) pp.4-5.

²³¹ Susanna Paasonen, *Carnal Resonance: Affect and Online Pornography* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2011).

which, very obviously and deliberately, deal in ‘gender norms’ and ‘commodity logic’. Not only are these features constitutive of the ‘mainstream’ heterosexual porn industry, but ‘gender norms’ and ‘commodity logic’ underpin both the celebrity and memoir industries as well. These texts, therefore, represent a unique overlapping of genres (pornography, celebrity and autobiography) which all revolve around the manufacture and commoditisation of intimacy.

Scholars such as Helen Hester have observed that, by taking a protective stance and focussing on pornography’s most progressive potential, porn studies scholars have not led the field to the dispassionate nonpartisan approach that was claimed.²³² Instead, a newly proscriptive body of scholarship has emerged that could be accused of being insufficiently critical in its assumption of a favourable or celebratory position.²³³ Feona Attwood argues that recent works ‘flatten out all opposition to pornography as a move towards censorship and against transgression’²³⁴ with the risk of negating ‘important political issues raised in earlier accounts’.²³⁵ It is with this in mind that I approach the memoirs of Anderson, Price and Jameson, not as examples by which to exalt or vilify pornography in general, but as individual texts with their own politics.

Combining the intimate revelations that form the appeal of celebrity coverage, autobiography’s promise of self-disclosure of personal truth, and the visual exposure and physical availability of pornography, these texts occupy a unique nexus of promises of ‘access’. As such, they cannot be viewed as purely memoir, as celebrity texts, as sexually explicit literature, or sex industry testimony, but rather as a combination in which physical undress and psychic confession reinforce and magnify one another in a dynamic that presupposes access and consent. Linda Williams suggests that to argue ‘that pornography expressed the power and the pleasure of heterosexual men [is] one of the serious limitations of much earlier writing on pornography.’²³⁶ In the readings of these memoirs, however, one cannot put aside questions of patriarchal power: agency, ‘empowerment’, consent, and sexual violence are themes which all three celebrity authors invoke, demanding that such discourses be interrogated.

Whilst these memoirs contain sexually explicit material, and narrate career paths through the sex industry, they should also be treated as written life narratives. As Paasonen argues, ‘the tendency to understand porn in terms of the visual is common, yet this ignores

²³² Hester, *Beyond Explicit*.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Feona Attwood, ‘Reading Porn: The Paradigm Shift in Pornography Research,’ *Sexualities*, 5 (1), 2002, p.98.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Williams, ‘Introduction’, *Porn Studies*, p. 7.

the fact that the history of pornography has largely been one concerning the written word.'²³⁷ This oversight is present in the emphasis of both public and scholarly debates upon visual pornography. Hester proposes the possibility that 'linguistic porn receives comparatively little negative attention, perhaps due to the fact that the graphic sexual scenarios it depicts do not depend upon the presence of real bodies – bodies that, in the popular imagination, could be vulnerable, or unwilling, or subject to damage.'²³⁸ The memoirs of Anderson, Jameson and Price, however, do narrate stories of harm visited upon the real bodies of their authors. Hester's binary opposition of 'textual fantasies' versus filmed 'use and potential abuse of real bodies'²³⁹ collapses when the sexually explicit written accounts narrate the purported real abuse of real bodies.

²³⁷ Paasonen, 'Good Amateurs,' p.67.

²³⁸ Hester, *Beyond Explicit*, p.11.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

2.1 Sanitizing sexual trauma: The competing agendas of Pamela Anderson's *Star*

Anderson's first memoir, *Star*, interweaves a narration of the path into soft-core porn modelling with an account of traumatic sexual history. The book relates the story of a fictionalised celebrity, Star, whose life so closely follows the narrative of its author's that, when Anderson was asked 'What comment do you hear most often from your readers?', she claimed that readers respond to her books for their truth value, answering, 'Thanks for telling the truth.'²⁴⁰ Even if we take at its strongest the notion that Anderson is not Star, the text must still reflect an attitude, attributed to Anderson as 'author', towards issues that are extremely pertinent to the facts of Anderson's own life. In other words, the approach to pornography and objectification expressed in her book must inform an understanding of the way that Anderson's star image is constructed (and this in turn then impacts upon the self-presentation in her memoir). The peculiar status of the fictionalised memoir that is read for insight into a 'real' extratextual person will be analysed later in the chapter. For now, however, I would like to introduce the sexual history presented in Anderson's memoir as an example which illustrates how, in these porn memoirs, experiences of coerced sex are presented in terms which diminish their seriousness. We shall see that Anderson's memoir draws a parallel between her experience of forced sex and her experience of posing nude for men's magazines. The implicit link between these two experiences (one which could be argued to be reproduced in the production and sale of a memoir) is that she is treated as an object for consumption.

Not only does Anderson's memoir depict a woman with a traumatic sexual history, but she narrates a wider model of sexuality in which consent is absent. Describing an early sexual experience at a party as a teenager the narrator states: 'Bobby got them each a screwdriver from the absentee's parents' bar, then he led Star up to the wastrel's room, where he locked the door, downed his drink, pulled out his erection, and pushed Star down onto the bed.'²⁴¹ The sex is described in non-consensual terms, and yet the seriousness of such a situation is underplayed, and instead Bobby's masculinity is mocked as 'it was over too quickly for Star to find it objectionable.'²⁴² The implication that, as long as it is over quickly, non-consensual sex is not objectionable (and can even be humorous) is further normalised when Star's mother glibly replies, 'welcome to dating' – as if non-consensual sex

²⁴⁰ 'Interview with Pamela Anderson,' *Goodreads*, February 2010, retrieved on 11 June 2013 from http://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/484.Pamela_Anderson.

²⁴¹ Pamela Anderson, *Star* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2004), p. 197.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

is a universal, even tolerable, inevitability of heterosexual relations.²⁴³ Even when consenting, Star's early sexual experiences are defined by negotiation and transaction. When relating the way her first relationship, began, she describes herself as conceding to sex she doesn't want to have and trading it as currency: "Put that away," she said disgustedly, "I don't want anything to do with your wiener." "Please, just put your hand around it... You can borrow my mountain bike for a week..." "A month," she said at last...And so their sexual adventures began.²⁴⁴ This dynamic of stating that she does not want to have sex, but succumbing anyway, is sustained throughout the sexual encounters related as an adult. The passivity of 'and so their sexual adventures began' is compounded by the suggestion that 'it had seemed only logical that they start going steady after that.'²⁴⁵ Whilst Anderson can be seen to be laughing at the arbitrariness of teenage relationships, what is presented as innocent, childish, and somehow wholesome, is a dynamic of masculine power. This dynamic privileges the sexual desires of men and runs throughout both of her autobiographical novels.

As a retrospective construction with the specific intention of securing a favourable reception amongst potential fans for the star author-subject's continued celebrity career, Anderson can be presumed to be anticipating the possible judgements of her audience. The placing of benign and recognisable details at the heart of sexual negotiations (in this case a mountain bike) may be an attempt to ease the reader into a world outside their experience with some reassuringly wholesome familiarities. Likewise, depicting oneself as subject to patriarchal structures which deny women sexual agency is an active means of situating oneself within such power structures and negotiating with them. As crossover texts with an intended audience far beyond that of their original careers in pornography, these memoirs must explain their lives in terms which intended audiences will find acceptable, despite social opprobrium for women who enjoy their pornographic careers (or even sex itself). In this respect, Anderson could be seen to be explaining her later career choices in terms that society understands, appealing to the entrenched moral logic of the 'fallen' or 'damaged' woman that is an established theme in Western literature.²⁴⁶ This would suggest the ways in which the star author-subject is required to fashion a life story to accord with pre-existing stock narratives and perceived social norms.

The absence of consent defines Star's sexual encounters – some of which are highly eroticised. The opening offers a teenage scene in which Star's female friend, Brandi, presses

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.199.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p.200.

²⁴⁶ See for example Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (London: Harper Collins, [1722] 2010) or Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1740] 2001).

her to try marijuana, then offers her a massage: ‘A lot of stuff is amazing after you smoke a jay. Here, lean back; I’ll rub your shoulders. You’ll see.’²⁴⁷ This then escalates, again with no active participation on the part of Star: ‘A finger slipped under the leg of the loose-fitting shorts she was still wearing from work. It wasn’t unpleasant, but it was unexpected.’²⁴⁸ Again, Star protests, but then capitulates: “Br... Brandi,” Star began, but her objections were overruled. “It’s okay, it’s perfectly natural,” Brandi urged, silencing her with tiny hungry kisses. Star fought and then succumbed, soft lips on soft lips. “It doesn’t mean a thing...” This eroticisation of sex as something that happens to a passive protagonist, who succumbs despite protestations, is a common trope of erotic fiction.²⁴⁹ What is especially problematic about this scene in *Star* is its uncomfortable parallel with and proximity to a scene of child rape that is described later in the memoir.

At the point of her big break on a nude shoot with *Mann Magazine* (a thinly veiled reference to Anderson’s career with *Playboy*), the male photographer’s coaxing of her to perform sexual poses triggers a flashback to her childhood: “Relax Star, it’s going to be great,” she heard his voice, felt his breath on her neck, his hands on her. She had only been twelve years old.²⁵⁰ The soothing yet insistent words parallel those of Brandi and, just as with their encounter, the situation escalates from an intoxicated massage:

It started innocently enough. Bringing her a fresh, forbidden, and hence decidedly grown-up rum and Coke, he’d come up behind the chair where she was sitting and rubbed her shoulders. “You’re so tense,” he’d said, “How about a massage?”²⁵¹

This is the only time non-consensual sex is, even indirectly, acknowledged as rape as the text states: ‘She thought of the experience with Al as forced, but never rape.’ This represents the victim’s struggle to make sense of what has happened, the challenge of being taken seriously as a 12-year-old girl, and the difficulty of holding her rapist accountable in a victim-blaming culture which routinely naturalises male desire as aggressive. In the model of sexuality offered in the text, however, this reads as part of a wider paradigm that also naturalises male sexual aggression. The parallels with the way the scene with Brandi is related – the similarities in dialogue, the massage, the intoxication further diminishing agency and the ability to consent – raises the question of the nature of the reading pleasures offered by these texts, with strikingly similar events narrated once as trauma and once as titillation. Such

²⁴⁷ Anderson, *Star*, p.28.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.29.

²⁴⁹ Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press [1984] 2009).

²⁵⁰ Anderson, *Star*, p.174.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.176.

close proximity and parallels raise the question of what erotic or entertainment value either scene confers on the other.

Scholars such as Boyle have argued that the histories of abuse contained within the memoir of the female porn star demonstrate ‘the conditions for her entry into pornography. She may go on to exercise a degree of choice in her porn career, but her account is a potent reminder of the limitations of arguments about choice in relation to women's involvement in pornography: this is choice exercised in a situation of extreme constraint.’²⁵² Whilst it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in debates about potential causative links between histories of sexual trauma and entry into the sex industry, it is Anderson’s memoir that explicitly draws a link between the two: ‘She never even thought about [the forced sexual encounter with Al] anymore, but then that morning, in the studio with those strangers, her clothes still in the dressing room, her body touched and adjusted, it had come back to her.’²⁵³ This has the potential to offer a moment of resistance through critique of her industry, demonstrating the parallels between work in the sex industry and abuse argued by anti-pornography feminists. However, whilst the narrator makes a connection between being ‘adjusted by strangers’ for a nude photoshoot and her experience of sexual assault as a child, this link is disavowed as positive self-sexualisation and is simultaneously presented as both the emotional trigger and the means to triumph over abuse: ‘Star felt angry and indignant that a man so many years before could make her feel ashamed of herself at this, her big moment. She arose from where she was sitting and crossed to the mirror. She dried her eyes carefully with a tissue... And then, very deliberately, she took off the robe.’²⁵⁴ This positions her experience of sexual assault as formative in her attitudes to, and motivations for, her entry into the industry, while positivising the latter in a way that disavows gender politics or any sort of institutional critique. The narrator segues between discussion of the photoshoot and the assault, concluding: ‘It had been fun and liberating. She could not get back what had been taken from her as a young girl nearly ten years earlier. But she didn’t have to give up anything more.’²⁵⁵ Thus, structural issues of gender are ‘reprivatised’²⁵⁶ as a postfeminist sensibility frames experiences of gendered violence ‘in exclusively personal terms in a way that turns the idea of the personal as political on its head.’²⁵⁷

In this example we have seen how the tension created as narratives of erotic titillation and testimonies from working in the sex industry are placed in close proximity to, and given explicit parallels with, narratives of abuse. This demonstrates that questions of agency

²⁵² Boyle, ‘Producing Abuse,’ p.596.

²⁵³ Anderson, *Star*, p.176.

²⁵⁴ Anderson, *Star*, p.177.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.179.

²⁵⁶ McNay, *Foucault and Feminism*, p.106.

²⁵⁷ Gill, ‘Postfeminist Media Culture,’ p. 153.

situated within patriarchal structures cannot be put aside when the texts invoke them so directly. Moreover, while these memoirs are not without potentially resistant moments, which appear to be approaching critique, structural inequities of gender are ultimately disavowed. Beyond the sensibilities of postfeminist media culture, we can see these tensions as intrinsic to the celebrity memoir form. The celebrity's commercial investment is extended and capitalised upon through such photoshoots and necessitate the construction of a reading position from which audiences have permission to continue consuming such images free from concern. Here we see the competing agendas within a porn-star memoir that attempts to simultaneously fulfil the promise of voyeuristic satisfaction integral to both pornography and autobiography, and the strange position of testimonies of sexual trauma within them. These narratives appear repeatedly, offering a voyeuristic quality of their own, but must ultimately be positivized or, at the very least contained, to put the reader at ease despite their apparent appetite for celebrities 'telling the truth'.²⁵⁸

The 'glamour girl' memoir: narrative subject/corporeal object

In the celebrity memoir it is unclear where self-making ends and brand-building begins, as celebrity authors occupy dual roles as narrative subject and commoditised object in a marketplace. Michel Foucault argues that confessional practices have evolved into modern day 'technologies of the self', whereby the modern subject comes into being by means of a process of identity formation through self-surveillance: 'a nearly infinite task of telling'²⁵⁹ that internalises, and thus replaces, traditional disciplinary power structures. The 'incitement to discourse'²⁶⁰ can be seen as a foundation of contemporary celebrity culture as stars confess in magazines, TV talk shows, and reality products as well as memoirs.²⁶¹ Using the name Jordan, British celebrity Katie Price is famous for 'glamour' modelling – a British euphemism that valorises topless modelling in which models are called 'glamour girls', perpetuating the postfeminist 'girling' of adult women. Having produced six memoirs and ten semi-autobiographical novels to date, she could be seen to exemplify the celebrity confessional as a 'nearly infinite task'. As a confessional means by which identities are constructed and negotiated, memoirs can be considered to be a primary example of technologies of the self. In celebrity memoir, then, self-making and merchandising are one

²⁵⁸ 'Interview with Pamela Anderson,' *Goodreads*.

²⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 20.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17.

²⁶¹ Redmond, 'Pieces of Me'.

and the same. These texts are profitable objects for sale in themselves and, furthermore, are tools for making their celebrity authors, as commoditised objects, more saleable.

Julia Watson notes the objectification required in autobiography's imperatives of narrative and witnessing²⁶² and yet, as Margaret McLaren argues, the process of critically examining 'how one came to be as one is' must, at the same time, be viewed as 'a process of subjectification.'²⁶³ This objectified subjectivity is inherent to all (and especially celebrity) memoir. However, the tension in the status of objectified subject is nowhere more evident than in the memoirs of 'glamour models' or 'porn stars' as their professional investment in their status as object of the male gaze demands a performance of eroticised subjectivity. American, hard-core, gonzo porn film star Jenna Jameson, the first real 'crossover' star to move to mainstream TV and radio presentation, notes, 'you are the product'.²⁶⁴ Her words are as true of autobiography and of wider celebrity culture as they are of the porn career that she was describing.

In her 'glamour' photographs, Price is the mute object of desire. In her career as a personality in gossip magazines, she is an object of speculation, judgement and ridicule. The narrator of autobiography, however, necessarily performs her subjectivity, interrupting these subject/object positions. However, regardless of how much celebrity authors claim to use memoir to show new or different aspects of their identity, or a 'real' self, the account of the life given in celebrity memoir must, to some degree, correlate with the persona that inspired readers to purchase the book. As Dan Shen argues, the memoir reader is always 'consciously or half-consciously comparing the textual world with the extratextual reality.'²⁶⁵ Thus, certain pornographic conventions dominate her depiction of her subjectivity.

The tensions between the roles of narrative subject and corporeal object are acknowledged as Price's autobiography promises to demonstrate that 'there's more to' her than being 'famous for [her] boobs.'²⁶⁶ Price claims that the *autobiographical occasion* of her memoir, what Smith and Watson explain as the rationale given, or events which apparently trigger a narrator to embark upon the task of writing her life,²⁶⁷ is the chance to reveal the 'person inside this body.'²⁶⁸ She suggests her desire is to reclaim control of her identity, and redress portrayal in the media as 'a slapper, a tart, a man-eater [and] a freak

²⁶² Julia Watson, 'Towards and Anti-Metaphysics of Autobiography,' *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-representation*, ed. by Robert Folkenflik (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.77.

²⁶³ Margaret A. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 152.

²⁶⁴ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p. 333.

²⁶⁵ Shen, 'Unreliability in Autobiography vs. Fiction', p.48.

²⁶⁶ Price, *Being Jordan*, p. 1.

²⁶⁷ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 207.

²⁶⁸ Price, *Being Jordan*, p. 1.

[who is] addicted to plastic surgery' and has 'mutilated' her body. 'Worst of all,' she states 'they say I'm an unfit mother.'²⁶⁹ That Price suggests this last charge is the ultimate judgement reveals the conservative moral landscape into which her memoir intercedes:²⁷⁰ one in which, as Deborah Jermyn has observed, allure and motherhood are viewed as incompatible.²⁷¹ Price's rebuttal to the public condemnation she has received is located within the celebrity memoir genre convention of claiming the need to 'reveal the real me' for fans. With her emphasis on taking back control of the meaning given to her life and shifting attention from her body to her thoughts, this text is presented as an act of self-making, an assertion of agency that locates the author's identity in a subjectivity beyond her role as embodied spectacle.

However, here one can see the contradictions presented by celebrity memoir: to redress her over-exposure, Price must 'open up' more completely. To counteract her public image of being a woman 'obsessed with fame [who] will do anything for publicity', she will propel that fame further with a well-publicised book.²⁷² To avoid being known for taking her clothes off, she must 'reveal' herself in new ways. Her purported goal of counteracting the way in which 'journalists write about [her] as if [she is] a dumb bimbo' situates her as resistant: rebelling against a 'history of woman as an object of speculation and specularization.'²⁷³ And yet, Price is an agent of her own display, and her memoir is an intervention which claims to disrupt her specularity whilst fuelling it further.

The subjectivity of the eroticised woman is a site of contestation. For example, anti-prostitution scholars such as Sheila Jeffreys risk dehumanising 'the prostituted woman' who is paid, in Jeffrey's terms, 'to be a person who is not a person,'²⁷⁴ and see this erasure of subjectivity as what enables men to ignore the ethical implications of their participation. Similarly, in her ethnographic study of a successful, independent, white British sex worker, Julia O'Connell Davidson concluded that 'whether he is submissive, flattering or abusive, the client's treatment of the prostitute represents a denial of her subjectivity and humanity...the essence of the transaction is that she is an object, not a subject, within it.'²⁷⁵ This argument, whilst not invalid in its critique of the client's evasion of responsibility, risks denying the woman-as-prostitute any subjectivity or agency, suggesting that the way that women gain subjectivity is by having it conferred upon them by men. However, while prostitution and

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Williamson, 'Female Celebrities and the Media,' p.119.

²⁷¹ Deborah Jermyn, 'Still Something Else Besides a Mother? Negotiating Celebrity Motherhood in Sarah Jessica Parker's Star Story,' *Social Semiotics*, 18 (2), pp.163-76.

²⁷² Price, *Being Jordan*, p.1.

²⁷³ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. 5.

²⁷⁴ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Idea of Prostitution* (North Melbourne : Spinifex, 1997), p.182.

²⁷⁵ Julia O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layder, *Methods, Sex, and Madness* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), p.189.

‘glamour-girl’ celebrity cannot simply be equated, these examples show how eroticised female subjectivity is vulnerable to erasure. Meanwhile, by contrast, postfeminist culture and third-wave feminism position women’s sexual subjectivity as a crucial site of empowerment. As Joel Gwynne observes, ‘popular culture’s prevailing message that the most successful way to become financially empowered – and therefore liberated – is through the cultivation of an active and hedonistic sexuality.’²⁷⁶ In their simultaneous occupation of the positions of narrative subject and sexualised corporeal object, the authors of these memoirs both contradict and compound each of these reductive characterisations. These texts do not fit the model offered by Jeffreys and O’Connell Davidson listed above because all first-person autobiographical narration is an act which performs subjectivity, humanity and personhood, even when the stories narrated are those of the experiences of professional objectification. However, even when these authors espouse postfeminist values of empowerment, they do so when narrating stories which clearly demonstrate moments of being *out* of control and depicting models of sexuality which, rather than being free, directly or indirectly reveal the constraints upon them. In a promotional interview, Anderson says jokingly of her writing, ‘I don’t know if you can call me an artist or not, but I feel like I’ve created my life day by day. [...] I’ve made a career out of it somehow.’²⁷⁷ She thus locates her life-writing as a deliberate, agentic process of self-making. And yet she jokes about the tensions in her objectified subject position, saying, ‘my breasts have a career. I’m just tagging along.’²⁷⁸ Whilst these women’s memoirs demonstrate an intervention into their objectification, and appear to counteract the erasure of the subjectivity of the eroticised woman, the resulting texts are deeply contradictory and reveal their authors as caught between genres: autobiography and pornography with their respective privileging of mental depth and physical surface.

Ghosting the ‘Glamour Girl’ Memoir: Between Fact, Fiction, Constructedness and the ‘Real’

Thus far, I have established the importance of the twin concepts of the ‘real’ extratextual bodies, and constructed intimacies. This is unsurprising given how integral these ideas are to the promises of both autobiography and pornography. Similarly, we have seen how autobiography is a performative act of self-construction. In relation to autobiography, Jakki Spicer, like Williams, observes the inherent, generic ‘problem of referentiality—that is, do the contents of the book correspond to a life lived?’²⁷⁹ Constructedness is a recurring theme throughout these memoirs. This is not unusual for celebrity narratives in ‘reality products’. Reflexivity about the construction of the image is arguably central to much celebrity

²⁷⁶ Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs*, p.10.

²⁷⁷ Sager, ‘Pamela Anderson.’

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Spicer, ‘Autobiography and the Fantasy of the Individual,’ p.387.

coverage. Even in 1994, Gamson observed the centrality of cynical reading practices where ‘celebrity-watcher cynicism’²⁸⁰ is underpinned by a belief that all celebrity narratives are constructed for purposes of marketability. Celebrity autobiographies, especially, gain some of their value from their ability to offer a ‘behind-the-scenes’ perspective by revealing construction processes underpinning the celebrity image and its commodification. While these texts are substantially comprised of trauma narratives, they consistently emphasise discourses of constructedness, falsity or fabrication, whether in relation to bodies, pleasures or narratives. This raises particular questions of what is at stake in these representations, what can(not) be uttered and what, once attested to, must be undermined. Firstly, I shall examine is their various claims to truth status and the ramifications of the (variously known, hidden or presumed) mediating presence of the ghost writer.

Although Katie Price’s *Being Jordan* claims to be a frank and honest autobiographical account, Pamela Anderson’s *Star Struck* is presented as fiction, and Jameson’s *How to Make Love like a Porn Star* combines modes of telling associated with both fact and fiction, all three texts attempt to offer the same model of reading pleasure: promoting the existence of a ‘real’ woman behind the image that readers can get closer to through their life stories.

Written in the first person, addressing the reader directly with the colloquial idiom of the spoken word, Price and her ghost writer create a sense of unedited and unpolished immediacy. For example, when stating her purported reasons for publishing the memoir, Price addresses her readers, pre-empting their critical responses: ‘I can almost hear you thinking, She must think a lot of herself.’²⁸¹ Whilst this could be a product of an oral collaborative construction process, the ‘you’ referring to ghost writer, Rebecca Farnworth, the effect, deliberate or otherwise, is a constructed intimacy through a disarmingly unprocessed aesthetic.²⁸² Farnworth’s name is buried, unmarked in the acknowledgements page along with other employees of the publishing house, John Blake. Price claims to offer herself up in unedited, unpolished entirety, appealing, ‘I’ve held nothing back [...] It’s all here. My life is in your hands.’²⁸³ Price’s model of autobiography thus reveals its investment in the appearance of a sole author capable of narrating an authentic self and in creating a feeling of proximity between narrator and reader.

Whilst Price’s memoir strives to make claim to authenticity, and to stress the veracity of an account that will ‘set the record straight’²⁸⁴, Anderson’s memoir employs various

²⁸⁰ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.149.

²⁸¹ Price, *Being Jordan*, p. 7.

²⁸² Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*, p.3.

²⁸³ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.x.

²⁸⁴ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.69.

distancing devices. Although *Star* only bears Anderson's authorial signature, the inside cover credits both her and her ghost writer, Eric Shaw Quinn, equally, and Quinn was a visible presence on the promotional tour: 'Unlike any ghost writers we can recall, he was sitting next to the celebrity as books were being signed. Ms Anderson, he said, was never interested in keeping his existence a secret.'²⁸⁵ This may in part be because of the book's status as fictionalised memoir, billed as a *roman-à-clef*.²⁸⁶ The protagonist, whilst explicitly based on Anderson, is presented as 'Pammy's alter-ego.'²⁸⁷ She is given a symbolic, but distinct name, Star, and with the ghost writer, writes herself in the third person. These representational choices grant Anderson licence to embrace the artifice which might be presumed regardless, owing to mistrust of autobiography in general,²⁸⁸ and celebrity culture in particular,²⁸⁹ with its circulation of the sceptical 'manufacture-of-fame narrative'.²⁹⁰

Despite these acts of disassociation, dustjacket quotes exclaim that 'STAR is more than a novelisation of Pammy's life. It is Pammy.'²⁹¹ As Katja Lee argues, 'readers are burdened with the knowledge that prior to the text, there exists a celebrity who shares that proper name; and they must practice severe and, perhaps, a little unnatural restraint to prevent themselves from reading that signature in light of the real body signified by that same proper name.'²⁹² Sufficiently explicit parallels are made to seduce readers into reading Star as Anderson, as they know her through other gossip media. For example, Anderson gained widespread fame playing CJ in *Baywatch* (1991), Star as BeeGee in *Lifeguards*. Where Anderson married Tommy Lee from *Mötley Crüe*; Star marries Jimi Deeds of *Fools Brigade*. Anderson starred in her first feature film as action hero *Barb Wire* (1996), and has a tattoo of barbed wire around her bicep. After landing the role as *Hy Voltz*, Star celebrates with a tattoo of electric cable in the same spot. This word play offers an extra level of enjoyment for the engaged Anderson fan, inviting them to feel pleased to have spotted the in-joke, whilst offering permission to read the character Star for insights into the real woman they know from extratextual celebrity media. Thus, whilst they create space for acknowledgement of the performance and fabrication that go into the construction of celebrity identity, Anderson's texts still function according to the search for a 'real' woman behind the public image.

²⁸⁵ Joyce Wadler, 'Boldface Names,' *The New York Times*, 10 August 2004, retrieved on 21 September 2015, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/10/nyregion/boldface-names-582794.html>.

²⁸⁶ 'Pamela Anderson is the Shameless Ploy of the Week', *Entertainment Weekly*, 16 July 2004, retrieved on 21 September 2015, from <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,662178,00.html>.

²⁸⁷ Anderson, *Star Struck*, back cover.

²⁸⁸ Timothy Dow Adams, *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.3.

²⁸⁹ Lee, 'Not Just Ghost Stories', p.1259.

²⁹⁰ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.44.

²⁹¹ Anderson, *Star Struck*, back cover.

²⁹² Lee, 'Not Just Ghost Stories,' p.1259.

In *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*, Jameson adopts various modes of life-writing within a single text, segueing between first person retrospective address, interview transcripts, childhood diary pages, graphic novel, 'how to' instruction lists and a great number of old photographs from Jameson's porn career, amongst other artefacts. Nonetheless, the book opens with an introductory page dedicated to claiming the truth status of its contents:

For years, in private, I wrestled with myself. The truth won. The following, then, is a true story... Only some names and identifying features of individuals have been changed in order to preserve their anonymity and protect their innocence. In addition some characters are composites, and one movie title has been changed.²⁹³

And yet, by stressing the truth, Jameson invokes the possibility of lying. The caveats above are sufficiently broad to cover anything from insignificant tweaks to fundamental fabrications. This, however, does little to interrupt the model of reading offered. The memoir is still judged by its ability to 'reveal' as evidenced by reviews such as Salon.com's claim that 'in this book, Jameson gets you rooting for her ... a real person comes through in its pages.'²⁹⁴ This is despite the fact that Jameson's memoir offers a further variation in models of identifying the ghost writer and their role. Unlike Price and Anderson's memoirs' (at least partial) claim to a singular author, the authorial signature states 'Jenna Jameson with Neil Strauss', while the back cover of the paperback edition lists his other co-authored celebrity memoirs and his bestselling manuals for male 'pick-up artists' including *The Game* (2005). Alongside his career as a journalist and ghost writer, Strauss worked in the 'pick-up artist' community, training men at 'bootcamps' in predatory techniques of sexual 'escalation' such as 'negging': a tactic of strategically damaging a woman's self-esteem so that she will concede to having sex. *The Game* offers a 10 step programme to coerce women into sex with chapters such as 'Isolate the Target', 'Extract to a Seduction Location', 'Pump Buying Temperature', and 'Blast Last-Minute Resistance'.²⁹⁵ In publicity interviews, Strauss has stated that the publisher brought him and Jameson together,²⁹⁶ so it is impossible to be certain what Jameson knew of her ghost writer's sideline. However, the choice of such a figure, known for successfully commoditising predatory masculinity, to ghost write a traumatic personal history as a repeated victim of sexual violence adds additional complexity to the ethical questions raised around who has the *authority* to interpret the meaning of certain events.

²⁹³ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*.

²⁹⁴ Charles Taylor, "How to Make Love Like a Porn Star" by Jenna Jameson, *Salon.com*. 25 August 2004, retrieved on 21 September 2015, from http://www.salon.com/2004/08/25/jenna_6/.

²⁹⁵ Neil Strauss, *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pick-Up Artists*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

²⁹⁶ Jill Singer, 'So What Do You Do, Neil Strauss?', *MediaBistro.com*, 17 August 2004, retrieved on 21 September 2015, from <http://www.mediabistro.com/So-What-Do-You-Do-Neil-Strauss-a2441.html>.

Despite these modal variations, all of these memoirs are presented as authentic personal narratives enabling a reader to better know the woman ‘behind’ the star image. If the ghost writer is hidden, their presence is presumed. Perhaps, as Lee suggests, ‘because it confirms our suspicions about the intellectual labors (or lack thereof) of the rich and famous.’²⁹⁷ Yet, if the ghost writer’s presence is highlighted, the text is still, nonetheless, judged by whether it succeeds in giving the feeling of access to an essential self of the star-author, thus erasing the known ghost. Gamson argues that contemporary celebrity is consumed with a ‘new, ironic knowingness’.²⁹⁸ Simultaneously admiring the star, and acknowledging that she is a ‘fabricated, performed image’, the knowing audience member can ‘avoid becoming the sucker’ without having to disavow the celebrity-gazing that they enjoy.²⁹⁹ Thus, despite the visible mediations of ghost-written memoir, or the assumption of performance that surrounds any life lived on display, the ‘glamour girl’ memoir presents itself as offering access to the woman behind the image, real or otherwise.

As I have argued, readers can simultaneously accept the ghost writer as mediating presence and read the text as offering first-hand insight into a woman they know from an assemblage of interconnected media narratives that circulate around her. The ghost writers of celebrities have been variously theorised as ‘outranked’ scribes,³⁰⁰ as ethnographers who study ‘from above,’³⁰¹ and as ‘harmless imposter[s] in the hallowed halls of autobiography.’³⁰² As G. Thomas Couser observes, ‘ethical dilemmas seem to be inherent to collaborative life-writing in ways that are peculiar to it.’³⁰³ For Couser the ‘liabilities of collaboration’ centre around the fair representation of the subject.³⁰⁴ For Lee, the ethical questions of ghost-writing lie in attribution and concerns of erased labour.³⁰⁵ I propose a further ethical consideration, independent of the evident perplexities of attribution, labour, or fair representation.

In the packaging and sale of stories of abuse as entertainment, these texts encourage the reader to acknowledge mediation and gain comfort that none of it is *really* real, thus enabling guilt-free consumption. These texts construct a subject position for the reader in which it is possible to simultaneously gain pleasure from the knowledge that the person they are reading about exists beyond the text and contradictorily find refuge from being implicated in the commoditisation of harm by reading them as fabrications. The presence of

²⁹⁷ Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories,’ p.1256.

²⁹⁸ Joshua Gamson, ‘The Assembly Line of Greatness: Celebrity in Twentieth Century America,’ *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London: Sage, 2007), p.151.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.152.

³⁰⁰ Couser, ‘Making, Taking, and Faking Lives,’ pp.334-51.

³⁰¹ Lejeune, ‘The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write,’ p.199.

³⁰² Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories,’ p.1256.

³⁰³ G. Thomas Couser, *Vulnerable Subjects* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p.34.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.55.

³⁰⁵ Lee, ‘Not Just Ghost Stories,’ pp.1256-70.

the ghost writer, along with conventional wisdom about stars as manufactured, fabricated identities, may allow readers to consume celebrity memoirs about abuse from a distance. As Lee argues, there is a scepticism ‘that attends celebrity authorship [which] is derived in equal parts from media coverage of the celebrity’s intelligence, vanity, and integrity; an awareness of the rising profile and profitability of the ghost-writing industry; and a lingering distrust of the authenticity and value of popular culture and mass-produced products.’³⁰⁶ Of course it is not possible to determine the degree to which these memoirs are ‘true’ or ‘accurate’ testimonies of these women’s sexual histories. Autobiographical truth is a vexed question in itself, independent of questions of celebrity agency and manufacture. However, it is important to note that these texts are sold as non-fiction, or at least a blending of fiction with autobiographical fact. When best-selling books³⁰⁷ are constructed in ways which invite a sceptical reading position towards testimonies of surviving sexual trauma, the credibility of rape victims in the popular imagination is at stake.

Jameson & Strauss: a case study in the problematics of ghosting celebrity memoir

As porn stars, existing in a mutually reinforcing, connected media web, these women have an economic investment in sustaining an image of themselves in service of male pleasure. Significantly, so too does Jameson’s ghost writer, Neil Strauss. A man who writes a ten step bible in how to ‘close’ with women, one who celebrates ‘Cavemanning’ (‘CAVEMAN—*verb*: to directly and aggressively escalate physical contact, and progress toward sex’)³⁰⁸ brings a particular perspective to co-writing Jameson’s Ten Commandments of Oral Sex. Indeed, such a co-author brings a particular perspective to the decision to include such a list (the advice in which, for example, ‘VIII: Honour the Scrotum,’ assumes oral sex is only given by women and received by men for male pleasure).³⁰⁹ Meagan Tyler argues that sexual self-help literature in general, despite adopting pseudo-feminist language, ‘promotes the (active) sexual servicing of men by women’ and thus should be understood as ‘advocating the sex of prostitution as an ideal for women to follow.’³¹⁰ Whilst Tyler is at risk of making conservative

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p.1259.

³⁰⁷ Matthew Miller, ‘The (Porn) Player,’ *Forbes* magazine, July 4 2005, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from http://www.forbes.com/free_forbes/2005/0704/124.html; and Lionel Shriver, ‘How Did Glamour Model Jordan Become a Bestselling Author when she Doesn’t Even Write?’, *Mail Oline*, 4 September 2008, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1052243/How-did-glamour-model-Jordan-best-selling-author-doesnt-write.html#ixzz42EBvHip4>.

³⁰⁸ Neil Strauss, *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pick-Up Artists* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), p.440.

³⁰⁹ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p.109.

³¹⁰ Meagan Tyler, ‘Sex Self-help Books: Hot Secrets for Great Sex or Promoting the Sex of Prostitution?’ *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 31, 2008, pp.363–72, p.363.

assumptions that preclude the possibility of ‘topping from the bottom,’³¹¹ these memoirs do similarly consistently construct a universe founded upon conservative heterosexual relations: despite being sold as female-authored narratives of sexual desire, they primarily promote the sexual interests of men and position the sexual role of women as one of sexual service.

As a career ghost writer keen to associate himself with the success of Jameson’s book, it is not surprising that in promotional articles Strauss would emphasise his agency and creative control, for example, describing his role as telling ‘the stories the way Jenna would tell them, if she were a writer.’³¹² However, comparison between her memoir and his book, *The Game*, reveals telling similarities. Conflating nudity and confession, Jameson’s introductory page before the contents asserts ‘The following, then, is a true story. It is more naked than I have ever allowed myself to be seen.’³¹³ Strauss has a near identical page before the contents which claims ‘The following is a true story. [...] Naked, vulnerable and disturbingly real.’³¹⁴ The use of the exact same sentence reveals the imprint of, not only Strauss’ labour, but, also, his personal stylistic preferences and turn of phrase. Reviewers have commented on the unexpected literary references Jameson makes when describing sex on porn sets suggesting that ‘the Russian literature reference might seem odd’ when Jameson states of a porn co-star that ‘trying to maintain eye contact with him was like trying to read Dostoyevsky on a roller-coaster.’³¹⁵ Meanwhile, Strauss’ *The Game* opens with a quote from Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from the Underground*. These similarities of idiom and reference support Strauss’ claims of creative control.

As Helen Hester contends in her arguments about the displacement of sex in an ever-expanding range of material that is termed ‘pornographic’, sex and violence occupy the same space of ‘incoherent blending of affective responses’³¹⁶ and thus both are together utilised here to titillate readers and stimulate prurient interest in the confessions of the celebrity author-subject. **As discussed**, Foucault casts confession as a technology of power and a form of subjugation, **internalising and superseding disciplinary power structures**. However, for Freud, the other important theorist of confession of the twentieth century, confession – the divulgence of traumatic, often sexual, memories – constituted the curative path to psychic

³¹¹ This phrase from a queer sexual lexicon proposes that penetration is not the sine qua non of sex and dominance and refers to occasions where the ostensible subordinate instigates and directs sexual play.

³¹² Jill Singer, ‘So What Do You Do, Neil Strauss?’

³¹³ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*.

³¹⁴ Strauss, *The Game*.

³¹⁵ Jane and Michael Stern, ‘How to Make Love like a Porn Star’: Lovers and Other Strangers,’ *The New York Times*, 5 September 2004, retrieved on 22 September 2015, from http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/05/books/review/05STERNL.html?_r=0.

³¹⁶ Hester, *Beyond Explicit*, p.91.

liberation.³¹⁷ Strauss describes receiving Jameson's testimony as an affecting experience for himself as he witnessed her relive her trauma:

She ended up sharing things she'd never told anyone before. When we stopped the tape, we were both totally shaken. She couldn't even sleep that night. The interview sessions were very intense. She had to take a lot of cigarette breaks.³¹⁸

This positions the ghost-writing process in the therapeutic tradition in which, in Judith Butler's terms, 'no one has ever worked through an injury without repeating it.'³¹⁹ It also acts as paratextual promotional material, promising that hitherto unheard secrets will be revealed – the primary currency for the celebrity memoir. In this account Jameson's affective response to the process is offered as authentication. Boyle argues that the porn industry demonstrates an investment in stories of harm to its female stars: 'That porn can be profoundly damaging to women is now part of the story the industry tells about itself, to itself (and its actual consumers) through porn industry publications and discussion forums, as well as to the wider world (and potential consumers) through interviews in mainstream media outlets.'³²⁰ If this is the case, then the traumatic nature of these revelations must be seen as an important part of the promotional appeal. **Thus, whilst these memoirs, and the confessional interactions that produce them, are framed within Freudian, therapeutic terms, the Foucauldian accountability to wider structures is also evident. These two modes of confession thus operate together. Confession is here presented, and perhaps indeed experienced, as self-affirming and freely given in the Freudian mould. It is possible that this, again, functions to positivise the confessed traumas and reassure the audiences that consume them. However, as shall be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the presence of multiple layers of interlocutors, along with generic, gendered and market expectations, make a Foucauldian consideration of the power dynamics at play the more productive model for the confessional practices of the glamour girl memoir as they can here be seen to also be coaxed and coached, if not explicitly coerced.**

Just as the gonzo porn director frames the violent action in the films Jameson stars in, her male ghost writer claims to control how her testimony of traumatic life events is told:

The stories in the book were so dark and heavy that I thought it needed a lighter, more fun element. So I talked to Bernard Chang, one of the artists who works on

³¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality*, (trans. James Strachey; London : Hogarth Press 1962)

³¹⁸ Singer, 'So What Do You Do, Neil Strauss?'

³¹⁹ Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p.102.

³²⁰ Boyle, 'Producing Abuse,' p.601

Batman for DC Comics. He had done some animation for a short I co-directed. So I gave him the text for those sections, and he drew the comics.³²¹

Usually one can only infer the roles of ghost and celebrity author-subject, and, paratextual material such as Strauss' interview should also be read sceptically, operating as it does with a specific promotional agenda. Nevertheless, the fact that he intervenes to transform 'dark and heavy' experiences into 'fun' is telling despite, or perhaps especially because of, its promotional role. The three events that are thus presented as 'lighter' 'fun' are lists of injuries sustained while working in strip clubs, relationships with controlling, parasitic men (called 'suitcase pimps'), and a period of being contractually forced to have sex with her ex-husband. The need to make such experiences less 'dark' shows the work of the ghost writer in this genre as finding ways to offer up authenticated pain while making trauma palatable for an audience.

³²¹ Singer, 'So What Do You Do, Neil Strauss?'

2.2 Nakedness vs. exposure: consent and the ‘snatch’

So far, I have established pornography and autobiography’s shared obsession with the ‘real’, as well as how the mediating presence of the ghost writer compounds assumptions about the constructedness of the celebrity life in ways which might interact problematically with the truth claims of the testimonies of surviving sexual violence narrated within. A further way in which these memoirs make a thematic feature of constructedness is in the writing of the ‘glamour girl’ body. Emphasis upon the constructedness of trauma survivors’ bodies serves to mitigate potential readerly discomfort in knowing that real bodies must bear the consequences of the experiences related.

Both pornography and autobiography offer documents of embodied experience. Joan Mason-Grant argues against the notion that there can be any separation between ‘pornographic meaning-ideas [and] the embodied realm.’³²² From the perspective of autobiography, Sidonie Smith similarly argues for the centrality of materiality: ‘the autobiographical subject carries a history of the body with her as she negotiates the autobiographical ‘I,’ [...] the history of the body intersects with the deployment of subjectivity.’³²³ The centrality of the bodies of Price, Anderson and Jameson to both their celebrity and their memoirs is clear: the experiences related are inherently embodied and, as we shall see, these texts centre on their author-subjects’ bodies as surfaces. Feminist scholarship on the body has been concerned with this apparent duality; debates have surrounded the idea of the female body as surface inscription versus affective embodiment.³²⁴ As Shelley Budgeon argues, the ‘irreducibility between the subject and object’ and the complexity of the relationship between body and self means that embodied female experience cannot be straightforwardly understood either simply as a passive surface on which cultural meanings are inscribed, nor as a natural physical foundation.³²⁵ Rather, ‘the active and processual nature of the self-body relation’³²⁶ must be understood as interrelated and complex. The examples given in this section demonstrate that these memoirs share a concern with the surface of bodies but no investment in depicting the inherent complexity contained within. Indeed, they work to simplify bodily experience and reduce it to its specularly. A repetitive fixation on fake breasts and waxed pubic hair in the

³²² Joan Mason-Grant, *Pornography Embodied: From Speech to Sexual Practice* (Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p.14.

³²³ Sidonie Smith, *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body: Women's Autobiographical Practices in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p.23.

³²⁴ Shelley Budgeon, ‘Theorizing Subjectivity and Feminine Embodiment: Feminist Approaches and Debates’, *Handbook of Children and Youth Studies*, 30 January 2015, pp.243-56; and Shelley Budgeon, ‘Identity as an Embodied Event’, *Body & Society* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: SAGE, 2003), 9 (1), pp.35-55.

³²⁵ Budgeon, ‘Identity as an Embodied Event,’ p.35.

³²⁶ Budgeon, ‘Theorizing Subjectivity and Feminine Embodiment,’ p.243.

memoirs carries the imprint of the visual codes of pornography. They evoke the visual images for which the celebrity is famous and so compensate for the dominance of text in her memoir. This can be seen in the photographs of the (naked body of the) celebrity author-subject which feature prominently on the cover and inside covers in the case of Anderson, in a short section of pages of colour photos in the centre of Price's *Being Jordan*, and in the many images from Jameson's career that intersperse her text.

As 'glamour girls', the star images of Anderson, Jameson and Price are most closely associated with their naked bodies. As Ruth Barcan argues, nudity has become a powerful shorthand for certain narratives. Amongst them, nudity signifies, in different contexts, both sex and honesty.³²⁷ In *Star Struck*, honesty takes the form of 'naked sincerity,'³²⁸ and being free manifests in 'twirling her shirt over her head as she danced a little dance of freedom.'³²⁹ When Jameson promises in her memoir's opening pages 'It is more naked than I have ever allowed myself to be seen' next to a photograph of her removing her underwear, she conjoins the discourses of physical and emotional exposure in the symbol of her naked body. The revelation of personal secrets is positioned as a continuation of sexualised striptease: one which goes further than Jameson's day job as 'porn star', but which, nonetheless, exists on the same continuum. Celebrity memoir (along with much gossip media) is the commodification of access to personal stories endowed with the appearance of something private being shared. The 'glamour girl' memoir locates this dynamic within the literalising commodity logic of pornography, showing the overlapping appeals to audiences on the basis of both exposed bodies and selves.

The combined effect of the frequent release of new memoirs and repeated celebrity appearances across an assemblage of women's magazines, social media and TV chat shows is that young female celebrities appear to be in a perpetual state of 'revealing all'. The tropes of the glamour girl genre remain parameters for the types of discourse that occur around these women. In *Being Jordan*, Price says, 'it's time to talk about my biggest assets, the ones that have put me in the papers more than anything else: my boobs.'³³⁰ Their naked bodies – their 'assets' – are depicted as their primary commodity and successfully trading this carefully managed breast-stock is presented as the key to their fortune and success.

Originally famous for revealing their bodies for a male target audience, for a female target audience they now bare their thoughts and feelings as well. Female celebrities may transition between audiences as long as they bare themselves one way or another. Even after a transition from media targeting men to media targeting women, their naked bodies are still

³²⁷ Barcan, Nudity.

³²⁸ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.81.

³²⁹ Ibid., p.89.

³³⁰ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.89.

integral to their brand. Anderson's protagonist spends most of the novel entirely naked: 'it was stranger for the pair to be dressed in each other's company than nude.'³³¹ Whenever Star's experience of her body is narrated, it is in terms of arousal: 'the feeling of her own skin was awesome, not to mention the sensation of her hand touching her naked breasts.'³³² This combined emphasis on the naturalness of her naked state and constant arousal naturalises the presentation of Star as sex object.

Adam Knee observes the 'fundamentally voyeuristic' impulses whereby celebrity nudes 'render *all* stars as porn stars' offering the bare body 'as a crucial site of authenticity.'³³³ Accordingly, in the accounts offered of these women's public images, nudity and exposure are confused: 'She felt so naked,' describes *Star Struck*, 'Well, aside from the boots and the ring, she was naked. But it wasn't just that she didn't have any clothes on. She felt vulnerable – raw and exposed.'³³⁴ For these women, for whom posing naked is banal and workaday, nudity is something other than the absence of clothes. A woman whose career depends on both nakedness and exposure is thus left in what Ruth Barcan calls 'the star's odd predicament as a victim torn between moral distress and economic gain,'³³⁵ where those two pillars of her agency, nakedness and exposure, are conditioned through the lens of vulnerability.

In a world of perpetual performance, the last shred of privacy becomes the essence of the self: 'What's left to hide?' Star is asked. "Me," she said simply. "The part I save for myself."³³⁶ The hunt for the last shred of privacy feeds a whole media ecosystem of unauthorised exposés. Paparazzi lie (often literally) ready to pounce upon a glimpse of crotch during an unguarded exit from a taxi; magazines, newspapers and gossip blogs circulate these images with their (often unfavourable) added commentary judging their unruly bodies and appetites;³³⁷ and adult websites reveal the rest in 'leaked' sex tapes.³³⁸ Knee observes that all other criteria can fall by the wayside 'as long as there is a seemingly unauthorised glimmer of skin.'³³⁹ The production of images of these women's bodies straddles consent and violation where the last shred of privacy becomes highly prized prey.

³³¹ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.63.

³³² Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.36.

³³³ Adam Knee, 'Celebrity Skins: The Illicit Textuality of the Celebrity Nude Magazine' *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), pp.161-77, p.168, p.162, p.169.

³³⁴ Anderson, *Star Struck* p.4.

³³⁵ Barcan, *Nudity*, p.247.

³³⁶ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.50.

³³⁷ 'Katie Flashes The Photogs A Smile Her Panties!' *Perezhilton.com*, 11 February 2011, retrieved on 21 September 2015, from <http://perezhilton.com/2011-02-11-katie-price-wardrobe-malfunction-london-panties-shot>.

³³⁸ 'Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee Sex Tape,' 1995, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=467533263.

³³⁹ Knee, 'Celebrity Skin,' p.169.

Celebrity memoir offers an opportunity to speak back to this ecosystem. Presenting her own celebrity selfhood as a commodity, her protagonist says of a paparazzi photographer:

He has ... pictures of me walking the dog, on the set, having lunch with friends, on dates, kissing, holding my mother's hand. He even has pictures of me sleeping. It's like he's stealing my life. Not the part that we all give to the world, but the part I keep for me.³⁴⁰

Her image is her selfhood, her private life the part with the highest exchange value, and like any other currency or commodity of great value, it can be stolen. This chimes with industry lingo, as journalists and photographers refer to shots taken without consent – usually as a celebrity leaves the building – as ‘snatches,’ an exceptionally gendered term uncomfortably combining theft and a slang reference to women's genitals (regardless of which part of the woman's body is the subject of the photograph).³⁴¹ Where quantity of exposure is the objective of a successful career, control of the quality and nature of exposure can lie beyond the celebrity's grasp. In an environment saturated with constant unauthorised exposure, for these women, famous primarily for their appearance and image, the real work lies in the management of their true assets: the constant reclaiming and rebranding of their public image.

Writing the ‘glamour girl’ body: ‘Well hello! I admit that I’m fake.’

Although celebrity memoirs provide an opportunity to redress the assemblage of images circulated in the media against these women's will, the representations within the memoirs closely correlate with the paparazzi images of their authors seen on both men's and women's magazines: their breasts are placed centre-stage. Breasts, specifically *fake* breasts, are presented as the *real* stars of the glamour girl memoir, and are endowed with agency beyond that of their owners, narrated with humour and an emphasis on empowered ‘choice’ which smooths over the fact that ‘accounts of the porn industry – however celebratory they may be – are frequently littered with the debris of other women's lives.’³⁴² At the same time, this approach veils the structures which demand specific bodily norms.

³⁴⁰ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.50.

³⁴¹ Scott Douglas, ‘Baffled Tony Marsh Gets a View from the Other End of the Lens,’ 12 March 2008, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <https://scottdouglas.wordpress.com/tag/paparazzi/>.

³⁴² Boyle, ‘Producing Abuse,’ p.599.

Scholars such as Adrienne Evans and Susan Riley have theorised contemporary female celebrity culture as rewarding ‘neoliberal entrepreneurial selves, with the capacity to make money from their bodies’ as a result of ‘continuous work on the bodies.’³⁴³ Price informs her readers that ‘bigger is definitely better when it comes to breasts’³⁴⁴ and wants to live in L.A. because there ‘boob jobs are just a part of life’³⁴⁵. Her own breast enlargement made her ‘even more famous and brought [...] even more work. The silicone-enhanced Jordan has been in constant demand.’³⁴⁶ Price presents herself as a good postfeminist, neoliberal subject conducting the necessary labour of self-transformation and ‘beauty work’.³⁴⁷ Further, by building a celebrity persona closely associated with cosmetic surgery and frequently *having work done*,³⁴⁸ Price secures work and income. By writing memoirs offering a commentary on, or ‘story behind’ these procedures she is able to maximise this body work to its fullest commercial potential. The idea of physical appearance as literal currency is not new. As Naomi Wolf argues, histories of bourgeois marriage markets have taught women to understand their own beauty as part of the economy. Thus, as a society we have become perfectly ‘accustomed to having beauty evaluated as wealth’.³⁴⁹ More recently, rapid expansion of a lucrative medical sector has worked to valorise cosmetic surgery as positive self-perfection while aggressively normalising its body norms. Diane Negra observes ‘a broad promotional rhetoric that (re)assures female clients that they are demonstrating agency and self-management when they avail themselves of such services rather than capitulating to regressive (sometimes misogynistic) appearance norms.’³⁵⁰ These social narratives of beauty work as agency, self-making and currency are accepted as givens and further literalised in the ‘glamour girl’ memoir universe.

Price even casts big breasts as the basis of relationships with other women. Of her trip to the Playboy mansion, she says, ‘I had been nervous that Hugh’s bunnies might not like me. But I needn’t have worried. [...] They were totally fascinated by my boobs.’³⁵¹ Social success takes the form of having fascinating boobs, large ones leading to the greatest endorsement: ‘They [...] couldn’t get over how big they were, and how natural looking. I took

³⁴³ Adrienne Evans and Susan Riley, ‘Immaculate Consumption: Negotiating the Sex Symbol in Postfeminist Celebrity Culture,’ *Journal of Gender Studies*, 22 (3), 2013, pp.268–81, p.268.

³⁴⁴ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.97.

³⁴⁵ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.194.

³⁴⁶ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.97.

³⁴⁷ Evans and Riley, ‘Immaculate Consumption,’ p.276.

³⁴⁸ Reportedly seven breast surgeries, a nose reshaping operation, liposuction, lip fillers, Botox, cosmetic dentistry and hair extensions. See Olivia Foster, ‘From a 32C to a 32G, and Back Again! How 16 YEARS of Cosmetic Surgery Gave Katie Price the Most Famous Boobs in the Country,’ *Daily Mail*, 8 December 2014, retrieved on 15 March 2016, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2865206/How-16-YEARS-cosmetic-surgery-gave-Katie-Price-famous-boobs-country.html>.

³⁴⁹ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), p.20.

³⁵⁰ Diane Negra, *What a Girl Wants?: Fantasizing the Reclamation of Self in Postfeminism* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), p.121.

³⁵¹ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.207.

it as a real compliment: they've seen enough of these things to be real connoisseurs!'³⁵² Similarly, when Price met Victoria Beckham, the two women 'had an interesting moment in the ladies' loos':

Somehow the conversation got round to boobs. I showed her mine, she showed me hers. [...] She told me how much she admired mine – and how much David [Beckham] likes big breasts. Well, show me a man who doesn't!³⁵³

With her colloquial universality, the connoisseur-endorsed, silicone-enhanced Jordan asserts the importance of big breasts, the heteronormative assumption that all men like them, and the patriarchal right to male pleasure, as if they were indisputable facts. In their power to determine where a woman lives, the success of her career and how she relates to both men and other women, *Being Jordan* portrays breasts, specifically big, fake breasts, as central to a woman's existence. Breasts are work, capital, conversation, curios – anything *but* sexual. What is presented as a discourse of sex is, rather, a matter of work – performed by and upon the body.

This emphasis is matched in Anderson's *Star Struck*. In its opening sentence we are introduced to the protagonist's breasts before we meet the woman herself, literally putting breasts first and foremost in the story of her life:

Why do my nipples hurt? was Star's first thought as she woke from a strangely deep sleep, her hands gliding along her naked body to the tender nipples that had awakened her. She winced as she made contact, realizing only belatedly that she was naked.³⁵⁴

Star/Anderson is characterised primarily by her breasts. Indeed they are given agency enough to wake her from a strangely deep sleep. Like Price, breasts are similarly credited with agency over Star's destiny as her best friend charts their centrality to every step of her career trajectory: 'They got you the job at Mother's. They got you the standing ovation at the Dolphin's game. They got you the job with Zax. And they got you on the cover of *Mann* magazine.'³⁵⁵ Throughout the memoir the character treats her breasts, and the arousal they cause her, as a continual reference point to the action. A woman's breasts are a separate entity with their own life story to tell.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Ibid., p.90.

³⁵⁴ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.1.

³⁵⁵ Anderson, *Star*, p.314-5.

In the perfect synthesis of three hallmarks of postfeminism – emphasis on consumer choice, self-sexualisation and self-improvement through work on the body – Anderson’s protagonist marvels at what she perceives as the control afforded her by the cosmetic surgery: ‘Nipple placement. I can decide.’³⁵⁶ Even twenty years ago, Kathryn Morgan was arguing that the rhetoric of empowered ‘choice’ surrounding cosmetic surgery emerges as thinly veiled ‘necessity’.³⁵⁷ This negotiation between individual agency and obedience to social norms is identified by Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon as typifying the ‘contradictions of the rhetoric of choice that the postfeminist woman grapples with: what looks like individual empowerment, agency and self-determination can also signal conformity and docility’.³⁵⁸ The tension between power and powerlessness is especially pertinent to this passage of *Star* because, while the text heavily emphasises Star’s power and freedom to choose, the breast augmentation occurs at the recommendation of the Editor of Playboy magazine (here renamed *Mann magazine*) and is funded by a wealthy former boyfriend.

Jameson recalls the time that she ‘bought two cakes (one for each implant) [and] threw a birthday party for my boobs’³⁵⁹. Disembodied breasts with a life of their own are presented to the reader as the true stars in the glamour girl memoir genre. It is hard to imagine celebrities throwing parties for their large, natural breasts, suggesting that the celebration itself is a function of their constructedness. These authors speak with knowing humour about the artificiality of their appearance, ascribing positive value to the fake aesthetic: ‘Natural beauty takes at least two hours in front of a mirror’, says Anderson,³⁶⁰ subverting cultural discourses in which constructed beauty is ‘de-valued for being made visible’, and thereby revealing the necessity for effort.³⁶¹ Price, meanwhile, credits Anderson for inspiration: ‘I like the “fake” look: big hair, big make-up, big boobs. Pamela Anderson has the perfect figure as far as I’m concerned’,³⁶² admitting that her persona involves a degree of impersonation of a prior referent.

Judith Butler argues that ‘gender is a persistent impersonation that passes for the real and destabilises distinctions between natural and artificial.’³⁶³ Price often refers to her modelling persona, Jordan, with the use of a second name, as a performance: ‘up until my appearance on *I’m a Celebrity* the public only really knew me as Jordan and probably

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.314.

³⁵⁷ Kathryn Pauly Morgan, ‘Women and the Knife,’ *Hypatia*, 6 (3), 1991, pp.25-53. p. 26 (emphasis in original).

³⁵⁸ Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p.151.

³⁵⁹ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p.170.

³⁶⁰ Sager, ‘Pamela Anderson.’

³⁶¹ Bev Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.101.

³⁶² Price, *Being Jordan*, p.91.

³⁶³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.x.

thought that was the only role I could play.’³⁶⁴ Butler argues that becoming gendered is a process of interpreting cultural norms constituted of both choices and restrictions: ‘the choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live and wear one’s body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles’ in which the natural body is increasingly suspect.³⁶⁵ Cosmetic surgery is central to the Jordan persona, and Price’s open embrace of this upturns traditional discourses in the gossip media where female stars are ‘outed’ for attempting to conceal the ‘work’ done on their bodies. In her (potentially ironically titled?) fourth memoir, *You Only Live Once*, she exclaims, ‘Journalists write that I’m so fake. Well hello! I *admit* that I’m fake.’³⁶⁶

Here, Price can be seen to be embracing artifice in a camp performance of exaggerated femininity, demonstrating the “incongruity (subject matter), theatricality (style), and humor (strategy)” that Esther Newton’s foundational ethnography of drag queens identifies as the qualities of gender impersonation.³⁶⁷ Unlike the drag queens in Newton’s sample, Price performs femininity as a cisgender woman, and yet such theatrical exaggeration can nonetheless be understood to be ‘performing the social character of “women” (that is, the signs and symbols of a socially defined ... category) by artificially creating the image of glamorous women’.³⁶⁸ Bruce LaBruce calls this ‘a performative femininity by females filtered through drag queens’.³⁶⁹ On the one hand, this openness about the ‘fakeness’ of her body can be seen as transgressing traditional patriarchal feminine codes of middle-class respectability which, as bev skeggs argues, valorise the appearance of ‘natural’ beauty.³⁷⁰ For skeggs, the politics of respectability are always at play in the confessional or autobiographical acts of working class women, as she explains: ‘Different techniques of telling enable the attribution of the “self” to different groups; for the working-class, it always had to be a way of displaying respectability.’³⁷¹ Price’s overt rejection of discourses of propriety, and absence of reticence about purchasing beauty through multiple cosmetic surgeries, could be seen to be a rebellion against the politics of respectability at play in celebrity culture. Tracing the historical discursive construction of respectability, skeggs observes, ‘respectability entailed moral rectitude, economic continence and self sufficiency; in short, a distillation of evangelical disciplines. [...] In any definition of respectability,

³⁶⁴ Katie Price and Peter Andre, *A Whole New World*, (Sony BMG, 2006), pp.40-1.

³⁶⁵ Judith Butler, ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex,’ *Yale French Studies*, No. 72, Simone de Beauvoir: Witness to a Century. (1986), pp. 35-49, p.40.

³⁶⁶ Katie Price, *You Only Live Once*, (London: Century, 2010), p.20.

³⁶⁷ Esther Newton, *Mother camp: Female impersonators in America*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p.107.

³⁶⁸ Rosemary J. Coombe, ‘Author/Izing the Celebrity: Publicity Rights, Postmodern Politics, and Unauthorized Genders’, *10 Cardozo Arts and Entertainment Law Journal* (1992), pp.365-395, p.380.

³⁶⁹ Bruce LaBruce, ‘Notes on Camp/Anti-Camp’, *Nat.Brut*, retrieved on 9.11.16 from: <http://www.natbrut.com/essay-notes-on-campanti-camp-by-bruce-labruce.html>

³⁷⁰ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, p.101.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.123.

sexuality lurks beneath the inscription. For instance, prostitution, as the constitutive limit to propriety.³⁷² Price's celebrity revels in a space beyond this limit, performing a plastic, worked-for, constructed femininity that acts as a constant referent to her career origins in soft-core porn modelling. This, alongside the sexual 'confessions' that make up much of the 'glamour girl' memoir, transgresses the respectability politics of gendered celebrity. Smith and Watson, meanwhile, argue that women's sexual autobiography 'exploits and flaunts norms of gendered modesty about self-disclosure, testing the limits of decorum that women artists confront.'³⁷³

And yet, whilst in this regard these memoirs could be argued to be a mode of resistance to these norms, they work equally hard to reinscribe them. Indeed, in the assemblage of cross-promotion, there is a clear commercial logic to the packaging and sale of the sexual confessions of porn stars alongside a narration of the appearance of their synecdochal 'bigger,' 'better' breasts.³⁷⁴ If self-making and brand-building overlap in celebrity memoir, this emphasis can be seen as reinforcing the link between the memoirs and the extratextual identities of their porn star author/subjects. Foucault argues that, within a regime of 'power-knowledge-pleasure', offering up a sexual confession imbues one with the 'speaker's benefit'; 'the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of deliberate transgression.'³⁷⁵ This appearance of transgression is integral to the appeal of celebrity memoir and the types of stories people may expect when purchasing a memoir. Skeggs argues that 'a residue of value remains, one that makes those at the constitutive limit potentially much more exciting than those valued through restraint, respectability and propriety.'³⁷⁶ Thus, whilst Price, Anderson and Jameson's memoirs may appear to be resisting the gendered politics of respectability in their preoccupations with narrating the female body, this aspect is ultimately a norm of its own, in service of commercial appeal. If these texts offer a 'confession of the flesh' it is of the appearance, over the experience, of their bodies. **Once again, the paradoxical, 'impossible space'³⁷⁷ of femininity is visible on the page as authors' accounts must contort to adhere to mutually exclusive, contradictory and impossible gendered norms such as likability, respectability, desirability and profitability.**

³⁷² Ibid., p.38.

³⁷³ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*, p.4.

³⁷⁴ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.97.

³⁷⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p.6.

³⁷⁶ Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*, p.39.

³⁷⁷ Tseëlon, *Masque of Femininity*, p.131.

‘Simplified and made visible’: Public privates and the performance of extreme femininity³⁷⁸

The genre of celebrity memoir demands its authors reveal personal information in an act of ‘making a private history public.’³⁷⁹ In a move which both eroticises and literalises privacy, these women have responded to that demand by narrating their ‘privates’. Historically, pre-Enlightenment ideas of ‘assessing the status of the soul or the meaning of public achievement’ have been integral to the development of the autobiography genre and presumptions about what autobiography is *for*.³⁸⁰ The prominence of fake breasts and waxed pubices in this space subverts such generic expectations and/or communicates that these atomised body parts are deemed sufficiently integral to these women’s identity to feature heavily in their life story. As Slavoj Žižek argues of pubic hair, ‘even the most intimate attitude towards one’s body is used to make an ideological statement.’³⁸¹ These memoirs instruct that pubic hair is something that must be removed or, at the very least, discouraged. For Price ‘it’s either all off, or there’s a minimal landing strip. [She is] in the all-off camp in case you were wondering.’³⁸² Anderson’s protagonist explains, ‘I don’t really have any... Just naturally, and I don’t encourage what’s there.’³⁸³ Jameson even has her own line of branded intimate hair removal products.³⁸⁴ Through waxing, the object of desire is to be laid bare, arguably the role of memoir also.

Relating a scene from her time staying at Hugh Hefner’s *Playboy* mansion, Price browses a corridor of pictures of former ‘playmates’ with pubic hair like an archaeologist perusing a peculiar relic of a bygone era: ‘In the seventies a full bush was all the rage.’³⁸⁵ Anderson’s protagonist states that the publisher of her nude images, ‘has a thing about pussy hair. It’s his little kink – I guess he misses the seventies.’³⁸⁶ Whilst not made explicit, there is a specific subtext invoked; as they recoil from the seventies as a phase of backward sexual etiquette, they distance themselves from second wave feminism and, with it, from a model of womanhood that is complex, demanding and seeks parity with men.

Diane Negra argues, public hair waxing is ‘one of a number of female beauty and exercise trends that originated in pornography’ which ‘not only stylizes the female genitalia so as to appear pre-pubescent, it also reflects a misogynist belief that female genitalia are

³⁷⁸ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p.119.

³⁷⁹ Rachael McLennan, *American Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p.7.

³⁸⁰ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p.2.

³⁸¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 2008), pp.5-6.

³⁸² Price, *Being Jordan*, p.192.

³⁸³ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.94.

³⁸⁴ ‘Jenna Jameson Hair Hot Trimmer Shaver,’ *Amazon.com*, retrieved 7 March 2016, from <http://www.amazon.com/Jenna-Jameson-Hair-Trimmer-Shaver/dp/B00041MB2U>.

³⁸⁵ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.192.

³⁸⁶ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.94.

excessively complex and need to be simplified and made visible for the comfort and pleasure of a male sex partner.³⁸⁷ One of the more obvious significations of body hair is that of a marker of sexual maturity. The rejection of this marker of sexual maturity corresponds with the wider postfeminist trend in which adult women are ‘made safe by being represented as fundamentally still a girl’.³⁸⁸ These memoirs designate pubic hair as anathema to femininity and mark themselves out as more innately feminine (and thus desirable) than other women – even in farcical extremes:

They brought in this little old man who specialised in making fake beards and mustaches, and I had to lie on a table like I was at the doctor’s office while this poor little man crawled between my legs and glued crepe hair onto me.³⁸⁹

The extremity of her innate desirability is underlined by the absurd lengths gone to so that she can be like other women.

It is not simply a straightforward investment in the signification of pre-pubescence that mandates the treatment of public hair with disgust. Breasts, after all, are a marker of sexual maturity and their centrality to these texts cannot be overstated. Unlike breasts, an increase in post-puberty body hair is a secondary sexual characteristic that is also shared by men. Thus, as Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen argue, the two-part emphasis upon the presence of breasts and the absence of pubic hair constructs femininity in binary opposition to male bodies.³⁹⁰ With their cosmetically enhanced breasts and their inability to grow pubic hair, this binary logic is mobilised for a performance of feminine identity at its most extreme.

Even through the written word, their sexuality remains purely specular. As a result, in the ‘glamour girl’ memoir, female sexuality is safely ‘kept within the realm of male visual pleasure’³⁹¹ as the authors describe at length the appearance, not their experience, of their genitals. This containment within the parameters set by careers in glamour modelling creates a confusion between telling secrets and revealing bodies. Invested in preserving images of themselves as highly desirable, these texts portray women as a hyper-feminine, heterosexual male fantasy for other women to read. Under these contradictory investments, memoir, the medium of subjectivity, becomes a tool to reinforce the author’s role as object.

³⁸⁷ Negra, *What a Girl Wants?*, p.119.

³⁸⁸ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, ‘In Focus: Postfeminism and Contemporary Media Studies,’ *Cinema Journal*, 44 (2), 2005, pp.107-10, p.109.

³⁸⁹ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.95.

³⁹⁰ Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen, ‘Consuming Skin: Dermographies of Female Subjection and Abjection,’ *Critical Pedagogies of Consumption: Living and Learning in the Shadow of the “Shopocalypse,”* ed. by Jennifer A. Sandlin and Peter McLaren, (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.157-68.

³⁹¹ Margaret Schwartz, ‘The Horror of Something to See: Celebrity “Vaginas” as Protheses,’ *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope*, p.228.

The performative extremity of femininity that is depicted operates in service of a wider sensibility of fabrication. The claim in these memoirs is that the bodies narrated within them are 'just naturally' suited to the visual conventions of, and therefore a career within, soft-core pornography: hyperbolically, comically, synthetically feminine in the extreme. This works to rationalise, simplify and smooth over the more harrowing aspects of the conflicting accounts of these (at times, very difficult) careers. Bodies that appear but seemingly do not feel are narrated alongside the accounts of sexual violence upon those bodies, as if such a testimony of physical and sexual trauma must be mitigated to ameliorate potential readerly discomfort. To borrow Negra's explanation of the pubic wax, the, often traumatic, embodied experiences of the author-subjects must be 'simplified and made visible for the comfort and pleasure of the reader.'³⁹²

³⁹² Negra, *What a Girl Wants*, p.119.

2.3 The contradictory ‘empowered’ femininity of the ‘glamour girl’ memoir subject

These texts present their authors-subjects’ sexual subjectivity as the crucial site of their empowerment, building upon their existing star images from the world of porn. This kind of depiction of sex-as-empowerment has been much debated by feminist scholars. Discussions of female sexual agency range from those who argue for reading self-sexualisation as its own autonomous, authentic and therefore agentic act, to those who argue that sexual agency can only be understood in its relation to structural inequalities and wider coercive contexts.³⁹⁴ For Harvey and Gill, discourses of female sexual freedom are often ‘*intimately entangled with attempts to recuperate this to (male-dominated) consumer capitalism.*’³⁹⁵ By contrast, Attwood draws upon alternative pornographies to argue for the potential spaces available to women to resist objectification in the production of porn.³⁹⁶

In their girling of adult women, the assertion of sexuality as a source of women’s power, the occlusion of structural gender inequalities through their ‘reprivitization’, and the valorisation of the labour of beauty work and consumer choice, we have seen how these texts are exemplary of a postfeminist sensibility.³⁹⁷ In her examination of postfeminist media culture Ros Gill argues that **the commodification of sexual empowerment has been ultimately enabling for sexist objectification.** ‘Empowerment is everywhere,’ argues Gill, ‘feminist notions of it have been taken up and sold back to us emptied of their political force.’³⁹⁸ The postfeminist sensibility of these memoirs is not least in evidence in their rhetoric of ‘empowerment’.

These texts engage directly with questions of personal power. For example, Jameson celebrates the fact that she ‘was finally learning to take control of people instead of being so passive.’³⁹⁹ Price similarly informs readers that she is tough and tenacious: ‘I know how to work it.’⁴⁰⁰ She stresses the fact that she is ‘strong and independent.’⁴⁰¹ Indeed, she considers

³⁹³ Linda Duits and Liesbet Van Zoonen, ‘Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls’ Bodies in the European Multicultural Society’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 13(2) (2006), pp.103–17.

³⁹⁴ Sumi Madhok, *Rethinking Agency: Gender, Development and Rights in North West India* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010).

³⁹⁵ Laura Harvey and Rosalind Gill, ‘Spicing It Up: Sexual Entrepreneurs and *The Sex Inspectors*’, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, edited by Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.52.

³⁹⁶ Feona Attwood, ‘Through the Looking Glass? Sexual Agency and Subjectification Online’, *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, edited by Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p.203.

³⁹⁷ Ros Gill, ‘Media, Empowerment and the ‘Sexualization of Culture’ Debates,’ *Sex Roles*, 66, 2012, pp.736–45.

³⁹⁸ Gill, ‘Media, Empowerment and the ‘Sexualization of Culture’ Debates,’ p.743.

³⁹⁹ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p.48.

⁴⁰⁰ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.7.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

herself to be ‘much too independent’ saying, ‘I could never do what someone tells me.’⁴⁰² The advice, delivered with gravitas, from the deathbed of Anderson’s protagonist’s mother is that ‘it’s your choice who you are.’⁴⁰³ Star’s husband is surprised by her ‘lack of intimidation’⁴⁰⁴ when he shouts at her.

At the same time, it is an account of empowerment that is contradictory and defined within pre-existing parameters of female subservience. Jameson is ‘taking control’ by pretending to be sexually interested in men to persuade them to pay for erotic dances. Price is ‘too independent’ to be one of Hugh Hefner’s sexually subservient bunny girls. The fate that Star would have chosen for herself had she not been robbed of the choice would have been to die with her husband to show her devotion. **These conceptions of ‘empowerment’ are certainly, to use Gill’s terms, ‘emptied’ of any feminist or political force and, rather, aggressively assert the primacy of male pleasure in sexual relations.**

This thesis seeks to avoid the binarising tendency to cast the subject in either uncomplicatedly liberatory or pessimistically castigatory terms. Rather, I seek to trace the, sometimes contradictory, ways in which these texts depict the sexual agency of their authors, both overtly and implicitly. What arises is both evidence of an agentic interjection in wider discourses, for example, redressing criticisms of undeserved fame, and at the same time evidence of a persistent wider paradigm of male activity and aggression and female passivity and service. What powerfully emerges is the investment these stars have in asserting their individual sexual agency, in ways that aren’t seen in the memoirs from celebrities from other fields – for example, claiming that they gain power over men primarily through having sex with them or offering inventories of the economic proceeds of their role in the sex industry. This reflects the cultural anxieties that surround questions of female sexual agency, especially that of women in the sex industry. Thus, in their repeated (if at points shaky) assertions of power we see the burden of reassurance that is at stake in the life-writing of the young, female porn-star celebrity in particular. Thus we see these memoirs seeking to align with their extratexts and the regressive paradigms they uphold. These narratives, produced through collaboration with (sometimes male) ghost writers, describe (and at points celebrate) male control and the non-observance of consent, compromising – or at the very least complicating - authorial assertions of independence and agency as a result.

⁴⁰² Price, *Being Jordan*, p.211.

⁴⁰³ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.212.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.69.

Negotiating cultural value and creative agency

More successfully than the inherently compromised examples given above, these memoirs represent their author-subjects as agentic through their depiction of careers that have required hard labour, professionalised skills, creative input and business acumen. In so doing they run counter to the understanding of ‘glamour modelling’ and even of wider female celebrity, in the popular imagination, which associates female celebrities with easy-won rewards, as evidenced by Kim Allen’s study into teenage girls’ conception of celebrity which found that ‘contemporary celebrity was seen to bypass the necessity of hard work and talent.’⁴⁰⁵ Perhaps in response to such assumptions, Price’s autobiography offers frequent statements which emphasise the labour which goes into her career: ‘what I do is called glamour modelling, which makes me laugh because if people knew what went on at a shoot they wouldn’t think it was glamorous at all.’⁴⁰⁶ As Dyer has established, claims such as Price’s, ‘I’ve worked for everything I’ve got,’⁴⁰⁷ are paradigmatic to the star archetype established at least as long ago as classic Hollywood, while reassurances of hard work potentially neutralise audience envy at the unequal distribution of wealth.⁴⁰⁸ In this way memoir offers an opportunity to intervene in the discourses that surround a celebrity. Moreover, I would argue that the emphasis upon the labour of modelling is a riposte to the punitive discourses of cultural value Geraghty⁴⁰⁹ and Allen⁴¹⁰ identify – discourses which hinge upon the concept of underserved fame and see Price, for example, categorised as an ‘attention seeking’⁴¹¹ ‘fame whore.’⁴¹²

As Su Holmes notes: ‘Jordan is often invoked as the epitome of the worthless nature of contemporary.’⁴¹³ As well as offering the appeal of the invitation “‘behind-the-scenes” of fame production,’⁴¹⁴ by showing the work that goes into the finished image, memoir as a medium offers glamour models a means to attempt to legitimise careers which have been stigmatised by hierarchies of value that doubly devalue both the sex industry and female celebrity more generally.

⁴⁰⁵ Kim Allen, ‘Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight: Social Class, Gender and Fantasies of ‘Success,’ *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope*, p.157.

⁴⁰⁶ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.59.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁴⁰⁸ Dyer, *Stars*, p.7

⁴⁰⁹ Geraghty, ‘Re-examining Stardom’, p.99.

⁴¹⁰ Allen, ‘Girls Imagining Careers in the Limelight,’ p.157.

⁴¹¹ Owen Tonks, ‘Jodie Marsh Predicts Katie Price’s Fall from Showbiz as she Slams her Attention Seeking Ways,’ *The Mirror*, 26 March 2013, retrieved on 22 September 2015, from <http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/jodie-marsh-predicts-katie-prices-1786469>.

⁴¹² ‘Katie Price Reveals Her Struggle To Conceive A Child With Alex Reid,’ *Perezhilton.com*, 25 October, 2010, retrieved on 22 September 2015, from <http://perezhilton.com/2010-10-25-katie-price-reveals-her-struggle-to-conceive-a-child-with-alex-reid>.

⁴¹³ Holmes, ‘Starring... Dyer?’ p.13.

⁴¹⁴ Holmes, “‘Starring... Dyer?’” p.16.

The similarities between the ways the three memoirs depict their author-subject's work are significant. Jameson's memoir features a comic strip called 'Jenna Jameson's Stripper Dancer Injuries 101'⁴¹⁵ and even includes example business contracts for porn actresses.⁴¹⁶ Such inclusions are outside the norms of both autobiography and celebrity memoir and do not appear in any of the reality or pop star memoirs that are discussed later in this thesis. Here they serve to emphasise Jameson's physical labour and business savvy in a professionalised industry. When Price discusses 'creating [her] own poses,'⁴¹⁷ she asserts, 'I know what works and what will sell,'⁴¹⁸ and inducts her readers into the 'tools of the trade,'⁴¹⁹ she similarly presents herself as a professionalised expert rather than a celebrity.⁴²⁰ Anderson's memoir describes the peculiar graft that goes into glamour modelling:

'A,E,I,O,U,' she said laughing.

'What the fuck?' Jimi asked, amused but confused.

'It's what they had me say when they were taking the gatefold shots of me for *Mann*. [...] I'm lying there, wrenching my spine, dislocating a shoulder, with a beard glued to my coochie, going, 'AEIOU.'⁴²¹

This description offers the same combination of discomfort, absurdity and make believe as the now famous passage where Price explains the effort that goes into 'being Jordan':

I'm too busy concentrating on the job, on looking good, on breathing in just enough to keep my stomach flat, but not so much that I'll show off too many ribs. I'm worrying about my hair being in place. And of course I'm perfecting my Jordan stare. While I'm looking at the camera I try and imagine I'm gazing into the distance at a sunset – for some reason that seems to give me the perfect challenging, come-and-get-it-if-you-dare look in my eyes. And I'm very proud of my pout, which I achieve by pretending I'm blowing bubbles very gently.⁴²²

These passages demonstrate an ironic, self-parodic humour that delights in the gap between the polished erotic image and the (decidedly un-erotic) labour that goes into producing it. Crucially, these descriptions of their work disassociate them from the image of the mute, inert clotheshorse and position them as active performers, instrumental to the production of the photographs that make them famous. They are represented in these examples as the

⁴¹⁵ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p.64.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.353

⁴¹⁷ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.58.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.57

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴²¹ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.95.

⁴²² Price, *Being Jordan*, p.59.

agents of a career that they have worked for, deserving of the resultant rewards and successes, resisting their characterisation as passive objects.

Constructing female sexuality: service and hyperbole

We have seen that these memoirs reveal an anxiety that their author-subjects should be viewed as empowered by readers and that accounts of the skilled labour required to construct a successful 'glamour girl' image are one of the ways evidence of this empowerment is given. By contrast to the above example that shows memoir as a space for reframing discourses about a celebrity, much of the 'glamour girl' life narrative otherwise depicts and – at points – celebrates loss of control to men.

The sheer fact that these memoirs offer accounts of women's sexual desires is significant, existing as they do in a context of historical representational lack.⁴²³ However, they are accounts of female sexuality which primarily place their protagonists in service to male pleasure. This accords with feminist arguments that feminine sexualities have been constructed in subordination to dominant male sexualities. For example, Lynne Jamieson observes that 'predatory male sexuality remains a celebrated theme and a commercially successful formula' in contemporary culture.⁴²⁴

Exemplifying Angela McRobbie's conception of the 'postfeminist sexual contract' where new freedoms are seemingly afforded to women, but kept within the sexual arena,⁴²⁵ these memoirs assert that sex is a route to empowerment and agency: 'having sex,' states Katie Price, 'made me feel like I had power over him.'⁴²⁶ These memoirs embrace the eroticisation of power. Rather than a pleasure to be experienced, sex is a tool to be utilised. Price punishes men for treating her badly by providing them with sexual gratification:

I was planning to take my revenge. I was going to shag his brains out one last time, make him realise what he was missing. [...] I made sure the sex was passionate, intense and totally satisfying – for him at least. [...] I felt like a slag but I wanted to torture him. Finally I was free.⁴²⁷

⁴²³ See Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs*, p.6. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.14. Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley, (London : Vintage Books, [1949] 2011).

⁴²⁴ Lynne Jamieson, *Intimacies: Personal Relationships in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p.133.

⁴²⁵ Angela McRobbie, 'Top Girls? Young Women and the Post-feminist Sexual Contract,' *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2007, pp.718-37, p.718.

⁴²⁶ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.28.

⁴²⁷ Anderson, *Star*, p.272.

Whilst Price relates this anecdote confident that she has used sex to reverse any power imbalance and that Bowers is the victim of the situation, it is questionable whether he is really the injured party and will be chastened by the experience. **Not only does this depiction thus construct sex through adversarial power relations, it paradoxically asserts an increase in Price's power at the very moment that pleasure is one-sidedly for male benefit and she is shamed for participation.**

Star Struck adopts a hyperbolic investment in male pleasure which is seen as a question of women's labour. Jimi Deeds is Star's rock star husband based on Anderson's then real life husband. When Jimi isn't 'pushing her head down' in the car,⁴²⁸ Star is 'grin[ning], slipping under the table and taking him in her mouth'⁴²⁹ during breakfast. The 'grin' communicates enthusiasm and, as Gwynne argues of the postfeminist memoirs of non-famous contemporary women, 'the reader is expected to perceive this as empowering simply because the authors/narrators claim to enjoy these experiences.'⁴³⁰ Fellatio is a source of pride: 'Star had developed some oral talent over the years'⁴³¹ especially with 'big cock she had really honed her skills.'⁴³² This emphasis on male pleasure as a result of female 'talent' and 'skill' promotes the idea that, for women, sex is work and male pleasure is a form of labour to take pride in. The hyperbolic celebration of male pleasure, symbolised in the enthusiastically performed labour of fellatio, is epitomised in a hot-tub scene which promotes the act as such an achievement that it is worth making the ultimate sacrifice for: 'She took him into her mouth, her head under the water as she plumbed the depths... She almost drowned, but what a way to go.'⁴³³

Despite the promotion of male pleasure as a site of active female labour, these texts are invested in conservative gender roles of female passivity and male dominance. Star and Price narrate sex as something done *to* them by men, rather than something people do together. Price says of dating Ralf Schumacher, 'I lay next to him, burning with desire, but I didn't feel able to initiate things myself.'⁴³⁴ Price describes her sex-life with another partner without any active participation on her part: 'I'd let him have sex with me.'⁴³⁵ When Star instigates sex, she is slipping under the table and onto her knees in an act of service. By contrast Jimi's agency and power is represented as being tied up in his status as agent of penetration, 'driving himself inside her.'⁴³⁶ Passages describing the couple's intercourse

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.84.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p.66.

⁴³⁰ Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs*, p.118.

⁴³¹ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.84.

⁴³² Ibid. p. 85.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴³⁴ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.114.

⁴³⁵ Price, *Being Jordan*, p.28.

⁴³⁶ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.62.

repeatedly emphasise Jimi's physical power and dominance: he 'drove himself into her with all his force.'⁴³⁷ As the word is repeated, sex and force become inextricably linked: he 'drove himself mercilessly into her again and again with such force.'⁴³⁸ *Star Struck* thus presents passionate expression of sexuality as inherently violent. What these scenes demonstrate is a model of female sexuality in which a dual fantasy of activity and passivity together serve male pleasure and dominance.

While it is not surprising that mainstream texts should reproduce the dominant ideas in society, it is significant that they speak for self-authored female sexual desire, performing, as Joel Gwynne posits, a 'reclamation of the first-person sexual,'⁴³⁹ in an area lacking representation. Gwynne views women's erotic memoir as a genre offering the possibility of 'achieving representational parity in public narratives of sexual expression'⁴⁴⁰ in a culture which otherwise eclipses female desire because the 'vocabulary of sex is much more concerned with describing what happens to a man's body during sexual arousal than a woman's.'⁴⁴¹

It is this representational lack which makes it so significant that some of the most widely read texts authored by women, and the best-selling accounts of the sex-lives of women contained within them, are not necessarily (or at least not solely) authored by women. Whilst, as I have argued, it is problematic and disempowering to automatically conclude that the presence of a ghost writer negates the agency of the celebrity author-subject as the popular imagination presumes, it is nonetheless impossible to determine conclusively the extent to which each party controls the resulting life story and its meaning. The result is a narration of a female desire that is sold as true, self-authored confessional while presenting female desire as existing to serve male pleasure. This model of sexuality is offered in the historic convention of the instructional guide to readers,⁴⁴² and yet if advice from such a guide were followed, the beneficiaries of this model are not the female readers.

In contrast to the skilled labour of fellatio, female sexual gratification is effortlessly instantaneous: 'Star shrieked. The orgasm was instantaneous, swift and fierce. Jimi merely brushed against that most sensitive spot and she went off like a gunshot.'⁴⁴³ Reinforcing the pornographic paradigm of male convenience, and Star/Anderson's role as naturalised sex object, her body immediately and intensely rewards Jimi's least efforts at pleasing her: 'As

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p.121.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p.92.

⁴³⁹ Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs and Postfeminism*, p.6.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁴¹ Diane Richardson, *Constructing Lesbian Identities in Feminism and Sexuality: A Reader*, eds Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996) 279.

⁴⁴² Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Dover, 1996 [written between 1771–1790]), 1.

⁴⁴³ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.40.

his fingers explored, it just kept happening [...] too numerous to count'⁴⁴⁴ In this way, the writing of Star's experience of sex reinforces her status as 'every young boy's fantasy'⁴⁴⁵ (to her female audience). In contrast to the skilled labour of fellatio, female sexual gratification is achieved immediately and with ease. For Star, having sex was 'like orgasms came by the gallon and she was drinking too fast.'⁴⁴⁶

Linda Williams defines hard core pornography as the 'representation of living, moving bodies engaged in explicit, usually unfaked, sexual acts.'⁴⁴⁷ However, the impossibility of such promises of access to the 'real' leads to a reciprocal obsession with the fake: 'The woman's ability to fake the orgasm that the man can never fake (at least according to certain standards of evidence) seems to be at the root of all the genre's attempts to solicit what it can never be sure of: the out-of-control confession of pleasure, a hard-core "frenzy of the visible".'⁴⁴⁸ In this reading, the absence of external evidence creates the problem of an 'invisible place' for pornography's codes of 'proof'; an invisibility for which pornography must compensate through other means.⁴⁴⁹ The testimonies of female porn stars therefore insistently affirm their own sexual satisfaction with emphatic overstatement. Anderson's contradictory account of sex as both physical labour for male pleasure and hyperbolically easy for her own echoes that of porn star Kami Andrews who blogged about her experience on set: "I ended up doing 2 scenes yesterday [...] In the first scene my ass tore and there was a fair amount of blood, It was not my best scene by far! The second scene went way smoother and I came a zillion times."⁴⁵⁰ As Karen Boyle argues of this example, despite the first-hand accounts of women in the porn industry playing an important role in debates around pornography and violence, hyperbolic discourses of female arousal locate harm as a result of female sexual failure and thus ultimately serve the interests of the porn industry in the suggestion that responsibility for the avoidance of injury lies with individual women rather than the industry.⁴⁵¹ The assertion of extreme pleasure and ease in Anderson's ambivalent account, like her insistence that her body hair naturally grows according to the pornographic fashions of the day, both works to sell her as ideally suited to the role of 'glamour' model and sells glamour modelling as a lifestyle, while smoothing over the experiences of harm and exploitation encountered along the 'glamour' model career path. Thus again we see the 'glamour girl' memoir's thematic and formal investments in explicit constructedness

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p.34.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p.40.

⁴⁴⁷ Williams, *Hard Core*, p.30.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p.50.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p.49 and p.147.

⁴⁵⁰ Boyle, 'Producing Abuse,' p.600.

⁴⁵¹ Boyle, 'Producing Abuse'.

functioning in service of permission to read the purported sexual and physical harm of real bodies as light-hearted entertainment.

Thus, the glamour girl memoir reveals its investment in the pornographic field from which its author-subjects originate. In the universe presented, sex, for women, is work: whether a diary management strategy, a means to get men to allow you to get on with your work, or a means of extracting information, sex is the means and male pleasure is the end. We have seen the contradictory intertwining of sex and power which extoll the idea that sex is empowering for women while primarily depicting sex acts which centre upon male pleasure; which are based upon a conflicted dual fantasy of female activity and passivity in service of male pleasure; and where advice is issued to a target audience of heterosexual, female readers for the benefit of their male partners. As with the performance of extreme feminine physicality described in the previous section, hyperbolic accounts of female pleasure that comes 'by the gallon' feed an undercurrent of constructedness, which, along with the presence of the (sometimes male) ghost writer, work to undermine the truth claims of these rare accounts of female sexual autobiography.

Conclusion

These memoirs are an act of self-making in which the authors seek to assert who they are and reclaim control of their identity; the process of subjectification that memoir necessitates taking them beyond their traditionally conceived roles as object. This could be seen as a corrective to what Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald see as prevalent 'attitudes that dehumanise sex workers – that, for example, deny them the right to speak for themselves.'⁴⁵² Not only have sex workers' voices historically been silenced, but, as Joel Gwynne identifies, there has been a representational lack in terms of the first person accounts of sexual pleasure of all women.⁴⁵³ It is in this context that these best-selling memoirs are sold as women's first-hand experience of sexual pleasure and of working in the sex industry. The reality of both the production and consumption of these texts is far more complex. As established in chapter one, authenticity is a vexed yet valuable currency for both autobiography and celebrity culture. There is much at stake in the truth value of accounts of survival of abuse, and in the representational lacunae mentioned above. In this context, it is significant that these texts make a thematic, and in places formal, feature of constructedness. Firstly, the scepticism that attends celebrity culture – the expectation of marketing mediations – and its exacerbation in the figure of the ghost writer enables the reading of texts of abuse survival

⁴⁵² Leslie Ann Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), p.64

⁴⁵³ Gwynne, *Erotic Memoirs and Postfeminism*, p.6.

with a stance of ‘ironic knowingness’⁴⁵⁴ and an avoidance of being duped, rather than one of sincere concern. Secondly, where feminist debates about pornography have centred around the potential for harm to real bodies, and autobiography is historically understood as an account of embodied experience, these memoirs focus upon harm in a different way. The severity of the harm visited upon the bodies of their author-subjects, the severity of which is mitigated by presenting the defining characteristic of those bodies as their ‘augmented’ fakeness and function primarily as surface spectacle. Lastly, the accounts of female sexuality pivot between humorously hyperbolic ecstasy and absolute passivity in ways that do more to uphold the performative tropes of pornography than to claim truth status. The interweaving of this emphasis upon constructedness with narratives of surviving sexual and physical abuse problematically raises questions of survivor credibility, while the creation of proximity and parallel between accounts of sexual abuse and accounts of sexual pleasure that are (both eroticised and) defined as erotic both implicates and absolves readers in the consumption of narratives of harm as entertainment.

While, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, these texts are culturally disparaged along highly gendered lines, they are not without their moments of resistance. In highlighting their active and creative labour the celebrity author-subjects write against the cultural hierarchies that would deny them the status of creative agent because of their careers. Their accounts of the harm encountered in their careers approaches if not actually achieves industry critique. They speak back to a media culture which disregards their consent when hunting to (over)expose them. Their psychic and physical revelations deliberately contravene a patriarchal politics of respectability that valorise feminine restraint. And yet, despite a stated autobiographical occasion of the reclamation of their public identities, these texts perpetuate the tropes of their authors’ erstwhile representation, for example the specularisation of their own sexuality, and the preservation of ‘every young boy’s fantasy’ of these women as sexually servile.⁴⁵⁵

The appearance of transgression is a form of currency in the celebrity memoir, however, all three texts are bookended with very similar contemplations upon the redemptive power of motherhood: ‘I’m done with movies,’ states Jameson’s epilogue, in the same paragraph as her hopes for the future of her porn movie production company. ‘My mind is elsewhere, and soon my body will be too: I picked up an ovulation predictor kit from the doctor’s office yesterday.’⁴⁵⁶ Anderson’s protagonist announces her pregnancy in the final pages, closing with her embracing her pregnant stomach.⁴⁵⁷ Meanwhile Price’s prologue

⁴⁵⁴ Gamson, *Claims to Fame*, p.149.

⁴⁵⁵ Anderson, *Star Struck*, p.34.

⁴⁵⁶ Jameson, *A Cautionary Tale*, p.577.

⁴⁵⁷ Anderson, *Star Struck*, pp.296-7.

opens with her baby kicking and the book closes with her meeting the baby's soon-to-be father Peter Andre. This shows the normative pressures upon female sexuality that such an account must negotiate despite, or because of, their investment in the breaking of taboos. While it is disempowering to presume that the mediating pressure of the ghost writer entirely negates the celebrity author-subject's capacity for self-representation, this analysis shows the importance of remaining alert to the multiple roles these texts perform, confounding as they do attempts to police the boundaries between self-making and merchandising, personal history and paratextual pornographic performance.

Chapter 3. ‘White Trash’: Class, Race and Authority in the Reality TV Star Memoirs of Jade Goody, and Paris Hilton

Introduction

Whilst celebrity culture and its supporting gossip media have been viewed as a ‘low’ field with tabloid sensibilities, this chapter will demonstrate that its value system is punitively middle-class, policing the appropriateness of its players and shaming those who fall short. Although memoirs offer an intervention into the assemblage of narratives that surround them, this chapter will show that the game is rigged because they are inevitably in conversation with normative ideas of a woman’s moral, sexual virtue. Even though the production of a memoir is an act that claims certain forms of agency in self-representation, I shall illustrate the fact that it implicitly contains its surrounding strands of criticism and normativity in its responses to them. These responses frequently take the form of attempts to align the celebrity subject with dominant ideas of middle-class femininity, such as the restraint, cleanliness, motherliness.

This chapter uses reality TV stars, Jade Goody and Paris Hilton as examples, but not because either can be seen as representative of female celebrity – indeed many academics have argued for the particularity of their celebrity.⁴⁵⁸ Rather, a productive interplay between their polar class positions enables a reading of the ways in which access to certain capitals inflects the celebrity’s status as subject of her own life story. British reality TV star Jade Goody provides a stark illustration of some of the dynamics at play between ghost writer and subject and the ways in which agency in self-representation is multiple, negotiated and inflected through different capitals each brings to the exchange. Paris Hilton offers a rich example for comparison due to the ways in which her antithetical class position enables a reading of the ways in which a celebrity subject with an excess in certain capitals is granted certain freedoms. In Hilton’s case, one such ‘freedom’ is from the obligation of full disclosure, as evidenced by her camp play. **However, resistance to disclosure is ultimately undermined** by the fact that celebrity memoirs exist within an assemblage of interconnected media webs, in which narratives about the celebrity circulate beyond their control. This means that the ellipses in the memoir left by denial can be filled in from alternative sources. In section 2 of this chapter I interrogate the construction of the figure of the ‘white trash’

⁴⁵⁸ See Su Holmes, ‘All You’ve Got to Worry About is the Task, Having a Cup of Tea, and Doing a Bit of Sunbathing’: Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*,’ in *Understanding Reality Television*, ed. by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (London : Routledge 2004); Skeggs and Wood, ‘The Labour of Transformation and Circuits of Value ‘Around’ Reality Television’, 559–572; Thomas Fahy, ‘One Night in Paris (Hilton)’, pp.75-98.

celebrity, as demonstrated through Goody and Hilton. Looking at online responses to Hilton and Goody, and the alternative discourses they contribute to the narratives that surround these women and their memoirs, reveals that, despite their apparently polar class origins, they are understood through similar discursive frameworks which are gendered, raced and classed. Reality stars Kim Kardashian's (*Keeping up with the Kardashians*) Armenian ethnicity and Sam Faiers's (*The Only Way is Essex*) tanning practices are brought into this analysis of celebrity whiteness as a category that remains unmarked until certain feminine ideals are transgressed. This chapter argues that the nature of reality TV, and its imperative to place the celebrity's live on display, provides a basis for the gendered classing of its female stars as 'trash', a status deriving from the failure to demonstrate 'acceptably' feminine restraint rather than from socioeconomic status.

3.1 Goody and Hilton: An Unlikely Pair of Celebrity Class Anomalies

‘I felt like utter shit. As I lay on my bed I even started hitting myself, somehow trying to take the pain away’⁴⁵⁹ *Jade: Fighting to the End*, Jade Goody.

‘Possibly the best thing about being an heiress is that you don’t necessarily have to work. Everyone else must work, though, so it immediately sets you apart.’⁴⁶⁰
Confessions of an Heiress, Paris Hilton.

Existing work in celebrity studies has convincingly drawn links between class and gender in the role of judgement in celebrity discourses. Skeggs and Wood argue that reality TV upholds the middle-class ‘subject of value’ over the undesirable working-class participant as the form depends upon ‘making good and bad behaviour specific to practices, bodies and people’ - inviting audiences to make moral judgements based upon how successfully its stars perform the ‘labour of femininity’.⁴⁶¹ Similarly, Allen and Mendick’s investigation into the centrality of class and gender to distinctions between ‘proper and improper celebrity’ reveals discursive frameworks in which ‘it is the female working-class celebrity in particular that is constructed as abject other.’⁴⁶² Whilst developed in relation to sexuality, Judith Butler’s theorisation of the abject can be productively applied to these classed practices of exclusion, which require the production of a category of abject beings who are ‘not yet ‘subjects,’ but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject.’⁴⁶³ Here, the abject other serves to define those social positions and spaces that are regarded as unlivable and uninhabitable and to mark those ‘whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the abject’.⁴⁶⁴ Tyler and Bennett theorise celebrity culture as functioning as a ‘class pantomime’ in which gendered social hierarchies are cemented in the collectively censured figure of the (usually female) ‘celebrity chav’.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, reality TV and celebrity discourses have been established as class-based, exclusionary practices, reinforcing dominant social hierarchies through the delegitimisation of certain practices, bodies and selves.

⁴⁵⁹ Jade Goody, *Jade Fighting to the End*, p.13.

⁴⁶⁰ Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress*, p.100.

⁴⁶¹ Skeggs and Wood, ‘The Labour of Transformation and Circuits of Value ‘around’ Reality TV’, p.560, p.564.

⁴⁶² Allen and Mendick, ‘Young People’s Uses of Celebrity,’ p.79.

⁴⁶³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.3.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.3

⁴⁶⁵ Tyler and Bennett, ‘Celebrity Chav’, p.376.

Such a discursive paradigm can be applied to Jade Goody. Indeed, she has often been seen by scholars to typify such constructions.⁴⁶⁶ This is why bringing Paris Hilton's antithetically privileged celebrity background as point of comparison offers such a productive and, as yet, unexamined contrast: the middle-class discourses of value, impropriety and undesirability remain, suggesting that the hegemony of middle-class values operates in both directions, both 'downward', towards the working-class, and 'upward', towards the wealthy elite.

Whilst what can broadly be called reality TV was the vehicle by which both women entered mainstream public consciousness, their positions within their breakthrough shows are a direct inversion of one another. Paris Hilton, by contrast, as an heiress and socialite, is held up as an extraordinary individual who, in 2003 American TV show, *The Simple Life*, clashes with 'ordinary' life.⁴⁶⁷ In the latter, Hilton and fellow socialite Nicole Richie give up the privileges of their L.A. lifestyle and travel around America attempting to undertake demanding, poorly-paid labour in a humorous, carnivalesque - and, crucially temporary - inversion of their class status.⁴⁶⁸ By contrast, Goody appeared in 2002's *Big Brother UK* as a member of the public and thus a representative of 'ordinariness' who was thrust into an extraordinary situation. Having made the transition to serial celebrity reality contestant, Goody made an ill-fated return to *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2007 from which she was evicted for the racist bullying of Indian co-star Shilpa Shetty.⁴⁶⁹ Attempting rehabilitation, she then participated in its Indian franchise *Bigg Boss*, but was diagnosed mid-filming with the cervical cancer which subsequently caused her death in 2009.⁴⁷⁰

A further reason for pairing these two stars together is the sexual inflexion that structures the origins of both star stories. In her first visit to the *Big Brother* house, filming caught a sexual encounter between Goody and fellow contestant PJ, which was announced in tabloid newspaper, *The People*, with the exclamatory headline 'JADE: YES I DID GIVE PJ THE BJ!'⁴⁷¹ In 2003, the same year that *The Simple Life* first aired, a sex tape of Hilton and then boyfriend Rick Salomon was leaked, resulting in numerous court cases which unsuccessfully sought to control the distribution of the video. Thus both reality stars' early fame in part originates from sex on screen.

For Hilton in particular, the sex tape has been a touchpoint that paratextual material frequently returns to, structuring her star image around the idea of her sexual availability. This happens in gossip media beyond her control: for example, thirteen years after the

⁴⁶⁶ See Skeggs & Wood, 'The Labour of Transformation'; Allen & Mendick, 'Young People's Uses of Celebrity'; Tyler & Bennett, *Celebrity Chav*'.

⁴⁶⁷ *The Simple Life*, 2003–2007. TV, 20th Century Fox.

⁴⁶⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965).

⁴⁶⁹ *Celebrity Big Brother*, 2007. TV, Endemol. Series 5.

⁴⁷⁰ *Bigg Boss*, 2008. TV, Endemol. Series 2.

⁴⁷¹ James Desborough, JADE: YES I DID GIVE PJ THE BJ!, *The People*, 28th July 2002, p.4.

sextape's release, it is still the source of Hilton's mockery as parodically-named celebrity blogger Perez Hilton awarding her with 'Best Night Vision' in a celebrity sextape, stating, 'Stars like Paris Hilton may never win any actual acting awards, but who says their past camera work wasn't good enough to earn a few accolades?'⁴⁷² The sex tape also informs the scripted roles Hilton takes on. One infamous example is the 2005 advert for the 'Carl's Jr Spicy Barbecue Six Dollar Burger'. In it, Hilton, dressed in a black leather swimsuit, performs the erotic spectacle of a sexy carwash, soaking herself and a Bentley with an ejaculatory, soapy hose spurting white frothy liquid. On all fours, she then 'animalistically' and climactically bites into a colossal burger, in what Stacy M. Jameson reads as 'the food commercial's show of bodily penetration'.⁴⁷³ Notoriety followed as the campaign was banned after complaints about its explicitly sexual content and its accompanying website, SpicyParis.com reportedly buckled under the weight of its own traffic. Having cemented her notoriety through the medium of the sex tape, her subsequent activity draws upon it to determine the meaning of her star image, both implicitly and explicitly, whether within or beyond her control. As the above examples demonstrate, Hilton operates with a 'situated agency'.⁴⁷⁴ She can capitalise on her sexualisation for her own gain, whether in terms of economic gain, increased profile, or cementing her status as a desirable female celebrity. However, these agentic acts clearly operate within the structures of gendered celebrity culture discussed in chapter one, where female celebrity is always already conditioned through an emphasis on the body, intimacy and sexuality and policed by harshly judgemental discursive regimes.

Richard Dyer argues that, for actresses playing an obviously fictional role, stars' off-screen identities are as much 'representations of people' as the characters they play on-screen and as such have an equal if not greater influence.⁴⁷⁵ For Dyer this is because their existence in the world makes them 'more real,' which in turn makes the values that they embody harder to reject.⁴⁷⁶ However, the off-screen personality is 'itself a construction known and expressed only through films, stories, publicity etc'.⁴⁷⁷ What differs between the Hollywood actors who formed the sample for Dyer's study and Hilton or Goody is that by appearing in reality programmes rather than in films with fictional stories they, purportedly, are famous for playing themselves. If we are to believe the claims of the reality TV shows which follow the details of their day to day lives, there is no separation between on and off-screen. In the heavily mediated, interconnected environment of the ghost-written memoir,

⁴⁷² 'Celebrity Sex Tape Awards,' *Perezhilton.com*, 31.8.16, retrieved on 6.11.16 from <http://perezhilton.com/galleries/?id=489857#.WB9MohGa3uq>

⁴⁷³ Stacy M. Jameson, 'Televisual Senses: The Embodied Pleasures of Food Advertising,' *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 48, 6, (2015), p.1080.

⁴⁷⁴ Joe Moran, *Star Authors*, p.67.

⁴⁷⁵ Dyer, *Stars*, p.22.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23.

the off-screen identity is constructed, packaged and sold. Dyer warns not to 'elide the star-as-person with the star-as-text and assume that the former is the author of the latter', taking as evidence the fact that stars appear in texts 'the construction of which s/he was only a collaborator or even a mere vehicle'.⁴⁷⁸ For Dyer this text may be a star image, character or performance; however his caution applies well to the example of ghost-written memoir which combines the explicit promise of access to a 'true' off-screen identity with an environment where the degree of authorship a star has had over a text can only be inferred. Su Holmes has noted the competing and contradictory discourses of access between shows such as *Big Brother*, and their press coverage.⁴⁷⁹ Whilst their TV careers construct them as openly sharing their total selves, their memoirs contradict the claims of the TV shows, constructing them as having kept their true selves back to be shared in their memoirs. Each is a coexisting strand, simultaneously combining and competing. Thus the already unstable concept of on and off-screen identity is further problematised as different formats compete to reveal the more wholly exposed woman.

Ordinariness and specialness are not neutral, descriptive terms, but rather are constructed and value-laden to privilege certain things over others. What is described as ordinary is disparaged for its quotidian mundanity, but also has the normative power to present something as naturalised. In the celebrity marketplace, ordinariness can be traded to make a star likably accessible, specialness to inspire aspiration. Dyer argues that both ordinariness and specialness must combine in a star image to balance envy and aspiration.⁴⁸⁰ Like Goody, Hilton is an outlier in celebrity class identities and far from representative of celebrity in general. Rather than reconciling contradictions through a balance of representational elements as Dyer suggests, each appears to sit at opposite extremes of a spectrum of working class ordinariness and upper-class specialness. Discourses of class have been theorised as central to the conception of 'ordinariness' in reality television. The presence of so-called, ordinary members of the public has been considered by some to be a sign of the democratisation of fame.⁴⁸¹ However, as Williamson argues, a model of fame based upon 'exposure rather than "talent"' merely constructs a myth of social mobility, which instead mobilises thinly veiled, highly-gendered class prejudice.⁴⁸² We shall see Goody illustrate these paradigms; however Hilton's contrasting class identity complicates these models, throwing these questions of gendered exposure into sharp relief.

The contrast between Goody's memoir and Hilton's is stark. From its title, *Confessions of an Heiress*, to its chapters 'How to be an Heiress' and 'My Jet-set Life', and its photographs

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p.175.

⁴⁷⁹ Holmes, 'Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*,' p.122.

⁴⁸⁰ Dyer, *Stars*, p.7.

⁴⁸¹ Anita Biressi, Heather Nunn, *Reality TV: Realism and Revelation*, (London ; New York : Wallflower Press 2005), p.147.

⁴⁸² Williamson, 'Female celebrities and the media,' p.199.

of mother and daughter on the catwalk in the height of 80s luxury fashion, Hilton's memoir is first and foremost about being born rich.⁴⁸³ In this regard, Hilton's star identity is characterised most strongly by inherited wealth. Thus, as Thomas Fahy argues, Hilton 'fails to embody the typical promise of modern-day celebrity—that anyone can achieve the same. If celebrity is a function of birth, it is as exclusive as we've always feared, and supremely undemocratic.'⁴⁸⁴ Contradictorily, her memoir simultaneously displays her privilege and undertakes an extraordinary denial of socioeconomic reality, issuing advice to her readers to channel their 'inner heiress' because 'being an heiress is really all in your head'⁴⁸⁵; and to 'choose who you're born to' because 'lineage can be a state of mind'.⁴⁸⁶ Whilst these statements seem to play to the cultural narratives of 'a country so steeped in the myth of classlessness'⁴⁸⁷, the very existence of Hilton, who has claimed to be 'American royalty',⁴⁸⁸ refutes this myth.

Goody's memoir informs readers that she is the daughter of a man 'found overdosed in the toilet of a Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant – which must go down as one of the classiest exists in history.'⁴⁸⁹ Where celebrity memoir convention sees its authors heavily emphasising their difficult beginnings, Goody uses sarcastic paralipsis to reject her background for not being 'the classiest', whilst emphasising how far she has come. Offset against this scene, her memoir teaches readers that reality TV can be the catalyst for triumphing over such adversity: 'I had to find an escape...when I saw the advert for *Big Brother* it felt like I'd been offered a lifeline.'⁴⁹⁰ Goody paints a picture of deprivation, desperation and shame.

Typically of the genre, both women claim that their memoirs offer up their 'true' selves, as distinct from their public identity. 'A lot of people have the wrong idea about me,' opens Hilton's memoir, 'So I've finally decided to give you a sneak peek into my very hyped life – so you can know the real me.'⁴⁹¹ Where Goody offers up inglorious revelations in an earnest tone that implies shame and distress, Hilton makes no such earnest promise and offers no such shameful detail. She is playful and titillating, offering only a 'sneak peek' that suggests her private self is hers to share at will.⁴⁹² The subtitle of her 'Confessions' is 'A tongue-in-chic peak behind the pose'. This tells her readers three things: she is not being

⁴⁸³ Hilton, *Confessions*.

⁴⁸⁴ Thomas Fahy, 'One Night in Paris (Hilton)', pp.75-98.

⁴⁸⁵ Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress*, pp.5-6.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁴⁸⁷ Annalee Newitz, Matt Wray 'Introduction' in ed. Annalee Newitz, Matt Wray, *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, (London and New York : Routledge, 1997), p.1.

⁴⁸⁸ Nancy Jo Sales, "Hip-Hop Debs," *Vanity Fair* (September 2000): p.378 cited in Fahy, 'One Night in Paris (Hilton)', pp.75-98.

⁴⁸⁹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.xxxvii.

⁴⁹⁰ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, 14

⁴⁹¹ Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress*, 4

⁴⁹² *Ibid.* 4

serious; this is not the full story; and none of it was 'real' in the first place. The promises of a glimpse of 'the real me' and of revelations one has 'never dared tell' both appeal to the same desire in the audience to cross the line between public and private self. However, these contrasting stances suggest a power differential between the two women in relation to their status as subjects of their memoirs. The stakes, of course, are higher for Goody, who views celebrity as her 'lifeline' and depends upon remaining in the celebrity spotlight as her sole source of income. In comparison, Hilton has a celebrity career which merely supplements her inherited wealth. Each book's title reflects these differing positions: *Jade: Fighting to the End*, a title strongly suggestive of struggle and adversity, and Hilton's *Confessions of an Heiress*, with its promise of tales of wealth and luxury.

Goody and her ghost: negotiated agency

As established in chapter one, Couser's understanding of ghost-writing as a one-directional hierarchy - in which the celebrity subject can always be assumed to outrank the writer - is too simplistic for the texts discussed here.⁴⁹³ Returning to the example of Jade Goody and Lucie Cave, the ghost writer of three out of Goody's four memoirs, their extreme difference in cultural capital and educational privilege confound assumptions that Cave is merely an exploited scribe doing Goody's bidding.⁴⁹⁴ Goody's agency in the process of her self-representation is therefore not straightforward but involves complexities which I shall discuss below.

Smith and Watson identify the form of writing that dominates the field of autobiography as focussing upon the 'concept of the self-interested individual intent on assessing the status of the soul of the meaning of public achievement.'⁴⁹⁵ When Cave opens Goody's memoir with a pre-prologue from her point of view as ghost writer she forecloses possible interpretations of Goody's life by directing readers as to how the text should be read. Cave instructs that the text should 'serve as an inspirational reminder that success can be built on hard work, persistence and inner strength',⁴⁹⁶ firmly locating the meaning of Goody's life in the convention of the autobiography genre, while reinforcing the success myth Dyer identifies as so integral to celebrity narratives.⁴⁹⁷ Cave makes a claim to the validity and authority of the text as a continuation of a privileged literary form. Yet, at the same time, by

⁴⁹³ G. Thomas Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives'.

⁴⁹⁴ Now the Editor of UK celebrity gossip magazine, *heat*, Cave is a university educated journalist and broadcaster. Goody, a working class woman repeatedly excluded from her state secondary school, became famous, and publicly mocked, for her malapropisms, confusion and lack of education.

⁴⁹⁵ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.2.

⁴⁹⁶ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.vii.

⁴⁹⁷ Dyer, *Stars*, p.42.

imposing external meaning upon Goody's life, she denies validity and authority to the celebrity subject, taking control of her life's meaning.

Goody's memoir emphasises its ghost writer's presence more openly than is conventional for the celebrity memoir genre. Katie Price and British pop star and TV personality Tulisa, for example, both bury the name of their ghost writers in the acknowledgements pages with nothing to mark out their role from any other employee of the publishing house.⁴⁹⁸ By contrast, a prologue to Goody's memoir by Cave offers twenty-three pages in Cave's own voice.⁴⁹⁹ Despite the promise of the genre to reveal the real woman behind the image, the book displays the mechanisms by which Goody's identity is mediated, a feature avoided elsewhere to protect the appearance of authenticity and the authority and validity that come with it. This is perhaps because, as a reality TV star rather than actress or pop star she exists in a genre characterised, as Su Holmes argues, by 'the heightened awareness of the very *process of representation*', a genre where 'the acquisition of fame can simply be about being "mediated".'⁵⁰⁰ Cave attempts to mitigate this visible mediation by repeatedly stressing the verity of 'her' Jade. As the first page relates:

Jade brought me on board as her ghost writer to help her pen an honest account of her colourful life. [...] The Jade I got to know was more open, honest and candid than any celebrity I'd ever met (and probably ever will again) [...] Unique [...], big-hearted and extremely vulnerable, Jade wore her heart firmly on her sleeve in a way no-one else, especially those in the public eye, would dare.⁵⁰¹

This is the alternative source of authenticity for Goody, stemming from an emotional excess, which is itself a failure to live within the boundaries of social acceptability.

The ultimate proof of Cave's dominance over the representation of the life of Goody in this text is that it was published after her death. Criticised by the publishing industry as a hasty, cynical move to capitalise upon renewed affection for the star, the book is a republishing of 2008 memoir *Catch a Falling Star*, with a brief closing section taken from her 2009 cancer diary, *Forever in my Heart*.⁵⁰² The only new content therefore, is that provided by Cave, from her own point of view as ghost writer and, according to *The Times*, without the permission of Goody's family.⁵⁰³

The presence of fame-industry apparatus such as the interventions of management, branding and public relations teams are an open secret that creates complex webs of mediation around both subject and writer. This further complicates any claims of

⁴⁹⁸ Tulisa Contostavlos, *Honest: My Story So Far* (London: Headline, 2012)

⁴⁹⁹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, pp.i-xxiii.

⁵⁰⁰ Holmes, 'Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*,' p.128.

⁵⁰¹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.vii.

⁵⁰² Patrick Foster, 'Media scrum continues after Jade Goody's death, with rehashed book and a film plan', *The Times*, 24 March 2009.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*

unrestricted expression of subjectivity, traditionally an inherent promise of the memoir genre. Goody's memoir describes her former manager, John Noel, making decisions about her career on her behalf, without the full ramifications being explained to her. Goody recounts 'being trapped into saying yes' to appearing on *Celebrity Big Brother* in 2007 after Noel responded 'Don't be a fucking idiot!' when she tried to say no.⁵⁰⁴ She retrospectively states, 'I didn't realise then how much of an involvement John actually had with Endemol.'⁵⁰⁵ Goody suggests that her autonomy over how she is represented is compromised, claiming that she has been manipulated, or even forced, by those with commercial interests in her high profile. The management team must therefore be added alongside the ghost writer as a strand in the web of a celebrity's mediation.

This depiction of relations between Goody, her management and production company, Endemol, invites a consideration of how the wider industrial machinery of celebrity contributes to the web of reciprocal influences and stakes that collectively produce the life story. Celebrity memoirs are texts that operate in a particular marketplace. They are exercises in branding of the celebrity as a desirable 'product' to ensure their enduring profitability for both the individual celebrity and the industries that support them. As discussed, providing a platform to stars who need to reclaim the spotlight with fresh revelations, the celebrity memoir is an intervention of sorts, and thus a source of some agency. They are also, however, commercial ventures in themselves, with reportedly huge advances paid in anticipation of correspondingly large sales volumes and resultant profits for their multiple, powerful stakeholders, who can be added to the list of interested parties with a claim on the way that the life of the star is presented.⁵⁰⁶ The existing celebrity brand and its commercial stakeholders are thus threads in this web with which the life story must interact. Significant upfront outlay creates a risk-averse industrial environment that favours bankable formulas which create confidence that past successes can be replicated. Thus, what has worked previously will affect what type of life story the publisher is willing to back, making previous successes elements to which the presentation of the life responds. As a commodity in a market place, the celebrity memoir must stimulate, anticipate and, to some degree, satisfy consumer desires. Only to *some* degree, as Goody, for example, published five autobiographical texts in three years, which suggests a strategic withholding of information to ensure future publications. To stimulate readers' desires, these texts must promise to enclose contents worth the exchange value of, roughly, £7.99.

⁵⁰⁴ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.74.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Mandy Morrow, 'Celebrity Book Deals: The Latest, Highest-Paid Advances', *The Richest*, 3 August 2014, retrieved on 21 February 2016 from: <http://www.therichest.com/expensive-lifestyle/money/celebrity-book-deals-the-latest-highest-paid-advances/>.

Professional ghost writer to Katie Price, Virginia Blackburn, suggests that a certain type of personal revelation is key to selling celebrity memoirs. Speaking of the disappointing sales of Peter Kaye's second memoir, retailed at £20, she told *The Observer*: 'People aren't mugs; for that kind of money, they want 400 pages and at least one juicy revelation.'⁵⁰⁷ Blackburn describes readers as consumers seeking value for money. In this market, value takes the form of access to, at the very least, the personal, ideally the juicily scandalous or shameful. Anticipation of readers' desires is a force that inevitably shapes both the form and content of the life presented.

Hilton and her Ghost: 'It's all about taking charge and branding yourself'⁵⁰⁸

Like Goody's memoir, Hilton's *Confessions of an Heiress* emphasises its ghost writer more prominently than is usual for the memoir genre, having a cover bearing the authorial signature 'Paris Hilton with Merle Ginsberg'. Like Goody, rather than defend appearances of authenticity, Hilton claims to be revealing her 'real' self whilst displaying the mechanics of her mediation. Contradictorily, these women play no scripted part above and beyond *playing* themselves, but the process of mediation is part of their identity. In the context of a reality TV fame that offers multiple sites of conflicting 'real' selves, the instability of binaries of identity - on/off-screen; performance/self – is evident.⁵⁰⁹ Added to the unreliability of identity in a field in which 'performance' is integral, Dyer argues that 'the notion of 'manipulation' is fairly widespread and this tends to undercut the illusion of the star's autonomous existence.'⁵¹⁰ These memoirs attempt to stake claim to their subject's autonomy whilst displaying their manipulation openly. The visibility of ghost writers suggests that these women are not invested in having their audience believe in their ability to author a book unaided. This is a view perpetuated within their memoirs with Goody stating, for example, 'As always, I was clueless'⁵¹¹ and Hilton making statements such as 'I may not know how to do brain surgery (who wants to? Guys don't want girls to know that stuff).'⁵¹² In this way they collude with criticisms of their intellect that have accompanied their reception.

When it comes to Hilton's agency in self-presentation, her memoir explicitly claims her own careful orchestration and control. Her image is referred to as something for her to

⁵⁰⁷ Virginia Blackburn, 'Katie Price's Life? It's a price worth paying', *The Guardian*, 17 January 2010, retrieved on 29 June 2013 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jan/17/jordan-celebrity-memoir>.

⁵⁰⁸ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.100.

⁵⁰⁹ Su Holmes, "'Starring... Dyer?'"

⁵¹⁰ Dyer, *Stars*, p.110.

⁵¹¹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.49.

⁵¹² Hilton, *Confessions*, p.130.

construct: 'It's all about taking charge and branding yourself.'⁵¹³ She advises her readers: 'Learn how to pose. [...] Always know your best angle – for your body and your face – and work it. Study your own pictures and you'll figure it out.'⁵¹⁴ This suggests that manufacture can be gotten away with as long as the celebrity can claim it is within her own control. However, as with Goody, it is impossible to confidently conclude whether she even uttered these statements. This is presented as Hilton's work: the study of her image to craft the ideal presentation of the self, the fruits of this labour are to be seen throughout the book's many photographs. The memoir invites the reader to infer signs of Hilton's hand in her representation. However, even here, agency must be negotiated between ghost writer and subject.

Looking at Merle Ginsberg's career history, it is possible that she was chosen (whether by Hilton or her management) not only for her writing ability. As a television personality in her own right and the Senior Writer for the *Hollywood Reporter*, a magazine that is influential both with consumers and within the entertainment industry, Ginsberg has influence in the web of celebrity gossip as well as a platform to aid the promotion of the book once published. Hilton's memoir relates her hopes to embark on acting and singing careers. In these and Hilton's other aspirations for her celebrity career Ginsberg would likely be a prominent and valuable contact. To what extent Ginsberg has subsequently helped Hilton is difficult to ascertain. However, under Ginsberg's tenure, *The Hollywood Reporter's* editorial line on Hilton has since been favourable, giving her ensuing second album and career as an Electronic Dance Music DJ frequent, and solely positive coverage.⁵¹⁵ Whilst one can only infer to what degree Hilton truly is 'taking charge and branding [her]self,' a memoir is a carefully crafted product, whether orchestrated by Hilton or by those who surround her.⁵¹⁶

Whilst non-disclosure contracts mean that the ghost is paid for their discretion as well as their writing, there is a risk in choosing a vocal, public figure with a platform for celebrity commentary as a 'ghost'. The traditional conception of the ghost writer is that their job is to render themselves invisible in the process to allow the reader the feeling of unmediated access to the subject of the book.⁵¹⁷ By choosing someone highly visible, this dynamic is impossible. When a celebrity career depends upon the continued interest and favour of the gossip press, an entertainment writer may be a savvy choice for a ghost. It does,

⁵¹³ Ibid., p.100.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p.11.

⁵¹⁵ Billboard Staff, 'Paris Hilton Signs With Cash Money; Second Album to Feature Lil Wayne', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2 May 2013, retrieved on 23 February 2016 from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/earshot/paris-hilton-signs-cash-money-532750>; THR Staff, 'Paris Hilton on Her Global Tour and Drug Use in the EDM Scene', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 8 October 2013, retrieved on 23 February 2016 from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/video/paris-hilton-her-global-tour-645126>; Matt Medved, 'Paris Hilton Reveals Las Vegas Residency, Defends DJ Career', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 31 March 2015, retrieved on 23 February 2016 from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/paris-hilton-reveals-las-vegas-785656>.

⁵¹⁶ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.100.

⁵¹⁷ See Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives', pp.334-351.

however mean that the ghost brings different capitals to the exchange: influence and useful connections. It is another example in which the celebrity far outranks the ghost writer in economic capital, and, once again but for different reasons, the ghost writer is far from being simply a lackey scribe, but is rather a strategic alliance.

Goody as Autobiographical Subject: Shame, Confession and Authority

In accordance with Blackburn's expectations of 'juicy revelations', Goody's memoir promises ignominious, hitherto untold secrets as she sets out to 'address stuff that [she has] never dared tell anyone before' in a tone that implies shame and distress.⁵¹⁸ The memoir fulfils the genre convention of 'warts and all' anecdotes that Gilmore theorizes as the 'neoconfessional'.⁵¹⁹ This narrative trend in memoirs under neoliberalism sees a boom in 'endless versions of down and outers who make good', which displace life narratives that could invite structural critique of the causes of inequality.⁵²⁰ Instead, argues Gilmore, 'critical energies are recruited to the task of judgment' of the individual.⁵²¹ Seemingly committed to revealing how unlovely they are in reality, many contemporary female celebrities use their memoirs to reveal that behind the public image, their lives are a mess. Goody exclaims, 'to have to admit to my friends that Mum was a drug addict! They would think she was dirty.'⁵²² Thus, she duly shares her shame and narrates the lowest points in her life:

I felt like utter shit. As I lay on my bed I even started hitting myself, somehow trying to take the pain away... I bashed my head repeatedly against the wall as hard as I could, I pulled my hair out of my head until my scalp was red raw.⁵²³

Goody acknowledges the possibility of not revealing the whole truth, explaining that she was able to choose to hold back information in her previous memoir: 'this was what I was being forced to talk about. Something I'd never admitted...I'd glossed over it in my last book – I'd been too frightened to tell a living soul.'⁵²⁴ However, for reasons she does not explain, she claims not to have that option now (thus shoring up the commercial value of this particular memoir): 'You might think I'm a wuss, but tears are streaming down my cheeks just knowing

⁵¹⁸ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.xxxv.

⁵¹⁹ Leigh Gilmore, 'American Neoconfessional: Memoir, Self Help and Redemption on Oprah's Couch', *Biography*, 33 (4), 2010, pp.657–679.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.657.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.657-58.

⁵²² Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.9.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p13.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.xxxvi.

I have to talk about my mum in this way in the pages of this book.⁵²⁵ The suggestion is that her commitment to ‘telling all’ to her readers is so great that she is willing to upset both herself and her mother to do so. The demonstration of the pain it causes her is another means by which she attempts to authenticate the verity of her book. More than this, however, by suggesting she has no other option, she relinquishes agency and thereby responsibility.

Readers are instructed that they can rely upon the representation of Goody contained within this book to be truthful because Goody was innately, uniquely, perhaps pathologically, incapable of anything other than excessive candid outpourings - something Goody describes as the ‘floodgates opening’.⁵²⁶ Whilst it may be framed as a form of authenticity, it is a form that actively denies the authority that usually attends it, dovetailing perfectly with the criticisms of a lack of both intelligence and restraint that beleaguered her public reception.

Goody frames her revelations in the language of therapy, casting her memoir as part of a wider confessional process of ‘address[ing] stuff’. As Rachel E. Dubrofsky has argued, the reality TV genre that made Goody famous is characterised by the hallmarks of the therapeutic mode, combining self-reflexivity, self-disclosure under surveillance and an emphasis on talk and confession.⁵²⁷ Indeed, Goody cites the process of going through therapy as the catalyst that has freed her to publish these confessional ‘secrets’. The power dynamics of confession are theorised by Michel Foucault thus:

The confession is a ritual of discourse [...] that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, and reconcile.⁵²⁸

Having become famous through reality TV with its confessional tropes that invite the judgement of its viewers, Goody’s (already polarised) star image later became a national hate figure after charges of racism during her 2007 *Celebrity Big Brother* appearance. A breakdown followed, which led Goody to the Priory where she received therapy forcing her to talk about her upbringing with her crack-addicted mother. Her memoir is positioned as a seamless continuation of this process, transferring the authority of the therapist to the ghost writer, who will present her case to readers. In this regard, the public is the authority ultimately asked to judge and forgive her.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p.xxxviii.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., p.xxxv.

⁵²⁷ Rachel E. Dubrofsky, ‘Fallen Women in Reality TV: A Pornography of Emotion,’ *Feminist Media Studies*, 9 (3), 2009, pp.353-368.

⁵²⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, pp.61–62.

Memoir as agency

My intention is not to cast Goody's memoir as merely the artificial product of the industrial machine of celebrity manufacture, nor Goody herself as its unwitting puppet. Indeed, Goody's memoir presents an opportunity for her to make an intervention in her public image and as such, is inherently an act that claims agency. Regardless of however much the seemingly unrestrained outpourings contained within her memoir may be imbued with the emotional authenticity of what Dyer called 'an untrammelled flow,'⁵²⁹ and Goody herself described as the floodgates opening,⁵³⁰ she does have the choice of which anecdotes to share with her ghost writer. As well as omission, she has the option to be disingenuous. Both of these are forms of agency, but impossible to identify with certainty in the text. For example the exchange cited earlier between Goody and her former manager John Noel, where Noel calls her a 'fucking idiot' for not wanting to return to *Celebrity Big Brother* precedes her account of the race row that ended her run of popularity. By claiming a lack of autonomy from her management, she is able to distance herself from poor decisions that brought about her unpopularity. The representation of Goody as 'coaxed' to participate in certain celebrity or life-storying acts could itself be read as a mechanism by which she negotiates and manages those who may be 'coaxing' her.⁵³¹

Another means by which these memoirs are interpreted as being a source of power for their subjects is the sheer volume in which they sell. However any model of influence based on mass communication and sheer scale fails to account for the nature of the relationship between subject and audience. Interest in a star does not necessarily translate as admiration, but rather may offer audiences the pleasure of collective censure. As Imogen Tyler and Bruce Bennet observe, Goody could be giving audiences the opportunity to affirm their comparative superiority through 'community-forming attachment to a "bad object"'.⁵³²

At points in her career, Goody very clearly provided a function, not just as 'bad object', but as a symbol of all society's ills. In the days after her funeral, the British right-wing press described Goody as 'poster girl of the curious contemporary cult of 'talentless celebrity'⁵³³ and as representing 'all that is wretched about Britain today.'⁵³⁴ Similarly the general secretary of the Fabian Society, a left-of-centre think tank, is quoted as saying 'she

⁵²⁹ Dyer, *Stars*, p.138.

⁵³⁰ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.xxxv.

⁵³¹ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.51.

⁵³² Tyler and Bennett, 'Celebrity Chav', p.377.

⁵³³ Obituary: 'Jade Goody,' *The Telegraph*, 22 March 2009, retrieved on 29 June 2013 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/5031343/Jade-Goody.html>.

⁵³⁴ Anita Singh, "Jade Goody represented wretched Britain", says Sir Michael Parkinson' *The Telegraph*, 7 April 2009, retrieved on 29 June 2013 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/jade-goody/5114664/Jade-Goody-represented-wretched-Britain-says-Sir-Michael-Parkinson.html>.

symbolises the problem', 'our education system let her down'.⁵³⁵ This suggests that another important element in this assemblage, circling with the others, is the mediation of the symbolic function that the life provides to society. This elevating of woman to symbol is both an interpretation of the life and an imposition upon it and plays as much to stock convention as Cave's imposition of success myths or generic tropes. It is one of the multiplicity of narratives that converge around and create versions of Goody's public life. In this context she is neither a manipulated pawn, nor a sovereign at the apex of society. Rather, her agency in self-representation is negotiated between aspects of her mediation and takes many forms, for example, presenting oneself as wholly lacking agency is a direct claim *to* agency.

For Bourdieu, cultural products and producers are located within a hierarchical and relational cultural field. This he constitutes as 'a space of positions and position-takings' in which one's social status is negotiated.⁵³⁶ In Bourdieu's conception, one is neither a slave to structuring conditions, nor free of them as the cultural field 'is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles' which may 'transform or conserve' social relations.⁵³⁷ In this example of Goody's memoir, we can see the negotiations between structure and agency clearly illustrated. In this particular overlapping set of subfields that constitute the working-class, female, reality TV celebrity, the space of possible positions she can adopt are structured in terms of emotion over intellect, confession and shame. Bourdieu's cultural field is thus made up of possible positions that accord with central cultural values that operate within it. For Tseelon, women in particular must always negotiate social expectations around how they should present themselves, expectations which are so deeply rooted in ancient cultural traditions that they come to shape a woman's self-perception.⁵³⁸ Considering these models of negation in parallel with the example of Goody demonstrates that while the memoir provides a privileged space for negotiation, the subjectivity depicted within is heavily coaxed and structured, dependent as it is upon its negotiations of central cultural values and upon the expression of a self-image that has already been formed under significant pressure. Where all autobiography seeks an inaccessible first-hand experience, mediated by memory, the lives of the subjects of ghost-written celebrity memoir are harder to access through additional strands of a web of interference. They offer the opportunity to intervene in a public image that often otherwise lies beyond the celebrity's grasp. However the ghost writer's editing, surrounding industries, literary convention, the star's symbolic function and – in Goody's case, a deficit in certain capitals - undermine authority and circumscribe the ways in which that agency can be manifested. These texts resist authoritative interpretation, leaving the

⁵³⁵ Nick Morrison, 'What can schools learn from Jade Goody?' *Times Educational Supplement*, 17 April 2009, retrieved on 29 June 2013 from <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6011978>.

⁵³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p.30.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ Tseelon, *The Masque of Femininity*, p.1.

critical reader to work by inference and rendering the genre, like many of its subjects, a bad object.

Hilton as Autobiographical Subject: Elliptic denial, camp play and supplementary extratextual worlds

‘We were like a couple of cute blond Eloises running around the Plaza, except it was the Waldorf Towers, and it wasn’t fiction.’⁵³⁹

Confessions of an Heiress, Paris Hilton.

The above quote comes from Paris Hilton’s description of her childhood with her sister, Nicky. The reference is to *Eloise*, a series of children’s books written in the 1950s by Kay Thompson about a six-year-old girl who lives in the Plaza Hotel in New York City. The message is that Hilton has lived a lifestyle of which her readers can only dream, so fabulous that it is hard to distinguish from fiction. Hilton makes clear that she is ‘special’: ‘we knew we were special and different.’⁵⁴⁰ As the quote shows, one thing that will distinguish one from ‘ordinary’ people is being born rich – something which again alludes to the class discourses inherent in such constructions. Indeed, Hilton looks with disdain upon the ordinary, advising, ‘You never want to be normal. Anyone can be normal. How boring. I’m yawning.’⁵⁴¹ Further marking out her exceptionality, Hilton holds herself up, not just as special compared with her ordinary readers, but even compared with other heiresses: ‘Not every heiress is famous. Or fun. There are a lot of boring heiresses out there.’⁵⁴² Not only is she an heiress, she is a fun, famous, celebrity-heiress and, as such, doubly special. This sits outside of the aforementioned theorisations of reality television, developed in relation to British reality TV stars.

In this regard, Hilton’s implied audience is constructed as ordinary relative to her, and assumed not have experienced anything like the rich, famous life she describes. ‘Possibly the best thing about being an heiress,’ she states, ‘is that you don’t necessarily have to work. Everyone else must work, though, so it immediately sets you apart.’⁵⁴³ She issues advice to readers, explicitly offering her memoir as an instructional guide, complete with ‘dos and don’ts’, for those who wish to emulate her. It includes, for example, a list entitled ‘My

⁵³⁹ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.20.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., p.20.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., p.11.

⁵⁴² Ibid., p.5.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., p.100.

Instructions on How to be an Heiress,' the ironic humour of stating the impossible only serving to reinforce the fact that the distance is untraversable.⁵⁴⁴

Hilton offers the *autobiographical occasion* of her wish to 'correct' misconceptions about her that result because 'newspapers and magazines write that I'm [...] privileged, and that all I do is [...] party with my friends.'⁵⁴⁵ However, far from counteracting this characterisation, the memoir and the many photographs within it deliberately emphasize these very aspects of her persona. It is a whole book *about* privilege, which she explicitly acknowledges is a function of her birth: 'Heiresses are born with privileges'.⁵⁴⁶ Another chapter is dedicated to parties, listing favourites and party secrets, explicitly stating, 'my life is a party'.⁵⁴⁷ Therefore, whilst she acknowledges her detractors and their charges that she is a privileged party-girl, this is evidently not an idea that she wishes to counter, but an aspect of her image which her memoir exists to emphasise and perpetuate. However, that is not to say that Hilton's wealth fails to insulate her from certain celebrity pitfalls.

Hilton and Goody's different class positions are explicitly narrated in their memoirs and that their relative agency is manifest through a different relationship with confession and shame. Where Goody prostrates herself, sharing stories of her pain for the reader's judgment and forgiveness, Hilton's *Confessions*, despite its title, confesses little. If Goody's memoir puts the readers into the position of the confessed-to interlocutor and authority, Hilton's memoir refuses. Indeed, accompanying merchandise for Hilton's *Confessions* comes in the form of a journal titled, *Your Heiress Diary: Confess it all to me*, retaining the position of confessed-to authority. The reader searching for 'at least one juicy revelation'⁵⁴⁸ for their \$22 dollars may be disappointed by the limited nature of Hilton's 'confessions', for example: 'Here's one of my major secrets revealed: I have curly hair. I get it blown straight all the time so no one has to know.'⁵⁴⁹ Statements such as, 'Yes, I admit I've taken the subway in New York'⁵⁵⁰ pale next to Goody's abjection. The hyperbolic tone with which she presents these 'major secrets'⁵⁵¹ suggests an awareness of the expectations of the genre and a refusal to play by those terms. Despite the fact that she claims 'At this point, I'm not afraid of controversy',⁵⁵² this book firmly avoids making reference to any controversial content.

Past disgraces only appear in the text elliptically, as she explains: 'I have pretty much grown up in public and I've done some pretty immature things along the way... Everything tends to get written about, so people don't forget as easily. I learned this lesson the hard

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., p.10.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., p.4.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., p.6.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p.82.

⁵⁴⁸ Virginia Blackburn, 'Katie Price's life? It's a price worth paying'.

⁵⁴⁹ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.44.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p.93.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p.44.

⁵⁵² Ibid., p.103.

way.’⁵⁵³ Unlike Goody, Hilton does not appear to be required to justify her actions. Misdemeanours are alluded to but not named. The assumption may be that readers already know these stories from outside of the text. So comprehensive has the coverage been from the tabloids, gossip blogs, glossy magazines that, when it comes to events like her sex tape or jail time for drink-driving, these stories need not be repeated in her memoir.

A memoir is one element that contributes to a star persona that is, ultimately, intertextual. Although developed with reference to film, Barbara Klinger’s concepts of intertextual circulation highlight the ways in which a text is surrounded by promotional materials, which do not cohere to a singular reading, but rather accentuate competing aspects in the hope of widening a text’s appeal to multiple audiences:

The text’s situation in a social intertextual context of this sort ‘opens’ it to signifying activities that exceed conventions of formal resolution. The intertextual situation of a text is then characterised by a semiotic ‘spanning’ from exterior sites that bear on the text with signifiatory pressure.⁵⁵⁴

Here, the ‘text’ is Hilton’s celebrity persona, so overexposed through multiple media outlets that her memoir cannot be read as a discreet, self-contained text. Rather, it is supplemented by a repository of stories and impressions that circulate within her star image, accumulated through newspapers, magazines, websites, television and radio programmes where Hilton appears or is discussed. As Su Holmes and Sean Redmond observe, tabloid news media ‘would now seem strangely empty without celebrity disclosures.’⁵⁵⁵ This increased visibility of celebrity stories in mainstream news means that even the most disinterested consumers of popular culture and ‘news’ are likely to have some awareness of certain stories about Hilton.

Given that a memoir is fan-merchandise, a product whose readership pays to know more about its author and subject, it is possible that readers come to the book with a thorough working knowledge of Hilton’s previous scandals. Thus, *Confessions of an Heiress* cannot be separated from its position as, for example, the autobiography of a woman made famous for incidents including a leaked sex tape and jail time for driving under the influence, despite these incidents never being mentioned in its pages. Hilton claims that the reason for her writing this memoir is that, ‘a lot of people have the wrong idea about’ her, indirectly raising the spectre of sexual shame in the form of the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ kind of woman.⁵⁵⁶ Whether or not Hilton views the sex tape *1 Night in Paris* as contributing to this ‘wrong idea’, there is an intertextual association between her own star image and the sexual exposure and humiliation encapsulated in the video’s existence. In a media environment where much

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p.176.

⁵⁵⁴ Barbara Klinger, ‘Digressions at the Cinema : Reception and Mass Culture’, *Cinema Journal* 28 (4) 1989, pp.3-19, cited in Holmes, ‘Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*’, pp. 111-136 (pp.121-122).

⁵⁵⁵ Holmes, Su and Redmond, Sean, ‘Fame Damage: Introduction,’ *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture* edited by Su Holmes, Sean Redmond (London ; New York : Routledge, 2006), p.289.

⁵⁵⁶ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.4.

celebrity coverage takes the form of seemingly ‘unapproved’ exposés, control of the nature of the discussion about them lies beyond a celebrity’s reach. By contrast, the celebrity memoir offers the possibility of an intervention where the identity presented can be carefully controlled. This version of the star’s identity, however, can only be consumed in combination with the rest of a star’s media image. Thus, the media web that a celebrity is part of can undermine the capacity of memoir to impose the star’s preferred reading upon their life.

That the reading Hilton offers is ‘a tongue-in-chic peek behind the pose’, suggests a playful pleasure in the artificial that casts Hilton as a knowing, humorous and resistant subject.⁵⁵⁷ Statements signal to readers that the version Hilton presents within these pages is a construction: ‘Create your own image. [...] Always act like you’re on camera.’⁵⁵⁸ As noted above, the promise of access to an unrestrained subjectivity is intrinsic to the appeal of the celebrity memoir genre. Where constructedness was functioning in the memoirs of chapter 2 as an ameliorative reassurance around traumatic stories, Hilton’s emphasis upon her own fabrication is altogether more playful. Not only does she flout generic convention, but she also retracts the promise to her readers that ‘you can know the real me’.⁵⁵⁹ Where the confessional tropes of Goody’s memoirs are an extension of the genre of reality television she worked in, the same could be said for Hilton: she is able to produce a memoir that continues her brand of surface, gloss, and cheeky artifice (and therefore escapes the compulsion to narrate the ‘real’ or confess) because her reality television show launched her in that mode. Hilton’s memoir taunts, ‘You can’t always believe what you read, right?’⁵⁶⁰ She is referring to her tabloid press coverage, but such a comment in the opening page of her *Confessions* reads as a self-reflexive refusal to be pinned down. The memoir seeks to upset expectations both about what Hilton should share, and also, what she should seek to hide: ‘Tell everyone you’re wearing hair extensions even if you aren’t, because they don’t expect you to tell them.’⁵⁶¹ In this way, Hilton personifies what Misha Kavka identifies as reality TV’s undermining of ‘discursive distinctions between reality and fiction, private and public identities, authenticity and performance.’⁵⁶² Hilton’s flamboyance emphasises the performative aspect to ‘being Paris Hilton’. In this way, Hilton could be seen to be embracing the ‘love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration’ that defines Susan Sontag’s conception of camp.⁵⁶³

Hilton (and/or Ginsberg) posits self-reflexive theories on the function of celebrity in society and the role Hilton plays within it:

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., frontispiece.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p.6.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p.4.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p.14.

⁵⁶² Misha Kavka, *Reality TV* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Press, 2012), p.77.

⁵⁶³ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), p.275.

I'm a fantasy to a lot of people. They *want* to think that I have more fun than they do, have fewer problems, wake up looking great, go to sleep looking great, can buy and eat anything in the world I want, and get any hot guy I want. They think I'm "Paris Barbie." (I take that as a compliment.)⁵⁶⁴

In this highlighting of what people *want* to believe, the implication is that this fantasy does not match reality. However, her memoir firmly stays within this Paris Barbie character as it goes on to relate precisely that she has huge amounts of fun, no problems, buys and eats whatever she wants and has a lot of 'hot guys'. Hilton's memoir articulates then plays out the fantasy narrative, illustrated with photographs of Hilton styled with the glitzy, excessive femininity of a Barbie doll, which are even printed on Barbie-esque pink pages. Hilton preemptively punctures the narrative she is about to tell with a smirking irony that highlights the fact this is Paris Hilton 'the pose'. Sontag's observation is that to 'perceive camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role'.⁵⁶⁵ Hilton is positioned as performing a role of fantasy excess that is knowingly comic, anticipating and disarming potential criticism of her artificiality or privilege. Richard Dyer argues that camp is 'a weapon against mystique [...] it demystifies by playing up the artifice'.⁵⁶⁶ Here Hilton's memoir acknowledges audience expectations that "'manipulation" is fairly widespread',⁵⁶⁷ using the transparent, self-aware, revelling artificiality of camp as a weapon against criticisms of artifice.

Another characteristic shared between Hilton's memoir and Sontag's conception of camp is its 'playful, anti-serious' nature.⁵⁶⁸ 'Rule Number Two' of 'How to be an Heiress' is: An heiress should never be too serious [...] First of all if you make fun of yourself, no one gets upset when you make fun of other people. And if you make fun of yourself first, no one gets the urge to do it behind your back. You've taken all the power away from them – AND made them laugh. It's a double whammy.⁵⁶⁹

This refusal of seriousness and insistence upon fun is a form of camp play that is presented as aiding her in a power struggle with adversaries who would seek to make fun of her behind her back. Rather than be defeated by press mockery, by campily refusing seriousness herself, Hilton is positioned as being able to give them permission to laugh:

While the stuff printed about me over the last few years is amusing and makes me laugh, I've finally decided to let the world know: Okay, *I get it*. Everyone can have fun

⁵⁶⁴ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.8.

⁵⁶⁵ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.280.

⁵⁶⁶ Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.52.

⁵⁶⁷ Dyer, *Stars*, p.110.

⁵⁶⁸ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.288.

⁵⁶⁹ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.9.

with my image because *I* like to have fun with it too. [...] While I like my lifestyle, I don't take it – or my media image – all *that* seriously.⁵⁷⁰

Hilton's playful, camp pose insulates her in various ways. She is insulated from press mockery by permitting their laughter; furthermore she is freed from accountability for what she says within the memoir. For example, Hilton's memoir states, 'Some people might say I'm a hypocrite because I eat burgers but don't wear fur. My response to that is: Heiresses don't need to be consistent.'⁵⁷¹ At every opportunity readers are assured that Hilton means little of what she says, leaving critics with little basis to hold her to her words. Dyer argues that 'by living out a high camp life-style [one develops] serenity and a sense of being-at-one-with-yourself.'⁵⁷² In her camp heiress performance, Hilton is positioned as above having to worry about charges such as hypocrisy. Therefore, when Hilton makes patently offensive comments such as 'being an heiress is all in your head', she is insulated, having already undermined her own position.⁵⁷³

As the apparently problematic aspects of Hilton's star image are smoothed over as humorous fun, readers are perhaps similarly released from the obligations of a sincere stance. As discussed, Gamson argues for the cynicism central to celebrity-watching.⁵⁷⁴ And yet, Hilton's ironic posture contravenes celebrity memoir genre convention. It is, however, reflective of contemporary reality TV discourses. Faye Woods argues that British structured reality TV show *The Only Way is Essex's* 'celebration of excess tilts toward caricature, yet they seek to defuse their problematic representations by employing a knowing tonal address' to 'flatter a British youth audience well versed in the constructed nature of reality TV. It offers a sceptical viewing position and knowing address that allows viewers to be detached yet simultaneously invested in the unfolding narratives'.⁵⁷⁵ Similarly Su Holmes argues that British celebrity gossip magazine *heat* is a 'text in which the commercial machinery of celebrity represents *part* of the narrative itself and—duly the province of irony and 'knowingness'—*heat* describes itself as "brimming with tongue-in-cheek humour."⁵⁷⁶ By exposing the constructedness, both Hilton and her reader are exonerated from their part in it.

This may free audiences who might otherwise feel shame attached to consuming such a book. Hilton's publisher has acknowledged that the primary target audience for Hilton's

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., p.4.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p.60.

⁵⁷² Dyer, *Culture of Queers*, p.49.

⁵⁷³ Paris Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress*, pp.5-6.

⁵⁷⁴ Gamson, 'The Assembly Line of Greatness,' p. 151.

⁵⁷⁵ Faye Woods, 'Classed Femininity, Performativity, and Camp in British Structured Reality Programming', *Television New Media*, published online 6 November 2012, retrieved on 2 July 2013 from <http://tvn.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/04/1527476412462246> (2).

⁵⁷⁶ Su Holmes, 'Off-guard, Unkempt, Unready?': Deconstructing Contemporary Celebrity in *heat* Magazine', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, published online: 21 Oct 2010, retrieved on 4 July 2013 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1030431052000336270> (26-7).

memoir was teenage girls. However, Hilton's best-seller success has hinged upon her ability to cross-over to other audiences. The diversity of book signing attendees surprised Fireside editor Trish Todd: 'We thought it was mostly going to be teenage girls . . . but it was moms with strollers, it was little old ladies, it was gay guys, it was businessmen in suits—it was everyone.'⁵⁷⁷ Hilton can sell a princess fantasy, replete with childish pink pages and sparkly tiaras, to adults, because both are at a safe ironic distance. This business logic also makes sense of Hilton's collaborative construction. Not only does the ghost writer collaborate on the writing of her life, as Paris Hilton incorporated, profitable brand, many people's labour combines to produce her everyday public life. Again, what might elsewhere be hidden due to appearances of cynical inauthenticity is here explicitly revelled in: 'How can you brand yourself if you're in somebody else's label?'⁵⁷⁸ 'Your face is your trademark';⁵⁷⁹ 'Secrets are assets, so are rich friends.'⁵⁸⁰ This language of business is presented as knowing wit; a sign that Hilton knows what is really going on. That this is an exercise in elevating her 'social net worth'⁵⁸¹ is made palatable by the fact that the sale of the 'real' Hilton is so explicitly undermined that both Hilton and readers are permitted to be in on the joke.

Hilton's elliptical, evasive play, alluding to what is already in the public domain whilst refusing to satisfy audiences' appetites for her to narrate her shame, is presented as a deliberate, defensive strategy:

If the media plays with you, well, play with them. I went on *Saturday Night Live* soon after my name was in the headlines for something I wasn't proud of [...] the script had [presenter, Jimmy Fallon] asking me, 'Is it hard to get a room in the Paris Hilton? Is it roomy?' and he wanted to cut it. But I wouldn't let him. No way. That was the funniest line. And I got the upper hand with the media the moment he said it on national TV. That's when it all clicked and things started to change. People knew I could laugh at myself, and that one bad incident was not going to make me lock myself in my room.⁵⁸²

This is the closest her memoir comes to showing any kind of vulnerability. It is presented as a personal triumph and successful power-play. She may have successfully positioned herself as in on the joke, invulnerable and untouched by society's mockery, however, this does not alter the fact that it is a sexist joke at her expense.⁵⁸³ Just as Dyer highlights the pitfalls of camp as 'the self mockery of self protection',⁵⁸⁴ Hilton's agency is compromised when she is

⁵⁷⁷ Fahy, 'One Night in Paris (Hilton),' pp.75-98.

⁵⁷⁸ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.39.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁵⁸³ The joke hinges upon a pun conflating the hotel chain that is the source of her inherited wealth and her body, the implication that it is equally easy to pay for access to either, making a link between her perceived promiscuity and the size of her vagina.

⁵⁸⁴ Dyer, *Culture of Queers*, p.50.

forced to collude in her mockery in order to be accepted. Ultimately, Hilton's repeated dictums to 'MAKE FUN OF YOURSELF'⁵⁸⁵ serve to reinforce that there is little place in the public eye for young, celebrity women who take themselves seriously. Hilton's memoir does show a different status in relation to her audience and, as a result, does not have to fulfil potential audience appetites for her shame. However, this does not mean that such appetites do not exist, or that they are not potentially satisfied by the text, whether Hilton willingly participates or not. **Any freedoms in terms of self-representation are ultimately thwarted by her own constraining conditions of the wider structuring discourses of sexual exposure and humiliation.**

⁵⁸⁵ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.15.

3.2 Talentless ‘White Trash’ Celebrity: Undeserving rich or poor

As I have argued, celebrities and their memoirs are surrounded by assemblages of contradictory narratives. This interconnected media landscape provides a forum for alternative discourses about a star to flourish. I shall now contrast celebrity memoirs, as supposedly ‘official’ narratives about a celebrity, with the reception each celebrity receives from tabloid news, cultural commentators and fan (and anti-fan) user generated websites. Doing so reveals the ways in which the celebrity memoir is constructed in negotiation with these extratexts, implicitly containing surrounding normative criticisms in their responses to them. Both women are subject to the class (and racial) slur ‘white trash’, suggesting that their class identities render them vulnerable to ridicule. However, as established, their socioeconomic backgrounds are diametrically opposed. I shall argue that the nature of reality TV, with its subjects’ lives on display, provides a basis for the gendered classing of its female stars as ‘trash’, a status deriving from the failure to demonstrate acceptably feminine restraint rather than relating to socioeconomic status. I will argue that these women transgress (and in so doing highlight the existence of) celebrity’s codes of idealised white femininity: a whiteness which retains the privilege of an unmarked category until such celebrities fall short of its ideals of purity and restraint and are thus deemed to be, and denigrated as, ‘White Trash’.

Goody is held to epitomise what Holmes calls the ‘celebritisation’ of the ‘ordinary’ person,⁵⁸⁶ whilst Rojek summarises Goody’s persona thus: ‘Brash, vulgar, overweight, physically plain and self-opinionated, Jade featured in media coverage as, not to mince words, a representative of white, working-class trash.’⁵⁸⁷ Goody embodies the type of stardom bemoaned by Daniel Boorstin for a lack of ‘greatness, worthy endeavours or talent’,⁵⁸⁸ and as discussed, she has often been foregrounded as emblematic of the apparently ‘regrettable’ nature of reality TV fame. Indeed, this conservative appraisal remains influential, characterising much of the popular critique of celebrity culture fifty years after it was first published. The assumption here is that only certain talents are of worth and that there is a consensus on what counts as worthy. A talent for placing oneself at the centre of a media furore, for example, the endeavour to provide an audience with opportunities to laugh at one’s expense, or earn a net worth of millions of pounds, are deemed to be inauthentic talents and thus denied cultural value. This, however, poses no problem for Goody’s celebrity. Indeed an apparent absence of talent both defines and authenticates her stardom.

⁵⁸⁶ Holmes, ‘Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*,’ p.114.

⁵⁸⁷ Chris Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Fame and its Consequences*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p.29.

⁵⁸⁸ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image* (London: Penguin, 1963), p.11.

Her own publicist, Max Clifford, whom Goody described as a 'father figure',⁵⁸⁹ and who might be expected to emphasize her talent to legitimate her claim to the spotlight, said after her death, 'Jade would be the first to tell you she had no talent. She was just herself.'⁵⁹⁰

In both popular and academic debate, reality TV celebrity is often constructed as antithetical to 'traditional' stardom - however vaguely this is often defined. Returning to the construction of the success myth, Dyer identifies how this embodies the discourses of ordinariness, 'lucky' breaks, 'specialness' and hard work. Yet reality TV shows like *Big Brother* remove hard work, talent and specialness from the equation. Even the lucky break element is diluted through the visibility and openness of the application process for participation. Holmes argues that in the absence of a discernible talent, the work discourse in the success myth is 'replaced by an ever more fervent negotiation of the "real" self.'⁵⁹¹ Max Clifford's description of his ward as talentless but 'just herself', clearly fits this model of fame. Goody's autobiography goes so far as to claim that she is not even capable of dissembling: 'I've never been "briefed" for an interview, and I'd be rubbish if I was. If someone told me what I should and shouldn't say I'd cock it up anyway and you'd be able to tell instantly that I wasn't being myself.'⁵⁹² Ironically, Goody claims that she is never told what she should and should not say, through the medium of a ghost writer, whose job is precisely to guide and edit Goody's utterances. This suggests an anxiety surrounding the question of whether she is putting on an act and works from the assumption that her 'true' identity is fixed and stable, and that 'being herself' is important to her fame. As Nunn and Biressi argue, reality TV stars who have allegedly remained 'true' to themselves are valued most highly.⁵⁹³ Just as her apparent talentlessness functions to cast her as authentically being herself, her aggressively, pre-emptively asserted 'stupidity' is used to reassure her audience that a contrived performance would be an impossibility. Conflicting narratives coexist as Goody is at once famous for her visible mediation, openly ghost-written and yet apparently incapable of staging a performance. Even fifty years after Boorstin, to be famous for talentlessness is to be famously unworthy, or famous for not deserving one's fame.

In the opening pages of her memoir, Goody explicitly and self-consciously deals with questions of class, stating: 'I was actually a chav before they were given a name.'⁵⁹⁴ Chav, a term of contempt used to depict the British white, working-class as tasteless, excessive, dangerous and immoral, grew in popular usage in the early part of the twenty-first century, to the point that right-wing, British newspaper the *Daily Mail* reported 2004 to be 'The Year

⁵⁸⁹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.22.

⁵⁹⁰ 'Jade Goody 'had no talent - and she knew it' says Max Clifford' *The Mirror*, 6 May 2009, retrieved on 2 July 2013 from <http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/jade-goody-had-no-talent-392393>.

⁵⁹¹ Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn, "Introduction," in *Understanding Reality Television*, ed. Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (London: Routledge, 2004), p.22.

⁵⁹² Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.100.

⁵⁹³ Biressi and Nunn, *Reality TV*, p.5.

⁵⁹⁴ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.2.

of the Chav⁵⁹⁵ due to its inclusion in an annual of newly popular idioms.⁵⁹⁶ The *Daily Mail's* description of 'a word coined to describe the spread of the ill-mannered underclass - a rival to the American trailer trash - which loves shellsuits, bling-bling jewellery and designer wear'⁵⁹⁷ highlights the confluence of fear, blame and judgement that surround the word along with anxieties about the poor having access to more than they 'deserve'. Whilst Goody's classing (of herself) as a 'chav' derives in part from aesthetic and cultural markers of taste and class, the conception of her as talentlessly famous speaks directly to the anxieties of undeserved rewards that the word 'chav' represents.

Tyler and Bennett argue that British celebrity is a class pantomime in which the celebrity chav is the butt of the joke; a Foucaultian theatre of punishment that polices the threats posed by social mobility.⁵⁹⁸ Rather than inspiring aspiration or identification, the celebrity chav offers her audience the pleasure of collective censure. She defines what the audience are glad *not* to be and gives them the opportunity to affirm their comparative superiority through 'community-forming attachment to a "bad object."⁵⁹⁹ Whilst it is perfectly possible that readers may turn to memoirs as a guilty pleasure, read from a knowing, ironic distance,⁶⁰⁰ these texts are predominantly published as fan merchandise and as such can expect to receive a more admiring, sympathetic audience than the wider celebrity gossip media. However, despite this, Tyler and Bennett's point is borne out in Goody's autobiography. Whilst it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the subject's *self*-awareness in a text produced through a ghost writer, Goody's memoir suggests that she knows she is a 'bad object'. Of dining at Claridges, a place she describes as 'soooo posh!', Goody suspects that upon recognising her, other diners 'must secretly have thought, Bloody hell, we come in here to get away from the likes of her!'⁶⁰¹ This suggests an awareness of the fact that her bad object status is based upon her class origins and the opportunities her fame and subsequent wealth afford her to exceed the boundaries that her British audience is taught ought to circumscribed.

⁵⁹⁵ 'The Year of the Chav' *The Daily Mail*, 19 October 2004, retrieved on 4 July 2013 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-322501/The-year-Chav.html>.

⁵⁹⁶ Susie Dent, *Larpers and Shroomers : The Language Report*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

⁵⁹⁷ 'The Year of the Chav' *The Daily Mail*.

⁵⁹⁸ Tyler and Bennett, "'Celebrity Chav'", p.380.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.377.

⁶⁰⁰ Gamson, "The Assembly Line of Greatness".

⁶⁰¹ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.36.

Celebritisation as class drag

Contradictorily, Goody is presented as proudly, unchangingly working class *and* as having progressed beyond shameful origins. Writing about Goody, Tyler and Bennett claim that what is ‘both comic and poignant is [her] conviction that it is possible to escape rigid class origins through highly visible careers in entertainment.’⁶⁰² Goody’s autobiography invokes this concept directly in an example which highlights the regulatory workings of class and femininity. Describing her mother’s participation on the TV programme *Extreme Makeover*, she states:

She had a nose job, a neck lift an eyelift, a boob job, her teeth done, her tattoos removed...waving like royalty... I’ve never seen my mum behaving in such a ladylike manner...She kept saying, ‘This is fabulous!’ It was all, ‘Oh, thanks for the drink, it’s fabulous. My teeth are fabulous, my boobs are fabulous! I said, ‘Fabulous’? Piss off! Just because you’ve had your face tweaked doesn’t mean you have to change the way you talk... It felt so wonderful that she could put her past behind her and be a new person.’⁶⁰³

Here, Goody undermines her mother’s attempts at what Bev Skeggs identifies as ‘doing femininity,’⁶⁰⁴ casting it as ‘an unconvincing and inadvertently parodic attempt to pass’⁶⁰⁵ in a class drag act in which ‘she had never been allowed to’ succeed.⁶⁰⁶ At the same time Goody endorses the postfeminist belief in what Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra describe as ‘consumption as a strategy...for the production of the self.’⁶⁰⁷ Goody reveals, however, that this is ultimately a temporary and therefore failed process of self-making: ‘Of course this wasn’t to last. Mum was soon back to her old loudmouth, lairy ways and couldn’t have appeared less of a lady if she tried.’⁶⁰⁸ Loudness is coded as a particularly unfeminine form of unrestraint – a discourse that simultaneously valorises a deferent image of middle-class femininity. Goody’s desire that, in Skeggs’ terms, ‘working-classness can be overcome and eradicated’⁶⁰⁹ and disappointment in her mother’s failure to ‘pass’ is repeated when she sees her mother in the *Celebrity Big Brother* house: ‘Her behaviour, her language, her manners were appalling. But she was my mum.’⁶¹⁰ Goody speaks from the point of view of someone who has undertaken the same process through which she is now watching her mother

⁶⁰² Tyler and Bennett, “‘Celebrity Chav’”, p.389.

⁶⁰³ Goody, *Jade Fighting to the End*, pp.65-6 .

⁶⁰⁴ Bev Skeggs, ‘The Toilet Paper: Femininity, Class and Misrecognition’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 24 (2-4) 2001: 297

⁶⁰⁵ Tyler and Bennett, “‘Celebrity Chav’”, p.381.

⁶⁰⁶ Su Holmes, ‘Jade’s back and this time she’s famous: Narratives of Celebrity in the *Celebrity Big Brother* ‘race’ row’. *Entertainment and Sports Law Journal*, 7(1) 2009 (22)

⁶⁰⁷ Tasker and Negra, ‘Introduction’, *Interrogating Postfeminism*, p.2.

⁶⁰⁸ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.66.

⁶⁰⁹ Skeggs, ‘Femininity, Class and Misrecognition’, p.298.

⁶¹⁰ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.81.

flounder: 'I knew how people would view her on the outside, because they'd viewed me in the same way when I'd first gone in there in 2002. And I'd behaved like a right ignorant idiot.'⁶¹¹ Repenting for her previous behaviour, Goody speaks as if occupying a comparative position of safety: as if she had successfully made the transition to acceptable, middle-class femininity, and could view her working-classness retrospectively, its markers having, but for her mother's humiliations, been shed, permitting her to 'pass'.

'White trash' celebrity as lack of self-control

In 2007, whilst appearing on *Celebrity Big Brother* UK, Goody was at the centre of widespread controversy when she was accused of the racist bullying of fellow contestant and Bollywood film star, Shilpa Shetty. Media uproar ensued, with Goody ejected from the public's affections and branded as repugnant 'white trash'. This particular incident, and the reactions to Goody that followed, have been a cultural reference point for many celebrity studies scholars.⁶¹² For Su Holmes, this pivotal moment in Goody's career trajectory reveals the way in which discourses of fame and celebrity are mobilized as disciplinary forces as whatever gains she had 'won' were gleefully stripped from her and any 'passing' possibilities were publicly retracted.⁶¹³ Meanwhile, for Biressi and Nunn the apologetic media tour which followed the Goody/Shetty 'race row' offers an exemplary case of celebrity as an 'contract of on-going public intimacy' that demands the performance of emotional labour.⁶¹⁴

By contrast to Goody, Shilpa was praised for dealing with Goody's insults with grace, decorum and civility – words which are themselves inherently classed. Bourdieu describes 'the refusal to surrender to nature, which is the mark of dominant groups – who start with *self-control* – [as] the basis of the aesthetic disposition.'⁶¹⁵ The division between imperturbable Shetty and intemperate Goody falls along these lines of classed self-control. As polar identities were constructed for Goody and Shetty by the media, reference was made to each woman's physical attractiveness. For example, Stuart Jeffries' article in the *Guardian* titled 'Beauty and the beastliness' describes the *Big Brother* house as 'divided between ugly, thick white Britain and one imperturbably dignified Indian woman.'⁶¹⁶ In the contrasting of

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p.82.

⁶¹² Radha S. Hegde, 'Of Race, Classy Victims and National Mythologies: Distracting reality on *Celebrity Big Brother*', *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (4) 2007, pp.457-60. Lieve Gies, 'Pigs, Dogs, Cows, and Commerce in *Celebrity Big Brother* 2007,' *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (4) 2007, p462.

⁶¹³ Holmes, 'Narratives of *Celebrity in the Celebrity Big Brother* 'race' row,' *Entertainment and Sports Law Journal*, 7(1) 2009.

⁶¹⁴ Heather Nunn & Anita Biressi (2010) "'A trust betrayed": celebrity and the work of emotion,' *Celebrity Studies*, 1:1, 49-64.

⁶¹⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.40.

⁶¹⁶ Stuart Jeffries, 'Beauty and the Beastliness: A Tale of Declining British Values', *The Guardian*, 19 January 2007, retrieved on 3 July 2013 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2007/jan/19/broadcasting.comment>.

an 'ugly' woman's crass vulgarity against a 'beautiful' woman's elegant propriety, narratives of 'proper' femininity become enmeshed with those of race and class. Shetty conducts herself with comparative ease. Bourdieu argues, that ease 'represents the visible assertion of freedom from the constraints which dominate ordinary people, the most indisputable affirmation of capital as the capacity to satisfy the demands of biological nature or of the authority which entitles one to ignore them.'⁶¹⁷ Goody's autobiography explains the argument that was at the centre of the allegations in terms of class, rather than race:

We were fighting because we were from different classes and different values in life...I have a chip on my shoulder about that. I don't want anyone to think that they're better than me, just because they have more money or a more educated upbringing. I felt like, to her, I was common. And, to me, she was a posh, up-herself princess.⁶¹⁸

Goody claims that what she objected to in Shetty, was not her race, but her privilege, arrogance and condescension. Any appearance of racism is explained away as an accidental, if unfortunate, product of her working-class background. 'It's not in me to be racial about anyone,' Goody explains.⁶¹⁹ This disconnects the exchange from the realities of racism as a systemic problem with far-reaching consequences, misrecognising structural inequalities as depoliticised individual pathologies.⁶²⁰ Stuart Jeffries responds to Goody's media apologies with a personal attack on her poor grasp of grammar and her undeserved wealth: 'the word you want, Jade, is not racial, but racist: do spend some of that estimated £8m you have earned on a remedial education rather than boob jobs and liposuction.'⁶²¹ Goody's racist bullying provided the commentariat with their own opportunity for self-righteous bullying of her on the grounds of class and femininity, suggesting that class hate and sexism remained a socially acceptable form of bigotry.

When Goody steers the conversation away from the politics of race to those of class, she uses her autobiography to justify the actions that made her a national hate figure, or, as Lieve Gies suggests, 'Jade's own media savvy has been to convert the humiliations which she suffered ... into a highly bankable asset.'⁶²² Goody's memoir reframes the debate in terms of class rather than, or as well as, race, and suggests that, in the classed, racialised hierarchy, to be a privileged woman of colour is a preferable, more acceptably feminine, position to occupy than to be white, working-class.

⁶¹⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.255.

⁶¹⁸ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.91.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Hegde, 'Distracting Reality on Celebrity Big Brother,' pp.455 – 469.

⁶²¹ Jeffries, 'Beauty and the Beastliness', *The Guardian*.

⁶²² Lieve Gies, 'Pigs, Dogs, Cows, and Commerce in Celebrity Big Brother 2007,' *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (4) 2007, p462.

During this time fellow *Celebrity Big Brother* contestant Jermaine Jackson received little criticism for allegedly calling Goody 'white trash'.⁶²³ As John Hartigan notes, 'in a political moment when derogatory labels and innuendoes for ethnic groups are being rigorously policed in social and institutional exchanges, 'white trash' still flies with little self-conscious hesitancy.'⁶²⁴ 'White trash' itself is a slur in which race and class combine. Whilst used interchangeably with the aforementioned term 'chav' in reference to Goody, the term has specific historical resonances. Matt Wray and Annalee Newitz trace the concept back to the US Eugenics Research Office who, between 1880 and 1920, attempted to demonstrate scientifically that rural poor whites were 'genetically defective' by 'locating relatives who were either incarcerated or institutionalised and then tracing their genealogy back to a "defective" source.'⁶²⁵ Thus the rural poor entered the public imagination as 'poor, dirty, drunken, criminally minded, and sexually perverse people.'⁶²⁶ This was used to call an end to welfare and other forms of giving to the poor and introduce involuntary sterilisation and incarceration. Eugenics may have been discredited as a scientific practice, but, as Wray and Newitz argue, 'the stereotypes of rural poor whites as incestuous and sexually promiscuous, violent, alcoholic, lazy, and stupid remain with us to this day.'⁶²⁷ 'White' is racialised, serving as an invisible norm: white bodies are 'unmarked, normative bodies and social selves, the standard against which all others are judged (and found wanting)'.⁶²⁸ 'Trash' is classed as the dregs, dirt or refuse of society. Wray and Newitz observe that 'the white trash stereotype serves as a useful way of blaming the poor for being poor'.⁶²⁹ In this respect the American term functions in the same way as the British 'chav', as an explanation for cultural and class differences that blames the poor not only for their own situation, but for a nation's ills.

Whiteness as an unmarked category: Comparing Hilton and the Kardashians

When Hilton and Goody transgress (and in so doing highlight the existence of) celebrity's codes of idealised white femininity, they reveal a whiteness which retains the privilege of an unmarked category until such celebrities fall short of its ideals of purity and restraint and are thus deemed 'white trash'. The unmarked status of whiteness is seen most clearly through comparison with non-white celebrities who are understood primarily through their ethnic or

⁶²³ 'Jermaine in Frame: New Big Bro Race Row' *The Daily Star*, 3rd February 2007, retrieved on 3 July 2013 from <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/posts/view/12423>.

⁶²⁴ John Hartigan 'Unpopular Culture: The Case of 'White Trash', *Cultural Studies* 11(2) 1997, p.317.

⁶²⁵ Wray and Newitz, 'Introduction', *White Trash*, p.2.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

racial identity. Consider Hilton in relation to her celebrity peer Kim Kardashian, whose memoir constantly references, explains and even apologises for, her ethnic identity. Hilton's memoir never once mentions her white racial identity.

In terms of socioeconomic background, Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton have extremely similar profiles. Both attended a prestigious, independent school The Buckley School in California and live in Beverly Hills as the offspring of wealthy, high profile parents. Indeed Kardashian describes Hilton as a friend and mentor in cultivating and coping with fame: 'she said "whatever you do, just smile. And don't say anything under your breath because now they have video cameras too."' ⁶³⁰

As Sean Redmond observes, "The symbolism of whiteness is also found in the everyday world, in the wedding dress, the doctor's uniform and in the 'signs' of health and hygiene, for example, establishing whiteness as indexical, or rather iconic, of purity."⁶³¹ In the collective memoir, *Kardashian Confidential*, we see the three Kardashian sisters negotiating their public identity in relation to ethnicity, hygiene and purity, in a way that Hilton is not at any point required to do. They describe a beauty regime that must deal with the perceived 'problems' associated with their Armenian heritage. Hilton's memoir similarly makes frequent references to her beauty regimen. Not one of them is presented as a necessity because of her race. *Kardashian Confidential* contains a chapter titled 'So Armenian', expressing pride in their Armenian heritage. However, paradoxically, the women simultaneously demonstrate shame in their Armenianness, presenting it as the source of undesirable physical attributes which need to be erased. The book reads: '[We] are all dark, and we're hairy, like most Armenians.'⁶³² The reference to hairiness, which in this context is delineated as a negative attribute - incompatible with acceptable femininity - renders the statement an apology for their ethnic make up and explains away what they consider to be unsightly flaws.

In their analysis of the reality TV series *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, Maria Pramaggiore and Diane Negra observe that 'the women overtly signal aspirations toward a convincing whiteness through, for example, multiple series mentions of the importance of hair removal.'⁶³³ This emphasis extends, in their memoir, to an entire chapter entitled 'Wax Work', a phrase highlighting the labour behind what is presented as important and necessary maintenance: 'waxing leaves everything cleaner', 'at the age of eleven, we were getting

⁶³⁰ Kourtney Kardashian, Kim Kardashian, and Khloe Kardashian, *Kardashian Confidential*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2011) p.100.

⁶³¹ Sean Redmond, 'The Whiteness of Stars: Looking at Kate Winslet's Unruly White Body,' *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (London : SAGE 2006), p.266.

⁶³² *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁶³³ Diane Negra and Maria Pramaggiore, 'Keeping Up with the Aspirations: Commercial Family Values and the Kardashian Brand,' in *Reality Gendervision : Sexuality & Gender on Transatlantic Reality Television*, ed. by Brenda R. Weber (London: Duke University Press 2014), p.86.

waxed', 'your bikini, I believe, should always be waxed'.⁶³⁴ These statements accompany large colour photographs of the women in their bikinis as evidence that they are good postfeminist subjects with abundant, curly, brown Armenian hair visible only in acceptably feminine places. Hair is equated here with Armenianness, but it is also equated with dirt. Their ethnic identity is thus expressed through contradictory displays of both pride and shame.

Racial markers are embodied, and this bodily emphasis is a source of sexualisation. Pramaggiore and Negra identify that 'the desire for and disparagement of Kim's ass continues a long tradition of racial and ethnic fetishization that spans Sarah Baartman, known as the Hottentot Venus, and Jennifer Lopez.'⁶³⁵ Indeed, Kim Kardashian's behind is an asset so heavily capitalised upon that her entire family's fame and fortune is attributed to its extraordinary plenitude. Kim's sisters open the memoir with 'people say it all started with Kim's bootylicious butt.'⁶³⁶ Kim Kardashian's star image exhibits ambivalence between pride and shame toward an ethnic identity that draws attention to, is written upon, and purportedly capitalises upon her sexualised physicality as defined in contrast to what Richard Dyer has identified as the 'non-physical, spiritual, indeed ethereal qualities' of the 'white woman as angel'.⁶³⁷ Hilton's memoir, by contrast, never accounts for, explains, apologises for or even acknowledges the fact that she is white. According to her memoir, Hilton has no racial identity: her hegemonic whiteness is not held to be a racial signifier.

In contrast to the claims of Hilton's memoir, her popular reception as 'white trash' shows that she disrupts 'the social decorums that have supported the hegemonic, unmarked status of whiteness as a normative identity'⁶³⁸ and thereby undermines the privileges that their whiteness, as well as their wealth, ought to confer. Transgressions of cultural appropriateness appear to be most harshly chastised when the boundaries crossed are those set by middle-class ideals of femininity. As Tasker and Negra argue, 'postfeminism is white and middle class by default'⁶³⁹ and presents women's lives as defined by 'choice' whilst simultaneously privileging traditional, passive gender roles as the choice above all others. Building upon the work of Bourdieu, Skeggs charts the association of femininity with the habitus of the upper classes: 'ease, restraint, calm, and luxurious decoration. It was a category of pure, white, heterosexuality, later translated into the ideal for middleclass women.'⁶⁴⁰ Femininity is inherently classed and defined in opposition to black and working class women who are 'coded as the sexual and deviant other'.⁶⁴¹

We have seen in the previous examples how Goody's 'brash', 'ugly', 'ignorant' persona,

⁶³⁴ Kardashian, Kardashian, and Kardashian, *Kardashian Confidential*, pp.36-7.

⁶³⁵ Negra and Pramaggiore, 'Keeping Up,' p.86.

⁶³⁶ Kardashian, Kardashian, and Kardashian, *Kardashian Confidential*, p.4.

⁶³⁷ Richard Dyer, *White* (London : Routledge, 1997) p.127.

⁶³⁸ Hartigan 'Unpopular Culture,' p.317.

⁶³⁹ Tasker and Negra, 'Introduction', p.2.

⁶⁴⁰ Skeggs, 'Femininity, Class and Misrecognition,' p.297.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

not only finds her condemned to the lowest of class and racial categories, but also presents a failure of femininity. Having been coded as the shameful, debased other - deficient in femininity and class - her memoir attempts to offer readers a *mea culpa*, not only for her racism, but for who she is. Ultimately her memoir is an act of repentance, expressing shame at her origins, her past behaviour and the woman she was when she entered the limelight. Society's judgement of her as unacceptable 'white trash' create the framing conditions within which she must write her life story and shape it accordingly.

Despite having been born at the opposite end of the class spectrum from Goody, Hilton receives the same class slur. Where Rojek considers Goody to be 'representative of...white, working-class trash', the website *Urban Dictionary* claims that Paris Hilton personifies the term. Under the entry for 'white trash' comes the definition: 'anyone who goes by the name Paris Hilton, wants to be Paris Hilton, knows Paris Hilton, or has spent one night in Paris'.⁶⁴² Regardless of the difference in their socio-economic backgrounds, both Goody and Hilton are subject to the class and racial discourses that combine to judge them to be what Shelley Cobb describes as 'women who do not display the cultural tastes appropriate to the privileges of whiteness.'⁶⁴³ Coming from the world of old money, Hilton represents the most exclusive enclave of white privilege. Her inherited wealth affords her the means to acquire the accoutrements, habits and cultural knowledge of the elite and yet she epitomises 'white trash' celebrity. Whether born rich or poor, neither woman has the 'symbolic' or 'cultural capital' to save them from ridicule and degradation once they are in the public eye.⁶⁴⁴ On the user-generated, online forum *Listology*, under the heading 'Paris Hilton: Rich White Trash,' poster melladior@ho describes her as a 'no-talent-daddy's-money-what's-a-Walmart-bottle-blonde... Dumb. As. Dirt.' and asks 'What's she famous for again? I can think of very few examples of people making a career out of their mind-numbing stupidity.'⁶⁴⁵ The poster's vitriol comes from the view that Hilton lacks the right type of talent to deserve fame and that her inherited wealth renders her out of touch with 'normal' people. To be dumb and famous is an insult to the audience. To be dumb and rewarded with riches is even more so. Their careers in reality television leave both Hilton and Goody vulnerable to the charge of talentless stupidity without the shield of a socially approved 'talent' to hide behind. The bottle blonde reference is a charge of inauthenticity, as if the injustice of Hilton's fame and riches would be mitigated were it springing from a natural beauty.

⁶⁴² 'white trash,' posted by 'your mom', *Urban Dictionary*, retrieved on 3 July 2013 from <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=white%20trash> (on 3 July 2013 this definition had received 7744 likes).

⁶⁴³ Shelley, Cobb, 'Mother of the Year Kathy Hilton, Lynne Spears, Dina Lohan and Bad Celebrity Motherhood', *Genders*, (48) 2008, retrieved on 3 July 2013 from http://www.genders.org/g48/g48_cobb.html.

⁶⁴⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

⁶⁴⁵ melladior@ho, 'Paris Hilton: Rich White Trash', *Listology*, retrieved on 3 July 2013 from <http://www.listology.com/story/paris-hilton-rich-white-trash>.

‘White trash’ as failure of femininity and wilful self-display

Skeggs builds upon the work of Bourdieu to argue that appearance classes femininity through its function as a marker of respectability. Naturalness, and with it associations of ease, are rewarded with a greater cultural value than constructed beauty, which is ‘de-valued for being made visible’ thereby revealing the necessity for effort.⁶⁴⁶ As well as both receiving the slur ‘white trash’, Goody and Hilton share conventions of appearance, actively embracing an ostentatiously ‘fake’ look. Nails, hair extensions, breasts or manifold other ‘enhancements’ are mentioned in their memoirs, with the fake tan the symbol above all others of the trashy girl’s beauty regime. Hilton advises, ‘always have a tan. It looks like you’ve been in an exotic (i.e. expensive) place,’⁶⁴⁷ whilst Goody describes that one of the first things she did to recover from a miscarriage was spend ‘twenty minutes on a sunbed’.⁶⁴⁸ Star of reality show *The Only Way is Essex*, Sam Faiers, dedicates a chapter of her autobiography to the topic of fake tanning and explains why ‘being tanned is like a religion’⁶⁴⁹: ‘We like a glamorous, big, full-on look that catches people’s attention, and we are not afraid to look like we have made a lot of effort.’⁶⁵⁰ These augmentations are presented as the consumerist trappings of a wealthy celebrity lifestyle. However, this fake aesthetic is another means by which both women are judged to be ‘trashy’. Whilst it may be an expensive look to produce, with its over-the-top excess, it is a look interpreted by society as ‘cheap’: a term which, when applied to a woman, has derogative overtones of sexual availability. Hilton herself attempts to police the line between ‘classy’ and ‘trashy’ for her readers: ‘There’s a big difference between being fun and provocative and being totally over-the-top and gross.’⁶⁵¹ With the ‘white trash’ slur, however, Hilton has been judged to have transgressed her own standards. Both women describe their revealing outfits, heteronormatively placing the authority to approve, and the right to judge, with their male partners. Goody states of a birthday outfit, ‘I thought I looked great, Jack [her partner] thought I looked like a slut.’⁶⁵² Hilton advises readers to, ‘show off your navel and belly’, wear jeans ‘really, really low-waisted’, and ‘dress supersexy when you don’t have a boyfriend, or if you want to make your boyfriend jealous’.⁶⁵³ As their sexuality is conflated with the visibility of their bodies, the accusation of aesthetic trashiness is born of these women’s specularly, having made a display of themselves.

‘Making a spectacle out of oneself’, argues Mary J. Russo in her book on the female grotesque, can be seen to be ‘a specifically feminine danger. The danger was of an exposure.

⁶⁴⁶ Bev Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture*. (London: Routledge, 2003), p.101.

⁶⁴⁷ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.13.

⁶⁴⁸ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.186.

⁶⁴⁹ Sam Faiers, *Living Life the Essex Way*, (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012), p.23.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁶⁵¹ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.8.

⁶⁵² Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.46.

⁶⁵³ Hilton, *Confessions*, pp.52-3.

Men, I learned later in life, “exposed themselves,” but that operation was quite deliberate and circumscribed. For a woman, making a spectacle of herself had more to do with a kind of inadvertency and loss of boundaries.⁶⁵⁴ The charge of trashiness, and the invocation of the grotesque in the discourses of inadvertency and inappropriateness that surround these women, is in part founded upon the failure of boundaries represented in Hilton and Goody’s exposure. Further, Goody’s sentimental discourse is also grotesque in these terms: as already discussed, her memoir describes ‘the floodgates opening’⁶⁵⁵ in a seemingly unrestrained outpouring of personal secrets – suggesting a flouting of the boundaries of decorous speech. However, unlike the inadvertency Russo describes, Faiers relates the ‘efforts’ made to ‘catch people’s attention,’ suggesting that what further provokes censure in the ‘big, full-on look’, epitomised by the fake tan, is the deliberate willingness it suggests to be looked at. Or even, a willingness to be seen to make an effort to encourage others to look. Acceptable middle class femininity has always been decorative and specular. The supposedly unseemly difference in this instance is the invitation to an admiring audience, which one ought to be able to attract effortlessly. Despite their antithetical socioeconomic origins, both women’s star identities share many characteristics: they are classed as ‘white trash’, criticised for occupying our screens without the necessary talent to deserve the attention, and characterised by a supposedly ‘trashy’ aesthetic. The common ground here is the gendered charge of failing to conduct themselves with the modesty and humility that befit their being female. If an upper-class habitus and restrained femininity are inextricable, these women are classed together as trashy for their lack of feminine restraint.

In this regard, both women use their memoirs to present themselves as more acceptably ‘feminine’ than their public reception has classed them. Goody’s memoir casts her as a homemaking, ideal mother writing ‘a precious record for her two beloved sons’⁶⁵⁶ and emphasises the importance she puts on manners and cleanliness. Hilton distances herself from women who ‘need to talk about every tight T-shirt they buy, every carbohydrate they eat, every insecurity they have, every single thing a guy says to them’⁶⁵⁷ or ‘go around spilling [their] guts.’⁶⁵⁸ However their careers as the subjects of reality products, including these very memoirs, require them to live in public. They are characterised by a kind of performative excess, an inability to stay demurely out of the spotlight as a ‘classy’ woman should.

Where Tyler and Bennett describe the vilification of Goody as a ‘grotesque representation of the undeserving poor,’⁶⁵⁹ Hilton is conversely represented as the

⁶⁵⁴ Mary J. Russo, *The Female Grotesque : Risk, Excess and Modernity* (London and New York: Routledge 1994), p.53.

⁶⁵⁵ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.xxxv.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.vii.

⁶⁵⁷ Hilton, *Confessions*, p.9.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁶⁵⁹ Tyler and Bennett, “‘Celebrity Chav’”, p.380.

undeserving rich, lacking what Cobb describes as ‘the supposedly innate cultural tastes and decorum that wealthy white people should have’.⁶⁶⁰ Therefore, the white trash slur derives less from either woman’s class status than from their ‘inhabiting a transgressive femininity’ that renders them vulgar and grotesque. They stimulate what Cobb describes as ‘cultural anxiety over the availability of individual success within capitalism to "inappropriate" members’ of society.⁶⁶¹ The female reality star is impelled to share all and thus cannot simultaneously occupy both the restrained feminine and a life of display. Whether it is aesthetic trashiness or an undeserved spotlight, the diametrically opposed class backgrounds of these two women show that the charge of trashiness is - above all else - about the sullied virtue of a woman who lives in public and the hegemony of middle class ideals.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how the celebrity memoir is an exemplary text for analysing the construction of the celebrity image in relation to the multiplicity of industrial forces and presumed audience appetites which shape and surround it. This chapter has shown how these books and the star images of their subjects are assemblages as they interact with, redress, seek to reconcile and implicitly contain a multiplicity of overlapping, interconnecting, and often competing narratives. By accounting for the collaborative construction of these texts and finding a space for the ghost writer in our understanding of them, this chapter provides an approach for the way in which the industrial conditions of celebrity render all star images collaborative constructions.

Despite agentic interventions on the part of the celebrities being ghosted, the celebrities perform version of themselves in the narrative that are located directly within the parameters defined by the arena of celebrity from which the individual emerges. This has implications for the agency of the young female celebrity who is constructed in both the narratives and the system of celebrity. The overlapping cultural fields in which these celebrities and their status are located, fields of gendered celebrity culture and of reality TV stars in particular, offers the arena in which these they can maneuver, bringing their habitus and capitals into negotiation with the rules of the field.⁶⁶² In these examples we see that the rules of this cultural field are that acceptable femininity is policed in terms of restraint and that sexual morality is always at stake in female exposure. Exposure is both the means and the end in reality TV celebrity, however, as with Tseelon’s paradoxes it is both the requisite condition of participation and the cause of censure and ridicule, especially for women. Restraint, exposure and sexual morality can therefore be seen to be irreconcilable co-existent

⁶⁶⁰ Cobb, ‘Mother of the Year’, p.6.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p.25.

⁶⁶² Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*.

pressures, leaving the female reality tv star in an 'impossible space', doomed to fail them.⁶⁶³ Whilst the young female celebrity may negotiate a space for her self-representation using the capitals she brings to the exchange, the rules of the reality TV cultural field, and the exposure demanded, leave her subject to wider structuring conditions which police sexual morality and acceptable femininity

As the 'official' narratives produced in celebrity memoir react to their media environment, they can be seen to be always in interaction with the multiplicity of coverage, judgements and readings that circulate around the celebrity. The digital structures of celebrity gossip media provide a forum for alternative discourses about a celebrity that can compete with, if not supplant, the 'official story'. As celebrities are judged according to how successfully they perform certain norms, celebrity memoirs can be seen to be attempting to align the celebrity subject with dominant ideas of white, middle class femininity. A particular brand of celebrity femininity is thus constructed through the negotiation between the subject and her audience as 'official' memoir and 'alternative' discourses overlap with, react to, and incorporate one another. In the reception of their images, Jade Goody and Paris Hilton are always already defined in relation to their status as emblems of either the undeserving rich or the undeserving poor. Publically derided as not having proven their worth according to socially sanctioned ideas of what constitutes talent or worthy fame, these women's images are constructed in relation to their past humiliation such that they are always partially defined by it. These celebrities do not solely seek to disavow their public humiliations. Indeed, the recirculation of these humiliations can work in their commercial interests. However, whilst they may at points embrace and celebrate their unruly femininities, their categorization as 'white trash' shows that society does not. A sexualised inflexion writes trashiness upon the overexposed female celebrity body and exposes the limits and parameters of this negotiated agency. Agency in self-representation takes many shifting, multi-directional, interconnected forms. However, it is a finite multiplicity in which neither woman can shed her origins.

The conventions of both reality TV and contemporary memoir demand the subject's exposure as they reveal (ideally shameful) secrets, or are caught in candid moments of humiliation. Individual subjects must negotiate this demand for their exposure. The strategies available to each depend on the capitals they bring to the exchanges between a subject, their ghost and their audience arising in the process of producing a memoir. By analysing two stars who represent antithetical extremes along the class spectrum, this chapter shows that strategies for negotiating shame and confession vary greatly from star to star, revealing different power dynamics in relation to the status of autobiographical subject.

⁶⁶³ Tseëlon, *Masque of Femininity*, p.131.

And yet, in celebrity memoir, even if evasively, shame and confession must always be negotiated. Goody's relative deficit in social status forces her to participate in her abjection as she repents the shame of her class background, giving the reader the authority to judge and forgive. In contrast, Hilton's corresponding surfeit insulates her from the genre's demands for confession, mobilising ellipsis and camp play in the performance of 'tongue in chic' persona. At either end of the class spectrum, as heiress and 'chav', neither is perceived to have 'earned' her fame and lifestyle in ways which are particularly gendered. Memoirs represent an intervention into the web of media narratives that surround these women, but it is an intervention that attempts to make these women more palatable to the dominant norms that reject them, thus affording them agency enough only to participate in their own humiliation.

Chapter 4. Art, Authorship and Authenticity in the Visual Pop-Star memoirs of M.I.A and Lady Gaga

Introduction: Autobiographical Images in an Economics of Exposure

Examining the autobiographical books produced by American pop-star Lady Gaga and British-Sri Lankan pop-star M.I.A. adds the category of pop-stardom to this study. **In so doing this brings both a different, supposedly more or countercultural type of celebrity as well as different autobiographical forms into this investigation as a point of contrast to the previous case-studies. This selection of case study brings the thesis to a close with examples that might counter the representational and narrative conventions set up in the previous examples. The thinking was that I might find a limit case, against which I could test the theorisations offered in this thesis thus far. However, what is most interesting of all are the points of correlation between the self-representational practices of pop-stars with subcultural affiliations and those of porn and reality stars, as these continuities show the endurance of conventions that shape the subjectivities coaxed from young, female celebrities despite differences in their cultural fields.**

Both artists have rejected traditional written life narratives in favour of visual memoir forms, a representational act that privileges each woman's distinctive aesthetics. At first look, these visual memoirs appear to adhere to different conventions and construct an alternative type of celebrity from those discussed in previous chapters. Certain production and representational choices attempt to set M.I.A. and Gaga apart from celebrity culture conventions and to signal where value is to be placed in their star identities. Whilst the promise of celebrity memoir is to reveal the 'real' woman 'behind' the image, these texts present a site for a deeper contemplation of the image itself. This represents a significant departure from the conventions of the celebrity memoir genre, straying instead into the conventions of the art book or collection of documentary photography. Rather than functioning as illustration, accompaniment, verification or supplement to written text, images in these texts form the central content and purpose of these books and are framed by minimal accompanying written discourse.

M.I.A. by Mathangi "Maya" Arulpragasam, is described by its author as 'a document of the five years of M.I.A. art'⁶⁶⁴ and contains over 100 graphic artworks dated between 2002

⁶⁶⁴ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.13.

and 2011. Images are organised by the LPs they were made for: /\\ / Y / (a typographic play on her own name), ARULAR, and KALA, named after M.I.A.'s father and mother respectively. Each collection of images is prefaced by an autobiographical essay explicitly linking M.I.A.'s life to her music, the artworks made to support it, and the global, political affairs of the time of production. Her music is thus set up as part of an autobiographical expression of the self as commoditised cultural product.

M.I.A.'s work has been characterised by political lyrics and a brightly coloured aesthetic (in videos, stage shows etc), both of which make much of her family's Sri Lankan origins. Born in the UK, M.I.A. was moved to Sri Lanka as a baby and then on to India due to the Sri Lankan civil war and her father's purported involvement with the Tamil Tigers. She returned to London at the age of ten where she stayed until becoming a global star through the success of her first album, *ARULAR*, named after her 'father's code name when he became involved in the Tamil resistance movement'.⁶⁶⁵ The representation of M.I.A.'s ethnicity is central to her creative output. Situated as diasporic cultural production, her work embraces a politics of difference and enacts a politicised post-colonial identity through both her music and her wider promotional aesthetics. Whilst the book, *M.I.A.*, clearly attempts to stake claim to being an art artefact, much of its contents are made up of marketing collateral such as logos, CD artwork, web design or backdrops from her world tours. Here, marketing is anthologised and presented as both art and autobiography that is in turn used to market her further.

My second case study for this chapter, Lady Gaga, was born Stefani Germanotta. However, unlike *M.I.A.*, Gaga's photo-memoir offers nothing of this backstory. Rather, it takes the form of a visual diary of life on tour between 2010 and 2011. Beyond a one-page introduction in the voice of Gaga, and promotional blurb on the dust jacket, the book is compiled entirely of photographs without any textual framing. Shot by or with controversial fashion photographer Terry Richardson and titled *Gaga x Richardson*, photographs chart life on the road, on and off-stage during 2010 and 2011 taking in events such as Lollapalooza festival, music Awards shows, a political rally, a Paris fashion show, and many dates of her *Monster Ball* tour in what the dust jacket calls a 'year-long global odyssey'.⁶⁶⁶

Both stars have achieved widespread mainstream fame (*Time Magazine*, for example, has included both women in their '100 Most Influential People' lists - M.I.A in 2009 and Lady Gaga in 2010). Additionally, both star images are associated with controversy, counter-cultural music scenes and social causes.⁶⁶⁷ Both M.I.A. and Lady Gaga

⁶⁶⁵ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.16.

⁶⁶⁶ Gaga and Richardson, *Gaga x Richardson*, dust jacket.

⁶⁶⁷ For examples of Gaga and M.I.A.'s reception as controversial see Katy Steinmetz, 'Top 10 Controversial Music Videos', *Time Magazine*, 6 June 2011, retrieved on 4 August 2015 from <http://entertainment.time.com/2011/06/07/top-10-controversial-music-videos/>; 'Controversial singer M.I.A.

are young, female pop performers who have combined *avant garde* or confrontational aspects of their identities with the cheerful, light-heartedness of pop's mass appeal to achieve global success as recording artists. Their association with decentralised subject positions - such as Gaga's performances of gender fluidity or M.I.A.'s alignment with the subaltern dispossessed - suggests that they have carved public careers whose possibilities are not necessarily dominated by pre-existing models of gendered exposure. These two stars and their visual memoirs provide fruitful examples for comparison – with one another and with my wider sample - in part because they are popularly received as countercultural icons counteracting the gender norms identified in previous chapters – a belief that this chapter suggests needs to be interrogated.

The fact that M.I.A. and Gaga represent themselves visually rather than verbally cannot be accounted for by their status as pop-stars (and not models or reality TV stars like in previous chapters). Pop-stars such as Kerry Katona, Geri Halliwell, Tulisa Contostavlos, Kelly Osbourne and the members of Destiny's Child all adopt predominantly textual memoir forms according to the wider genre's conventions. Nor can this difference be accounted for by different target audiences: all of the stars in this thesis have, to one degree or another, achieved large-scale, mainstream fame broad enough to be safely considered to overlap. Rather, in rejecting written memoir, the customary form of celebrity (co)authored self-disclosure, both women appear to be rejecting a set of conventions for how they will present themselves as young, and crucially female, celebrities.

Thus, M.I.A.'s anthology and Gaga's photo-memoir appear to be setting themselves up as a postmodern masquerade: a playful bricolage with performed identities which directs attention to the surface in a genre that is usually concerned with finding 'hidden depths'. Rather than written confessional narratives like those of Katie Price and Jade Goody which draw upon nineteenth century realist modes and an Enlightenment model of a coherent self, M.I.A. and Gaga's texts appear to construct self-conscious performances of 'doing' celebrity.

Focussing on the surface image could be read as a resistant move against being knowable, or to function 'against interpretation'⁶⁶⁸ in a culture determined to know its young, female celebrities. This difference can in part be attributed to the hierarchies of

fighting 'ridiculous' \$1.5 million fine for swearing and making rude gesture during Madonna's 2012 Super Bowl show,' *The Daily Mail*, 20 September 2013, retrieved on 4 August 2015 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2426878/MIA-fighting-1-5m-fine-controversial-appearance-Madonnas-2012-Super-Bowl-show.html#ixzz3hqQRWnRi>; James Lachno, 'Lady Gaga – Top 10 Controversies,' *The Telegraph*, 20 April 2011, retrieved on 4 August 2015 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/rockandpopmusic/8463228/Lady-Gaga-Top-10-Controversies.html>; 'Lady Gaga's Craziest Stunts and Most Outrageous Controversies,' *Us Weekly*, retrieved on 4 August 2015 from <http://www.usmagazine.com/entertainment/pictures/lady-gagas-craziest-stunts-and-most-outrageous-controversies-2014273/36953>.

⁶⁶⁸ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*.

cultural value, which permit female pop-stars with sub-cultural affiliations a wider range of representational opportunities. As a result, their access to the status of creative agent is less contested. This is not universal across the field: for example, accusations of lip-synching and autotune surround pop-stardom, and cynicism around industry manufactured bands is rife. However, when compared to the discourses surrounding reality TV as identified in chapter 3, pop-stardom is a celebrity field at least in part associated with talent. The texts discussed in this chapter are set apart from the conventions of the celebrity memoir genre by their goal to canonise the pop career of each woman as part of a wider creative project and in so doing, they attempt to confer the status of artist upon its celebrity author-subject.

At the same time, whilst these examples demonstrate meaningful differences which show that the memoir genre is not homogenous, they ultimately still trade in the same currencies as the texts in previous chapters. For Gaga, this means a representation that is underpinned by the same kind of psychic and physical ‘stripping bare’, emotional extremity, and loss of control that permeated the theorisation of the memoirs in chapters 2 and 3. Her photo-memoir proves subject to the logic of gendered celebrity, casting exposure as the locus of authenticity and thus seeks to thoroughly reveal her. For M.I.A., this means likewise seeking to construct and trade in authenticity, locating this in a claimed history of hardship. Rather than being exceptions, these texts demonstrate the extreme persistence of certain conventions of female celebrity (self)representation. While they do not offer the written confessions that are the norm, a form of confession can be extracted nonetheless.

This chapter demonstrates the rare moments when traces of power-relations between celebrity and ghost can be discerned in the text as well as how these relations shape the meaning of the resultant co-authored memoir. It is true that, as many academics have observed, Gaga has constructed a star persona which has the capacity to trouble the normative cultural boundaries of femininity.⁶⁶⁹ However, these non-normative aspects are not what are being captured and canonised in her photographic memoir. Rather, the hand (and gaze) of the ‘ghost’ that mediates her is visible with his own agenda regarding the role and representation of women. By contrast, the ghosting machinery that collectively produces M.I.A.’s autobiographical text can be traced to pre-existing relationships- employed by her directly - independently of the publishing house or record labels.

This could be what enables M.I.A., uniquely in the sample of memoirs examined in this thesis, to produce a work which does not linger on the female sexuality of its author-subject. Instead, the majority of images in *M.I.A.* are by, rather than of, her. Academic interest in M.I.A. has tended either to focus on her uniqueness as a star who embodies the

⁶⁶⁹ J. Jack Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal*. (Boston: Beacon Press), 2012.

post-colonial experience of life under atrocity,⁶⁷⁰ or to interrogate the popular criticism she has received for hypocritically appropriating subaltern experience.⁶⁷¹ These concerns are unarguably at stake in M.I.A.'s star image and in evidence in her memoir. However, these readings neglect her gendered identity and thus the potential she presents for an alternative model of young, female celebrity self-representation. Whilst I will argue that M.I.A.'s willed controversy is at times extremely problematic, she evades the economics of exposure demonstrated in previous chapters, refuses to undertake the (sexual) confession that the genre typically demands, and keeps her body out of the frame in favour of her creative and conceptual output. As Helen Hester rightly identifies, prurience is key to the promise of the autobiography genre,⁶⁷² and yet prurient interest in M.I.A. will remain largely unsatisfied by this text. Amongst the sample of memoirs examined here, M.I.A.'s is unique in that it is not about sex.

I have shown the ways in which both the genre of autobiography and wider celebrity culture demand that women 'share', and have explored the elliptical, ironising or fictionalising strategies that are sometimes put in place in a bid to resist or temper these demands. In this chapter, similarly, we see strategies in place to avoid sharing while still *appearing* to share: for example, using images to offer only surface, or to offer anthologised promotional media in place of mediated access to the self. Thus, these celebrities can be seen to be seeking marketable alternatives to confession that appear to carry the same hallmarks. Despite evidence within these texts of the impossibility of 'access' and 'authenticity', these concepts remain important currencies at the heart of what the books claim to offer as they intervene in the existing field of images which circulate around each star.

Celebrity is built upon the image: the mediation through which celebrity (and especially female celebrity) is built and circulated is predominately visual. Magazines, films, TV interviews, paparazzi shots, music videos, merchandise, red carpet appearances, social media and endless press photographs all involve technologies of image construction to trade upon the visual image of the star, and these circulate within an ecosystem dependent upon a regular flow of new images and the audience's recognition of them. Celebrity culture, with its visual construction and emotive storytelling, is 'characterised by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment'⁶⁷³ that Walter Benjamin identified in the availability of mechanically reproduced art imagery to a mass public. The qualities of directness and

⁶⁷⁰ See John Hutnyk, 'Poetry after Guantanamo: M.I.A.', *Social Identities*, 18 (5), pp.555-72; and Brian Creech, 'Refugee Status: Tracing the Global Flows of M.I.A.', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 7, 2014, pp.267-82.

⁶⁷¹ See Anamik Saha, 'Locating MIA: 'Race', Commodification and the Politics of Production,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2012 (15), and Candice Haddad, 'Immigration, Authorship, Censorship, and Terrorism: The Politics of M.I.A.'s US Crossover,' *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope*, ed. by Holmes and Negra.

⁶⁷² Helen Hester, *Beyond Explicit*, p.144.

⁶⁷³ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,' *Stardom and Celebrity*, ed. by Holmes and Redmond, p.29.

intimacy that Benjamin ascribes to the photograph are precisely those sought in celebrity culture. Memoir is possibly the celebrity mode in which this is most evident, as it exists primarily to provide this illusion of presence. The presumed (or target) reader of celebrity memoir is invited to read memoir to further their existing knowledge of, and feelings of intimacy with, the star. To this end, it is common for celebrity memoir to supply images as illustration, verification and further provision of access to the star within their pages. However, it is the written text of memoir that is conventionally presented as the primary content of value with new insight to offer about the star.

In their promise that fans can purchase a means to better know their celebrity subjects, the visual memoirs of Lady Gaga and M.I.A. serve the same function as the written celebrity memoirs that typify the genre: constructing the star persona and its meaning whilst providing the *appearance* of access to and intimacy with an 'authentic' self. Whilst the means available in a book of images differ to those in a book of written narrative, they ultimately – I will argue here - serve the same conceptual and commercial ends.

Moreover, these visual memoirs present an intersection between old and new media. M.I.A.'s images emphasise their digital, recombinant production methods and depict technological evolution in images of computers, disks, music software interface and @ signs. Similarly, the rough aesthetic of the photographs of Gaga, with their implied spontaneity, share much with the proliferating visual autobiographical modes offered by social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Tumblr, and Instagram. Muntean and Petersen observe that, with sites like Twitter, the 'appeal for both celebrities and their followers comes from the ostensible spontaneity of the tweets, as the seemingly unrehearsed quality of the communiqués lends the form an immediacy and casualness unmatched by blogs or official websites.'⁶⁷⁴ Although this 'semantic informality'⁶⁷⁵ has been sought in the content of the celebrity memoirs previously described, in social media it finds itself matched in form. These visual memoirs present a juncture between media forms with crudely wrought content designed to document the self and communicate informality, authenticity, and therefore intimacy, whilst their distribution in a large, hardback, glossy, full-bleed colour print, communicate the old media values of the revered art object that grants import to the contents which it anthologises.

These examples show the strategies available to public women in their self-representation: the importance of what is kept in and left out of the frame, the politics of

⁶⁷⁴ Muntean and Petersen, 'Celebrity Twitter'.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid.

production and the struggle this presents to be seen as author of one's own image in a wider context of negotiated celebrity exposure.

4.1 Visual Autobiography, Art School Framing and Claims to Creative Agency

As an introduction to the themes and aesthetics of these texts, consider their cover artworks and the identity each constructs. The cover of Gaga's photo-diary presents a combination of the visual codes of the toughness and aggression of Teddy Boy, rebel masculinity and the exaggerated, performed white femininity of glitter and bombshell blondeness (fig.1). The image sets up the characteristic confrontational Gaga persona with which her audience will be familiar: leather, plastic, peroxide, studs and sparkles. Her bleached hair, cut to her nape with darker roots visible, presents a femininity which rejects the social value placed on seemingly 'natural' beauty, and one that has (supposedly) not been scrubbed up or perfected to be photographed. She wears a leather jacket with the collar turned up in reference to the punk and rockabilly fashions that have been marked in pop-culture as the sartorial choice of the rebel or outsider. The photograph is cropped to her head and shoulders where the word 'Gaga' is studded across her back, as a Hell's Angel jacket might carry emblems of allegiances. In a combination of toughness and glamorous camp, these studs are wrought in diamante. Wearing her own name - written in lights - across her back suggests the self-canonisation and performance of fame that have been explicit concerns throughout her career. The cover carries no title. Her status as icon is such that the full-bleed photograph of the back of her head is enough to know it is her. She needs no further referent. Her eyes hide behind sunglasses, in the classic, black, plastic Wayfarer style that has been the costume of male rock and roll heartthrobs. Another image from the same shoot shows her snarling with brightly-coloured talons, sharpened to a point: the kinds of visual signs of toughness that lead Elizabeth Kate Switaj to argue that Gaga 'invokes an admirable sort of female strength that is, at least potentially, cruel and violent'.⁶⁷⁶ Her gaze is hidden, denying access to her subjectivity, something she has remarked upon in interviews: 'I don't take off my glasses for many interviews, but I'll take them off for you.'⁶⁷⁷ This suggests that eye contact and the connection it implies is a privilege she consciously chooses to admit or deny. With her back to the camera, her performance of indifference literally gives her viewer the shoulder, her head is turned to look off into the distance, her facial expression, what can be seen of it,

⁶⁷⁶ Elizabeth Kate Switaj, 'Lady Gaga's Bodies: Buying and Selling *The Fame Monster*,' *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga*, ed. by R. J. Gray (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), p.49.

⁶⁷⁷ Ann T. Torrusio, 'The Fame Monster: The Monstrous Construction of Lady Gaga,' *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga*, ed. by Gray, p.161.

dispassionate, unsmiling, bored even. It is a rejection of the viewer's gaze and a performance of her power. And yet, the glaring studio light, bouncing off her shiny leather and gems and casting her shadow on the bare, white studio backdrop, is harsh, clinical and searching and signals the closed, confined space of the editorial fashion set. This suggests that despite her armour, despite various defences or shields, she has nowhere to hide in the spotlight and may yet be exposed.

M.I.A.'s cover artwork typifies her explicit concerns with post-colonial, post-national subjecthood in a collage of clashing, colourful prints and layers of crudely edited photographs which suggest geographies and concepts that might constitute M.I.A.: palm-trees, globes, patterns which cross fashionable leopard print with military camouflage, abstract silhouettes of machine guns, CDs, and money (fig.2). All are roughly hewn in basic materials such as marker pen, cut-outs, and stencils that imply handmade, small-scale labour. The emphasis is on her role as artist and producer.

M.I.A. herself barely appears, and is seen in only a tiny image which is one inch wide. The black and white photograph is digitally flattened as if repeatedly photocopied, and features M.I.A. dressed as Muammar Gaddafi with leopard print military beret and sunglasses - a man M.I.A. described as her 'style icon [because] he's rock and roll.'⁶⁷⁸ Of this controversial impersonation she states in the book, 'THIS IS LIKE, AFRICAN DICTATOR, BEFORE SACHA BARON COHEN.'⁶⁷⁹ The reference is to Cohen's loosely satirical slapstick movie, *The Dictator* (2012). M.I.A.'s work makes frequent, controversial, decontextualised reference to military conflict; a strategy scholar Brian Creech praises as the 'intentional unintelligibility that occurs as a part of the processes of translation, appropriation, and aestheticization',⁶⁸⁰ and which Anamik Saha commends as a tactical, camouflaged politics which 'resists the aversion to politics from mainstream pop audiences, and conversely, prevents her political message from being reduced to a novelty.'⁶⁸¹ Certainly, M.I.A.'s self-styling as a controversial, reviled, once-powerful man is a bold representational move not seen amongst other young, female celebrities. However, Creech and Saha's interpretations may be generous when there is little offered to explain the political insensitivity of appropriating imagery of someone who, just one year before the book's publication, was killed by rebels after his violent suppression of a popular uprising. Her concern that she get credit for having the idea before Cohen, however, typifies her claims to authorial and creative credit. The overall cover image tells much of what is at stake in her star identity: willed

⁶⁷⁸ Romain Gavras, 'M.I.A.', *Interview Magazine*, 7 July 2010, retrieved on 2 September 2014 from http://www.interviewmagazine.com/music/mia/#_.

⁶⁷⁹ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.112.

⁶⁸⁰ Creech, 'Refugee Status', p.271.

⁶⁸¹ Saha, 'Locating MIA,' p.742.

controversy, oblique reference to current affairs and global politics, military violence, ethnic identity, globalization and a performance of power.

Scholarship on postmodern icons posits the ‘post-national’, ‘nomadic’ ‘global hybrid’ as the subject of postmodernity⁶⁸² and collage as its artform.⁶⁸³ As a text, *M.I.A.* literalises these two aspects of postmodernity. Statements such as, ‘I WASN’T ANYWHERE, I WAS EVERYWHERE. I WAS HAVING PROBLEMS WITH MY US VISA, SO I RECORDED IN LIBERIA, JAMAICA, TRINIDAD, AND INDIA. I DIDN’T FEEL LIKE I FIT ANYWHERE,’⁶⁸⁴ position *M.I.A.* as the nomadic post-global subject of postmodernity as well as a global star. Describing the production of the artworks supporting her first album, M.I.A. explains: ‘ARULAR WENT FROM JUNGLE TO STREET TO WALL. IT’S WORD-OF-MOUTH, PHOTOCOPIED, BLACK-AND-WHITE, NEON, LO-FI, PRINTED, SCANNED, RE-FILMED, RE-PHOTOGRAPHED, WITH SOME TAPE, STAPLES, A SPRAY CAN, AND SOME GLUE.’⁶⁸⁵ This deliberate interplay between digital and analogue (re)production provides a perfect example of what John Urry identifies as the ‘mechanically, electronically and digitally reproduced’ collage of post-modernity.⁶⁸⁶ Her music, similarly, is an assemblage of genres and territories featuring international partners layering mainstream pop, dance music and rap with non-Western musical forms. For M.I.A., the cut and paste aesthetic processes of her autobiographical art book permit an aggregate identity rather than the univocalism of the linear narrative life story. *M.I.A.*’s recombinant imagery hybridises nationality, internationality, art, commerce, memoir and marketing.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the text-based celebrity memoirs in this thesis have been considered by both the academy and the media to be ‘low,’⁶⁸⁷ non-literate⁶⁸⁸ literature, sullied by commerce. Whilst their celebrity author-subjects sometimes express pride in having completed a book, they rarely claim any ‘higher’ purpose than enabling their audience to get to know the ‘real’ them or ‘speaking back’ to press misrepresentations. By contrast, the large format, glossy, art texts produced by M.I.A. and Gaga borrow conventions from the fields of more legitimised forms of culture in signifiers of high fashion and fine art, fields with associated creativity and originality. Thus, Gaga and M.I.A. attempt to elevate their memoirs (and therefore themselves) up these hierarchies of cultural value. M.I.A.’s description of her text as ‘a document of [...] art’⁶⁸⁹ signals the comparative seriousness with which the reader is asked to approach her text. The ‘autobiographical occasion,’⁶⁹⁰ therefore,

⁶⁸² John Urry, ‘The Global Media and Cosmopolitanism,’ 26 April 2001, p.3, cited in Jose´ I. Prieto-Arranz, ‘The Semiotics of Performance and Success in Madonna,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 45 (1), 2012, p.178.

⁶⁸³ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London : SAGE, 2011), pp.98-9.

⁶⁸⁴ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.52.

⁶⁸⁵ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.16.

⁶⁸⁶ Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, pp.98-9.

⁶⁸⁷ John Sutherland, ‘Among the Ghosts’.

⁶⁸⁸ Cadwalladr, ‘All Because the Ladies Love Jordan.’

⁶⁸⁹ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.13.

⁶⁹⁰ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*.

is presented as the artist's urge to produce. Gaga's book of full-bleed images, its staging, lighting, composition, and wardrobe, have the appearance of a fashion house's coffee-table book. Whilst the contents within them trade in the immediacy and presence of seemingly unprocessed image construction, both texts have very high production values, expensively made in terms of print, paper quality and colour saturation. They come only in hardback and retail at £19.95 and £35 respectively, far above the customary £7.99 cover price of written celebrity memoirs. Thus, the star images of Gaga and M.I.A. privilege the visual, presenting it as the aspect of their identity and creative output that demands serious attention to be fully appreciated. Gaga and M.I.A. frame the way in which they wish their readers to consume them, we can see their desire to position themselves in contrast to other pop-stars as a more serious, cerebral and artistically purposeful type of star.

When the author of *M.I.A.*'s foreword, Steve Loveridge, states, 'I met Maya in 1998 at Central St Martins College of Art and design',⁶⁹¹ he frames M.I.A. first and foremost as an artist. Drawing upon the credibility of art school origins reframes her pop-stardom as a form of performance art: a self-reflexive, postmodern exercise in 'doing' pop-stardom, at the same time as being a bid for success in the music industry. Loveridge, elaborates on what these art-school credentials mean:

Saint Martins was the college that everyone wanted to be at in the late '90s – Alexander McQueen, Stella McCartney, and John Galliano are all ex-pupils. Fashion was massive, Kate Moss was everywhere, the Britpop and Brit art scenes were populated with London art school graduates. Jarvis Cocker and PJ Harvey both had done our degree.⁶⁹²

This show of artistic and pop-culture pedigree positions M.I.A. as taking her place alongside important British cultural icons. The roll-call conflates 'Britpop and Brit art' conferring the conceptual and creative values of the latter onto the former. M.I.A., the reader is instructed, is not the usual manufactured pop-star marionette, but an artist of substance and member of the pop-cultural intelligentsia. Association with a credible, cultural clique who have undertaken the same training as her protects M.I.A. from the allegations of undeserved fame seen in Chapter 3. When *M.I.A.*'s foreword states, 'the M.I.A. art show became the visual backdrop for M.I.A. the recording artist',⁶⁹³ her transition from visual artist to pop-star is presented, not as one from the high-brow environment of the gallery to the low-brow populism of the charts, but as a seamless expansion of conceptual creativity into new forms. With Loveridge claiming, 'Maya had a fully realized aesthetic ready to go', 'she was fully

⁶⁹¹ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.6.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ Ibid., p.11.

formed from day one', *M.I.A.*'s foreword presents her stage identity as coming from a pre-existing, intrinsic essence of her self, rather than the commercial machinery of the music industry.⁶⁹⁴ When M.I.A. states that '*KALA WAS THE ALBUM WHERE I WAS SUPPOSED TO GET CLEANED UP, SCRUBBED UP WITH BETTER PRODUCERS, AND TO BECOME AN ICON THAT WAS MORE PALATABLE TO THE INDUSTRY*',⁶⁹⁵ she does so as a mark of pride. She positions herself as untamable in contrast to the cynical, commercial processes of mainstreaming, offering her resistance to 'scrubbing up' as a mark of authenticity. Elevating her pop career with such statements as '*EVERYTHING I DID AS AN ARTIST*',⁶⁹⁶ the presentation of pop-stardom as a continuation of a prior art practice stakes a claim to authenticity and agency over manufacture.

The most significant claim to artistic status through representational choices within *M.I.A.*, within this entire sample of memoirs even, is the inclusion of curator's notes cataloguing what in any other context would be considered promotional materials, according to fine art conventions of fine art. Each work is listed with the artist's medium and date of production, e.g. '*Nisa, Freedom Bird. Animation with spray paint on canvas, 2002.*'⁶⁹⁷ To understand the woman behind the image, this text offers the artworks she has created, presenting a site for a deeper contemplation of the image itself and suggesting it navigates comfortably, and belongs within, the art establishment. This self-representational move clearly seeks to claim cultural value for *M.I.A.*

A self-reflexivity suggestive of a conversance with the theoretical critiques of art school is similarly implied within Gaga's star image. This is seen in the disparate, extra-textual narratives that surround her photo-memoir, offering various frames for reading her identity and thus contributing to the text's meaning. Like M.I.A., she also attended art school at NYU's Tisch School of Arts. In unofficial biography, *Rivington Was Ours : Lady Gaga, the Lower East Side, and the prime of our lives*, Gaga's former DJ, Brendan Jay Sullivan, describes a friendship founded on a love of being 'up to [their] ankles in theory'.⁶⁹⁸ An apocryphal essay purportedly authored by Gaga at art school waxes theoretical about nudity, monstrosity and the human body - themes later explored in her pop persona.⁶⁹⁹ Texts such as these interact and combine with Gaga's own deliberate acts of branding which explicitly and self-referentially intertwine pop music and art to frame her pop-stardom as a critical

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid., p.52.

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid., p.115.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p.51.

⁶⁹⁸ Brendan Jay Sullivan, *Rivington Was Ours : Lady Gaga, the Lower East Side, and the Prime of our Lives* (New York: It Books 2013), p.19.

⁶⁹⁹ Stefani Germanotta, 'Assignment # 4: Reckoning of Evidence' reportedly written 2003 during her freshman year at NYU Tisch, November 1, 2004. Posted in Jordan Carter, 'The Theory Monster', 4 February 2010, retrieved on 1 August 15 from http://students.brown.edu/College_Hill_Independent/?p=2481.

exercise. For example, Gaga names her third album 'Artpop', and claims it is 'a reverse of Warhol' that puts 'art culture into pop music.'⁷⁰⁰ In her concerns with fame, fabrication, surface and mass spectacle, scholars have read Gaga through the lens of Pop Art - specifically that of Andy Warhol.⁷⁰¹ Gaga makes direct reference to Warhol, such as the creation of the character, Candy Warhol, for *The Fame Ball* tour, in an enjambment of the artist and his transgender muse, Candy Darling. Partnerships with respected visual artists and designers such as Terence Koh, Alexander McQueen and Philip Treacy, borrow their associations with the creative avant garde to position Gaga's own oeuvre as equally credible. In explicitly staking claim to the status of artist, Gaga and M.I.A. run counter to the gendered narratives of celebrity merit defined by scholars such as Geraghty, and attempt to distinguish themselves from the narratives of female pop-stardom with its associations of puppetry and manufacture.⁷⁰²

This distinction is reflected in their rejection of the conventions of female pop-stars' written memoirs, in which stars describe strikingly similar paths into the music industry. In the memoirs of Jessie J (2012) and Victoria Beckham (2002), for example, pop-stardom can be seen as the natural progression from a childhood in 'stage school' and the encouragement of a supportive, middle-class family. Gaga's supportive family, economically comfortable upbringing and performing arts background are similar but only made visible in support of a wider characterisation of her critical pop-art practice that presents a performing arts background as the conceptual training of a serious artist. This contrasts with the image of a finishing school for pop-stars that stage school represents in the popular imagination. Both M.I.A. and Gaga position themselves at odds with middle-class comfort but this is intrinsic to the position they've adopted: art school is classed; artistic purpose is classed; having a cause is classed.

In their self-representation, both Gaga and M.I.A. position themselves among a cultural and artistic elite. As such they claim creative agency, requesting their work be taken seriously despite its embrace of the immediacy, effervescence, and mass appeal of pop. Not only is each woman a cultural product, but each keenly emphasises their role as agent of cultural production. This contradicts gendered division in discourses of star agency,

⁷⁰⁰ Fay Strang, 'EXCLUSIVE: 'My Intention was to Put Art Culture into Pop Music': Lady Gaga Reveals she Aimed to 'Reverse Warhol' in New Record,' Mail Online, 4 November 2013, retrieved on 1 August 2015 from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2486872/Lady-Gaga-reveals-aimed-reverse-Warhol-new-album-ARTPOP.html#ixzz3KqrUw8BQ>.

⁷⁰¹ See Lucy O'Brien, Lori Burns and Marc Lafrance, and Sally Gray and Anusha Rutnam in *Lady Gaga and Popular Music: Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture*, ed. by Martin Iddon and Melanie L. Marshall (New York: Routledge, 2014).

⁷⁰² Geraghty, 'Re-examining Stardom,' p.99.

adopting the masculinised position of creative agent and cultural producer.⁷⁰³ As such, they define themselves in contrast to the feminised passivity of the pop-star as music industry pawn. Spectacle is usually feminised as celebrity constructs women as decorative objects to be looked at.⁷⁰⁴ However, by creating grand spectacles and using them as a claim to high art, and making explicit connections between their visual identities and their creative agency, these representational moves disrupt the logic of gendered celebrity spectacle. Instead, they could be argued to be undertaking what Smith and Watson have termed ‘the artist’s engagement with the history of seeing women’s bodies’⁷⁰⁵. Both of these photo books are an attempt to occupy the space of the thinking subject and visual artist using their specular, embodied pop-stardom as canvas.

This exercise in pop-stardom as performance art has both women presenting themselves as having a critical stance which understands, takes into account, and surpasses traditional pop-stardom through self-reflexivity. It is not simply that they are famous pop-stars, but that each is constructing a performance about being a famous pop-star. As Victor P. Corona observes, ‘given that Gaga has released albums titled *The Fame* and *The Fame Monster*, it is not surprising that she is preoccupied with the performance of celebrity.’⁷⁰⁶ Loveridge’s foreword to *M.I.A.* constructs the mechanics of pop-stardom as creative opportunities for the construction of a wider artistic project: ‘Everything was treated as art. The website, the record covers, the fonts, and the clothing.’⁷⁰⁷ Thus, these women are presented as ‘doing’ pop-stardom rather than, or as well as, being pop-stars. This construction of themselves as deliberately enacting a performance of ‘doing’ pop-stardom, itself constitutes a source of contradictory authenticity: as with the logic of reality television discussed in chapter 3, openness about the machinery that fabricates the star provides the authenticity of an honest fake.

The Ontology of Celebrity Memoir and the Workings of Images

Autobiography and photography share a privileged ontological status because of their relationship with a world that exists beyond the page. As Dan Shen argues, the memoir reader is always ‘consciously or half-consciously comparing the textual world with the extratextual reality’.⁷⁰⁸ And yet, as I have discussed, the study of autobiography has been a

⁷⁰³ R. L. Rutsky, ‘Being Keanu’, *The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*, ed. by Jon Lewis (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p.185; and John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books 1972), p.47.

⁷⁰⁴ Williams, ‘From Beyond Control to In Control,’ p.114.

⁷⁰⁵ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*, p.7.

⁷⁰⁶ Victor P. Corona, ‘Memory, Monsters, and Lady Gaga,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 46, 2011, p.729.

⁷⁰⁷ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.11.

⁷⁰⁸ Shen, ‘Unreliability in Autobiography vs. Fiction’, p.48.

process of problematising its relationship with the 'real' in light of the impossibility of such a straightforward referential status.⁷⁰⁹

Just as - despite evidence to the contrary - autobiography is a search for a connection with a reality beyond the page, photography has been understood through its direct links to the actual. Despite asserting the impossibility of untroubled referentiality in autobiographical writing because 'in the field of the subject, there is no referent',⁷¹⁰ Roland Barthes expressed belief in the directness of this relationship in photography: 'The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent.'⁷¹¹ This suggests not only a representational link but indeed a continuous physical link. Barthes writes of the photograph in terms of certainty and trust, casting the photograph as a document that can attest to a truth of what has existed: 'Every photograph is a certificate of presence.'⁷¹² Susan Sontag furthers this idea of physical presence when she states that the photograph is 'something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask.'⁷¹³

Sontag's reading of the photograph, appearing as if a relic that carries traces of the sitter which we may later worship, is specifically of interest when considering the appeal of books of celebrity images. The materiality of these texts as physical objects compounds this sense of the keepsake that offers physical proximity: 'the force of photographic images comes from their being material realities in their own right, richly informative deposits left in the wake of whatever emitted them'.⁷¹⁴ For the celebrity fan, a sense of intimacy may be achieved through maintaining this belief in the 'deposits', 'emanation', and, ultimately, 'presence' of the sitter contained in the photograph. Digital photography has dematerialised the individual photograph. However, as Elizabeth Stainforth and David Thom observe, metadata (the information fields that are encoded in digital photographs) creates further certifications in a 'tension between the semiotic inscription of metadata and the inscription understood as the "this was" of the photograph.'⁷¹⁵ Where knowledge about the celebrity's life constitutes a feeling of privileged access within the assemblage of celebrity gossip, belief in a 'certificate of presence' or 'this was' can provide the confidence of documented record amongst the hearsay. An old photograph of M.I.A.'s father with a group of men, who look like a rebel militia, in a mixture of civilian and partial military dress, some with rifles, is offered as *proof* of her much questioned family connection to the Tamil Tigers. Photographs of both women's

⁷⁰⁹ Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton, 1988), p.3.

⁷¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p.56.

⁷¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), p.80.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁷¹³ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977), p.154.

⁷¹⁴ Sontag, *On Photography*, p.180.

⁷¹⁵ Elizabeth Stainforth and David Thom, 'Metadata: Walter Benjamin and Bernard Stiegler', *Theorising Visual Studies*, ed. by James Elkins (New York: Routledge 2013), p.164.

live concerts, with hordes of crowds screaming and reaching for their idol, document their status and potency as stars. Photographs of Gaga before and after the infamous appearance wearing what has become known as ‘the meat dress’ document the labour that went into a team of people dressing her in it, the protective nipple covers required underneath it, the string that held the slabs of beef in place; they verify the company of fellow A-list pop icon Cher during the nervous wait to go on stage, and the back stage hugs from Gaga’s mother after a successful appearance. Together they create a narrative around the event, contextualising, giving further dimension to, and offering the ‘this was’ of a moment that has become an iconic reference point within her career. The remaining documents show us that these things occurred; they reduce the distance because, in the celebrity’s absence, they instead can be touched, held and in the case of these books, bought and owned. ‘Photographic images’, argues Sontag, ‘do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.’⁷¹⁶ Such is the logic of the visual celebrity memoir, perhaps of celebrity memoir as a whole, offering a piece, or microcosm, of the star, which anyone can acquire.

This illusion of presence and possession is, however, as much a fiction as the self at the centre of the idea of autobiographical truth. In *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*, André Bazin claims that ‘a very faithful drawing may actually tell us more about the model but despite the promptings of our critical intelligence it will never have the irrational power of the photograph to bear away our faith.’⁷¹⁷ In the visual celebrity memoir we see this irrational power and faith compounded in the belief in the subject’s ability to reveal a true self. Writing in 1994, when today’s debates about the alteration of celebrities’ images with Photoshop were in their infancy, Dow Adams observed that despite decades of discussion about creative techniques enabling photographic forgery ‘an inherent belief about the photograph’s direct connection to the actual persists.’⁷¹⁸ There are direct parallels between this and the ghost-written memoir’s layers of complex mediation in that each undercuts explicit promises of access, revelation and ‘true’ selfhood. Thus, as Dow Adams asserts, ‘lifewriting and photography, both by definition and common perception, have a strong felt relationship to the world, a relationship which upon examination seems to disappear’⁷¹⁹ and yet the pull of this relationship, especially in the context of the appetites stimulated by celebrity culture, remains stronger than logic, examination, or evidence to the contrary.

The images within Gaga and M.I.A.’s books are supplied to brand, impose meaning upon, and commoditise the self through forces of mediation in much the same way as the

⁷¹⁶ Sontag, *On Photography*, p.4.

⁷¹⁷ Bazin, André, ‘The Ontology of the Photographic Image,’ *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. by Trachtenberg, p.241.

⁷¹⁸ Timothy Dow Adams, ‘Introduction: Life Writing and Light Writing; Autobiography and Photography,’ *Modern Fiction Studies*, 40 (3) 1994, pp.365-6.

⁷¹⁹ Dow Adams, ‘Introduction,’ p.483.

written memoirs discussed in previous chapters. Indeed, they are offered for that very purpose, as (and in place of) autobiography. They presuppose the same desire for proximity and are similarly searched for access to the real. Such overlap should not come as a surprise: scholars such as W.J.T. Mitchell have challenged the ways in which text and image have been defined in opposition to one another, asking instead that each be understood as subject to congruent cultural, historical and disciplinary conventions.⁷²⁰ Within these texts we see overlapping visual and verbal conventions of autobiography, diary, scrapbook, album, personal snapshot, paparazzi 'snatch', press release, merchandise, pornography, catalogue, art artefact, graphic design, and agitprop. Just as all text offers a visual artefact, even in its simplest form of marks on a page, an image is reciprocally linguistically coded in the process of recognition of what it represents. The difference is, to use Mitchell's terms, that 'the image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as natural immediacy and presence.'⁷²¹ It is this claim to 'natural immediacy and presence' that suits the image to the wider masquerade undertaken by celebrity culture in fabricating the sensation of intimacy through revelation. Having established the emptiness of the promise of access and authenticity contained within autobiography and photography, I shall now examine how the appearance of access to an authentic subjectivity is, nonetheless, cultivated and performed within these specific texts.

Ghosted authenticity and access: consent, boundaries, and what is in (and out of) the frame

As a ghost writer mediates the subject of a written celebrity memoir, the photographer mediates the subject of a visual memoir such as Gaga's. In both cases the process of documentation requires interpretation. Thus, like a ghost writer, photographer, Richardson, witnesses and documents Gaga's story in a process which inevitably shapes and contributes to the story. As I have shown, the power dynamics of ghosting sit on a spectrum from the barely-acknowledged scribe who ventriloquises their subject to the point of their own disappearance, to the employee of a star's management, who gets the last word after their "cash cow" subject's death. It is rarely a simple case of one or other extreme. The negotiation between Gaga and Richardson hinges upon similar factors to written memoir: Gaga has chosen, or at the very least agreed, to work with Richardson; Richardson is credited on the cover; he is famous in his own right; Gaga is, ultimately, vastly more famous and is presumably involved in some form of approval process.

⁷²⁰ W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Word and Image,' *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. by Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), retrieved on 4 August 2015 from <http://faculty.washington.edu/cbebler/teaching/coursenotes/Texts/mitchellWordimage.html>.

⁷²¹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1986), p.43.

There are differences, however, in ghosting dynamics in the case of photography. Like words, photographs can be edited, or cut. It is difficult, however, for them to undergo a fundamental change in subject matter. The moments in which and angles from which Richardson records his subject form the book's source material in a way that cannot be redrafted, unlike memories recalled for a ghost-as-interlocutor. The events recorded (for example, Gaga's *Monster Ball* tour) cannot easily be repeated. Gaga's contribution occurs in the moment, rather than retrospectively. The 'inevitably partial' and 'imaginative' nature of auto/biography remains: caused by the (partial and imaginative) acts of Richardson's documentation (plus editorial and design teams), rather than the author-subject's memory.⁷²² Whereas memory offers subjective, often unverifiable evidence,⁷²³ the 'this was' of the photograph can in contrast (appear to) bear witness with authority.⁷²⁴ Whilst the subject of written, ghosted memoir may forget, omit, or lie to control the account given, the subject of photographic memoir has their ghost present as events occur. Their opportunity for shaping their account, therefore, lies in controlling actual events, negotiating with the ghost as they happen, or withholding approval after the fact. The question of consent and approval processes in such an example is, therefore, critical.

In *Gaga x Richardson*, Gaga's photographer, Richardson, can be seen encroaching on her space as both author and celebrity subject. There are four ways he does this. As I have argued, deliberate mystification of the roles of the ghost and the celebrity author-subject means one can only infer each party's contribution. However, as identified in the case of Strauss and Jameson, stylistic preferences, recognisable from a ghosts' solo-authored works, make visible their contribution. Richardson's famous pop-pornographic *oeuvre* has a distinctive style, familiar from campaigns for fashion brands like Tom Ford, Katherine Hamnett and Sisley, or books and exhibitions such as *Terryworld*, *Deitch* and *Kibosh*. Richardson's resultant visibility, even behind the camera, claims the pictures of Gaga as his interpretation. Whilst the pictures document Gaga's creations (shows, persona, poses), Richardson's visibility positions her more as subject than producer of the memoir itself.

Choosing such a known entity as ghost, Gaga borrows certain values, capital, and associations from Richardson's existing reputation. These include edginess, fashion, irony, hipsterism, and sexual controversy. Richardson's career has been accompanied by allegations of sexual coercion of young models and many of his works graphically depict his penetration of his female subjects.⁷²⁵ As Louise Wallenberg describes: 'Models appear in the

⁷²² Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.6.

⁷²³ Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Stainforth and Thom, 'Metadata,' p.164.

⁷²⁵ See for example, Jenna Sauers 'Meet Terry Richardson, The World's Most F—ked Up Fashion Photographer,' *Jezebel.com*, 16 March 2010, accessed on 1 August 2015, from <http://jezebel.com/5494634/meet-terry-richardson-the-worlds-most-fked-up-fashion-photographer>.

nude, often with Richardson placing himself next to them, as if saying: “Look, I made them undress.” Yet his photos are read as fashion, due to his legacy. [He also produces work] depicting himself engaging in oral, vaginal (and anal?) sex with young women – often ‘decapitated’ with their faces out of the frame’.⁷²⁶ (fig.3-5).

Richardson’s tendency to appear in the shoots he orchestrates, handing the camera to his assistants while he steps into the frame is a second way he encroaches on Gaga’s space as celebrity subject. There are two different scenarios in which this happens: either in images of young, female models performing sex acts upon him, or in his portraits of extremely famous subjects, such as Gaga, or even President Obama (fig.6). These documents of ‘pally’ familiarity with some of the most famous and powerful people on earth is a clear demonstration of Richardson’s power and approval within the establishment (a power which helps enable him to ask young models to participate in the former scenario). The relationship between these two types of photographs is explicit in an account by Jamie Peck who modelled for Richardson when she was 19:

He decided to just get naked. Before I could say “whoa, whoa, whoa!” dude was wearing only his tattoos [...] “Why don’t you take some pictures of me?” he asked. Um, sure. So his assistants took pictures of me taking pictures of him. *All the while, he was dropping names like they were hot* [...]. I’m not sure how he maneuvered me over to the couch, but at some point he strongly suggested I touch his terrifying penis [emphasis added].⁷²⁷

Echoes of Peck’s account are visible in Gaga’s memoir. Richardson appears in the frame in 24 of the photographs in *Gaga X Richardson*, often giving his typical grinning thumbs up, sometimes approaching her on the bed in a combination of both the aforementioned scenarios, blending (implied) physical intimacy and access to established powerful figures (fig.7).

Thirdly, the title *Gaga X Richardson* is deliberately ambiguous about who is author and who is subject. It claims to be neither Gaga by Richardson nor vice versa. Rather, various ambiguous possibilities are implied by ‘X’: partnership, X-ratedness, a kiss, the progeny when the two of them combine, or that they multiply one another and are thus bigger together. Another (perhaps unintended) reading, given his encroachment on her space as

⁷²⁶ Louise Wallenberg, ‘Fashion Photography, Phallocentrism and Feminist Critique,’ *Fashion in Popular Culture: Literature, Media and Contemporary Studies*, ed. by Joseph H. Hancock, Toni Johnson-Woods, Vicki Karaminas (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), p.146.

⁷²⁷ Jamie Peck, ‘Terry Richardson is Really Creepy: One Model’s Story,’ 16 March 2010, *The Gloss*, accessed on 1 August 2015, from <http://www.thegloss.com/2010/03/16/fashion/terry-richardson-is-really-creepy-one-models-story/2/#ixzz3CjasFCrY>.

both author and subject and his branding of her with his own renowned style, could be that he is crossing her out.

The fourth, and most significant, way in which Richardson as ghost proves overly visible is the overwhelmingly male gaze that conditions the photographs of Gaga. Gaga's introduction references her unsuccessful protestations to stop photographing her: 'Oh Terry, get out of here.' This signals his control of the camera and of the moment in which the photograph is taken. Despite the power asymmetry in her favour outside of the frame, the camera puts the audience into his heterosexual, male perspective as he lingers over her body as erotic object, decapitates her head or reduces her to disembodied parts. These worn pornographic tropes of male agent and female spectacle are deployed knowingly and ironically throughout Richardson's work, and yet the suggestion that the exploitation is itself amusing makes it no less politically offensive. In response to Richardson's work, journalist Alissa Quart developed the term 'Hipster Sexism,' which involves 'the objectification of women but in a manner that uses mockery [and] quotation marks.'⁷²⁸ Quart argues that when perusing "Uncle Terry's" pictures, we may imagine that we are cool connoisseurs of fun, stagy perversity.'⁷²⁹ Richardson and Gaga together are positioned as above concern for offence. In McRobbie's terms, feminism is 'taken into account' only to suggest its redundancy.'⁷³⁰ Richardson's work could be understood through McRobbie's reading of media which plays back to its audience a crude appropriation of Laura Mulvey's theory of women as objects of the gaze.'⁷³¹ Gaga's participation shows that she 'gets the joke', presenting her as fun, sexy and worldly.'⁷³² As discussed, all the celebrity memoirs examined here incorporate photographs, many of which, especially for Price, Jameson and Anderson, conform to these same conventions. However, when photographs form the entire memoir, being constituted through an (ironic or otherwise) objectifying gaze other than her own, reduces her appearance as agent of her own representation.

Both M.I.A's and Lady Gaga's texts employ aesthetic tropes to enhance the image's appearance of authenticity and, with it, (the illusion of) access. Ruth Barcan argues of homemade (or constructed to look homemade) pornography that 'graininess becomes a virtue, a sign of the authenticity and the brazenness of the image.'⁷³³ These books juxtapose images with low production values with high celebrity subjects to imply an unfinished mediation process, a contrast with official star output and, thus, an 'off-screen' identity or

⁷²⁸ Alissa Quart, 'The Age of Hipster Sexism,' *New York Magazine*, 30 October 2012, retrieved on 3 August 2015, from <http://nymag.com/thecut/2012/10/age-of-hipster-sexism.html>.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Tasker and Negra, 'Introduction', *Interrogating Postfeminism*, p.28.

⁷³¹ Ibid., p.33.

⁷³² Ibid., p.33 and p.28.

⁷³³ Barcan, *Nudity*, p.245.

glimpse of a more 'real' self 'behind' the polished celebrity image.⁷³⁴ This is what Smith and Watson, in their study of women's autobiographical art, describe as a 'disarmingly unprocessed' aesthetic which 'emit[s] an aura of authenticity'; an authenticity which is 'commodified as cultural capital in the age of confession.'⁷³⁵ The forms of 'graininess' differ between the two texts. However, in both, an 'unprocessed' aesthetic signifies a 'brazenness' and authenticity that ultimately imply that a form of confession is taking place and that a self is being revealed through a series of images.

The appearance of images that were produced 'off the cuff' - unfinished, unpolished and without the usual refinements, finessing and manipulations of the perfected images of celebrity culture - serve a further goal beyond communicating access to something authentic. These visual effects act as signifiers of counter-cultural, anti-corporate, 'hipster' values, which, perhaps ironically, are what make them such effective merchandise in the marketing of the celebrity as product. This implication of access to an unprocessed, unmediated star is crucial to their power. If 'the image is the sign that pretends not to be a sign, masquerading as natural immediacy and presence',⁷³⁶ these images are the adverts that pretend not to be adverts, selling the charade of the immediacy and presence of the star in their carefully perfected imperfection.

The visual memoirs of these women could be seen as an attempt to resist the 'incitement to discourse' previously discussed, but they do offer a form of confession.⁷³⁷ As Redmond observes of candid celebrity photography 'it is deeply affectively moving' and 'with each photograph, the viewer is presented with a seemingly private, intimate moment.'⁷³⁸ This form of confession can be seen in *Gaga x Richardson's* awkward, unsettling angles which highlight rather than conceal imperfection to endow the images with an accidental, unprofessional and therefore supposedly spontaneous quality – a signature aesthetic which runs throughout Richardson's career. Harsh glare from the flash, lighting bright white walls, emphasises flaws, sitting at odds with the smoothed, digitally altered images that form the majority of 'official' celebrity-endorsed photographs. This contrast is especially evident in images which 'catch' (and construct) Gaga as dirty or passed out, with clothes torn or make up smeared (fig.8). It is not that audiences never see celebrities in these compromised or humiliating situations, but rather that these are usually supplied by paparazzi 'snatches'. As discussed, these stolen images usually act as an undermining counterpoint supposed to reveal the earthy mess behind the godly perfection. In appropriating these tropes,

⁷³⁴ Dyer, *Stars*, p.22.

⁷³⁵ Smith and Watson, *Interfaces*, p.3.

⁷³⁶ Mitchell, *Iconology*, p.43.

⁷³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p.19.

⁷³⁸ Sean Redmond, 'Introduction,' *The Star and Celebrity Confessional* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.2.

Richardson borrows their signs and codes of 'realism' and their suggestion of forced exposure, thus playing with the concept of consent (both visually and sexually).

Gaga praises Richardson's working methods in a one-page introduction that, along with dust-jacket blurb, forms the only anchoring text within the book. In it, she proudly attests to the beauty of the mess in these images: 'There is no moment too strange, no angle unflattering, no circumstance relying on blind artifice, and never a time that I feel embarrassed.'⁷³⁹ She attributes this to her photographer's skill as, 'Terry finds beauty in the most intricate and unassuming of places.'⁷⁴⁰ Once again, the question of permissions and approval is crucial. Gaga can argue that "'shame" is an obsolete notion'⁷⁴¹ when regardless of their private, spontaneously captured, strange or unflattering appearance, these images were shot with the express intention of producing a book for public consumption, in a process which doubtlessly had a stage of review and Gaga's final approval built in.

Richardson is presented as her intimate: she writes that 'with Terry the relationship extends beyond the photograph' and observes that 'it is unique to Terry and his subjects that there are *no* limitations. At all.'⁷⁴² The ambiguous implication that these images result from intimacies between photographer and subject, beyond the contents of the image, is an entrenched (and gendered) trope within popular culture as a whole⁷⁴³ and within Richardson's career specifically. The ghosting relationship is already one of intimacy, as confidant, or in the case of the ghost-photographer, as a companion present as events occur. The images which confess or construct a relationship beyond the photograph between Gaga and Richardson cast the intrinsic confidence and familiarity of ghosting as a primarily sexual intimacy, further imbuing the text with the appearance of being risqué or transgressive (when in reality this dynamic is possibly the most normative thing about it).

The content of the photographs supports this implication. Gaga's introduction describes, 'the giggling noise he makes at 4:30 in the morning when he's caught me in bed' and many of the images are indeed of Gaga 'caught' in her bed, in her underwear, with the signs that this is a pre- or post-coital moment (fig.9). Of course this is a commonly deployed photographic genre that features in the memoirs of Anderson, Price and Jameson as discussed in chapter 2. The sense of the possibility of further intimacies just out of shot adds to the appearance of something private being shared when these images, whatever their intimate context, were shot as part of a project intended for public display. In this regard,

⁷³⁹ Gaga and Richardson, *Gaga x Richardson*, Introduction.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

⁷⁴² Ibid.

⁷⁴³ See for example, "It Wasn't Rape or Anything' Says David Bailey of his Sexual Conquests' *The Telegraph*, 22 December 1012, retrieved on 7 August 2015, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/9762530/It-wasnt-rape-or-anything-says-David-Bailey-of-his-sexual-conquests.html>; or *Blow Up*, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film inspired by Bailey's life (1966).

whether or not Richardson has ever been Gaga's sexual partner, as is indirectly implied, he has always been her employee. Promotional blurb on Amazon.com claims that over 100,000 photographs were taken as part of this project before being edited down to the 450 which fill the book. This being an official, endorsed book of photographs, billed as a collaboration between Gaga and Richardson as two equally contributing artists, it is safe to assume that Gaga's input, in whatever form, was present at some point in the approval process. The appearance, therefore, of Gaga as unexpectedly 'caught' or 'captured' in an intimate, messy or out of control state or moment that might otherwise cause 'shame' is a deliberate play with the familiar celebrity tropes of access and intimacy. As the large-scale circulation of naked celebrity 'selfies' hacked from their mobile phone cloud back-up in 2014 shows,⁷⁴⁴ it is precisely the appearance of an image that was not intended to be shared which lends it a form of authenticity, and therefore voyeuristic currency compared to the many authorised celebrity images with which it coexists.

This voyeuristic currency is bound up with the exercise of power as the pleasure hinges upon an unwitting object of the gaze.⁷⁴⁵ The implication that Richardson captures Gaga by surprise further plays with the question of consent to borrow this voyeuristic currency and appearance of authenticity. Despite the overarching evidence of Gaga's participation in, and approval of, the book, individual images show her, at times, in what appears to be unwitting participation: for example, images of Gaga seemingly asleep or just woken up, or images where the camera has zoomed in on her buttocks, cropping out any other part of her. In one example (fig.10) Gaga leans out of a car window to greet her fans, another shot shows her at the side of the stage focussing solely on her fishnet covered buttocks that form part of her stage costume. Whether staged or not, the representation of Gaga as 'caught' 'in bed' by Richardson is problematic in the context of Richardson's wider photographic practice and reputation, and the gendered inequities upon which this hinges

Unlike Richardson's non-famous subjects, Gaga is never depicted performing a sex act upon or with him. Again, the audience's knowledge of an overarching power dynamic where Richardson is, ultimately, Gaga's employee is key here. However, Richardson's more exploitative work is so well known in the assemblage of celebrity media circulation, that whatever the content and whoever the subject, any photograph shot by Richardson is consumed against a backdrop of his wider, deliberately exploitative practice. In *Gaga x Richardson*, images constructed to imply that sex has happened, or will happen, with written acknowledgement that 'with Terry the relationship extends beyond the photograph', clearly and deliberately draw upon this aspect of Richardson's work.

⁷⁴⁴ John Naughton, 'Celebgate: it's not the internet we need to fix but men's squalid behaviour', Guardian Online, 7th September 2014. Retrieved on 9.3.16 from: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/07/celebgate-icloud-naked-selfies-jennifer-lawrence>

⁷⁴⁵ Freud, *Three Essays*.

Gaga praises Richardson's working practice precisely for this non-observance of boundaries: 'I'm always, "Oh Terry, get out of here, and he's like, Oh, it's so beautiful, let me just shoot it."'746 This positivisation of the non-observance of boundaries is something this chapter will analyse in detail later. For now, however, note that Gaga can disavow shame as an 'obsolete notion' because her star image is built upon deliberate performances of being messy and out of control. Richardson contributes to this performance of extremity, of embracing a 'bad girl' subject position. This can be seen as one of the ways in which, as journalist Jonah Weiner claims, 'Gaga debuted already-defiled' unlike stars such as Britney Spears whose early pop career ascribed value to purity.⁷⁴⁷ With lyrics such as those to *Bad Romance* ('I want your ugly, I want your disease') imperfection and impurity have always been integral to the public star image of Gaga. Gaga performs imperfection through the kinds of photographs associated with forced over-exposure and humiliation, but which here form Gaga's official narrative (fig.11-13). Gaga's text claims to have 'captured the intimate, random, behind-the-scenes moments of Lady Gaga in all aspects of her life.'⁷⁴⁸ The Amazon promotional text promises 'original, behind-the-scenes photographs', 'one year of her life', 'Lady Gaga as you've never seen her before', 'all access, nothing off limits'.⁷⁴⁹ This access-all-areas logic presupposes that authenticity lies in being perceived to be as thoroughly revealed as possible.

The artworks created by M.I.A. realise a disarmingly unprocessed feel through their lo-fi, cut-and-paste aesthetic, that values concept over technical execution and has the cumulative appearance of an art student's scrap book: crudely wrought in mixed media such as graffiti stencils, street art, chopped up photographs, notebooks and marker pen (fig.14-16). These work to give the appearance of a revealed self, especially in images of material artefacts, such as a page of M.I.A.'s handwriting entitled 'Page from M.I.A. sketchbook, 2005.'⁷⁵⁰ As Sonja Neef and José van Dijck argue, 'we value handwritten manuscripts as "authentic" proofs of historical persons.'⁷⁵¹ M.I.A.'s aged family photographs from Sri Lanka, for example, have a material, archival quality, referring to a time before the creation of the M.I.A. stage persona. Moreover, sections authored by M.I.A. use capitals in short sentence fragments suggestive of

⁷⁴⁶ 'Lady Gaga Talks Terry Richardson Book' *gagadaily.com/2011/08/* cited in Jenna Sauers, 'Lady Gaga Loves Terry Richardson Because He Finds Beauty In Urine' *Jezebel.com*, 4 August 2010, retrieved on 1 August 2015, from <http://jezebel.com/5971347/yeah-lady-gaga-and-terry-richardson-are-making-a-movie>.

⁷⁴⁷ Jonah Weiner, 'How Smart Is Lady Gaga?', *Slate*, 16 June 2009, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2009/06/how_smart_is_lady_gaga.html.

⁷⁴⁸ Lady Gaga X Terry Richardson, 2011, retrieved on 1 August 2015, from <http://www.ladygagaxterryrichardsonthebook.com/>.

⁷⁴⁹ 'Lady Gaga X Terry Richardson', *amazon.com*, retrieved on 1 August 2015, from <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Lady-Gaga-X-Terry-Richardson/dp/144474125X>.

⁷⁵⁰ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.51.

⁷⁵¹ Sonja Neef and José van Dijck, *Sign Here!: Handwriting in the Age of New Media* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p.9.

the patterns of the spoken rather than written word. Her informal use of verbal vernacular has a logic in a genre defined by the promise of access. As Roland Fletcher argues, we ‘view verbal meaning as the window into the human mind.’⁷⁵² (Furthermore, whilst never confirmed, this also suggests the previously discussed mode of ghosting where the author-subject dictates to her ghost-as-interlocutor.)

However, for the most part, the book claims to offer access to M.I.A.’s subjectivity through her preoccupations and her creative responses to them. The book is offered in the spirit of the celebrity memoir genre: as a means to better know and understand its celebrity subject. However, where other texts discussed in this thesis compete to offer more thoroughly exposed representations of their star author, *M.I.A.* offers her creative output in place of either physical exposure or psychic confession. This suggests that she hopes to be best understood as a cultural producer and through the images she has produced. The images are about her, but she is not necessarily in them, except as authorial trace.

In terms of the collaborative authorship of *M.I.A.*, the text conforms to the traditionally conceived ghosting dynamic of celebrity memoir, in which, in Couser’s terms, ‘the subject outranks the writer.’⁷⁵³ I have evidenced that the dynamics of ghosting are rarely this simple and can only be inferred. However, M.I.A.’s team of ghosts do indeed appear only as traces of erased and uncredited labour. In describing the production of some artwork from the *ARULAR* LP, M.I.A. states:

The birth of M.I.A. as a concept stems from these stencil paintings [...] when I started in on the art thing. We would pause the video, take a still, then spray it on cardboard.⁷⁵⁴

The ‘we’ of this collaborative production process is never identified. The production of M.I.A.’s artworks are assemblages both in their use of recombinant mixed media and in being multiply produced as part of a team. There is no page of thanks or acknowledgements, only a few details along with the copyright and publisher’s details. Mathangi Maya Arulpragasam owns the copyright to the book and, we are guided to assume, is author of the images, essays, curatorial notes and song lyrics within it. Mathangi Maya Arulpragasam along with Tom Manaton, is credited with the Art Direction and Design of the book. Tom Manaton’s CV reads as follows:

“Creative Director, MIA, 2009 – Present

⁷⁵² Roland Fletcher, ‘The Messages of Material Behaviour: A Preliminary Discussion of Non-Vernacular Meaning,’ *The Meanings of Things: Material Culture and Symbolic Expression*, ed. by Ian Hodder (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p.33.

⁷⁵³ Couser, ‘Making, Taking, and Faking Lives,’ p.334-351.

⁷⁵⁴ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.51.

Working as Creative Director to the Artist MIA. Working directly with her to conceptualise and develop creative directions across her entire practice. And to manage and execute this in collaboration with her management, label, external partners and a network of global talent.”⁷⁵⁵

That the partnership with Tom Manaton both predates and extends beyond the production of this book demonstrates that, where the ghosts of other celebrities, such as Jameson’s ghost Strauss, have been employees of, and therefore accountable to, the publishing house, M.I.A. has been in a position to choose and bring existing collaborators who are primarily accountable to, and presumably sympathetic towards, her. This negotiation of self-determination through whom M.I.A. chooses to work with can be seen throughout M.I.A.’s relationships with her record labels as well. For example, Saha claims that a career path through independent subsidiaries of larger international labels has afforded her ‘a privileged position – unique and perhaps a one-off, prised open within the mainstream of a highly oligarchic and corporatized music industry – that provides for her full autonomy alongside a wide reach on a global scale.’⁷⁵⁶ Like Tom Manaton, foreword author, Loveridge, who introduces himself as a friend of M.I.A.’s from art school, can be seen to be an example of M.I.A. choosing collaborators with existing loyalties. There are six different photographers credited with some of the few photos, shot between 2004 and 2010, in which M.I.A. *does* appear in the frame. That there are so many photographers listed suggests that no one photographer in particular has contributed enough to significantly share the authorial space.

Still, there is the question of who performed the role of ghost-as-interlocutor. Aside from the Co-Art Director and the photographers, the only two remaining credits are as follows: Book Production: Aoife Wasser; and Editor: Leah Whisler, the CVs of which reveal them to be the only two credited contributors with a prior connection to the publisher. Still, it is unclear which of these two job titles accords with the role of ghost, or who it was that received M.I.A.’s oral account and committed it to text in the process traditionally understood as ghosting. M.I.A.’s invisible team of unacknowledged ghosts in the production of her book, and the artworks within it, are more visible in a lone moment of slippage than in credited contributions. When describing a photograph of a 2008 live performance at New York’s Museum of Modern Art with the listing ‘Reflective dress handmade by M.I.A.’⁷⁵⁷ she states, characteristically claiming creative ownership and originality, ‘It glowed. And it was way before Kanye’s Glow in the Dark tour, just wanted to say that. My shit was actually glowing [*laughs*] [emphasis added].’⁷⁵⁸ Suddenly, out of character with the conventions

⁷⁵⁵ ‘Thomas Manaton’, *LinkedIn*, retrieved on 6 December 2013 from <https://www.linkedin.com/profile/view?id=188954041&authType=name&authToken=yXgW>.

⁷⁵⁶ Saha, ‘Locating MIA,’ p.749.

⁷⁵⁷ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.114.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

established throughout the rest of the book, in that one word, '[laughs]', the oral construction of the text reveals itself and brings attention to the presence of a ghost as erased scribe. This slippage invites one to question how else M.I.A.'s account may have been edited, raising a retrospective question of trust with regards to the previous 113 pages. Occurring as it does out of nowhere, towards the end of the book, this reads more as a proofing error that has the effect of bursting the suspension of disbelief by making visible a process that had until that point remained erased: by drawing attention to the interlocutor where it had been presented as M.I.A.'s direct account, this moment also draws attention to the fact that the interlocutor is normally erased. This brief lapse in the conventions of written style of the rest of the book highlights the fact that the reader never gets to know to whom M.I.A. is speaking. As previously discussed, texts often never reveal to whom the celebrity author-subject speaks, however, in those instances attention is rarely drawn to this unknown. Ironically, despite the text's verbal vernacular and repeated promise that it is M.I.A.'s account, what looks like a copy-editing error is the moment which suggests most strongly that it is M.I.A. who is speaking. As with her status in relation to her music labels, this erasure of a team of ghosts in her direct employment accords with and highlights M.I.A.'s wider concern with being seen to claim ownership of her ideas and with her status as agent of cultural production.

In these examples we see that, in collaboratively authored celebrity memoir, the questions of authenticity, authorship and agency in self-representation, whilst highly suspect and difficult to decipher with any certainty, are inextricably intertwined. Yet authorial and creative agency is nonetheless a thematic concern in the ways in which these books present their star author-subjects. This section has examined the visual memoirs of M.I.A. and Gaga in relation to their privileged yet, ultimately, undermined, ontological status in relation to the real shared by both the autobiography genre and autobiographical image. We have seen the resultant methods employed to cultivate signifiers of authenticity and the *appearance* of offering access. To interrogate these ideas further, the following sections focus on each star image in greater depth, interrogating their representation in memoir and whether either star can be seen to employ resistant strategies to evade the gendered demands to share.

4.2 Pop persona and M.I.A.'s performance of difference

The title and authorial signature, '*M.I.A.* by Mathangi "Maya" Arulpragasam', sets up a distinction between two coexisting personas: stage name and birth name. Arulpragasam, in this distinction, is presented as the real-world author, both of the book and of the identity M.I.A. The stage persona M.I.A. is the text's subject. That M.I.A. is known to be a fabricated construction does not trouble the status of the stage persona as subject of primary interest: an understanding of the life of Arulpragasam is interesting to the intended audience primarily because it offers insight into the stage presence M.I.A.. The stage name M.I.A. plays with, adapts and politicises Arulpragasam's given name. Phonetically, M.I.A. mirrors Maya, her name before she embarked as a visual or vocal artist, itself an abbreviation of the Sri Lankan, Mathangi. Conceptually, M.I.A., standing for 'Missing In Action,' suggests military casualty and euphemistic, institutional callousness towards the human cost of war, a theme which recurs throughout her song lyrics. This intertwining of autobiographical identity formation and oblique political reference is typical of M.I.A.'s art and to her claimed artistic purpose:

M.I.A. CAME TO BE BECAUSE OF MY MISSING COUSIN. I WANTED TO MAKE A FILM ABOUT WHERE HE WAS SINCE HE WAS M.I.A (MISSING IN ACTION) IN SRI LANKA. WE WERE THE SAME AGE. WENT TO THE SAME SCHOOLS GROWING UP. I WAS ALSO LIVING IN ACTON AT THE TIME SO I WAS LIVING IN ACTON LOOKING FOR MY COUSIN MISSING IN ACTION.⁷⁵⁹

M.I.A. is presented as existing at an intersection: she herself is safe in West London, but is informed by, and presented as having proximity to, and parallel with, those affected by violent conflict. However, her wordplay, enjoying the similarities between (London district) Acton and (military) Action, does little to convey the true horror of the conflict and its toll on Sri Lankan civilians, serving conversely to highlight how different her lifestyle is to that of her family in Sri Lanka. The text intertwines M.I.A.'s life experiences with those of people in Sri Lanka with statements such as, 'IT WASN'T JUST ABOUT MY PERSONAL STRUGGLE AND THE TAMILS.'⁷⁶⁰ This invokes a proximity which, whilst based on shared ethnicity, presents little overlap in experience.

Just as Gaga erases her 'backstory' of normalcy and middle-class privilege, M.I.A. leverages the aspects of her backstory associated with hardship and difference, with references to 'what she'd been through' as a result of 'her childhood and Sri Lanka'.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁹ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.13.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

Positioning oneself in contrast to narratives of privilege is a necessity if a music artist is to claim authenticity. As argued in chapter 3 in relation to Goody, in the sale of celebrity selfhood, one must have suffered. Comfort is a mark of inauthenticity. M.I.A.'s star image embraces difference and, in the foreword, white, male classmate, Loveridge, describes M.I.A. as challenging existing hierarchies in a music scene whose homogeneity both excludes her, and provokes her disdain:

Maya's new artwork was all motivated by a sense of resentment towards the London media scene. [...] Being around white, middle-class people doing well with their bands and their fashion labels and their photography projects began to irritate her. [...] Instead of never talking about it, she became outspoken [...] and started to make completely different work about her childhood and Sri Lanka. And people responded to it. They wanted more. [...] And it all came out of the mouth of a beautiful twenty-three-year-old Tamil girl with a great face.⁷⁶²

This passage argues for the particular role of autobiography in the creation of M.I.A.'s public identity. 'Instead of never talking about it' implies her life-story had until then been unwelcome, and that it becomes a source of outrage, of creative inspiration, and a means of attracting attention for herself and, in a wider sense, directing the attention of those in the West to the political situation in Sri Lanka.

However, rather than simply seeking the moral capital associated with using one's platform as an artist or musician to direct attention to causes as is so commonly seen in the philanthropic narratives of celebrities,⁷⁶³ Loveridge's last sentence ('it all came out of the mouth of a beautiful twenty-three-year-old Tamil girl with a great face') lends the passage a cynical, industry-weary tone. M.I.A. is unapologetically presented as exploiting personal history as a brand asset for personal gain. This is presented as a shrewd and knowing means to highlight and sell herself as different from the homogeneity of the music industry. In a statement of cynicism about the use of racial identity in the music industry, *M.I.A.* presents ethnicity as marketing, a part of creating a saleable image. Despite having a stake in difference, embracing that which Others her, *M.I.A.* is not ashamed to cast this difference as capital to be traded along with the normative value Loveridge places upon her youth and beauty. Whilst such use of ethnic markers is not unusual in the music industry, the marketing intentions are usually hidden. Like Lady Gaga's creation of the feeling of sub-

⁷⁶² Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.9.

⁷⁶³ See Joy V. Fuqua, 'Brand Pitt: Celebrity Activism and the Make it Right Foundation in Post-Katrina New Orleans,' *Celebrity Studies*, 2 (2), 2011; Katherine M. Bell, 'Raising Africa? Celebrity and the Rhetoric of the White Saviour,' *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 10 (1), 2013; Janice Peck, 'Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Oprah Winfrey and the Politics of Philanthropy,' *Celebrity Studies*, 3 (1), 2012; and Ilan Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Ideology of Global Charity* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

cultural membership for her 'Little Monsters', M.I.A.'s embrace of Otherness has a commercial logic. Unlike, Gaga, M.I.A.'s text acknowledges this fact.

M.I.A.'s visual memoir performs conflicting subject positions, aligning her variously with artists, terrorists, victims of violence, sweatshop labourers and hegemonic imperial powers. Critics have tended to read these inconsistencies as hypocrisies and to debate her authenticity and resultant (lack of) authority to represent the refugee experience.⁷⁶⁴ This scrutiny could be seen to be symptomatic of what Stuart Hall describes as the 'burden of representation' facing people of colour in the role of cultural producer as M.I.A. is required to account for her ethnicity as a minority in a media that lacks diversity.⁷⁶⁵ As demonstrated, authenticity is always at stake in celebrity memoir. Celebrity author-subjects are always under scrutiny, even when the source material of their memoir is drawn only from their experience.⁷⁶⁶ The assemblage from which M.I.A.'s identity is constructed is sprawling encompassing not only her own life experience, but the history and politics of Sri Lanka and even the 'third world' more generally. As a result, M.I.A.'s claims to authenticity are vulnerable to further criticisms depending on her interpretations of events beyond her own experience.

Take as an example of these critical responses *Guardian* journalist Douglas Haddow, who admonished her video for the single *Born Free* (an allegorical genocide of red-haired people, rendered in graphically violent detail) saying, 'genocide can now be parodied in order to promote a pop record.'⁷⁶⁷ This summarises the untenable position of the pop-star who attempts to combine outspoken politics with mainstream success: regardless of whether any provoked scandal might be intended to make a political statement, politics are overshadowed by the fact that PR controversies equate to commercial gain within the industrial complex of music sales. *Village Voice* journalist Simon Reynolds similarly critiqued: 'Don't let MIA's brown skin throw you off: She's got no more real connection with the favela funksters than Prince Harry.'⁷⁶⁸ This reveals that at stake in her censure is the question of authenticity and her resultant authority to speak to the refugee experience. Rather than authenticating her

⁷⁶⁴ The most famous example of this is Lynn Hirschberg's 2010 interview for the *New York Times* which contrasted M.I.A.'s pronouncements about her politics with undermining contrasting details of her pop-star lifestyle: 'She thrives on conflict, real or imagined. 'I kind of want to be an outsider,' she said, eating a truffle-flavored French fry. 'I don't want to make the same music, sing about the same stuff, talk about the same things. If that makes me a terrorist, then I'm a terrorist.' (Hirschberg, 2010). M.I.A. accused Hirschberg of quoting her out of context in a public disagreement which culminated in M.I.A. publishing Hirschberg's private phone number on Twitter. A resulting editor's note appended to the article apologises for the misquote. Lynn Hirschberg, 'MIA's Agitprop Pop,' *New York Times*, 25 May 2010, retrieved on 4 August 2015, from www.nytimes.com/2010/05/30/magazine/30mia-t.html.

⁷⁶⁵ Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities' in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), p.443.

⁷⁶⁶ Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p.6.

⁷⁶⁷ Douglas Haddow, 'The Real Controversy of MIA's Video,' *The Guardian*, 1 May 2010, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/may/01/mia-video-real-controversy>.

⁷⁶⁸ Simon Reynolds, 'Piracy Funds What?,' *Village Voice*, 15 February 2005.

agenda, M.I.A.'s racialised identity becomes a means by which to question her authenticity. As Nabeel Zuberi observes, journalists have 'tended to determine her authenticity or lack of it based on signs of middle-class privilege [and] the veracity of her transnational experience as a Sri Lankan refugee'.⁷⁶⁹

M.I.A. depicts its author-subject as caught between contradictory approaches to autobiography. She draws upon her refugee and diaspora experience for authentication at the same time as commoditising it, and she simultaneously constructs playfully multiple, postmodern identities whilst paradoxically appealing to the 'Romantic authenticity'⁷⁷⁰ of the rock star based on authority of personal experience. **This again illustrates the 'impossible space' of the star who wishes to balance authenticity and artifice.**⁷⁷¹ Rather than attempting to counter or reconcile these charges of exploiting her background for commercial purposes, M.I.A.'s visual memoir performs them explicitly as part of a wider dismissal of the implication that, in the pop industrial context, her backstory should, or even ever could be, treated as anything more than marketing.

In these examples we have seen that M.I.A.'s claims to proximity with atrocity are frequently problematic and unconvincing, being based on shared ethnicity but not necessarily shared experience, but that this is performed with a cynical, knowing stance in relation to both marketing the commoditised self, and to the very idea of autobiography. Now I shall build on these concepts in more depth to investigate how she attempts to construct an identity that straddles the subject positions of both global pop-star and subaltern refugee.

M.I.A.'s hybridity and ambivalence: invoking and rejecting stereotype

Reading against the aforementioned popular criticisms of M.I.A., Saha argues that M.I.A. succeeds in evading 'the dominant Orientalist discourse that exoticizes and reifies Asian artists'.⁷⁷² In her characterisation of herself, M.I.A. has, as Saha argues, evaded 'the persistent stereotypes of Asian youth as doomed in their Otherness: passive, submissive, conformist'.⁷⁷³ M.I.A. is none of these things and precisely such tropes are pre-empted and punctured by Loveridge, the white, British author of the foreword, whose voice stands in for

⁷⁶⁹ Zuberi Nabeel, 'Worries in the Dance: Post-millennial Grooves and Sub-bass Culture,' *Britpop and the English Music Tradition*, ed. by Andy Bennet and Jon Stratton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), p.188.

⁷⁷⁰ Keir Keightley, 'Reconsidering Rock', *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. by Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (New York: Cambridge University Press 2001), p.136.

⁷⁷¹ Tse'lon, *Masque of Femininity*, p.131.

⁷⁷² Saha, 'Locating MIA,' pp.737-8.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.738.

the way in which the anticipated reader may approach, and bring assumptions about, M.I.A.'s racialised identity:

I suppose I had already formed an idea of what her background was in my mind. I figured she was Indian, and so her mum and dad probably had come over in the '60s with the wave of immigration [...] with an entrepreneurial father and a house-proud mother and one of those strict traditional grandmothers who complained all the time and wanted her to have an arranged marriage to someone's idiot son.⁷⁷⁴

This invokes the power of generic conventions to shape the expectations that are brought to a life story, in this case, through the form of racial stock narratives which operate as a lazy shorthand for decoding difference. In the terms of Homi K. Bhabha, this quote performs the ambivalence of stereotype: 'a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always "in place", already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.'⁷⁷⁵ This pre-emption of assumption asks readers to reject such reductive expectations, ready to receive the account offered by the memoir. In so doing *M.I.A.* demonstrates how visually encoded difference must be accounted for.

Whilst it is true that the ethnic identity that M.I.A. performs is free from certain 'passive, submissive, conformist' racialised stereotypes, that does not mean that these stereotypes are not invoked.⁷⁷⁶ Sri Lanka and, later in her career, Africa, comprise M.I.A.'s subject matter, but not her audience. M.I.A. is a transnational star, her global headlining tours taking in the United States, Canada, Central and South America, Europe, Australasia and Japan. However, with only the 'developed' world as her audience, Sri Lanka appears as an exotic elsewhere, to which she can uniquely draw attention. Whilst M.I.A. herself escapes the abjection of the Asian youth stereotype, her representation of the territories that form her causes do not.

M.I.A.'s alignment with a dispossessed or subaltern struggle is, at points, a strained likeness. This is never more so than when she tries to draw this analogy, not on the basis of her origins, but from her present experience as a pop-star. Of the decision whether to produce promotional merchandise, M.I.A. states:

I WAS TORN. DURING ARULAR I WOULDN'T HAVE EVEN THOUGHT OF DOING SOMETHING LIKE THAT, BUT WHEN I WENT TO AMERICA IN 2005 I FELT MORE PART OF THAT. BUT IT WAS INTERESTING BECAUSE AT THIS POINT I DIDN'T HAVE A VISA SO I ACTUALLY BECAME LIKE A CHINESE FACTORY – I

⁷⁷⁴ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.6.

⁷⁷⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge 1994), pp.94-5.

⁷⁷⁶ Saha, 'Locating MIA,' p.738.

WAS BOTH THINGS – I WAS THE AMERICAN ENTERTAINER BUT I WAS ALSO THE FACTORY IN INDIA THAT MADE SHIT.⁷⁷⁷

The disavowal of the promotional behaviours that are integral to music industry economics shows M.I.A. navigating between commercialism and credibility, forces presented as being incompatibly at odds. That she abjures merchandise in a book that is essentially merchandise shows the contradictions in her navigation of the conflicting demands of art and commerce. The suggestion, however, that the imperative to produce renders global popstardom comparable with sweatshop labour is, at best, a spurious association.

In fact, discussing the power dynamics that exist within a globalised marketplace, M.I.A. aligns herself with America when identifying herself as the party with power. Speaking of the Jamaican dancers in her video for 2007 single, *Boyz*, she states:

THEY WERE ALL PART OF THE BEST DANCE CREWS IN JAMAICA FROM DIFFERENT AREAS AND GANGS. THIS WAS THE POWER I HAD, I AM SIGNED TO INTERSCOPE, I'M LIKE, "HEY, THIS IS A BIG DEAL GUYS, IT'S WORTH GETTING TOGETHER FOR." THEY WERE LIKE, "SHE'S AN AMERICAN RAPPER SO WE'RE ALL GOING TO DO THIS VIDEO."⁷⁷⁸

She is, of course, not American - at least, not in terms of her origins or nationality. However, as has been discussed, these are determined to be contingent, fluid and hybrid. She is American in terms of her record label, certainly. However, in the described interaction, to be American means to have the greater economic and cultural sway, to have the pull of fame and, ultimately, to be the global power, in contrast to what she calls 'a third world market'.⁷⁷⁹ Thus, whilst M.I.A. certainly does align herself, as Saha argues, with disavowed diasporic subaltern experience,⁷⁸⁰ she is simultaneously, positioned as the global power through whose Orientalist gaze an Othered subaltern struggle is viewed.

Bhabha's identification of the 'ambivalence' of the subject positions of coloniser and colonised allows for their interrelation in that 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up for the possibility of cultural hybridity'.⁷⁸¹ M.I.A.'s adoption of various contradictory subject positions including Sri Lankan refugee and powerful 'American' star within a single autobiographical text, enacts Bhabha's problematisation of the binarism of coloniser/colonised. Hovering between multiple identities, she is 'never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional. It is a pressure and a presence which acts

⁷⁷⁷ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.113.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., p.54.

⁷⁸⁰ Saha, 'Locating MIA,' p.741.

⁷⁸¹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.5.

constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorisation.⁷⁸² As we have seen, within both her own work and its popular reception, this boundary of authorisation is highly contested.

M.I.A.'s claim, 'I WAS BOTH THINGS – I WAS THE AMERICAN ENTERTAINER BUT I WAS ALSO THE FACTORY IN INDIA THAT MADE SHIT',⁷⁸³ leaves her open to charges of hypocrisy and flippancy regarding the real suffering of the victims of global capitalism. In literal terms, clearly, M.I.A. is not a factory worker, and, whilst the exploited labour of artists in the music industry is a productive area for critique, her experiences as a pop-star and those of the Indian factory worker share little overlap – however directly involved she may be in the labour of production of her creative output. On the level of identity, however, this state of being 'both things' performs the double consciousness Bhabha argues characterises the post-colonial subject: 'In another's country that it also your own, your person divides, and in following the forked path you encounter yourself in a double movement ... once as stranger, and then as friend.'⁷⁸⁴

At points, M.I.A.'s simultaneous occupation of both positions is highly problematic. Typically conflating the personal, the global and the political with a concern with herself as producer, she states:

[2nd album] KALA REPRESENTS THE BIRTH OF A COMPUTER IN MY LIFE. IT ALSO REPRESENTS THE DIGITIZING OF THE THIRD-WORLD TASTE AND THE CHEAP, GRITTY PRODUCTION OF THIRD-WORLD GOODS FOR FIRST WORLD CONSUMPTION. [...] I ALSO FELT LIKE A ONE-WOMAN FACTORY BECAUSE I WAS ACTUALLY MAKING THIS STUFF. MY SLOGAN WAS "YOU LIKE? I MAKE, YOU PAY 20 DOLLAH." "I MAKE YOU PAY"⁷⁸⁵

As seen throughout her memoir, an understanding of what went into the production of her album and its supporting visual artworks is offered as a means to understanding M.I.A.'s experiences. Her concerns with technology are also in evidence, suggesting that readers can trace her personal experiences in the media through which her artworks are produced. She takes steps towards a critique of the inequalities of production and consumption under global capitalism, but stops short at fetishization and, ultimately, mockery. Making a joke out of the poor English language skills of those in the 'third world' appears to form the entire concept of the KALA album, the artwork for which comprised simply bold typographic posters with malapropisms of famous English sayings such as 'Get Rich Or Die Trying' mistranslated as 'Goat Rich or Die Frying'⁷⁸⁶ (fig.17). The thinking behind this she describes

⁷⁸² Ibid., p.156.

⁷⁸³ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.113.

⁷⁸⁴ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.xxv.

⁷⁸⁵ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.52.

⁷⁸⁶ Arulpragasam, *M.I.A.*, p.80.

thus: 'IT'S ABOUT HOW KIDS IN THE THIRD WORLD DIGEST AMERICAN RAP MUSIC. IT'S SLIGHTLY OFF BECAUSE THEY DON'T NECESSARILY SPEAK ENGLISH AND SO IT ALWAYS SOUNDS A BIT WRONG.'⁷⁸⁷ However affectionate, or however much it is intended to pass comment on the ways in which imperial domination occurs at the level of cultural export as well as economic or military subjugation, this concept ultimately hinges upon a joke made at their expense. When M.I.A. describes taking album covers and 'MAKING THEM THIRD WORLD'⁷⁸⁸ or speaks of using 'THE REFUGEE ... AESTHETIC'⁷⁸⁹ to support her single, it is clear that she does fetishise, appropriate and commodify those whose cause she also seeks to support. She finds a space for herself outside of the Orientalist gaze, but constructs an abject Other, whose struggle is reducible to a set of decontextualised, borrowable signs within it.

M.I.A.'s autobiographical instrumentalism

Having demonstrated that *M.I.A.* (frequently and problematically) treats difference, struggle and ethnicity as a reducible and exploitable commodity, I will now show that this is consistent with her approach to her own autobiography. Despite the fact that the persona constructed in *M.I.A.* is built upon her Tamil and refugee origin story, a cynicism is displayed toward the role of biography and, with it, ethnic and racial identity, openly dismissing her backstory as something to be consciously manipulated and reproduced for marketing purposes. In the foreword, Loveridge states:

I've watched her do so many press interviews about the same story – telling it over and over again. [...] I myself have written it up as a press release to send out to journalists and record reviewers. It's been edited and condensed into a single paragraph, been doubted and defended by music critics and bloggers, become Sunday magazine column inches and a Wikipedia page.⁷⁹⁰

This concisely expresses the currency of life story in celebrity culture in which all the texts discussed in this thesis are attempting to trade. This describes how celebrity life-stories evolve in an *economy of access*, adapting themselves to the imagined appetites of desired audiences. Unlike the rest of the genre, she makes visible the assemblage of market forces that layer over, intersect with and shape this life story, obscuring the human underneath.

Biographical history is integral to the construction of M.I.A.'s star persona. The above quote, however, trivialises the role for biography in stardom, identifying it as a useful

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid., p.113.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., p.112.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid., p.114.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., p.6.

commercial asset to be manipulated for exchange in a marketplace fuelled by the desire to know its young female stars. In *M.I.A.*, biographical narrative is substituted by M.I.A.'s cultural and commercial product: her work as a visual and vocal artist. This interplay between business and biography creates an identity where difference and the unique selling point are celebrated equally. *M.I.A.*'s foreword reminds us that 'under all the mess of the music, and her outspoken politics, and her family story, and all the Cinderella shit of some little Tamil refugee girl ending up on stage with Madonna at the Super Bowl, is basically a human being,'⁷⁹¹ but doesn't claim to be able to offer access to that human being, or anything other than her output. In this depiction, biography is 'mess'; career trajectories are the 'shit' of externally imposed narrative formulae.

As seen in chapter 3, the use of evasiveness within celebrity memoir is not unique to M.I.A. However, the evasive camp play of Hilton's *Confessions* still operates within the grammar of an invitation to 'know the real' her. The insights into her life may be deliberately shallow, but they are offered within the terms of access: exposure is what is at stake. By contrast, *M.I.A.*'s admission (and devaluation) of strategically deployed autobiography – her model of autobiography as 'column inches and a Wikipedia page' - refuses to engage in an economics of exposure. Like Hilton, M.I.A.'s implication is that the life story's details are not needed in the book because these are always already available in the contemporary landscape of multiplying commentary and speculation. Whilst Hilton attempts to navigate the market's demands for intimacy and negotiate shame with a playful, elliptical account, which still ultimately valorises the public/private divide by protecting what is off-limits, *M.I.A.* instead negates the value of the private life. Autobiography, we are told, is for press releases. Autobiography is mere business. A text like *M.I.A.* instead desires to be a space for anthologising an artist's creations, for 'document[ing]...art'.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid., p.9.

4.3 Gaga's liberatory gospel?

Where M.I.A. undermines what her audience might seek from her biography, Gaga erases it all together. Gaga was born Stefani Germanotta. Contrary to celebrity memoir convention, which typically offers childhood narrative as an explanation of what drove the woman to become the star and as a means to know her better, this identity from before the creation of the Gaga persona is never acknowledged. This accords with the surrounding Gaga rhetoric: the photographs published in this book are of the tour in which she 'hatches' on stage from a giant egg and literally moulds herself with prosthetics, changing the shape of her face and body. Gaga presents herself as a self-determined identity with no prior origin, staging her own birth as a fully formed Lady Gaga. There is a backstage, to which this book purports to grant access-all-areas, but there is no backstory.

The tour in these photographs supported an album called *Born This Way*: a title which could be read as an inconsistent appeal to essentialist immutability, fundamentally at odds with her performance of identity construction.⁷⁹² Alternatively, and perhaps more usefully, viewed in the context of Gaga's self-determined self-birthing, *Born this Way* could instead be seen as a denial of born identity in favour of self-manufacture. The refusal of a time before 'Lady Gaga' renders the identity and history of Stefani Germanotta irrelevant to this text, fundamentally contradicting the discourse, not only of memoir, but of wider, confessional celebrity culture, where, as we have seen, a star's trajectory from their origin so often forms the basis of their narrative and its meaning.

Returning to Gaga's flirtations with the themes of Pop Art, Susan Sontag identifies Pop Art as a form that resists knowability by 'using a content so blatant, so "what it is," it [becomes] uninterpretable.'⁷⁹³ Sontag's *Against Interpretation* describes the defensive 'attempt to have, in the ordinary sense, no content; since there is no content, there can be no interpretation.'⁷⁹⁴ Whilst these ideas were developed in relation to the *avant garde* art of the 1960s, they can be fruitfully applied to the construction of celebrity. In a culture with quenchless appetites for gaining access to, ascribing meaning to, and seeking knowledge of (in Sontag's terms, interpretation of) the 'real' women 'behind' celebrity images, the insistent denial of Gaga's backstory could be seen as a defensive strategy against this hunger for interpretation. Gaga focusses on the surface and insists that there is nothing 'behind' the fakeness, only performed fakeness all the way down, using TV appearances to make statements such as 'every minute of my life is performance'.⁷⁹⁵ In so doing, Gaga challenges

⁷⁹² See Suzanna Danuta Walters, 'Born this Way?' *Chronicle*, 5 July 2011 for such a reading. Retrieved on 8 August 2015 from <http://chronicle.com/blogs/brainstorm/born-this-way/37016>.

⁷⁹³ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.10.

⁷⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁵ Lady Gaga, interview with Alison Stephenson, 29 November 2010, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eS5tq4F659Q>.

the notion ‘that there really is such a thing as the content of the work of art’⁷⁹⁶ – in my application of Sontag, the woman who lives in public as object of spectacle takes the place of the work of art. When Sontag describes an appetite for interpretation which ‘excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs “behind” the text, to find a sub-text which is the true one’,⁷⁹⁷ she could just as well be describing the appetite for making the star’s private life intelligible.

In this context, the emphasis on the totality of the surface of the image is as much a protection of as it is an erasure of a prior self: ‘I wouldn’t like people to see me—*me*—in any other way than my music and my stage performances’, she asserts.⁷⁹⁸ Her emphasis, ‘*me—me*’, suggests the existence of a private, ‘true’ self, a rare moment when she breaks from her gospel of total artifice to suggest the possibility of a private self that can be held off limits: one that is distinct from, and can be kept out of, her performances.

Like M.I.A., Gaga’s star identity could similarly be argued to cultivate a deliberate stance of Otherness. Unlike M.I.A., however this has no basis in a visibly inscribed aspect of her origin. Gaga’s links to categories of Otherness are openly manufactured in accordance with her identity’s wider embrace of the fabricated. Unlike previously discussed stars such as Price and Hilton who similarly celebrate knowingly performed, fabricated identities, photographs of Gaga applying prosthetic horns, shoulders and cheekbones before going on stage for the ‘Monster Ball’ tour play with tropes of monstrosity and resultant Otherness as she creates, not only multiple identities, but also varied embodiments of them.

The closest Gaga comes to tying pop persona to real life history is statements like, ‘I didn’t fit in in high school and I felt like a freak, so I like to create this atmosphere for my fans where they feel like they have a freak in me to hang out with and they don’t feel alone’.⁷⁹⁹ This identification with the misfit, emphasis on performing explicitly fabricated and multiple identities, and rejection of a role for historical origin in identity formation, approximate the ‘variable construction of identity’ beyond the ‘socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility’ without ‘invocation of a non-historical “before”’ of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*.⁸⁰⁰

As I have argued, camp artifice is a common counterpoint throughout celebrity construction always in tension with the celebrity’s need to claim authenticity. Gaga’s campness has been noted by scholars such as Katrin Horn, who identifies Gaga’s “reducing” [of] identity to clothes, masks and wigs’ as a camp strategy.⁸⁰¹ Gaga’s campness is more widely acknowledged than other celebrities and is generally credited as resistant in a way

⁷⁹⁶ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.5.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁷⁹⁸ Alex Cho, ‘Lady Gaga, Balls-out: Recuperating Queer Performativity,’ *FlowTV*, 7 August 2009, retrieved on 4 February 2014, from <http://flowtv.org/?p=4169>.

⁷⁹⁹ On *Ellen*, Ellen DeGeneres’s talk show, air date 27 November 2009.

⁸⁰⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p.5, p.23, and p.13.

⁸⁰¹ Katrin Horn, ‘Follow the Glitter Way: Lady Gaga and Camp’, *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga*, p.88.

that does not occur in relation to the campness I have identified in Hilton's and Price's star images. This is likely in part a classed product of her associations with an elite art-school education that positions her, as I have argued, as undertaking a theoretically informed practice of 'doing' celebrity. Further, it is perhaps attributable to the hierarchies of cultural value that afford less contested status to the pop-star with subcultural affiliations than to the glamour model or reality star. However, Hilton's playful evasion and Price's celebration of artifice are as redolent with the "irony, aestheticism, theatricality, and humor" that Babuscio designates to be the defining features of camp as any of Gaga's camp gestures.⁸⁰² Their camp performances are no less knowing, no less instructive in the performativity at the heart of gender construction and no less negotiations with the discourses that surround and shape their star images.

As someone who openly identifies as bisexual and who writes lyrics about gender-sex-desire fluidity such as those to 'G.U.Y (Girl Under You)',⁸⁰³ who has welcomed speculation on whether she has intersexed genitals, who campaigns for LGBTQ rights and has a loyal following of drag impersonators, it is unsurprising that much Gaga scholarship has read her image through Butler to find identities which trouble normative conceptions of gender-sex-desire. Heather Humann, for example, argues that Gaga's multiple identities and incarnations, including her male alter ego, Jo Calderone, photographed for the September 2010 issue of Japanese *Vogue Hommes*, 'challenge the binaries of man and woman and complicate notions of sexual difference and desire.'⁸⁰⁴ Likewise, Teresa Geller sees Gaga as 'exploding the line between nature and artifice, authenticity and glamour, boy and girl.'⁸⁰⁵ Amber Davisson similarly argues that 'by refusing to be defined in a typical way, she alters much of the mainstream media's conversation about desirability.'⁸⁰⁶ She quotes Gaga's explanation in a 2009 interview with *Maxim* magazine: 'I'm not trying to make your dick hard the way other girls are. I'm trying to teach your dick to get hard when it looks at other things.'⁸⁰⁷ Corona is another scholar who states his faith in her subversive and liberatory potential: 'Gaga's hypermodern gospel of liberation hints at the irrelevance of truth or, rather, the creation of one's own truth.'⁸⁰⁸ In congruence with these readings, and against celebrity memoir convention, the visual format of Gaga's photo-memoir facilitates the

⁸⁰² Babuscio, 'Camp and Gay Sensibility', p.20.

⁸⁰³ Lyrics can be found at [http://ladygaga.wikia.com/wiki/G.U.Y._\(song\)](http://ladygaga.wikia.com/wiki/G.U.Y._(song)), retrieved on 7 March 2016.

⁸⁰⁴ Heather Duerre Humann, 'What a Drag: Lady Gaga, Jo Calderone, and the Politics of Representation,' *The Performance Identities of Lady Gaga*, p.74.

⁸⁰⁵ Theresa L. Geller, 'Trans/Affect, Monstrous Masculinities, and the Sublime Art of Lady Gaga,' *Gaga and Popular Music: Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture*, ed. by Iddon and Marshall, p.209.

⁸⁰⁶ Amber L. Davisson, *Lady Gaga and the Remaking of Celebrity Culture* (Jefferson, NC : McFarland, 2013), p.56.

⁸⁰⁷ Jonah Weiner, 'Bare Naked Lady,' *Maxim*, July 2009, pp.60-67.

⁸⁰⁸ Victor P. Corona, 'Gaga Studies,' *Pop Matters*, 24 November 2010, retrieved on 7 March 2016, from <http://www.popmatters.com/post/133577-gaga-studies/>.

fabrication of multiple identities at a surface level, rather than offering access to a singular, essential autobiographical truth.

As I have shown, the (im)possibility of autobiographical truth-telling is a question that has dominated autobiography scholarship. For Estelle Jelinek, the inevitably partial nature of autobiography enacts a ‘conscious shaping of the selected events of one’s life into a coherent whole’.⁸⁰⁹ For the autobiographical texts produced by celebrities this is especially problematic, existing, as I have argued, within an assemblage of conflicting extratextual accounts. Despite the genre’s attempts at singular coherence, Susanna Egan concludes that ‘neither the person nor the text can reveal any single or final truth’.⁸¹⁰ A text such as Gaga’s, which depicts the artifice, multiplicity and performativity of self-making, has the potential to escape the demands of this fiction of coherent and singular meaning and to accord with Corona’s interpretation of Gaga’s wider star image as emancipatory.

However, despite the fluidity of gender and desire that scholars identify as characterising Gaga’s wider star image, and, despite the potential of photo-memoir as a form to allow for multiplicity and explicit artifice, *Gaga x Richardson* is far from being a liberatory memoir. Instead it presents the violability of the female body, her loss of control, and her fungibility under the male gaze. **In contrast to her scholarly and popular reception as an alternative or subversive star, the star image constructed in *Gaga x Richardson* is structured by the same defining themes of bodily spectacle and violation as those in the glamour girl memoir genre interrogated in chapter two.** As discussed, the introduction page in Gaga’s own voice claims that the process of making the text was ‘unique’ in that there were ‘no limitations.’ But rather than expanding the possibilities for female celebrity self-representation, this memoir is a stark example of how the self-representational possibilities of young women in the public eye are foreclosed by gendered conventions of the marketplace in the processes of mediation, according to predetermined paradigms of physical and emotional access.

The containment of Gaga’s resistant femininity

A consequence of pop-stars’ existence within a web of conflicting discourses is that the gendering of a star’s image goes beyond the individual’s deliberate, potentially resistant acts. Despite its multiplicity, the contemporary media assemblage ultimately tempers and makes palatable the more resistant aspects of their identities as their performances remain subject to the conservative logic of the market in which ‘sex sells’, or rather, women’s bodies and

⁸⁰⁹ E. C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present* (USA: Xlibris, 2003), p.24.

⁸¹⁰ Susanna Egan, *Mirror Talk: Genres of Life and Death in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999), p.326.

specularised sexuality are for sale and sell certain models of femininity. As Corona suggests, 'When the image of someone like Gaga becomes so closely associated with spectacle, the question of authenticity inevitably emerges.'⁸¹¹ However, contrary to Corona's claim that 'the question of authenticity is rendered almost meaningless...given that the star's day-to-day life is thoroughly consumed by the mechanics of performing,'⁸¹² Gaga's memoir instead offers gendered displays of emotional lability and corporeal vulnerability in place of the exposing backstory that usually forms the basis of the promise of an account of the authentic self. It is insufficient to claim, as Corona does, that 'Gaga has avoided the authenticity dilemma by affirming that she is the persona she inhabits on stage.'⁸¹³ An embrace of the performed, and of explicitly constructed identities, does not excuse the celebrity from the obligation to grant the appearance of access in one form or another to a 'real self'. A celebrity marketplace driven by access and exposure, one which stimulates and promises to satisfy curiosity about how the other half live, constructs an obligation to expose the self that forecloses self-representation. Further, it is a marketplace that thrives on voyeurism; the images that capture moments not designed for public consumption - the paparazzi 'snatch', the leaked sex tape, and the hacked smartphone sex selfie - command the highest exchange value. This voyeurism is inextricably tied to the claim of ownership, control, power that are at the heart of objectification.⁸¹⁴

Leaning out of a car window, possibly to interact with fans outside, the photographer captures her denim-clad behind and bare upper thighs in an image redolent of visual tropes of pornified sexual invitation (fig.10). Her head outside of the car is invisible: we only know that it is Gaga because the image appears within the context of a book of photographs of her. The dust jacket promises that the photographer 'captured the intimate' and in instances such as these the use of the word *capture*, so common in photographic discourse, suggests the word's true definition of 'seize or take forcibly.'⁸¹⁵ In contrast to the photos in which Gaga presents the crafted identity that is her performance art, the gaze of this image suggests a furtive pleasure in reducing a famous icon to just another anonymous, interchangeable and violable body in an image whose defining fungibility⁸¹⁶ and reduction to body parts⁸¹⁷ objectify the star and erase her subjectivity. These images recall Mulvey's theorisation of the structurally unequal power dynamics of looking which cast the 'spectator in direct

⁸¹¹ Corona, 'Memory, Monsters, and Lady Gaga,' p.733.

⁸¹² Ibid., p.734.

⁸¹³ Ibid.

⁸¹⁴ Laura Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Screen*, 16 (3) 1975, p.13.

⁸¹⁵ "capture, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2015, retrieved on 1 August 2015, from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/27659?rskey=86l3QA&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>.

⁸¹⁶ Martha Nussbaum, 'Seven Ways to Treat a Person as a Thing,' *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), p.257.

⁸¹⁷ Rae Langton, *Sexual Solipsism: Philosophical Essays on Pornography and Objectification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), pp.228–9.

scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment.⁸¹⁸ Margaret Olin problematises the intrinsic negativity of 'gaze' as a term for art criticism, when she argues that it is always tinged with the connotation of 'the publicly sanctioned actions of a peeping Tom'.⁸¹⁹ Images such as Lady Gaga's anonymised but available backside, (while she, out of shot, may or may not know the photograph is being taken) use a camera angle that precisely and deliberately positions the audience as 'peeping Tom'.

Mulvey's conception of gaze has been challenged by many since it was written. For example, by Edward Snow critiques it for its lack of an account of the 'pleasurable constitution of the self as subject in and of representation'⁸²⁰ But this contention does not account for the asymmetry of the gendered paradigm of who is looking and who is looked at. Scholars have read the music videos of Gaga as containing strategies to resist, and disrupt the power dynamics of, the male gaze, such as David Annandale's reading of her *Paparazzi* video as confronting the male gaze with the terror of castration as she aggressively 'bares her teeth'.⁸²¹ Many of the images in Gaga's book contain such hostile, snarling gestures and expressions - posing with nails clasped as monster claws and snarling face are signature mnemonics - and these are at points combined with an otherwise sexualised posture (fig.18). Of this combination of the sexualised and confrontational, Elizabeth Kate Switaj observes that Gaga meets the viewer's 'gaze with her own powerful and desiring gaze; she is an erotic object not only for the other characters in the videos and for the viewing audience but also for herself.'⁸²² This may be so, and yet this eroticised aggression is a common feature of the lads' mag photoshoot and *Gaga x Richardson's* contribution to this genre of photograph is no more transgressive than the images which lead Maddy Coy and Miranda Horvath to conclude that 'in an increasingly sexualized media environment, lads' mags serve as a powerful tool in the mainstreaming of sexist images and ideals.'⁸²³

Gaga's 'access-all-areas' visual tour diary works to serve the demands of the wider genre's demand for access through visual means. Behind the scenes photos of life on the road suggest the visceral grit and determined, embodied labour behind the rehearsed stage image: a plate of spaghetti eaten while sitting on the floor in underpants; an interrupted moment on the toilet; sweaty work outs to maintain the stellar figure; time spent in wardrobe and make up constructing the look for the stage and the same make up smeared post-show (fig.13,19). All these images of dirt, sweat and imperfection imply that, through an understanding of the

⁸¹⁸ Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' p.13.

⁸¹⁹ Margaret Olin, 'Gaze,' *Critical Terms for Art History*, p.217.

⁸²⁰ Snow, "Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems," *Representations* 25 (1989): 30-41, p. 39.

⁸²¹ See Annandale, 'Rebelais Meets Vogue', p.146.

⁸²² Switaj, 'Lady Gaga's Bodies,' p.41.

⁸²³ Maddy Coy and Miranda A. H. Horvath, 'Lads Mags, Young Men's Attitudes Towards Women and Acceptance of Myths about Sexual Aggression,' *Feminism & Psychology*, 21 (1) 2011, pp.144-50.

‘making of’, the fan can gain a truer understanding of the star they admire. This presentation of mundane aspects of their everyday lives, including those normally considered private, share a quality with reality celebrity and create a similar fantasy of absolute access (which is in reality highly mediated).

Aspects of Gaga’s identity do deliberately engage with and contravene norms of gender, sexuality, respectability, naturalness and accepted definitions of beauty. A number of examples are depicted in this photo-memoir, such as the famous ‘meat dress’ and a use of prosthetics to mould her body into unusual and unsettling shapes, both of which embrace monstrosity and affective repulsion. Despite these elements, the ways in which she creates the traditionally demanded feeling of proximity are remarkably similar to those of Anderson, Jameson and Price, discussed in chapter 2: namely, access to her specularised, naked body. In Gaga’s photo-diary this takes multiple forms, ranging from the kind of aggressive, willed visibility that has characterised her star image, a visibility of the nature that demands to be witnessed as a creative agent and a woman, to the mundanely passive availability that typifies, without problematising, the history of seeing women’s bodies. Images such as one of Gaga curled up foetal in white sheets, arms crossed over her bare body, her hand on her mouth as if sucking her thumb, with small white knickers and little or no make-up, conjure a timid innocence (fig.20). This image conforms to Mulvey’s theorisation that ‘pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female’ and thus not only contrasts with, but also undermines, her moments of resistant confrontation.⁸²⁴ She looks small and exposed in a combination of vulnerability, performed intimacy and sexual invitation that is problematic in its rendering of her as tame, palatably feminine prey to the photograph’s predatory gaze from above; this accords with a genre of soft pornographic pseudo-confessional image, and diminishes Gaga from her usual performance of power. As she looks up into the camera one is reminded of Richardson’s presence behind it in this intimate moment of access, mediating her exposed body for the audience.

Richardson’s use of the camera as an instrument of power in forced intimacy is something he cheerfully admits. Richardson tells *The New York Observer* about persuading girls to pose nude: ‘And they’re like, “I don’t want to be naked,” So I say, “I’ll be naked and you take the pictures. You can have the camera. You can have the phallus.”’⁸²⁵ He admits that control of the camera is a form of dominance, understanding and exploiting the phallogentrism of the photographer/subject power-dynamic. This interview, given six years before Peck came out with strikingly similar accounts of Richardson’s coercion, is, therefore, not a rebuttal, but a jovial description of working practices. McRobbie’s aforementioned

⁸²⁴ Mulvey ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ p.11.

⁸²⁵ Phoebe Eaton, ‘Terry Richardson’s Dark Room,’ *The New York Observer*, 20 September 2004, retrieved on 8 August 2015, from <http://observer.com/2004/09/terry-richardsons-dark-room/>.

'taken-into-accountness'⁸²⁶ is literalised, accounting for unequal power dynamics in Richardson's favour only to joke about them in news print. The consequence, in McRobbie's conception, is 'quietude and complicity in the manners of generationally specific notions of cool [that] endorse a new regime of sexual meanings based on female consent'.⁸²⁷

Richardson's output of sexual representations that presume and demand female consent, operate at the level of both cultural output and of actual abuse. *The Observer* journalist Sean O'Hagan interviewed Richardson ahead of the publication of the book, *Terryworld*, describing photographs in which one model fellates Richardson while 'trussed up in a suitcase, just her head - and open mouth - protruding' and another fellates him while 'crammed into a dustbin.'⁸²⁸ O'Hagan considers this 'too crude. Too in-your-face.'⁸²⁹ This criticism operates merely at the level of taste and decency, constituting quietude and complicity about the gendered power dynamics despite Richardson's openness about his eroticisation of power inequality: 'I'm this powerful guy with his boner, dominating all these girls. In a way, that's the very stuff I'm trying to work out in the work.'⁸³⁰ In interviews, Richardson not only shows an awareness of the exploitative dynamics of his work, but suggests that it is the abuse itself that is 'the very stuff' of his 'art'. He has been called 'boundary-nudging talent'⁸³¹ in a recent *New York* magazine 'puff-piece'. In a career that demonstrably, knowingly utilises material power inequities to document domination by his 'boner', the real boundaries being nudged are those of the penetrability of the female body and the negotiability of consent.

I wish to underline the pertinence of Richardson's working practices to a wider understanding of celebrity exposure and authenticity. As discussed, Richardson and Gaga are described on the dust jacket as equal creative partners in a 'visual dialogue' and as an established global icon Gaga wields more power than the young, aspiring models who have made these accusations.⁸³² However, it is significant that traces of his *modus operandi* are visible in images of Gaga exhausted, collapsed, drunk or otherwise unable to participate as active posing subject - images with uncomfortable parallels with the allegations against him. However, crucially to the argument in this thesis, it is precisely these attributes that make it a successful text when judged against the criteria of a culture that presumes fan appetites for access. Richardson's model of uncomfortably creeping boundaries results in a more comprehensive, fully exposed image and, in *Gaga x Richardson*, this sequence constructs a

⁸²⁶ Tasker and Negra, 'Introduction', *Interrogating Postfeminism*, p.28.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁸²⁸ Sean O'Hagan, 'Good Clean Fun?' *The Observer*, 17 October 2004, retrieved on 8 August 2015, from <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2004/oct/17/photography.art>.

⁸²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸³¹ Benjamin Wallace, 'Is Terry Richardson an Artist or a Predator?' *New York Magazine*, 15 June 2014, retrieved on 8 August 2015, from <http://nymag.com/thecut/2014/06/terry-richardson-interview.html>.

⁸³² Gaga and Richardson, *Gaga x Richardson*, dust jacket.

narrative that gradually strips Gaga of her armour. The book begins with hard images of Gaga, all snarling pose, aggressive leather, pointed talons and red lipstick-warpaint, the Gaga persona that has led to scholarly readings of her as, for example, in Halberstam's terms, 'a celebration of the joining of femininity to artifice, and a refusal of the mushy sentimentalism that has been siphoned into the category of womanhood.'⁸³³ However, it ends with her collapsed post-show, distraught, in tears, unable to walk, and needing to be carried in the arms of her strong, male backing dancer: diminished and returned to normative, sentimental models of weak, femininity.

The images in between enact a gradual forcing of access into new areas of privacy and parts of her body. Photographs of emotional extremity and physical vulnerability are offered as a mark of authenticity rooted in the 'direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional',⁸³⁴ and in the affective immediacy of an image of intense distress. These ultimately accord with the normative femininities that scholars like J. Jack Halberstam argue Gaga otherwise contravenes. Halberstam reads in Gaga 'a symbol for a new kind of feminism' which is 'a monstrous outgrowth of the unstable category of "woman" in feminist theory.'⁸³⁵ In Halberstam's terms, 'gaga feminism' rejects the 'fixity of roles for males and females'⁸³⁶ and celebrates 'the withering away of old social models of desire, gender, and sexuality.'⁸³⁷ *Gaga x Richardson*, however, cannot be read in these terms. Between its pages, it is Gaga's confrontational stance that withers to reaffirm a social order in which femininity equates with physical weakness and emotional instability and a non-normative figure such as Gaga, stripped of her artifice, can be safely returned to a tamed and untroubling 'category of woman' that exists within celebrity's dominant codes of gendered emotional and physical exposure.

The politics of being looked at are diverse, with a range displayed in *Gaga x Richardson*. The spectrum has the agency in Gaga's pose at one end, as model and hired shooter construct images in partnership: 'a visual dialogue' in which Gaga clearly participates in and relishes her 'to-be-looked-at-ness.'⁸³⁸ At the other end of the spectrum, the book gradually reveals images which, if their implied content is to be believed, could not have been posed: with Gaga asleep, or unconscious on a kitchen floor, and collapsed after a stage show, photographs which imply she has no agency in their construction. Whether or not Gaga is a covert participant in staging these scenarios, and, despite the fact that she is a

⁸³³ Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, p.xiii.

⁸³⁴ Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p.29.

⁸³⁵ Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, p.xii-xiii.

⁸³⁶ Halberstam, *Gaga Feminism*, p.5.

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁸³⁸ Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' p.11.

participant in their approval for publication, crucially, it is the image of her violability, not her agency, that her photo-memoir sells.

This process of apparent wearing away at emotional and physical boundaries recalls the pornographic nature of reality products as a whole in which, as Laura Grindstaff argues, 'the money shot' is the moment when the stars break down in tears.⁸³⁹ Images displaying such rawness and abjection can operate as a proxy for the wretchedness of the usual, required celebrity confessional. Mulvey argues that the spectator gains 'control and possession' by 'investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery'⁸⁴⁰ and, in the few closing images, Richardson's thorough exposure of Gaga's moments of emotional lability and physical weakness renders her, despite her claim to 'high'-cultural legitimacy and confrontational creative agency - 'bearer of [his] meaning, not a maker of meaning'.⁸⁴¹ Sontag explained that the 'refusal to leave the work of art alone' reveals it 'has the capacity to make us nervous.'⁸⁴² With the hunger to know 'one tames the work of art. Interpretation makes art manageable, conformable.'⁸⁴³ Richardson's aggressive interpretation and taming of Gaga reveals the capacity of her resistant, non-normative femininity to make us nervous and thus reduces her to a femininity that is emotionally labile, physically weak. To borrow Sontag's terms, the thoroughly revealed celebrity woman is 'prey' of both her mediators and audiences, whose 'revenge' is the ever greater, more exposing interpretation, which 'violates art. It makes art into an article for use.'⁸⁴⁴

Conclusion

Whilst Gaga and M.I.A. employ different self-representational forms from the memoirs in previous chapters, the same dynamics of a negotiated economics of exposure remain in evidence. They do not offer the written confessions that are the norm, but Gaga's text shows that a form confession can be extracted nonetheless. It is true that, as many academics have observed, Gaga has constructed a star persona which has the capacity to trouble acceptable femininity and even boundaries of the category 'woman'. However these non-normative aspects are not what are captured and canonised in her photo-memoir. Rather, the hand (and gaze) of the 'ghost' that mediates her is visible with his own agenda regarding the role and representation of women.

⁸³⁹ Laura Grindstaff, *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

⁸⁴⁰ Mulvey 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' p.13.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁸⁴² Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.8.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.10, p.7, p.10.

Celebrity exists within, negotiates, and is constituted of a pre-existing field of images. Books such as these can be seen as interventions attempting to cement preferred readings of star identities. Gaga's photo-memoir depicts her as living the wild, rebellious, rock and roll lifestyle on and off-stage, and borrows associations of fashion, ironic hipster cool and bad behaviour from its ghost. M.I.A.'s 'document of ... art' locates her pop output as part of a deliberate cultural politics of difference, informed by her Tamil and refugee origins. In both books we see that authenticity is always at stake as a vexed, yet valuable, currency and yet the privileged ontological status that photography and memoir share does not stand up to scrutiny. Despite the fact that Gaga's star persona engages in a deliberate performance of self-fabrication and embrace of the 'unnatural', *Gaga x Richardson* proves subject to the logic of conventional gendered celebrity in casting exposure as the locus of authenticity and thus seeking to present her as thoroughly revealed.

M.I.A. can be seen to be following celebrity memoir convention by locating authenticity in a history of hardship and suffering: a position that means that the question of the legitimacy of her biography has become a source of much debate. *M.I.A.* depicts its star author as caught between contradictory strategies, drawing upon her refugee and diaspora experience for authentication and yet simultaneously commoditising it, and admitting and commenting upon this commoditisation. She both constructs playfully multiple, postmodern identities which avoid the Enlightenment model of the centralised, coherent subject and paradoxically appeals to the Romantic authority of personal experience.

In different ways, both M.I.A and Gaga reject the traditionally crucial role of an origin story in autobiography. Rather than attempting to counter accusations of exploiting her biography for commercial purposes, M.I.A.'s memoir performs them explicitly as part of a wider dismissal of the implication that, in the pop industrial context, her backstory should or even ever could be treated as anything more than marketing. Gaga's origin story is altogether absent from a photo-memoir in which she is seen birthing herself onstage from a giant egg and moulding herself with prostheses. Such undermining of the conventionally fundamental role of the origin story, and with it the dynamics of revelation that form the basis of celebrity memoir, can be read as resistant strategies against interpretation in a culture determined to know them.

The appearance of access to M.I.A.'s subjectivity is offered through a catalogue of her preoccupations and her creative responses to them. This means that in contrast to Gaga, in the majority of her images, M.I.A. is often out of the frame except as authorial trace. In this way, she demonstrates the possibility for alternative models of celebrity self-representation which resist the demands for sexual confession. The ghosting machinery that collectively produce M.I.A.'s autobiographical text can be traced to have existing relationships with her,

as subordinate employees, independent from record labels or publishing houses. This suggests a degree of control over the process of mediation. By positioning herself as an artist in the same league as the Brit Art pack, she elevates herself to contradict gendered divisions in discourses of star agency. She adopts the masculinized position of creative agent and cultural producer and defines herself in contrast to the feminised passivity of the pop-star as music industry pawn.

Richardson's visibility as ghost competes for authorial space as his interpretation of Gaga follows a narrative sequence from a famously resistant, misfit, fabricated spectacle, through a conventionally postfeminist self-sexualisation, to the deindividualised, seemingly unwitting object of his gaze. This literalises the dynamics of celebrity revelation where access to the female celebrity's specularised body is offered as a means of gaining insight to the self. The foreclosing of young female celebrities' possibilities for self-representation by the logic of forced exposure is most evident where *Gaga x Richardson* concludes: with its collapsed subject offering the authenticity of the emotional 'money shot'. Whilst, as an official memoir, Gaga's permissions have been given, the use of images of her diminished power in her physical and emotional loss of control, regardless of whether they are staged or not, deploy the paparazzi model of unconsenting photographs to hint at a truer image, in a voyeuristic marketplace where violation is held to be ideal dynamic of celebrity exposure. The fact that allegations of sexual force circulate within Richardson's star image, along with his own admissions that a non-observance of his models' boundaries informs his working practice and can be seen in his images, suit him perfectly to the job of constructing the image of authentic celebrity exposure for an economy which defines 'realness' according to the logic of forced exposure. The history of sexual trauma so thematically integral to 'glamour girl' memoirs is not revealed here, but is indirectly invoked in Richardson's star image. For all her presentation of a consciously, aggressively, resistant femininity, that rejects the norms of gendered celebrity, Gaga's photo-memoir structures the performance within its pages according to the gendered attributes of the genre: emotional lability, access to a specularised body, and loss of control. M.I.A. does not prove to be free of the demands of the genre. However, it is significant that by keeping her body out of the frame and placing her artistic output in the space usually reserved for sexual confession, she bucks the convention of access that typifies the celebrity memoir genre, signalling the potential for different models of female, celebrity self-representation.

Conclusion

This thesis has demonstrated the complexities of a neglected genre and its value as a means to understand the varied power dynamics of collaborative constriction and wider celebrity mediation. The examples in this thesis illuminate that celebrity memoir is not a homogenous genre. Despite the genre having been disregarded as formulaic, artless, or shallow by literary studies, popular cultural discourse and celebrity studies alike,⁸⁴⁵ the sample discussed here has demonstrated great textual diversity and structural complexity. I have illustrated the features that make these texts complex: their entanglements of collaboration, their layers of mediation, their interrelation with extratextual worlds, and their intrinsic multiplicity and negotiation. This complexity is matched by their formal diversity shown in the wide range of strategies for self-representation across vastly different modes of textual address; these range from traditional first-person retrospective address, to the art anthology, through comic strips and photo-memoirs.

However, despite these formal differences, a strong set of representational conventions is at play in the memoirs of young, female celebrities. We have seen that the concept of authenticity is always at stake, and yet it is always suspect existing on uncertain discursive foundations (and in need of constant renegotiation). These memoirs exist within a wider economics of access, in which young, female celebrities trade the appearance of access to their commoditised subjectivity and/or exposed bodies. Such access operates as currency, with the appearance of non-consensual access having the highest trade value. The promise of access to the 'real' self is often explicit for example, in the texts of Price, Jameson, Hilton and Goody. Even when it is not explicit, for example in the texts of Anderson, M.I.A. and Gaga, it is still implicitly fundamental to the text. At various points we have seen these celebrity author-subjects promise to offer up the essential self whilst simultaneously ironising, fictionalising or taking steps to distance themselves from that promise. The texts frequently claim that authenticity is located in ever greater exposure, in a history of suffering, and in the narration of lives that are out of control. Even when the texts purport to engage in postmodern, self-reflexive play with performed identities - in what in chapter 4 I term as 'doing' celebrity - they default to the currency of authenticity in some form.

Access and Authenticity

This thesis set out to explore the promise of a genre that claims to offer *access* and *authenticity* within the context of explicit and self-conscious mediation. I have shown that,

⁸⁴⁵ See Harris, 'Why Celebrity Memoirs Rue Publishing;' and Crone, 'Are We Seeing the Death of the Celebrity Memoir?'

beyond this intrinsic generic promise, the related concepts of access and exposure run throughout the celebrity memoir. Furthermore, I have argued that a celebrity marketplace driven by access and exposure constructs an obligation to expose the self and so forecloses other potential models of self-representation available to the young, famous women within it. **Lastly, whilst authenticity has long been understood as at stake in celebrity image construction, I have theorised camp artifice as a counterpoint to authenticity: a strategy deployed in seeming contradiction to the demands of authenticity but which, in fact can offer a means for negotiating the competing simultaneous demands of publicly performed femininity.**

The ‘glamour girl’ memoir is especially illustrative of this generic preoccupation with exposure, demonstrating a unique inter-relation of promises of access. Whilst all celebrity memoir combines the intimate revelations that form the appeal of celebrity coverage with autobiography’s promise of self-disclosure, the ‘glamour girl’ career origins of the author-subject add to this a preoccupation with the visual exposure and sexual availability common to mainstream pornography. Here we have seen how the revelation of personal secrets is positioned as a continuation of sexualised striptease - one which goes further than the stars’ work in pornography, but which, nonetheless, exists on the same continuum. The ‘glamour girl’ memoir creates an explicit confusion between telling secrets and revealing bodies. In a move which both eroticises and literalises privacy, these women have responded to the demand for ‘making a private history public’⁸⁴⁶ by narrating their ‘privates’. We have seen how these memoirs co-exist with a media landscape populated with non-consensual paparazzi ‘snatches’ which seek to expose these women further, and how memoirs offer an opportunity to ‘speak back’ to those who ‘steal’ their commoditised selfhood in this way. The memoir is thus framed as the opportunity to expose oneself on one’s own terms. The autobiographical accounts which result, however, still adhere to the same conventions of sexualised exposure. They seek both to tally with the existing star image, which compelled the reader to purchase, and to compete with a wider landscape of celebrity culture which locates authenticity in the non-consensual.

Chapter 3 demonstrated an interconnected media web where different formats compete to reveal the more wholly exposed celebrity self. This means that details which are deliberately left out of a celebrity’s memoir are supplemented by the assemblage of narratives that circulate around her. Strategies for resisting exposure, such as Hilton’s camp play, can be foiled as the meaning of these texts always reside within their overlap with extratextual worlds. In Chapter 3 we saw the gendered censure for overexposure and the sexual morality at the heart of it. The charge of trashiness is in part founded upon Hilton

⁸⁴⁶ McLennan, *American Autobiography*, p.7.

and Goody's failure to adhere to social boundaries of feminine restraint represented in their exposure. Goody's sentimental discourse is also positioned as grotesque in these terms: her memoir describes emotional 'floodgates'⁸⁴⁷ and offers seemingly unrestrained outpourings of personal secrets, representing an 'over sharing' of physical and emotional detail suggesting that she doesn't respect the boundaries of decorous speech. Chapter 3 demonstrated censure provoked by the reality TV star's willingness to be seen to be inviting an admiring audience which one ought to be able to attract effortlessly. The conventions of both reality TV and contemporary memoir demand the subject's exposure as they reveal (ideally 'shameful') secrets, or are caught in candid moments of humiliation. We saw how individual subjects must negotiate this demand for exposure and how the strategies available in this negotiation depend on the capitals they bring to the exchanges with their ghost and their audience.

Within the context of the memoir, Chapter 4 highlighted a focus on the surface image as a way of resisting the demands of a culture which coaxes stars to 'share'. Yet, this, too, offers an example where the dominant codes of gendered celebrity exposure win out as these texts can nonetheless be seen to trade in the same currencies as the memoirs in previous chapters. Rather than being exceptions, they demonstrate the extreme persistence of conventions of access and exposure in female celebrity (self-)representation. They do not offer the written confessions that are present in the wider celebrity memoir, but they offer a form of confession nonetheless.

With regard to *Gaga x Richardson*, in appropriating the visual tropes of the un-posed paparazzi 'snatch', Richardson borrows their codes of 'realism' whilst further borrowing their suggestion of forced exposure, thus playing with the concept of consent. *Gaga x Richardson* performs imperfection through the kinds of photographs associated with forced over-exposure and humiliation, but which here form an official narrative which promises to have 'captured the intimate...in all aspects of her life.'⁸⁴⁸ This 'all access, nothing off limits'⁸⁴⁹ logic presupposes that authenticity lies in being perceived to be as thoroughly revealed as possible. Gaga's text offers gendered displays of emotional lability and corporeal vulnerability in place of the exposing backstory that celebrity memoir traditionally promises to access. Her embrace of the performed does not free her from the obligation to grant access to what appears to be a 'real self'. Terry Richardson's photos enact a gradual forcing of access into new areas of privacy and parts of her body. This model of uncomfortably creeping boundaries results in a more comprehensive, fully exposed image, and this sequence constructs a narrative that gradually strips Gaga of her defensive artifice. The images in

⁸⁴⁷ Goody, *Fighting to the End*, p.xxxv.

⁸⁴⁸ Lady Gaga X Terry Richardson, <http://www.ladygagaxterryrichardsonthebook.com/>.

⁸⁴⁹ 'Lady Gaga X Terry Richardson', *Amazon.com*.

Gaga x Richardson reaffirm a social order in which femininity is equated with physical weakness and emotional instability. Within this framework, a non-normative figure such as Gaga can be safely returned to a tamed and untroubling 'category of woman' that exists within celebrity's dominant codes of gendered emotional and physical exposure.

In contrast, M.I.A.'s text largely keeps the celebrity author-subject's body out of the frame in favour of a focus on her creative and conceptual output. As Helen Hester identifies, prurience is key to the promise of the autobiography genre,⁸⁵⁰ and yet prurient interest in M.I.A. will remain largely unsatisfied by this text. Like many of the texts analysed in this thesis, *M.I.A.* claims to expose the workings of celebrity in an effort to assert the authenticity of the honest fake. Unlike the other examples however, the target of cynicism is her admission of manipulated and strategically deployed autobiography. *M.I.A.* articulates the currency of life story in celebrity culture within which all of the texts discussed in this thesis are attempting to trade. *M.I.A.* draws attention to the way that the celebrity life evolves in an economy of exposure and revelation and adapts itself to the appetites of its desired audience. This model of autobiography as 'column inches and a Wikipedia page' seeks not to engage on the terms of the genre and yet it nonetheless conducts the very exchange it seeks to undermine. The text works to construct authentic subjectivity through tropes such as the verbal vernacular and hand writing - as if they offer a 'window into the human mind.'⁸⁵¹ The attempt to offer access to M.I.A.'s subjectivity through her art rather than her exposed body is significant in its demonstration of the ways in which demands for exposure can be negotiated by the female celebrity memoir. At the same time, it demonstrates the potency of the economics of access at the heart of gendered celebrity as the appearance of access must still be given.

Within this thesis, we have seen the strategies available to public women in their self-representation: the importance of what is kept in and left out of the frame, the politics of production, and the struggle to be seen as author of one's own image in a wider context of negotiated celebrity exposure. Of course, the idea that access to another person's subjectivity can be offered through a form of mediation such as the celebrity memoir is as inherently suspect and paradoxical as celebrity culture's sale of the idea of the 'authentic' self. Access is therefore best understood as a currency: an insistent demand in celebrity culture that - as the examples in this thesis show - can be negotiated, but that ends up fulfilled one way or another.

⁸⁵⁰ Hester, *Beyond Explicit*, p.144.

⁸⁵¹ Fletcher, 'The Messages of Material Behaviour', p.33.

Extratextuality and the celebrity domain

In terms of access, *M.I.A.* functions as a limit case. Whilst the specificities of her celebrity field and her star image as a pop-star with 'alternative' sub-cultural caché create the conditions which enable certain representational freedoms (especially when contrasted with the 'glamour girl' category), *M.I.A.* is unique in this sample for showing that a sexualised inflection need not frame mediated access to female subjectivity. The account above of how the memoirs are constructed around the concept of access also shows how these texts can only be understood through their extratextual relations, for example the negotiations with the paparazzi 'snatch', negative commentary and the pre-existing field of both star and ghost.

The texts have been shown to be always in dialogue with their extratexts, not least in the interaction between the way the life story is told and the field from which its author's fame originated. The paratextual pornographic persona construction in 'glamour girl' memoirs showed that their accounts are required to tally with, positivise, retrospectively justify and, in some cases, propel pornographic careers for new audiences. At the same time, they narrate sex, the body and harm in ways that mitigate concern and reiterate the visual codes of porn aesthetics in written text.

Reality TV star memoirs have been shown to be interacting with and seeking to counter the discourses of the 'talentless' overexposure that surround the TV genre and its stars. Chapter 3 showed how reality celebrity memoir is always in dialogue with the criticisms, judgements and exposés which circulate around a star in a landscape of networked gossip media as both commentators and (anti)fans contribute to the overlapping meanings that surround the star's life story. Whilst a star like Hilton may engage in games of elliptic denial, these gaps are filled in by the narratives that circulate in her assemblage of extratexts.

The autobiographical output of pop-stars (with some degree of subcultural caché) have been shown to start from a point of assumed creativity that grants licence for a wider range of playful self-representation. Both *M.I.A.* and Gaga responded to this representational scope with texts that focus upon the visual imagery of or around their stardom, opening up the working definition of celebrity memoir in this thesis to include visual forms and expanding our understanding of ghosting to include the agents of mediation in these forms such as the creative director or photographer. This showed how the meaning of the account given is shaped not only by the ghost in their conscious acts of interpretation, but also - if they are sufficiently visible - by the extratextual associations that circulate in the ghost's own 'star' image. In *M.I.A.*'s case we also saw some of the risks associated with extratextual meaning-making. She attempts to give meaning to her story, not only from her own life experience, but by drawing upon the history and politics of Sri Lanka and the 'third world' more generally. In this example we see how stepping beyond one's own life story and into external debates, verifiable beyond one's own experience and authority, renders the meaning

of that story vulnerable to further criticisms on the grounds of interpretations of external events.

Agency and Authorship

This thesis has shown that autobiographical ‘truth’ in celebrity memoir is always relative, endlessly negotiating with an extratextual reality. We have seen the gendered nature of the judgements levied at young, female celebrities and how memoir can be understood as an intervention into this field of discourse. This thesis has argued that agency and authorship in collaborative memoir can both take various forms, occur within a negotiation with a range of other forces, and, ultimately, can only be inferred. It is problematic and disempowering to automatically conclude that the presence of a ghost writer negates the agency of the celebrity author-subject as the popular imagination presumes. At the same time, it is nonetheless impossible to determine conclusively the extent to which each party controls the resulting life story and its meaning. In the female celebrity memoir (as with wider celebrity culture), we can only speak of the discursive negotiation of agency: not its ‘actual’ or ‘measurable’ existence.

Providing a platform for stars who need to reclaim the spotlight with fresh revelations or a chance to ‘set the record straight’ for those whose public image has tumbled from their control, the celebrity memoir is an intervention of sorts, and thus a source of represented agency. Indeed, these celebrity author-subjects explain their decisions to produce memoirs in these terms, emphasising the opportunity to take back control of the meaning given to their lives. Some of these forms of agency can be complex and counterintuitive. For example, presenting oneself as wholly lacking agency is a direct claim *to* agency. We have seen that depicting oneself as subject to patriarchal structures which deny women sexual agency is nonetheless an active means of situating oneself within such power structures and negotiating with them. Further, the lucrative market for such memoirs and their explicitly commercial function complicates the model of victimhood presented within them – profitably selling one’s own victimhood is, indeed, a form of agency (in economic terms at least). The celebrity-author subject can also omit or fabricate aspects of her memoir. Both of these are forms of agency, although not without certain risks and impossible to identify with certainty in the text.

Memoir presents an opportunity to reframe the ‘work’ of celebrity. For example, ‘glamour girl’ memoirs represent their author-subjects as agentic through their depiction of careers that have required hard labour, professionalised skills, creative input and business acumen. They are represented in these examples as the agents of a career that they have worked for, deserving of the resultant rewards and successes, resisting their characterisation as passive objects. However, the representations of celebrity agency that have been analysed

over the course of this thesis have also proven deeply contradictory: for example, the ‘glamour girl’ memoir asserts that sex is a route to empowerment and agency while constructing female sexuality as service, and uses the rhetoric of empowerment to primarily tell stories of being *out* of control.

Even though the production of a memoir is an act that claims certain forms of agency in self-representation, my analysis of the reality TV memoirs illustrates that memoir implicitly contains surrounding strands of criticism and normativity in its responses to them. For example, Hilton’s apparent freedoms to evade self-exposure reveal their limits when she is forced to collude in her mockery in order to be accepted: her repeated dictums to ‘MAKE FUN OF YOURSELF’⁸⁵² reinforce that there is little place in the public eye for young, celebrity women who take themselves – or their identities – seriously. Hilton’s memoir does show she has a different status in relation to her audience to a star like Goody and, as a result, Hilton does not have to fulfil an appetite for her shame. However, this does not mean that such appetites do not exist, or that they are not potentially satisfied by the text, whether Hilton willingly participates or not. Memoirs represent an intervention into the web of media narratives that surround these women, but as an intervention that attempts to make these women more palatable to the dominant norms that reject them: it affords them agency enough to participate in their own humiliation.

The visual memoirs of pop-stars discussed in this thesis start from a point of less contested access to the status associated with the role of creative agent. They seek to distance the author-subject from popular conceptions of the pop-star-as-puppet through a self-conscious performance of ‘doing’ pop-stardom. Further, the texts analysed here present pop-stardom as a continuation of a prior art practice, originating within the endorsed, elite environment of art school, and so staking a claim to authenticity and agency over manufacture. However, the differences between the representations of celebrity agency in the visual memoirs of M.I.A. and Gaga point to the significance of the ghost-writing relations to the meaning of the text.

As she constructs images in partnership with hired shooter Richardson, Gaga claims agency in the model’s pose and appears in some images to revel in her ‘to-be-looked-at-ness.’⁸⁵³ However they are followed by images which, if their implied content is to be believed, could not have been posed, with Gaga asleep or unconscious on a kitchen floor and collapsed after a stage show, where the photographs suggest she has no agency in their construction. Crucially, it is the image of her violability, not her agency, that her photo-memoir sells – regardless of whether or not Gaga is a covert participant in staging these scenarios, and, despite the fact that she is a participant in their approval for publication. By

⁸⁵² Hilton, *Confessions of an Heiress*, p.15.

⁸⁵³ Mulvey ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,’ p.11.

contrast the unsuccessfully erased ghosting machinery that collectively produce M.I.A.'s autobiographical text can be traced to have existing relationships with her as subordinate employees, independent from the book's publishing house or her record labels, suggesting greater control over the process of mediation.

When ghosts reveal themselves they show that accounting for their presence has implications for understanding the way meaning is attributed. The range of models for understanding the dynamics of collaborative authorship in this thesis have also been broad: from Ginsberg, Hilton's strategic alliance, to M.I.A.'s uncredited team who reveal their erased labour despite it being buried, to Lucie Cave, who gets to ascribe the meaning of Goody's life after her death. Despite offering vastly different ways of viewing the ghosting relationship, all three are too messy to neatly fit into existing models of ghosting offered by Couser or Lejeune, in which the ghost is either an 'outranked' scribe,⁸⁵⁴ or one who studies 'from above'.⁸⁵⁵ This thesis started with the case of Neil Straus – a man who made his fortune from a how-to guide for sexual predation - co-writing the story of surviving sexual violence and admitting to making interventions to make it less 'dark'. From this example we see both the active role of the ghost and the potential coalescence of the ways in which they shape the meaning of the text and their extratextual interests. The thesis then closed with the example of Terry Richardson, whose high profile associations of sexual predation are leveraged to imply a non-consensual and therefore more authentic image. This last example is especially instructive in the wider codes of celebrity culture which see the non-consensual image production of the 'snatch' as the locus of authenticity. In each example, consideration of the role of the ghost has implications for how we understand the text. They do not preclude the possibility of celebrity authorial agency. Indeed, many of these examples directly evidence the power of the celebrity to hire, borrow from or benefit from the chosen partnerships. Yet, in every case unpicking the presence of the ghost exposes a process of negotiation which complicates how agency, authorship and celebrity meaning-making can be understood.

There have been many moments of resistance highlighted throughout this analysis of celebrity memoir. We have seen both the demands of the genre, and the elliptical, ironising or fictionalising strategies put in place in a bid to perhaps resist or temper these demands. They range from speaking back to exploitative media ecosystems of exposure, reframing the labour of celebrity (and the adult entertainment industry), claiming to be 'in' on any jokes made at the celebrity's expense, directing attentions to surface images, and works in which the celebrity does not appear except as authorial trace. And yet whilst resistant strategies are often at play, they are also often thwarted at a textual level. The demand for the appearance of access (from both autobiography and celebrity culture), and the existence of these texts in

⁸⁵⁴ Couser, 'Making, Taking, and Faking Lives,' pp.334-51.

⁸⁵⁵ Lejeune, 'The Autobiography of Those Who Do Not Write,' p.199.

assemblages of overlapping narratives, means that confessions can be extracted one way or another. As a result, even the most seemingly non-conforming examples evidence the weight of convention upon them and point to the limits of the field of representational possibilities for highly visible young women in contemporary culture.

This thesis has provided a thorough interrogation of the memoirs of contemporary, young, female celebrities that has been long overdue. I have developed a framework for reading these texts which accounts for both their collaborative authorship and the industrial conditions of their construction without dismissing them as solely the cynical manufacture of corporate merchandise: a framework that has been lacking from either celebrity studies or literary studies of the autobiography.

I have shown the value of celebrity memoir to understandings of the debates that are central to both of these scholarly fields. Celebrity studies has offered theorisations of the ways in which celebrity texts engage with the competing discourses of privacy and publicity, authenticity and manufacture.⁸⁵⁶ However, we have seen throughout the examples given here that celebrity memoir is an especially valuable case-study for the examination of such themes, being so entirely defined by both visible manipulation and apparent access to essential subjectivity. The study of autobiography has offered ways to understand how certain life stories are coaxed according to both pre-existing norms and the need to be perceived as a reliable narrator despite obvious partiality.⁸⁵⁷ Celebrity memoir, with the conspicuousness of its ghostwriters and industrial relations, literalises and makes visible these concerns as it seeks to trade in, what I have termed, an *economics of access*. As 'official' celebrity narratives which react to their media environment, modelling the ways in which celebrities are always in interaction with the multiplicity of coverage, judgments and readings that circulate around them, memoir affords a model for understanding the *celebrity-as-assembly*. By offering an understanding of celebrity memoir - as ghost-written, as an agentic intervention, as a microcosmic cultural artefact with much to tell us about celebrity culture at large, and as a negotiated terrain which makes its negotiations exceptionally visible on the page – this thesis has provided new ways to understand the (limits to the) modes of self-representation available to women on a public stage.

⁸⁵⁶ See, for example, Holmes, 'Approaching Celebrity in *Big Brother*'; Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*; Turner, Bonner, and Marshall, *Fame Games*; Dyer, 'A Star Is Born'; and Gamson, *Claims to Fame*.

⁸⁵⁷ Evans, *Missing Persons*; Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*; Shen, 'Unreliability in Autobiography vs. Fiction'; Spicer, 'Autobiography and the Fantasy of the Individual'; and Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*.

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Fig.1



Fig.2

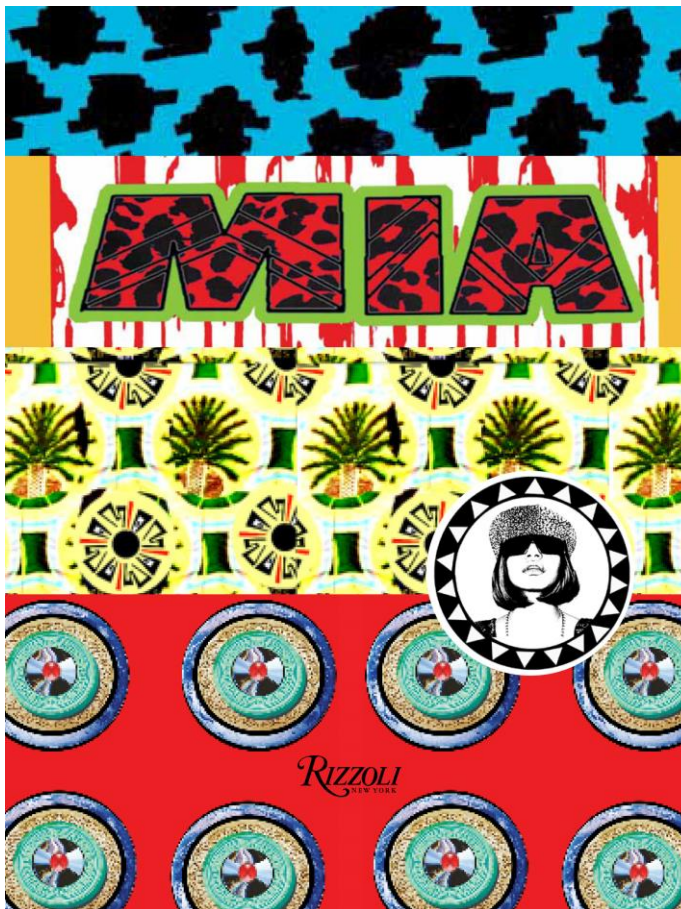


Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12



Fig.13

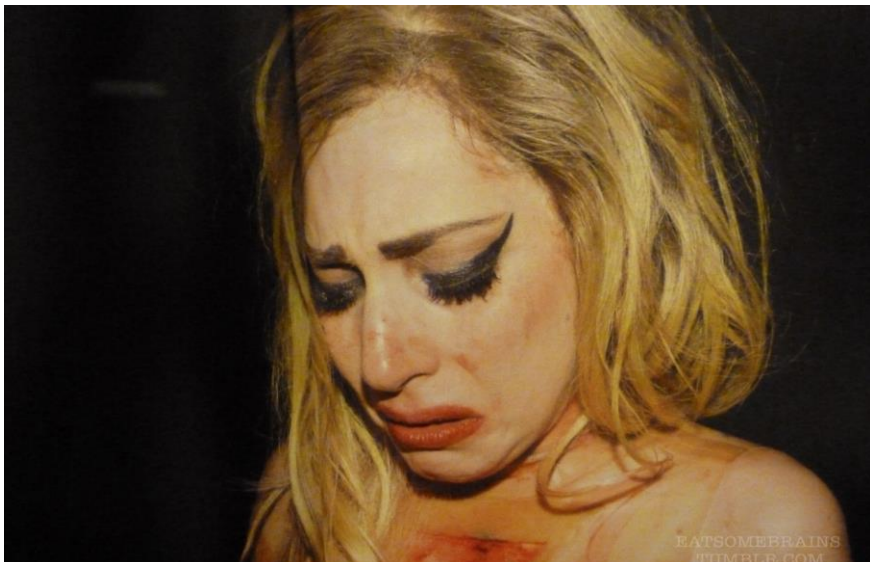


Fig.14



Fig.15

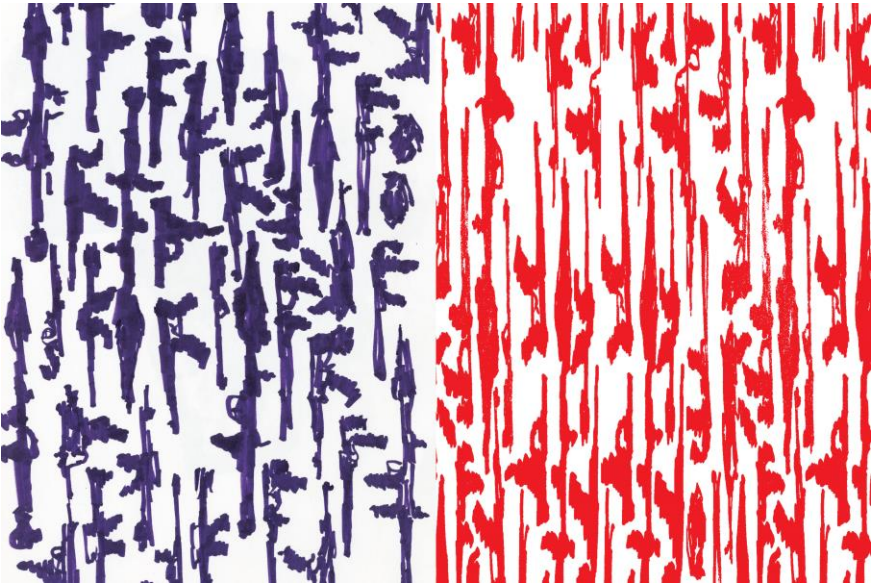


Fig.16



Fig.17

Fig.18



Fig.19



Fig.20

